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**Youth and Social Vulnerability:
Becoming Adults in Contemporary Argentina**

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**Youth and Social Vulnerability:
Becoming Adults in Contemporary Argentina**

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Dedication

To my son, Felipe

To my wife, Cris

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**Youth and Social Vulnerability:
Becoming Adults in Contemporary Argentina**

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This dissertation explores the new patterns of youth transition to adulthood in contemporary Argentina. During the last decade the country has experienced a deep transformation of its socio-economic foundations that make relevant the analysis of the characteristics, risk and social consequences of the process of becoming adult under this new scenario. In a context characterized by an increasing deterioration of the labor market, the constitution of new social identities, and the crisis of traditional mechanisms of socialization and upward social mobility, I identify and analyze patterns of school-to-work, family and residential transitions associated with different resources, opportunities, and constraints. The family, the neighborhood, and the labor market receive special attention.

The research is based on a quantitative analysis of the Argentinean Continuing Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires since 1990 until 2000, and a qualitative analysis of 60 in-depth interviews to young people conducted during 2000 in two different neighborhoods of Greater Buenos Aires. The main findings of this research show an increasing vulnerability of the young people in terms of their future opportunities of social integration. It is also observed a process of cumulative disadvantages among specific segments of the young population, with a potential risk of becoming socially excluded from the mainstream society. These findings suggest that Argentina is currently experiencing a significant transformation of its traditional social structure, whose patterns are not clearly defined yet.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RELEVANCE

The main purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of the transitions to adulthood in contemporary Argentina. Youth represents a critical period of the life course, characterized by key social processes that have a determinant effect both on the individual biography and the reproduction of society. The transitions that take place during this period mark the integration of new adults members in society, independent of their families of origin, but they mark also the strong linkages between social origin and future expectations, opportunities and constraints. In this sense, young people are the subject of a major social experiment: the reproduction of society through individual biographies. Thus, youth is both an individual transition and a social process.

Transitions are relational processes affected by risk and uncertainty, in that they comprise change and development. The transition to adulthood, however, is a particularly sensitive period given that they represent major events in the life course that have a direct effect on future living conditions. The process of becoming adult has a direct relationship with processes of social integration. The transition from school-to-work, the formation of a new family, and the achievement of economic and residential independence are not only key markers of adulthood, but determinant processes that shape the characteristics and conditions of adult life in society. Thus, youth becomes a stage of the life course particularly sensitive to the socio-economic (micro and macro) environment, and

at the same time, a life stage with significant consequences for future life trajectories.

The analysis of this transitional period of the life course, however, becomes a particular issue in the context of contemporary Argentina, and acquires a special relevance. During the last decade the Argentinean society has suffered a deep transformation, affecting some of its basic socio economic foundations. Young people face a transition to adulthood in a new socio-economic scenario characterized by sharp contrasts with the context experienced by their families of origin. The transition to adulthood in contemporary Argentina takes place in a changing society, where the loss of previous certainties is one of its main features.

Argentina used to have distinctive social and economic conditions in the Latin American context. A particular feature of the Argentinean society was a social structure with relatively low levels of inequality and dynamic channels of upward social mobility. As a result of an early, dynamic, and formal process of urbanization and industrialization Argentina presented, in terms of social stratification, the consolidation of a large middle class, as well as the emergency of a strong urban, and highly formalized, working class. While middle classes were made up of professionals, white-collar workers and small-scale entrepreneurs, the working class included formal industrial workers but also a consolidated sector of self-employed workers. Although these classes presented contrasting identities and living standards, they share a common membership to society based on the idea of “progress” and social mobility (see chapter 2). The labor market, the formal –and public- educational system, but also the State and

the local community, were dynamic and open sources of intra and intergenerational social mobility.

The 1990s find a radically different socio-economic scenario. The labor market has suffered an impressive deterioration with high levels of unemployment and job insecurity. Poverty has become a more extended phenomenon, and income inequality has reached unprecedented levels. But one of the most significant changes has been the erosion of previous mechanism of social mobility. In this new context, the transition to adulthood seems to be a particularly uncertain and risky transition. Which are the new opportunities and constraints that young people find in this changing socio-economic scenario? Which are the main patterns of the transition to adulthood and which are the opportunities and risks in terms of social integration? Is there an ongoing process of social exclusion affecting the youngest generations of the Argentinean society?

Additionally, these issues become particularly relevant when the demographic age composition is considered. The Argentinean population is characterized by an advanced stage in its demographic transition, experiencing a long and slow process of aging. This process, however, has been disrupted by a sudden rise in fertility during the early 1970s. The main result has been a significant increase of the youth population during our period of analysis - according to data from the Population National Census the proportion of young people increased from 16% to 18.3% during the last decade.

Studies of youth in Argentina have rarely adopted either a life course perspective nor one that looks to the effects of youth experiences on their later

social integration as adults. The literature review on youth in Argentina shows three main areas of analysis: studies on identity, values and perceptions, and labor market participation. The scenario depicted by these studies is complex and heterogeneous, but also suggestive of new research.

Studies on identity have shown an increasing fragmentation in youth identity (Wortman 1992, Wortman 1998, Margulis 1994, Urresti 2000). A growing process of differentiation and inequality in different spheres of social life have led to a fragmentation of the youth world, which in contrast with previous generations of Argentines has lost the experience and expectation of a collective and common social fate. This aspect, associated with recent economic and social changes, has deepened the identity crisis that characterizes the youth life stage, leading to different and heterogeneous responses. In most of these studies a tacit comparison is traced between the experience of young people during the 1960s and the 1990s. As a final stage of the idea of social "progress" the Argentinean youth of the 1960s and 1970s was deeply involved and compromised in a radical transformation of society; this was a central axis of the youth identity. The 1990s, in contrast, find a young population with lost certainties, scarce involvement in collective actions, and more heterogeneous life experiences than in the past. Some authors have described the contemporary youth as "urban tribes", in terms of the multiple responses to the crisis of a common youth identity. In general terms, however, these contrasts are not exclusive of Argentina, and those changes are not only experienced by youths.

Values and perceptions among young people represent also a growing area of study. Most studies have focused on how youth perceive school, work, family, and political participation (Chapp 1990, Tenti 1998a, Tenti 1998b, Sidicaro 1998a, Sidicaro 1998b). Once again uncertainty emerges as the central feature. This uncertainty seems to be the result of a de-coupling process between cultural values and structural conditions. For instance, young people still have a social memory of school as a valuable and respectable goal and as a mechanism of social mobility, but this contrasts with their experience of a boring and sometimes useless school, in a socio-economic context where unemployment, job insecurity and even poverty have extended to different educational segments of the population.

The third area of study is focused on the characterization of the youth labor market (Llomovate 1991, Braslavsky 1989, Wortman 1990, Mekler 1992, Macri and Van Kemenade 1993). Low wages, instability, unemployment and informality emerge as the main features of the economic participation of youth. Most of these studies combine a descriptive statistical analysis with a qualitative exploration of the labor experiences of young people, describing the hardship characterizing the initial stages of labor careers, particularly among early school leavers.

In chronological and logical order the studies on the increasing deterioration of the youth labor market were followed by new studies on the values and perceptions of young people about the labor market and other traditional institutions of socialization. Subsequently, the main concern focused

on how these changes were affecting the construction of a youth identity. In this context it is worth noting, however, the work of Javier Auyero (1993), which represents a significant and ground breaking contribution to the study of youth issues in Argentina. Based on a cultural perspective, Auyero analyzes the emergence of a process of cultural change among young people driven by the recent structural changes experienced by Argentinean society. A central idea of his study, is that the accumulation of experiences of exclusion, defined as a process of structural de-citizenship, are leading to a cultural change characterized by the routinization and internalization of those experiences. A similar perspective of analysis has been developed by Szulik and Kuasñosky (1993 and 1996), whose studies focus on the construction of identities of exclusion among young people from the popular sectors. These studies, however, are mainly based on the analysis of youth perceptions and they are still studies focused on youth identity.

My research is built upon these findings, but it focuses on issues that have not been explored. A perspective of analysis based on transitions and social vulnerability highlights previously unseen processes. Apart from the perceptions of young people about current aspects of the Argentinean society, the effect of these structural changes on the life course of young people and their transition to adulthood, as well as the responses to these changes, have not been analyzed. On the one hand, this dissertation explores the intermeshing between different public and private spheres of the young people's life. On the other hand, it explores the meaning of social exclusion as a relational and institutional concept, focusing in

current and concrete young people's experiences. The analysis of social vulnerability in the process of becoming adult is an analysis of the effects of structural changes in micro scenarios. Two main areas of interest motivated this study.

The first issue refers to the characteristics of the transition to adulthood during the 1990s in terms of school-to-work transition, family formation, and residential independence. In a context characterized by the deterioration of the labor market, the crisis of traditional institutions of socialization, and the constitution of new identities I explore the patterns of labor, family and residential transitions associated with different resources, opportunities and constraints. The main objective is to analyze situations of social vulnerability in each of these dimensions focusing on their social, economic and cultural roots. Which factors make young people vulnerable to leaving school or to be unemployed or to have an insecure job? Are young people remaining longer at home and postponing the formation of a new family? What are the push and pull factors affecting their family and residential transition? Which are the opportunities and constraints that the family, the neighborhood and the labor market provide them in making these critical transitions to adulthood? The exploration of these questions attempts to cover a first gap in the literature on youth in Argentina: the analysis of youth as a transitional life stage and as a social process that marks the transition to adulthood.

The second main issue focuses on the intermeshing between these different dimensions of the transition to adulthood. My concern is not limited to

explaining how different patterns of transition came about; I am also curious about the consequences of these different patterns. This study attempts to explore the effects of particular events on specific trajectories, and the effects of specific trajectories on the life course. The limitation of resources, however, constrains our analytical opportunities. Argentina does not have national surveys targeted to young people or longitudinal biographical surveys. As explained in the following section, this study relies on a continuing household survey and in-depth interviews. These instruments, however, provide the opportunity of exploring short-term processes. What do young people do after leaving school? How do young people deal with unemployment and job insecurity? Are new street sub-cultures emerging among young people as alternative spheres of socialization? What are the reactions to a pre-marital pregnancy during adolescence? What are the residential alternatives for a new young couple?

The following chapters provide some tentative answers to these questions, and suggest an interpretation of the new processes characterizing the transition to adulthood.

1.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODS

As Marshall and Rossman (1995) have pointed out the research strategy is a road map -that is, an overall plan for undertaking a systematic exploration of a particular subject. The methods are the specific tools for conducting that exploration. In this sense, no selection of techniques is made randomly rather they result from a major decision regarding the best instruments for exploring the

research topic. Following this basic assumption, this study combines quantitative and qualitative techniques for specific reasons. Each of these techniques provides results that inform us about different dimensions of the same issue, allowing a final and richer interpretation of our main research problem: the process of becoming adult in contemporary Argentina.

The quantitative techniques are used with two main objectives. First, is to provide a description of the current situation of a representative sample of young people in terms of education, employment, family and residential statuses, and to identify the main changes experienced during the last decade. Secondly, I aim to identify situations of vulnerability in each of these dimensions and to explore the associated factors. Based on this analysis, I have constructed three different patterns of transition to adulthood characterized by increasing levels of social vulnerability.¹ In this sense, the quantitative techniques provide a macro analysis of trends and associations between different vulnerable situations and specific socio-economic factors.

The reason for using qualitative techniques, in contrast, is to explore in more detail how different socio-economic contexts affect the life course experience of young people. The quantitative analysis identifies possible causes and possible outcomes; the qualitative analysis identifies the multiple and complex links between these two extremes. The interviews introduce new aspects that are not covered by the quantitative survey, but they also capture the complex

¹ It is worth noting that Argentina does not have either specific national surveys targeted to young people or longitudinal biographical surveys. The above objectives were defined taking into account the opportunities and limitations of the major available and suitable data set (Household Continuous Survey).

intermeshing between micro (subjective) and macro (social) conditions contributing to a better understanding of heterogeneous outcomes. It is worth noting that this does not mean to understand how "decisions" are made -a common misinterpretation of the value of the qualitative techniques. The voices of the interviewees do not provide answers to our research questions; they are the expression of our research problem.

In sum, the purpose for using quantitative and qualitative techniques is to combine the complementary advantages of both instruments in order to offer a richer understanding of particular "social processes".

The quantitative analysis is based on the *Encuesta Permanente de Hogares* (EPH), a continuing household survey conducted in 28 Argentinean urban areas twice a year (May and October). The analysis focuses on one of these urban centers: Greater Buenos Aires, which is the country's most important area both in economic and demographic terms. It includes 19 (currently 26) municipalities from the Province of Buenos Aires and the City of Buenos Aires, which is the national capital, representing more than one third of the country's total population. The analysis extends from 1990 to 2000, and is based both on individual surveys and on one-year-long panels.

The EPH is based on a representative and stratified household sample that, in the case of Greater Buenos Aires, includes approximately 4,300 private households. The sample is integrated by four independent sub-samples, each of them representing 25.0% of the total number of households. Additionally, every six months (that is, in every new wave) one of these sub-samples is replaced; as a

result 25.0% of the respondent households are surveyed 4 times (a period of 18 months) and then this sub-sample is replaced by a new one, which will remain in the sample for another 18 months period. This sampling design makes it possible to construct short-term panels. In order to increase the sample size, I have constructed one-year-long panels with 50% of the original sample, and then two subsequent panels were added.

The survey collects information in six main areas: basic demographic characteristics, employment, migration, housing conditions, education and income. Except for migration, I have used information from each of these thematic areas. It is worth noting three characteristics of the survey that limit our research topic. First, the sampling units are households living in independent houses; this makes it particularly difficult to analyze some specific aspects of extended households.² Secondly, this is a household survey, and therefore there is no information about family members who live in a different household; this was a significant limitation for the analysis of the family background of young people living without their parents. Thirdly, until 1998 the question on education asked individuals about the highest level attended and if that level was completed or not, without any specification of the last grade achieved. This has been a limit on using the more convenient variable “years of education”.

The analysis makes use of descriptive (cross-tabulations) and inferential statistics (Logistic regressions). Descriptive statistics are used both on cross-sectional surveys and short-term longitudinal data from those surveys (panels).

² For instance, it is possible to know that a grand child is living in a particular household, but it is almost impossible to know which members of the household are his or her parents, and even if they live in that household.

The main purpose of this analysis is the identification and comparison of trends between different groups and years. The analysis relies on the identification and exploration of situations of vulnerability in different spheres of the transition to adulthood. The inferential statistics are used to explore both the causes and effects of these vulnerable situations. As a result of this quantitative analysis three different patterns of youth transition were identified.

The qualitative analysis is based on 61 in-depth interviews of young people between 16 and 26 years of age living in Greater Buenos Aires. The interviews were conducted in two contrasting localities of Greater Buenos Aires: Lanús and Florencio Varela. The selection of these two localities offered the opportunity to explore the process of becoming adult in two different urban contexts in terms of their social and economic conditions.³ The sample includes a similar proportion of men and women with different educational, occupational, marital and residential statuses. They have also different social class family backgrounds, in terms of education and occupation. Table 1.1 presents a summary of the sample composition, and Appendix presents the main characteristics of each interviewee.

³ Chapter 3 presents a deep description of Lanús and Florencio Varela, and the reasons for the selection of these two localities.

Table 1.1 Characteristics of the interviewees' sample

Localities	Lanús	Florencio Varela	Total
	30	31	61
Gender			
Male	14	16	30
Female	16	15	31
Total	30	31	61
Educational / Employment			
Student	9	7	16
Employed	12	2	14
Unemployed	5	15	20
None	4	7	11
Total	30	31	61
Marital Status			
Single	22	24	46
Married	8	7	15
Total	30	31	61
Residential Status			
Living with parents	25	24	49
Independent from parents	5	7	12
Total	30	31	61

All the interviews were conducted by myself between June and December of 2000. All of them were conducted individually, in places familiar for the interviewees (but not in their homes), and without the presence of parents or other relatives of the interviewees. Most of them were conducted in local organizations (*sociedades de fomento, centros culturales*, a community radio, a public local library, etc.); in the case of Lanús, some of the interviews were conducted at the Universidad Nacional de Lanús. Three different types of institutions were the main initial mechanisms used in order to make contacts with young people. I was helped by local social and political organizations from both localities that introduced me young people from their neighborhoods. In the case of Florencio Varela I also interviewed participants of a social program with special activities

targeted to young people from poor areas (PAGV); and in the case of Lanús, I made some contacts with students from the local public university.⁴ After this initial stage, the interviewees suggested and introduced me to other candidates for future interviews (snow ball method). In order to avoid a possible bias in the construction of the sample by using a snow ball method, I made initial contacts with key informants in different social contexts. This gave me the opportunity to interview young people with different educational levels, living in different neighborhoods (middle class and working class neighborhoods as well as in shantytowns), and from families of origin with contrasting socio-economic statuses.

The interviews have an average length of 60 to 70 minutes.⁵ They were tape recorded and electronically transcribed. None of the interviewees were paid for his or her interview. Several visits were done to the same neighborhoods (in each locality) and to the same institutions, expending long hours talking with different people, sharing and observing their activities, and generating a friendly relationship with members of these institutions and other young neighbors. The interviews were the result of this relationship generated with key informants and groups of young people during a seven-months-long period of fieldwork.

The main purpose of the interviews was to explore the interaction between individual biographies and structural constraints and opportunities. In

⁴ The PAGV is a national social program targeted to “vulnerable groups”; these groups are women head of household, handicapped persons, elderly persons, and young people, all of them living in poor neighborhoods. The program for young people is based on different training activities. I interviewed participants from a course on telephony and from a course on computer training. The PAGV does not have any program in Lanús. In turn, there is no University in Varela.

⁵ The shortest and longest interviews had 40 and 120 minutes respectively.

this sense, I did not use a pre-established questionnaire but a thematic guide, to ensure both coverage in every interview of a number of key aspects associated with the transition to adulthood and, at the same time, a deep description of individual and concrete experiences linked to this process. All the interviews have a common set of questions regarding demographic, occupational, and educational status of the interviewees, their parents, and other household members. All the interviewees were also asked about their employment and educational trajectories, as well as their experiences in terms of family formation (including pregnancies) and residential independence. The family support and the influence of the neighborhood and the labor market on these transitional experiences were central areas of interest. The interviews explored also about groups of social interaction, main problems and concerns, and future expectations. Given that I conducted all the interviews, this gave me flexibility in order to follow and explore in more detail different aspects according to the particularities of each interviewee. A description of the topic guide used for the interviews is included in Appendix.

The analysis of the interviews was carried out using the QSR NUD*IST software package for qualitative research. All the interviews were coded using this program and a pre-designed basic coding index. After this initial stage, the coding structure or “tree” was re-built several times eliminating, modifying or adding new codes or “sub-trees” to the original structure. It is worth noting, that NUD*IST offers the opportunity of linking categories using different criteria, coding these results as new categories, and re-using them in new searches or analyses. This was the main strategy followed in the qualitative analysis. The final

index structure has 13 main categories, divided in 320 sub-categories, and they were used for a total of 200 index-searches.⁶

1.3 THE ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study is organized as follow. Chapter 2 discusses and constructs a theoretical definition of social vulnerability and youth. It presents a review of different perspectives on social exclusion and discusses the value of these approaches in the Argentinean context. Social integration and exclusion are conceived as ideal constructions that allow a better understanding of intermediate situations captured by the concept of social vulnerability. Chapter 3 examines the socio-economic context of the research. Its main goal is to present the major social and economic changes that the country has experienced during the last decades, and particularly between 1990 and 2000. It is argued that these changes represent a significant transformation of the Argentinean society. Moreover, this chapter presents a description of Greater Buenos Aires, and the two localities (Lanús and Florencio Varela) where the interviews were conducted.

The following three chapters present a qualitative analysis of the main dimensions of the transition to adulthood. Chapter 4 explores the role of education in contemporary Argentina. It is argued that education has ceased to be a channel for individual and group mobility and has become a major mechanism of exclusion. Chapter 5 focuses on the main changes observed in the labor markets. It is shown that the deterioration of the employment conditions has become an

⁶ Index searches can be defined as text retrievals of specific codes under specific conditions or restrictions.

extended phenomenon but with a more drastic effect on specific groups of disadvantaged youths. Chapter 6 analyzes the main trends observed during the last decades in terms of family formation and residential independence. This chapter shows a strong association between social disadvantages in the public and private spheres of the life course, one of its main consequences is a process of cumulative disadvantages.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 make use of the qualitative data in order to analyze three major contexts of youth life: the household, the neighborhood, and the labor market. Chapter 7 seeks to explore the effect of different household contexts in terms of resources, opportunities, and constraints for the transition to adulthood of the young family members. Chapter 8 looks at differences between young people living in contrasting urban contexts. This chapter argues that the economic and social conditions of the neighborhood have a strong effect on young people's lives. Chapter 9 considers how youth's employment conditions are associated with other dimensions of the transition to adulthood. It is shown that labor participation represents a central axis in order to achieve both subjective and social markers of adulthood.

Finally the conclusion in chapter 10 summarizes the main findings with respect to the patterns of transition to adulthood and the increasing vulnerability that affects this process in contemporary Argentina in terms of social integration. It also suggests some social implications both in terms of a future research agenda and a changing social structure in Argentina.

Chapter 2. Social Vulnerability and Youth Transition: An Analytical Framework

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Vulnerable transition is almost a tautological expression. Transitions, particularly those affecting social processes, have always a certain degree of risk and uncertainty that makes them inherently vulnerable. Additionally, transitions are defined by an intermediate stage between a point of origin and a point of destination, which makes them particularly sensitive to external shocks. However, they can be smoother or riskier, and when people are involved in them social inequalities increase the heterogeneity of the transitions and their results. These aspects are particularly relevant in the case of youth, a period of the life course characterized by critical transitions.

There is still a significant degree of ambiguity in this argument. Who are included in the category of youth? What are the transitions that take place during this period of the life course? What are the particular risks and vulnerabilities in these transitions? Which are the factors that make young people more or less vulnerable in the process of becoming adults? In order to answer these questions, this chapter discusses and constructs a theoretical definition of social vulnerability and youth. The main purpose is to arrive at a theoretical instrument that allows us to explore and analyze the heterogeneity -in terms of vulnerability- of the process of becoming adult in contemporary Argentina.

The first section introduces the main contributions of the contemporary debate on social exclusion focusing on Argentinean society. As a result of this analysis a definition of social exclusion is elaborated. Integration and exclusion are conceived as ideal constructions that allow a better understanding of intermediate situations captured by the concept of social vulnerability.

The second section presents a life course perspective for the analysis of youth. Youth is defined as a socially constructed life stage, characterized by a combination of role transitions and chronological age. In this section I also discuss the main resources and structures that affect the transition to adulthood.

2.2 SOCIAL VULNERABILITY: DEFINING THE RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN ARGENTINEAN SOCIETY

2.2.1 Discussing the concept of social exclusion

The notion of social exclusion has emerged in the last decade as a dominant concept in the analysis of poverty and deprivation. Social exclusion represents both a concept which identifies a specific social issue and the affected social groups, as well as a theoretical instrument to explain the social roots of exclusion and to generate policy implications. It focuses on the social outcomes of recent processes of economic restructuring and the subsequent reforms of welfare regimes. It offers the opportunity of reexamining and highlighting new dimensions of poverty and inequality in a context of the socio-economic changes driven by globalization.

Most of the literature on social exclusion has been developed by European theorists reflecting on the impact of globalization and economic restructuring on employment and welfare. However, since globalization and restructuring are key processes affecting employment throughout the world, the concept of social exclusion has been used in different regions, including Latin America and other developing countries (Rodgers, Gore and Figueiredo 1995, Kaztman et. al. 1999, Neffa et. al. 1999).

The concept of social exclusion emerges in the European literature as a key concept for analyzing processes leading to poverty, deprivation, and particularly disaffiliation from society. The term “exclusion” refers to an incomplete or broken process of social integration. However, beyond this common agreement different perspectives have defined and emphasized different aspects as the key social tie that allows the integration of individuals into society. Additionally, the link between individual and society is multidimensional and therefore exclusion may also have more than one dimension of analysis. As Silver (1995:61) has observed “the term social exclusion is so evocative, ambiguous, multidimensional, and expansive that it can be defined in many different ways”.

One of the perspectives associated with the social exclusion framework emerged from the most recent and ambitious definitions of poverty. The pioneering work of Townsend (1979) established a broader notion of poverty by considering its relative character. Poverty is not defined by reference to the satisfaction of some absolute needs, but considering the individuals' opportunities of participation in the activities of their communities. In this sense, the concept of

poverty acquires a double relative character. On the one hand, the required resources for a full participation in society are relative to time and space (different socio historic contexts). On the other hand, poverty becomes closer to social inequality, since different social groups have in the same community different levels of participation pushing the most disadvantaged toward a relative level of social deprivation. As Townsend (1993:79) states in a more recent work, poverty is better defined as “a state of observable and demonstrable disadvantage relative to the local community or the wider society or nation to which an individual, family or group belongs”. This perspective comes close to the notion of social exclusion since it associates poverty with lack of a full participation in society; participation that is defined both in economic and social terms. This notion of poverty, introduces the distributional dimension of the concept of social exclusion.

Amartya Sen (1981, 1995) has also developed a more comprehensive notion of poverty, which comes even closer to the concept of social exclusion. Discussing the “relativist” perspective supported by Townsend and others, Sen introduces some key concepts into the debate; these are the ideas of “entitlements”, “capabilities” and “functioning”. For the purpose of this discussion, the important input from this perspective is the definition of poverty in terms of the “capabilities” of individuals and households to achieve certain basic and absolute “functionings”.⁷ To Sen, poverty should not be identified with the

⁷ “Functioning” could be defined as states of being or standards of living. Sen focuses on valuable functionings which can include elementary things (or biological needs) such as being adequately nourished and being in good health, and more complex achievements (social needs) such as having self respect, taking part in the activities of the community, etc.

lack of specific “functionings” or with the lack of specific resources to achieve these functionings, since it is possible to avoid poverty through various combinations of resources and various styles of life. Instead, Sen argues that poverty refers to the lack or limitation of the “capability budget” of individuals and households.⁸ Beyond the discussion about the relative or absolute condition of poverty, both perspectives share a common focus on the economics and social dimensions of poverty. Additionally, an important contribution of Sen’s work is the association of poverty with entitlements. The capabilities of individuals and households depend on the entitlements they have; that is, the bundle of commodities over which a person can establish command, which in turn will depend on the legal, political, economic, and social characteristics of the society in question and the person’s position in it (Sen 1981). The idea of entitlement introduces the concept of social rights into the debate on poverty. The most recent perspectives on social exclusion will develop this idea through the concept of social citizenship.

In sum, the poverty debate in this broader sense, made a first approach to the problem of social exclusion. It extended the concept of poverty including social aspects and focusing on basic requirements for the participation of individuals in society. But this approach, which could be defined as the Anglo-

⁸ Sen argues that when poverty focuses on the “budget of capabilities” it acquires an absolute character. This is the main contrast with Townsend perspective. Indeed, both perspectives are not incompatible: the absolutist element in the notion of poverty refers to capabilities, and the “relativist” element to the resources. Sen observes that “when Townsend estimates the resources required for being able to “participate in the activities of the community” he is in fact estimating the varying resource requirements of fulfilling the same absolute need” (Sen 1983:161)

Saxon perspective, was limited to the distributional dimension of social exclusion, and this is why it is still a poverty analysis.

The social exclusion approach, which was mainly developed by French scholars, takes into account this distributional issue, but incorporates and emphasizes a relational dimension that represents the essential aspect of exclusion. This perspective focuses on the rupture of the relationship between individual and society as a result of the deterioration of the labor market. Exclusion is primarily seen as a relational issue, associated with the crisis of the wage society (Paugam 1995, Room 1995, Castel 1997, Bhalla and Lapeyre 1999). Employment, particularly a formal wage job, is conceived as the main mechanism of social integration. It is not only the main provider of access to incomes, but also to social legitimacy, social networks and solidarity, psychological well-being, and in the case of most European countries (except the more “universalistic” Scandinavian welfare regimes), to social benefits.

The two main processes contributing to exclusion are: high unemployment and job precariousness for groups of people who were fully integrated before, and the difficulties that new workers have in entering the labor market to enjoy the social bonds associated with it (Rodgers 1995, Maguire and Maguire 1997). It is worth noting that unemployment and job insecurity are not just labor market problems, but evidence of the crisis of work (or employment) as a mechanism of social integration. Unemployment is not only a problem of joblessness, but also a problem of social integration. A weak integration with the formal labor market has been associated with other dimensions of social integration, such as access to

decent income, housing, education, family stability, and social participation. Paugam (1995:56) for instance, observes that “the strength of the links between the employment situation and other dimensions of economic and social life - family, income, living conditions, and social contacts- could suggest that those people in situation of occupational precariousness have a good chance of becoming excluded from society”.

In this sense, social exclusion is defined by the combination of distributional and relational dimensions. Poverty by itself does not imply exclusion from social networks, as it is shown by the Latin American literature on marginality. As Bhalla and Lapeyre (1999) have observed “exclusion from the productive system and social deprivation are the two crucial processes leading to social exclusion, whereas a job and an effective social network are the main elements of social integration”. Thus unemployment and job insecurity become the trigger factors of a process of cumulative disadvantages, which leads to a final stage of disaffiliation from society – that is, social exclusion.

A final approach is clearly associated with the previous perspective, and has been developed by an especial unit of the European Union focused on social issues (The European Commission). This perspective emerges as an attempt to fulfill two unresolved problems. On the one hand, it attempts to combine elements of the French approach, and its emphasis on social and cultural exclusion, with the Anglo-Saxon tradition and its focus on income inequality and material exclusion (Atkinson 2000). On the other hand, it looked for an empirically identifiable definition, that is, a concept from which to construct social indicators

and to define social policies (Yepez del Castillo 1994). The European Commission found the answer in the concept of citizenship rights, and in particular, social rights. The debt with the seminal work of T.H. Marshal on citizenship and social class is evident.

The citizens' right to a certain basic standard of living and to social participation in the major institution of society becomes the main reference for the concept of exclusion. From this perspective, "social exclusion can be analyzed in terms of the denial –or non-realization- of these social rights: in other words, in terms of the extent to which the individual is bound into membership of this moral and political community" (Room 1995:7). The focus changed from the labor market to social citizenship. The lack of social rights is seen as the main factor in a process of cumulative disadvantages undermining both social and occupational participation, and finally, social integration.

These three approaches to the contemporary characteristics of poverty and exclusion were developed taking into account a particular and concrete socio-economic context: modern European society. Nevertheless, there are two main reasons that make the discussion of this concept valid in the Latin American context. On the one hand, the neo-liberal policies and the increasing deterioration of the labor market have generated an expansion of poverty, both in terms of a deeper impoverishment of the structural poor and the emergence of new poor. On the other hand, the concept of social exclusion has intrinsic similarities with previous and traditional Latin American studies on marginality, which generates a question about the differences between both concepts.

The main problem with the concept of social exclusion in Latin America is rooted in the definition of social integration. The three different perspectives previously examined define a critical aspect that determines the bond between individual and society: the Anglo-Saxon perspective, based on a liberal vision of society, emphasizes a basic living standard; the French perspective, based on a conservative-corporatist vision of society, emphasizes the link with the labor market; and the European perspective, inspired in a social democratic vision of society, emphasizes social citizenship. As several studies have noted, none of these criteria can be directly extrapolated to the Latin American context (B. Roberts 2001). Urban poor (those below the expected and accepted living standards) very often represent the bulk of the urban population; the link with the labor market was always weak and in most countries the formal and secure jobs were the exception; social citizenship has never had a comparable extension to the European situation. That is, none of these three aspects seems to be the critical determinant of social integration in Latin America. The recent history of the region shows that during the process of urbanization and socio-economic development important segments of the population were left behind, with very poor living standards, without formal jobs, and with restricted social rights (Roberts and Oliveira 1998).

These segments of the Latin American population were the subject of the marginality theory. Some authors have questioned if there is any difference between social exclusion and marginality, and what are the advances that emerge from the new concept in comparison to the Latin American tradition on social

marginality (Yepez del Castillo 1994, Bhalla and Lapeyre 1999). Even other authors like Alain Touraine have traced a theoretical and empirical continuity between the Latin American perspective on marginality and the more recent European studies on social exclusion.

We think that both concepts are not the same, and that there are good reasons to use, and particularly, redefine the notion of social exclusion in the Argentinean context. It is possible to summarize these reasons in three observations. A first and central aspect is that marginal sectors were not excluded from society; their distinctive feature was, indeed, a particular and subordinated form of integration in the local society (and in turn in the international division of labor, as “dependentist” theorists have argued). As Vilmar Faria (1995) has clearly observed, “marginalist” scholars were concerned in emphasizing that urban marginality correspond to a specific mode of integration into the prevailing social division of labor. Marginality and social exclusion refer to different empirical problems.

The second aspect refers to the mechanisms of social integration in Latin American countries. A common argument is that a concept of social exclusion is not useful in contexts where the main mechanisms of social integration (minimum living standard, formal employment, or social rights) have never reached the entire population. Yepez del Castillo (1994:630) presents this argument with two short questions “Does this [the concept of exclusion] have any meaning in relation to a person who has never been socially integrated? Why speak of social exclusion where the Welfare State, pension and unemployment benefits scarcely

exist?” The answer is that the mechanisms of social integration in Europe are not the same as in Latin America and need to be specified for Latin America.

A third, simple but usually forgotten aspect, is that Latin America is not homogeneous. There is more than one Latin America. Any “latin-americanist” would recognize that Brazil, Mexico and Argentina (just to mention three cases) are clearly different societies, where social integration (and in turn social exclusion) acquires particular characteristics. Using the concept of social exclusion, therefore, requires paying attention to the specificities of Latin American societies.

2.2.2 Vulnerability and social mobility in Argentina

As Bryan Roberts (1996) has observed, Latin American welfare provision most closely approximated the corporatist model until the 1980s, based on occupational status differentiation and maintaining much social welfare in the private sphere of family and community. This corporatist type of welfare regime, with its regional limitations, developed furthest in the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile and Uruguay). These countries, particularly Argentina and Uruguay, shared an exceptional situation in the Latin American context that placed them in an intermediate situation between developed and developing countries. Relatively high levels of education, low levels of poverty and income inequality, and a large and growing middle class sector, were their main distinctive aspects.

Two main factors explain this situation in the case of Argentina. On the one hand, is the high and increasing labor demand of the formal sector of the

economy, mainly from the public and industrial sectors. This was due to an early process of urbanization and industrialization, but also to the low growth of the economically active population. On the other hand, the early development of an incomplete Welfare State, but with a significant coverage in areas like education, health and social security. This was the result of growing social demands from the middle classes, strong trade unions, and a corporatist state that used social protection as a mechanism of social stratification and power.

As a result of these conditions, Argentina showed during the period of Import Substituting Industrialization (ISI), relatively good social indicators and a path of sustained socio-economic development. By 1970, the level of households living in poverty in Greater Buenos Aires was 5.0%, between 1963 and 1978 the average rate of urban unemployment was 5.6% (Godio et. al. 1998), wage workers protected by the labor code accounted for over 70.0% of the labor force (Marshall 1998), and self employment was not as closely associated with low education and low incomes as was the case in other Latin American countries (Rosenbluth 1994, Altimir and Beccaría 1999, Bayón, Roberts, and Saraví 1998).

Despite these figures poverty, inequality, and job insecurity were also features of Argentina. Indeed, the major cities of the country, particularly Greater Buenos Aires, were centers of growing shantytowns (*villas miserias*), the paradigmatic example of marginality and poverty. Social benefits (with exception of education and health care) were linked to formal employment, generating a stratified system that excluded the urban informal workers and rural poor from social protection (Razcynski 1995, Bayón et. al. 1998). That is, beyond the

relatively early and high socio economic development, Argentina was not exempt from the marginality and inequality common to Latin America.

As a result of this intermediate situation between developed and developing countries, Argentina generated particular forms of social integration. As Kaztman et. al. (1999) observe with reference to Argentina and Uruguay, these countries present forms of social integration typical of a developed wage society as well as particular mechanisms of partial integration -as in the case of the informal workers, who were socially integrated through a set of partial integrations in different social spheres. Social integration, the authors conclude, can be depicted as a process of multi-affiliation, where no social bond has the strength of the wage relationship (which is the main and par-excellence mechanism of integration), but other social ties exist that give a sense of membership.

The relatively wide extension of the formal sector, and the attachment of social benefits to employment, suggest that the wage relationship was the key mechanism of social integration. Indeed, this was the case for a significant segment of the population –i.e. the wagers. We argue, however, that the key factor was not formal work in itself, but the idea of social mobility. Formal work was an important (perhaps the most important) factor of social integration, because it was seen as a mechanism of social mobility. It was not the only one; formal education, the State and the community were also seen in Argentina as mechanisms and resources of social mobility. I argue that it was this idea of “progress” and the existence of different mechanisms of “upward social mobility”

that represents the main social bond of Argentinean society. Given that the society provides different channels of social mobility, social integration appears in Argentina as a process of multi-affiliation.

Based on this concrete idea of integration, social exclusion is associated in the Argentinean case with the crisis of the traditional mechanisms of social mobility. The deterioration of the labor market undermined the value of work; as Bryan Roberts (1997) observes for Latin America the period of upward mobility induced by changes in the occupational structure is now likely to be over as job creation in the formal economy slows and open unemployment increases. Education is also questioned as a result of the depreciation of educational credentials and the expansion of unemployment among the most educated. The community, particularly poor neighborhoods, has been weakened as a space of solidarity and collective action, mainly as a result of increasing political disaffection and growing crime and violence. Finally, the reform of the State has destroyed the former incomplete welfare system. Thus, social exclusion emerges as a potential outcome.

If social integration is a phenomenon of multiple affiliations, then social exclusion cannot be defined by a single dimension, such as a living standard, a wage relationship, or social citizenship. Social exclusion should be seen conceptually as a multidimensional issue, that is, as the final result of a process of multiple disattachments from the traditional channels of social mobility. In this sense, social exclusion represents, in the Argentinean case, an ideal type that provides a bench mark against which to analyze the empirical reality.

Thus, focusing empirical research on the concept of social exclusion has several risks. First, it tends to present social conditions in dualistic terms, blurring their character as process. As Castel (1997, 1999) has observed social exclusion is found at the end of a process that begins in mainstream society, in the spheres of integration. He recommends being cautious with the use of this concept, and –in most cases- replacing it with more appropriate concepts. Secondly, as Minujin (1999) has pointed out, this concept could lead to targeted social policies, oriented by a logic of providing assistance and compensation to excluded groups, without considering either the factors leading to exclusion or the population at risk of exclusion. Third, the notion of social exclusion could lead to a conservative perspective on the social effects of the contemporary socio-economic order. Atkinson (2000) observes that the concept of social exclusion distracts attention from fundamental social inequalities, about which the conventional political wisdom believes nothing can be done; that is, by focusing on minority groups with extreme situations of exclusion, the intermediate disadvantage situations are assumed as “normal”.

Social vulnerability is a “more appropriate” term for reflecting and examining the social effects of the socio-economic changes experienced by Argentinean society during the last decades. Social vulnerability refers to the intermediate situations that are obscured by the concept of social exclusion. Unemployment or job insecurity, represent factors of social vulnerability, but they are not –always- determinant of social exclusion. Vulnerability refers to the factors increasing the risk of social exclusion, which is conceived as the potential

final result of a process of accumulation of disadvantages. The common feature of these disadvantages is that they weaken the expectations and opportunities of upward social mobility.⁹

2.3 YOUTH AND THE TRANSITIONS TO ADULTHOOD

2.3.1 The social construction of youth

Youth can be defined as a particular stage of the life course characterized by specific biological, psychological and sociological features. Indeed, there is an agreement between these different disciplines in considering that youth, like every period in the life course, is a process. This position has significant implications. First, the idea of process implies that there is no clear cuts or discontinuities between successive life stages. Therefore, youth cannot be defined as a concrete and discrete block of time with clear and determinant boundaries. Scientists from different disciplines, however, have established specific markers of this life period to identify a particular moment in the life process. Secondly, life stage periods are not universal -either between individuals or societies. Youth markers -even biological markers-¹⁰ may occur at different times among different individuals and different societies. Youth -as well as other life stages-, defined through biological, psychological or sociological markers, is not fixed to a specific and

⁹ It is worth noting that this research does not focus on the institutional aspects that characterize the crisis of the traditional mechanisms of social mobility. The main concern of this research is the effects and experiences of these disadvantages -i.e. social vulnerability- in young people's transitions to adulthood.

¹⁰ As Beall (1984) has observed analyses based on the comparison between biological ages -i.e. skeleton age- and chronological ages have demonstrated that individuals and populations pass through the same physiological developmental stages at widely varying rates and that at a given biological age there is tremendous variation in chronological age (and vice versa).

universal chronological age. Third, the recognized life stages in the ageing process are the result of a social taxonomy or categorization. As Keith and Kertzer (1984) have pointed out "in human communities nothing is nature but culture makes it so". In this sense, youth is a natural stage of the life process, socially constructed.

A life course perspective takes into account these three basic assumptions, but it has been used with different purposes by biologists, psychologists and sociologists. From a sociological point of view, the "life course refers to a pattern of age-graded events and social roles that is embedded in social structures and subject to historical change" (Elder 2000:1614). The life course is a social construction, in which different stages can be recognized as a result of social norms and cultural values. Norms and values specify age appropriate behavior and expectations, and provide a set of meanings that organize and signify the life course experiences of individuals.

Elder (2000) has pointed out four main principles or basic assumptions of the life course perspective, that should be taken into account in the definition of "youth". First, the life course of individuals is embedded in and shaped by the historical times and places they experience over their lifetime. In this sense, "youth" is a socio-historical experience, which can be defined as a cohort effect - that is, youth varies according to the structure of opportunities and constraints, and the social and cultural conditions characterizing different socio-historic settings. Secondly, the developmental impact of a lifetime transition or event is contingent on when it occurs in a person's life. The same socio-historic conditions

or processes do not equally affect individuals in different life stages. This principle means that the socio-historic conditions, as well as, the social changes have a particular effect on youth that is different to their effect on other life stages (childhood, adulthood, etc.). Thirdly, lives are lived interdependently and social and historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships. With this assumption, Elder refers to the transmission and repercussion of social changes in networks of social relationships, but it would be convenient to extend it in order to consider the effect of different interaction contexts on the organization and experience of the life course. In other words, using an expression from Foucault, my intention with this redefined principle is to capture the "micro physic" of the life course. In this sense, youth is relative not only with reference to macro socio-historic contexts, but also regarding to different micro scenarios of interaction; for instance, young people in different family contexts experience, organize and signify "youth" in different ways. Finally, individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they have taken within the constraints and opportunities of history and social circumstances. This principle attempts to address the complex theoretical discussion of structure and agency. Different perspectives have emphasized the perception of the life course either as an institutionalized and structurally determined process or as a biographical construction. In the sociology of youth, the structural perspective, mainly in terms of a class analysis, has been faced by new postmodernist theories that emphasize a process of individualization and self-construction of the life course. My approach here, however, emphasizes the macro

and micro constraints that shape the experience of "youth". Although I recognize an increasing variation and individualization in the process of transition to adulthood I look for a sociological explanation of these multiple and diverse biographies.

Two elements are the main units of the life course: trajectories and transitions. They are the central analytical dimensions of the life course. On the one hand, the life course analysis focuses on the trajectories followed by individuals along their aging process in different spheres of social life, such as family or work. On the other hand, it is possible to identify transitions or short terms changes that occur at specific moments and mark turning points in the life course process, such as leaving school, job retirement, first marriage, etc. Each life course transition is embedded in a trajectory that gives it specific form and meaning (Elder 2000). As Hogan (2000:1626) has observed "interlocking transitions and their trajectories lead to multiple roles that define the individual life course from birth to death".

This last statement points to an important and critical aspect of the life course. Social roles and transitions are associated with different stages of the life course. In this sense, chronological age becomes an important component of the socially constructed life course. Chronological age has a socio-cultural meaning. Through social norms and cultural values society associates specific roles (and statuses) with specific ages. This is not only a feature of explicitly age-graded societies, but also of modern society (Neugarten, Moore and Lowe 1965, Keith and Kertzer 1984). Based on accepted social norms, there is an appropriate age

for motherhood or for retirement from work, and there are also reciprocal expected behaviors (reciprocity of expectations) in interactions with young, adult or older people.

The association between chronological age and specific social expectations and social timetables for the occurrence and order of events allow recognizing life stages in the life course.¹¹ Youth, as well as all other life stages, is defined both by a specific range of chronological age and specific roles and transitions (Hogan and Astone 1986). It is -socially- expected that both dimensions tend to coincide, but as we will see, this is not always the case and a wide biographical variation exists.

Youth is a life stage that follows childhood and precedes adulthood. In this sense, youth could be defined as a transitional stage characterized by a condition of semi-autonomy. The particular aspect, however, of youth -defined as a transitional life stage- is the transition from the complete dependence of children on their parents to the establishment of one's own independence as an autonomous adult individual. Thus, youth is a transitional life stage socially signified by multiple markers that represent key steps in the process of gaining autonomy and becoming adult. In some "other" cultures the transition to adulthood was marked by rites of passage through which individuals are imbued with adult roles and statuses; in pre-modern societies there was a direct and immediate change from child roles to adult roles. In the modern urban-industrial

¹¹ In this sense, the definition of life stages has a strong "emic" component.

society, this transition has been protracted over a new life stage -youth- characterized by gradual transitions to adulthood.

Three main transitions are associated with youth and the process of becoming adult. They include the transition from education to the labor market (school-to-work transition), the formation of a new family through marriage and/or parenthood (family transition), and the achievement of housing independence (residential transition). Although society makes no formal and explicit demarcation between different life stages, there is an implicit association and order between these transitions and between them and the person's age (Hogan and Aston 1986). Most persons will follow these social expectations – regulations- and complete these transitions in the specified chronological period – and even in the specified order. Other persons may not complete some of these transitions in the expected time, or may achieve some adult roles earlier than expected. Nevertheless, they will be socially recognized as adults and youths respectively –i.e. persons who remain single or adolescent mothers.

Table 2.1 shows the association between these three transitions and chronological age in Argentina. By age 15, most young persons have not started the transition to adulthood; most of them are still attending school, are out of the labor market, remain single and still live with their parents. At 24 years of age most of the population has completed the school-to-work transition, and almost one third is married and has left the parents' home. Finally, by age 29 a significant segment of the population has completed the school-to-work, family and residential transitions.

Table 2.1. Transitions to adulthood and chronological age. Greater Buenos Aires (2000).

Proportion of young people:	Chronological age			
	15	19	24	29
In education	97.5	56.0	25.5	10.2
In the labor market	5.4	47.9	79.7	83.1
Single	100.0	91.8	66.2	36.6
Living with their parents	96.5	86.1	62.4	32.5

Source: Permanent Household Survey, Greater Buenos Aires (October wave).

The youth life stage requires two final observations regarding the intermeshing between the socially expected and institutionalized life course and individuals' biographies. As Neugarten, Moore and Lowe (1965) have observed, people's lives are ordered by social norms and cultural values regarding both age-appropriate behaviors and timetables for life transitions. Nevertheless, there is a significant variability and heterogeneity among different biographies in terms of role development and sequencing during the transition to adulthood.

On the one hand, as Hogan and Aston (1986:119) have pointed out, "even within societies there may be different cultural expectations about what constitutes the stages of youth-to-adult development for major subgroups". Gender, ethnicity and social class are some of the most important determinants of these contrasting expectations about youth. On the other hand, there are significant individual differences associated with the increasing weakening of traditional constraints of family and locale, which allow individuals to exercise more agency in the construction of their biographies. As K. Roberts (1997b: 57) has observed, "in family affairs, as in school-to-work transitions, there has been

much destandardization with more backtracking than formerly. It has become impossible to identify a normal sequence in which labor market and family transitions are made. The expectations used to be that obtaining a job and becoming financially independent would precede household formation but nowadays the expectations obliterate the old rule". Although these observations generally emerge from post-modernist and post-structuralist perspectives, it is important to remember that in contemporary society structural forces coexist with trends toward a greater secularization of the life course pattern. Although changes in socio-cultural pressures should be considered (i.e. greater acceptance of premarital sexual relationships or young adults living with their parents, etc.), this research shows that the increasing diversity in youth biographies is mainly due to the increasing heterogeneity of the structural constraints on young peoples' lives and to differences in the contexts of interactions of young people..

The second observation refers to the reciprocal effect between transitions. The characteristics and conditions under which specific transitions occur have a significant impact on future life trajectories. This aspect is particularly relevant in the case of the transitions to adulthood. As Hogan and Aston (1986:124) have observed, "the adult roles initially assumed provide entry ports for subsequent familial and occupational careers. The manner in which these adult roles are entered (in terms of intentionality, timing, sequencing in relation to other roles) influence the subsequent life course". In this sense, the characteristics of the youth transitions are good predictors of future opportunities of social integration and well being during adulthood. Vulnerable patterns of transition to adulthood

increase the likelihood of social vulnerability in adult life. This research focuses on the analysis of different patterns of transitions to adulthood and the identification of factors contributing to those differences, keeping in mind that this is a stage of the life course in which social policies could prevent cumulative disadvantages.

2.3.2 Youth vulnerability: resources, opportunities and constraints

The previous analysis makes clear the interconnections between processes of social exclusion and the life course. Vulnerable transitions may be determinant of a future circle of cumulative disadvantages in different spheres or trajectories of the life course.

European studies on youth carried out during the 1980s and 1990s have shown that the transition to adulthood has become more insecure and riskier as a result of recent processes of socio-economic restructuring (Paugam 1995, Mac Donald 1997a, Bynner, Chisholm and Furlong 1997, Furlong and Cartmel 1997, Williamson 1997a). The main focus of these studies has been the effects of labor market changes –namely unemployment and job insecurity- on different spheres of the transition to adulthood. In general terms these studies have shown that labor transitions and trajectories are critical axes structuring and organizing other dimensions and processes of the life course. However, the recent expansion of unemployment and labor instability is making economic independence, family formation and residential transition more difficult and complex. In this sense, new

patterns of transition to adulthood characterized by an increasing uncertainty have emerged.

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) suggest that short, stable and predictable transitions are characteristics of the Fordist social structure in which most of the population used to have relatively standardized and homogenous life experiences. The new conditions of the labor market have altered this pattern of youth transition, generating a less predictable and more uncertain process. Several authors (Coles 1995, Evans and Furlong 1997, Lewis, Smithson and Brannen 1999) have identified two main features of the transitions to adulthood in the 1990s: they have become more “protracted” and “fractured”. On the one hand, protracted transitions refer to the fact that the attainment of employment, leaving home and setting up a new household is much more likely to take place at a later age than previously. This aspect has multiple implications in terms of family and inter-generational relationships, household organization, welfare provision, etc. Fractured transitions refer to situations in which young people move from one status position, without managing to attain a secure, stable or positive outcome in another. For instance, young people may leave education without obtaining a job or they may obtain a full time job without leaving the parental home, or getting married before having a place to live. This represents an increasing diversity of transitional patterns as well as a greater uncertainty and risk in the result of the transitions to adulthood.

The European literature tends to agree that structural forces are increasingly mediated by multiple factors that generate less predictable and rigid

transitions. In order to analyze the characteristics of the transition to adulthood -in its multiple dimensions-, and explore its diversity and vulnerability, the resources, opportunities and constraints of young people become a critical factor. The school-to work, family and residential transitions are conditioned both by the resources young people can rely on, and the structure of opportunities and constraints of their environments.

Assets and resources are similar concepts. Recent studies (Moser 1996), conducted under the umbrella of the World Bank, have propagated the more “economicist” idea of assets in the analysis of poverty, particularly in poor countries. The following paragraph from Caroline Moser’s study (1996:2) on poverty and vulnerability in poor urban communities presents a basic social definition of asset and its implications:

The means of resistance are the assets that individuals, households and communities can mobilize in the face of hardship. Thus vulnerability is closely linked to asset ownership. The more assets people have, the less vulnerable they are. And the greater the erosion of their assets, the greater their insecurity... The ability of households to avoid or reduce vulnerability and to increase economic productivity depends not only on their initial assets, but also on their ability to transform those assets into income, food, or other basic necessities effectively. Assets can be transformed in two distinct ways: through the intensification of existing strategies and through the development of new or diversified strategies.

The concept of asset introduces two main ideas that were absent in previous studies on poverty. On the one hand, previous studies on coping strategies focused on resources effectively mobilized; the idea of asset, in contrast, includes the resources that are latent or immobilized but can be activated in cases of hardship or need. On the second hand, the definition of “asset” is

linked to the effective capability to mobilize them;¹² that is, focusing on assets imply the exploration of barriers and obstacles that prevent individuals and households to use or mobilize their resources.

The asset approach, however, is subject to a basic criticism: the distributional sphere and structural conditions are neglected. Individuals, households and communities have assets and they should maximize the use of those assets in order to cope with poverty and decrease their vulnerability. Additionally social policies should facilitate the use of those assets. This represents a significant contribution, but there are two missing elements. First, the sources of assets as well as the access to these sources are excluded from the analysis –that is, the production and distribution of resources. In this sense, poverty is not only a problem of the resources of the poor, but mainly of the poverty of resources (Gonzalez de la Rocha 2000). Secondly, the capability to mobilize resources is strongly conditioned by structural opportunities and constraints. Thus, the concept of asset should be considered relative to the socio-economic contexts of individuals, households and communities.

The analysis of the transitions to adulthood considers both the resources as well as the structure of opportunities and constraints. Different combinations of these two dimensions lead to different patterns of transition to adulthood.

Four different types of resources are distinguished. Human capital refers mainly to educational qualifications, but it also includes labor experience, informal education or training, health as well as the individuals' labor capacity.

¹² This is a clear input from the seminal work of Amartya Sen (1981)

In general terms, human capital is associated with individual attributes that affect participation in the labor market. Economic capital includes both financial and physical capital. Savings, loans, vehicles, land plots, housings, material gifts and other properties are grouped in this category. However, individual and household incomes are the key resources. Social capital is a quality of social relationships; it refers to the potential access to goods, services and information that could be obtained through social relationships. In this sense, it includes social networks and contacts (at the individual level) as well as the characteristics of community relationships and the potential for collective action. Emotional capital is also a feature embedded in social relationships (particularly in family relationships). It refers to the affective bonds between individuals, and is expressed through affection, emotional support and mutual protection transmitted through those relationships.

The structure of opportunities and constraints refer both to the main sources of resources and the contextual conditions that allow or restrict the mobilization of those resources. Without pretending a complete definition, four key institutions can be recognized.

The market: given the topic and goals of this research the labor market is the main component of this category. A depressed or dynamic labor market, precarious or secure labor conditions, high or low labor demand, restructuring processes and technological change, among other factors, are critical features of the labor market affecting the transition to adulthood. The housing market and the

increasing commodification of welfare provision have also a significant effect on young people's lives.

The state: social policies and welfare provision from the state constitute the main variables. Recent structural reforms of the state (in its social and economic role) as well as traditional and new types of relationships between citizens and the state are some of the factors affecting the resources of young people, creating or eliminating opportunities in their transitions to adulthood.

The community: it refers to the physical and social characteristics of the neighborhoods. It includes physical aspects such as infrastructure, spatial isolation or accessibility, land and transportation availability, demographic attributes of the population, etc. And social conditions such as local economic development, crime and violence, social class composition, etc. Thus, the community, or the neighborhood, could be a source of assets –i.e. such as local organizations or local networks- and also a favorable or adverse context for the mobilization of other resources –high levels of crime, for instance, reduce the opportunities of collective actions, a depressed local economy and spatial isolation decrease the labor opportunities, etc.

The family: it represents the main platform from which young people are launched into adult life. It is a central pillar of support for young family members in their transitions to adulthood. As this research will show, the resources provided by the family (physical, human, social and emotional capital) are determinant of significant differences in the patterns followed by young people in their transitions. But it is not only a source of resources; the characteristics of the

family (composition and structure, family relationships, family socio-economic environment, etc) have also a strong effect on young people opportunities and constraints. In sum, family is a basic institution of social reproduction and this becomes particularly relevant during the youth life stage.

Based on this analytical framework the following chapters explore the process of becoming adult in contemporary Argentina.

Chapter 3. The Socio-Economic Context of Argentinean Youth (1990-2000)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The 1990s were a decade of profound transformations for Argentinean society. The foundations of a new social and economic model of development were established. The old model of socio-economic growth, based on an active State in the social and economic spheres and a process of national industrialization by import substitution, became just a memory of the past. After two decades characterized by significant political changes and socio-economic instability, a new model of development was constructed in the early 1990s. The main bases of this new model were the insertion of Argentina in the global economy, the downsizing of the State, and the primacy of the market both in the economic and social spheres.

The impact of this new model was not only a new strategy of economic growth, but also that households and individuals had new forms of interaction with the labor market and the state. The traditional and dynamic patterns of intergenerational social mobility that were a characteristic feature of Argentinean society, began to be undermined by the new rules. Poor and middle class households faced an increasing social vulnerability associated with the expansion of poverty, unemployment, and lack of social protection. These are the main features of the socio-economic context in which young people are making their transitions to adulthood.

The challenges, risks, and uncertainties that this new model imposed on the transition to adulthood are explored in the following chapters. Here, I focus on the most significant socio-economic characteristics and changes of Argentinean society during the 1990s. The first section explores the new economic model. It focuses on the main economic policies and reforms implemented over the last decade, as well as on the performance and development of the Argentinean economy under these new rules. The second section presents and analyzes the most significant changes in terms of the social and living conditions of the population during this period. Three issues are highlighted: the increase of poverty and inequality, the expansion of open unemployment and job insecurity, and the changes in the age structure and the patterns of household organization. The third, and final section, explores these issues in Greater Buenos Aires, and in particular in Lanús and Florencio Varela, the two localities in which our fieldwork was conducted.

3.2 THE NEW ECONOMIC MODEL OF THE 1990S

3.2.1 The economic foundations of the new model

Argentina ended the so-called lost decade in a middle of an economic and political crisis. The extremely high levels of hyperinflation of 1989 generated popular riots, and in turn an early transition to the new democratically elected government of Carlos Menem. The new decade starts a new critical stage in Argentina's recent history. The 1990s were the decade of the Menem Presidency

through two presidential periods between 1989-1995 and 1995-1999. But these were also years of drastic socio-economic changes.

If the 1970s and 1980s could be defined as the end of an already exhausted model of economic growth based on the internal market, the 1990s were the period of the installation of a new socio-economic model. As Beccaría (1993) has observed, although there were significant economic changes between 1973 and 1989, they did not alter the basic attributes of the period of import substituting industrialization (ISI). Those decades witnessed the agony and death of the old socio-economic model, but they did not see the definition of a new and consistent model. It was during the nineties that radical structural transformations were implemented in terms of the economic rules and of the role of the State and, thus, when a new socio-economic model was born. As Marshall (1998) has observed, the new economic strategy represented a real break with the past.

The socio-economic transformation imposed during the 1990s in Argentina has been put forward as a classic model of neo-liberal structural reforms¹³ (Lloyd-Sherlock 1997). Among the most important measures that shaped this new socio-economic model are: first, the stabilization program based on monetary policies whose legal framework was the *Plan de Convertibilidad* (Convertibility Plan); secondly the construction of a market oriented economy

¹³ During most of the 1990s, Argentina was seen as a paradigmatic example and a model for other countries of the benefits brought by neo-liberal reforms. The deep economic and social crisis that took place in 2001, however, generated a different attitude toward Argentinean policies. The same international economic organizations that during the 1990s were advising and promoting Argentina policies now were silent about the drastic consequences of the same policies. As Paul Krugman wrote in a New York Times Editorial “the people who encouraged Argentina in its disastrous policy course are now busily rewriting history, blaming the victims”. (Paul Krugman “Crying with Argentina”, *The New York Times*, January 1, 2002)

based on new labor legislation and a wide liberalization of international trade and the financial markets; and thirdly, a deep structural reform of the State that included an extensive program of privatization, reduction of public employment, and targeting of social expenditures . A final aspect of this model and one of its basic elements, although sometimes neglected, was an increasing external indebtedness encouraged by favorable conditions in the international financial markets.

The Convertibility Plan had two main characteristics: on the one hand, it established a fixed exchange rate between the peso and the dollar. The new parity was established at one peso to one dollar. On the other hand, this legal framework restricted the monetary autonomy of the Central Bank, since it was barred from printing money (to supply credit to the government in order to cover budget deficits). The new regime established that new monetary emissions should be backed by equivalent reserves in gold or foreign currency.

The liberalization of financial flows and foreign direct investments was one of the initial measures in the market-oriented structural reforms. At the beginning of the decade, almost all the restrictions on capital movements were eliminated, and this deregulation was maintained independently of the changes in the domestic and international capital markets. As a result of this strategy the national economy became highly sensitive and vulnerable to changes in the international financial market (Fanelli and Frenkel 1998).

Policies toward trade liberalization started in the late 1970s and continued during the next decade, but from the early 1990s this process had a dramatic

acceleration. As Fanelli and Frenkel (1998:5) pointed out “the core of the program was the elimination of quantitative restrictions on imports, a strong reduction in tariffs and the elimination of taxes on exports”. These policies were aimed at stabilizing the economy, but also at increasing the productivity and competitiveness of the Argentinean producers (Marshall 1998).

An extensive and gradual reform of the labor legislation was initiated to contribute to this last goal (external competitiveness). High labor costs and a rigid labor legislation were identified as the main causes of the low performance of Argentinean export sector as well as of the increasing unemployment affecting the labor market. The successive changes introduced into the labor legislation in this decade were aimed at diminishing the level of employment protection and collective bargaining. In general terms, these measures increased the employer’s flexibility in hiring and dismissing workers, and diminished the employer’s contributions to social security benefits.

The *Ley de Empleo* (Employment Law) of 1991 was the first of a series of reforms intended to change the labor legislation. It created unemployment insurance, but it also introduced different forms of employment based on temporary contracts. They had a minimum extension of 4 or 6 months, subject to renewal up to a maximum of two years (with variants according to the program) and were exempt (partially or totally) from social security contributions. Two of these forms of temporary employment were targeted at youths: *Práctica Laboral para Jóvenes* offers work practice to young workers who have technical or professional skills, and *Trabajo y Formación* is targeted to unskilled young

workers looking for their first job (Marshall 1997). These contracts were totally exempt from severance payment and labor taxes. This initial reform, however, did not have a significant impact on the labor market; one of the reasons was that the law established that these contracts still required the approval of the trade unions.

In 1995 new changes were introduced through the *Ley de Promoción del Empleo* (Law on Employment Promotion), which increased the flexibility in hiring new workers, mainly through the incorporation of trial and apprenticeship contracts and some specific benefits for small firms (up to 40 employees). This reform introduced a special regime for small firms, a trial period for all contracts, and a new form of temporary contract. One of the most significant changes was the extension of the trial contract to all kinds of new employment and from 3 to 6 months. Under this contract employers are exempted from all type of social contribution (with exception of health insurance -that is, the *obra social*), as well as from payments for termination of employment. If the employer decides to retain the worker after the trial period, s/he should be hired with all the benefits established by law. As Perelman (2001) has observed this became a punishment for those employers retaining workers, and in turn it stimulated the permanent use of trial contracts. A new reform in 1998 reduced this period to 1 month, but with a possible extension of up to 6 month if agreed through the collective bargaining process. Another major change introduced by the Law of Employment Promotion of 1995 was the elimination of the requirement of trade union approval for temporary contracts, which generated a significant expansion of this type of contracts in the labor market. Finally, it is worth noting the introduction of

apprenticeship contracts for unemployed young workers (14-25). These contracts have a maximum extension of 2 years and are subject to important exemptions from non-wage contributions¹⁴ (Marshall 1997).

Additionally, several programs aimed at employment promotion through training contracts for young people were introduced during the 1990s. Among them are: *Proyecto Joven* (Youth Project), created in 1993 for young people older than 16, who are unemployed and without a secondary education diploma and labor experience. Since 1995 *Aprender* (Learn), catered for unemployed youth between 14-25 years of age. *Estudiar es Trabajar* (Study is to Work) began in 2001 for inactive or unemployed young people without secondary education.¹⁵ These three programs have training courses and a practice period in a firm, and participants receive a monthly scholarship (between 100 and 160 pesos according to the program).

In contrast with the previous reforms, the new forms of contract introduced in 1995 had a significant impact on the labor market. Several authors (Marshall 2000, Altimir and Beccaria 1999, Perelman 2001) have observed that these new temporary contracts have favored an increasing deterioration (precarization) of the labor market. One of their main effects has been an increasing substitution of stable and secure jobs by new unstable and insecure jobs under these sponsored employment contracts. Between 1996 and 1997 the proportion of wageworkers in Greater Buenos Aires with permanent contracts

¹⁴ According to Montoya (cited in Marshall 1997), during the apprenticeship period non-wage costs are reduced from 61.5% to 5.0%.

¹⁵ This program will also provide a secondary degree certification.

decreased from 91.8% to 83.2%, those with temporary contracts increased from 4.8% to 11.4% and those with trial contracts grew from 2.7% to 4.9% (Perelman 2001). In 1998, around 70.0% of the new jobs were under some kind of temporary contract (Marshall 2000).

Finally, from 1989 an extensive plan of privatization of public State-owned enterprises took place under the legal framework of the *Ley de Reforma del Estado* (Law of State Reform). The privatization program included telecommunications, national airlines and airports, oil and energy companies, etc. Between 1990 and 1999 the privatization process reached a total of 24 billion dollars, becoming one of the largest and most extensive program of Latin America (CEPAL 2001b). During this period, particularly during the first years of the decade, several social reforms were implemented. In 1993 the privatization of the retirement and pensions scheme was approved, and since 1994 a new private system based on individual capitalization is in operation (Lo Vuolo 2001, Bayón and Saraví 2002). Education has also suffered significant changes. In 1993 the *Ley Federal de Educación* (Federal Law of Education) was approved. It introduced, among others major changes, the extension of basic education from 8 to 10 years, a restructuring of the education system into new levels,¹⁶ and the legal formalization of the process of educational decentralization, that had started in the 1980s. Laws established new responsibilities for national, provincial and local

¹⁶ The educational system in Argentina was organized in four basic levels: preschool (at least 1 grade required), Primary (7 grades), Secondary (5 grades) and University. The new structure is: Basic General Education (10 grades), Polimodal (polyvalent) Education (3 grades) and University. In other words, the initial two grades of secondary education have been included in a basic cycle of education. In this research I used the old denominations, because during fieldwork the transition was still in process.

governments (Nosiglia and Marquina 2000). Finally the Health System has also experienced some changes. The central goal of this reform was to transform the public system into a dual system –that is, working as a private provider for patients with private or trade union insurance (*obras sociales*) and as a public provider for poor and unprotected sectors (SIEMPRO 2001d). This reform was intended to increase the self-financing capacity of public hospitals. However, as Cortés and Marshall (1999) observe, this model has not worked due to the low payment capacity of public hospital patients and the indebtedness of the *obras sociales*.

The viability of this new model was constrained by the external indebtedness of the country. Between 1991 and 2000 the gross external debt as a proportion of the GNP grew from 32.3% to 51.8%. This increasing indebtedness led the country toward a severe and deep financial crisis. By the end of the year 2000 the public deficit became greater than expected and there was a clear risk of a default on the external debt interest payments. The government applied several measures to curb public spending (one of the most important among them were public-sector wage cuts for salaried workers) and agreed a rescue package with the IMF, the World Bank and the IDB. New problems emerged in 2001. After several policies aimed at reducing the fiscal deficit (including a zero deficit law), at increasing the export capacity of the country (mainly through relaxing the exchange rate), and at avoiding a financial sector crisis (freezing bank accounts and deposits), Argentina finally declared its default in 2002.¹⁷

¹⁷ Our analysis focuses on the period 1990-2000. The quantitative analysis is based on the Permanent Household Survey from October 1990 to October 2000. The fieldwork was conducted

Between December of 2001 and January of 2002 the critical financial and economic situation of the country generated a deep political crisis. The democratically elected president stepped down after growing popular protests, and during the next week three interim presidents took over the government. Finally, after increasing social pressure, the National Congress established a new government, with broad political support. Among others one of the most important measures taken by the new government was the abolition of the *Ley de Convertibilidad* (Law of Convertibility), which was sanctioned by the National Congress on January 7 of 2002. This measure marked the end of the 1990s.

3.2.2 The economic performance of the new model

The new economic program had a strong impact on the Argentinean economy, but its effects were not homogeneous over time. After an expansionary phase characterized by a rapid economic growth and a positive performance of the macroeconomic variables, the economy started a period of increasing contraction leading the country into a deep recession and financial crisis. Thus, two main periods can be distinguished: an expansionary phase from 1991 to 1994, and a contraction and recession phase between 1995 and 2000.

The most immediate and effective result generated by the new economic program was the stabilization of the economy. 1989 and 1990 were years marked by hyperinflationary surges, which reached record annual rates of 4,923.8% and 1,343.9% respectively. After the application of the *Plan de Convertibilidad*, and

between May and December of 2000. Thus, most of the policies oriented to avoid the financial default were taken after our period of analysis.

as a result of the new monetary policies, the annual inflation rate rapidly decreased to 84.0% in 1991, and thereafter it was kept at very low levels (see table 3.1). As a result of the deep recession affecting the country, a process of deflation started¹⁸ in 1998.

Between 1982 and 1990 the Gross Domestic Product remained almost unchanged with an average decrease of -0.3% , which implied a more significant decrease of the GDP per capita, estimated at -2.0% . From 1991 and during the first four years of the new program there was a rapid expansion of the economy and the GDP grew consistently. The internal market, however, played a central role in this expansion. Between 1991 and 1994, domestic demand grew by 60% and, consistent with this increase, the fastest-growing industrial sectors were the car and the electronic industries. As several studies have shown, the main factor in the new dynamism of internal demand was the expansion of credit, which in turn was favored by the inflows of capital received by the country during this period. As Fanelli and Frenkel (1998:2) have observed “the period of tight credit rationing in the eighties completely changed and the Argentine economy received capital inflows which amounted to 40 billion dollars between 1991-1994. These capital inflows largely exceeded the requirements on the current account and, given the convertibility rule, constituted the main factor that fueled the growth in international reserves, the money supply, and credit”.

The new economic policies also became attractive for foreign capital. Between 1991 and 1994 Argentina attracted more than US\$ 11.0 billion of foreign

¹⁸ After the elimination of the Ley de Convertibilidad, which implied a devaluation of the peso with respect to the dollar, inflation has emerged once again.

investments, the second largest influx after Mexico in Latin America. The nature and destination of these investments, however, did not have a significant impact on job creation. Indeed in most of the privatized enterprises (most of them foreign-owned) there was a process of organizational and technological modernization that at some point increased unemployment.

The process of trade liberalization also had a rapid effect. Exports, but mainly imports grew fast during the first years of the decade. Table 3.1 shows that exports grew from 1992, but imports did at a much faster pace; between 1990 and 1994 imports multiplied six-fold. This boom in imports was an inevitable result of the simultaneous capital and trade liberalization, in a context where inflows of money were available and the national currency was appreciated at a 1 to 1 parity with the dollar.¹⁹ As a consequence of this disparity between exports and imports Argentina began to experience an increasing trade deficit; in 1991 the country had a favorable balance of US\$ 2,820 millions, but by 1994 it had a trade deficit of US\$ -7,831 millions.

During this initial period the external debt did not experience a significant increase as a percentage of the GDP. Between 1991 and 1994 it was stabilized around 30% of the GDP. However, if we take into account the impressive growth of the GDP during the same period, it is clear that the external debt was growing quietly. In fact, it grew from US\$ 60 billions in 1990 to almost US\$ 100 billions in 1995 (Table 3.1).

¹⁹ Apart from the increasing entry of consumption goods of foreign origin, local firms were using these favorable conditions to import new technology, which made an important contribution to the level of imports.

Table 3.1: Indicators of the Argentinean economy, 1990-2000

Year	GDP ¹		Inflation	External trade			External Debt		Fiscal deficit GDP %
	Net	Per Capita		Exports ₁	Imports ₁	Balance ²	GDP %	US\$ billions	
1990	-1.8	-3.2	1343.9						
1991	10.6	9.2	84.0	-3.6	80.1		32.3	61.3	
1992	9.6	8.2	17.5	-1.0	65.7	-3.86	27.4	62.8	-0.1
1993	5.9	4.5	7.4	4.7	14.9	-5.58	28.0	72.2	1.5
1994	5.8	4.4	3.9	15.1	21.1	-7.83	30.4	85.7	-0.3
1995	-2.9	-4.1	1.6	22.6	-10.0	-0.97	35.2	98.5	-0.6
1996	5.5	4.1	0.1	7.8	17.4	-1.77	36.9	109.8	-1.9
1997	8.0	6.6	0.3	12.0	26.6	-6.54	42.6	125.1	-1.5
1998	3.9	2.6	0.7	10.1	8.4	-7.58	47.1	141.9	-1.4
1999	-3.0	-4.2	-1.8	-1.1	-11.2	-4.87	51.2	145.9	-1.7
2000	-0.5	-1.7	-0.7	1.8	0.2	-1.77	51.8	147.7	-2.4

Notes: 1 Annual change rates; 2 As a percentage of GDP

Source: Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean. ECLAC (several years)

From the mid-1990s, the macro-economic variables began to show a different picture of the effects of the new economic model. During the second half of the decade the Argentinean economy was shaken by two international crises that had an immediate local effect. In 1995 Argentina felt the so-called Tequila Effect generated by the Mexican crisis, and in 1998 it was affected once again by the Asian financial crisis.²⁰ Although the country showed a high level of vulnerability to international crises, some authors have argued that in 1994, before the Mexican crisis, the economy already showed problems. Fanelli and Frenkel (1998) have identified two main symptoms of the future problems. The slowdown of capital inflows, which dropped by 30% between 1993 and 1994, while the fiscal deficit kept growing. On the other hand, some recessive trends were

²⁰ The Mexican crisis occurred in 1994 and the Asian crisis in 1997.

observed in specific sectors as a result of the contraction of credit. The main problem behind the trends emerging in the second half of the decade, were already present during the first years of the new program. It was the increasing dependence of Argentina on inflows of external capital, both to cover a growing fiscal and trade deficit, and to activate the internal market through credit. When the international markets changed (i.e. the increase of U.S. interest rates) the economy began a process of contraction. It is worth noting that the deep trade liberalization did not increase the competitiveness of Argentinean exports, and that most of the previous expansion was due to internal demand. In this sense, the decrease of external capital flows and credit, weakened the internal market and, in turn, the whole economy.²¹

In 1995 the GDP fell for the first time since the new economic program was established. This contraction was lower than expected thanks to an exceptionally good performance of the export sector (see table 3.1). The two subsequent years saw a slight recovery, but from 1998 the economy began a period of economic recession. The GDP suffered a decline of -3.0% in 1999, -0.5% in 2000, and a decrease of -3.5% was expected in 2001. There was a deflationary process resulting from the contraction of the domestic demand, but also a significant decrease of the external sector. Both exports and imports were less dynamic than they were in the past, and as a result there was a significant decrease of the trade deficit from US\$ -7,576 millions in 1998 to US\$ -1,766

²¹ In this sense, is worth noting that the country had also a scarce capacity of national saving and investment.

millions in 2000. During this period there was also an increase of the fiscal deficit, which in 2000 represented 2.4% of the GDP (Table 3.1).

Under this new economic model and in the macroeconomic context depicted above, the real economic structure suffered significant changes. The consistent growth of the GDP during most of the 1990s hides significant disparities between different economic sectors and sub-sectors. Altimir and Beccara (1999) have collected information regarding the performance of different economic sectors between 1991 and 1997. They provide a good indication of the trends followed by the real economy under the new rules of the game. Table 3.2 presents those data. Some general observations emerge from this table: first, production grew in almost all sectors, but with particular intensity in financial services; secondly, employment followed an irregular pattern with a final total increase of just 1.5%, however while employment in the industrial sector decreased (-1.6%) it grew in financial and professional services; thirdly, several sectors experienced a significant increase in their productivity, but only a few of them increase both productivity and employment. The increase in productivity has been the result of both technological investments, stimulated by the trade liberalization, and of worker layoffs, stimulated by the reform of the labor legislation. The previously state-owned public firms, now in private hands, are a paradigmatic example of this situation. Most of them had a significant increase of their production after privatization, but without a similar increase in employment, indeed most of them dismissed thousands of employees.

Table 3.2: Evolution of production, employment and productivity by economic sector, 1991-1997.

	Product (1)	Employment (2)	Productivity (1) / (2)
Total	6.2	1.5	4.7
Subtotal Industrial Sector	6.1	-1.6	7.9
Food, Beverage, and Tobacco	4.3	0.2	4.1
Textile and Garment	0.0	-6.1	6.5
Wood products	9.6	-0.6	10.2
Paper products	7.8	1.3	6.5
Oil and Chemical Industries	5.7	0.2	5.5
Mineral Products	7.2	0.1	7.0
Metallurgical	10.0	-1.0	11.2
Construction	11.1	3.1	7.8
Commerce	6.5	-0.6	7.1
Hotels and Restaurants	7.6	3.4	4.1
Ground Transportation	4.3	4.6	-0.3
Other transports	5.9	-3.8	10.1
Transportation Auxiliary	2.5	19.5	-14.2
Financial Services	13.1	3.7	9.0
Privatized Public Services	9.4	2.8	6.5
Professional Services	8.8	5.6	3.1
Private Education and Health	1.3	3.1	-1.7
Government	1.0	2.6	-1.6
Other Services	4.2	0.4	3.7
Domestic Service	2.1	2.4	-0.3

Note: average of annual rates between 1991 and 1997.
Source: Altimir and Beccarí (1999).

Within the industrial sector at least two main trends have been observed during the 1990s (Heymann 2000, Bisang et. al. 1995). On the one hand, large firms, particularly those specialized in commodities (raw materials, steel, paper, and petrochemical products) experienced an expansionary period. These sectors increased their exports as well as their local investments. On the other hand, particularly small and medium size firms, but also large companies, in traditional sectors (electronics, textile and garment, toys, etc.) suffered a contraction due to

an external competition with lower costs and more advanced technologies. Under the new scenario, a significant proportion of these firms became importers of their products.

The service sector, in contrast, showed a more homogenous and positive performance. There was an increase in production and productivity, and in some cases in employment too. This was the case of modern services such as professional and financial services, and less evident among the private public services whose contribution to employment was not significant.

These changes can also be observed in the structure of employment. Data for Greater Buenos Aires show that during the 1990s important changes occurred in the composition of employment, particularly in terms of its distribution by economic sector. Between 1991 and 2000 the manufacturing share of total employment decreased from 24.2% to 16.3%, and the construction sector suffered a slight decrease from 7.4% to 6.8%. Continuing the tertiarization of the labor market observed in previous decades, service activities grew in terms of employment, but this increase was not big enough to cover the growing unemployment generated in other sectors, particularly in manufacturing industry. Another significant change was the growing proportion of wage-workers and the decreasing proportion of self employed; between 1990 and 2000 salary workers grew from 69.2% to 73.5% while self employment dropped from 24.2% to 20.6%, and other occupational categories (mainly employers) from 6.6% to 5.9%. The employment structure by firm size remained almost unchanged, with a small

decrease of both extremes (those with less than 5 employees and those with more than 500 employees).

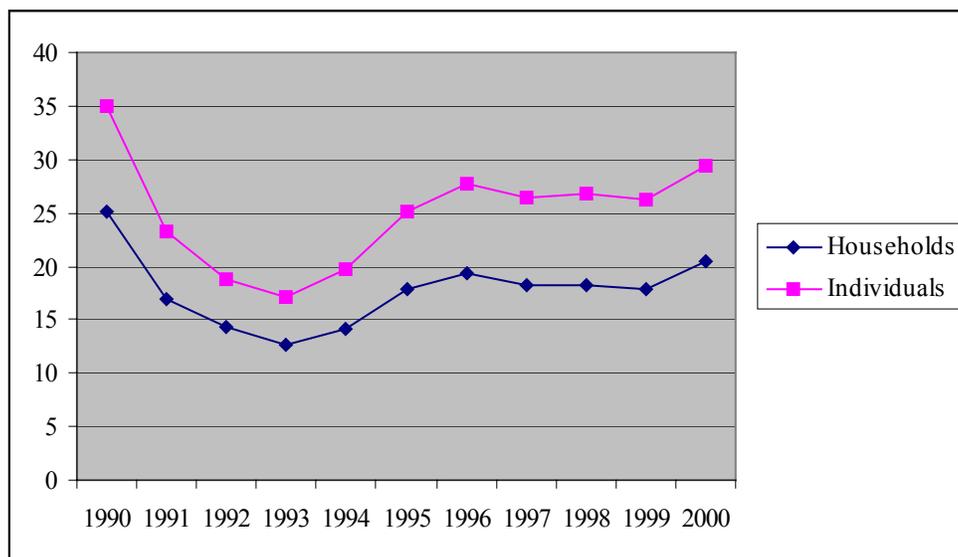
3.3 SOCIAL CONDITIONS DURING THE 1990S.

3.3.1 Poverty and inequality

During the 1990s Argentina experienced a process of growing poverty and increasing income inequality. This process has followed the performance of the economy. That is, during the initial period of the new economic model (1991-1994) poverty and inequality followed a positive trend, but since 1995, when the economic program began to show its inherent problems, both poverty and inequality started an opposite trend, finishing the decade with very high levels by the country's traditional standards.

Between 1990 and 1993 the proportion of households living below the poverty line dropped from 25.1% to 12.7% (see figure 3.1). This decline, however, should be considered as a recovery rather than a real improvement. As a result of the hyper-inflationary surges of 1989 and 1990, poverty grew to exceptional record levels during both years. A more realistic comparison is with the level of household poverty in Greater Buenos Aires in 1974, which was 6.0%, and 11.1% in 1980. This means that by 1993 the progress made was only enough to reach the poverty levels of the early 1980s. Since 1994, poverty grew steadily, and by the end of the decade one fifth of all households was living in poverty, which represents almost a 30% of the total population of Greater Buenos Aires.

Figure 3.1 Poverty trends. Greater Buenos Aires 1990-2000

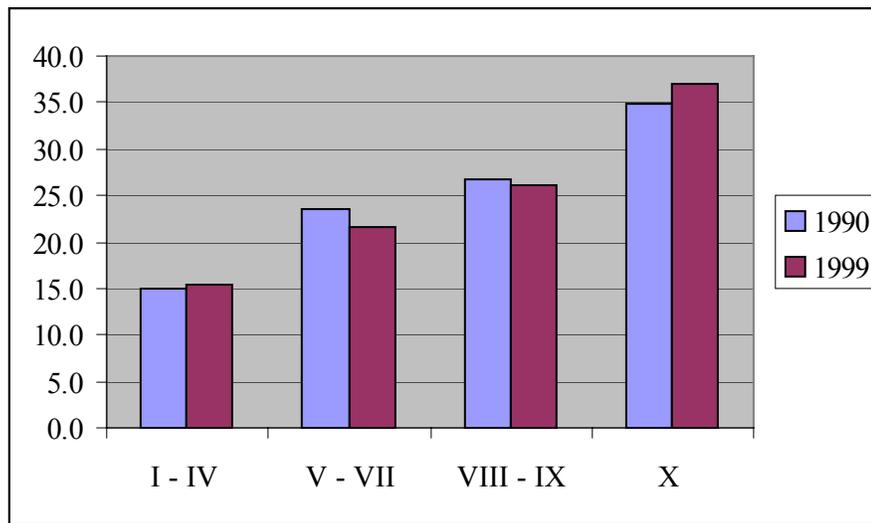


Source: Permanent Household Survey. Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

Simultaneously with the increase of poverty there was a parallel process of income concentration. Several indicators show a significant increase in income inequality. The Gini index grew from 0.50 in 1990 to 0.54 in 1999. This was one of the highest increases in Latin America (CEPAL 2001a). Figure 3.2 shows that middle-income sectors experienced the most significant losses in favor of the richest segments of the population. Households in the poorest 40% of the income distribution had a slight increase in their income participation (from 14.9% to 15.4%). Households in the fifth, sixth and seventh deciles, however, suffered a significant decrease (from 23.6% to 21.6%), which was gained by households in the richest deciles (its participation in total incomes grew from 34.8% to 37.0%).

In sum, during the 1990s Argentina suffered both a process of growing poverty and income concentration.

Figure 3.2. Household income concentration by income deciles. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 1999)

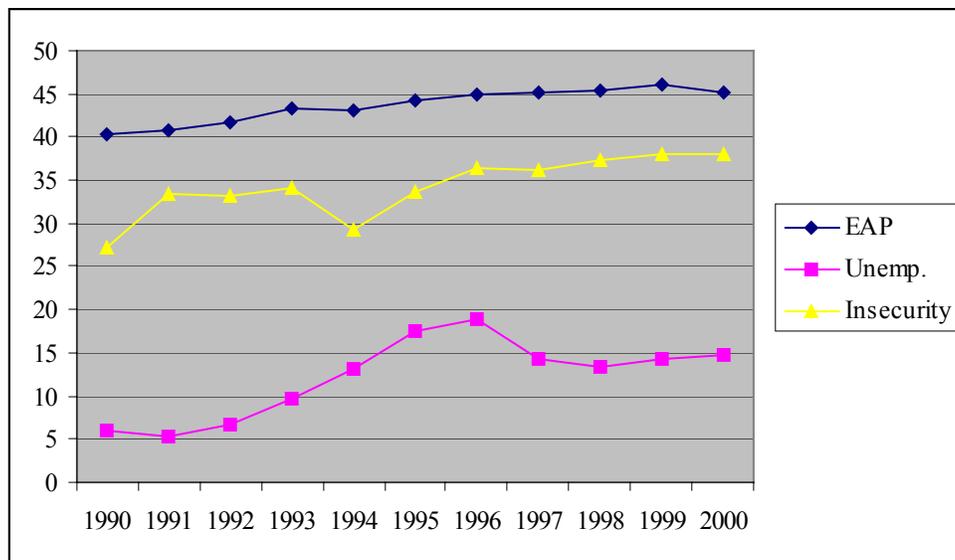


Source: Panorama Social de America Latina 2000-2001. CEPAL 2001a.

3.3.2 Unemployment and Job Insecurity

Two main features characterized the labor market during the last decade - that is, under the new economic model. These two features are unemployment and job insecurity. A third characteristic of the labor market during this period is the growing labor participation of the population. The combination of these three aspects has resulted in a complex and restricted labor market that, in turn, became one of the most evident and critical problems of the new economic strategy.

Figure 3.3 Evolution of selected labor market features. Greater Buenos Aires 1990-2000



Source: Permanent Household Survey. Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

Between 1990 and 2000 the Economically Active Population (EAP) grew from 40.3% to 45.1%²² (table 3.3). This increase was mainly driven by the growing economic participation of women (from 27.9% to 35.4%) and adult workers between 25 and 64 years of age (from 67.8% to 74.9%). The rate of labor participation among young people (15-24) suffered a slight decrease from 51.8% to 49.6%.²³ It is worth noting that this increase in the EAP was, in part, the result

²² The EAP grew much faster than the population and employment. Between 1991 and 1998, Altimir and Beccaria (1999) estimated that the EAP had on average an annual growth of 6.2%, while the population and employment grew at a similar pace of 1.7% per year in average.

²³ The decrease in the rate of youth labor participation was significant among males (from 61.8% to 56.7%). In contrast young females experiences a slight increase (from 41.1% to 42.7%)

of the deterioration of the labor market. Households were sending more members to the labor market, as is shown by the significant increase in the participation of spouses (from 34.4% to 43.5%) and children (from 23.4% to 27.7%) (Bayón and Saraví 2002).

Unemployment was one of the main and most dramatic phenomena associated with the new economic model. In 1990 the level of unemployment in Greater Buenos Aires was 6.0%, ten years later it was 14.7% (in October of 1996 unemployment reached a record level of 18.8%). Currently, Argentina has one of the highest levels of unemployment in Latin America. The magnitude of the problem has resulted in a phenomenon that has affected all segments of the working population. However, it is possible to identify sectors that have been more affected than others, and sectors that have seen an increase in their vulnerability to unemployment. Women and young people have higher levels of unemployment than men and adults, but these two last categories (men and adults) of workers have suffered the most significant increases. Similarly, workers who are heads of their households have the lowest unemployment (comparing to spouses, children and other household members), but the increase from 3.9% to 10.6% in this group is particularly striking. Finally it is worth noting that the lack of employment is higher among manual and service workers, as well as among those with low education. During the 1990s, however, non-manual workers and those with secondary education have become much more vulnerable to unemployment than they used to be in the past (Bayón and Saraví 2002).

A final observation refers to the worsening of labor conditions. A good indicator of this phenomenon is the proportion of wagedworkers without pension (retirement) benefits. Between 1990 and 2000 this proportion grew in Greater Buenos Aires from 27.3% to 38.0%. There has been a process of polarization - that is, an increasing segmentation between groups of workers with and without social benefits. This segmentation, however, is not associated with the occupational category or the level of education, but data suggest that it could be associated with the characteristics of the economic sector (Bayón and Saraví 2002).

3.3.3 Population and Households

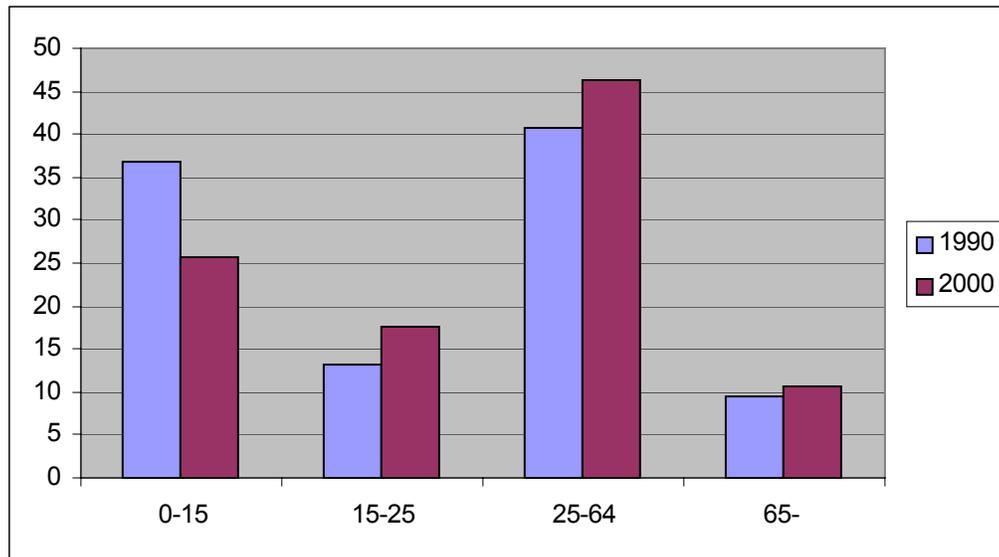
The structure of the society in terms of age groups and household composition has a significant impact on the process of transition to adulthood. This section presents a brief picture of Argentina in term of these two dimensions and an exploration of the changes experienced over the last decade.

In the Latin American context, Argentina has a long tradition of very low demographic growth. According to CELADE, the country is in the last stage of its demographic transition, with low levels of fertility and mortality. As a result, and in comparison with other Latin American countries, Argentina has one of the smallest proportions of young people in its population (CEPAL 2000). Based on projections from the last Population and Housing National Census, INDEC has estimated that the share of 15-24 year olds in the population was 18.3% in 2000.

In Greater Buenos Aires, in October 2000, the proportion of young people was similar: 17.5%.

The analysis of the Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires shows, however, a growth in the share of this segment of the population over the last decade. Figure 3.4 presents the age structure of the population in 1990 and 2000. Two observations follow from this figure. First, and consistent with the advanced transitional stage of the country, there is a sharp decrease in the share of the youngest age group in the population: children younger than 15 years of age represent 36.7% of the population in 1990, but only 25.6% in 2000. A similar trend is suggested by the increasing proportions of the adult and elderly segments of the population, showing the ageing process of Argentinean society. On the other hand, however, the youth age group (15-24) has also increased its representation in the population. In 1990 they made up 13.1% of the total population, but in 2000 this proportion increased to 17.5%. The main reason for this significant growth of the 15-24 age group in the 1990s was the “baby boom” period experienced by the country in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Novacovsky 1998, Duryea and Székely 1998). According to Duryea and Székely (1998) this was the effect of a 10.0% increase in the fertility rate that took place in the country between 1967 and 1975. In sum, the Argentinean population is experiencing a long and slow process of aging, which has been disrupted by a sudden rise in fertility during the early 1970s. The main result has been a significant increase of the youth population during our period of analysis.

Figure 3.4. Population by age groups. Greater Buenos Aires. (1990 and 2000)



Source: Permanent Household Survey. Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

In terms of the living arrangements of the Argentinean population, nuclear families (couple and children) represent the most common type of household structure. They represent 42.0% of the total households from Greater Buenos Aires. The remaining households are distributed in similar proportions (around 15% each) among households made up by a single person, couples without children, extended families, and single parents, which represent a relatively high 10.2% of the total number of households. In general terms, and in comparison to other Latin American countries, the most significant aspect of the Argentinean household structure is the relatively low weight of extended and nuclear families and the numerical importance of other households structures such as single persons, couples living alone, and single parents.

Argentina is not, however, homogeneous. There are differences between geographic regions and income sectors. Isla, Lacarrieu and Selby (1999) found significant differences between urban areas in the types of household structures. They distinguish three urban regions representing different models or patterns of household organization. First, a "traditional" model similar to the Latin American pattern characterized by the predominance of households made up by nuclear and extended families. The authors found this model in Tucumán (a northern city), but it is likely to be true of most of the country's interior cities. Secondly, at the opposite extreme, the city of Buenos Aires represents a "modern" model characterized by very high rates of "non-family" households and female-headed households. Finally, the urban fringe that surrounds the city of Buenos Aires (known as the *Conurbano*²⁴), presents an intermediate situation that the authors define as a "transitional" model. A particular characteristic of this last model is the relatively high proportion of single person and single parent households.

Additionally, different types of family structure tend to be associated with different income sectors. A recent study based on the National Survey on Social Development (SIEMPRO 2001a) found sharp differences between income sectors. Using the same categories that Isla et. al. use in their analysis (1999), this study suggests a more traditional pattern of household structure among poor sectors and a modern model among the richest segments of the population. In the lowest per capita household income quintile single persons and extended families represent 2.9% and 23.4% respectively. The weight of single person households

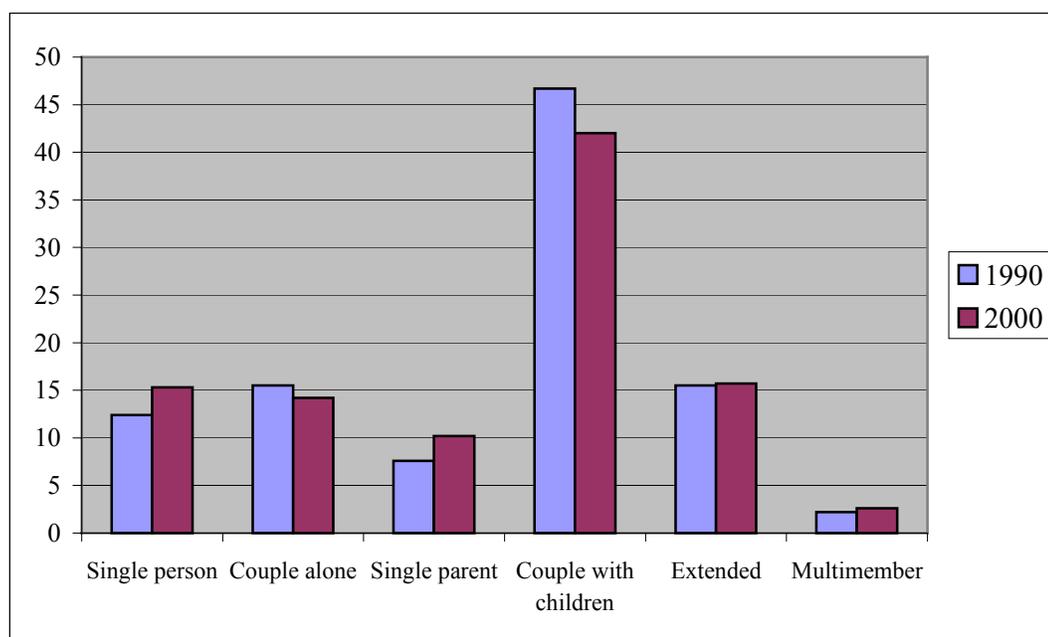
²⁴ The city of Buenos Aires and the "Conurbano" integrate the Greater Buenos Aires, the largest urban area of the country (for a description of the Greater Buenos Aires see the following section).

grows with the income distribution, and they represent 12.9% in the third quintile and 25.2% in the fifth quintile. Extended families follow an opposite trend: they decrease to 14.7% in the third quintile and to 6.9% in the last quintile. Nuclear families, the most extended household structure, also become less significant among the highest income quintiles.

In sum, on average Argentina presents a diversified distribution of household structures with relatively high rates of households made up by non-traditional forms of residential organization and low rates of extended and nuclear families. Nevertheless this trend presents significant differences by region and income/social class. Among interior urban cities and poor sectors a “traditional” pattern becomes more evident; in contrast, the Greater Buenos Aires and middle-high income sectors present a more “modern” model of household organization.

During the last decade this “modern” pattern has become more common. Figure 3.5 shows that between 1990 and 2000 the proportion of single person and single parent households in Greater Buenos Aires increased significantly. Additionally, nuclear families decreased as a proportion of the total number of households. There is a sharp increase of female-headed households from 21.1% in 1990 to 27.1 in 2000.

Figure 3.5. Distribution of family structures. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)



Source: Permanent Household Survey. Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

A final issue is the household context in which young people live. I distinguish between young people who are heads of their households (heads and/or spouses) and those who are non-heads (all remaining household statuses) since they represent clearly different situations. More than half of the non-head young people live in nuclear families. However, during the last decade two important changes have taken place. On the one hand, the proportion of this youth group living in nuclear families has decreased; but on the other hand, the

percentage of non-head young people living with a single parent has significantly increased (table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Household structure of young people. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)

	Young non-heads		Young heads	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Single person			7.0	10.0
Couple Alone			23.6	20.7
Single parent	9.6	14.6	3.6	1.3
Couple with children	61.0	54.6	44.3	50.7
Extended family	26.8	27.4	15.5	13.2
Multimember household	2.6	3.4	5.9	4.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: head includes household members identified as heads and/or spouses. Non-head includes all other household statuses.

Source: Permanent Household Survey. Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

Young heads are also more likely to live in nuclear families. However, over the last decade this group has followed an opposite trend to young non-heads: between 1990 and 2000 young heads in nuclear families increased from 44.3% to 50.7%, and single parents decreased from 3.6% to 1.6%. Additionally, young people living alone increased and those living with a partner but without children decreased.

In general terms the household context of young people from ages 15 to 25 shows the following picture. Most of them (90.0%) are non-head household members, and only a minority (10.0%) are heads or spouses.²⁵ Within the first

²⁵ The proportion of non-head and head young people remained almost unchanged during the last decade. Young heads represented 11.4% of the young population in 1990 and 10.3% in 2000.

group, nuclear and extended families are the most common household structures, but during the last decade there has been a significant increase of young people living with a single parent (mainly at the expense of nuclear families). Within the second group the most important household structures are nuclear families and couples without children, reflecting the initial stages of the family life cycle. It is also worth noting the slight increase of young people living alone, although they still represent a very small segment of the total young population.

3.4 THE LOCAL CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

3.4.1 The Greater Buenos Aires: a large and heterogeneous urban space

According to the last national census, conducted in 2001, Argentina has a total population of 36 million inhabitants and an extension of 3.761 million square kilometers. Greater Buenos Aires²⁶ is the largest and most important metropolitan area of the country in terms of population and economic activity. With less than 0.2% of the total national territory, it concentrates more than one third of the national population and more than half of the Gross Domestic Product. But Greater Buenos Aires is also highly heterogeneous, presenting significant contrasts between the living conditions of its inhabitants. The most powerful and richest segments of the population share this urban area with sectors living in extreme poverty.

²⁶ The National Institute of Statistics has released preliminary information on population based on the 2001 National Census. Basic data are only available for the whole country and their individual provinces; information regarding smaller units is not yet available For Greater Buenos Aires our main source is the 1991 National Census.

Three major urban spaces are part of Greater Buenos Aires. First, the city of Buenos Aires, which is the country's Federal Capital and concentrates 9.1% of the national population. Secondly, the Buenos Aires Conurbation (*Conurbano Bonaerense*), which is made up of 19 municipalities belonging to the Province of Buenos Aires and concentrating almost one fourth (24.4%) of the Argentinean population. The *Conurbano* has in turn two main areas: a first ring integrated by those municipalities that share their borders with the City of Buenos Aires, and a second ring integrated by the remaining municipalities forming a more distant second outskirt. These three areas have significant socio-economic differences between them but in urban terms they are a continuous unit and they are relatively well integrated by an extensive system of public transportation.

Greater Buenos Aires, particularly the City of Buenos Aires and the first ring, was the destination of a massive European migration during the late XIX century and the early XX century. Later, it was also a center of attraction for new waves of internal migrants arriving from the northern provinces of the country. Most of this migration was the result as well as a motor of a dynamic process of industrialization and socio-economic development. Greater Buenos Aires represented, for poor migrants, the place where there were schools, hospitals, and good jobs; it was the place for social mobility. Indeed it was the main locus of the old development model based on a process of imports substituting industrialization (ISI). Still today it represents one of the main industrial areas of the country, concentrating almost 60% of the national production. This process, however, has taken place in the city of Buenos Aires and particularly in the first

ring of the *Conurbano Bonaerense*. The second ring has a lower level of industrial development. It has become more recently a place of residence both for the upper classes emigrating from the city of Buenos Aires, as well as for poor workers looking for cheap and available land.

Urban services and facilities follow the same trend as does economic development, showing an increasing deterioration from the city of Buenos Aires, to the first ring, to the second ring. In terms of poverty and living conditions, contrasts between regions are stark. In the year 2000 the proportions of households with incomes below the poverty line and unsatisfied basic needs (UBN) in Greater Buenos Aires were 20.8% and 8.7% respectively, slightly lower than the national values. These data, however, hide deep contrasts between its two main urban areas; the percentages of households living in poverty and with UBN were 7.1% and 5.9% for the city of Buenos Aires, and 26.9% and 9.9% for the *Conurbano*. Within this last region, the first fringe presents values closer to the city of Buenos Aires, and the second fringe values the highest levels of poverty and unsatisfied basic needs. In terms of unemployment, differences also contrast sharply. In October of 2000, 10.4% and 16.5% of the labor force were unemployed in the city of Buenos Aires and the *Conurbano* respectively.

In sum, Greater Buenos Aires presents significant contrasts between its two major areas. On the one hand, the city of Buenos Aires appears as an exceptional case, since most of its social indicators differ considerably from the average levels of the country. On the other hand, the Buenos Aires Conurbation or *Conurbano Bonaerense* is closer to the situation of the whole country, with the

first ring presenting better conditions and the second ring worst conditions than the national values on many social indicators. My fieldwork has been conducted in two localities from the *Conurbano*. One of them, Lanús, located in the first ring, and another, Florencia Varela, located in the second ring. These two municipalities represent the heterogeneity of living conditions among the working classes in the Greater Buenos Aires.

3.4.2 Lanús and Florencio Varela: two contrasting localities from Greater Buenos Aires

Both Lanús and Florencio Varela are located south of Greater Buenos Aires. Apart from this common feature, however, they present contrasting characteristics in almost all other dimensions, particularly regarding their demographic and socio-economic profiles.

Lanús is part of the first ring of the *Conurbano*, this means that it borders on the city of Buenos Aires. Both urban areas are well integrated through a system of public transportation (buses and electric trains) that interconnects them easily. It is not unusual for Lanús's inhabitants to work, study, or shop in the capital city. Varela, in contrast, is located in the second ring of the *Conurbano*, 30 kilometers south of the capital. Its access to the Federal Capital is provided by a precarious system of buses and an old and run down railroad system, that interconnects both areas but demands significant investments in time and money. Some areas are more segregated than others, depending on their distance and access to the center of the municipality or from the main paved roads that enter and exit the municipality.

Lanús is one of the smallest municipalities of Greater Buenos Aires, with an extension of 45 square kilometers, but it has the highest population density with more than ten thousand inhabitants per square kilometer. As a result, it is highly urbanized. Varela, is a large municipality (206 square kilometers), with a population density almost ten times lower than Lanús. As a result of the availability of land, extensive areas are still occupied by agriculture, by large weekend houses, and by old and new settlements resulting from the occupation of public and private land. The following data indicate the contrasting levels of urbanization reached by both municipalities: according to the last National Census (1991) 72.8% of Lanús houses have sewers and water lines, but in Varela 78.4% of its houses do not have access to sewers nor to a public water system; in 1997 Lanús had 18.7 telephone lines to every 100 inhabitants, and a total of 40 banks; Varela had only 9.8 telephone lines to every 100 inhabitants and just 8 banks.

The composition of the population by place of birth presents a similar distribution in both municipalities with values close to the average for the *Conurbano*. Nevertheless there are slight differences that also show differences in the patterns of urbanization. Most of their inhabitants (60.0%) were born in Buenos Aires, but Lanús has a higher proportion of foreigners from non-bordering countries and a lower proportion from bordering countries and other provinces than Varela. These differences are an indicator of the different migration waves that affected both localities: an overseas migration from European countries in the first half of the XX century in the case of Lanús, and more recent waves of

migrants from northern provinces and bordering countries in the case of Florencio Varela.

Table 3.4. Basic demographic characteristics. Lanús and Florencio Varela

	Lanús	F. Varela	Conurbano
Population	468,561	254,997	7,969,324
Population density (inhab/km2)	10,412	1,237	2,165.6
Population by place of birth			
Buenos Aires	61.6	61.1	58.0
Other province	28.6	32.6	33.9
Foreign bordering country*	3.0	4.5	3.5
Foreign non-bordering country	6.7	1.8	4.3

Source: Data from the Population and Housing National Census 1991. INDEC. * Bourdering countries are Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil and Uruguay.

These contrasts are associated with different stages and characteristics of the urbanization process in both municipalities. Lanús is an old municipality, whose urban growth started in the early XX century with an intense process of industrialization. It was one of the main centers of national industrial development. The process of urbanization in Varela occurred under clearly contrasting socio-historic conditions. Its most significant urban growth started in the 1970s when the ISI model became exhausted, and it was driven by land occupations. The opportunities that the socio-historic conditions offered to both municipalities in their processes of urbanization were radically different.

. Contrasts between Lanús and Florencio Varela reflect the disparities between the first and second fringe of Greater Buenos Aires. Varela is the poorest locality of Greater Buenos Aires. In 1991 almost one third of its population lived

in households with unsatisfied basic needs (UBN), almost one fifth was at high sanitary risk, and in 1997 the rate of infant mortality was 25.2. Lanús, in contrast, presents more favorable social conditions. The population with UBN and high sanitary risk in 1991 was 14.5% and 4.1% respectively, and the rate of infant mortality was in 1997 significantly lower than in Varela (table 3.5). The levels of education of the population in both localities also present sharp differences. Varela has a relatively high rate of illiteracy, which almost doubles the rate of Lanús. Table 3.6 shows that Varela's low education is exceptional in comparison with the average educational characteristics of the population from the *Conurbano*. One out of four persons has not completed primary school, and only one out of ten has a secondary degree. Lanús has a distribution of the population by level of education similar to the average values of the *Conurbano*; 17.3% has less than primary school and 21.9% a secondary or a higher degree.

Table 3.5. Basic social indicators. Lanús and Florencio Varela

	Lanús	F. Varela	Conurbano
Population with UBN	14.5	31.0	19.5
Infant mortality (1997)	17.4	25.2	18.8
Population at high sanitary risk	4.1	17.4	9.4
Illiterate population (over 10 years)	1.9	3.5	2.2

Source: Data from the Population and Housing National Census 1991. INDEC

Table 3.6. Level of Education. Lanús and Florencio Varela.

	Lanús	F. Varela	Conurbano
Primary incomplete or less	17.3	25.4	18.7
Primary complete	60.2	64.1	59.5
Secondary complete	20.1	9.7	19.1
College complete	1.8	0.6	2.4

Note: This table excludes current students.

Source: Data from the Population and Housing National Census 1991. INDEC

The economic structure of Lanús and Florencio Varela are sharply contrastive. According to data from the National Economic Census, Lanús had 2,521 industrial establishments in 1994 and Varela only 313, representing 9.2% and 1.1% respectively of the total number of firms located in the *Conurbano*. It is worth noting, however, that the average size of these industrial firms is larger in Varela than in Lanús. There are fewer but larger firms in Varela than in Lanús. This contrast is consistent with the tradition and characteristics of both urban areas. Lanús experienced an intense process of industrialization during the ISI period in sectors such as metallurgical and electronic products, food, shoes and leather. Micro, small and medium size firms played a central role in this industrialization and at the same time industrialization favored the proliferation of small workshops. In Varela, industrial development is more limited, and characterized by a few large firms that were attracted by the availability of cheap land. Commercial activity presents similar characteristics; a more dynamic sector in Lanús than in Varela, with 9,310 and 3,446 retailing shops in each area respectively in 1994.

The available information regarding the employment structure shows a similar situation in both localities (table 3.7). Wage workers and self-employed represent around 60% and 22% of the active population in both Lanús and Florencio Varela. The remaining three occupational categories represent a smaller proportion of the population, but they present significant differences. Domestic service is a very important labor activity in Florencio Varela; more than one out of ten workers are domestic servants; if we consider just female workers we find

that 38.1% of them are working in this activity. In contrast, the percentage of employers is relatively high in Lanús. This is consistent with a more dynamic economic structure characterized by micro and small industrial and commerce firms.

Table 3.7. Occupational structure. Lanús and Florencio Varela

	Lanús	F. Varela	Conurbano
Employer	7.1	3.6	6.4
Wage worker	62.2	58.8	60.0
Self employed	22.7	21.9	23.0
Domestic servants	5.5	12.3	7.8
Family worker	2.5	3.4	2.8

Source: Data from the Population and Housing National Census 1991. INDEC

The categories of wagedworker and self employed show similar proportions in both locations, but they hide contrasting labor situations. The fieldwork suggests that wagedworkers in Florencio Varela have more unskilled and precarious labor positions, and that self-employment tend to be associated with very instable informal activities, usually called survival or refuge activities. Wagedworkers and self-employed, in contrast, have more formal and secure jobs in Lanús. This impression emerging from my own fieldwork is supported by the available data on the social benefits that are associated with formal labor conditions. Table 3.8 shows that the proportions of the population with health and pension benefits in Varela are below the average for the entire *Conurbano*, while Lanús presents a higher level of social protection. Remember that this is not an attribute of the locality; it is a result of the type of labor market participation of their inhabitants. Data from 1991 show that 69.1% of Lanús wagedworkers had pension benefits, but this proportion decreased to 58.4% in Florencio Varela. The

comparison of the population older than 60 and currently receiving pensions shows even sharper differences: 78.3% and 55.2% in both municipalities respectively. The extension of health insurance benefits, which are also associated with employment conditions, has a similar trend. In Lanús almost two out of three of its inhabitants had a public or private health insurance, but only one out of two had this benefit in Florencio Varela. If we consider the population with *obra social* (a health insurance tied to formal employment), differences are similar: 59.4% and 48.4% of the population have this benefit in both localities respectively. The contrast among the older population is even greater.

Table 3.8. Indicators of social protection. Lanús and Florencio Varela (1991)

	Lanús	F. Varela	Conurbano
Wage-workers with pension benefits	69.1	58.4	64.1
Population with health insurance	64.9	50.0	-.-
Population over 60 with pensions	78.3	55.2	66.7
Population over 60 with health benefits*	80.1	60.5	69.8

Note: * data from 1997

Source: Data from the Population and Housing National Census 1991, INDEC and from Buenos Aires Statistics 1998, DPEPG.

A final aspect of the fieldwork settings are the characteristics of their young population. First, Florencio Varela has a younger population than Lanús. In 1991 children younger than 15 years of age represented 36.5% and 24.9% in each locality respectively. Lanús has a much higher percentage of people over 65 years of age. Secondly, the rates of school attendance among young people present deep contrasts. In Lanús, 71.6% of the adolescents between 13 and 17 years of age were attending school in 1991, but in Varela only 53.6% were in the same

situation. Among those between 18 and 22 years of age the differences were also sharp: 25.8% against 11.8% respectively. Finally, some data suggest that young women from Florencio Varela are more likely to become mothers than young women from Lanús. Table 3.9 show that in Lanús 11.8% of all births in 1991 were from adolescent mothers (younger than 20 year old); the proportion of births from adolescent mothers was significantly higher in Varela (17.8%).

Table 3.9. Characteristics of the young population. Lanús and Florencio Varela (1991)

	Lanús	F. Varela	Conurbano
Population by age groups			
0-14	24.9	36.5	29.5
15-64	63.6	59.4	62.3
65+	11.3	5.1	8.2
Rate of school attendance			
Population younger than 6 year old	86.2	74.7	83.0
Population 6-12 year old	98.0	98.2	98.4
Population 13-17 year old	71.6	53.6	65.6
Population 18-22 year old	25.8	11.8	22.6
Rate of birth from adolescent mothers*	11.8	17.8	14.5

Note: * data from 1997

Source: Data from the Population and Housing National Census 1991, INDEC and from Buenos Aires Statistics 1998, DPEPG.

In sum, both localities represent paradigmatic and contrasting urban settings that reflect the socio-economic heterogeneity characterizing Greater Buenos Aires. They clearly contrast in economic structure. Lanús has a more dynamic and formal economic environment that provides more employment opportunities as well as more secure jobs. The proximity and easy connection with the city of Buenos Aires is also a positive attribute that increases the opportunities of their inhabitants. Additionally, the educational level of its

population and the existence of middle class sectors contribute to a more favorable urban context. Florencio Varela presents an opposite picture, which can be characterized as an economically depressed and socially segregated urban context. It is homogeneously poor, with few labor opportunities and spatially isolated from more economically dynamic urban centers.

The social structure of both areas reflects different stages of urbanization. Lanús is an old industrial center, where its inhabitants (most of them migrants) found an opportunity of social mobility during the expansion of the ISI model. It has a large middle class, and its population shows the attributes of inhabitants of a modern urban area: low demographic growth and a parallel aging process, longer periods of education among the youngest generations, and relatively low levels of birth among adolescent mothers. Varela started its urbanization process during the agony of the ISI model and the beginning of Argentina's economic problems. Its inhabitants, most of them poor migrants, did not have the same opportunities of social mobility that other sectors of the society had in the past. It has a relatively younger population than the *Conurbano*. Young people in Varela have lower rates of school attendance and higher levels of births from adolescent mothers, suggesting an earlier process of transition to adulthood.

During the last decade both areas have suffered the effects of the new economic model. Nevertheless, Lanús and Florencio Varela still represent today urban contexts that offer clearly contrasting opportunities and constraints for young people who are in the process of becoming adults.

Chapter 4. Youth and Education in Argentina: Narrowing, Reproducing or Widening Unequal Opportunities?

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Formal education is a key aspect of youth transition to adulthood and future opportunities. Education is, or should be, one of the main activities during this period of the life course. It represents both a channel of socialization and a source of resources that may improve welfare conditions and social integration during adulthood. Education also has an immediate effect on young people's lives. Differences in quantity and quality of schooling affect the use of time, the opportunities of social interaction, labor market participation, and the "access" and "use" of social rights, just to mention some spheres of young people's lives. However, access to education is not equally distributed among young people and the experience of formal education is not the same for all of them. Thus, education becomes a central mechanism of production and reproduction of social inequality.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and analyze a phenomenon that we have called "educational vulnerability". It refers to the situation of a sector of the young population that has not obtained the minimum level of education required in contemporary society. Minimum that is not an absolute guaranty of well-being but determines a great divide in terms of current life experiences during youth and the scope of future opportunities in adulthood.

The first part of this chapter analyzes the expansion of education in Argentina. It focuses on three main issues that characterize this process in the last decades: the slowdown in the pace of educational expansion and schooling attainment, the persistent inequality of educational capital among sectors from different social background, and the increasing value of middle education (secondary) for present and future opportunities. The second part examines the sectors most affected by educational vulnerability and analyzes those factors associated with it. Although the levels of educational vulnerability have decreased during the last decades, this section shows that: a) the association between educational vulnerability and family disadvantages increases, b) household inequalities have a pervasive effect on educational vulnerability, c) these inequalities have a strongest effect on young females, who are specially disadvantaged as against young males; and d) the development of a process of school segmentation associated with socio-economic segregation.

4.2 THE EXPANSION OF EDUCATION IN ARGENTINA: FROM SOCIAL MOBILITY TO SEGMENTED OPPORTUNITIES

4.2.1 The social context of educational expansion

During the last century Argentina has experienced a dramatic expansion of its educational system, and an equally important increase in the average level of schooling of its population. The early process of socio-economic development and “modernization” experienced by the country assigned a central role to education as an instrument of social integration and economic growth. The lower

and middle classes benefited from this expansion; higher levels of schooling attainment gave them access to better jobs and opportunities of intergenerational social mobility (Germani 1963, Torrado 1992). As a result of this rapid expansion, Argentina ranks among the top Latin American countries in terms of educational development, but still clearly below the most developed countries. However, since its creation in 1884, the expansion of the formal educational system has not been homogeneous. Its development and features have been shaped by the characteristics of the state and its articulation with the society in different socio-historic periods (Filmus 1996, Torres and Puiggrós 1997).

During an initial period dominated by a liberal-oligarchic state, the education system played a major political role in the consolidation of the nation-state. The construction of a national identity, the homogenization of a diverse population according to “western” and “modern” stereotypes, and the establishment of common values and norms were among the main politico-ideological goals assigned to education.²⁷ At the same time, the formal education system contributed to spread labor discipline and basic skills among the population in order to supply an increasing demand of urban and clerical labor. The active policies in education combined with a dynamic urban labor market generated a rapid and increasing demand for education, particularly from the urban middle classes.

²⁷ The economic and political project of this period was presented in terms of a conflict between “civilization and barbarism”. In this conflict education was conceived as a central mechanism to diffuse modern and western values, and consolidate a project of integration of Argentina in the world economy of that period. A clear example of the main aspects of this national project can be found in “Facundo” written by Domingo F. Sarmiento, a central intellectual and political figure of that period and former president of the country between 1868-1874

Argentina experienced one of the earliest processes of urbanization and industrialization in Latin America, and this early development gave particular and pervasive characteristics to its socio-economic structure (B. Roberts 1996). As Germani (1963) showed in his classic study on social stratification, the middle classes expanded dramatically between 1880 and 1930 as a result of the creation of new labor opportunities in a growing urban economy (public, commerce and service sectors). This structural expansion of middle sectors and the initial low levels of formal education opened numerous opportunities for intra and intergenerational social mobility. Working-class sectors were almost excluded from these opportunities, but the middle classes considered the achievement of higher levels of education a natural channel of social mobility.²⁸ As a result of the political objectives of the liberal-oligarchic state and the increasing demand of middle classes for a more democratic and open educational system, the rates of enrollment in primary and higher levels grew rapidly. Illiteracy decreased from 77.4% in 1869 to 13.6% in 1947, rates of finishing primary education grew from 20% in 1869 to 73.5% in 1947 (Tiramonti 1995), and by 1950 the rate of college enrolment surpassed 5%, when the average rate for Latin America was 1.9% (CEPAL 2000).

When a process of industrialization by import substitution began to develop in the early 1930s, the economic role of education became central. Its role as a mechanism of social integration did not disappear but, as Filmus (1996) points out, the main goal now assigned to the public educational system was

²⁸ Tiramonti (1995) has observed that the positive appreciation of education could be associated with the large waves of European migrants that the country received during this period.

“teaching how to work”. The expansion of primary education in order to expand basic writing and reading skills among an increasing urban labor force, and the development of several programs of technical education and training were central features of this period.

The expansion of the middle sectors continued, accelerating the process of upward structural mobility. According to Torrado (1992) two main features characterize this process: a) intra-generational upward mobility from the lower segment of the working class toward higher positions in the same class or the lowest segments of the middle class; and b) inter-generational mobility within the middle class from lower to higher positions. Educational attainment has had a central role in this process of social mobility. Torrado (1992) observes that college and secondary education became the critical levels for upward mobility. This author concludes, that the formal education system was a mechanism of social mobility mainly for the middle classes and upper segments of the working class, with the remaining working sectors almost entirely excluded from these educational opportunities.²⁹

Under the new socio-economic conditions, primary school expanded to almost universal coverage, but the main aspect of this period was the increasing participation of middle classes in higher levels of education. Rates of completion of primary and secondary education increased to 93.4% and 38.8%, respectively

²⁹ It is necessary to remember the extension and growth of the middle classes during this period, which explain the increasing expansion of the formal education system and its importance as a mechanism of social mobility. According to Torrado (1992) middle classes represented 32,1% of the Economically Active Population in 1947, 35.7% in 1960, and 41.5% in 1980.

by 1980. Table 4.1 presents the average years of schooling of cohorts born during the industrialization period for Argentina and other Latin American countries.

Table 4.1: Average years of schooling for several birth cohorts. Latin America (selected countries)

Country	Year of birth					Change 1930-50	Change 1950-70
	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970		
Argentina	7.5	8.3	10.0	11.0	11.3	2.5	1.3
Bolivia	3.3	4.5	6.3	7.0	8.6	2.9	2.3
Brazil	2.8	3.6	5.2	6.2	6.7	2.4	1.5
Chile	5.2	7.1	8.9	10.1	11.1	3.7	2.1
Colombia	3.9	4.4	6.2	7.7	8.4	2.3	2.2
Costa Rica	4.3	5.7	7.1	8.8	8.4	2.8	1.3
Ecuador	3.9	4.5	6.5	8.5	9.5	2.6	3.0
El Salvador	2.1	3.2	4.1	5.7	7.0	2.0	2.9
Honduras	1.4	3.2	4.6	5.6	6.1	3.2	1.4
Mexico	2.9	4.2	6.7	8.2	9.3	3.9	2.6
Nicaragua	2.0	3.2	4.3	5.8	5.8	2.2	1.6
Panama	5.8	6.9	8.8	10.3	10.1	3.1	1.3
Paraguay	3.8	5.1	6.1	7.4	7.3	2.3	1.2
Dominican Rep.	3.2	4.2	7.0	8.6	9.1	3.9	2.1
Uruguay	6.3	7.4	8.8	10.0	10.7	2.5	1.9
Venezuela	3.2	5.1	6.9	7.9	8.3	3.7	1.4
Average	4.1	5.3	6.9	8.2	8.8	2.7	1.9

Note: Argentina includes only Greater Buenos Aires, and Uruguay only urban areas.
Source: Behrman, Duryea and Székely 1999.

Several observations follow from this table. First, the initial cohort in Argentina shows educational levels significantly higher than the average for the continent, which reflects the early development of the educational system. Secondly, there was an increase of 3.8 years of schooling between the cohort born in 1930 and their counterparts born in 1970; this increase is lower than the average for the region but it is still a significant progress given the high

educational level of the first cohort. Finally, and most important, after a long period of continuous improvement there is a slowdown in the last two cohorts. When levels of education are higher, schooling progress tends to be slow because there is an upward limit on possible increases; however in the Argentinean case, there is almost no change between the 1960 and 1970 cohorts. Moreover, the average years of schooling are below completion of the secondary level (12 years), which has become the determinant of good job opportunities.

Cohorts born in 1960 and 1970 have attended secondary education between the mid '70s and '80s. In order to explore the evolution of schooling attainment during the most recent years, table 4.2 presents the average years of schooling for youths with 15, 18 and 25 years of age in the last three decades. The slowdown observed in the previous table seems to be also a feature of the 1980s and 1990s.

Table 4.2: Average years of schooling for several age groups. Greater Buenos Aires (selected years)

Year	Age 15			Age 18			Age 25		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1980	7.7	7.3	8.2	9.7	9.5	9.8	10.1	10.0	10.2
1990	8.2	8.1	8.3	9.9	9.6	10.3	10.7	10.6	10.9
2000	8.6	8.4	9.0	10.0	9.6	10.4	10.9	10.2	11.9

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (1980, 1990 and 2000, October waves).

Schooling attainment has increased in the first age group. In this 30 years period the first cohort has gained one grade of education, almost achieving the

maximum of nine years that it is expected at this age.³⁰ This reflects the universal coverage of primary education and the high rates of secondary enrollment observed during the last decades. The situation is different for youths aged 18 and 25 year olds. They have had a very slight progress –female more than male-, but significantly lower than the changes observed in previous cohorts. Moreover, differences between cohorts have decreased; by 2000 those with 18 years of age had just 1 grade more than the 15 years old group, and the difference between 18 and 25 years old youths was less than 1 year. What these figures suggest is: first that the slowdown in schooling attainment has continued during the 1980s and 1990s, and secondly that secondary education is the critical level at which improvements have been stopped. Therefore, there is a third period in the development of the educational system, starting in the early 1970s –with the crisis of the I.S.I-, and characterized by a clear slowdown.

The slowdown in educational progress is a common feature in Latin American countries (Behrman, Duryea, Szekely 1999, Reimers 2000b). Data from ECLAC (1997) show that intergenerational educational mobility -an alternative way to look at educational progress- has been exceptional in recent years. By 1997 Latin American youths have an average of three years more schooling than their parents. However, more years of education are not the equivalent of intergenerational progress. Education is devalued as its coverage and average level increase, since more years of schooling are needed to acquire the same job

³⁰ Nine years of education is equivalent to secondary incomplete (seven years of primary plus two of secondary). Since the reform of the education system, primary (now called basic general education) has been extended to nine years, and secondary (now called polimodal) has been reduced from five to three years.

and an equivalent income. Thus, there is only an intergenerational educational improvement if the level attained by young children in the present generation is higher than that of their parents discounting this devaluation effect. Calculations from ECLAC (1997) estimate that, in spite of the average of 3 years gained between generations, less than one out of two urban youths (47%) has surpassed their parents' education in Latin America taking account of the devaluation effect, and only 30% have exceeded their parents education and obtained the basic educational capital of 12 years of schooling.

Several factors have contributed to this slowdown in educational progress during the last decades. Political turmoil and the adjustment policies that characterized this period had a direct impact on education. In the Argentinean case, for instance, the annual average rate of secondary enrolment between 1976 and 1979 –central years of the dictatorship period- was negative (-2.2%), while between 1983 and 1986 –initial years of a new democratic period- it was significantly higher (6.8%). This suggests an association between the political context and social attitudes toward the educational system: during authoritarian periods, there is a retreat from education and in periods of democratic transition new expectations are pinned on education (Tiramonti 1995).

Economic crises have also affected educational expansion. During the “lost decade” social expenditures decreased throughout Latin America; most of these countries had to wait until the mid 1990s to recover the levels of per capita social spending of 1980 (ECLAC 1998). Education was no exception, and some authors even consider that this was one of the sectors most affected. A study of

changes in government financing of public education in Latin America between 1970 and 1985 concludes that the adjustment led to disproportionate cuts in expenditures on education as a percentage of government expenditure or GNP (Reimers and Tiburcio 1993 cited in Torres and Puiggrós 1997). Argentina's expenditures on education followed the same pattern, characterized by a steady decrease during the 1980s and an important recovery during the 1990s. Public expenditures on education represented 1% of the GDP in 1970, 1.8% in 1975, 1.9% in 1980, 1.6% in 1985, 3.3% in 1990, and 3.9% in 1995. In order to evaluate the real magnitude of this decline in educational investment it is necessary to remember that the GDP had a negative growth during the same period, averaging an annual rate of -1.4% between 1980-1985 and 0% between 1985-1990 (ECLAC 1990 and 1999). The decline of educational expenditures led to a financial crisis in the system that had a sharp effect on quality and efficiency of the formal education system (Filmus and Miranda 1999).

Beyond the direct impact of cuts in educational expenditures, macroeconomic instability has also affected the expansion of education. Behrman, Duryea and Székely (1999) have explored the effect of macro socio-economic fluctuations on schooling attainment in Latin America. Using data for 18 Latin American and Caribbean countries, they found a very consistent association between macroeconomic stability, represented by the international terms of trade and GDP growth, and schooling attainment. Better terms of trade are associated with significantly higher attainment, GDP volatility is associated with

significantly lower attainment, and greater GDP per capita is also associated with higher attainment.

The decomposition of changes in educational attainment between 1950-70 and 1970-80 provides a similar result. Increasing shares of urban population and improving macroeconomic conditions account for most of the explained gain in average grades of schooling for people going through the educational system during 1950-1970. The results also suggest that the main cause for the slowdown during the next decades was the macroeconomic environment. Comparing to previous decades, the 1970s and 1980s presented higher macro economic volatility, lower economic growth, and practically unchanged GDP per capita. Behrman, Duryea and Székely (1999) estimated the progress in schooling that would have been observed in the 1980s, with the better macroeconomic conditions of the mid 1970s. The simulation exercise shows that rather than the observed increase of 1.17 grade of schooling for the whole population, the improvement during that decade would have been of 1.79 years.

Finally, the crisis of education as the natural mechanism of progress and social mobility must also be considered in the Argentinean case. Several coincident factors have contributed to question and undermine the role and value of education in society. On the one hand, the secular trend towards a devaluation of educational credentials, which in Argentina became worse as a result of the early expansion of basic education and the contemporary depression of the labor market. These elements have led to an overqualified labor market with few opportunities left for less educated workers; higher levels of education are

required to get relatively unskilled job positions (Gómez 2000). On the other hand, the recent increase of unemployment and poverty among the middle classes with relatively high levels of education makes uncertain the returns of educational investments. These factors, considered together, have contributed to undermine the traditional place of education in the collective value set or “social imagery”; its role as a mechanism of upward social mobility is now questioned, particularly among youths from low income sectors³¹ (Filmus and Miranda 1999, Urresti 2000, Duschatzky 2000).

4.2.2 The Educational Gap

Strong patterns of differentiation in the educational system are a common feature of industrial societies (Furlong and Cartmel 1997). The expansion of schooling attainment during the last century has not achieved an equal distribution of educational capital among the population. Even the slowdown in educational expansion observed during the last decades has been more severe for already disadvantaged sectors. As Reimers (2000b) pointed out, what most defines Latin America is not the average level of schooling of the population or the dramatic educational expansion that characterizes the last century but rather the wide gap between the rich and the poor.

Despite the expansion of schooling and the incorporation of new social groups into the educational system, educational capital continues to depend on

³¹ Urresti (2000) observes that some aspects of a “youth culture” have contributed to this discredit of education; among these aspects the author mentions a culture of “easy”, “immediate”, and “images”.

socio-economic divisions. Schooling attainment of children is strongly conditioned by household income and parents' level of education (Reimers 2000b, Behrman et. al. 1998). Inequalities of educational attainment due to socio-economic conditions are deep throughout Latin America. According to data from ECLAC (2000a) for urban areas, only 7% of the 14 year olds children in the highest income quartile drop out or lag behind at the end of primary school, but in the poorest household income quartile the share rises to 26%. Completion rates of secondary education present even sharper differences: 30% of young people from households in the highest income quartile have not completed secondary education by age 20, but in the lowest income quartile this value increases to almost 70%.

Parental schooling has a similar, and at times stronger, effect on educational opportunities. Currently, only about 20% of young people whose parents failed to complete primary education finish secondary school, but the percentage exceeds 60% among children whose parents have at least ten years of schooling. There were similar, albeit smaller differences in these proportions, at the beginning of the 1980s (ECLAC 1997).

Behrman, Birdsall and Székely (1998) also find a clear association between family background (income and education) and children's schooling attainment. They regress the schooling gap –difference between years of schooling and expected years of schooling at different ages- on three indicators of family background –father's schooling, mother's schooling, and household income- for children between 10 and 21 years of age from a sample of 16 Latin

American countries. The results show that the overall average is 0,17, suggesting that the central tendency is for these three family background aspects to be consistent with about a sixth of the sample variations in schooling gaps. The analysis also shows that there is a strong tendency for this association to increase with child's age, which suggests that household incomes and parents' education are likely to be more important in the mid and late teenage years. These findings are consistent with previous tables that showed sharp inequalities in secondary education. Finally, Behrman and colleagues (1998) find that for seven of the eleven countries in which there are at least two surveys the consistency of the family background variables with variance in the schooling gap fell between the 1980s and 1990. In contrast with these results, the analysis of the Argentinean situation between 1990-2000 shows a more complex picture, where the educational inequalities associated with the family background have increased in some cases and decreased in others.

In the Latin American context of wide socio-economic disparities, Argentina is characterized by a relatively low level of educational inequality. According to data from Duryea and Székely (1999, cited by Reimers 2000b) Argentina has the most equal distribution of education in the region, with a Gini coefficient for education of 0.229. Nevertheless, significant gaps among socio-economic strata remain.

Table 4.3 presents the average years of schooling for young people (15-24) with different family backgrounds (per capita household income and parents' education). By the year 2000 only the group of young children from households in

the highest income quintile and parents with at least completed secondary education, have an average of 12 or more years of education. During the decade there has been progress in all groups. However, young people from the poorest household have had a relatively smaller progress. The ratio between average years of schooling of young children from the fifth and first household income quintiles increased from 1.31 in 1990 to 1.35 in 2000. It is a small difference but as a trend it shows that educational inequality between young people from different income sectors has not decreased. Rather it has remained pronounced.

Table 4.3: Average years of education of young people by socio-economic strata. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000).

Socio-economic strata	Year		Variation
	1990	2000	
Household Income			
1 st quintile	8.58	8.89	1.04
2 nd quintile	9.54	9.84	1.03
3 rd quintile	9.58	10.33	1.08
4 th quintile	10.40	11.35	1.09
5 th quintile	11.24	11.98	1.07
Parents' Education			
Low	8.53	8.93	1.05
Middle low	9.80	10.14	1.03
Middle	11.25	11.29	1.00
Middle high	11.44	11.95	1.04
High	12.34	12.35	1.00

Note: Includes young people aged 15-24 living with their parents. Household income refers to per capita household income. Parents' education combines mother and father education: low (primary incomplete & primary incomplete or primary incomplete & primary complete), middle-low (primary complete & primary complete or primary incomplete & secondary complete), middle (primary complete & secondary complete or primary complete & college complete or primary incomplete & college complete), middle high (secondary complete & secondary complete or secondary complete & college complete), high (college complete & college complete).
Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

In contrast, in terms of parents education there has been a clear trend towards a more equal distribution of educational capital. The ratio of average years of schooling of young children from the highest and lowest education groups has decreased from 1.45 in 1990 to 1.38 in 2000 –one reason that explains this progress, however, is that by 1990 young people with highly educated parents already had a very high level of schooling.

Therefore, in terms of inequality, Latin America, and specifically Argentina, has showed two main trends during the last two decades. On the one hand, almost all countries made progress in reducing the inequalities in attainment levels in primary education among children from different socio-economic strata. By the end of the century, primary enrollment was almost universal in Latin American urban areas; however substantial disparities remain in terms of drop outs and repetition. Although the percentages are small, it is a matter of concern given that those who do not complete primary level are likely to be excluded from opportunities to participate in any meaningful way in labor markets or social and political organizations (Reimers 2000b). On the other hand, educational inequalities due to socio-economic status are particularly significant in terms of finishing secondary school. At this level, and in contrast with the situation in the primary cycle, there was little narrowing of the gap in attainment levels in the last decades among young people from different socio-economic strata. ECLAC (1997) has observed that differences in secondary attainment during the 1980s and 1990s have remained almost at the same level in urban areas from eleven Latin American countries.

4.2.3 The Educational Divide

The last trend is particularly relevant given that secondary education has become a critical divide in terms of youth opportunities (Reimers 2000b, ECLAC 1997). A recent ECLAC (2000b) study on inequality in Latin America concludes that completion of secondary school is the main factor affecting material and immaterial welfare opportunities. Young people's incomes and labor opportunities are decisively influenced by their educational achievement.

Table 4.4: Occupations of Young People by level of education. Latin America (1993)

Occupation	Years of education			Total
	0 – 8	9 - 11	12 – more	
Professionals & technicians	1.3	8.2	42.9	12.8
Managers	0.7	3.2	5.9	2.6
Clerical employees	4.7	26.1	31.6	18.6
Salesperson & commerce employees	10.8	18.6	9.3	13.5
Industrial and transport workers	33.5	23.9	6.4	24.3
Construction workers	16.8	6.2	1.0	9.4
Domestic employees, waiters, etc.	25.0	12.2	2.2	15.4
Agricultural workers	7.1	1.6	0.6	3.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Includes young people aged 20-29 who work 20 hours per week or more.
Source: ECLAC 1997

Tables 4.4 and 4.5 show the association between years of schooling and occupations and incomes. More than 80% of those with less than 8 years of education in urban areas are manual workers (industry, construction and transport), domestic employees, and agricultural workers; at the same time their

average income does not exceed the value of 2.5 times the per capita poverty line, which means that there are unable to keep a small family out of poverty. In contrast, those with at least 12 years of schooling –that is, complete secondary level- tend to be professionals and managers (48.8%) or clerical employees (31.6%); their incomes also tend to be higher, averaging 5.2 times the individual poverty line.

Table 4.5: Youth average income by occupation and level education. Latin America (1993)

Occupation	Years of education			Total
	0 – 8	9 - 11	12 – more	
Professionals & technicians	6.1	5.3
Managers	8.9	7.0
Clerical employees	2.9	3.3	4.2	3.6
Salesperson & commerce employees	2.5	3.1	4.4	2.9
Industrial and transport workers	2.6	3.3	4.2	2.9
Construction workers	2.6	2.8	..	2.7
Domestic employees, waiters, etc.	1.9	2.4	..	2.1
Agricultural workers	2.4	2.2	..	2.5
Total	2.5	3.4	5.2	3.4

Note: Includes young people aged 20-29 who work 20 hours per week or more. Incomes are expressed in multiples of the per capita poverty line.
Source: ECLAC 1997

These data also show that real differences in labor and income opportunities start with 12 years of education. Completing secondary and higher places a great divide on future income and occupational opportunities. ECLAC's analysis of the work income of those in the labor market indicates that completion of secondary school is now the minimum educational level required in order to avoid poverty. Reaching that educational threshold offers the chance to earn

incomes that give a more than 80% probability of remaining non-poor during the working life.

Similar observations apply in the Argentinean case. Table 4.6 shows that completion of secondary education represents a clear cut in terms of occupational opportunities; six out of ten young people with secondary education have a job in the highest occupational classes (mid-high services and non-manual activities), and this proportion rises to eight out of ten for those with a college degree. In contrast, those who did not complete the secondary level are concentrated in the lowest occupational classes, such as skilled and unskilled manual, and low services. There is also a wide segment (30%) of young people with less than primary education, who I define as self-employed. This class is highly heterogeneous but it is basically made up of informal activities. Young people from this occupational class are likely to be concentrated in survival activities.

Table 4.6: Youth occupation by level of education. Greater Buenos Aires (2000).

Occupation	Educational Level				Total
	Less than Primary	Primary Complete	Secondary Complete	College or more	
High Services	0.0	0.0	0.8	6.1	
Middle Services	0.0	12.7	25.7	66.8	
Routine non Manual	8.9	15.9	29.6	11.7	
Self-employed	30.1	10.6	8.1	6.8	
Skilled Manual	18.0	19.6	11.6	2.9	
Unskilled Manual	17.5	10.4	3.2	0	
Low Services	25.5	30.8	20.8	5.7	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Includes young people aged 15-24 who are not attending school.

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Educational attainment is also associated with income, and during the last decades there has been a trend towards higher returns for education. The individual rate of return to higher education has increased in Argentina from 16.5% in 1986 to 26.0% in 1994 (World Bank 1994, cited by Reimers 2000b). Secondary and college education make significant differences in terms of incomes. More years of education increase the expected incomes, but completion of educational levels is determinant of real jumps in remunerations (SIEMPRO 2001c).

Table 4.7: Working population's average income by education. Argentina (1997)

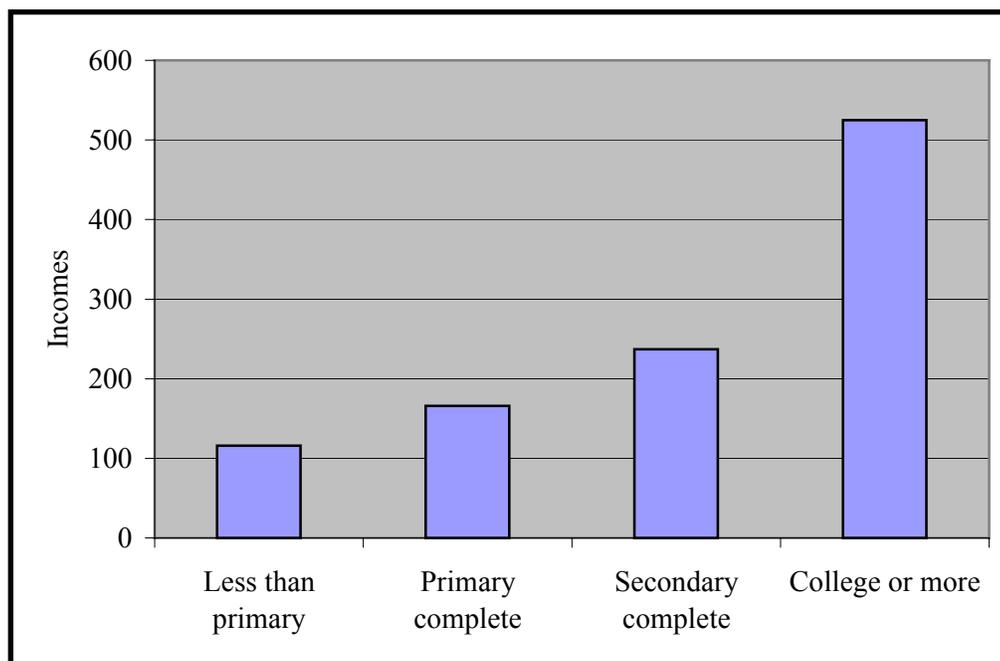
Years of Education	Monthly Income		Hourly Income	
	Mean income (pesos)	Variation rate (%)	Mean Average (pesos)	Variation rate (%)
0 to 6	349.9		2.32	
7	461.5	31.9	3.20	37.8
8 to 11	519.3	12.5	3.09	-3.4
12	650.8	25.3	3.90	26.2
13 to 16	794.8	22.1	5.32	36.5
17	1944.0	144.6	11.33	113.0

Source: Social Development Survey 1997, SIEMPRO.

Table 4.7 shows that, among the working population, finishing primary, secondary and college education increases monthly income by 31.9%, 25.3% and 144.6% respectively; hourly income shows a similar trend. Estimations from Greater Buenos Aires show that disparities among young people are even greater; incomes increase with the completion of each education level 43.1%, 42.8% and 121.5%, respectively (see figure 4.1). Additionally, secondary education is a

critical determinant of future levels of remuneration. A SIEMPRO report (2001c) on education and inequality shows that adult workers have higher incomes than young workers with the same level of schooling, but these differences are greater among the most educated workers. Adults (30-44) with completed primary earn 28.6% more than youths (15-29), but adults' incomes are 59.5% higher when they have completed secondary and 73.1% higher when they have completed college. This suggests that youths with secondary degree have higher incomes but also more opportunities of upward income mobility during their working life.

Figure 4.1: Youth average income by level of education. Greater Buenos Aires (2000)



Note: Includes young people aged 15-24 who are not attending school. Income refers to monthly incomes in pesos.

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Welfare opportunities are clearly associated with schooling attainment. Education is a potentially promising avenue to social mobility, but also an important link in the reproduction of inequality (Reimers 2000a). In terms of these opportunities, the main educational divider for the younger generations is the completion of secondary education. This is not the only determinant factor of future well being, but the previous analysis suggests that the transition to adulthood for those below this educational divide becomes more vulnerable. This is a first disadvantage that may be part of a process of cumulative disadvantages leading toward increasing vulnerability and exclusion.

4.3 YOUTH EDUCATIONAL VULNERABILITY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

4.3.1 Educational Vulnerability and Family Disadvantages³²

Two main features emerge from the previous analysis: first, that in spite of the expansion of education, significant inequalities remain among youths from different socio economic strata, and secondly, that secondary education has become the great divide in terms of future opportunities. Therefore, a key level of inequality between young people is determined by the opportunities of completing secondary school.

³² The analysis conducted in this section is based on young people (15-24) living with parents given that the EPH does not provide information about the family of origin of individuals living in independent households -that is, there is no data on the family background of young people living out of their parent's home. It is worth noting, however, that the great majority (82.7%) of young people between 15 and 24 years of age were living with their parents in 2000. Among this sub-sample the rate of educational vulnerability (28.1%) is lower than in the total sample (34.4%). It is also important to mention that in Argentina leaving home at this age is associated with low working classes, thus the association between household's disadvantages and youth educational vulnerability examined in this section is likely to be even clearer considering the total sample.

Based on these two aspects it is possible to identify a segment of the young population affected by educational vulnerability, in that its opportunities of upward social mobility are seriously constrained by its educational capital. Two groups of young people are included in this category: on the one hand, the school leavers who have not completed secondary school, and on the other hand, those who while attending school are in lower levels than the expected levels for their age.³³ During the 1990s the percentage of young people in this situation fell significantly, from 45.9% to 34.4%. However only the youngest group (15-19) was responsible for this decrease; the level of educational vulnerability in the “20-24” age group remained almost unchanged during this ten years period (table 4.8). Males are also more likely to be vulnerable educationally than females (39.5% and 29.5% respectively) –this is consistent with a trend toward higher levels of education among women than men.

³³ That is, young people between 15-19 years of age who are attending primary school (normal age for this level is 6 to 12), and those between 20-24 years of age attending secondary school (normal age for this level is 13 to 17). They represented 6.9% of the student population in 1990 and 10.0% in 2000. They have been included in the category "educational vulnerability" because most of their life trajectories have already been affected by their educational situation (for instance, the fieldwork suggests that they have spend several years without attending school during their adolescence).

Table 4.8: Rates of educational vulnerability among young people. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000).

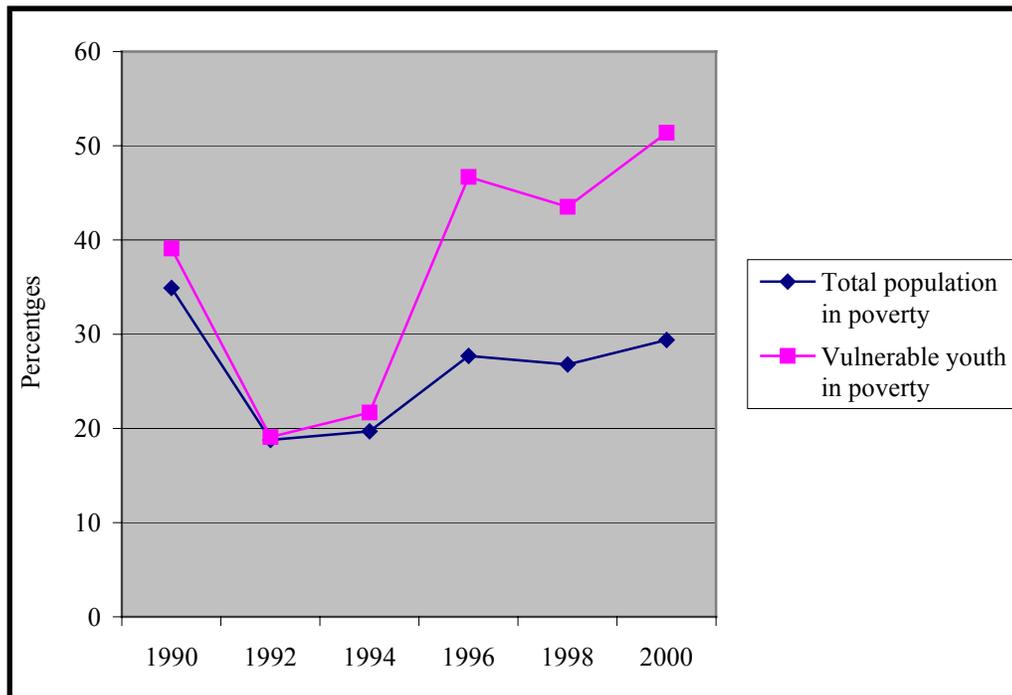
Education	1990			2000		
	15-19	20-24	Total	15-19	20-24	Total
Non-Vulnerable	62.4	44.4	54.1	78.0	45.8	65.6
Vulnerable	37.6	55.6	45.9	22.0	54.2	34.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: vulnerable youths are the school leavers who have not completed secondary school, and students at lower levels than the expected levels for their age.

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Household socio-economic conditions have a strong association with educational vulnerability. In spite of the decrease in educational vulnerability during the last decade, young people from disadvantaged households had not made significant progress; in some cases, inequality and polarization has increased. In the last ten years, for instance, the population living in poverty decreased from 34.9% in 1990 to 29.4% in 2000. However, during the same period the percentage of educationally vulnerable youths living in poor households increased from 39.1% to 51.4% (Figure 4.2). The analysis of per capita household incomes provides similar results: by 1990 the percentage of vulnerable youths in the poorest 40 percent was 49.4%, but by the year 2000 it increased to 62.4%. Young people with precarious education tend to live in poor households, and this trend has become deeper, even when poverty has diminished.

Figure 4.2: Evolution of youths with educational vulnerability living in poverty. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 to 2000).



Note: Includes young people between 15-24 years of ages living with parents. Vulnerable youths are the school leavers who have not completed secondary school, and students in lower levels than the expected levels for their age.

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

The schooling divide is also associated with divisions in terms of the educational and occupational class of the households. Young people with educational disadvantages tend to live in households with low schooling levels. Table 4.9 shows that eight out of ten young people with educational vulnerability have parents that have not surpassed secondary education; with a slight decrease (in 1990 the proportion was nine out of ten), this trend has remained unchanged during the decade.

Table 4.9: Educational vulnerability by poverty, education and occupational class of household. Greater Buenos Aires (2000).

Household class	Education		Total
	Non-vulnerable	Vulnerable	
By household's poverty			
Poor	25.2	51.4	32.8
Non-poor	74.8	48.6	67.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
By parents' education			
Low	14.1	39.4	21.2
Middle low	34.4	42.9	36.8
Middle	21.4	10.8	18.4
Middle high	22.4	5.4	17.7
High	7.7	1.5	5.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
By head's occupation			
High Services	10.2	1.7	7.9
Middle Services	27.7	27.1	27.6
Routine non Manual	8.7	3.5	7.3
Self-employed	30.0	32.2	30.6
Skilled Manual	14.6	18.4	15.7
Unskilled Manual	1.2	1.8	1.3
Low service	7.6	15.3	9.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Includes young people between 15-24 years of ages living with parents. Household's education class combines education of both parents (see note in table 4.4); household's occupation class refers to the head occupation class.

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave)

Differences between young people with and without educational problems are less significant with respect occupational class. There are important contrasts at both extremes of the household class structure: only 1.7% of young people who are educationally vulnerable live in households where the head is in the "high service class", but 15.3% of them have a head of household in the "low service class"; non-vulnerable youths present the opposite situation (10.2% and 7.6% for each class respectively). Beyond this, the distribution of both groups among the

class structure is similar (see table 4.9). Although a greater percentage of young people affected by educational vulnerability tend to live in households headed by manual workers, inequalities between occupational classes tend to be less significant than differences determined by poverty and educational class. This is itself an indicator of the heterogeneous nature of the occupational class system in Argentina.

This short analysis shows that there is a clear association between educational vulnerability and other important disadvantages. Young people who do not have the minimum educational capital required in contemporary society, tend to live in households with few and deficient assets. A large majority of youths with educational vulnerability live in poor households, have parents with very low education, and belong to lower class families. Therefore, it is unlikely that their educational vulnerability could be compensated by family support. Youths disadvantaged by their own education are also disadvantaged in terms of the human, physical and social capital of their families. This is particularly relevant since family is a main resource and support for young people in their transition to adulthood (Allatt and Yeandle 1992). In future chapters we explore the family's role in youth transition and how it can compensate children's vulnerability. However, at this stage, it is important to remember that educational vulnerability affects an important segment of the young population, and that a large proportion of them have families with limited helping and supporting capacity.

4.3.2 Household Inequalities and Educational Vulnerability

Several studies have analyzed the impact of household characteristics on schooling attainment. They have provided evidence about the relationship between different household contexts and the educational attainment and performance of children; factors such as the family size and composition, the economic situation of the household, the support home environments can provide to school endeavors, etc., have a clear impact on educational opportunities. These factors have been called "initial inequalities" (Husen 1972), or "social inequalities outside the school" (Reimers 2000b), in the sense that they represent disadvantages that some children carried with them when they enter the school system. Even when they are offered equal educational opportunities, their school trajectories are already strongly conditioned by household inequalities.³⁴ Children from poor families "may be pressed to spend less time in school, attend school irregularly, and to spend more time in various forms of work that contribute to family well-being; they also lack cultural capital that will make early success in school equally likely" (Reimers 2000b:76).

The study of household inequalities' effect on educational attainment in Argentina has mainly focused on household poverty and, to some extent, on parents' education. Findings are consistent with the literature from other countries on this topic: children from poor households tend to achieve lower levels of

³⁴ Initial inequalities or social inequalities outside the school are not limited to households' attributes. Social characteristics of neighborhoods, such as crime and unemployment rates, education of friends and neighbors, transport facilities, etc, also affect the school trajectory of children and they have been a central topic of the American literature on the underclass and the inner city ghettos. They can be called community inequalities, in contrast with household inequalities. This section focuses on household inequalities (community inequalities are addressed in future chapters).

education and have higher rates of repetition and dropout (Aguerrondo 2000). This section contributes to the study of household inequalities in Argentina by focusing on various household characteristics and the recent evolution of their impacts on educational vulnerability; simultaneously it provides a more precise analysis of this association by using panel and regression analysis.³⁵

As might be expected, the rate of educational vulnerability is significantly higher among young children living in poor households. Table 4.10 shows that one out of two poor young children has a precarious educational capital. In contrast this situation affects only one out of five non-poor youths. Between 1990 and 2000 the percentages have declined in both groups (poor and non-poor). However, the likelihood of being vulnerable by education for poor young children (relative to non-poor children) has increased. The ratio of the educational vulnerability rate for poor youths relative to the educational vulnerability rate for non-poor youth increased from 1.44 in 1990 to 2.16 in 2000 – that is, poor young children were 44.0 % more likely than the non-poor to be educationally vulnerable in 1990, but it increased to 116% in 2000. These changes are due basically to the progress made by the non-poor, and the stagnation among poor sectors.

³⁵ This section analyzes the association between household characteristics and educational vulnerability, that is young people who are not attending school or are studying a lower level than the expected at their ages. Therefore, this is not an analysis of events (dropout, repetition, etc.) but of a condition.

Table 4.10: Rates of educational vulnerability by poverty and educational class of household. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000).

	1990		2000	
	Non-Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Non-Vulnerable	Vulnerable
By household poverty				
Poor	49.4	50.6	54.5	45.5
Non-poor	64.8	35.2	78.9	21.1
Total	60.9	39.1	71.9	28.1
By parents' education				
Low	30.2	69.8	47.8	52.2
Middle low	57.8	42.2	67.2	32.8
Middle	80.7	19.3	83.6	16.4
Middle high	93.0	7.0	91.4	8.6
High	100.0	0.0	93.1	6.9
Total	60.9	39.1	71.9	28.1

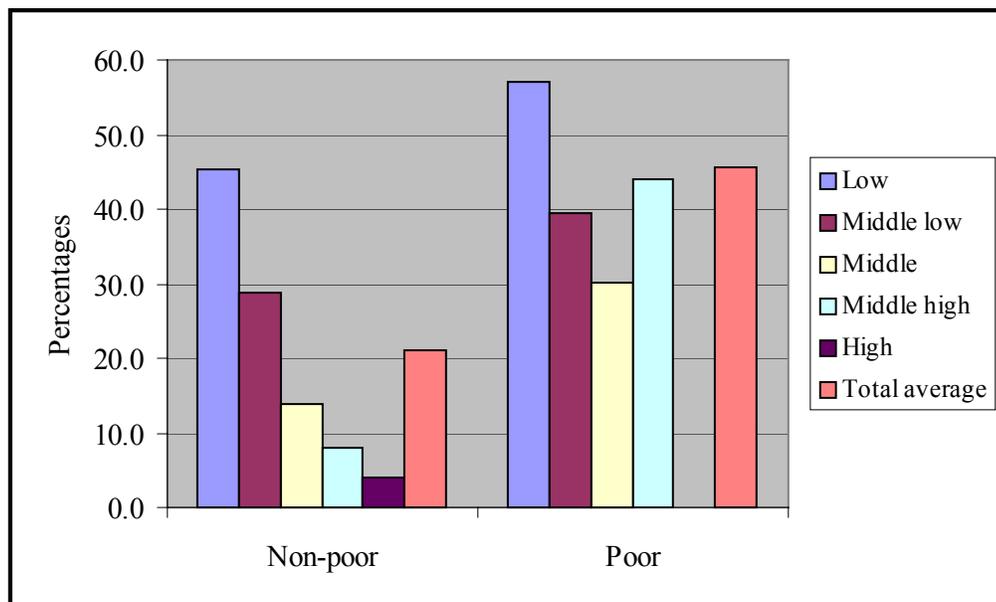
Note: Includes young people between 15-24 years of ages living with parents. Household's education class combines education of both parents (see note in table 4.4)

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October waves)

Table 4.10 also shows that the higher the level of parents' education the lower the rate of educational vulnerability; for instance, only 6.9% of children between 15 and 24 years old with college educated parents are affected by educational vulnerability, but more than half of those with parents in the lowest educational level are so affected. However, in contrast with the trend observed in terms of poverty, educational vulnerability has become less polarized during the last decade. The ratio of the educational vulnerability rate for the two lowest educational classes relative to the educational vulnerability rate for the two highest educational classes decreased from 8.40 in 1990 to 4.85 in 2000. Thus, two main observations follow: a) polarization between households with different levels of education tends to be higher than between poor and non-poor

households, and b) both trends are in opposite directions: less inequality in the first case and greater polarization in the second one.

Figure 4.3: Rates of youth educational vulnerability poverty and educational class of households. Greater Buenos Aires (2000).



Note: Includes young people between 15-24 years of ages living with parents. Household's education class combines education of both parents (see note in table 4.4)
 Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave)

Observation (a) suggests that parents' education tends to be a stronger determinant of educational vulnerability than household poverty. The analysis of poor and non-poor households with different levels of education supports this hypothesis. Poor households with the lowest level of education have a rate of youth educational vulnerability higher than the total average (57.11% and 45.5%

respectively); but non-poor households with the same educational level have a much greater rate of youth educational vulnerability than the general mean (45.3% and 21.1% respectively). The opposite situation seems to apply for households with high education (see figure 4.3). The presence of an extended system of public education and the high value that educated sectors assigned to education help to explain this finding.

Family size and composition are also associated with youth educational vulnerability. Young people living in extended families, overcrowded homes, and household with infants are more likely to have a precarious educational capital. These household characteristics have an effect on schooling attainment because they may imply different conditions and facilities for homework, different quantity and quality of parents' support, and different obligations and activities at home for young family members.³⁶ At the same time, it is possible to hypothesize that these effects are gendered. Levison, Moe, and Knaul's (2001) study of family effects on youth education in Mexico, for instance, have found that household work has a strong effect on schooling opportunities of young people, particularly for females. They have showed that when unpaid household work is included in the definition of work, female children are less likely to specialize just in schoolwork than males, and more likely to combine work and school.

³⁶ These aspects are explored in future chapters using qualitative data.

Table 4.11: Rates of educational vulnerability by gender and household characteristics. Greater Buenos Aires (2000).

Household characteristics	Rates of educational vulnerability		Ratio between rates*	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Poverty				
Poor	40.5	49.5	2.65	1.86
Non-poor	15.3	26.6		
Total	22.1	33.6		
Parents' education				
Low	43.2	59.9	6.85	3.90
Middle low	28.7	36.5		
Middle	9.0	23.1		
Middle high	5.0	12.8		
High	4.6	8.8		
Total	22.1	33.6		
Household condition				
Overcrowded				
Non-Overcrowded				
Total				
Infants				
With infants	39.3	40.4	1.97	1.23
Without infants	19.9	32.7		
Total	22.1	33.6		

Note: Includes young people between 15-24 years of ages living with parents.

* Ratio between poor/non-poor rates, two lowest/two highest educational classes rates, overcrowded/non-overcrowded rates, and with infants/without infants.

Household's education class combines education of both parents (see note in table 4.4)

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave)

Table 4.11 shows that household inequalities tend to have a particularly strong effect on young women. In general terms, the rate of educational vulnerability for females (22.1) is lower than the rate for males (33.6); however, household conditions seem to have a stronger effect on females. Young girls' educational opportunities are deeply linked to household conditions; this is also true for men but the association is less significant. The ratios between rates, which

appear in table 4.11, make evident the gender difference. Poverty among females increased the likelihood of educational vulnerability 1.65 times and among male 0.86 times; the presence of infants in the household has a small effect on young boys (23%), but it increases the likelihood of educational vulnerability among girls by 97%. These associations require further qualitative research on the internal household dynamic and the role of young family members. As Jones and Wallace (1992) observe, the study of young people and adolescents in their families has not received enough attention from sociologists (this has been a focus of interest for psychoanalysis and social psychology). Future chapters address some of these issues.

A logistic regression analysis confirms a strong association between household inequality and youth educational vulnerability. This exercise regresses “educational vulnerability” (a dichotomous dummy variable: vulnerable and non-vulnerable) on several indicators of “household inequalities” (family structure, household poverty, households with infants, overcrowded households, and parents’ education). A first model includes a control variable for gender, and a second model includes interactions terms between gender and household variables.³⁷ Table 4.12 presents the results.

³⁷ Models (not included here) including control variables for household’s occupational class were run. The coefficients obtained did not present substantial differences comparing to those presented in table 4.12, which is consistent with the heterogeneity of the Argentinean occupational class system observed before.

Table 4.12: Logistic regression on youth educational vulnerability. Greater Buenos Aires (2000).

Variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coefficients	S.E.	Coefficients	S.E.
Intercept	-1.146	0.004	-1.131	0.005
Female	-0.707	0.004	-0.735	0.007
Single parent family	0.854	0.005	0.856	0.005
Extended family	0.998	0.005	0.983	0.005
Multimember family	-0.617	0.018	-0.629	0.018
Household in poverty	0.268	0.005	0.212	0.006
Female*Household in poverty			0.145	0.009
Household with infants	-0.139	0.006	-0.392	0.008
Female*Household with infants			0.556	0.012
Overcrowded household	0.853	0.005	0.836	0.007
Female*Overcrowded household			0.017	0.010
Middle low educational class	0.661	0.005	0.707	0.006
Female*Middle-low educ. class			-0.102	0.010
Middle educational class	-0.786	0.006	-0.616	0.008
Female*Middle education class			-0.504	0.013
High education class	-1.284	0.007	-1.171	0.009
Female*High educational class			-0.334	0.016

Note: Includes young people between 15-24 years of ages living with parents. Coefficients are significant at 0.01, except “Female*Overcrowded household” that has a Pr chi-square 0.09. High educational class includes high and middle-high educational class.

The first model shows that the likelihood of being “vulnerable by education” is higher for poor households, single parent and extended families, and overcrowded homes; in contrast it is lower for young people in households with infants and with highly-educated parents. Model 1 also makes evident that females are less likely than males to be vulnerable. But the second model, in which several interaction terms for female were added, presents a different picture. Young females still have a lower probability than males to have a precarious educational capital. However the interactions terms show that they are more affected by the characteristics of their households.

According to the results of model 2 (table 4.12) the effects of household inequalities on both genders can be summarized in four items:

- Poverty has a stronger effect on females,
- Overcrowded households have a similar effect for men and women,
- Infants at home have a clear contrasting effect; in model one this variable has a negative coefficient, but when the interaction term is included, its effect remains negative for male and becomes positive for female. It is difficult to determine the family relationship of these infants with the young members of the household (son/daughter, siblings, etc.), but it seems clear that young women are involved in child caring activities that affect their schooling attainment.
- Finally, high levels of parents' education have a stronger negative effect on female than male youths. Low levels of education have a similar effect on both genders in increasing educational vulnerability.

We now know that there is a strong relation between household inequalities and youths' educational vulnerability, and that young females are more affected than males by the situation of their households. A panel analysis gives us a deeper understanding of this relationship, through a more dynamic analysis. Above we have explored the association between two static conditions – that is, household features and educational characteristics. With the panel analysis

we explore associations between changes or events. In this case, we analyze the association between changes in household conditions and changes in school enrolment occurring during a one-year period³⁸.

Changes in school attendance are associated with changes in parents' employment status (see table 4.13). Young children attending school or leaving school after secondary level tend to have fathers with stable employment. In contrast school leavers without a secondary degree are more likely to have fathers with unstable employment situations. For instance, 68.8% of youths have the father "always employed" in a one-year period, but this percentage increases to 76.7% among those who remain at school during the same period; 5.9% have fathers who became unemployed, but this percentage increase to 8.2% among school leavers without secondary degree; and 23.7% have fathers with unstable employment situations, whereas these situations are true of 34.9% of those who have never attended school in that period. Young children who left school before secondary graduation and those who have not attended school are also more likely to have a father with long-term unemployment.

³⁸ Association does not imply causation. It is also important to note that we are unable to establish what change has occurred first; we just know that two or more changes have occurred in one year period.

Table 4.13: Changes in youths' school enrollment by changes in parents' employment status. Greater Buenos Aires (1999 and 2000).

	Remain in school	Leave with secondary	Leavew/out secondary	Never at school	Total
Father					
Always employed	76.7	71.3	66.7	53.5	68.8
Employed to unemp.	6.0	6.2	8.2	6.2	5.9
Unemployed to emp.	4.7	1.0	4.3	8.4	5.4
Employed to inactive	2.1	2.1	1.9	5.1	3.1
Inactive to employed	0.6	3.2	2.2	1.8	1.2
Unemployed to inact.	0.6	0.0	2.0	2.9	1.4
Inactive to unemp.	0.1	2.1	4.1	0.7	0.7
More than 1 change	4.3	6.1	2.2	9.8	6.0
Always unemployed	0.4	0.0	2.2	3.2	1.4
Always inactive	4.5	8.0	6.2	8.4	6.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mother					
Always employed	34.6	35.3	20.1	15.8	28.2
Employed to unemp.	1.3	0.0	8.6	3.2	2.0
Unemployed to emp.	1.5	3.1	2.0	1.1	1.5
Employed to inactive	4.2	3.1	2.2	3.5	4.3
Inactive to employed	5.3	5.2	4.2	8.8	6.3
Unemployed to inact.	3.2	2.1	2.1	1.9	2.6
Inactive to unemp.	2.3	3.0	4.4	1.3	2.1
More than 1 change	8.6	9.3	4.6	10.4	9.0
Always unemployed	0.6	1.0	0.0	0.3	0.4
Always inactive	38.4	37.9	51.8	53.7	33.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Includes young people between 15-24 years of ages living with parents.

Panel for one-year period between October 1998 / October 1999 and October 1999 / October 2000 (two panels have been merged in order to increase the sample size).

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October waves)

School attendance of young children presents a similar association with changes in mother's employment situation. Two observations are significant. First, a high proportion of young children attending school (34.6%) or leaving

school after secondary education (35.3%), have working mothers; in fact these proportions are higher than the average (28.2%). Young children with mothers always inactive present the opposite situation: they represent 33.6% of the total sample, but 51.8% of the school leavers without secondary degree and 53.7% of those who have never attended school. This suggests that young children are not necessarily more likely to remain at school (for longer period) if their mothers are at home. The second observation is that mothers who have become unemployed are significantly higher among school leavers without secondary education. In average, only 2.0% of young children have mother who have become unemployed, but 8.6% of those who have left school before secondary graduation in that year have mothers who have lost their jobs in the same period.

Table 4.14 explores the association with changes in households' economic conditions. A main observation from this table is that changes in youth's school enrollment are affected by long run economic situations rather than by short run changes. There are, for instance, a proportion of school leavers without secondary education whose households have fallen in poverty (10.5) slightly higher than the average (8.8%); but the critical differences are between households which have been poor or non-poor during the entire one-year period. On average, six out of ten youths live in households that remained non-poor, but this proportion decreases to 4 out of 10 among school leavers without secondary degree. Thus, the remaining 60% of them live in households that have been affected by poverty during the panel period; a significant percentage (31.9%) belongs to household that have remained poor through all the one year period.

Table 4.14: Changes in youths' school enrollment by changes in household's economic situation. Greater Buenos Aires (1999 and 2000).

	Still at school	Leave with secondary	Leavew/out secondary	Never at school	Total
Household poverty					
Never in poverty	65.5	74.9	39.3	48.4	59.9
Fall in poverty	7.9	6.0	10.5	10.8	8.8
Exit poverty	6.9	4.2	10.2	8.9	7.7
More than 1 change	4.5	1.5	8.1	8.8	5.7
Always in poverty	15.2	13.4	31.9	23.1	17.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Includes young people between 15-24 years of ages living with parents.
 Panel for one-year period between October 1998 / October 1999 and October 1999 / October 2000 (two panels have been merged in order to increase the sample size).
 Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October waves)

In sum, this section has examined the association between youth's educational vulnerability and household inequality. Household poverty and parents' low education increase the likelihood of educational vulnerability among young children. Parents' education has a stronger effect than household poverty has. Extended and single parent families, and households with infants also increase the likelihood of youth's educational vulnerability. The analysis showed that household inequalities have a deeper effect on females; that is, young women's educational opportunities are more linked to household conditions than young men's opportunities are. This suggests that there is an increasing polarization in terms of education among young women: on average they have

higher levels of education than young men, but they are also more likely than young men to have low levels of education in contexts of disadvantaged households. Finally, educational vulnerability of young children is also associated with parents' employment volatility and changes in household poverty.

4.3.3 School inequalities and the segmentation of educational quality

Differences in schooling attainment are not the only source of inequality. The quality of the education received by young people from different social sectors is an increasingly important determinant of unequal opportunities (ECLAC 1997). Household inequalities or initial inequalities are not the only factors responsible for differences in the acquisition of educational capital. Inequalities between schools have become an important determinant of educational opportunities. As Reimers (2000b) observes, a significant proportion of the variation in student learning outcomes is a result of differences between schools, and because students are grouped in schools in ways that reflect residential patterns of segregation, schools are socially segregated. That is, even though they are different phenomenon, inequalities between schools tend to be associated with household or initial inequalities, which is a paradigmatic example of a cumulative process of disadvantage.

A recent study conducted by UNESCO-OREALC (2000, cited in Reimers 2000a) shows that socio-economic segregation between schools and differences in learning achievement are common and extended phenomenon throughout Latin America. Differences in schools' social compositions are very high, as well as the

differences in student achievements between schools. According to this study, Argentina ranks fourth in Latin America in terms of socio-economic segregation, with a 40% indicator of social segregation between schools. In terms of differences in fourth-grade students' achievements in basic language and math skills, the country ranks 8 and 11. Additionally, other studies have found substantial differences in educational achievement between public and private Latin American schools; while average students attain 50% of the expected achievement in the official curriculum, those in private schools attain almost 100% (UNESCO 1996, cited in ECLAC 1997).

The social segmentation of schools blocks the opportunities of social interaction between students and parents from different social strata. As Kaztman (2001) has observed, the social segmentation of the educational system leads to differences in learning opportunities but also to limited opportunities for disadvantaged students to enhance their social and civic capital.

Several studies (Braslavsky 1985, Filmus 1996) have shown that Argentina has experienced an increasing segmentation of its educational system both in terms of schools' social composition and quality of the learning process. Filmus (1996) observes that Argentina does not have one homogeneous educational system, but several sub-systems characterized by differences in the quality of the education that they provide. This fragmented educational system is the result of two factors that work together and are mutually reinforcing: on the one hand the segmentation of schools in terms of their social composition, and, on the other hand, the stratification of the resources assigned to schools. This

stratification, as Reimers (2000b) observes, begins with public financial resources for education, is aggravated by further stratification of private resources for education, and is finally reflected in the quality of schools attended by children from different income groups.

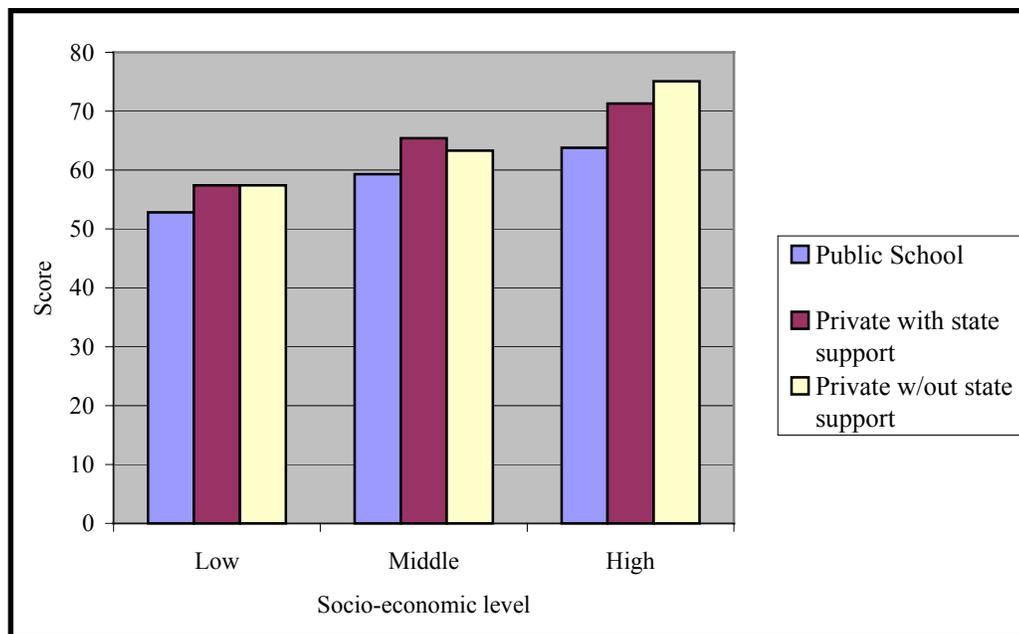
Differences in schooling achievements between public and private schools and between students from different socio-economic sectors are deep. A recent survey on learning achievements of secondary students conducted by the Argentinean National Ministry of Education (IDECE 2001) provides relevant data on this topic. According to this study, students from public schools scored³⁹ 57.4; that is significantly lower than students from private schools, who obtained 71.4. Similar differences were obtained between students from different socio-economic strata; scores for students from low, middle and high socio-economic conditions were 54.2, 61.8, and 68.5 respectively. Given that public and private schools usually have students from different social sectors (and, vice versa, children from different socio-economic levels attend different schools), it becomes difficult to estimate the extent to which these differences are due to differences in schools' resources and learning strategies, or to differences in family background.

The same survey examined learning achievements in schools with unequal resources. The results are not surprising: a) students from schools with good structural conditions (buildings, classrooms, bathrooms, light and heating systems, etc) performed better than those from schools with bad conditions (67.7

³⁹ The scores in learning achievements represent the average percentage of correct answers in a math exam.

and 53.3 respectively); and b) students from schools with good teaching resources (libraries, blackboards, etc) scored higher than those from school with bad teaching resources (65.2 and 56.5 respectively). On the other hand, household inequalities have a significant association with learning achievements. Students from overcrowded households, and/or living in houses without bathroom, and/or with parents with primary or less education obtained lower scores than students without these disadvantages (55,4 and 66.2 respectively). However, once again there is likely to be an overlap between school and household inequalities.

Figure 4.4: Learning achievements of secondary level students by type of school and socio-economic status. Argentina (2000).



Note: Learning achievements in math skills; students from last grade of secondary school.
Source: IDECE 2001.

In order to examine this relationship Figure 4.4 presents the scores of students from different socio-economic backgrounds attending both public and private schools. The results show: first, that students in private schools perform better than those in public schools in all three socio economic levels, and secondly that students from high socio-economics levels have scores higher than students from low and middle levels whatever type of school they attend. However, the most significant result is that type of school (public or private) does not have the same effect on students from different socio-economic statuses. In the lowest level, students from private schools have a very slight advantage (52.8 public schools and 57.4 private schools), but in the highest socio-economic level, differences between both types of schools are significantly sharper (63.8 and 75.1 respectively).

Even though these differences could be attributed to several factors, the most plausible explanation is that private schools are also socially segregated -that is, their financial, structural, and teaching resources are also associated with the students' social background. Moreover, a likely consequence of these differences would be an increasing homogenization of schools in terms of their social composition. The wide differences between public and private schools among students from the highest socio-economic strata will encourage them to move out from public to private schools, a trend that is already visible in contemporary Argentina. The expected result is an increase in socio-economic segregation and learning quality differences between schools, but also a silent and critical

transformation of the formal educational system. Public schools, once a keystone for upward mobility opportunities and center of interaction between classes, turn into schools for the poor.

4.4 SUMMARY

Through most of the twenty century formal education represented a mechanism of social integration. Middle but also working classes found in education a channel of upward social mobility, which was stimulated by an early and dynamic process of urbanization and economic development. Although Argentina still has one of the highest and most equal educated population in the Latin American context, between 1990 and 2000 inequality in terms of educational attainment between different socio-economic sectors has become deeper.

The previous analysis showed a strong association between educational vulnerability and family background, particularly in terms of household poverty, household educational class, and household structure. In contrast, the occupational class of the household does not represent a significant factor in educational inequality. The rate of educational vulnerability is lower among women, but family background features have a stronger effect on them. Young women from disadvantaged household are more affected in their educational opportunities than young men.

The rate of educational vulnerability has decreased over the last decade, however it has increased among the poor. This suggests a process of growing

social segmentation, where the division of the population between socio-economic sectors tends to overlaps with growing and critical inequalities in terms of educational attainment. Additionally, there are indications of an increasing segmentation of the educational system in terms of school social composition and quality of the learning process.

Education seems to have a new role in contemporary Argentina. In the past, educational inequalities had the form of a continuous stratification with multiple ladders, offering greater and better labor opportunities and standards of living. In the 1990s education seems to reflect a polarized social structure where completion of secondary school becomes a great divide in terms of social integration. Education ceases to be a channel for individual and group mobility and becomes a gatekeeper for future opportunities (particularly in the labor market). An increasing overlapping of poverty and educational vulnerability, suggests the consolidation of specific groups for whom education is no longer a viable window of social mobility but a mechanism of exclusion. In contrast, this segment of the young population could be experiencing a process of cumulative disadvantages. The following chapters will explore other spheres of the life course of this group of vulnerable youth.

Chapter 5. Youth and the Labor Market: Unemployment, Job Insecurity and Exclusion.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, an increasing concern with youth labor problems has arisen in multiple and diverse social contexts. Since the early 1980s youth unemployment and labor insecurity have grown and affected a significant proportion of young workers in Latin America as well as in most of the OECD countries. Macro economic restructuring, employers' strategies for flexibility, government policies to deregulate labor markets, and difficulties in job seeking processes have been revealed as major factors contributing to the recent deterioration of the youth labor market (MacDonald 1997b).

Beyond these common features a cross-national analysis shows that the deterioration of the youth labor market presents important contextual specificities. In some countries, this deterioration shows up mainly in falling relative wages for young people. In others, the main problem is the increasing rate of youth unemployment, but even in these cases important differences remain as a result of differences in rates of youth labor activity, in social welfare programs, etc. Additionally there are significant disparities among the youths most affected by labor market problems. There is a common trend toward a concentration of labor problems in specific groups of disadvantaged young people. However, there are sharp differences between disadvantaged youths in different national context, and therefore factors contributing to labor vulnerability are not always the same.

Beyond the contextual particularities of the deterioration of the youth labor market, there is a general consensus among researchers that these new labor conditions affect current youth living conditions as well as the transition toward adulthood. As several authors have observed (Paugam 1995), the strength of the links between the employment situation and other dimensions of economic and social life suggests that people in situations of labor vulnerability (job insecurity or unemployment) are more likely to start or extend a cycle of cumulative disadvantages.

This chapter analyzes the characteristics of youth labor vulnerability in Argentina. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. On the one hand, it examines the evolution of labor vulnerability during the last decades and its association with other disadvantages. On the other hand, it explores the transition from school to work focusing on the relationship between educational and labor vulnerability. In order to achieve this goal, the chapter is organized in three major sections. The first explores the main dimensions of youth labor vulnerability in Argentina from a comparative perspective. The goal is to identify the specificities of the Argentinean youth labor market and its problems. Then, I focus on the association between labor vulnerability and other social disadvantages. The relationship between unemployment and labor insecurity, and individual and family resources is the main issues addressed in this section. Finally, the last section focuses on an important segment of the young population that is excluded both from the educational system and the labor market. The analysis explores the socio-

economic characteristics of this group, but also the effect of these periods of exclusion on transition patterns for different social groups.

5.2 THE ARGENTINEAN YOUTH LABOR MARKET IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

5.2.1 Trends in youth economic participation

After a long period of labor market expansion, the early 1970s made clear the exhaustion of labor opportunities generated by the I.S.I. model. An increasing underutilization of the labor force and a deep decline of real wages were the main symptoms of labor market deterioration. As we have noted in chapter 3, the early 1990s represent a breakpoint in this process, both in terms of the main problems affecting the labor market and their causes. In general terms, the most significant features between 1974 and 1990 were a sharp decline in real incomes, and a slight increase of unemployment, which was compensated by the informal sector. During the 1980s, in Greater Buenos Aires, real incomes fell 40.3%, unemployment increased from 2.3% to 6.0%, and the informal sector from 42.1% to 48.5% (Altimir and Beccaría 1999, Cimillo 2000). In contrast the increase of unemployment and job insecurity are the most prominent aspects characterizing the 1990s. Between 1990 and 2000 the unemployment rate grew from 6.0% to 14.7% (with a record peak of 18.8% in 1996), and wage earners without social security protection from 27.3% to 38.0%.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Chapter 3 presents an analysis of the structural socio-economic changes during this period.

This process of labor market deterioration has particularly affected young people. Several studies (Feldman 1997, Novacovsky 1998, Filmus and Miranda 1999) have shown that youths are particularly subject to problems of unemployment and job insecurity. This is not a particular characteristic of the Argentinean labor market, but a comparative analysis (both in terms of different social contexts and older age groups) allows us to highlight some of the specificities of youth labor vulnerability in Argentina.

By the year 2000, one out of two (49.6%) young people aged 15-24 were economically active in Argentina. This is a similar, but slightly lower rate than that for Latin American and OECD countries. Nevertheless, trends of youth labor participation during the last two decades (1980-2000) have followed different patterns in these three regions. First, in the Argentinean case the proportion of active youths remained almost unchanged during the entire period (table 5.1 shows a decline in male participation offset by a female increase). In contrast, Latin America and the OECD countries have experienced significant changes but in opposite directions; an irregular pattern in Latin America with an overall increase between 1980 and 1999, and a constant decrease in OECD countries. These different patterns are consistent with trends both in relative size of young cohorts and in youth education. On the one hand, the youth cohort's relative size increased in Argentina and Latin America until the early 1990s, whilst it has diminished in OECD countries since the late 1970s (CEPAL 2000, OECD 1999). On the other hand, the stagnation and increase of youth labor participation in Argentina and Latin America, respectively, correlate with the slowdown in rates

of school enrollment suffered during these decades (see chapter 4). OECD countries experienced during this period a steadily increase of youth school enrollment (Blanchflower and Freeman 2000b).

Table 5.1: Labor force participation rates by age and gender. Argentina, Latin America and OECD countries (1980-2000)

Country	Year	Males			Females		
		15-19	20-24	Total	15-19	20-24	Total
Argentina*	1980	47.8	87.0	66.0	29.1	59.2	35.0
	1990	42.8	86.1	61.8	26.2	57.0	41.1
	2000	26.6	85.7	56.7	20.6	62.2	42.7
Latin America**	1980	54.5	83.9	69.0	19.3	32.5	26.0
	1990	61.3	87.7	73.9	35.5	50.8	42.8
	1999	56.2	71.7	69.9	36.4	58.0	46.6
OECD***	1980	44.7	79.7	61.9	41.4	68.8	55.0
	1990	40.0	77.4	59.4	37.1	70.8	54.5
	1997	32.4	71.2	53.2	29.4	62.8	47.2

Note: * Greater Buenos Aires. ** Selected countries (Brasil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay). *** Selected countries (France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States).

Source: own calculations based on data from: for Argentina: EPH (October waves); for Latin America: Statistical Yearbook 1995, ECLAC 1995, and Panorama Laboral 2000, OIT 2000; for OECD: Handbook of Labor Statistic 1970-1989, OECD 1990, and Preparing youth for the 21st century, OECD 1999, and OECD Employment Outlook 2001, OECD 2001.

Secondly, the evolution of youth economic participation presents noticeable differences in terms of gender and age groups (table 5.1). With respect to the gender composition and evolution of the young labor force, Argentina remains in an intermediate situation between Latin America and OECD countries. Male labor participation decreased following the OECD pattern, but economic activity among females increased following the Latin American trend. As a result

of these contrasting trends, Argentina had, by the end of the decade, the lowest rate of female economic participation when compared with the rest of Latin American and OECD, and an intermediate rate of male activity, but significantly lower than the average for Latin America.

The activity rates of young people between 15-19 and 20-24 have different relative weights in Argentina in comparison with Latin American and OECD countries. In Argentina, 26,6% and 20.6% of male and female adolescents (15-19) were active in 2000, contrasting with higher rates in OECD countries, 32.4% and 29.4% respectively, and even higher rates in Latin America, 56.2% for males and 36.4% for females (table 5.1). Two factors may explain the low Argentinean rates of adolescent labor participation: higher levels of school enrollment than in Latin America and lower levels of economically active students than in some OECD countries –for instance, in Argentina 15.3% of adolescents between 16-17 years old were economically actives and attending school in 1991. In contrast in the United States 29.2% of this age group combined school and work in that year (data from table 8 in Feldman 1997 for Argentina, and table 4.6 in Card and Lemieux 2000 for U.S.A). In contrast to the low levels of adolescent economic activity, young people between 20-24 have particularly high rates of labor participation. Among males, Argentina has the highest rate (85.7%), and among females (62.2%) it is higher than in Latin America and similar to OECD countries.

Finally, it also important to mention that trends in youth economic participation differ among different social sectors in Latin America, as well as in

Argentina. If the participation rate of young people is analyzed in terms of household incomes it will be noted that the increase has been greater among the poorest. Between 1990 and 1999, the annual growth rate of youth economic activity in Latin America averaged 1.8%, but it was 2.6% among youths living in poor households (OIT 2000). The same trend is observed in Argentina. The rate of youth labor participation suffered a slight decrease from 51.8% in 1990 to 49.6% in 2000. However among the poor it grew in the same period from 37.1% to 45.9% whilst among the non-poor it decreased from 55.5% to 50.8%. Table 5.2 also shows that the sharp decline observed above in adolescent (15-19) economic activity, was mainly driven by the non-poor -among the poor the level of labor participation in this age group remained almost unchanged⁴¹.

Table 5.2: Labor force participation rates by poverty and age. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)

Year	Non-Poor			Poor		
	15-19	20-24	15-24	15-19	20-24	15-24
1990	36.1	73.6	55.5	29.3	56.6	37.1
2000	20.9	73.8	50.8	28.3	70.7	45.9

Note: Poverty refers to young people living in poor households.

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

In sum, Argentina had in 2000 a relatively small rate of youth economic activity, whose evolution during the decade has followed different patterns

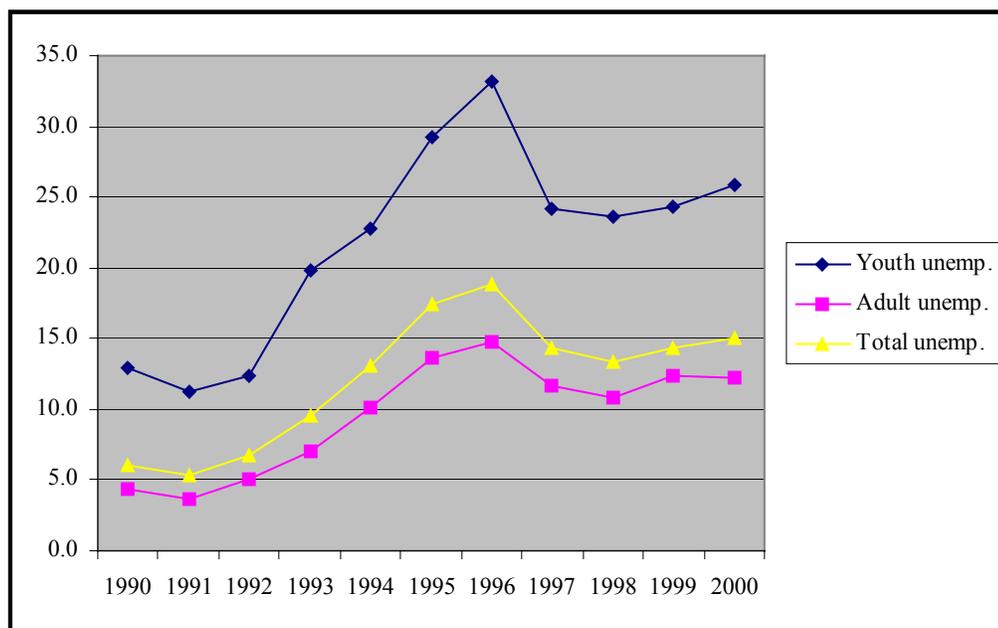
⁴¹ In this sense, the increase of poor young women's economic activity has been noticeable. Between 1990 and 2000 the labor participation rate for teenager females (15-19) increased from 22.5% to 24.9%, and for adult young females (20-24) it increased from 31.7% to 50.9%. This trend, particularly in the older age group, seems to reverse a common assumption that poor young women are mainly involved in housekeeping and childbearing activities.

according to gender, age and poverty. The adolescent (15-19) rate has diminished, particularly among the non-poor, and it is significantly lower than in Latin America and OECD countries. In contrast, from a comparative perspective, the adult young (20-24) are massively integrated into the labor force (particularly male). Female labor participation has increased, particularly among the poor, but it is still lower than in the other two regions. Finally, poor and non-poor young people have followed opposite trends, and by the end of the decade their labor participation rate were similar. This aspect is consistent with patterns in education explored in chapter 3: young people from non poor sectors are remaining longer at school (diminishing the rate of labor participation), while the proportion of poor young people leaving education before completing secondary school has grown, increasing their presence in the labor market.

5.2.2 Trends in youth unemployment

During the 1990s, economically active youths faced three main problems: unemployment, job insecurity and low wages. One of the most significant features of the Argentinean labor market during this period has been the sharp increase in unemployment. In Greater Buenos Aires, one of the most affected regions in the country, total unemployment jumped from 6.0% in 1990 to 15.0% in 2000. As we can see in figure 5.1, the youth labor situation is even worse: in 1996, when unemployment peaked at record levels, one out of three young workers (33.2%) was unemployed, and by 2000 still one out four active young people (25.8%) was unemployed.

Figure 5.1: Rates of youth, adult, and total unemployment. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 - 2000)



Note: Youth (15-24) and Adult (25-64)

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October waves).

Table 5.3 shows some basic features of the youth labor market for several countries from Latin America and the OECD. In comparison to these regions, Argentinean rates of youth unemployment are amongst the highest. Countries in tables 5.3 can be classified in two groups: those with low youth unemployment (Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and Mexico in Latin America, and Germany, Japan, United Kingdom and United States in OECD), and those with high levels of youth unemployment (Colombia, Ecuador and Uruguay, and France, Italy and Sweden, respectively). Argentinean rates of youth unemployment are among the highest in

the latter group, only below Italy and very close to France, Uruguay and Colombia.

Beyond these initial observations in terms of unemployment rates, youth unemployment as a social problem, however, has a different weight and dynamic in each of these countries. The need to look beyond unemployment rates in order to gauge youth labor market problems properly is widely recognized (Freeman and Wise 1982, Bowers, Sonnet and Bardone 1999). The meaning and value of youth unemployment are heavily linked to youth levels of economic activity and school enrolment, as well as to general rates of unemployment. As Bowers et. al. (1999) have observed, when teenagers have low rates of labor force participation and high enrolment rates in education, unemployment rates for this age group refer only to early school leavers. Moreover, they may show a rise even if the proportion of the young population that is unemployed has declined. In this sense both the youth unemployment and total unemployment ratio and the rate of youth unemployment over the total youth population (columns 3 and 4 in table 5.3) are valuable complements of the traditional unemployment rate.

Table 5.3: Indicators of youth unemployment. Argentina and selected countries.

Country	Year	Rate of youth activity	Youth unemployment (1)	Youth unemployment (2)	% youth unemp/ % total unemp (3)
Argentina	1990	51.8	13.0	6.8	2.17
	1996	55.7	33.2	18.5	1.76
	2000	49.6	25.8	12.8	1.72
Latin America					
Brazil	1990	62.0	8.3		184
	1996	61.0	15.1		175
Chile	1990	38.0	17.9		2.06
	1996	37.0	13.2		2.20
Colombia	1990	49.0	20.1		1.95
	1997	48.0	24.3		2.06
Costa Rica	1990	51.0	10.5		1.98
	1997	47.0	13.0		2.24
Ecuador	1990	44.0	13.5		2.21
	1997	48.0	18.9		2.05
Mexico	1989	43.0	8.1		2.45
	1996	47.0	12.5		2.45
Uruguay	1990	57.0	24.4		2.74
	1997	61.0	26.3		2.31
OECD					
France	1990	36.4	19.1		2.12
	1997	28.0	28.1	8.0	2.26
	2000	29.5	20.7		2.18
Germany	1990	59.8	5.6		1.16
	1997	51.1	10.2	5.0	1.14
	2000	52.5	7.7		0.95
Japan	1990	44.1	4.3		2.05
	1997	48.6	6.6	3.4	1.94
	2000	47.0	9.2		1.96
Italy	1990	46.8	28.9		3.21
	1997	38.0	33.6	13.2	2.87
	2000	38.1	31.5		3.00
Sweden	1990	69.1	4.5		2.65
	1997	50.2	21.0	9.1	2.19
	2000	52.3	11.9		2.02
U. K.	1990	78.0	10.1		1.42
	1997	70.5	13.5	9.0	1.65
	2000	69.7	11.8		2.14
United States	1990	67.3	11.2		2.00
	1997	65.4	11.3	7.5	2.09
	2000	65.9	9.3		2.32

Note: 1 unemployed youths / active youths; 2 unemployed youths / youth population; 3 youth unemployment / total unemployment.

Source: based on data from: for Argentina (EPH, Greater Buenos Aires, October waves), for Latin America (Social Panorama 1998, ECLAC 1998), for OECD (OECD Employment Outlook, June 2001, OECD 2001).

When we turn to these two complementary measures, a new picture of youth unemployment in Argentina emerges. Looking at the unemployment/population ratio and comparing Argentina to Italy and France (those with the highest unemployment rate in the OECD group), the magnitude of the youth unemployment problem in Argentina becomes more evident. This result is mainly due to the low rates of youth labor participation in both European countries contrasting with middle levels of economic activity in Argentina. By 1996-97 Argentina and Italy have similar unemployment rates, but the proportion of unemployed in total youth population was clearly lower in the European country (18.5% and 13.2% respectively). By the year 2000 the unemployment/population rate had decreased but still remained high (12.3%). Therefore, although the traditional youth unemployment rate is also high in some OECD countries, its impact is significantly higher in Argentina, where a broader proportion of young people are already in the labor market.

The ratio between youth unemployment and total unemployment (column 3 on table 5.3), however, shows significant nuances. Young people are over represented among the unemployed; in 2000 they were 20.0% of the EAP, but 34.6% of the unemployed. Nonetheless, as it is shown in tables 5.3 and documented in an extensive literature, higher levels of youth unemployment is a common feature to most industrial societies. Taking into account this aspect, the ratio of youth unemployment / total unemployment, shows that Argentina has the lowest level comparing to both Latin American and OECD countries. Indeed, between 1990 and 2000 the relative weight of youth unemployment in Argentina

has decreased from 2.17 to 1.72. This means that, in relative terms, Argentinean youth unemployment is not a youth problem in itself, rather than it is a problem of high rates of total unemployment. This is one of the main peculiarities of the Argentinean case.

In Argentina, unemployment grew fastest among adult workers: youth unemployment increased 146.9% between 1990 and 2000, but adult unemployment increased in the same period 251.4%. Two factors have contributed to this process: first, a demographic factor, and secondly a youth bias in labor demand.

The increase of the active youth population (24.9%) during the last decade was significantly lower than the growth in the young population (30.5%). As a result the rate of labor participation among youth decreased slightly from 51.8% to 49.6%. In other words, there were less active youths than might be expected in terms of their demographic growth, which contributed to a diminution in the youth labor supply. In contrast, adult (25-64) economic activity grew faster than its demographic growth (22.5% and 10.9% respectively). The relatively slow increase of youth economic activity may be explained by higher and longer rates of school attendance (particularly among non-poor adolescents), as well as a discouraged worker effect. As several studies have showed, young people are particularly likely to drop out of the labor force when jobs are hard to find (SIEMPRO 2001e, Ryan 2001, Freeman and Wise 1982).

Simultaneously, labor demand benefited, in relative terms, young people. Between 1990 and 2000, 464,346 new jobs were created in Greater Buenos Aires:

89.2% of them were for adults and just 10.8% for youths. However, in order to keep constant the ratio of youth unemployment / total unemployment (at the level of 1990), the distribution of the new jobs should have been 99% "for" adults and just 1% "for" young people. The greater adaptability of the young to new technologies, production processes, and labor conditions (more insecure and flexible) have contributed to this youth bias (Filmus and Miranda 1999, Monza 1998). This trend has mainly affected young people with secondary education. As we will see below, educational vulnerability represents a critical determinant of labor opportunities.

In sum, during the 1990s unemployment has affected a significant proportion of the young population, becoming a major problem in terms of the transition to adulthood. However, a comparative analysis showed that youth unemployment in Argentina is a problem of a growing general unemployment rather than a youth problem as it is the case in other countries. It is worth noting that the sharp and homogeneous expansion of unemployment in contemporary Argentina makes difficult to identify segments of the population particularly affected or excluded of this problem.

5.2.3 Trends in youth job insecurity

As we showed above, one of the main features of the Argentinean labor market during the 1990s was the high level of unemployment. At the same time, however, workers had to face an increasing deterioration of labor conditions. This

has been the result of the deterioration of existing jobs, but also a consequence of the new labor conditions under which new jobs were created (see chapter 3).

The deterioration of labor market conditions during the 1990s has been particularly strong in terms of underemployment and social protection.⁴² In contrast, the proportion of workers with low incomes⁴³ has slightly diminished from 22.5% to 19.7% (table 5.4). The insecure conditions, however, have increased faster among adult workers, which is in part a result of an initial high level of insecurity in the youth labor market. By the year 2000 differences between youths and adults have narrowed. Nevertheless, young workers still suffer higher levels of job insecurity⁴⁴ than adults. Differences between both age groups are particularly wide in terms of social protection and incomes, but less significant in terms of underemployment. By the end of the decade one fifth of young worker were underemployed, one third earned poor incomes, and more than half of young wage workers were unprotected (see tables 5.4).

⁴² Underemployment is defined as employed who work less than 35 hours per week and wish to work longer; social protection refers to wage workers with pension benefits.

⁴³ Low income is defined as less than half the value of a poverty line for a four members family. A single young worker with this basic income could live out of poverty, and a new couple of two young workers with this basic income could start a family out of poverty. It is a very conservative measure, but a higher income reference would place all young people into the low or bad income category.

⁴⁴ Jo insecurity refers to situations of underemployment and / or, lack of social protection.

Table 5.4: Rates of job insecurity by age groups. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)

Job insecurity	1990			2000		
	15-24	25-64	Total	15-24	25-64	Total
Underemployment	11.5	7.9	8.5	20.2	16.5	17.1
Full employment	88.5	92.1	91.5	79.8	83.5	82.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Unprotected	49.1	22.2	28.2	55.4	33.4	38.0
Protected	50.9	77.8	71.8	44.6	66.6	62.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Poor income	33.5	20.3	22.5	32.5	16.8	19.7
Non-poor incomes	66.5	79.7	77.5	67.5	83.2	80.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Underemployment (employed who work less than 35 hours per week and wish to work longer), Unprotected (wage workers without pension benefits), Poor income (less than half the value of a poverty line for a four member family).

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October waves).

Young male workers have been more affected than females. Between 1990 and 2000 underemployment grew with an average annual rate of 0.6% among young women, but it grew even faster among men, with an average annual rate of 1.2%. In terms of social security protection, males in 1990 had a better situation than females, but by the end of the decade this situation had been reversed: 57.5% and 52.6% of male and female young workers, respectively, had jobs without social benefits. Finally, incomes followed an opposite trend in both groups; the proportion of males with poor incomes increased from 28.1% to 30.0%, whilst females with bad incomes decreased from 41.7% to 36.0% (see

tables 5.5). As a result of this process job insecurity has become less gendered. In some aspects, such as social protection, women are in a better situation than men.

Table 5.5: Rates of youth job insecurity by gender. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)

Job insecurity	1990			2000		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Underemployment	8.2	17.1	11.5	17.8	23.8	20.2
Full employment	91.8	82.9	88.5	82.2	76.2	79.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Unprotected	47.9	51.1	49.1	57.5	52.6	55.4
Protected	52.1	48.9	50.9	42.5	47.4	50.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Poor income	28.1	41.7	33.5	30.0	36.0	32.5
Non-poor incomes	71.9	58.3	66.5	70.0	64.0	67.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Underemployment (employed who work less than 35 hours per week and wish to work longer), Unprotected (wage workers without pension benefits), Poor income (less than half the value of a poverty line for a four member family).

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October waves).

An additional indicator of job insecurity is the level of labor stability. Several studies have shown that during the 1990s labor instability has become a common experience for an expanding proportion of the working class. This aspect has particular relevance for young people, and particularly for those that have already left the educational system. As we will see in future chapters, labor instability has a strong impact on objective and subjective dimensions of the transition process toward adulthood. It represents a critical factor for youth

independence and family formation as well as for the construction of a life project, expectations for the future, and an own identity.

According to data from the EPH for October 2000, the proportion of workers without a “permanent occupation” was 10.9% among adults (25-64) and 24.8% among youth. This is a first indicator of higher instability among young workers. This measure, however, could be questioned since the association between a “permanent occupation” and a “stable job” is not always clear.⁴⁵ An alternative approach to labor instability is a panel analysis of changes in labor status. Table 5.6 compares rates and types of labor changes among young and adult workers in a one-year period (panels from October 1991 to October 1992 and October 1999 to October 2000).

Comparing both panels makes clear that labor instability has increased in the last decade. The proportion of workers employed at least one year decreased from 66.5% to 60.3% and those with more than one labor change increased from 7.9 to 10.3%. A second observation emerging from this comparison refers to those changing from unemployment to inactivity. Even though the rates are relatively low, the increase during the decade is significant. It can be explained as a result of a “discouraged worker” effect associated with the high unemployment that characterized the 1990s.

⁴⁵ Moreover several problems have been noted in the corresponding survey question because of unclear answer options.

Table 5.6: Labor market instability by age groups in a one-year period. Greater Buenos Aires (1992 and 2000)

Labor Instability	1991-1992			1999-2000		
	15-24	25-64	Total	15-24	25-64	Total
Always employed	46.3	72.9	66.5	39.2	66.4	60.3
Employed to unemployed	4.6	2.8	3.2	7.0	5.8	6.0
Unemployed to employed	4.0	1.0	1.7	7.5	4.6	5.3
Employed to inactive	12.6	7.2	8.5	5.0	4.1	4.3
Inactive to employed	15.9	8.1	10.0	10.8	4.2	5.7
Unemployed to inactive	1.8	0.5	0.8	3.1	2.5	2.6
Inactive to unemployed	2.2	0.8	1.1	7.5	1.7	3.0
More than 1 change	12.4	6.5	7.9	15.5	8.8	10.3
Always unemployed	0.2	0.2	0.2	4.4	1.9	2.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: the category "always inactive" has been excluded. One-year panel between October 1999 - October 2000.

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October waves).

As was expected youths have less labor stability than adults; just 4 in 10 young workers remain employed at least during one year, a proportion that increases to 2 in 3 for adults. As a result of this initial difference, young people have higher rates of change in labor status. Except for changes from inactivity to employment or unemployment (which are likely to be first time job seekers, who are predominantly youths), the remaining changes are clear indicators of labor instability. Two types of categories from table 5.6 are particularly significant. On the one hand, changes between employment and unemployment (row 2 and 3), which suggest that young people lose and obtain jobs more easily than adults. On the other hand, the category "more than one change", which means that the respondent had a different labor status each time that he or she was surveyed (three times in one year); 8.8% and 15.5% of adults and young workers

respectively fell in this category, which reflects the high instability of the youth labor experience.

In sum, during the 1990s there was an increasing deterioration of labor conditions, and as a result differences between age groups and genders were shrinking. Young workers tend to have less secure job than adults, but differences have narrowed in the last decade. Young females used to have higher levels of job insecurity than males, but the 1990s have blurred these differences. These processes, however, have not been the result of improvements in labor conditions among previously disadvantaged groups, but a direct consequence of the expansion of labor insecurity within previously protected working sectors. In general terms, age and gender became less determinant of labor opportunities and conditions, and simultaneously new aspects emerges as determinant. The following section explores these aspects among youth.

5.3 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND LABOR INSECURITY IN ARGENTINA

5.3.1 Poverty, education, and youth labor problems

Unemployment and labor insecurity is an expanding phenomenon among young people. Youth, however, is not a unitary concept rather it is a heterogeneous universe (Allat and Yeandle 1992). Education, poverty, and household characteristics are clear determinants of different experiences and opportunities. Youth labor participation tends to assume different forms according to these background characteristics. This section explores the association between background aspects and unemployment and job insecurity. The aim is twofold: on

the one hand, to identify those sectors that are most affected by these labor problems and on the other hand, to identify the factors that limit labor opportunities. The first aim addresses the issue of the nature of the deterioration in the youth labor market in Argentina. Is it a general phenomenon or one dimension of a process of cumulative disadvantage? The second aim points to a closer examination of specific features contributing to the situation of labor vulnerability: what are the necessary and important conditions that block or facilitate to obtain a secure job?

In this section we divide the structure of the youth labor market in three main categories: secure job, insecure job, and unemployment. As shown in table 5.7 the most prominent change during the 1990s has been the sharp increase of unemployment, from 13.1% to 25.9%. In contrast, the proportion of young workers with insecure jobs remained almost unchanged around 43% of the active youth population.⁴⁶ The result has been a net loss of secure job opportunities. By the end of the decade, seven out of ten economically active youths suffered labor problems. In terms of gender differences, young women seem to be more vulnerable to unemployment and less affected by labor insecurity. As a consequence, the proportion of male and female youths with secure jobs was only slightly different (table 5.7).

⁴⁶ Given that the employed population has been drastically reduced, the percentage of young worker with insecure jobs, as part of the employed population, increased (see previous section).

Table 5.7: Structure of youth labor participation by gender. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000).

	1990			2000		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Secure job	47.0	38.7	43.8	32.1	28.5	30.5
Insecure job	41.4	45.7	43.1	46.2	40.2	43.6
Unemployed	11.6	15.6	13.1	21.7	31.3	25.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: population between 15 and 24 years old. Employers are excluded. Insecure jobs (underemployment and/or lack of social security protection)

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October waves).

Education has become a powerful determinant of youth labor opportunities. As mentioned in chapter 4 and as reflected in our interviews (see future chapters), public opinion has an ambiguous perception about the value of education and its effect on labor opportunities. It is often considered an important resource and an insignificant attribute at the same time. People's perception is that highly educated workers tend to have better jobs, but at the same time that they also suffer increasing unemployment and labor insecurity. Table 5.8 shows that this ambiguous perception reflects real trends in the effects of education on labor opportunities during the 1990s.

Young workers with educational vulnerability have higher rates of labor insecurity and unemployment. In 2000, 36.0% of non-vulnerable youths had secure jobs, but only 23.9% of those with educational vulnerability. Young workers with at least a secondary degree are more likely to obtain a secure job than those with lower levels of education. The changes observed during the 1990s, however, show that unemployment and job insecurity have increased at a faster

pace among the most educated youths. Unemployment for instance, grew 67% among vulnerable youths, but 267% among non-vulnerable young workers.

Thus, the effect of educational vulnerability on labor opportunities showed two important trends during the 1990s. On the one hand, non-vulnerable youths have become less protected against labor insecurity and unemployment. In 1990 the ratio between non-vulnerable young workers without a secure job (insecure or unemployed) and with a secure job was 0.88 and in 2000 it was 1.78. Thus, in 1990 young people with at least a secondary degree were likely to have a secure job, but in 2000 they were likely to suffer labor insecurity or unemployment (for every young worker in a secure job there was 0.88 unemployed or with labor insecurity in 1990, and 1.78 in 2000).

On the other hand, good jobs are more restricted for non-vulnerable youths than used to be the case. In 2000 they represented 54.0% of the labor force but they concentrated 65.0% of the total secure jobs. Young workers with educational vulnerability have become almost excluded from secure jobs; only one out of three good jobs was occupied by vulnerable young workers. In sum, although higher education does not avoid unemployment and labor insecurity, it has become a necessary condition for good jobs. The increasing credential role of education in contemporary Argentina explains this paradoxical situation as well as the mix social perception about education. In a context of a growing deterioration of the labor market, secondary school has become a gatekeeper -that is, a critical barrier for those below this level.

Table 5.8: Structure of youth labor participation by educational vulnerability.
Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000).

	1990			2000		
	Vulnerable	Non-Vulnerable	Total	Vulnerable	Non-Vulnerable	Total
Secure job	37.6	53.2	43.8	23.9	36.0	30.5
Insecure job	48.0	35.4	43.1	47.1	40.7	43.6
Unemployed	14.4	11.4	13.1	29.0	23.3	25.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: population between 15 and 24 years old. Employers are excluded. Insecure jobs (underemployment and/or lack of social security protection)

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October waves).

The labor market deterioration of the 1990s had also a stronger effect on poor youths, particularly in terms of job insecurity. In 2000 38.2% of active young people living in a non-poor household had a secure job, but only 10.6% of those living in poverty (table 5.9). The evolution of labor market conditions during the decade shows a relatively higher increase of labor insecurity among the poor and a relatively higher increase of unemployment within the non-poor. That is, even when unemployment was a prominent feature of both groups, it grew faster among non-poor. In contrast, job insecurity had relatively decreased among non-poor young workers and relatively increased among the poor. Changes in ratios of labor condition rates between the first and fifth youths' household income quintile⁴⁷ reflect these trends: the labor insecurity ratio grew from 0.94 in 1990 to 1.65 in 2000, but the unemployment ratio fell from 2.34 to 1.33 during

⁴⁷ Youth household income quintile refers to quintiles of per capita household income for young people living with parents and excluding young people's incomes.

the same period. Differences between the poorest and the richest are polarizing in terms of job insecurity and shrinking in terms of unemployment.

Table 5.9: Structure of youth labor participation by household poverty. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000).

	1990			2000		
	Poor	Non-Poor	Total	Poor	Non-Poor	Total
Secure job	23.5	46.5	42.7	10.6	38.2	29.5
Insecure job	42.8	41.8	43.7	46.3	39.4	42.4
Unemployed	33.7	11.7	13.6	43.1	22.4	28.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: population between 15 and 24 years old living with their parents. Employers are excluded. Insecure jobs (underemployment and/or lack of social security protection)
Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

The association between labor conditions and poverty, however, presents substantial variations when gender is considered. Gender differences in terms of having a secure job are deeper among youths living in non-poor households: 41.8% of non-poor males and 33.9% of non-poor females have a good job, while rates for the poor are much lower and almost similar. That is, being male and non-poor (both aspects together) represents a privileged condition in terms of labor opportunities.

Labor market problems affecting men and women living in poverty also present sharp differences. The relative weight of labor insecurity and unemployment for both genders is similar in non-poor households, but it is sharply different when young people live in poverty. The main labor problem for the poor male is labor insecurity; one in two has an insecure job. In contrast, the

central labor problem for poor young women is unemployment; more than 1 in two are unemployed (table 5.10). Poverty has a different effect on male and female youths, conditioning their labor opportunities in different ways.

Table 5.10: Structure of youth labor participation by household poverty and gender. Greater Buenos Aires (2000).

	Poor			Non-Poor		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Secure job	11.8	8.6	10.6	41.8	33.9	38.2
Insecure job	50.7	38.9	46.3	40.9	37.5	39.4
Unemployed	37.5	52.5	43.1	17.3	28.6	22.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: population between 15 and 24 year olds living with their parents. Employers are excluded.
 Insecure jobs (underemployment and/or lack of social security protection)
 Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

In sum, young people living in poverty are particularly subject to problems of job insecurity and unemployment. During the last decade, however, unemployment increased faster among non-poor young workers, while job insecurity grew faster among youths in poverty. Therefore, the unemployment problem has become a more general phenomenon over different educational and income sectors, but good jobs are more restricted to educated and non-poor youths. The poverty effect on labor opportunities has a deep gender break, increasing labor insecurity among men and unemployment among women.

5.3.2 Family contexts and youth labor problems

In this section we explore the effect of family characteristics on labor opportunities. Family can affect youth labor opportunities in two main ways. On the one hand, family members represent one of the most important sources of help and social contacts for young job seekers. Thus, opportunities to find a job as well as the quality of the jobs offered are likely to be associated with family characteristics. On the other hand, family structure and composition may affect the support received by young children.

Several studies have showed that social capital is a critical resource for individuals looking for a job. Job search is a matching process -that is, matching job seekers with employers searching for employees. As Granovetter (1974) has observed, job seekers and employers do not typically encounter one another as strangers; a considerable amount of recruitment occurs through personal contacts and informal local institutions. Social networks generate most job matches, and in this sense, the quality and extension of the social capital that a job seeker has become critical in order to obtain a job.

Granoveter has argued that people are much more likely to find a job through weak and extended ties than from stronger ties. The reason is that extended networks (although they tend to be weak) open a more heterogeneous and broader set of opportunities, while closer contacts tend to give access to similar networks and information, and thus they become redundant. This has been the focus of several studies that emphasized a tendency toward “occupational closure” resulting from a job matching process through social networks (Tilly and

Tilly 1994). The main assumption here is that even if weak ties are more effective, much of the job openings tend to circulate between close and similar contacts, that is, people in the networks recruit workers like themselves. This aspect is particularly important for poor young people since one of their main sources of contacts for job searching is the family and the neighborhood.

Family also represents the main source of (economic and emotional) support for young people in difficult situations. Several studies (Huston and Jenkins 1989, Allat and Yeandle 1992) have shown that the majority of the young people who have coped with unemployment have often owed much to the support of their families. But families do not have the same resources and conditions to support their young members. Therefore it is possible to hypothesize that family characteristics will affect youth opportunities to get employment through time and resources spent in searching for a job.

The family support of young people and its effect on different spheres of the transition process are analyzed in depth in future chapters using qualitative data. In this section, however, we explore this issue using the Permanent Household Survey, maximizing the scarce possibilities that this survey provides for exploring family support and social capital.

In order to examine the effect of family resources on the labor opportunities of young people, we consider two main household characteristics: parents' education and poverty. The analysis focuses on young children with the same level of education in order to observe the net effect of the family background on their employment opportunities.

Table 5.11 presents the association between the family background and the labor status of young school leavers with secondary degree. Unemployment presents sharp differences between educational classes, even when the children have the same level of education. The unemployment rate among young children with highly educated parents is 20.5%, it increases to 26.2% among those with mid educated parents, and to 31.7% among those with low educated parents. In terms of secure/insecure job, however, there are no significant differences. Therefore, young children with secondary school but more educated parents have higher opportunities of finding a job than those with less educated parents.

Table 5.11: Structure of labor participation of school leaver young children who only complete secondary education by parents' education and household poverty. Greater Buenos Aires (2000).

	Labor Status			Total
	Secure job	Insecure job	Unemployed	
Parents Education				
Low	40.0	28.3	31.7	100.0
Middle	37.1	36.7	26.2	100.0
High	39.0	40.5	20.5	100.0
Household Poverty				
Poor	22.4	16.9	60.7	100.0
Non-poor	41.3	36.3	22.4	100.0

Note: population between 15 and 24 year olds living with their parents. Employers are excluded. Insecure jobs (underemployment and/or lack of social security protection)
Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Differences between young children with a secondary degree living in poor and non-poor households are even deeper. More than half (60.7%) of those living in poverty are unemployed, contrasting with only one fifth (22.3%) of

youths in non-poor households. Secure jobs are also more likely among those living in non-poor households (41.3%) than among the poor (22.4%). It is possible to hypothesize that poor families also have poor and redundant social networks and, as a result, they have limited opportunities to help their young children to find a job and a good job.

Additionally, young children with secondary education living in poverty, have lower income than those living in non-poor households. As shown in table 5.12 there is a sharp difference between both groups: 59.6% of those in poverty have a low income, but only 16.1% of those who live in non-poor households. In contrast, parents' education does not make any difference. In every group around 80.0% have good incomes. Nevertheless, this homogeneity in youth incomes should be considered taken into account the results of the previous table. Indeed, a significantly higher proportion of young children with low educated parents do not have an income at all. In a context of very high levels of unemployment, to have a job, even with bad incomes, becomes important. Another aspect to take into account, is that the limit for a bad income is very low, and it is likely to find significant differences among those with good incomes from different household educational classes.

Table 5.12: Incomes of school leaver who complete secondary education by parents' education and household poverty. Greater Buenos Aires (2000).

	Incomes		Total
	Good Income	Bad income	
Parents Education			
Low	80.4	19.6	100.0
Middle	80.3	19.7	100.0
High	80.8	19.2	100.0
Household Poverty			
Poor	40.4	59.6	100.0
Non-poor	83.9	16.1	100.0

Note: population between 15 and 24 year olds living with their parents. The line dividing bad and good income is defined by: the value of the poverty line for a four members family / 2.
Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

The analysis of the family background of young school leavers with only primary school shows a stronger effect on their employment opportunities. When low levels of education are combined with disadvantaged household characteristics, the opportunities to get a secure job and receive a good income are dramatically restricted.

In sum, this analysis shows that the labor opportunities of young children are strongly conditioned by family resources such as parents' education and household poverty. These two family features generate significant differences among young children with the same educational level. Parents' education does not have a significant effect on children's job security/insecurity, but it is highly associated with unemployment: young people with less educated parents are more subject to unemployment than those with highly educated parents. This could be associated with more extended and useful social networks among more educated

families. Family poverty is another important determinant of labor opportunities. Youths with relatively high education (secondary degree) in poor households are particularly subject to unemployment and bad incomes. This could be associated with a trend toward “occupational closure”, where disadvantaged families tend to limit the structure of labor opportunities of their young children. In this way, young children living in poor families became trapped in poverty, even though they have relatively high educational levels.

A regression analysis allows us to look more closely at the family effect on youth labor opportunities. Table 5.13 presents the result for a logistic regression analysis on youth economic participation and employment status. The first regression, model 1, estimated the likelihood of being economically active. The analysis of the employment status is based in two separate logistic regressions: model 2 regresses the likelihood of being unemployed (against having a secure job) and model 3 the likelihood of having an insecure job (against having a secure job). The fourth model was constructed subtracting the coefficients of model 2 in model 3 -the results show the likelihood of being unemployed against having an insecure job. The dependent variables are the same in all four models, including individual features as well as family and household characteristics.

Table 5.13: Logistic regression on youth labor status. Greater Buenos Aires (2000).

Variables	Employment Status			
	Model 1 Active / Inactive	Model 2 Unemployed / secure	Model 3 Insecure / secure	Model 4 Unemployed / insecure
Intercept	-0.516	-1.320	-0.470	-0.850
Individual features				
Female	-0.269	0.836	0.256	0.580
Educational vulnerability	1.391	0.495	0.428	0.067
Family structure				
Single parent	0.219	0.986	0.593	0.393
Extended / Multimember	-0.092	0.032	-0.013*	0.045*
Household welfare conditions				
Household in poverty	-0.682	2.009	1.407	0.602
Overcrowded household	-0.159	0.016*	-0.071	0.087
Household with infants	-0.161	-0.112	0.305	-0.417
Household educational class				
Low educational class	-0.117	0.305	0.112	0.193
High educational class	-0.289	0.197	0.226	-0.029
Household head labor status				
With insecure job	0.300	0.379	0.434	-0.055
Unemployed	0.295	0.659	0.258	0.401
Inactive	0.819	-1.114	-0.367	-0.747
Household spouse labor status				
With insecure job	0.003*	0.409	0.539	-0.130
Unemployed	0.161	0.325	0.095	0.230
Inactive	0.165	-0.116	-0.094	-0.022
Siblings labor status				
Employed	0.447	-0.508	-0.158	-0.350
Unemployed	0.419	-0.231	-0.167	-0.064
Hhold. head occup. class				
High services	-0.316	0.624	-0.229	0.853
Middle services	-0.126	-0.026*	-0.170	0.144*
Routine non-manual	0.375	-0.059	-0.004*	-0.055*
Self-employed	0.116	-0.211	0.144	-0.355
Low services	-0.049	0.286	0.106	0.180

Note: Includes young people between 15-24 years of age living with parents. Coefficients are significant at 0.01 except those with *. The reference categories are: male, non-vulnerable, nuclear family, non-poor, non-overcrowded, with infants, middle educational class, head with secure job, spouse with secure job, inactive siblings, and manual workers occupational class.

Source: Permanent Household Survey, Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

The first regression shows that young males and young people with educational vulnerability are more likely to be economically active. The regression also suggests that the participation in the labor market of young people is strongly associated with the employment characteristics of the household. On the one hand, young people living with a single parent are more likely to participate in the labor market, which could be the result of the need of the household of increasing the number of income earners. On the other hand, young people tend to be economically active when their parents have precarious labor conditions (unemployment or insecure jobs). In this sense, the household occupational class variable also shows that young people from higher classes are less likely to be economically active.

Finally, poverty and household education present interesting results. Contrary to what would be expected, young people from poor households are less likely to participate in the labor market. This could be associated with a discouraged worker effect, but also with the presence of alternative spheres of socialization, particularly in areas of concentrated poverty (see section 5.4 and chapter 8). Regarding the household educational class, young people with low and high-educated parents are less likely to be economically active (comparing with those from middle classes).

Focusing on the economically active young population, the regression analysis of the employment status shows more complex results. The individual variables (gender and education) confirm some of the previous findings. Women

are more likely than men to have a precarious employment status, but the difference is particularly strong for unemployment, and less significant for an insecure job. Educational vulnerability has also a positive association with unemployment in model 2 and job insecurity in model 3; but its effect is relatively small in model 4. This suggests that education is a critical factor in order to have a secure job (model 2 and 3), but it is a less decisive factor between situations of unemployment or job insecurity (model 4).

Young children living in families with a single parent are more likely to suffer unemployment and labor insecurity (remember that they are also more likely to be economically actives). Having more restricted social networks may contribute to this result. In terms of household welfare conditions, poverty is the variable with the strongest effect. The poverty coefficients show a similar behavior to educational vulnerability: they are particularly high in model 2 and model 3. That is, the probability of having a secure job is much lower for young people living in poor household than for non-poor youths.

Educational and occupational household classes present a less clear trend. Young children from parents with low education are particularly subject to unemployment. Those with highly educated parents, however, are also more subject to unemployment and labor insecurity than young children from middle educational class households.

Regarding occupational class youths from the high services class are more likely to be unemployed and less likely to have an insecure job. It is possible to hypothesize that they have better conditions (family support) that allow them to

remain unemployed, waiting for a secure job. It is also important to remember, that most of the young people from this high occupational class remain inactive. These results suggest that employment is not a priority for them.

The self-employed and low services groups show a contrasting situation. Young people coming from households where the head is self-employed are less likely to be unemployed, but more likely to have insecure jobs. This could be associated with the characteristics of self-employment that allows children to work with their parents but under insecure conditions. Young people living in household defined as low services class are more subject to both unemployment and insecure jobs.

Finally, middle classes do not show a consistent pattern –and some of the coefficients are not significant. Young people whose households of origin are defined as middle services and routine non-manual are not subject to one particular condition. Nevertheless, the result suggest that young people from middle services classes have a similar pattern to those from high services classes; in contrast, young people from routine non-manual households, present a very similar situation to the reference category –that is, the manual worker class.

The employment status of other family members (father, mother, and siblings) has a significant impact on young people labor opportunities. Father's unemployment has a strong positive effect on model 2 and model 4, and also mother's unemployment but with lower coefficients. Thus, parents' unemployment seems to have a consistent association with young children unemployment. Two factors should be considered: first, that parents'

unemployment may force young children to become economically active –that is, to look for a job-, and therefore increase youth unemployment. Secondly, that the unemployed tend to have fewer work connections and higher social isolation, therefore young children with unemployed parents lose an important source of social networks and contacts.

Parents' job insecurity show positive coefficients in model 2 and 3. They suggest that young children with parents (particularly mothers) affected by job insecurity are less likely to obtain a secure job. Once again, the type and quality of parents work networks may affect the labor opportunities of their young children. Parents labor status seems to have a multiplier effect, that is: unemployed parents increase the likelihood on unemployed children, and parents' job insecurity decreases the likelihood of children having secure jobs.

5.4 STATUS ZERO YOUTH: OUT OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, OUT OF THE LABOR MARKET

5.4.1 Status Zero Youth in Argentina: some trends during the 1990s.

One of the most significant social problems associated with youth transitions to adulthood in the last decades has been the wide segment of the young population that is neither in education nor employment. This is a common phenomenon in most advanced countries and also in developing countries, although the roots of this unemployed, not-in-school youth status are different not only between regions but also between countries.

One approach to this issue emphasizes the joblessness problem, and therefore the analysis focuses on young school leavers who are not in employment or training schemes. Unemployed youths as well as inactive young people who are not in education are included in this analysis. A central argument for placing both situations together is that young people who face employment difficulties may be inactive instead of unemployed. A seminal work by Freeman and Weiss (1982) pointed out that the fuzzy and blurred frontier between unemployment and inactivity is one of the most distinctive aspects of youth labor markets. Further studies have also shown that young people are particularly likely to drop out of the labor force when jobs are hard to find, whether for study, leisure or illicit activities.

An alternative approach consists in analyzing both situations (unemployment and inactivity) separately. The main argument supporting this perspective is that factors and reasons behind unemployment and inactivity in school leavers may be substantially different. Thus, considering both statuses as a unique group may lead to mixing phenomena that are intrinsically different. Youth inactivity among school leavers may be generated by choice not constraint, or by non-economic constraints not labor market ones (Ryan 2001).

I follow this last approach, focusing on a group of young people that I defined “*status zero*”⁴⁸ as since they are out of the educational system and out of

⁴⁸ The term *status zero* is used by Williamson (1997a and 1997b) to depict the status of those young people not in education, training, and employment. According to this author, this concept represents a powerful metaphor for young people who appeared to count for nothing and be going nowhere. I used this concept because it also makes evident the central role of the educational system and the labor market in our society; we do not have a category for young people out of these two major social institutions.

the labor market, two of the main institutions of social integration during the youth transition.⁴⁹ There are a wide array of different factors and situations associated with this status. In some European countries, for instance, where this type of inactivity is significantly high, this phenomenon has been associated with leisure, travel, or inertia derived from extended periods of parental support. In Sweden, where the proportion of inactive youths (12.1%) between 20 and 24 years old was higher than the proportion of unemployed (11.0%), their main activities were military service (35.0%) and foreign travel (15.0%) (Ryan 2001). Other studies, particularly those conducted by Howard Williamson, which represent a landmark on this subject, have found that English youths in "status zero" tend to be associated with minor illicit and criminal activities, but mainly with a significant disengagement with respect to mainstream social values and aspirations.

Latin America lacks studies focusing on this growing sector of the young population, but the general perception from explorations by ECLAC, is that this group constitute a high social risk group, not merely because their chances of well being are considerable reduced, but also because they are highly likely to become involved in illicit and criminal activities.⁵⁰ The same study (ECLAC 1997) has estimated that around 5% of young people between the ages of 15 and 19 in the region are in this situation. This is no small number if it is considered that this

⁴⁹ In this study I defined the status zero as: young people who are out of the educational system and out of the labor market, excluding housekeepers and disabled youths.

⁵⁰ In this section we examine the magnitude and evolution of this phenomenon during the 1990, as well as individual and family factors associated with youth exclusion. In future chapters we analyze this group from a qualitative perspective using interviews that allows us to have a closer approach to life experiences of the excluded young people.

percentage represents around two million Latin American adolescents. In Argentina the proportion of *status zero* youth is similar, but it has experienced a slightly decrease toward the end of the decade.

In 1990 more than one fifth (21.0%) of the young population were neither attending school nor working, and this proportion remained almost unchanged (20.0%) by the year 2000. Nevertheless, as shown in table 5.14, the composition of this broad group has experienced radical changes during the last decade. One of the most important transformations is the jump in unemployment among this group; while in 1990 less than one third were unemployed, in 2000 almost half of young people not in school or employment were looking for a job. Simultaneously, the number of *status zero* youths plummeted from 23.3% to 14.6%. During the 1990s there was thus a significant movement of young people from inactivity toward the labor market, and particularly to unemployment. The growing proportion of unemployed has been the result of a decreasing amount not only of the *status zero* but also of the young who are housekeepers [mainly women].

Table 5.14 Young people out of education and employment by main status

	1990	2000
Unemployed	29.0	45.5
Housekeeper	45.3	38.0
Disabled	2.4	1.9
Status zero	23.3	14.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Note: population between 15 and 24 year olds neither studying nor working. Status zero refers to young people who are out of the educational system and out of the labor market, excluding housekeepers and disabled youths.

Source: Permanent Household Survey, Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

As a result of these changes, between 1990 and 2000 exclusion among the total young population decreased from 4.9% to 2.9%. Although this is a small proportion of the total youth population, it represents more than 63,000 young people in Greater Buenos Aires who show a high level of exclusion from mainstream social institutions and aspirations. As shown in table 5.15, adolescents and males are particularly subject to this phenomenon.

Table 5.15 Status zero youth by age and gender. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)

	1990			2000		
	15-19	20-24	Total	15-19	20-24	Total
Male						
Status zero	6.8	3.6	5.4	4.8	2.3	3.5
Other status	93.2	96.4	94.6	95.2	97.7	96.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Female						
Status zero	6.6	2.0	4.4	3.0	1.8	2.3
Other status	93.4	98.0	95.6	97.0	98.2	97.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total						
Status zero	6.7	2.8	4.9	3.9	2.0	2.9
Other status	93.3	97.2	95.1	96.1	98.0	97.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Status zero refers to young people who are out of the educational system and out of the labor market, excluding housekeepers and disabled youths.

Source: Permanent Household Survey, Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

Another aspect that exposes this small segment of youths to risk is that most of them concentrate other social disadvantages. Moreover, although the percentage of *status zero* youths has diminished during the 1990s, at the same time this group has become more homogeneously disadvantaged. The educational

capital is a clear example. As we saw in chapter 4 educational vulnerability decreased during the last decade, however the proportion of *status zero* youths affected by educational vulnerability increased from 67.1% in 1990 to 74.1% in 2000. Similar trends can be observed regarding household educational class, head's occupational status, and family structure. The proportion of non-status-zero youths with low educated parents decreased from 66.1% to 57.0%, but at the same time this percentage increased from 79.9% to 88.2% among the *status zero* youths. In 1990 *status zero* young people were less likely to have a single parent than other youths, but this trend was reversed by the end of the decade. The proportion of *status zero* young people with a single parent grew more than three times, from 6.8% in 1990 to 22.4 in 2000. The occupational status of the household head also shows a precarious family situation among this group. Three in ten have a household head with an insecure job, and two in ten a household head who is unemployed, that is half of the young people affected by *status zero* live in a household where the head has a weak or precarious labor market integration.

The poverty level in both groups has remained almost unchanged, but the percentage of status zero youth who are also poor is high; around 60.0% of them live in poor households. In sum, this brief analysis has shown that a majority of the young people who are out of the educational system and out of the labor market (critical spheres of social participation) tends to be also affected by several different social disadvantages. Most of them have low educational levels (74.1%), live in poverty (59.8%), and have low educated parents (88.1%). Additionally, a

significant proportion live in households headed by precarious or unemployed workers, and with a single parent. These are characteristics that make it more difficult to become socially integrated; in other words, the status zero seems to be associated with a process of cumulative disadvantages.

Table 5.16. Social disadvantages of *status zero* youths. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)

	1990		2000	
	Other status	Status zero	Other status	Status zero
Education				
Vulnerable	44.8	67.1	33.2	74.1
Non-vulnerable	55.2	32.9	66.8	25.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Poverty				
Poor	29.0	60.8	32.0	59.8
Non-poor	71.0	39.2	68.0	40.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Household Education.				
Low	23.8	29.8	20.6	40.1
Low-middle	42.3	50.1	36.4	48.1
Middle	17.0	4.9	18.8	5.9
High-middle	14.8	15.2	18.1	4.0
High	2.1	0.0	6.1	1.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Head Occupational Status				
Secure job	79.3	77.0	60.4	51.0
Insecure job	15.8	15.2	28.3	31.0
Unemployed	4.8	7.8	11.3	18.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Family Structure				
Single parent	11.0	6.8	16.3	22.4
Nuclear	67.7	75.4	62.0	49.6
Extended	21.3	17.8	21.7	28.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Includes young people between 15-24 years of age living with parents, except for education where the entire youth population was included. Status zero refers to young people who are out of the educational system and out of the labor market, excluding housekeepers and disabled youths.

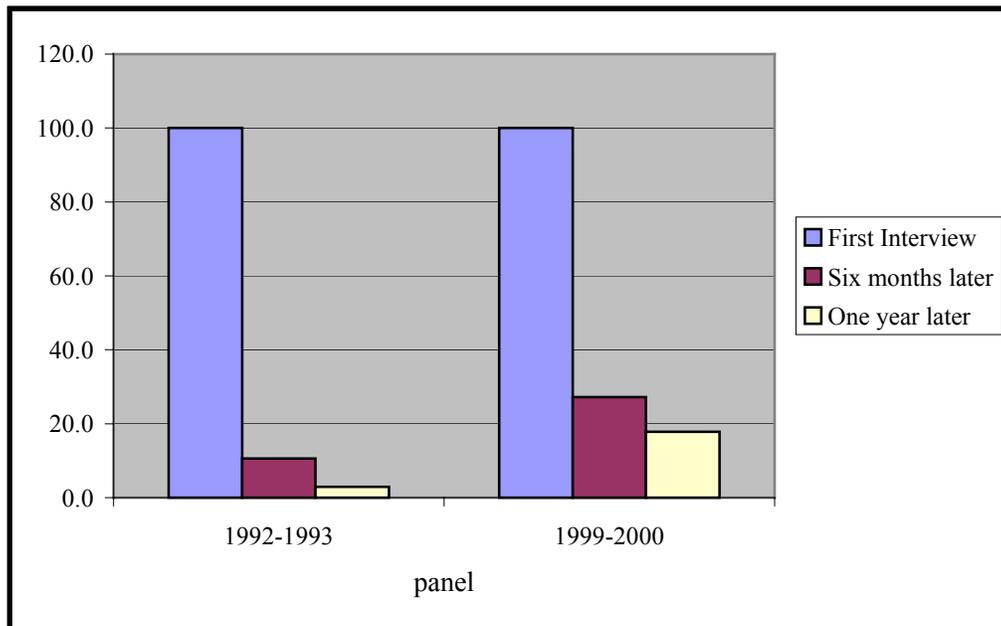
Source: Permanent Household Survey, Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

5.4.2 The *Status Zero* in the Transition to Adulthood

Some of the main issues associated with *status zero* refer to how long this status lasts during the transition period, and the previous and subsequent status of young people who have experienced a period out of education and the labor market. Regarding to the length of time, the question is whether the *status zero* represents a permanent situation concentrated in some specific youth groups or is a more volatile and transitional experience with a broader effect. Associated with this, the second question focuses on the situations from which young people are led to the *status zero* as well as the type of social integration that follows a period of *status zero*.

A panel analysis gives us the opportunity to explore these questions during a one-year period. A first result is the high proportion of youth who are vulnerable to status zero. In a one-year period more than 7.0% of the total youth population has experienced a period of *status zero* (among adolescents the percentage is even greater, 9.1%). How long do they remain in this situation? Figure 5.2 presents the percentages of youths that remained in *status zero* after 6 months (second interview) and after 12 months (third interview). Almost 3 in 10 young people (27.2%) that were *status zero* in the first interview remained in that status 6 months later, and almost 2 in 10 (18.0%) remained in that status one year later.

Figure 5.2: Length of status zero. Greater Buenos Aires (1992-1993 and 1999-2000)



Note: two panels were merged for each period in order to increase the sample. Panels are: October 1991 to October 1992, October 1992 to October 1993, October 1998 to October 1999, and October 1999 to October 2000.

Source: Permanent Household Survey, Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

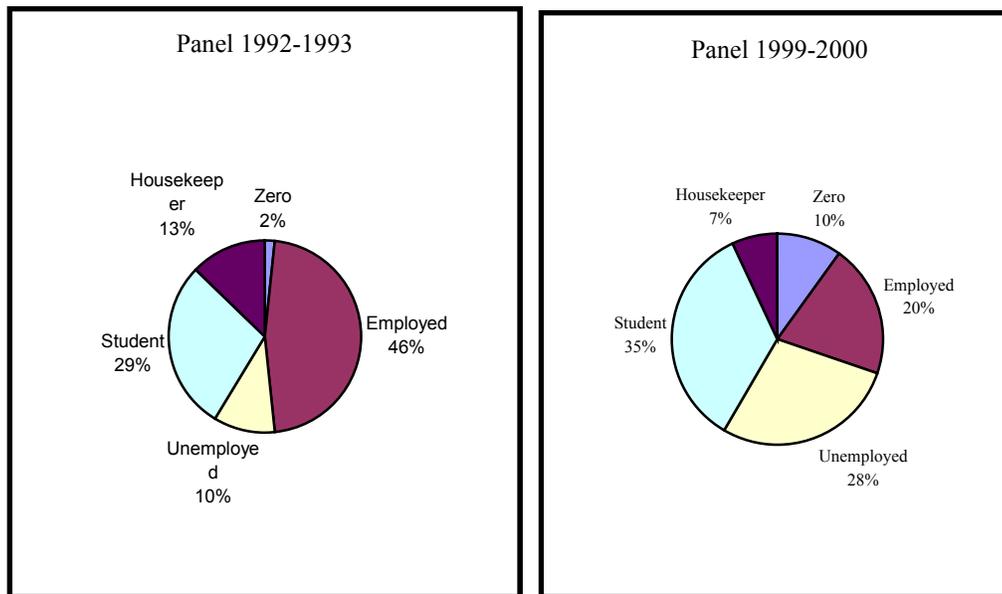
That is, 18.0% of those that experience a period of *status zero* at any moment remain in this situation for at least one year (this is a minimum estimate because we can not know since when and until when they were in this condition). Note the significant increase in the extension of *status zero* during the last decade. In the early 1990s, 10.6% of young people remained out of education and employment at least 6 months, and only 2.9% at least one year. Therefore, during the 1990s there were two different trends: on the one hand, as we saw in Table 5.15, there was a decrease in the proportion of young people that experience the

situation of *status zero* during a one-year period; on the other hand, there is a significant increase in the proportion of those who once out of education and employment remain in that situation for long periods. In sum, by the end of the decade although movement into and out of the *status zero* remained high, a considerable proportion (around one fifth) of *status zero* youths were finding growing difficulties to exit this status. This raises the issue of the previous status, and particularly their subsequent status.

The comparison between both panels shows significant changes in the composition of *status zero* youths. As shown in figure 5.3, at the beginning of the 1990s a majority of them were previously employed (46.0%), but by the end of the decade the main group were ex-students (35.0%). In general terms, the 1999-2000 panel presents a more heterogeneous composition of the *status zero*, and therefore a more complex picture of the reasons and factors contributing to this phenomenon. The growing proportion of ex-students, for instance, could be associated with a decision to delay participation in the labor market after leaving education, which, in turn, may have encouraged and been encouraged by an extended period of parental support. In contrast, the high proportion of ex-unemployed may be associated with an "escape" of young people from the labor market (and education). This does not mean a "discouraged worker effect". Indeed, I found that 86.0% of the *status zero* youths declared that they did not look for a job because "they did not want to work" and the remaining 14.0% due to "other reasons", but none of them said that it was due to the belief that it is not possible to find a job –the typical answer of a discouraged worker. In this sense,

the "escape" factor reflects a desire to retire from (and rejection of) the labor market. The qualitative analysis explores these issues in more detail.

Figure 5.3: Previous status of *status zero* youths. Greater Buenos Aires (1992-1993 and 1999-2000).



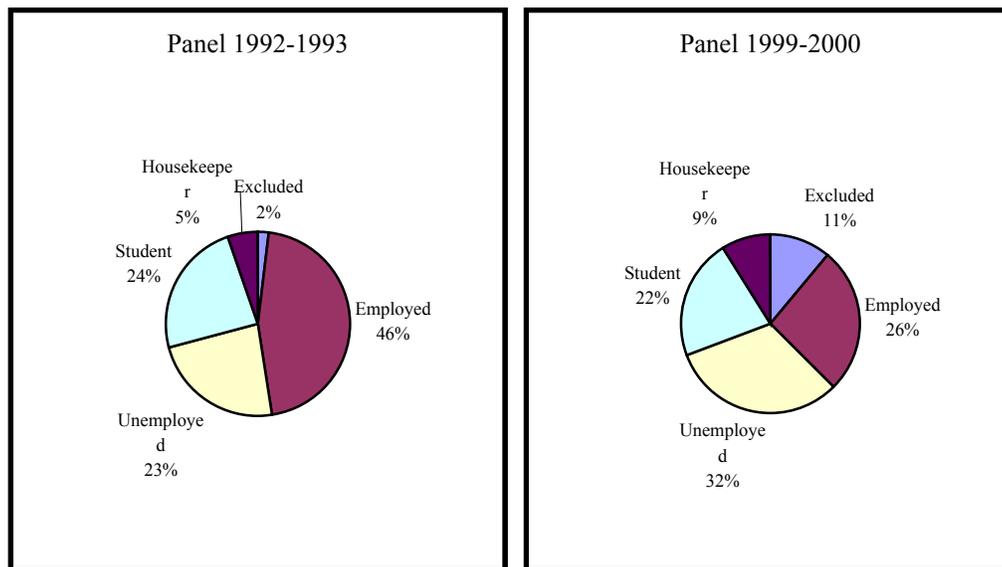
Note: two panels were merged for each period in order to increase the sample. Panels are: October 1991 to October 1992, October 1992 to October 1993, October 1998 to October 1999, and October 1999 to October 2000.

Source: Permanent Household Survey, Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

One of the most important aspects to note about the subsequent status is the sharp decline in the proportion of those that become employed. In the early 1990s, 46.0% of the *status zero* youths become employed by the second interview (6 months later), but by the end of the decade only 26.0% of them had this outcome. In the late 1990s young people in *status zero* found fewer opportunities

of (a successful) integration in the labor market. A significant proportion (22.0%) decided to return to the educational system, but most of them have extended a situation of precarious integration, whether through unemployment (32%) or *status zero* (11.0%).

Figure 5.4: Subsequent status of excluded youths. Greater Buenos Aires (1992-1993 and 1999-2000).



Note: two panels were merged for each period in order to increase the sample. Panels are from: October 1991 to October 1992, October 1992 to October 1993, October 1998 to October 1999, and October 1999 to October 2000.

Source: Permanent Household Survey, Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

The final analysis refers to the effect of the status zero on youth transition patterns. The findings show a general trend of continuity between previous and subsequent statuses. A significant percentage of young people have the same

status before and after experiencing a period out of education and employment. These are the percentages of those that repeat the same previous and subsequent status: 65.7% *status zero*, 56.7% employment, 49.6% unemployment, 30.3% education and 20.6% housekeeping (see table 5.17). The situation of those who were previously unemployed is particularly significant. Almost half of them were unable to find a job after exclusion. This was the group who had the greatest difficulties in obtaining a job, showing the increasing difficulties of obtaining a job for those who remain out of work for extended periods of time.

Table 5.17: Previous and subsequent status of *status zero* youths. Greater Buenos Aires (1999-2000)

Previous	Subsequent status					Total
	Excluded	Employed	Unemployed	Student	Housekeeper	
Status zero	65.7	0.0	19.8	8.1	6.4	100.0
Employed	10.3	56.7	22.7	0.0	10.3	100.0
Unemployed	26.5	23.9	49.6	0.0	0.0	100.0
Student	20.4	27.6	5.3	30.3	16.4	100.0
Housekeeper	79.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.6	100.0

Note: two panels were merged; panels are from October 1998 to October 1999, and from October 1999 to October 2000.

Source: Permanent Household Survey, Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

In spite of these continuities, some disruption can be observed. An important percentage of previously employed and (particularly) student youths find problems in returning to these statuses after a period out of education and labor market. A significant proportion of previously employed youths become unemployed. In contrast, those who were students follow a more heterogeneous pattern. Finally, the situation of ex-housekeepers is particularly risky; almost 80%

of them remain in status zero, and the remaining 20% return to household activities. These youths have little or no opportunity of integration into the labor market or the educational system, and they seem to be trapped in social spheres that do not increase their resources or opportunities for adulthood.

The fact that ex-employed and ex-unemployed return massively to the labor market, and ex-students follow more heterogeneous destinations, is consistent with the hypothesis that the status zero has different meanings. For those who were in the labor market, it seems to be a temporary “escape”. In contrast, for those who were students, *status zero* seems to be a period of “absence” before starting new life stages.

5.5 SUMMARY

During the 1990s the rate of youth economic activity has remained almost unchanged, however this is the result of different trends among different groups. The labor participation of adolescents (15-19) suffered a significant decrease, particularly among males, which could be associated with longer education. In contrast young women between 20 and 24 years of age experienced a significant increase. But the most important difference is due to poverty: the rate of economic activity decreased among non-poor and increased among poor young people.

Labor market conditions suffered a significant deterioration during the last decade. Youth unemployment became a major problem, however, this seems to be the result of a very high level of general unemployment, more than a youth problem in itself. A similar trend can be observed in terms of job insecurity. Age

has lost weight as a major determinant of different labor opportunities, mainly as a result of a generalized deterioration of the labor market. Nevertheless, other social characteristic emerged as critical factors in terms of different labor opportunities among the young population.

Education vulnerability and poverty show a significant and increasing association with job insecurity. During the last decade young people with less than secondary school and living in poverty have become almost excluded from secure jobs. They are also more subject to unemployment, however this situation has become more generalized during the 1990s, and as a result unemployment grew faster among non-poor and high-educated young people. Additionally this chapter has shown that family background characteristics are strongly associated with the opportunities and constraints experienced by young people in the labor market. The analysis suggests that disadvantaged households tend to increase the disadvantages of their children in the labor market; this is particularly relevant in that the labor market has been a traditional mechanism of social mobility. Labor opportunities are associated with the educational and occupational class of the household, but it is worth pointing out the effect of the parents' labor status. Young people whose parents are unemployed or have an insecure job are more likely to be economically active, but they are also more subject to unemployment and job insecurity. This suggests a process of reproduction and accumulation of disadvantages and, at the same time, raises questions for subsequent analysis about the mechanisms of this process. Chapter 7 and 8 analysis and explore some of these mechanisms, such as the internal household conditions, the extension and

quality of social networks, and the socio-economic characteristics of different urban contexts.

This chapter also analyzed the main characteristics of a particular group of young people, those who are out of the educational system but also out of the labor market. The proportion of *status zero* youths has decreased in the last decade, however it has also become deeply associated with social disadvantages in terms of education, poverty and family background characteristics. There is also an observable trend to remain longer periods in *status zero*. The qualitative analysis explores in more detail the life experiences of this group, focusing on the process driving young people to leave the educational system and the labor market, and their alternatives spheres of social interaction and socialization.

Chapter 6. Getting Married and Leaving Home: The Intermeshing between the Public and Private Spheres of the Transition to Adulthood

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on two main issues. First, it examines the patterns of family formation and home departure among young people over the last decades. Secondly, it explores the intermeshing between socio-economic conditions (education and labor) and these two transitional processes.

In Argentina, as well as in most Latin American countries, the analysis of the transition to adulthood is an incipient and still underdeveloped area of study. In particular, the family and living arrangements of young people have received little attention from social researchers. Until recently, the situation in the developed world was not significantly different. Mainstream research on youth focused on the more public and visible transition from school to work. At the same time, it tended to neglect the analysis of the home and family lives of young people, as well as the reciprocal relationships between these different dimensions of the transition to adulthood (Jones and Wallace 1992, Allat and Yeandle 1992, Jones 2000). Thus, while there is a substantial development in the analysis of the public dimensions of youth transition, much less attention has been paid to its private dimensions, as well as to the intermeshing of the public and private spheres.

Over the last two decades several studies have observed that young people in most developed countries are changing the timing and pattern of family and

residential transition. They have become more extended, in the sense that youths remain at their parent's home for longer periods of time, postponing both home departure and marriage. But at the same time, new forms of family and living arrangements have emerged. Beyond these general trends, however, significant differences persist between and within countries.

Simultaneously with this new focus on the family and housing transitions, two main factors have led to the study of the relationship between these private spheres of the youth transition and its more public dimensions of education and labor. On the one hand, with the emergence of studies of the life course, the focus on youth research shifted toward a more holistic approach (Jones and Wallace 1992). On the other hand, structural changes in labor market conditions over the last decades generated a new concern about their effects on different spheres of youth lives (Paugam 1995, Evans and Furlong 1997).

This chapter explores these issues in the Argentinean context. The first section focuses on the main trends that have characterized the family and residential transitions during the last decades. The goal is to identify major changes in patterns of transition to adulthood, as well as the particularities of the Argentinean pattern from a comparative perspective. The second section, analyses the association between the public and private spheres of the transition process. The central objective of this section is to explore the effect of different educational and labor conditions on family and living arrangements. Finally, a third section presents a more comprehensive analysis of youths' vulnerability.

The analysis focuses on the association between education, work, family and housing characteristics of young people, and their vulnerability to poverty.

6.2 THE ARGENTINEAN PATTERN OF FAMILY AND RESIDENTIAL TRANSITION FROM A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

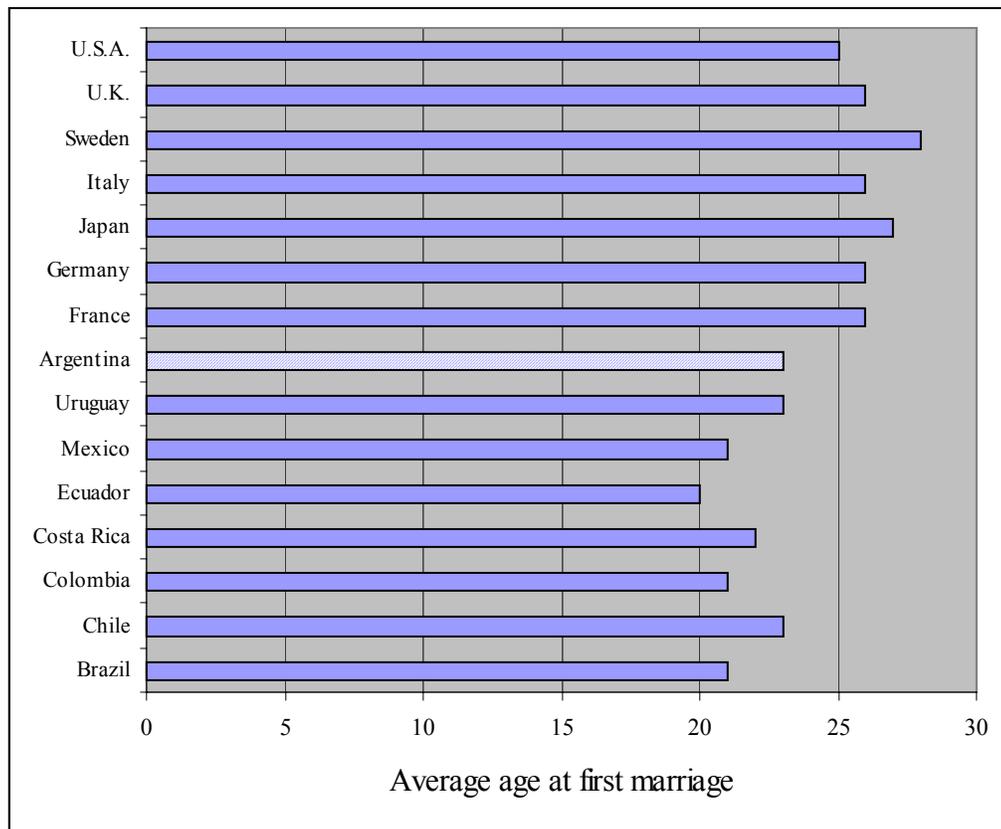
6.2.1 Trends and characteristics of the family transition

Three main aspects have characterized the process of youth family transition in Argentina during the last decades: marriage has become increasingly delayed, cohabitation has become more extensive, and motherhood during adolescence and early youth has remained high but significantly polarized among social sectors. While the first two aspects are similar to trends observed in most developed countries, the last one is a common feature in Latin America. As a result of this particular combination, the Argentinean pattern of youth family transition approaches the American model, characterized by an increasing postponement of marriage and persistent high levels of adolescence childbearing, particularly among disadvantaged social classes.

The average age at first marriage (formal or consensual) of Argentinean women is 23 years, which is among the highest in Latin America, but clearly below the average mean in most developed countries (see figure 6.1). However, during the entire century, but particularly since the early 1960s, Argentina has experienced a delay in marriage among young people. Using data from the City of Buenos Aires, and considering only formal marriages, Torrado (2000) has estimated that the average age at first formal marital union increased from 26.4 in

1965 to 28.2 in 1995 among women, and remained almost unchanged among men during the same period (29.1 in 1965 and 29.5 in 1995). Torrado's figures, however, do not take into account the increasing importance of cohabitation or informal unions, which has a direct effect, increasing and delaying the timing of first formal marriage. Nevertheless, the analysis of the last decade shows that there has been a postponement of marriage regardless the type of marital union.

Figure 6.1: Average age of women at first marriage in Argentina and selected countries (circa 2000)

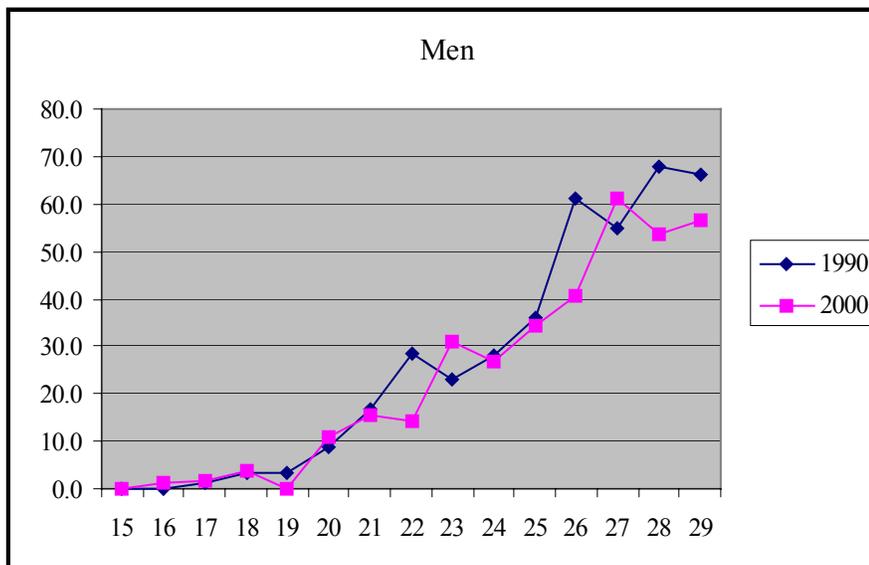
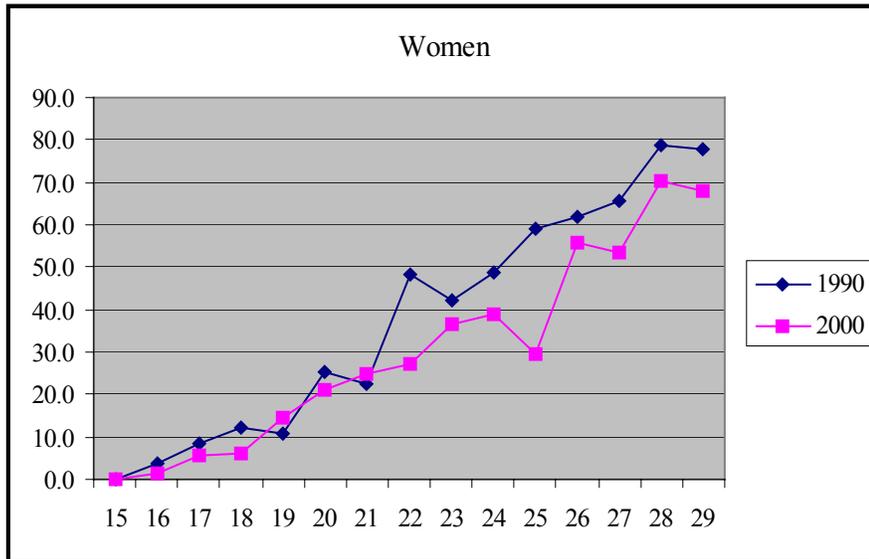


Note: marriage includes formal or informal unions.
 Source: Population Reference Bureau 2001.

Figures 6.2 shows the trends during the last decades considering both formal and informal unions. Both figures present the proportion of male and female young people living with a partner (married or in cohabitation) at different ages in 1990 and 2000. They show that even considering cohabitation there has been a postponement of marriage, particularly strong among women and less consistent among men. The proportion of young women living with a partner by age 22, decreased from 48.5% in 1990 to 27.0% in 2000; among young men, 61,2% were married or in cohabitation by age 26 in 1990, but only 40.7% of them were in the same situation ten years later.

Both figures show an “age breakpoint” from which men and women diverge. For women this turning point is at age 21 and for men at age 25. While the proportions of women and men married or in cohabitation in 1990 and 2000 are similar up to ages 21 and 25 respectively, from those ages on the patterns for men and women split. The proportion of young men and women experiencing an early family transition remained unchanged during the last decade. The observed delay of marriage is mainly due to the postponement of family transition among those experiencing the transition in their early twenties.

Figure 6.2: Proportion of young people married at each age (formal or informal) by gender. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000).



Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

The previous observation may be associated with a pattern of increasing inequality among different social sectors. Early marital unions during adolescence reduce the opportunities of young people in terms of educational attainment, increase the risk of poverty, and diminish the opportunities of planning and enhancing their resources for the process of family transition. Therefore the extension or postponement of marriage could be seen as contributing to reducing the vulnerability of the family transition and the early family stages. Figures 6.2 show that the gap between early and late family formation broadened during the last decade. While around one fifth of young women were married by age 20 in 1990 as well as in 2000, the remaining 80% of young women has consistently delayed their family transition extending the period before the first marital union.

The qualitative analysis shows that early unions represent critical breaks in young people life course that are the result of different “pushing” factors such as family violence, pregnancy, etc. (see chapter 7). Consequently, early marital unions are better viewed as a link in a chain of cumulative disadvantages rather than an original cause of future disadvantages.

Table 6.1 presents a general picture of young people’s marital status in 1990 and 2000. Consistent with the previous findings, the proportion of single female and male adolescents (15-19) remains almost unchanged during the 1990s (around 93.0% and 98.0% for women and men respectively). This table also makes clear that the main changes in marriage postponement have occurred in the early twenties among women and in the late twenties among men. While the proportions of single women aged 20-24 and 25-29 increase (from 64.5% to

70.8% and from 31.6% to 44.3% respectively), the percentage of single men in the second age group (20-24) remains almost unchanged (around 80.0%) and increases in the third age group (25-29) from 43.1% to 51.8%. As a result of these different gender patterns, the proportions of single female and male young people have become more similar, particularly in the 20-24 age group.

Table 6.1: Marital status of young people by gender and age groups. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)

	1990				2000			
	15-19	20-24	25-29	Total	15-19	20-24	25-29	Total
Women								
Single	93.2	64.5	31.6	63.8	93.9	70.8	44.3	70.6
Cohabitation	3.6	9.0	12.7	8.3	4.5	16.8	25.2	15.2
Married	3.2	26.6	55.7	27.9	1.6	12.4	30.5	14.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Men								
Single	98.5	79.7	43.1	76.3	98.7	80.2	51.8	78.4
Cohabitation	1.1	6.8	10.3	5.6	1.3	14.3	23.0	12.3
Married	0.4	13.5	46.6	18.1	0.0	5.6	25.2	9.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

It is also important to note that, from a comparative perspective, the proportion of single young women in Argentina is high. A recent study conducted by the CEPAL (2000) in eight Latin American countries shows that less than 50.0% of young women aged 20-24 and less than 20% of those aged 25-29 remain single. These values clearly contrast with the Argentinean rates of 71.0% and 44.0% for young women in each age group, respectively.

The Argentinean situation with respect adolescent marriage is closer to that of the region and contrasts with most developed countries. During the last three decades, adolescent marriage has decreased in developed regions becoming an exceptional phenomenon (except in U.S.A. and Italy where it still remains relatively high). In the same period, Argentina has experienced an opposite trend characterized by a slight increase in the percentage of married adolescent women (formal or informal unions). By the late 1990s, this proportion was slightly lower than in other Latin American countries but still high.

Table 6.2: Rates of currently married adolescents (15-19). Argentina and selected countries (circa 1970 and circa 1995)

	1970		1995	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Argentina	10	1.7	12.0	1.8
Latin American countries				
Brazil	13.0	1.5	17.0	
Chile	9.0	1.5	12.0	5.0
Colombia	13.0	2.8	13.8	3.2
Costa Rica	15.0	1.9	15.4	2.6
Ecuador	19.0	3.8	20.0	7.0
Mexico	21.0	5.1	16.0	6.0
Uruguay			13.0	3.0
OECD countries				
France	3.0	0.3	0.8	0.1
Germany			1.9	0.2
Japan	2.0	0.6	0.7	0.3
Italy	6.0	0.6	4.6	0.6
Sweden	2.0	0.2	0.5	0.1
United Kingdom	11.0	2.8	2.5	0.5
U.S.A.	11.0	3.9	4.6	1.4

Source: The World's Women 1995 and The World's Women 2000, United Nations.

Thus, Argentina shows two simultaneous and contrasting trends. On the one hand, the proportion of married women older than 20 year olds has decreased and is relatively low (a common trend in developed countries). On the other hand, the proportion of married adolescent women has remained unchanged and at high values (a common feature of Latin American countries). There are, then, two different patterns of family transition among Argentinean young people: one of an increasing delay of marriage and other of persistent early marriage. Given the risks associated with early marriage and its association with disadvantaged social sectors, these two patterns represent a new source of increasing social inequality.

Table 6.1 also provides information about the growth of cohabitation or informal unions among young people. Cohabitation has increased in all age groups and in both genders. During adolescence (15-19) and early youth (20-24) informal unions have become more common than formal marriage. In both age groups there is a higher proportion of female and male young people cohabiting than married. Formal marriage has also experienced an important decrease among the third age group (25-29), but in this case it is still slightly higher than cohabitation.

Consensual unions have become more common and socially accepted not just in Argentina but also in Latin America and developed countries (United Nations 1995, CEPAL 2000, Population Reference Bureau 2000). Nevertheless, there are contrasting interpretations on the implications and consequences of this trend. In most developed countries, cohabitation has become a common way in which single youths first become established as couples. Cohabitation represents

a period of experience that precedes formal marriage (United Nations 1995). Torrado (2000) has suggested that this interpretation applies in the Argentinean case. Based on changes in rates of formal and informal unions during the life course, she argues that cohabitation among young people should be seen (at least among some sectors) as a transitional period before marriage rather than as an alternative and permanent option.

Other studies, in contrast, emphasize the vulnerability and risks associated with consensual unions in developing countries. It is argued that in Latin America men in non-formal unions tend to contribute less to the family than those in legal marriages, and that the smaller paternal investment often results in poorer nutrition for the children (United Nations 1995, Filgueira 1999). Different authors have argued that consensual unions are less stable than formal marriage, and that the risks and disadvantages associated with cohabitation are an indirect effect of family instability (Filgueira 1999, Kaztman and Filgueira 2001).

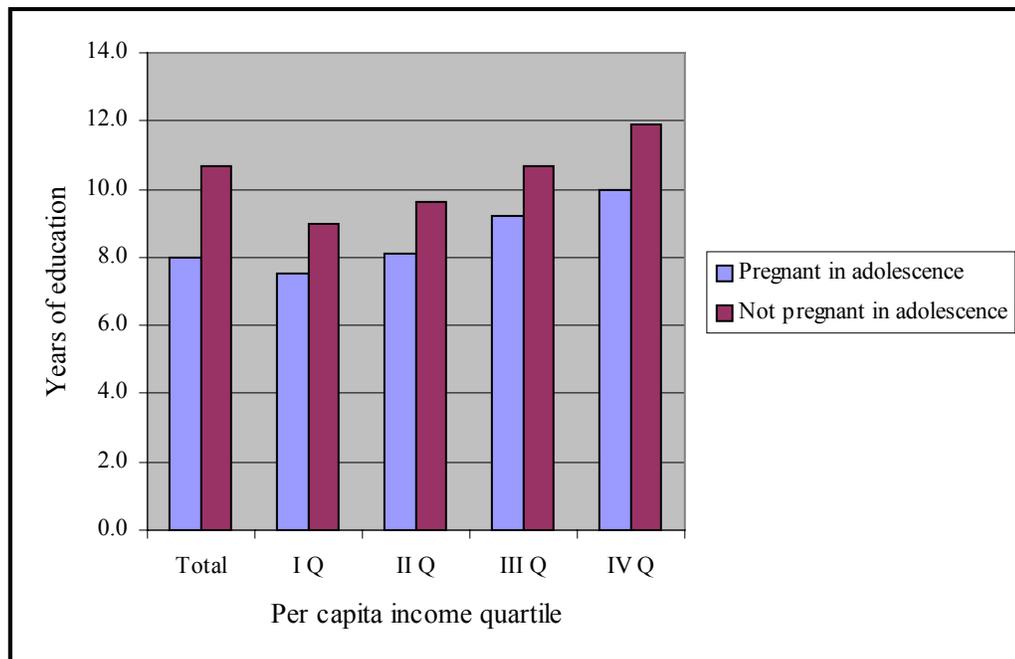
A final and important characteristic of the family transitions of youths in Argentina is the persistent high level of adolescent childbearing. There is considerable agreement that early pregnancy and childbearing is a risk factor and increases the vulnerability of newborns as well as of adolescent mothers. On one hand, young women and their children face serious health risks from early pregnancy and childbearing. Maternal mortality among 15 to 19 year old women is twice as high as for women in their 20s; infants of young mothers are also more likely to be premature and have low birth weights (Population Reference Bureau 2001). In Latin America, several studies have found that the risk of death during

the first year of life is significantly higher for infants born to mothers under age 20 (see Kaztman and Filgueira 2001).

On the other hand, adolescent motherhood tends to be associated with several factors that increase the vulnerability of the mother's transition toward adulthood. Early childbearing implies, for the young parents (in general, the mother), undertaking new responsibilities that restrict other opportunities. Adolescent pregnancy has been associated with less education, restricted labor opportunities, and lower future income for the young. With respect to educational capital, ECLAC (1997) has estimated that teenager mothers receive around two years of schooling less than women who do not become mothers before the age of 20. This loss of educational capital represents between 25% and 35% of the total number of years of schooling usually completed by women from low socioeconomic strata (ECLAC 1997). Early pregnancy also affects the process of family formation. Different studies have found that pregnancy during adolescence tends to be associated with single motherhood and instability in future marital relationships (CEPAL 2000).

In Argentina, schooling attainment among adolescent mothers is 2.7 years lower than among young women who were not pregnant during their adolescences. This educational loss represents around 16% of the total years of schooling attained by young women from different income sectors (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3: Years of education of women aged 20-24 by whether or not they had surviving children born of them before they reached the age of 20, by household income quartiles. Greater Buenos Aires (1994)



Source: Social Panorama of Latin America 1997, ECLAC 1997.

The effect of early pregnancy on educational attainment, however, remains under discussion. The association between both phenomena tends to be overestimated given that preexistent disadvantageous conditions are usually neglected. Taking into account the background conditions of adolescent women, several studies conducted in the United States have found that the effect of early pregnancy on educational attainment is much less significant than was previously estimated (Hoffman, Foster and Furstenberg 1993, Hotz, McElroy and Sanders 1997, Moore 1993). Hoffman, Foster and Furstenberg (1993), for instance, found

that the postponement of pregnancy during adolescence only increases schooling attainment in 0.38 years. For Latin America, a more recent study conducted by CELADE (cited in CEPAL 2000) and based on a Demographic and Health Survey from eight countries, found that between 15% to 20% of school dropouts among young women (aged 15-24) are due to early pregnancy. The study also found that taking into account background conditions and the reasons for school dropouts, the educational advantage due to pregnancy postponement until after 20 would be less than 1 year in each country.

Although figure 6.3 shows that in Argentina the educational disadvantage of adolescent mothers is proportionally similar along all income sectors, our qualitative data have shown that other pre-existent conditions, such as family support, generate substantial differences in terms of mothers' future opportunities and the vulnerability of their transitions to adulthood. Thus, other aspects than poverty should be taken into account when evaluating the effect of early pregnancy. As we will see in future chapters, in some cases teenager women may decide to become pregnant as a way of escaping from conflictive family relationships or because they have few other life opportunities outside of motherhood. Early pregnancy, as early marriage, represents in these cases a new disadvantage added to pre-existing adverse conditions.

Table 6.3: Indicators on adolescent childbearing. Argentina and selected countries (1995-2000).

Country	Total fertility rate ^a	Adolescent fertility rate ^a	% of TFR attributed to adolescents	% of women giving birth under age 20 ^b	% of births to women under age 20
Argentina	2.62	64.8	12.0	15.0	15.0
Latin Am.					
Brazil	2.27	71.9	16.0	20.0	18.0
Chile	2.44	49.0	10.0	18.0	10.0
Colombia	2.80	87.6	16.0	19.0	18.0
Costa Rica	2.83	84.6	15.0	21.0	18.0
Ecuador	3.10	71.9	12.0		15.0
Mexico	2.75	69.5	13.0	17.0	15.0
Uruguay	2.40	70.1	15.0	12.0	16.0
OECD					
France	1.71	8.6	3.0	7.0	2.0
Germany	1.30	11.0	4.0		3.0
Italy	1.20	7.2	3.0		2.0
Japan	1.43	3.7	1.0	2.0	1.0
Sweden	1.57	7.2	2.0		2.0
U.K.	1.72	28.6	8.0		7.0
U.S.A.	1.99	59.2	15.0	19.0	14.0

Note: a births per 1000 women; b among women currently aged 20-24.

Source: Based on data from: The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics, United Nations 2001; World Population Monitoring 1999: Population Growth, Structure and Distribution, United Nations 2000; and Juventud Población y Desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe, CEPAL 2000.

By the late 1990s, the incidence of early childbearing among women aged 20-24 in Argentina reaches 15.0%, which means that more than one in seven were mothers during their adolescent years. Adolescent fertility and its contribution to the total fertility rate is among the lowest in Latin America (only above Chile), but much higher than in developed countries (except the United States).⁵¹ Although the total fertility rate experienced a significant decrease during the last three decades, the adolescent fertility rate has only slightly diminished (much less

⁵¹ Among more developed countries, the United States has one of the highest rates of teenage childbearing.

than in the remaining age groups). This has been a common trend in most Latin American countries, with the exception of Brazil and Uruguay where the rate of adolescent fertility has increased during the last 30 years. As a result of this trend, adolescent fertility has increased its contribution to the total fertility rate throughout Latin America. In Argentina the fertility rate among women aged 15-19 decreased from 68.0 in 1970-1975 to 64.8 in 1995-2000, but its contribution to the total fertility rate grew from 10.8% to 12.3%.

In sum, the preceding analysis has indicated some basic trends in family transition patterns in Argentina during the last decades. There has been a clear trend toward an increasing postponement of formal and informal first unions, particularly among women. This trend, however, has not affected adolescent marriage, which has remained almost unchanged during the last decade. The postponement of marriage has taken place mainly among women aged 20-24 and men aged 25-29. Simultaneously cohabitation has sharply increased, but the interpretation of this trend is not clear. Finally, early childbearing remains a factor affecting the transition of a significant proportion of adolescent women. These three trends differ between social sectors both in terms of their magnitude and their meanings. This will be subject of this and future chapters.

6.2.2 Trends and characteristics of the residential transition

This section explores the characteristics of youth residential transitions in Argentina comparing them with the trends identified in developed countries.⁵²

⁵² This issue has not been studied neither in Argentina nor in other Latin American countries; thus our main references for a comparative analysis comes from developed countries.

Three general trends have characterized this process in developed regions during the last decades: a) after a long period of an increasingly earlier departure from the family home, this trend has been reversed during the last two decades and young people now stay longer in their parents' homes; b) apart from these changing trends, in comparison with men young women are still less likely to live with their parents (they leave earlier the parents' home), and more likely to live in their own families after departure from the parental household (they tend to leave the parents' home after marriage); and c) the process of leaving home has become less associated with the family transition, that is, young people have been increasingly leaving home not for marriage but for premarital (transitional) residential alternatives (Card and Lemieux 2000, Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1993, Jones 1995, Jones 2000, Fernandez Cordon 1997, Galland 1997, Furlong and Cartmel 1997). Some of these features are also valid for Argentina, where youths are postponing their departure from parents' home and women tend to leave home at younger ages than men. In contrast there are less substantial changes in terms of living arrangement after departure -that is, leaving home is still strongly associated with family formation.

Apart from these general trends, however, several studies have observed a growing divergence between countries. Differences in economic contexts, institutional arrangements, and social norms are key factors affecting the home transition and generating different patterns of moving out of the parental home.

Table 6.4 presents a closer examination of these recent trends in some European countries and a comparative analysis of the Argentinean pattern. It also

includes available data for two Latin American countries (Mexico and Uruguay) and the United States. A clear picture of the increasing proportion of young people remaining with their parents emerges from this table. However, a close examination suggests some interesting peculiarities behind this general trend.

Table 6.4: Proportion of young people living at parents' home by gender and age groups. Argentina and selected countries (1980s and 1990s).

		Female			Male		
		15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29
Argentina	1980	74.3	50.0	--	81.7	61.7	--
	1990	86.6	61.7	29.5	93.5	78.3	42.2
	2000	90.8	70.2	38.7	93.0	78.3	48.5
Mexico	1997	75.5	49.2	--	85.7	63.5	--
Uruguay	1990	--	63.7	--	--	63.7	--
	1996	--	72.2	--	--	72.2	--
France	1986	89.8	36.4	8.4	94.8	56.9	19.3
	1994	90.9	41.6	10.3	94.8	61.8	22.5
Germany	1986	92.0	42.8	11.0	94.8	64.8	27.4
	1994	93.2	44.6	12.7	95.4	64.6	28.8
Italy	1986	95.7	70.4	25.5	97.4	87.8	49.6
	1994	95.3	82.4	44.1	97.3	92.2	66.0
Spain	1986	93.9	76.1	35.3	95.6	88.1	53.2
	1994	94.6	84.3	47.6	95.6	91.5	64.8
U.K.	1986	87.8	33.8	8.6	93.6	57.2	21.9
	1994	88.2	37.0	10.8	93.2	56.8	20.8
U.S.A.	1986	--	36.3	11.1	--	49.5	18.5
	1994	--	37.3	12.3	--	51.6	20.0

Source: Based on data from: Argentina (Permanente Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires); Mexico (CONAPO 2000); Uruguay (Figueira 1998); European countries (Fernández Cordón 1997).

In all countries, women leave their parents' home before men. In those cases with more than one year reported, however, the postponement of home departure has been stronger among women. As a result, by the end of the 1990s, the proportion of young people of both genders staying at home is more similar than it was a decade ago. This change has been particularly strong in Italy, Spain and Argentina, where there has been a clear postponement of marriage and an increase of education among young women during the period (a process that was more advanced in other countries).

In terms of age groups, the proportion of young people remaining at home has increased in all of them. Once again the Latin countries are grouped together in that the highest and largest increase has occurred in the 25-29 age group. Central European countries and the United States show a more even increase throughout the three age groups; nevertheless, even in these countries, there have been some surprising changes during the last decades.

The comparison with the most developed countries suggests that Latin American countries have an intermediate position, but even among them some differences emerge. In the 20-24 age group for which all countries have information, the extremes are represented by the Anglo Saxon countries (United Kingdom and The United States) with less than 40% of females and less than 60% of males remaining at home, and the Latin European countries (Italy and Spain) with more than 80% and 90% of females and males still at home. The Central European and Latin American countries have an intermediate position; however,

while the Central Europe countries and Mexico are closer to the Anglo Saxon extreme, Argentina and Uruguay are closer to the Latin European extreme.

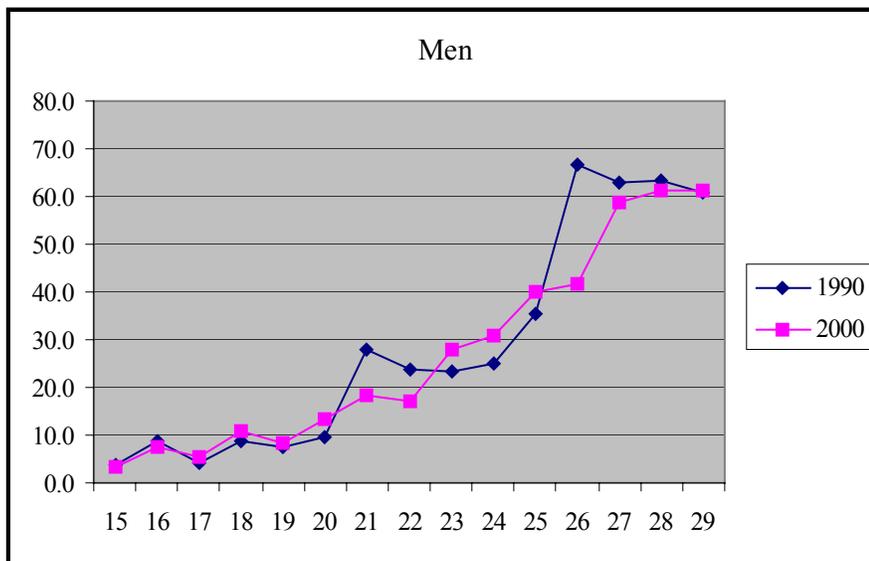
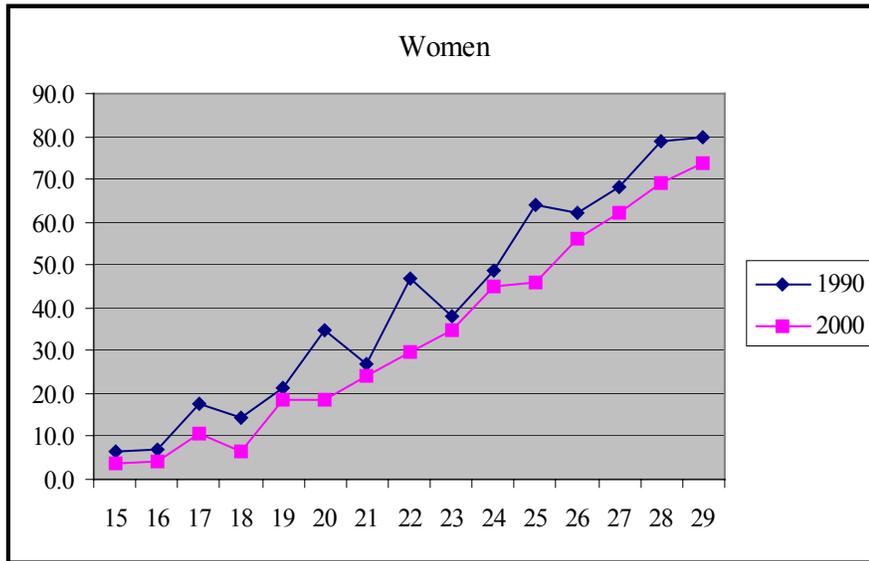
As we will see later on, differences in residential transition in Latin America as well as in Europe are intermeshing with contrasting patterns of family transition. In this sense, the differences observed between Argentina (and Uruguay) and Mexico could be associated with the timing of marriage in both countries. By the end of the decade, the proportion of married (formal or informal) women and men aged 20-24 in Argentina was 29.2% and 19.9% respectively, but the percentages in Mexico were significantly higher: 46.0% and 34.7%. In other words, the particularity of Mexico is the high proportion of young people getting married at early ages. It is thus likely that the early household departure of young people in Mexico is associated with early marriage, in contrast with the Central European countries where leaving home has become increasingly disassociated from becoming married.

In sum, from a comparative perspective, Argentina presents similar characteristics to the Southern European pattern of residential transition. Young people leave their parental home relatively late, and since the early 1980s this trend has become even sharper. At the same time, it differs from Mexico, where the residential transition tends to occur earlier. The Latin American and Southern European countries included in this comparison are culturally very similar, and the role played by the family and the importance attributed to it may contribute to the relatively extended period of residential dependence among young people. Argentina also shared with Italy and Spain, an increasing postponement of

marriage and, overall, an increasing deterioration in the youth labor market (see chapter V). These trends are not found in Mexico, which may explain the differences between the Latin American countries. The following sections show that family support, poor labor market and limited welfare system for young people, are becoming complementary factors in explaining changes in patterns of family and residential transition.

A fuller portrait of these changes in residential transition in Argentina during the last decades is presented below. Figure 6.4 shows the proportion of males and females living outside their parental homes at different ages in 1990 and 2000. The first and most important observation is that the main changes have occurred among women. While there is no substantial change among men, particularly until age 25, young women at all ages were much less likely to leave their parental home in 2000 than in 1990. As a result the difference between both genders has become less significant. Nevertheless, women are still leaving their parents' home sooner than men (particularly after adolescence); at age 29, 73.7% of young females and only 61.3% of young males have left home.

Figure 6.4 Proportion of young people living outside the parental home by gender and age. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000).



Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Table 6.5 presents the same information by age groups and includes the year 1980. Two additional aspects emerge from this table. Although the 1980 data present problems of comparability, they suggest that the declining proportion of youths leaving home is a process starting, at least, in the 1980s. It also shows that while in the 1990s the main increase among people staying at home was among young women in the 1980s, young men also became much more likely to stay at home. Thus, in the long run both groups have delayed leaving home, but have increased the delay at different points in time.

Table 6.5: Residential status of young people by gender and age groups. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)

	1980			1990			2000		
	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29
Females									
Parents' home	74.3	50.0	--	86.6	61.7	29.5	90.8	70.2	38.7
Other home	19.4	17.0	--	8.5	10.1	4.6	6.2	8.8	7.4
Own home	6.3	33.0	--	4.9	28.2	65.9	3.0	21.0	53.9
Total	100.0	100.0	--	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Males									
Parents' home	81.7	61.7	--	93.5	78.3	42.2	93.0	78.3	48.5
Other home	15.8	18.3	--	5.8	6.3	3.7	5.6	7.1	7.5
Own home	2.5	20.0	--	0.7	15.4	54.1	1.4	14.6	44.0
Total	100.0	100.0	--	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: For 1980, National Census for urban areas; for 1990 and 2000 Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

There has been a general decrease in the proportion of young people who neither live in their parents' home nor in their own home (as head or spouse). The exception is the 25-29 age group during the 1990s. Between 1990 and 2000 women and men of this age group living in "other homes" increase from 4.6% to

7.4% and from 3.7% to 7.5% respectively. Indeed, these adult youths have experienced the most significant changes: they are more frequently living with their parents than before, but they are also developing new living arrangements. It is possible to suggest that adult youth are facing increasing difficulties in order to achieve a complete residential independence. As a result they remain longer with their parents or develop alternatives residential arrangements, even after marriage.

6.2.3 The relationship between family and residential transitions

One of the main characteristics of the traditional pattern of transition toward adulthood in Argentina (and elsewhere) is the deep intermeshing of family and residential transitions. Young adults left home mainly in order to marry. The association used to be so strong that the age at which young people left home could be estimated from the age at which they got married. In most cases, both phenomena could be studied as just one unique event. As Jones (1995) has observed for England, but it is also valid for Argentina, women tended to leave home younger than men because they married younger, and the middle class tended to leave home later than the working class because they married later.

The trends and changes analyzed in the two previous sections suggest that this central feature of the traditional pattern of transition has also been the one most affected by the changes. However, this is not always the case since the traditional pattern had not changed in the same way or direction everywhere. The postponement of marriage and leaving home are general and extended features of

the contemporary process of youth transition toward adulthood. However, they hide different and heterogeneous patterns of family and residential arrangements.

The contrasting models, in terms of the association between family and residential transitions, are represented by the Southern European countries on one hand, and the Nordic and Anglo Saxon countries on the other hand.⁵³ According to a recent study, Central Eastern and Southern European countries have the lowest percentage of young people leaving the parental home before the first union. In Italy and Spain, only 15.0% of the women leave home before forming a union. The highest percentages are found in the Nordic countries: in Sweden and Norway the proportion of women leaving the parental home without moving in with a marital partner is around 63.0% and 68.0%, respectively. This is, to different degrees, the case in most Western European countries (and the U.S.A).

From this heterogeneous picture, two new alternative patterns of family and residential transition emerge. On the one hand, there is a model in which leaving home and marriage have been delayed, but the traditional association between them remains strong. This is the case of Spain and Italy, where young people's departure from their parental home usually coincides with marriage, and therefore the delay in marriage essentially means young people tend to prolong their stay with their family of origin. It is nothing more than an elongation of the traditional behavior of young people remaining with their own family until they marry.

⁵³ Western Europe presents similar characteristics to this last group of countries.

The second model is where there is a postponement of marriage and leaving home (in some cases clearer than in others), but with a deep disassociation between both events. Young people are leaving the parental home for other reasons than marriage, and generating new types of non-family living arrangements.⁵⁴

These two alternative models of family and residential transition give us the opportunity to identify the specificities of the Argentinean pattern. Although I do not have information on the immediate destination of young people after leaving their parental home, I use as a "proxy" the living arrangements of youths. Table 6.6 shows that the Argentinean pattern is very close to the Southern European model, but with some important particularities. The similarity with Italy and Spain becomes evident if we consider that around 90.0% and 80.0% of adolescents and young people respectively are either single living with their parents or married living with their own new family. Comparing 1990 and 2000, however, a different trend emerges for each age group: a slight increase among adolescents, a significant increase among youths aged 20-24, and a sharp decline among adult young people. In every age group the proportion of married living in their own home has declined, but while among the youngest (15-19 and 20-24)

⁵⁴ In England, Jones (2000) has observed that among home-leavers the change in patterns of household formation has been dramatic. Fewer young people are living with partners and children, while more are living on their own, or as lone parents, or sharing with their peers. The author distinguishes at least four types of "intermediate households" between the parental home and a possible new family home: surrogate, kin, peer, and one person. He observes that a new research question is whether these really are "intermediate" households or whether they are becoming more permanent and an alternative to family households. Goldscheider (1997) arrives at similar findings in the United States where the link between leaving home and family formation has dramatically weakened. He observes that most of the decline in the proportion of young people living independently with a new family has gone into non-family living.

most of this decline is due to (or compensated by) the sharp increase of living in their parents' home, among the adult youths (25-29) this decline has resulted in a more heterogeneous picture of their family and residential arrangements. In this age group the proportion of single youths living with their parents has increased during the 1990, but so too have the proportions of married youths living in their parents' house and single youth living with others and alone (see table 6.6).

Table 6.6: Marital and residential status of young people by age groups. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)

	1980			1990			2000		
	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29
Single with									
Parents	75.6	46.7	--	88.7	60.5	29.9	89.9	65.2	35.5
Others	16.8	14.3	--	6.8	8.3	3.5	5.7	6.9	6.0
Own home	0.9	3.0	--	0.5	3.4	3.7	0.7	3.1	6.5
Married with									
Parents	2.4	9.1	--	1.7	10.0	5.6	2.0	8.8	7.8
Others	0.8	2.8	--	0.1	0.0	0.5	0.2	1.0	1.2
Own home	3.5	23.9	--	2.1	17.9	56.7	1.5	15.0	43.0
Total	100.0	100.0	--	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: For 1980 National Census for urban areas; for 1990 and 2000 Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Summing up, these trends show that even though the traditional pattern is still predominant, there are some indications of change. Young people delay marriage and stay longer at their parental home (the most common situation until age 25), but after leaving home they are increasingly more likely to go into different family and residential arrangements.

Tables 6.7, 6.8 and 6.9 present a deeper exploration of the family composition of these different living arrangements.⁵⁵ The majority of young people living in homes that are neither their parents' nor their own are living with a relative. The proportion of youths in this situation has increased in every age group, and particularly among the oldest. It means an increase in the proportion of young people living in family contexts, either with their parents or other relatives.

Table 6.7: Household type of single young people living in others' house. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)

	1990			2000		
	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29
Single – others' home						
With relatives	85.2	79.0	67.7	92.7	81.9	83.3
With non-relatives	14.8	21.0	32.3	7.3	18.1	16.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Our interviews show that several factors account for this residential situation, but, in general, it represents an easy and secure alternative of escaping from the parental home. Youths may have to leave their family home for various reasons when they are not ready yet to become completely independent in economic and/or emotional terms. In these contexts, a relative's home appears as a suitable alternative.

⁵⁵ These tables focus on "single in other's home", "single in own home", "married in parents' home" and "married in own home"; "married in other home" has been excluded because there are few cases.

In contrast with developed countries (particularly England and the United States), Argentina does not show a significant proportion of single parents living in their own home. Once again, the qualitative data suggest that single parents (particularly during early youth) tend to remain in their family home. As we will see in future chapters, the alternative options for young women that become pregnant before marriage are: to remain with their parents' families as single mothers or to establish a new family with their partners. Couples without children are also an exceptional phenomenon in Argentina.

Table 6.8: Household type of young people living in their own home. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)

	1990			2000		
	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29
Single - own home						
Single parent	0.0	0.0	7.7	0.0	9.2	14.1
Single person	100.0	100	92.3	100.0	90.8	85.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Married - own home						
Couple with children	54.4	66.3	80.0	73.3	70.2	76.4
Couple without children	45.6	33.7	20.0	26.7	29.8	23.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Finally, table 6.9 has two important features. First, there is the sharp increase of cohabitation among young people; indeed, among the youngest, cohabitation has become more extended than formal unions. Secondly, the decrease of cohabitation with the increase of age; that is, around 80.0% of married adolescents are in cohabitation, among married adult youths this proportion fall to

less than 50.0%. This could be explained by Torrado's hypothesis of cohabitation as a transitional experience, but also by the association of early marriage with informal unions and late marriage with formal unions. The lack of biographical surveys mean that we cannot test these two hypotheses, but the qualitative analysis will give some understanding of these issues.

Table 6.9: Type of marital union of young people living with parents or in their own home. Greater Buenos Aires (1990 and 2000)

	1990			2000		
	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29
Married in parents' home						
Formal marriage	53.2	68.3	86.1	24.0	32.6	50.7
Cohabitation	46.8	31.7	13.9	76.0	67.4	49.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Married in own home						
Formal marriage	31.8	73.5	81.2	19.9	39.3	54.7
Cohabitation	68.2	26.5	18.8	80.1	60.7	45.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

In sum, Argentina presents a strong traditional pattern in terms of living arrangements among young people. Single persons tend to live with their parents and married couples in their own home. Beyond this general and dominant pattern, there are two specific features of this residential transitional process in Argentina: first, the dramatic increase of cohabitation, particularly during early youth; and secondly, the critical importance of family (both parents and relatives) in terms of the housing alternatives of young people.

6.3 SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF NEW PATTERNS OF FAMILY AND RESIDENTIAL TRANSITIONS

6.3.1 The Contemporary Debate

The two main types of explanations for changes in patterns of family and residential arrangements have focused on cultural changes and economic conditions respectively. The first approach emphasizes the changes in young people's values and attitudes regarding family formation, marriage, and life styles. In contrast, the second approach focuses on the deterioration of economic conditions, particularly the increasingly insecure labor opportunities for young people, and its effects on youth transitions.

Thornton (1989) has documented the profound weakening among young people of the normative imperative to marry, to remain married, to have children, and to restrict intimate relations to marriage. White (1999) also pointed out that acceptance of non-marital alternatives (both in terms of cohabitation and pre-marital childbearing) has expanded in the United States and is not limited to those who face the least secure economic situation. Support for these non-traditional alternatives is quite general across the population, and differences by social class are generally not significant. In this sense, she argues that "widespread awareness of the fragility of marriage is a key factor that modifies the way economic changes have affected family formation among young adults"; and concludes that "economic change in both young men's and young women's economic prospect undoubtedly play a role in the retreat from marriage, but we should not underestimate the direct and modifying effects of changed cultural values" (1999:63). Supporting this hypothesis, Modell (1999) has showed that in the

United States changes in patterns of family formation among young men began to change even while young men's job prospects were still superb. Youthful nuptiality continued downward even as the youth labor market temporarily improved, and it continued steadily downward thereafter, virtually independent of labor market tendencies. He suggests that the marriage regime has become modified as a result of pressures not just from curtailed economic opportunities, but from competing and highly public alternative institutional arrangements.

In the European context, several authors have also argued in favor of an "individualization" trend in the transition toward adulthood. An important theoretical source for this perspective is Beck's work (1992) on the "risk society" that stresses the weakening of the subjective dimensions of class and the increasingly individualized effects of structural determinants. From this perspective, a series of cultural changes associated with post-industrial societies, has led toward individualization in demographic behavior and in the life paths followed by different people. This implies flexibility in the life course and longer periods spent in states such as single person or unmarried cohabitation. According to this hypothesis a process of de-sacralization of traditional and normative patterns of household and family formation has occurred, opening new alternative options that make family and residential transition more heterogeneous, complex and individualized. As Furlong and Cartmel (1997:7) have observed, in "the modern world young people face new risks and opportunities, the traditional links between the family, school and work seem to have weakened as young people

embark in journeys into adulthood which involve a wide variety of routes, many of which appear to have uncertain outcomes”.

The second perspective, in contrast, emphasizes the strong association between economic conditions and the new types of household arrangements. The type of labor participation is the determinant factor in the transitional process toward adulthood. According to this perspective, the “life course” used to be organized around the job career, but nowadays, the expansion of precariousness and labor insecurity are making economic and family independence, housing and domestic transitions more difficult and complex (Lewis et. al. 1999, Paugam 1995). MacDonald (1997) argues that young people in the 1990s tend to share quite conventional aspirations, but the paths of transition to mainstream, adult society have for some become blocked and for others more circuitous. The swift collapse of the economic certainties and stable welfare systems of Fordism have generated new cultures of survival and new strategies of accommodation, negotiation and resistance amongst working-class young people.

Several studies have explored the association between changes in economic and labor conditions of young people, and their patterns of family and residential transition. In Europe, Bison and Esping-Andersen (2000) found significant differences in terms of living arrangements of unemployed young people depending on the availability of welfare benefits. Similarly, Fernandez Córdón (1997) suggest that beyond cultural differences between Southern Europe and the remaining European countries, the increasingly insecure labor conditions of young people in the southern countries is a major factor explaining the

postponement of home departure among young people. In the United States, Oppenheimer and Lewin (1999) have argued that the postponement and decline of (formal) marriage rates are strongly associated with the increasing and extended economic and labor instability of young people. Card and Lemieux (2000) have also argued that young people adjust to changes in labor markets opportunities through different mechanism such as changes in living arrangements, changes in school enrollments and changes in work effort. They found that both in the United States and Canada, “in regions with stronger local demand conditions and higher wages, young men are more likely to work, more likely to strike out on their own and move away from their parents’ homes; in regions with depressed local demand conditions and lower wages, young men adapt by continuing to live with their parents and by attending school” (2000:205).

The lack of previous empirical studies on youth transitions (particularly regarding the private spheres of this process) limits our possibilities of evaluating the effects of cultural and economic factors on family and residential arrangements among young people in Argentina. One exception is Torrado’s work (2000) on changes in family formation over the last forty years. She has observed that although labor opportunities may affect marital attitudes and behaviors, the expansion of cohabitation and the postponement of marriage (among other changes) have shown a relative autonomy with respect to macro structural economic conditions. Torrado gives special attention to the increasing social progress of women during the second half of the century, particularly in terms of educational attainment, labor participation, and family planning.

Nevertheless she observed that further research is needed in order to assess the intermeshing effect of these factors and economic conditions in producing new forms of family formation.

6.3.2 An Exploration of the Argentinean Case

I argue that in a context of secular trends toward an increasing acceptance and expansion of new patterns of household formation, labor market conditions have a strong effect on young people strategies of family and residential arrangements. In future chapters we will explore youths' perceptions and experiences on these issues based on our qualitative data. In this section, however, we will examine the association between the labor and educational statuses (public sphere), on one side, and the family and living arrangements (private sphere) developed by young people.

As was expected, the data shows that in Argentina there is a consistent association between the main activity of young people and their families and residential statuses. Table 6.10 shows that the proportion of single (unmarried) young people decreases among those for whom "work" becomes their main activity. For instance, among males aged 25-29 who are students only, both students and workers, and only workers the proportions of those who are single decrease from 100.0%, to 76.9%, to 67.4% respectively. The situation among young women follows the same trend; the proportion of single women aged 25-29, for instance, is 63.8% among "only students", 76.0% among "students and workers", and 51.5% among "only workers". There are, however, two important

differences when we compare the situation of both genders. First, the highest proportions of single male and female youths are in different activity groups: “only students” for male, and “students & workers” for females. Secondly, the proportion of those who are single among “only students” is always highest for males than for females. A possible interpretation of these features is that the traditional “breadwinner” model of family organization allows married women to attend school without working; but at the same time this suggests that for women the combination of two individual activities, such as work and school, are in conflict with projects of family formation.

Table 6.10. Proportion of single young people by type of activity, gender and age groups. Greater Buenos Aires (2000)

	Women			Men		
	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29
School	99.1	93.1	63.8	100.0	100.0	100.0
School & Work	100.0	94.0	76.0	100.0	100.0	76.9
Work	90.5	74.2	51.5	90.9	69.2	41.9
Unemployed	93.9	79.4	63.8	100.0	74.6	67.4
Total	93.9	70.8	44.3	98.7	80.2	51.8

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Table 6.11. Proportion of young people living at home by type of activity, gender and age groups. Greater Buenos Aires (2000)

	Women			Men		
	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-19	20-24	25-29
School	94.1	85.8	47.7	94.9	90.8	84.1
School & Work	88.7	78.0	56.6	94.5	88.3	63.5
Work	80.7	70.8	40.9	84.9	71.6	42.1
Unemployed	90.9	76.6	61.1	92.0	80.6	55.4
Total	90.8	70.2	38.7	93.0	78.3	48.5

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Table 6.11 shows a similar trend for the residential transition. The proportion of young people, whether single or not, living with their parents decreases when “work” becomes the main activity. This is true for both men and women.

A final observation refers to the marital and residential status of unemployed youths. The proportion of single young people and youths living with their parents are always (all age and gender groups) higher among the unemployed than among the employed. Although it is possible to argue that young people remain unemployed because they live with their parents and do not have a family of their own, this association also supports the hypothesis that unemployment, in a context of a restricted and poor welfare regime, blocks the process of family and residential transition. As Bisson and Esping-Andersen have argued for the Southern European countries, the young unemployed with inadequate or no revenue rely primarily on an “in-kin” type of substitution strategy: residing with their parents.

In sum, this analysis presents an initial approach to the intermeshing between the public (school and work) and private (family and housing) spheres. Two main observations emerge from this first analysis. On the one hand school attendance is practically irreconcilable with family formation and home departure, particularly among men and early youth. Almost all male and female young people aged 15-24 who are attending school are single, and more than nine out of ten live with their parents. On the other hand, paid work seems to be a determinant precondition of family and residential transition; young men and

women for whom work is their main activity have the highest rate of marriage and home departure.

A next step, therefore, is to examine the effect of different educational and labor conditions on family and housing transitions. In previous chapters we have identified situations of educational vulnerability and labor vulnerability. The question in this section is how young people cope with these vulnerable situations in terms of their family and living arrangements. The question points to the effect of vulnerable conditions in the public sphere on transitional processes in the private sphere.

In order to simplify the analysis, I have merged formal and informal unions, and also put in the same category those who (a) are living in their parents' home or in others' home (when married) and (b) living in their own home or in other's home (when single). The results are four possible combinations of family and living arrangements such as they appear in the following tables.

Table 6.12 presents the proportions of young people with educational vulnerability in each of these four categories. Married youths have higher proportions of educational vulnerability than single youths. This is valid both for men and women, as well as for every age group. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the younger the age group, the higher the proportion of vulnerable youths. We have observed before a clear incompatibility between school attendance and marriage; this finding supports that hypothesis, suggesting a strong association between educational vulnerability and early family transition. At the same time, it suggests that those postponing marriage have a better educational situation.

Table 6.12: Family and residential status of young people by educational vulnerability. Greater Buenos Aires (2000)

	Males				Total
	Single Parents' home	Single Own home	Married Parents' home	Married Own home	
15-19					
Vulnerable	20.5	44.6	100.0	100.0	23.1
Non-vulnerable	79.5	55.4	0.0	0.0	76.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
20-24					
Vulnerable	46.3	49.5	87.4	83.8	54.5
Non-vulnerable	53.7	50.5	12.6	16.2	45.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
25-29					
Vulnerable	42.2	47.3	72.8	64.5	54.4
Non-vulnerable	57.8	52.7	27.2	35.5	45.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Females				Total
	Single Parents' home	Single Own home	Married Parents' home	Married Own home	
15-19					
Vulnerable	15.7	21.7	89.6	82.7	20.5
Non-vulnerable	84.3	78.3	10.4	17.3	79.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
20-24					
Vulnerable	25.8	28.0	67.7	60.1	36.9
Non-vulnerable	74.2	72.0	32.3	39.9	63.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
25-29					
Vulnerable	26.7	39.0	58.4	50.2	42.1
Non-vulnerable	73.3	61.0	41.6	49.8	57.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

The association with home departure is more complex. The reason is that the association between educational vulnerability and leaving home is mediated by the stage of the family transition. All categories (by age and gender) show that

single youths living in their own home have a higher proportion of educational vulnerability than single living with their parents. The opposite is true in the case of married youths. Therefore, the association of the residential transition with situations of vulnerability depends on the family transition. That is, for single young people home departure (particularly at early ages) is associated with situations of educational vulnerability; in contrast, for married youths home departure is linked to a better educational situation.

In sum, table 6.12 shows that the highest proportion of youth educational vulnerability are, in descending order, among those married living with their parents, married living in their own home, single living in their own home, and single living with their parents. Therefore the contrasting situations in terms of the association between educational vulnerability and patterns of family and residential transition are represented by married and single youths living with their parents

The trends of employment conditions are less clear and require a more complex interpretation. The main pattern that emerges from table 6.13 is that those who are married and living in their own home have the highest proportion of males and females with secure labor conditions. The remaining categories show no clear trend, with the exception of married male youths living with their parents, who present the highest proportions of insecure jobs (underemployment and/or lack of pension benefits). These findings show that a secure job has a strong association with a complete transition. Although these data do not show a causal relationship, it is reasonable to suggest that a secure job is a determinant

precondition for a complete transition to adulthood in its private dimensions. Following this idea, the high proportions of youths with insecure jobs or unemployed in the remaining categories could be interpreted as factors both restraining family formation among single youths and residential independence among married youths.

A second observation that this table provides is the increasing proportions of young people with a secure job among older age groups. Males with secure jobs increase from 11.7% to 38.8% to 53.7% among the consecutive age groups; for females the increase goes from 10.6% to 33.6% to 46.7%, respectively. In this sense, the postponement of family and residential transitions observed in previous sections could be associated with longer and more insecure labor careers. Oppenheimer and Lewin (1999) have observed that family formation is not affected by the economic condition of young people at a given point in time, but by the stage in the labor career. The critical labor factors are the unstable work patterns during early youth that lead to uncertainties -uncertainty about a young man's ability and willingness to take on adult responsibilities and uncertainty about his long-term socio-economic characteristics (Oppenheimer and Lewin 1999). Table 6.13 suggests that in Argentina labor security is reserved for later periods of youth, while early youth is characterized by unstable labor conditions (insecure jobs and unemployment). Thus it is likely that the delayed pattern of family and residential transitions of Argentinean youths is conditioned by the precariousness and uncertainty of early labor careers.

Table 6.13: Family and residential status of young people by labor insecurity.
Greater Buenos Aires (2000)

	Males				Total
	Single Parents' home	Single Own home	Married Parents' home	Married Own home	
15-19					
Secure job	11.8	8.6	0.0	28.5	11.7
Insecure job	59.7	72.9	100.0	71.5	61.9
Unemployed	28.5	18.5	0.0	0.0	26.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
20-24					
Secure job	39.1	38.6	30.6	43.8	38.8
Insecure job	39.3	42.7	48.2	41.7	40.8
Unemployed	21.5	18.7	21.1	14.4	20.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
25-29					
Secure job	48.4	51.9	50.7	60.3	53.7
Insecure job	32.6	27.6	39.7	32.6	32.8
Unemployed	19.0	20.5	9.6	7.0	13.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Females				Total
	Single Parents' home	Single Own home	Married Parents' home	Married Own home	
15-19					
Secure job	12.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.6
Insecure job	41.2	67.2	0.0	100.0	43.9
Unemployed	46.6	32.8	100.0	0.0	45.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
20-24					
Secure job	32.9	33.1	35.4	37.5	33.6
Insecure job	37.2	50.3	37.5	40.2	39.2
Unemployed	29.9	16.6	27.1	22.3	27.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
25-29					
Secure job	45.7	45.3	31.4	50.5	46.7
Insecure job	37.0	39.6	50.4	38.3	38.6
Unemployed	17.3	15.1	18.2	11.2	14.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

The analysis of income characteristics among young people in different family and residential contexts, support this last hypothesis as is seen in Table 6.14. First, like job security, the proportions of young people with "good incomes" increase with the age groups; only 35.0% and 32.5% of the men and women aged 15-19 have good incomes, but this proportions increase to 87.4% and 82.6% at age 25-29.⁵⁶ Secondly, considering each age group separately there are no significant and consistent differences in the proportions of youths that have good incomes. A significant segment of single young people (around 80.0% in those older than 20), and an equally important proportion of those remaining in their parents' home (married or single), received good incomes. This implies that having relatively good incomes at a particular point in time is not a sufficient condition to get married and/or leave the parental home. In reality, there are a number of other factors that influence the timing of the family and residential transition. Nevertheless these two observations support the hypothesis that the effects of labor market conditions are found in the characteristics and stages of the labor careers.

⁵⁶ If we consider that unemployed (who do not receive incomes and are not included in this table) are more numerous among younger age groups, the gap becomes even greater.

Table 6.14: Family and residential status of young people by income. Greater Buenos Aires (2000)

	Males				Total
	Single Parents' home	Single Own home	Married Parents' home	Married Own home	
15-19					
Good Income	36.2	18.8	50.0	48.2	35.0
Bad Income	63.8	81.2	50.0	51.8	65.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
20-24					
Good Income	82.5	72.5	78.4	87.7	81.7
Bad Income	17.5	27.5	21.6	12.3	18.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
25-29					
Good Income	84.5	79.3	92.3	90.7	87.4
Bad Income	15.5	20.7	7.7	9.3	12.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Males				Total
	Single Parents' home	Single Own home	Married Parents' home	Married Own home	
15-19					
Good Income	27.1	54.9	0.0	50.2	32.5
Bad Income	72.9	45.1	0.0	49.8	67.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
20-24					
Good Income	74.3	76.2	72.0	76.4	74.7
Bad Income	25.7	23.8	28.0	23.6	25.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
25-29					
Good Income	86.8	81.1	50.3	83.7	82.6
Bad Income	13.2	18.9	49.7	16.3	17.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

In sum, three important findings emerge from this section. First, the previous analysis showed a consistent association between public and private spheres of the transition process. Establishing a cause-effect relationship requires

further research. Nevertheless some hypotheses have been advanced and will be explored in future chapters based on qualitative data. Second, there is a clear and strong association between early patterns of family and residential transitions, and situations of educational and labor vulnerability: the earlier the transitions, the higher the proportions of youths with low education, unstable labor conditions and bad incomes. Third, incomplete family and residential transitions have the strongest association with situations of educational and labor vulnerability; that is, married youth still living with their parents have higher levels of low education and insecure labor conditions than those living in their own home, but single youth living in their own home have higher levels of vulnerability than those still at home. This suggests that a traditional pattern characterized by simultaneous family and residential transitions still represents the strongest and most secure pattern. In contrast, incomplete transitions are the most vulnerable, associated more with pull and push factors than choices.

6.4 POVERTY, VULNERABILITY, AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS

In this last section we explore the association between educational, labor, family and residential conditions of youths and their vulnerability to poverty. The goal is to examine the effect of the categories distinguished in this and previous chapters on youth vulnerability. In this sense, poverty⁵⁷ and the risk of poverty is considered as an indicator of vulnerable transitions. The categories or attributes included in the analysis are:

⁵⁷ Poverty is defined as a household characteristic; those poor are those living in poor households.

- Education: vulnerable education, non-vulnerable education.
- Work: secure job, insecure job, unemployment.
- Family and Housing: single-parental home, single-own home, married-parental home, married-own home

The analysis is based on one-year-long panels, and focuses on the situation and changes in terms of poverty of young people during that period of time. Table 6.15 presents a general picture for male and female youths aged 15-29: 61.7% of them remained non-poor during the entire year, 15.6% remained poor, and 22.7% experienced a period of poverty during that year. The situation for men and women do not present significant differences, but there is a trend of higher levels of poverty among adolescents.

Table 6.15: Poverty vulnerability by gender among young people aged 15-29. Greater Buenos Aires (1998-2000)

	Poverty changes					Total
	Never poor	From non-poor to poor	From poor to non-poor	More than 1 change	Always poor	
Gender						
Men	60.3	8.4	9.3	5.9	16.1	100.0
Women	63.1	9.1	5.8	6.9	15.1	100.0
Age						
15-19	53.6	9.7	8.9	7.2	20.6	100.0
20-24	68.4	8.1	6.2	4.9	12.4	100.0
25-29	65.2	8.2	7.1	7.1	12.3	100.0
Total	61.7	8.8	7.5	6.4	15.6	100.0

Note: two panels have been merged in order to increase the sample size (1998-1999 and 1999-2000)

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Differences in terms of poverty vulnerability, however, become more significant when education, labor status, and family and living arrangements are considered. Less than half of the young people defined as vulnerable by their educational capital have avoided poverty, which clearly contrasts with the situation of non-vulnerable youths, where almost 3 out of four have never been poor. Comparing both groups, those with low education are more subject to remaining in poverty as well as more vulnerable to falling into poverty: 23.9% have been poor during the entire year-long period, and 12.4% became poor. Thus, secondary education represents a clear threshold in terms of poverty vulnerability.

Table 6.16: Poverty vulnerability by educational vulnerability among young people aged 15-29. Greater Buenos Aires (1998-2000)

	Poverty changes					Total
	Never poor	From non-poor to poor	From poor to non-poor	More than 1 change	Always poor	
Education						
Non-vulnerable	71.5	6.5	5.8	5.5	10.7	100.0
Vulnerable	45.3	12.4	10.5	8.0	23.8	100.0
Total	61.7	8.8	7.5	6.4	15.6	100.0

Note: two panels have been merged in order to increase the sample size (1998-1999 and 1999-2000)

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Table 6.17 shows a strong association between labor conditions and the likelihood of being or becoming poor. Young males with insecure jobs and particularly those who were unemployed are highly vulnerable to poverty; 14.0% and 23.5% respectively were always poor during the panel period, and around 10.0% in both groups fell in poverty. In contrast, almost three quarters of those

with a secure job have never been poor. Differences are even greater among women; of those with a secure job, 85.9% have never been poor and only a minimal proportion (2.7%) were permanently living in poverty.

As might be expected, income level has a consistent association with the risk of poverty. The association is particularly strong for young men, where 28.5% and 12.9% of those with bad incomes⁵⁸ remained poor and fell in poverty during the one-year period of analysis. In contrast, the income level of young women has a more complex association with poverty. On the one hand, only 10.5% of those with bad incomes were always poor (compared with 28.5% among men), but 16.4% of them (compare with 12.9% among men) were living in households that fell into poverty. This suggests that the income level of female family members has a stronger effect on household vulnerability to poverty, and is less associated with the permanent poverty situation of the household. Women's incomes are not determinant of the permanent economic conditions of their households, but they represent a critical resource in periods of crisis. This hypothesis is consistent with the complementary role played by female incomes in traditional models of family organization, where the head's income is the main household income, and children and spouses' incomes have a supplementary character for the household economy.

⁵⁸ Bad income is defined as the value of a poverty line for a four members family / 2.

Table 6.17: Poverty vulnerability by labor insecurity and income level among young people aged 15-29. Greater Buenos Aires (1998-2000)

	Poverty changes					Total
	Never poor	From non-poor to poor	From poor to non-poor	More than 1 change	Always poor	
Male						
Secure job	73.2	6.1	5.3	6.1	9.3	100.0
Insecure job	59.1	10.0	9.4	7.4	14.0	100.0
Unemployment	46.4	9.5	16.9	3.7	23.5	100.0
Inactivity	54.0	9.2	10.2	5.6	21.0	100.0
Total	59.9	8.5	9.4	5.9	16.2	100.0
Female						
Secure job	85.9	6.0	2.0	3.4	2.7	100.0
Insecure job	65.5	13.3	4.8	7.4	9.0	100.0
Unemployment	48.6	6.2	6.0	10.4	28.8	100.0
Inactivity	57.8	9.1	7.4	7.2	18.5	100.0
Total	63.0	9.1	5.8	6.9	15.2	100.0
Male						
Good income	73.7	7.2	5.0	5.7	8.4	100.0
Bad income	28.0	12.9	18.5	12.1	28.5	100.0
Without income						100.0
Total	60.7	8.5	9.1	5.8	15.9	100.0
Female						
Good income	82.5	7.2	1.7	3.9	4.7	100.0
Bad income	54.9	16.4	9.0	9.2	10.5	100.0
Without income						100.0
Total	63.3	8.9	5.8	6.8	15.3	100.0

Note: Poverty refers to household incomes. Two panels have been merged in order to increase the sample size (1998-1999 and 1999-2000)

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

Table 6.18 shows that poverty vulnerability is also associated with the family and residential statuses of young people. Married youths living with their parents present the strongest association with poverty: 37.1% of young people in this situation remain always poor. It is worth noting, however, that they are not particularly subject to poverty vulnerability (from non-poor to poor). In this sense,

a regression analysis (see table 6.19) shows that living with parents diminishes the risk of becoming poor (particularly among males). Indeed, both aspects are not incompatible: living with parents after marriage could be a more frequent pattern among poor sectors, but also a strategy to avoid poverty among new couples from non-poor family background. The qualitative analysis explores in more detail the social contexts of married youths living with their parents. On the other hand, married youths, living in their own home, present a contrasting situation. Most of them are never poor (64.2%), but there is also a significant proportion of them vulnerable to becoming poor.

Table 6.18: Poverty vulnerability by family and residential status among young people aged 15-29. Greater Buenos Aires (1998-2000)

	Poverty changes					Total
	Never poor	From non-poor to poor	From poor to non-poor	More than 1 change	Always poor	
15-19						
Single-parents' home	61.7	8.8	7.4	5.9	16.2	100.0
Single- own home	71.9	7.4	6.6	6.6	7.5	100.0
Married-parents' home	35.9	6.3	8.0	12.7	37.1	100.0
Married- own home	64.2	9.3	8.3	6.7	11.6	100.0
Total	61.9	8.7	7.5	6.4	15.4	100.0

Note: two panels have been merged in order to increase the sample size (1998-1999 and 1999-2000)

Source: Permanent Household Survey for Greater Buenos Aires. (October wave).

A final observation refers to single youths living in their own home. Living away from the parental nest is uncommon among single young people. This residential strategy, however, seems to be associated with relative good economic conditions; 71.9% of single youths living alone have never been poor.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that this residential strategy has different meanings for poverty vulnerability according to age. For adolescent youths, departure from home means an increase in their risk of poverty; for older young people it has the contrary effect. It is likely that motives, causes and conditions of leaving home are different among adolescents and older youths, and are associated with the level of poverty vulnerability.

A logistic regression analysis using the panels provides a deeper examination of the association between youth characteristics and the likelihood of falling in poverty. The dependent variable is a dichotomous dummy variable coded 0 if young people have never been poor and 1 if they have fallen in poverty. The independent variables are dummy variables for age, educational vulnerability, labor status, income level, and family and residential conditions. Two models for men and women have been regressed: model 1 includes the labor status variable and model 2 the income variable.

In general terms table 6.19 shows that adolescents and youth with little education live in households more likely to fall in poverty. The labor variables have also a significant effect on poverty vulnerability. A “secure job” as well as a “good income”, both for men and women, diminishes the risk of poverty. In contrast, “unemployment” and “bad incomes” among young men have a stronger effect than among young women. The likelihood of falling in poverty for male youths increases with unemployment and “bad incomes”, while for young females unemployment has a negative effect and bad incomes a much lower effect. These results support the hypothesis that female labor participation has a complementary

role for the household economy. A “bad income” for a young male has a strong effect in increasing the likelihood of falling in poverty; in contrast the risk of poverty is less associated with female “bad incomes” and “unemployment”.

Table 6.19: Logistic regression on youth poverty vulnerability. Greater Buenos Aires (2000).

	Male		Female	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	-2.71	-2.66	-2.41	-2.31
Age groups				
Adolescents (15-19)	0.82	0.76	0.39	0.24
Adult youths (25-29)	0.03	0.06	0.50	0.44
Educational vulnerability				
Vulnerable	1.30	1.33	1.46	1.52
Labor status				
Secure job	-0.80		-0.77	
Insecure job	-0.28		0.12	
Unemployment	0.07		-0.28	
Income level				
Good income		-0.75		-0.64
Bad Income		0.66		0.26
Family and residential status				
Single – own home	0.10	0.06	-0.70	-0.66
Married – parents’ home	-0.26	-0.37	-0.37	-0.47
Married – own home	0.44	0.41	-0.52	-0.62

Note: Includes young people between 15-29 years of age. Coefficients are significant at 0.01 The reference categories are: age 20-24, non-vulnerable, inactive, without income, and single – parents’ home.

Source: Permanent Household Survey, Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

Table 6.19 shows important differences between men and women on the family and residential variables. In both cases, couples living with their parents are less likely to fall into poverty, compared with single young persons living with their parents. However, while this is the best strategy to avoid poverty for young

men, for females it is only better than the reference category. An unexpected result is the low risk of poverty associated with single young women living in their own house.

In sum, this section has showed a consistent association between youth vulnerability and some critical aspects of the transition to adulthood. Education has a strong direct effect on poverty vulnerability, but it has also an indirect effect. In previous chapters we have seen that low education is associated with precarious labor conditions and early family and residential transitions. The characteristics of labor participation have also had a consistent effect on youth vulnerability: insecure jobs, unemployment and bad incomes increase the risk of the transition toward adulthood. Finally, different types of family and living arrangements have a complex association with poverty. In part this is the result of different factors and reasons behind youth decisions about family formation and home departure. Nevertheless there is evidence that early and incomplete transitions tend to be more vulnerable.

6.5 SUMMARY

The first section of this chapter showed that during the last decades, Argentina has experienced a process of increasing postponement of family formation and residential transition. This seems to be a secular trend observed in most developed countries. In Argentina, however, this trend presents a particular characteristic, which could be defined as the coexistence of two different patterns: one of an increasing delay of marriage and other of persistent early marriage.

Early family and residential transitions are associated with other social disadvantages (educational vulnerability and labor precariousness). Thus, the trends toward an increasing social polarization in public spheres of the transition to adulthood observed in previous chapters (4 and 5), are mutually reinforced with a parallel process of social polarization in the private dimensions of the transitions to adulthood (family and residential transitions).

The different dimensions of the process of becoming adult are deeply related. Both the family formation and the residential status of young people are affected by their educational and employment conditions. Educational vulnerability is more associated with married youths, and particularly with those married living with their parents. Job insecurity and unemployment are associated with single and married youths living with parents. In this sense, the deterioration of the labor market seems to have a double effect. On the one hand, it contributes to the delay of family and residential transitions; on the other hand, it increases the disadvantages of the young people experiencing early transitions.

These findings suggest three possible patterns of transition to adulthood:

- Inclusive pattern, characterized by a smooth transition from school to work (after secondary education and toward secure jobs) and a late family and residential transition. It includes young people without educational vulnerability, with secure jobs or inactive, and single or married living in their own home or single living with their parents.
- Exclusive pattern, whose main characteristic is the accumulation of disadvantages in the public and private spheres of the transition to

adulthood. It includes young people with educational vulnerability, with insecure jobs or unemployed, and married living with their parents.

- Vulnerable pattern, defined as an intermediate pattern between a) and b), which main feature is the uncertainty of the final destination of the transition: disadvantages in some areas could lead young people to a process of cumulative disadvantages and increasing exclusion or they can deal with them, finding a route toward social integration during adult life. It includes young people with at least one (but not all) of the following conditions: educational vulnerability, or insecure job, or unemployment, or married youths living with their parents.

Table 6.20 Patterns of transition to adulthood by gender and poverty. Greater Buenos Aires (2000)

	Total	Gender		Poverty			
		Male	Female	Total	Non-poor	Poor	Total
Inclusive	38.7	46.5	53.5	100.0	79.1	20.9	100.0
Vulnerable	55.1	49.5	50.5	100.0	65.6	34.4	100.0
Exclusive	6.2	65.5	34.5	100.0	55.0	45.0	100.0
Total	100.0	49.0	51.0	100.0	70.3	29.7	100.0

Source: Permanent Household Survey, Greater Buenos Aires (October waves)

These patterns are ideal types rather than empirical patterns. They provide an approximation and general schema of some basic attributes that make the transition to adulthood smoother or riskier. The following chapters, however, explores in more detail different social contexts (the family, the community and

the labor market) in which the transition to adulthood takes place. In these contexts the previous patterns become real experiences.

Chapter 7. The Social and Economic Dimensions of the Family Household and the Transition to Adulthood

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the effects of social and economic household characteristics on the transition to adulthood. The main hypothesis developed here is that different household contexts, in terms of their resources and internal dynamics, shape the educational and labor opportunities of their young children as well as their patterns of housing and family arrangements. Thus, the household becomes an important condition affecting the vulnerability of the transitions to adulthood. However, it is worth noting that the household is not a determinant factor of young people's opportunities. On the one hand, households with similar social and economic features develop different strategies to use and allocate their resources and to deal with their needs and problems. On the other hand, the support and/or burden that young people may receive from their families⁵⁹ are deeply associated with the structure of opportunities in which families are located. Therefore, the relationship between the household and vulnerability in the transition to adulthood is more complex and dynamic than a simple direct effect, and the outcomes more heterogeneous and flexible than they are fixed

⁵⁹ As several sociologists and anthropologists have observed household and family are not interchangeable concepts, although very often they are confused. Household is an analytical concept that refers to the unit of co-residence whose members may or may not be kin. In contrast family, is a cultural concept referring to kinship ties (Selby et. al. 1990). In this chapter, family refers to the household members who are also relatives, and in most cases it refers to parents and their children.

predetermined results. A main goal of this chapter is precisely to explore this relationship and its mediations.

The transition to adulthood of the young family members is associated and affected by two main analytical dimensions of the household: its economic and social roles in society. On the one hand, the household represents a basic unit of consumption and production. On the other hand, it is the basic institution of socialization. Young people are both subjects and objects of the different modalities in which households organize and fulfill these two basic social functions. Therefore, the transition to adulthood has a reciprocal effect with the household: the household dynamic affects it and at the same time it affects the economic and social organization of the household.

Even in contemporary industrial society the household has not abandoned its role as a producer. The unpaid work of wives and children within the household was a central component of the “male-breadwinner” model of industrial society (Morris 1990, Anderson, Bechhofer and Gershuny 1994). In Latin America, a long tradition of studies on marginalized sectors has emphasized the role of households as producers of goods and services, as part of their survival strategies (Cuellar 1990, Selby et. al. 1990, Gonzalez de la Rocha 1986). More recently, the household-family⁶⁰ has received special attention as a central component of welfare regimes, parallel to the market and the state (Esping-Andersen 1999). In sum, the household represents a key mechanism through which protection and support is provided; simultaneously, young children living

⁶⁰ In this literature the concepts of family and household are use interchangeably, but I interpret that it refers to the family members living in a particular household.

with their parents are critical and hidden producers of non-monetarized goods and services inside of their families.

Children are not only household workers; their participation in the labor market represents, in some cases, an important source of incomes for the household economy. The traditional division of labor between the family members, and the resulting Parsonian family structure characterized by a single income earner (the male head of household), is no longer standard. Indeed, the poorest households remained always dependent on other household members' earnings in addition to those of the head. Moreover, the opportunities of the household's members for labor participation, and therefore the household rate of dependency, is not a static attribute but an element conditioned by household composition and the stage of the family cycle. Children tend to represent an important resource for poor households and for middle classes during hard times, since they are potential income earners. Young family members are also a key component of the households as a unit of consumption, both as consumers and producers of incomes.

But households are not only a unit of production and consumption. Beyond the economic role, a basic and irreducible function of the household is, as Parson (1955a:16) has asserted, "the primary socialization of children so that they can truly become members of the society into which they have been born". That is, household is a key institution of social reproduction, where "the process of socialization and inculcation of values and ideologies takes place" (Selby et. al.

1990:72). In this sense, the central focus of the process of socialization lies in the internalization of the culture of the society into which the child is born.

Thus, the family is part of an integrated regulatory infrastructure that defines what is rational and desirable, that facilitates normative compliance and social integration. Parsons has emphasized the internalization of specialized and differentiated roles as the key mechanism of the socialization process, and the family as the basic and primary social subsystem of role differentiation in which the child starts that process. Much of the socialization that takes place in the family involves learning appropriate role behavior associated with the various family positions. In this sense, the family offers a wide enough range of role-participation only for the young child. By adolescence the influence of the family in the process of role internalization is substantially less than it was during childhood. Increasingly, other agents and contexts of socialization become important to the adolescent: peers and friends, the school, the family of procreation, the labor market, etc. (Parsons 1955b)

Family support and control, however, continues to be important in the socialization of offspring through childhood, adolescence, and beyond (Pettersen and Hann 1999, Steinmetz 1999). The moral, counseling, psychological and affective support that families provide to their children, becomes a critical aspect conditioning the characteristic of the transition to adulthood. Household and family structure, conflicts and violence, parental involvement, expectations and stimulus are, among other aspects, part of the household social atmosphere. Young people are objects and subjects of that atmosphere, and their patterns of

transition to adulthood are deeply associated with the forms in which families and youths deal with this social atmosphere.

The following two sections explore the relationship between a household's social and economic characteristics and the transition to adulthood of its young family members. The first focuses on the social dimension of the household, where the emotional resources have a central role. Through the analysis of household structure and composition, family conflicts and violence, and family values and expectations, this section explores the transition to adulthood in different family social atmospheres. The second focuses on the household as a unit of consumption and production, where the physical and social capital of families become critical aspects. The main issues to analyze are the role of young family members as income earners, the non-monetarized labor of young people in the household, the use of family social networks, and family economic support for the young people's transition to adulthood. While the first two issues focus on young people as producers in the household, the two last aspects emphasize their roles as consumers. The main goal of this chapter is twofold: on the one hand, to understand how the household affects the transition to adulthood; on the other hand, to show that the relationship between young people and their families is a complex and flexible relationship with heterogeneous results.

7.2 THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE FAMILY AND THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

7.2.1 Family's structure and family changes in the transition to adulthood

Three different types of household structure have been distinguished from the interviews conducted with young people: a) households with both biological parents present at home, b) households with biological and step parents at home, and c) households with only one parent at home.

An extensive literature, mainly from U.S.A., has observed that children reared in families with two biological parents have less cognitive, psychological, and behavioral problems than those reared in other types of family structure particularly in single parent families. The young people interviewed in our study, however, show no clear trend in terms of the association of household structure (independently of other attributes) with the vulnerability of their transition to adulthood (in terms of schooling attainment, labor opportunities, family and residential arrangements, and other risky behaviors). The experiences and perceptions of the young people regarding the effect of the structure and composition of their families on their own lives are heterogeneous and diverse. As we will see in the following sections, other family characteristics, such as emotional and economic support, are more important than household structure on its own.

Nevertheless, two main conclusions emerge from the interviews. First, the effect of the household structure on young people is mediated by the quality of the relationship with their parents and stepparents. Secondly, changes in the

household structure affect the young people lives more than the type of family structure by itself.

The quality of the relationship with parents affects the life of youths regardless of the structure of the household. Here I refer to a very basic aspect of the relationship between children - parents, which I call "the symbolic presence of parents". It refers to the young people's feeling that their "parents are there" as a resource of emotional and economic support and protection. This is a symbolic presence since it is not necessarily related either to the actual emotional and economic capacity of the parents or to the concrete needs of the young children. However, the lack of this basic attribute of the child-parent relationship has important effects on the transition to adulthood.

Young children tend to believe that the relationship with parents involves a mutual compromise, in which there are some basic rights and obligations for children and parents, respectively. However, when parents are symbolically absent this compromise disappears, and children abandon the activities perceived as children's responsibilities. Attending school during adolescence is seen for most children as one of their main responsibilities in the child-parent relationship. Thus, the symbolic absence of parents has a powerful influence on school dropout. Seba, for instance, left school at age 14 and, in his interview, this is associated with the lack of emotional support from his parents, underlining the tacit mutual expectations involved in the child-parent relationship.

Seba completed primary school three years later than the expected age for this educational level. After that, he left school. His parents were separated since he was 10. No, with my mom it's been years since... for example, now I haven't seen her for 2 years. What I saw [the situation I

viewed] is that after that time when she wanted me to live at her house, afterwards, she never cared about me again. [...] No, with my mom I don't get on [well] any more. Last year she blamed me for not having studied when I was a boy. And I told her 'But now you will care, you didn't care about my having [or not] a dish of food some years ago; not even once did you wish me Happy Birthday...' My ma, that I remember, only a few times did she come here, to my home, to say hello for my Birthday, not even a phone call, or calling me, or sending me anything... yes, she sent me some things with my sister, but I would have liked her to come herself and give me a hug. [...] As I tell you, I missed her a bit, but then I also saw it [the situation] from the point that, as I was by myself at home, I could live as I pleased... I don't know. May be [would she have been with me] I would have attended High School, I would have never worked... I lacked of... it is like, even if my sister would tell me [what to do], I lacked of a higher authority, like your parents, your mom and your old man. (Seba, 23, Varela, Interview 24)

In some cases risky behaviors emerge, such as drug use or suicide attempts; in other cases young people look for alternative sources of support and regulation in other relatives (mainly grand parents) or social institutions (basically religious communities). It is worth noting the mix perceptions of the young people; they tend to recognize the absence of their parents, but simultaneously they tend to feel responsible for this situation. Mauro, for instance, who has lived with five different families since the separation of his parents at age 11, stated in his interview that he was alone and no one showed interest or concern for him. This led him both to think that he is a difficult person, unable to live with others, and to extreme options in an effort to recall the presence of his family.

Mauro was living with his aunt, but after a discussion he decided to leave. He went to his other uncle's home, looking for a place to live. Well, from there I went to talk to my uncle, and I say to him 'I got away, all right, you told me to come here if my aunt hit me.' 'Yes, she hit me', I say to him, 'and you know that sometimes I don't feel like living [any more]. Sometimes I go to school and I come out of school and I think what would happen if I throw myself under a bus, if my mom would mind me.'

Because my ma used to go and see me every three or four months. She would never see me. Nor my old man either. My dad went once, for my Birthday, he gave me a pair of boots Adidas, and then never again. “*And why did you feel so badly?*” Because I didn’t... it seemed there was no place for me to live, do you understand? I went here and I didn’t get on well with someone, I went there and I didn’t get on well with someone else, and so on. [...] That’s why, that’s why I told you I thought I wanted to kill myself. “*Did you really think about that or it was just to say something?*” No, no, it was true, because I was at my aunt’s and my aunt wouldn’t care about me, nobody cared, you know? nobody came to visit me and *sort of...* ‘Hey, loco [man], pay attention to me, hey!, it’s me!, here!, Mauro!’ , you know? Sure, my mom, you know? So I say ‘Ok, I’ll throw myself under a car, and if I live that’s better because that way all my relatives will come to see me at the hospital, and if I don’t, it’s ok...’ (Mauro, 18, Varela, Interview)

The symbolic absence of the parents could be seen as a failure in the process of role interaction between child and parents, and more specifically in the complementarity of expectations involved in that interaction. Complementarity of expectations means that both parties involved in an interaction situation share and accept the same cultural values and normative expectations, so that each actor knows what the other expects, and their responses complement each other. The symbolic presence of the parents is one of the main expected aspects of the parent role. When this attribute is absent young children perceived that their role as a child is also undermined. This is a critical factor, since it disrupts the transition to adulthood. In some cases young people in turn abandon the expected behavior of the child role, in other cases they look for alternative mechanisms to avoid or reconstruct the missing relationship.

The interviews reveal that young children with separated parents or single parents are more likely to be affected by this situation. When two parents are present at home, they share the responsibility of monitoring and providing

encouragement and discipline. As Carlson and Corcoran (2001:781) observe, "when parents live apart, the residential parent often becomes the primary (or sole) provider of both economic and parental resources, and thus competing time demands necessarily entail less investment in monitoring and socializing children". Nevertheless two important observations must be taken into account. First, this is not an intrinsic attribute of incomplete families. Our interviews show that stepparents, other household members, or single parents can provide and fulfill the symbolic presence that young children demand, and that this is not necessarily associated with the economic and class status of the family. The case of Andrés (18) shows that the symbolic presence of parents could be fulfilled under conditions of extreme disadvantage.

Andrés lives in a poor household, with his mother, stepparent, and nine siblings (six from his own father and 3 from his mother and stepparent). He is studying the last grade of secondary education, and he has already decided to enter a police school the next year. Sure, it is like I didn't like him much, I saw [viewed] him as a substitute, you know? who came to replace my father and I didn't like him much. But afterwards I accepted him because he's a good person and... it is like everybody holds a poor opinion of stepfathers, and I took that for granted, but then I realized that he is a good person and I accepted him, and we speak everyday. [...] I don't know, it is like when I tell my schoolmates it is like they think it's strange my having a good relationship [with him]. But no, we have a good relationship; next Tuesday, for example, he is going to come to school with me (Andrés, 18, Varela, Interview 12)

Secondly, the experience of the "symbolic absence of parents" requires their physical presence. That is, young people perceive that their parents are symbolically absent when they are physically present. This is important, since the interviews show that this phenomenon is more likely among young children from separated parents than from single parents. In the case of youths from single

parents, who have never known one of their own biological parents, the symbolic presence/absence refers to the role of the parent in charge of them (in most cases the mother). Once again, the interviews show that single mothers are able to fulfill this role, thus this is not intrinsically associated with the physical lack of one parent. In other words, the symbolic absence refers to a "neglected presence". It is this unsolved conflict that disrupts the young child-parent interaction, and in turn the transition to adulthood.

In a similar way, the interviews show that young people are more affected by changes in their families than by the family structure and composition itself. Sudden changes in the family structure have a direct effect on the family system of role interactions, and therefore, the child role is once again undermined. The interviews show two different types of responses of young children to changes in the family structure.

In some cases, young children abandoned those activities seen as the responsibilities of children. Nora belongs to a middle class family; in her interview she established a strong association between her father's death and the differences in the school performance of her sister and herself. She states that attending school was an "obligation" for her siblings and herself when her father was present. Now, this obligation seems to have disappeared for her younger siblings. She also observes, that her father was the "strong figure at home"; my interpretation of this metaphor is that it does not refer to the authoritarian or disciplinary role of the father, rather "strong figure" refers to the person in which the child-parent compromise was condensed.

Nora's father died five years ago, when she had already completed secondary education. She is 26 and a primary school teacher. And it is like... it was something implicit [clearly established], a duty. Nobody would question the fact of studying or not studying, you would simply go and study. The difference is noticeable now with my sister, the youngest, who is 16 years old and is attending 9th grade. It is like we have to put quite a lot of pressure on her so that she goes on with her degree studies because she keeps saying 'I'll quit.' I don't know if it is because my father's figure is not present any more, which was the strong figure in my home, or if it is because everything has changed, because now it is quite frequent giving up studying. (Nora, 26, Lanús, Interview 1)

In other situations, young people not only leave the activities associated with the child-role, but also assume adult roles. A sudden change in the family structure impels young children to search for new roles associated with adulthood. Major changes in the family structure, such as the death of one parent or the disintegration of the family, weakened the child role since the roles against which it is constructed disappear. In some cases young people deal with these situations through the incorporation in a different interaction system, assuming a new status role. In other words, this is a mechanism for reconstructing a suddenly lost identity in the life cycle. The cases of Mirta and Elena are examples of this search for a new identity in the life cycle resulting from significant family changes.

Mirta is 19 year old and has two children. She married at age 15, a few months after the death of her mother, when she also left school. When I started living with him I was 14, almost 15, and he was 18. "And why did you decide to live with him?" Well... I... all right, my dad was not at home during the whole day. I started going to dance parties; I met him at this dance party... And my mom had passed away, it was some months since my mom had passed away... That is, because I felt lonesome, I didn't feel well. "Were you pregnant when you started living with him?" Yes, I was already pregnant, I got married [being] already pregnant, but I wanted to get pregnant. "Why?" I don't know. No, well, on one hand may be I felt bad because of my mother's [death], right? Because she... already..., I don't know, I felt..., I don't know. "And getting married and having a

child, did this change you?” Well, on one hand...to grow up all at once, because I grew up all at once, as my mom wasn't here any more and I was alone. “Do you think had your mom been here you would have delayed a bit more your...?” Yes, I think had my mom been here it would have been altogether different...(Mirta, 19, Varela, Interview 9)

Elena was pregnant, living with their parents, and studying the last year of secondary school. After the separation of her parents, in the conditions that she describes below, she left school and married. I got pregnant when I was 17 years old, and well, I had to get married; I didn't marry, either: I moved in with him. First I didn't think of living together. As my mom separated from my dad and I had to go and live with either one of them because... My mom went to live on her own and my dad stayed at my house. I went to live with my mom because she usually becomes very much depressed. The following week my dad got sick, and so I had to go back and live with my dad. And well, during all those comings and goings I moved in with him [with my husband] because I didn't want to be alone because I suffered badly from kidney disease. “But then you didn't want to move with him, at first?” No, first I didn't think of living together. But all right, all these problems at my home and I couldn't stay alone... then when I was already seven months pregnant I went to live with him. (Elena, 18, Varela, Interview 4)

In both cases, Mirta and Elena exchange their child-roles for new wife and mother roles. These new roles imply new rights, obligations and reciprocal expected behaviors. For young women, particularly those from popular sectors, early domestic careers of pregnancy, childrearing and home caring provide them a socially accepted role. But, very often, this role places young women in situations of economic and domestic subordination (Craine 1997). For young males, in contrast, the search of a new role becomes less socially determined and more ambiguous. Work careers and economic independence are the traditional paths to adulthood for young male, but in contexts of high unemployment and restricted labor opportunities, these are not always real alternatives. As we will see in

Chapter 8, the "street" and peer groups provide young males a new context of norms, values and alternative status systems.

Although young men and women make decisions about their new roles and their individual biographies, these decisions are limited by a narrow and unequal structure of opportunities. In this sense, these patterns of transition could lead to an increasing accumulation of disadvantages (such as large families and repeated pregnancies, economic and domestic subordination, poverty, etc. in the case of women, and drug and alcohol addictions, poverty, permanent unemployment, gang activities, etc, in the case of men).

7.2.2 Family expectations and encouragement during the transition to adulthood

Family expectations, encouragement and emotional support are critical factors during the process of transition to adulthood. The interviews show that these household aspects are particularly important for young people in two different situations. On the one hand, family expectations and support are strongly associated with the educational trajectory of the young children; on the other hand, family emotional support is a key factor in shaping crucial steps in the transition to adulthood.

Young people perceive that attending secondary education is a responsibility or obligation associated with the child-role. When asked about the reasons for attending secondary school, most of the interviewed adolescents refer to family pressures, but almost none of them make reference to their personal interest in studying or to their own future expectations. They are basically

attending school because several and (socially) different family conditions have established that schoolwork is their basic responsibility. When those family conditions are absent this particular family dynamic, in which the child-parent compromise is involved, breaks up; and therefore, the likelihood of school dropout increases. Seba, in his interview, shows this family dynamic contrasting his own decision of leaving school with the situation of the “regular” student in which the child–parents compromise is still active. He observes that children who are supported by their parents have a reason to study, and this reason is precisely family support and expectations. In contrast, his own parents were not committed to his educational career, and therefore he asks himself “why should I study”.

*Seba left the school after completing primary school at age 14 (three years later than the expected age). He has tried to start school again but without continuity. He is not currently attending school. Afterwards when I was a grown-up, when I was 18 and I wanted to study, I felt like studying but I had a different mental attitude, because it is not the same mental attitude of an 18 year-old kid whose parents have been supporting him [financially] since he was a boy and says ‘No, I’m going to study because my parents are *bancandome* (supporting him financially and emotionally), and well, I’m going to study for something.’ It is different from mine [my case] because I used to say ‘what am I going to study for? if I study I have to work and to *bancarme* myself.’, you know? And my dad, I remember he told me ‘Hey, you’ve got to study’, ‘yes, you’ve got to study, it’s nice to say that, but you’re going to *bancarme* [support me]?’ I say to him. ‘Yes, don’t worry [about it].’ but I viewed it too far away, you see, it’s nice to say that, ‘Yes, you study.’ well, but I want to see the fact. (Seba, 23, Varela, Interview 24)*

In this short paragraph, Seba highlights another important aspect: the different reasons and perceptions about education when he was older and decided to return to school. The interviews show that returning (re-starting) to school after a long period out of the educational system is a common and extended practice

among young people from the popular sectors, but also from the middle classes. In general terms this return to school occurred after a period in the labor market and as a result of new personal interests, motivations and expectations. Javier and Esteban have decided to start secondary school again for different reasons, but in both cases they recognize that this decision is based on their own interests and life projects.

*Javier lives with his parents in a lower middle class family. He left school when he was studying first grade of secondary school at age 13. When he was 25, he decided to start secondary school again. I had started 8th grade and I felt that it was not for me. Because I didn't like it, or may be it was that, being 13 years old, one only cares about bullshit, there, with these guys *en la joda*, and I wouldn't concentrate on studying. "And why did you decide to start again?" No, I don't do it because of my job's demands [qualification]; it is my inner debt, I am in debt with myself, you know? I have always regretted not having finished it [school] and so now, doing so I feel very well. To me, it is a step forward. (Javier, 26, Lanús, Interview 2)*

Esteban is married and has a child. He is still living in his parents' home. He left school when he was 14 and started again three years ago, at age 22. He will finish secondary school in the next year. After Elementary [school] I attended one year and I quit, because studying, when I was a boy, just didn't go with me, but now I have realized that you need studying. If I had finished my studies I would have achieved a higher level...that is, about job choices. I won't say that High School will allow me [a job/wages for] 10,000 dollars, but it helps a bit to get a better job. Besides, may be afterwards I go on with my studies, I don't know. (Esteban, 25, Lanús, Interview 3)

These changes in the perception of education represent a new stage in the life course, and in the transition to adulthood. School is no longer seen as a

responsibility of the child-role, but as a decision based in a self-constructed individual biography⁶¹.

In those cases in which school attendance is seen as part of the child-parent relationship, there are, however, important differences between young people from lower and middle classes, respectively.

As Mercedes observes from her own family experience, attending secondary school is an implicit and unquestionable responsibility for adolescent children from the middle classes.

Mercedes is a psychologist, currently working at the University of Lanús. She rents an apartment in a middle class neighborhood and her parents completed secondary education. High School yes, that, yes, I think the fact was implicit: 'Yes, you've got to finish High School.' for this thing that you have to have a proper education, or afterwards you won't know what to do with your life, and so on. High School is quite an implicit matter at my home. At my home, for example, it occurs with my sister, who is attending 8th grade, and all right, there is this thing, she is going to continue with the Polimodal [10th to 12th grades, equivalent to High School], that is, there is no question about it, it is like she's gonna do it; what she will do afterwards I don't know, but there is no question about that. (Mercedes, 24, Lanús, Interview 29)

Among middle classes, secondary school has already become a basic level of education for their children; remember that most parents from this class have also completed secondary education. Attending school during adolescence is seen as a “natural” and unquestionable activity of this life stage. As a result, adolescents from middle classes are still completely embedded of their child role, and therefore the transition to adulthood is delayed. This is not always the case among the lower social classes.

⁶¹ Among young people from middle classes this change in the perception of education and the motivations to study usually occurs at college level.

School attendance during adolescence is not an implicit activity of young children from lower social classes. The interviews show, however, that there are two main and contrasting perceptions of secondary education among lower class families. On the one hand, education after primary school is seen as a competing option with the labor career. Most important, education and work are considered equally valuable and beneficial alternatives of social participation and social mobility for young children. In some cases, parents from lower social classes consider that work is even the most convenient option, since education is seen as an unrealistic alternative for their own social background and possibilities. Patricia and Dora belong to low social class families and, although, they have clearly contrasting educational trajectories, their parents are good examples of these perceptions about education and work.⁶²

Patricia's father has primary education and her mother did not complete that level. Her father is a construction worker and her mother works in domestic service. She is a primary teacher. My brothers did not finish High School, but it was their decision. Neither would my mom and dad reproach us for leaving school if we wanted to; they would tell us: 'If you give up studying you've got to work.' My sister and I finished High School. (Patricia, 23, Varela, Interview 18).

Dora left the school after finishing primary education. Her parents did not complete primary school; her father is an unskilled worker in a meat-processing plant and her mother a domestic service worker. I finished Elementary [school] and then I gave up because they wouldn't allow me to continue studying. My dad didn't want to, fearing I would begin and then give up. My elder sister had been allowed to study and she abandoned, then she enrolled for the second time and she abandoned again; afterwards the two younger ones didn't want to have anything to do with it [with

⁶² The case of Patricia is particularly interesting because it shows that when parents are ambiguous about the value of education, their children may follow clearly contrasting educational trajectories; i.e. Patricia has finally graduated as a pre-school teacher while her siblings have just finished primary education.

school]. The fact was he [my dad] said that he was going to spend a lot and I would give up. (Dora, 25, Varela, Interview 23)

On the other hand, there are also low social class families that assign a high social value to secondary education. In these cases parents see education as a window of opportunity: the main mechanism that their children have for escaping out of poverty and obtaining better living conditions. For these families, attending secondary school is not an implicit responsibility of their adolescent children as it is in middle class families; it is not an alternative (at times less convenient) option to work either. Secondary education represents the opportunity of social mobility and the promise of a better life. Therefore parents place their hopes and expectations on their children's secondary education, putting high pressure and making substantial investments in order to obtain that goal. As shown in the following interviews, for these low class families the decision of sending young family members to school (high school) represents an important and costly social mobility strategy (Roberts and Oliveira 1998).

Even at school... I wanted to go where all my friends were going, that is to public school, and they [my parents] enrolled me in another school, a private school [...] Because they said that [in public schools] I would meet bad company and this and that. No, with us, they were always there, [helping for] learning how to read and this and that. That was what made the difference. Besides I would realize the efforts they had to make to afford the monthly payments, because they wanted me to have a good education, and that, it was like, encouraged me. (Julia, 18, Varela, Interview 14)

She [my mom] finished Elementary school. But she didn't want us to do the same as my dad, to work for 2 pesos, forced to, and afterwards to work as slaves in a job that doesn't pay off, you know? And that is what she didn't want us to go through; what she wanted was that we could work well, that we could have a degree, and when I was a boy it was like I didn't understand it much. [...] I am thankful now; I thank my mom

almost everyday, for she told me to study, for she forced me to. (Andrés, 18, Varela, Interview 12)

Inés is a primary teacher and she is currently studying social work at the National University of Lanús. Her parents have primary education; her father has worked in several factories as an unskilled worker, and he currently works in a restaurant; her mother was always a housekeeper. Besides, at my home it is like they overprotect me. Sure, yes, [my parents think] that... that I shouldn't work as a maid. If they managed to give me the possibility to study, at High School, which they could not manage themselves, since they could only finish Elementary school, both of them; my mom finished only 1st grade in High School but she gave up later... So that... they had great expectations on me; they didn't want to see me as a dish-washer, so it was like they would tell me 'No, but you are going to work in that?'(Inés, 25, Varela, Interview 30)

In a recent study of the values and perceptions of education among adolescents, Marcelo Urresti (2000) observes that in the historical experience of the popular classes education never received a prominent value, as has been the case with work. The previous interviews, however, show that the lower social classes have more heterogeneous and diverse perceptions about the role and value of education. For these families attending secondary education during adolescence is not an implicit and natural (socially expected) activity of their young children as is the case among the middle classes. But beyond this common perception, there are contrasting values and expectations about the school trajectory of their children. In this sense, the perception of education among the lower social classes is not entirely determined by structural conditions but by individual experiences.

Family emotional support is a key factor in shaping the transition to adulthood among adolescents who were pregnant before they married. Adolescents in this situation follow two alternative options: they either become single mothers and remain with their parents, or decide to live with their partner

(formally or informally) and start a new family. Usually these alternatives are not the result of a free choice, but the result of several social factors that restrict the opportunities of choice. Among those conditions are push factors such as family conflict and violence or economic hardship, but also aspects associated with the internal dynamic of the family. As we have seen in the previous section, the search for a new role-status or a life course identity could lead adolescent women to early pregnancy. At the same time, the emotional support of parents is a necessary condition if the adolescent mother decides to remain at home.

The family's economic and emotional capabilities for supporting a single adolescent mother are key conditions to avoid a spiral of increasing disadvantages. Young women are usually aware of the cost and disadvantages implied by an early and forced marital union. Adolescent women, who become pregnant without making a planned decision, tend to fear that a marriage or consensual union will be characterized by conflict and violence, submission and isolation, poverty and large size families. Vivi is a single mother of two children from two different fathers; in both opportunities she decided to remain alone with her parents arguing some of these fears.

Sure, when I got pregnant we talked about that with the baby's father. 'Because if I move in with you', I say to him, 'and you like to go out, to drink, to have fun and all that, I'll be at home with the baby and you'll be going to dance and then you're going to give me another child, and then another...' Just then it was like he understood... Afterwards I tell him 'What was going to happen to me if I moved in with you, all that was going to happen, we were going to have as much as 20 children...' At that moment, I don't know, I believe God was on my side. We began to think and I told him: 'No, I don't want us to live together, to be at home and suffering, and apart from that with more children; if you like to go out and have fun, drink, and all that, all right you go ahead and do it, time will

say'. But all right, it was I who didn't want to. (Vivi, 25, Varela, Interview 11)

It is worth noting that the alternative of remaining at the parents' home as a single mother depends on family economic and emotional support. Joaquín and Soledad argue in their interviews that several family factors pushed them to live together when they knew that they were expecting a baby; in contrast, Florencia observes that the support of her parents allows her to continue her life without significant changes after she became pregnant.

Joaquín is 18 year olds and his girlfriend got pregnant when he was 16. After different reactions to this situation (including an attempt to avoid responsibility, supported by his parents) he finally decided on living with his girlfriend. She was 16, too. She got pregnant and all right, I quit my school without telling my parents. I quit school because of that; that is, I became conscious. I said, my dad he is already old, because he is 65 years old, she [his girlfriend] has no father, she has her father but he is living somewhere else, her mother is humble, I am humble too, but they are 8 siblings... fuck...!, and her mother earns her living ironing clothes. [...] And all right, my father could help me, but I say 'No, if it was I who screwed things up'. I guess I am one of the few guys who think like that, you see. All right, I quit the school and I got down to work. (Joaquín, 18, Varela, Interview 16).

"Was he, too, willing to live together with you?" No. I, I wanted. When I was pregnant I used to tell him 'No, we'd better stay together, because apart from that I won't be able to work', and I don't know, for... as his family is better off than mine, it is like... But it was rather for fear, I didn't want to stay alone, being pregnant, I don't know. I wanted to be with him all the time. *"And, did you love him, or was it rather the need of not staying alone?"* I don't know, I guess, yes, I guess it was more that need of not feeling alone, of not... I love him, but I don't know, no... no...(Soledad, 24, Varela, Interview 10).

Florencia is eight months pregnant and she has not seen her boyfriend for the last four months. She lives with her parents and is currently studying the last grade of secondary education. She belongs to a low working class family (her father is an unemployed construction worker and her mother a

housekeeper) On the contrary, my dad didn't want me to get married nor to live together with him; that is, he never told me directly, but he didn't like the idea of my moving in with him [with her boy-friend] or anything of the sort. And my mom agreed with me in that I would stay for this year at my home [her parents' home] and would think, and later we would see, if I was to live together with him or not. Sure, they wanted me to make the decision. On one hand, it was a surprise because we didn't expect it, and so the situation changes a bit. But actually, it wasn't much of a change for me, because next year I am going to continue with my studies. If it is possible I'm going to sign up for the evening courses. My mom will take care of the baby and we'll try to [organize ourselves in order to] work in the morning, to be with the baby in the afternoon and to study in the evening. But no, I don't think the situation has changed a lot; actually nothing has changed about the projects and plans, to keep the same way, to go on studying, to study for a degree. [...] I think if I had gone to live together with him there would have been changes, but not because of the baby's arrival; things would have changed because the person with whom I was didn't like at all my decision of going on with my studying and... in that sense there would have been some changes, let's say. Either we were going to start thumping each other everyday or he would have limited my chances of going on with my degree studies. (Florencia, 19, Varela, Interview 21).

Family resources open different opportunities for young people in order to deal with a premature and unplanned pregnancy. The cases of Joaquín and Florencia are particularly interesting since the different level of support that they have received from their families lead to contrasting strategies in handling this situation. One of the most significant consequences of these different strategies is the effect on the process of transition to adulthood. Early parenthood has pushed Joaquín toward adult roles –a.i. leaving school, getting a job, starting a family of his own, and leaving the parents' home. In other words, in the case of Joaquín, early pregnancy triggered the acceleration of the transition to adulthood. Florencia illustrates a contrasting situation; in spite of her pregnancy she has kept almost entirely her child-role –she is attending school, she will work after finishing

secondary education, and she remains with their parents. Even her own imminent maternity seems to be shared with her mother (note that she use the first person plural when she refers to her future plans as a mother). In this case, and as a result of her family support, Florencia's pregnancy has not generated significant changes in her transition to adulthood

7.2.3 Family conflicts and the transition to adulthood

The first section of this chapter used the concept of “symbolic presence of parents” in order to explore the experiences and perceptions of young people about the association between the lack of a basic child-parent relationship and their transitions to adulthood. While in that case the problem was that parents were symbolically absent, this section focuses on those cases where the problem is the physical presence of the parents. Family conflicts, particularly in terms of physical violence, have a strong impact on young people's lives and on their transitions to adulthood.

If the problem were the physical presence of the parents the most evident solution would be to walk away from them. Moving away from family conflicts, however, imply that young people must also leave their parental home. Indeed, the interviews show that violent family conflicts represent one of the most important factors pushing young children out of their parents' home before marriage. In social, economic, and psychological terms, however, this is not an easy alternative for young people.

No, I am not comfortable at my home; I don't leave because of my mom. Because, if I had a job in which I can say, to have a good salary, I get my

mom out of there. Partly I want [to leave her home] and partly I don't because the lot [land] is my mom's and all the stuff has her name [is entitled to her]. My mom said many times 'We are going to leave.' but I tell her 'No, don't give him this place because he's got nothing here' [...] No, to go and leave my mom no. No, because, you see, if my stepfather is around I won't leave her on her own. [...]. On the one hand I think [about leaving] and on the other hand I don't. Because I say: I'll go and live on my own, I stay apart from my family; and may be after that I leave and then I don't do well, and then you stay alone, without your family and without anything (Martita, 19, Varela, Interview 3).

Family conflicts usually push young people to early, unplanned, and precarious residential transitions. Therefore, they are particularly vulnerable to increasing disadvantages. The resources and strategies used to leave the parents' home, however, will have significantly different effects on the transition to adulthood.

Close relatives, particularly grandparents, represent an important resource. Young people moving to their grandparents' home tend to experience relatively small changes in their patterns of transition to adulthood. However this is not always an available option. Our interviews show that in some cases, especially for women, family formation becomes an alternative in order to leave their parents' home. When asked about the reasons for living together, both Ernesto and Anibal said that the family conflicts of their girlfriends were the critical factors. In the case of Carlos, her wife became pregnant and thereafter they decided to get married; nevertheless he observes that the problems of his parents in law have contributed to this decision.

Mariela is very close with my parents, with both of them. I had a very peculiar family history. My mother-in-law and my father-in-law separated from each other when she [Mariela] was 15 years old; my mother-in-law went out as if going to work and she never came back. Yes, my mother-in-

law abandoned her family and went to live in Santa Fe. My father-in-law became an alcoholic, dreadfully alcoholic, I don't know... and she [Mariela] found with us... that is, she found with us a normal family, with the messes that a family may have, quarrels and all that, but there is no throwing things at each other, there is no thumping each other (Enrique, 25, Lanús, Interview 20).

In some cases, family conflicts trigger a process of rapid transitional changes in a less deliberate way. The previous interviews showed young people looking actively for alternative options to leave their parents' home, but in other cases important transitional changes are less consciously associated with family conflict. In the case of Clara, for instance, she left her home after a discussion with her mother and her stepparent; she moved to their grandparents' home, and a few months later she became pregnant, and moved again, now with her boyfriend.

We couldn't believe it, but later we accepted that I was pregnant and we had to... At that time I had had a row with my mom, we had had a tough quarrel and my mom told me it would be better for me and for her if I went to live at my grandfathers' home, at least for some time. [...] My stepfather had hit me, he put his hands on me, and my mom told me that we couldn't go on like that, so I had to go to live at my grandma's. [...] And *all right*, that very night I went to my grandma's home. [...] And I stayed there quite a long time... around 6 months I was living at my grandma's. And I realized I was pregnant while I was living there. "But you wanted to get pregnant?" No, it was like something unconscious; I didn't want to get pregnant, I wanted to go to Bariloche [a traditional holiday trip after finishing High School], to be able to go to dance; but on the other hand it was like we were looking for it, because it was like a child somehow would link us and could not separate us. (Clara, 18, Varela, Interview 22).

Starting a new family, however, is not an option for young males. The cases presented above show that young women leave their home to assume a new role of housewife and to become economically dependent on their partners. In this sense, family formation represents for poor young women a strategy that allows a

home departure without economic independence. This is not the case for young men; economic dependence restricts their opportunities of both residential and family transitions. For them, close relatives become almost the only alternative way of leaving their homes.

Yes, my father was the aggressive type of man and I didn't like it, I wouldn't, I wouldn't... let anybody hit me, I had a couple of problems with him and then I would leave home [each time]. "*And where did you go each time you left?*" [Many places] I have even slept at the main square, at a funeral parlor during a week. I have gone even to my aunt's, where I have stayed two or three months each time, living at the house that was my grandfather's, where my aunt lived also, occupying a part of it. I lived for 2 years there. I came to Lanús to see my grandfather because I wanted him to send me to an *instituto de menores* and...and my grandfather was going to send me to an *instituto de menores*... the very *fag*...No, no, I couldn't count on anybody to take charge of me. Yes, my grandfather was going to send me, and one of my aunts burst out and said 'No, you stay here with me, you don't know what that is'. And I stayed there for some time until my ma separated and came to live with us, and then my mom took charge of me, financially, which was what I needed: someone to support me financially because I wasn't able to make a living by myself (Aníbal, 23, Lanús, Interview 15).

In sum, family conflict may have a strong effect on the patterns of transition to adulthood. In most cases, they are responsible for early and precarious residential transitions. Nevertheless the conditions of this forced home departure depend on the resources and strategies available to young people. If they are still economically dependent, close relatives, in particular grand parents, become the most suitable options to leave the parents home. Young women, have also the alternative of accelerating their family transition, assuming new roles of wife, mothers, and housekeeper. This strategy, however, could increase the disadvantages and vulnerability of the transition to adulthood. Economically dependent young men have more restricted alternatives. However, while a new

family becomes a refugee for young women with family conflicts, the “street” becomes a refuge for young males without resources for symbolically and physically escaping their family conflicts. We will focus with more detail on this issue in chapter 8.

7.3 FAMILY SOCIO-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

7.3.1 Family physical capital and children opportunities

The opportunities and constraints that children face during their transition to adulthood are deeply associated with the economic conditions of the household in which they live. Different opportunities in terms of education, employment, savings capacity, and (economically) unconstrained decisions about their own life projects lead, in turn, to different patterns of transition to adulthood. Analytically, family economic conditions affect young children’s opportunities in two basic ways: first, conditioning the use of their own incomes, and secondly providing economic support and, particularly, giving material gifts.

Young family members living with their parents and receiving incomes from their own jobs operate, in their household context, as partially independent economic units. Although young people usually get food and shelter from their parents, the interviews show that there is no explicit demand for an economic contribution from their parents. However, the use and allocation of their own incomes are strongly conditioned by the economic situation of the household. In some cases, particularly in poor households but also during periods of economic

hardship among middle classes, young people's incomes become a key resource for the household economy. In contrast, in other cases incomes represent the opportunity of starting a process of setting money aside for future projects.

When children earn money and act as partially independent economic units, a wide network of monetary exchanges opens with their parents. This is a typical exchange based on "reciprocity", where the amount and frequency of the exchanged money depend on their respective possibilities and needs, without expecting an economic balance. The following cases show these reciprocal exchanges between young children and their parents; in all these three cases, the characteristics of the exchange are determined by family needs and the intermittency of the children's labor participation.

Susana is a kindergarten teacher and an undergraduate student. Her father is a retired industrial worker and her mother a housekeeper "Can you afford your own expenses or do you need to borrow money from your parents?" Sometimes I have to borrow some money; it's like a community, you know: I lend money to my mom, when she has [money] she gives me some, and so on, because there's no other way (Susana, 24, Lanús, Interview 18).

*Inés is a primary teacher and she is currently studying at the University of Lanús. Her father is working in a restaurant and her mother is a housekeeper. "And what did you usually do with your money?" Sometimes I would gather 400 pesos, more or less, and when I can I give some 50, sometimes 100 pesos to my mom. Like some kind of rent, you see. I don't know what she can do with that, you see, you can't do a lot with 50 pesos that I might give her. But at that time I used to give her some money. This last half of the year, for example, I wasn't able to give her anything, so she supported me financially for everything. So, both of them [her parents] *me bancan* [support me] for everything, they have to buy me perfume, soap, everything (Inés, 25, Varela, Interview 30).*

Mario has secondary education and he is currently under a PEL. His father is a metallurgical industrial worker and his mother works in a

textile workshop “What did you usually do with the money you earned?”
Nothing, I used to buy my own stuff... I always helped my dad... [...] Say, when I had a car, I used to work in a cars-for-rent agency [remiseria], here in the neighborhood, too, and *all right*, my dad used to come and say to me ‘*Che*, give me 10 pesos to buy the gas cylinder.’ or ‘I need so much more to buy some beef.’ and, *all right*, I would always give him some money (Mario, 19, Varela, Interview 19).

Thus, the economic balance of the exchange is determined both by the economic needs of the household and the income capacity of the young family members. In this sense, the economic contribution of young people could be a critical resource for poor households. Esteban, for instance, recognizes that the economic situation of his family improved when he and his brothers were able to work and contribute to the household income. The new favorable ratio between income earners and consumers opened the opportunity of starting a process of economic “progress”. Similarly, in the case of Marita, her income has also improved the economic conditions of the family, and sometimes, when her father is out of work, she has become the main income-earner of the household, covering the basic needs of the family.

Esteban began to work at age 15 and since then he has had several different jobs. His father has worked in a metallurgical industry for several years and currently is a security guard. His mother is a housekeeper, but she worked as a maid for a long time. He is the third of seven siblings. “How did you spend your money when you started to work?” I used to buy myself clothes; I would go to dance parties to the full, every weekend, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays to the dance parties. And some [money], if I had some left, I would give it to my old lady. Always some coins, you see, not much, but *all right*. [...] “*And when you worked as a post-man, how much did you earn?*” 600 pesos, I earned, I was well paid, for my age. There I was able to help my mom a little more. I don’t know, may be I used to come and bring some money and that was enough for some 15-day food supplies and they [his parents] could invest [their money] to finish up the building of the house, you know? besides

what my two other brothers used to bring. The problem is that we are so many to maintain... and those times were difficult. I remember from [the year] '83 on, sometimes we didn't have enough to eat for lunch or dinner, and we had to have tea or milk with a piece of bread, and that way we managed. *"That is, when you and your brothers started working, the financial situation at your home improved a bit?"* Yes, we could make some progress. Yes, yes, at that level we made progress to the full, because we had a house made of... a hut made of hardboard and corrugated iron, you see, and now we have a nice brick house, you see. (Esteban, 25, Lanús, Interview 3)

Marita began to work at age 14 in a small restaurant located in her neighborhood. After that she has worked in different garment workshops. She is currently a formal employee in a small garment industry. Her father is a construction worker, currently unemployed and her mother has never worked. She is the oldest of 4 siblings. "What do you do with your money?" I helped at home. I used to come and say to my dad 'Look, I got so much, I want to do this, we can fix that, and we can buy this or that.' and I bought myself some clothes, too. And that way, always that way, a half [of the money] for me and a half for them. Also, when my dad would lose his job, I used to say all right... my salary would be spent in home expenses, so I never had problems in that sense. I always liked helping at my home. [...] The problem is that sometimes my dad works the whole month, and then may be the next month he has no work to do at all, so it is like 'Where does the money come from?' 'How do we eat?' That is what worries me, works inside my head. I don't like [my family] suffering a great deal of hardship. [...] Besides we are very... that is, when we work both of us, with my dad, we do this: I give my mom a half of what I get, and he gives her, I don't know, I guess he gives her all he gets. And then, all right, we gather the money and we say what we need, clothes for the children, may be if the fridge has broken down we have to buy a new one, all right, you see, things we need. (Marita, 19, Lanús, Interview 13)

The economic contribution of young people from poor households is a common and extended practice. Children's incomes, however, are not only important in contexts of poverty. Young people from the middle classes are less constrained in the use of their own incomes. A better economic situation allows them to spend or save their incomes according to their personal interests and

motivations. Given that their basic needs (shelter and food) are provided by their families, they have a relative significant saving capacity. However, it is this saving capacity which becomes an important asset for the middle classes when they go through a period of economic hardship. While among poor households young children make a permanent contribution in order to cover basic needs or improve the economic conditions of their families, among the middle classes young people's economic contributions are generated by unexpected and concrete economic crises. Vicky, for instance has worked since she was 18, after finishing secondary school; although she has never made a regular economic contribution, she has supported her parents with significant amounts of money in order to cope with critical situations such as a mortgage debt, house maintenance, and the health problems of her parents.

At Mc Donald's I started with 260/300 pesos [a month], later I got a pay raise because I started to work at night; then I must have got 400 / 500 pesos, more or less. After that I worked at *Previnter* [a financial company] and there I got 600 pesos. The salary was much better there. But *all right*, there began all this trouble with the mortgage on the house. When we had that problem, when we had to make the first payments, I brought home my first salary from *Previnter*, I brought 600 pesos to my home. Then, from the next salary I brought 300 pesos, and so on. That is, my salaries from *Previnter* were almost entirely gone this way. [...] When they fired me from the gas station I didn't get any money as a severance pay, but afterwards I took the case to court and I won, I got 1,200 pesos, which were invested in building the bathroom of the house where we moved when we lost the other house. This was my other grandma's house. *All right*, after that... when I was working at the Shell station I used to win 460 pesos, and during 3 months I worked simultaneously as a waitress in a pub, in Avellaneda, so there I could put aside 1,500 pesos, because I lived with what I earned as a waitress, and I saved the other salary complete. That money was for my dad's operation, to afford certain expenses, things... I bought the TV for my dad, to have it in his room, that kind of bullshit, you see. I was always spending in stuff for the others, that's also

why now [I took] the decision of going to live on my own. But all right, it is my achievement because it's been years expecting this. (Vicky, 25, Lanús, Interview 28)

It is worth noting that while the monetary contribution of young children could be important for their families, it also represents a barrier for their independence. In other words, families sometimes become a liability for young people. As Selby et. al. (1990:57) have observed in Mexico, “children have two major goals that are antagonistic to the collective moral philosophy of the ideal family. They want to get ahead and they want to get married. And they need independence to be able to do either [...] The children understand the paradox that they can only perfectly serve the families they are having by renouncing their responsibilities to the families from which they spring...” Although in Argentina young people are subject to the same paradox, our impression is that young children feel less responsible for supporting their parents than in the Mexican case.

In the case of Vicky, for instance, the family's recurrent needs were draining her own income, preventing her from leaving her parents' home and finally pushing her to take this decision in order to avoid new demands for money. In this sense, leaving the parent's home imply that her own needs are now the primary purpose of her income, and therefore her income is not anymore available for covering family crises. Among poor households there is a stronger complementarity between parents and their children: their incomes are an important contribution for the family well being, but are not enough to enable

them to leave the parents' home. As a result, poor young children tend to remain with their parents, even after marriage.

When the economic conditions of the family are less constrained, young children have more opportunity to spend their incomes according to their own goals. In these cases, particularly among the middle classes but also in some poor households, family support gives young children a window of opportunity for starting a process of putting money aside for future projects. Several interviews show that working and living at the parents' home is used as a period of accumulation of financial capital that facilitates the transition to adulthood. Living with their parents gave Mercedes the opportunity to save money for her marriage; Enrique and Javier come from lower middle classes, but they were able to save money for buying a plot of land and starting a small business, respectively.

When my wages were a bit higher, sometimes if there were bills to be paid at home I used to go and pay for them: for example, the energy bill, I used to tell my dad 'I'll pay for it.' and that was it. They never demanded anything from me, never said 'Ok, now you have to contribute.' With my money, for example, I used to buy myself some clothes I liked, or something for my sister. But I always tried to put by some money, I don't know, may be 50 pesos every month, let's say. Because my idea was that: when I had reached the age of 21 or 22 years old, if I had saved a decent sum of money, then I would be able to rent a place and live on my own. *"And after you were 21, did you keep on saving or you couldn't afford that any more?"* Actually after my 21st birthday I went on saving... With that money that I had put aside I had bought myself a cheap car and when we began with our wedding projects we sold the car and I continued saving for the wedding expenses. (Mercedes, 24, Lanús, Interview 29)

I was 18 when I bought a lot [land] in Calzada; it cost me 22,000 pesos. That is, when I was 18 the first thing I did was to buy a plot of land. *"So you had saved that money?"* No, I had saved less than a half of it, but I was working at Pepsi and I was doing very well. I had bought it in monthly installments. My parents were fine, so I didn't have to contribute

at all. I paid 350-pesos monthly installments but I earned between 1,500 and 1,800 pesos a month. Swell, swell, I worked my butt off, but I earned good money. “*And what did you do with that money?*” I used to spend it in bullshit, to tell you the truth I used to spend it in bullshit. Suddenly I realized that I was burning my money for free, and then I said ‘*All right, let’s do something useful.*’ *All right*, I made a down payment to buy the lot, I bought it and I bought myself a Fiat 600 (Enrique, 25, Lanús, Interview 20)

My folks never told me ‘You have to bring money for this and this and this.’ Never, never; everything I earned it was for me. Look, until today my contribution is not needed, and you see, being 26 years old...I am a little bit ashamed, but no, there’s no need for that. More to that, they [my parents] are paying monthly for my health program fees, that is 130 pesos, and it’s long since they have been paying for it, years. My dad has a good job, you know. “*And what did you do with the money?*” I invested it in setting up a business store with my brother’s help. (Javier, 26, Lanús, Interview 2)

The opportunities and constrictions imposed on young children incomes are not the only effect of the family’s economic situation. The transition to adulthood is also affected by the economic support that young people receive from their families. Two main issues deserve to be considered: on the one hand, the association between the economic situation of the family and the educational career of their young children; on the other hand, the importance of the family’s material gifts as facilitators of the transition to adulthood.

The family economic support received by young people is an important condition affecting their educational careers. Those from poor households suffer more restrictions on studying than do non-poor youths. Nevertheless, the interviews show that the relationship between family economic resources and school dropouts is not always lineal, rather different results can be expected. That

is, poverty is not the only reason driving school dropout and poverty does not always lead to school dropouts.

The parents' emotional support and expectations, the social and infrastructure characteristics of the neighborhood, and their own interests and goals are equally important factors in shaping the educational careers of young children. When more disadvantages are accumulated young children become more likely to leave school.

The economic support of the family has a strong effect on the opportunities of attending school. Several children said in their interviews that the main reason for leaving school was the lack of economic support from their parents. Family economic support becomes a critical factor for children's education earlier among poor households than among the middle classes. Secondary education for the middle classes is both economically affordable and also a high priority in their family budget. After secondary school there is a significant change; college education becomes a more expensive and less valued priority. At this point the results are uncertain, and they depend on complex negotiations of interests, resources and opportunities between the young children and their parents. This process occurred earlier among poor households, and secondary education is the uncertain result.

While for the middle classes secondary school does not represent a significant cost, for poor household it is significant and competes with other needs. In the cases of Marita and Matías the lack of economic resources in their families became a major determinant for leaving school.

The fact is that I liked money, I wanted to have my own stuff, to buy myself some things, and so I decided to work. Besides, because I always liked to help at home, so I also wanted to help. I thought, after I was working, that I could do both. And so I began to study, but afterwards I used to leave work at late hours, and while the teacher was talking I would doze off, almost. Then I said, 'No, to spend money for nothing, I give up studying.' (Marita, 19, Lanús, Interview 13)

Because at home I didn't have all the comforts and the stuff you need to be able to study. I had a folder and a couple of photocopies and nothing else. They demanded books and the books I had, which were my dad's, I didn't understand them, they were for advance... they weren't the books I was asked for. And I couldn't afford, sometimes I couldn't afford... If I had had all the comforts I would have studied. Sometimes I wasn't well dressed, even, and I saw that my companions were well dressed, all that... (Matías, 21, Lanús, Interview 14))

But even in a situation of poverty, other resources, different opportunities, and the value of education for their families and themselves may lead to contrasting results. In the case of Tania a small income as a babysitter allows her to finish secondary education; Cintia combined her own intermittent incomes with the help of her parents and other relatives; Raúl graduated from secondary school because of the high priority that his mother attached to the education of their children as a social mobility strategy.

Even when I went to a public school I had to buy books, photocopies, notebooks, pens, they seem little expenses, but when at home you are trying to cope with a hard situation, everyday... even that counts. When I had this job I bought my own stuff to go to school, the work coat, the photocopies. I used to get 60 or 70 pesos a month. I used to put aside some money for the school stuff and obviously for my home expenses (Tania, 25, Varela, Interview 13)

No, no, no because I had already started and I said 'No, I have to finish it [school] no matter what happens. Even at home, my mom says many times 'If there's not enough money I'll borrow from your aunt and then when you earn something you give it back to her or something.' because she knew may be she couldn't make ends meet. No, no, they never... always

when I was at High School... many times I wanted to dropout because I knew there would be problems because of the bus tickets, photocopies, I knew it [the money] wouldn't be enough, and they always said 'You keep on studying, as long as we can support you we'll always help you.' and last year, when I decided to study, they said 'No, no, [don't worry] you study, we'll manage somehow'. They always backed me up. [...] Even last year, at the beginning of the year, I worked as a baby-sitter taking care of two little kids near my home and I got 170 pesos a month. I would give my mom 50 pesos, then there were school expenses for another amount of 50 pesos in one month, and then if my mom had run quite short of money I would give her some more, otherwise she would say to me 'No, you buy yourself something, or you spend it to go out and have fun' (Cintia, 20, Lanús, Interview 7)

When I finished Elementary school I started High School, because my mother wanted us to study, besides I also wanted to study. Look, we were really poor, and even so my mom would send us to school. And when we came here I had to take two different buses to go to school. I could have gone to another school, next to my house, but no, I wanted to go there [to the other one] and so everyday [I needed] money for the bus tickets. No, she really wanted us to study. I remember once, when I was 17 years old and I said 'Ok, I'm gonna work.' and my mom says 'No, you go to study, you finish High School and then, if you can work, you work' (Raúl, 25, Varela, Interview 25)

College education raises the same type of issues among the middle classes. Once again, the outcome is the result of a negotiation of resources, opportunities and interests. Vicky postponed College education until she was able to support herself, Mercedes was helped by her brother and then she started to work, and Pablo gave up his economic independence in order to attend the University.

By myself [my own will], only because I imposed it upon myself. The fact was that my parents were going through a financial crisis; they had been swindled and all that, and I had to decide between studying or working. I had no other options. My parents told me: 'Everything is ok, but truly, we can't support you financially now; you can't just study [you'll have to work]'. That was heart-rending, but I gave up studying. I had to. I worked for 4 years until I was able to start studying Economics. Now, I study Economics here. (Vicky, 25, Lanús, Interview 28)

I told my mom, 'I won't start studying until I get a job.' and my mom said 'Ok, but watch it, you're gonna lose half a year's time'. Afterwards my brother says to me 'I'll help you with college expenses'... because I felt I couldn't depend on anyone, I wanted to buy my books... I wanted to have my own money supply, let's say, without depending on my parents. Ok, my brother says 'I'll help you with college expenses.' And *all right*, I was annoyed and I was trying to decide what to do, but I couldn't get a job. (Mercedes, 24, Lanús Interview 29)

"Would you like to have a job?" Yes, from time to time, yes, to avoid asking him, and depending on him [his father], but *all right*, there are no other options, especially now that I am studying. *"This is a period of time when you have to bear certain things to..."* To achieve my degree studies, yes, particularly that. (Pablo, 20, Lanús, Interview 24)

The economic support of the family is also expressed in terms of material gifts. Parents give to their young children gifts that could be used as an initial physical capital in their transition to adulthood. The interviews show that although this is more common among middle classes, it also occurs in some working class households. The quality of the gifts is also associated with the economic condition of the family, but they are equally important for young people from different social classes. There are two different types of gifts: on the one hand, gifts that will facilitate the family and residential transition, and on the other hand, gifts that will facilitate the labor transition.

An extended practice in Argentinean working class sectors is that parents give their young children a parcel of land from their own lot (generally in the backyard). This plot of land is used to build a new small house behind the parents' house. This generally is the most common initial residential situation for a new family and it represents a transitional stage that provides significant advantages for the new couple. Among poor sectors, this allows young people to have a place

to live without demanding significant investments (for renting or buying a house), and at the same time to achieve a relative residential independence. When families are unable to transfer a piece of land to their children, the alternatives are either to rent or to remain with their parents, even after marriage. Both options have costs: on the one hand, renting a house represents a significant burden for poor families, on the other hand, living with parents after marriage is socially considered a negative and improper solution that might result in family conflicts, a restricted independence, and the disruption of the private life of the new and old family. Soledad, Matías, and Lucrecia have followed these three alternatives residential strategies, and they describe some of the advantages and disadvantages associated with them.

We live at his mother's house; we built a house in the backyard of his mother's house, but now we are living at my mom's because she gave us a lot... she gave us the rear part of her plot of land. "*How was that?*" No, they didn't give us a lot. His family gave us the rear part of their lot and my family, too, gave us a rear part of their lot to see if we can build a dwelling. As I left his house [his family's] because of family problems, so my mom said 'Stay here and build a little room' (Soledad, 24, Varela, Interview10)

First we lived at my mom's around 8 months because we didn't have another place to go... because I didn't work steadily. Later on, when I began to do better we rented a room in Villa Diamante. We stayed there for almost 9 months, but afterwards my work began to drop, to decrease, I got less money, little money, and the owner wanted the rent. After that we went back to live one month at my mom's, and then I came to live here. (Matías, 21, Lanús Interview 14)

I would like to have my own... not because I don't want to live at my house [with her parent's] but because I don't want to bother my parents. One wants privacy, I want my children to have a place, space enough for playing, to do what they want. Even if it is your parents' house it is

difficult... when you have two children... even for oneself (Lucrecia, 23, Lanús, Interview 26)

Among young people from middle classes the practice of sharing the land or the house with parents after marriage is less common. However, in these cases young children tend to use their parents gifts as an initial capital to buy their own house or land.

We have...my mother-in-law has 5 lots. As she has 4 sons, she lives at the house built in one of the lots, and she has given a plot of land to each one of their children. So, ok, the lot is on sale and the day we sell it we will buy something [a dwelling]. "*And why don't you build the house there?*" We began to build [a house] but the lot is next to my mother-in-law's house, so it was about the same as staying to live with her, so, no. We want to sell the plot of land and buy the house in which we are living now, which we are renting. [...] Selling the lot and asking the bank for a loan of 10,000 pesos more, we could afford the house's price. (Nora, 26, Lanús, Interview 1).

It is also common that young people receive gifts that can be used in a productive way. Mario, left school and started to work in a metallurgical factory, but after a couple of months the job became too hard for him and he decided to leave. His father gave him money to buy a car, and then he started to work as a cab driver; this was a more flexible job that allowed him to return and complete school. Javier left his job in a super market after health problems. With the financial help of his brother, he started a small business. In both cases, they received money as a gift but with a concrete and predetermined goal: to help them with their employment transitions.

During that time when I worked with my dad, well, I was just 18 years old then, and he gave me a little sum of money, and I had put aside a similar sum, and with that I bought myself a car. No, never, we had never had a car. You see, to have a vehicle, *you see*, for the family, I don't know: you go shopping, if there's an emergency, you ride your car, I don't know. I

bought myself a car, a Renault 12. While I was studying, after I quit the factory where I worked, with that car, I began to work in a cars-for-rent agency here in our neighborhood and well, I was able to study, too (Mario, 19, Varela, Interview 19).

I went to a big supermarket [to work], but then, afterwards, because of some health problems I had, because it took all my strength to lift so many crates and that sort of thing, so my brother came up with this proposition of setting up our own business. And, all right, as I couldn't work there any more because of my health problems, then I said 'Lets take the risk.' "*And how could you manage that? Did you have savings?*" Yes, I had some money put aside. When I left my job they gave me some money and... my brother made quite an investment there. I was in charge of the business [a small food store], absolutely. And I worked for 2 years, to the full, doing very well. "*So, you were your brother's partner?*" Yes, but he had his job; he was not a partner, that is, everything was for me. He gave me a hand. (Javier, 26, Lanús, Interview 2)

In sum the family economic support becomes a critical factor for youth transition. It opens different opportunities for young children and in turn different patterns of transition to adulthood. This section, however, showed that there is not a unique and direct effect between the economic conditions of the household and the vulnerability of the transition to adulthood. Young children from working class households have a structure of opportunities much more limited than those from middle classes. Nevertheless, within these two different household contexts, complex processes shape the characteristics and patterns of the transition to adulthood, where different resources, opportunities and interests are negotiated between the young children and their parents.

7.3.2 Family social capital and young children opportunities

The family is one of the most important sources of social capital given the strength of the social ties between their members. When the social distance between individuals narrows, the exchanges become more intense and less self-interested. But the family social capital becomes particularly important for young people. Parents and siblings are not only the closest and strongest social ties, but also the main (initial) channel to access a more extended social network. Youth is a period of the life course during which individuals start a more active participation in new social spheres out of their own families and independently of them: in the labor market, in the school system, in a new neighborhood, in a new family, in social and political organizations, etc. Young children have not yet constructed their own social networks; parents, older siblings, and other relatives represent their initial, and some time only, source of social contacts.

This does not mean that the family is the most effective source of social capital. As Granovetter (1973) has shown, the strongest and closest social ties tend to provide redundant resources -that is, the same type of contacts that individuals already have, and therefore they often become useless. Additionally, they tend to generate social closure (Portes 1999). This is particularly important in our case: the social capital that families provide to their young children becomes a mechanism of reproduction of the family social situation.

The interviews show that parents, siblings, and other relatives represent a social capital for young children in two different forms: as an indirect and direct source of social capital.

As a source of social capital, the family introduces young people into its own network of social contacts, acquaintances and information. They are particularly important in order to find a job. The labor participation of parents and older siblings is the initial and the most direct source of information about the labor market and job opportunities. As a result, the type and characteristics of the labor participation of the family members become particularly important in terms of the labor transition of the youngest family members. Inactivity and unemployment, but also insecure labor conditions are aspects that diminish the density and quality of the social networks. Tania, for instance, has been unemployed and underemployed since she finished the secondary school six years ago. In her interview, she said that her social contacts (including those of her parents) have become useless to find a job, given that her relatives, friends, and acquaintances are in a similar precarious labor situation.

Tania's mother works in domestic service and her father in a meat-processing factory. She is currently taking a course in journalism that is part of the Social Program for Vulnerable Groups, and is a voluntary employee in the local Youth Council. "And haven't you made attempts of using your parents' contacts or other acquaintances?" Yes, yes, of course, everybody I saw I would tell them 'I'm looking for a job'. Besides... but the fact is I had relationships with people who are also hard- up, you see. No, no, I couldn't, sometimes someone would say 'Look, I signed up, go and sign up you too', but no more than that (Tania, 25, Varela, Interview 13)

The social contacts and information provided by parents and siblings reproduce their own labor conditions. Young people from the middle classes are introduced into middle class networks, and young people for working classes are

introduced into working class networks. The following cases are good examples of contrasting processes of social reproduction.

I was still working at the laboratory when I was offered... a medicine doctor of my brother's acquaintance, was about to set up practice with two other doctors and I was offered working as their secretary. I liked the idea because I was tired of working at the laboratory. The fact is that my brother quit Medicine, he dropped out and began to study Criminology in La Plata. And he got a job at the General Hospital of Monte Grande. He worked for the Communications Service, so he was in touch with many of the doctors there. And, once he heard that this doctor was going to set up an office and my brother told him 'Look, I have my sister that is working so and so...' And, that was the way how they hired me. (Mercedes, 24, Lanús, Interview 29).

Then I went to work at a crackers factory. My cousin, who is older than me, works there. I told him that I had quit school and that I needed a job, because in my family they were so mad at me that I was about to be thrown out of my home; and he told me yes, *all right*, he told me that there was a place for me. [...] After that, I worked at Coke. Another cousin was working there and I was always passing the voice. The thing is the contacts are fundamental; that is the main thing. In my case, I have my cousins who are older than me, and they were always working, so they gave me the contact, the information (Fabián, 25, Lanús, Entrev. 11)

Mercedes and Fabián found a job according to their expectations and qualifications. In both cases, their relatives were simple mediators of successful job matches. However, there is the risk of a socially determined occupational closure and a reproduction of class conditions. The comparison between Tania and Vicky's labor experiences makes clear that their labor trajectories are predetermined by their social class status. Although both have similar qualifications, their labor opportunities have been contrasting. In their cases, the family social capital has operated not only as a link between labor opportunities and job seekers, but also as a link in the process of social class reproduction.

Family members also represent a direct source of social capital. Several studies in Latin America have shown the importance of exchange networks of "favors", including goods, services, and knowledge, between close and distant relatives. Reciprocity between family members represents a key strategy to cope with hardship in poor working class sectors as well as in the middle classes. These types of exchanges were also evident in our interviews: parents babysitting their grand children when their young children are working, reciprocal loans of money during economic crisis between parents and young children, mutual assistance when a family members is suffering a health problem, etc., etc. Here, however, we will focus specifically on how family social capital affects the transition of young family members.

Two main conclusions arise from the interviews. On the one hand, family help, as in the case of indirect social capital, tends to reproduce its own social conditions through young children. This occurs, particularly, with respect to labor and educational transitions. Parents and other relatives are very often, direct providers of labor opportunities for their young children: mothers working in domestic service give a "house" to their young girls, or fathers working in the construction sector hire their own young male children as assistants. This has particularly important results in terms of future labor opportunities, since the first job may determine the pattern of the labor trajectory. But beyond this, the family is also a provider of knowledge, practices, norms and values about labor and education that will mark the trajectories of their young children.

As we have seen in previous sections, the educational expectations and economic support of working class families are usually limited to the primary school and, in some cases, to secondary education. College education, in contrast, is not perceived as a real opportunity; for working class youths. College Education (*la Universidad*) is beyond their framework of reference. This is not just a problem of expectations or economic conditions. It is also associated with the characteristics of the social contexts and networks in which the young people are placed. Neighbors, friends, workmates, acquaintances, but also the family and other relatives are part of these social contexts.⁶³ The case of Inés illustrates these aspects.

It was a dream I had; I would have liked to attend *la Universidad* [college] as soon as I had finished High School, but that couldn't be, because of the hard financial situation. [...] Then that year, after finishing High School, I attended a computing course, and then as I didn't have a job, my mom and my aunt told me that I should study for a teaching degree, but I said no, [because] I wanted to go to *la Universidad*, but I couldn't afford it. "*What seemed difficult about going to college?*" First I was concerned about the fact that going to college meant commuting to La Plata or Buenos Aires, that the cost of commuting was high, besides the photocopies; and it seemed to me that it was too difficult, that you had to study too hard. Besides at home... no one in my family had ever attended college. There was nobody to tell me 'Look, it is not that difficult, it is accessible, you have to take your time, as much time as you need'. I had nobody to explain these things to me. Nor did I have anybody of my acquaintance in *la Universidad* [...] Until 2 years ago, when I got in touch with a girl whom I had met in a private school at which both of us used to work [as primary school teachers], and we became friends. She, too, wanted to study and I wanted to go on studying, but I didn't know what kind of

⁶³ This is a typical example of "cultural capital". In terms of Bourdieu, the norms, practices and knowledge in which young people are socialized in their families are defined as a "cultural capital". As several authors have observed, the distinction between social and cultural capital becomes blurred given that cultural capital is acquired and transmitted through social networks.

degree studies. So she said to me 'What if we go to the *University of Lanús* to get some information.' (Inés, 25, Varela, Interview 30)

Inés said that attending college education (la Universidad) was a "dream", something that was not for her; but then she recognized that indeed she did not know what the university was. The experience of college education was absent in her family as well as in her social networks. Four years later she met a girlfriend and both decided to study at the University of Lanús. It was not just a new friend who pushed her to study; it was the participation in new social contexts what introduced the university into her ideational frame. In terms of Bourdieu, Inés improved her cultural capital. During those four years Inés took computer courses, studied a tertiary education level (primary teacher), worked in private schools, and made new friends. As part of her transition to adulthood she became involved in new social contexts, where college education (la Universidad) was not a "dream" as it was in her family or her neighborhood, but a real option.

The family also helps young children during the family and residential transitions. Mercedes and Clara were able to start a new family and to cope with the hardship of the initial family stages with the help of their families. Both got married suddenly because they got pregnant; at that moment they were unemployed (or inactive), as well as their husbands. Although they were not ready to start their family transitions, their family social capital allows them to find a place to live, the basic equipment for a new house, and even the necessary resources to survive without incomes.

Sure. Neither my boyfriend nor I had a job. And well, we got married and he started looking for a job. I was pregnant and was attending the Elementary school teaching degree. I was working a bit as an interior

decorator, so, with that, more or less... Besides my mother-in-law helped us a great deal. We lived with my mother-in-law, and she paid for the food, everything. What we earned was only for our expenses. *“And why did you go to live with your mother-in-law?”* It was like this: we got married, and just then my mother-in-law separated from her husband. So, she was alone, living only with my sister-in-law, who was only a kid. So, we went to live with her, and we lived there one year and... afterwards, as it happens, our relationship became unsustainable...(Nora, 26, Lanús, Interview 1)

My mom called me up once and she told me she would give me the laundry room to build a house there, if we decided to live together [with her boyfriend]. She would buy the painting and all the stuff we needed. [...] And yes, we had the walls painted, we took out all the stuff my mother had in the laundry room and we set it inside her house, as we could arrange each thing. And, my mom bought some timber wood and Seba [her boyfriend] made our bed, and... oh, after that we bought ourselves a fridge, but that, it was we who bought it. [...] And when we told Toribia [my mother-in-law] all about it, she gave me some trays, dishes, glasses, cutlery, everything. Then we took all that to my grandma's, and my grandma gave me tea-cups, dishes, everything; and my mom gave me the gas range and... my father-in-law gave us the TV, and my grandma gave me the kitchen worktop, and so on (Clara, 18, Varela, Interview 22).

In the previous two cases the family social capital responded to particular and concrete needs of the young children. They showed social networks in action. But social networks also represent a latent support that allow young people to take risky decisions and steps. Several studies, have observed that the transition to adulthood is not a lineal and accumulative process, but a fragmented process characterized by "stop and go", and frequent "backward steps" (see chapter 2). Our interviews have shown that these "backward steps" are a common feature to the Argentinean context. But they have also shown that the opportunities of "moving back" depend on the resources and, particularly, the social networks that young people have.

Economic independence and resources are often limited during youth, particularly among poor and young women. Therefore, a supporting family network becomes a critical asset in order to re-think or retreat from a particular transition pattern. When young people face a failure or a conflict situation in their transitions to adulthood, the family support is the only resource to cope with those situations and to retreat from a risky pattern of transition. When the supporting family network does not exist, the opportunities of “moving back” are restricted, and the risky transition becomes a pattern of increasing disadvantages. The cases of Marcela and Clara show these contrasting opportunities. Both were involved in risky and dangerous family and residential transitions; but while Marcela escaped from this pattern returning to her parents’ home, Clara become involved in a process of increasing vulnerability and disadvantages.

Marcela decided to live together with his boyfriend as a result of her pregnancy. They rented a small and precarious house in Lanús, but after three months living together, she decided to return with her parents. “Did you want to live together with your boyfriend?” Sure, yes, because I wanted to give a family to my son. Then... we failed, we didn’t do well, because he, each time... he never shared his time with me, during the day he was never with us, he said he was working all the time, and all right... no, the problem was that he spent too much time out and then he didn’t give me any money. Because... no, I think he had another woman. [...] My mom and my dad wanted me to stay with them, from the beginning, and they were right, better than I am at home I won’t be anywhere else. “And why did you leave?” Because I said ‘I’ll leave and it is an [new] experience, my son will have a house, a roof of his own, that’s better, but it’s all the same... well it is not the same, now I am better at my parents’ (Marcela, 22, Lanús, Interview 21).

Guillermo told us the story of her mother (Clara). When she was 16 she got pregnant. As a single mother she was living with her father and her little son [Guillermo]. Conflicts with her father, particularly for being a single mother, pushed her to moving out in cohabitation. Since then, she

has been object of physical violence by her partner. She is now 32 year old. My stepfather went too far beating up my mother, and... we left, we came here with my grandfather, for a week... "Did he always hit her?" Oh yes, yes; he would beat her until she was black and blue. But my ma stayed there. My mom always thought, if... that is something like: if she wanted to start again...to begin a new [kind of] life... I have three more siblings now; it would be difficult thinking about a job. With my grandfather she doesn't get along well, because there are a lot of things... and then about the fixed hours, my mom, it is like, she is more liberal...more... "And then, what happened that time?" I asked my grandfather to help us, my grandfather went to La Carolina [his mother's neighborhood], we went there to the police station to report him [his stepfather] because he had gone too far, even with me.... And we came here to my grandfather's for some days, until he [his stepfather] convinced her and they went to live there [to their house] again. Now she is still living with him. I don't, I stay apart. Besides she backed out because of the children, because my stepfather told her that he would take the kids from her and you know... it was complicated, too, because she didn't have any help from my grandfather, either, so she thought not having my grandfather's help there was no way. And all right, they are coping with [with their problems]. (Guillermo, 16, Varela, Interview 15).

Young people are aware of the type of support that they can receive from their families. This knowledge –that, their parents will help them if it is needed– has also a significant influence on the transition process. A forward step in the transition to adulthood always implies risk and uncertainty. But the risks are even greater when the family potential support is limited. The type of support that could be expected from the family if something goes wrong has an important effect on young people decisions. Vicky, decided to leave her home knowing that if something fails, she will have the support of her parents; Martita, in contrast, thought that if she leave her parents' home and something goes wrong, she will be alone.

I don't want to get myself into debt more than I am, I don't want to engage myself in anything that means trouble. If I committed myself to live on my

own, it was because, I know that I can always count on my parents, who will shelter me from both sides. I wouldn't want to [ask for help] because I take a step forward and I don't want to make a step backwards, but I am not free from anything [any risk]. (Vicky, 25, Lanús, Interview 28).

Yes, to start living on my own, it is like I want to do it, but, I am not sure whether I should or I shouldn't, because you have to be absolutely responsible to do that. On one hand I think [I would like it] and on the other hand no [I wouldn't like it], because I say: 'If I start living on my own, I drift apart from my family, and may be afterwards I leave, and things don't turn out right, and you stay alone, without your family and without anything, so...(Martita, 19, Varela, Interview 3)

In sum, the family represents for young people a major source of social capital, with a strong effect on their transition to adulthood. The family is a direct provider of help but also a source of extended social networks. Reciprocal exchanges with parents, siblings and other relatives help young people to cope with unemployment, economic hardship, and other crises. Beyond this, which is a common feature of the social networks, family social capital is a critical factor that shapes the patterns of transition to adulthood and the opportunities of the young family members during this process. Family social capital is a main mechanism of reproduction of family social conditions and a key asset in order to change or retreat from risky transitions. In this sense, the vulnerability of the youth transition has a strong association with the resources and opportunities that the social capital of the family could provide.

7.4 SUMMARY

The economic and social dimensions of the household have a strong impact on the transition to adulthood of the young members. The characteristics

of the household (in terms of the availability and organization of the economic, social and emotional resources) represent for the young people a determinant structure of opportunities and / or constraints. Nevertheless, this chapter has shown that the results are not unique rather these effects are complex and heterogeneous. The complexity of these effects is mainly due to two main elements. On the one hand the household strategies to use and allocate their resources in order to fulfill their economic and social roles, as well as, the responses of young people in dealing with their household's support and burden. On the other hand, the structure of constraints and opportunities of the households, which affects both the generation and allocation of their physical, human, social and emotional resources. The family plays a central role as a mechanism of social reproduction and social change. In this sense, the level of vulnerability of the transition to adulthood is not only the result of individual attributes (education, employment, family and residential status); this chapter suggests that the family-household has a significant effect on youth transitions, contributing either to cope with some initial disadvantages or to increase and promote a growing process of cumulative disadvantages.

Chapter 8. Transition to Adulthood and Urban Context

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the relationship between neighborhood characteristics and the process of youth transition to adulthood. Recent major studies conducted in the United States and Europe have rediscovered the importance of local communities for the resources and opportunities needed for the well being of their inhabitants. These studies have explored different neighborhood characteristics and their effects on processes of either cumulative disadvantages or cumulative advantages. Some of these aspects are the concentration of urban poverty and unemployment as a result of changes in local economic opportunities, associated with large restructuring processes (Wilson 1987, Wilson 1996); the residential segregation of minority groups, particularly by ethnic and racial origin (Massey and Denton 1993, Musterd. and Ostendorf 1998); the emergence of subculture environments that foster deviant behavior from the mainstream society, particularly in poor neighborhoods (Massey and Denton 1993, Wilson 1996, Fischer 1995), and the strength of the social ties between neighbors and their involvement in collective actions and civic participation (Putnam 1993, Warren, Thompson and Saegert 2001, Sampson 2001).

Other studies have focused more specifically on the association between these neighborhood characteristics and the behaviors and development of their young inhabitants. In general terms, these studies have explored the effect of local

communities on teenage childbearing, dropping out of school, drug abuse and delinquency (Jencks and Mayer 1989, Furstenberg and Hughes 1995). In Latin America, Kaztman (1999) in Montevideo and Sabatini (1999) in Santiago de Chile have found a significant association between the social composition of the neighborhoods and youth behaviors such as early pregnancy, school dropout, and labor participation. This chapter explores similar issues focusing on the effects of neighborhood characteristics on the process of transition to adulthood from a qualitative perspective. Most of the studies cited above have already shown the association between neighborhoods and risky behaviors among young people, mainly based on statistical analyses. Our main goal, however, is to contribute to the understanding of why and how the social and ecological characteristics of the neighborhood are associated with different patterns of youth transition in terms of their opportunities of social integration.

The neighborhood can be defined as a spatial defined area, where its inhabitants are conditioned by similar economic, political and ecological forces, and share a set of common cultural values and social norms (Park 1916). This traditional and generally accepted definition of neighborhood, however, presents some important problems. On the one hand, there is an analytical and technical difficulty associated with the delimitation of the unit of analysis. As several authors have observed (Sampson 2001, Fisher 1995) administratively defined neighborhoods offer imperfect and artificial boundaries that not always match with ecological and social conditions. But there is also the problem of establishing when are social and cultural aspects contrasting enough to recognize different

neighborhoods. On the other hand, there is a “romantic” tendency and a methodological problem when the social and cultural dimensions of a neighborhood are analyzed, that leads to overstate homogeneity and commonality between neighbors. Although it is possible that some spatial areas present a high level of homogeneity, these can best be identified with qualitative data and participant observation rather than through an a priori assumption or the result of statistical procedures. Elias and Scotson (1994) have observed that studies of attitudes and beliefs based on statistical procedures tend to assume that the interviewed individuals, in the first place, have formed them independently of other individuals or that power was so evenly distributed between individuals that each of them was able to utter opinions independently of what others thought. In contrast, the authors argue that common beliefs and attitudes are maintained by various forms of social pressure and social control or by the pressure of a common situation. As we have learned from Foucault’s work, power and conflict are inherent components of social relationship, and therefore they should not be disregarded as part of the social and cultural analysis of a neighborhood.

In this chapter the neighborhood is defined with a systemic model of the local community (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974). From this perspective the social and ecological boundaries of a neighborhood are assumed to be flexible and diffuse, and priority is given to the local formal and informal social relationships in which neighbors are involved. Kasarda and Janowitz observed that "one can identify the social fabric of communities in systemic terms by focusing on local social networks and abstracting out those relations that are directly linked to the

occupational system; the remaining geographically based social relations constitute the social fabric of human communities, be they neighborhood, local communities, or metropolitan areas". These authors, however, emphasize friendship and kinship networks as a central aspect of the definition of local community. We agree with Sampson (2001:102) that, "for better or worse, in many neighborhoods, neighbors are acquaintances or strangers rather than friends", and this is also valid for developing countries and poor neighborhoods. Moreover, we add that neighbor relationships are not exempt from conflicts and contrasting cultural values and social norms.

This chapter explores the ecological, social and cultural characteristics of the neighborhood in association with the process of youth transition. The analysis focuses on the perception of young people about these three dimensions of their respective neighborhoods. The first section explores the experiences and perception of young people about the effect of ecological characteristics on their employment, educational and residential opportunities and other aspects of their everyday life. The second section focuses on the socio-cultural attributes of different neighborhoods. I will analyze the attitudes and behaviors prevalent in different neighborhoods. This is not an exhaustive analysis of subcultures, since this issue is beyond the scope of this study. The goal of this section is explore the values and attitudes that have become dominant in the public space of the neighborhood and how these affect youth opportunities in their transition to adulthood. I will also examine the social capital of these neighborhoods, focusing

both on the social networks and the local social organizations in which young people are involved.

8.2. ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS AND YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

Lanús and Florencio Varela represent contrasting neighborhoods in terms of their urban ecological characteristics (see introduction and appendix). Lanús is borders on the city of Buenos Aires. It was an important destination of the massive waves of European immigrant during the early XX century, and it was the center of an early industrial development, particularly in the metallurgical and meat-processing sectors. Florencio Florencio Varela, in contrast, is 25 km. South of the Federal Capital, and it has been urbanized as a result of internal migrants from the Northern Provinces, but also from ex-inhabitants of shantytowns in Buenos Aires city. They were attracted by the availability and low price of the land, but given that Florencio Varela has never had a local industrial sector, their inhabitants used to work in neighboring counties. An additional feature to remember at this point is that as a result of its early urbanization, Lanús is highly urbanized, with one of the highest indices of population density in Greater Buenos Aires, and heterogeneous in its social composition with extensive middle and working classes, but also with spots of extreme poverty. Florencio Varela, has a low population density, with some rural areas where agriculture is the main activity, and is highly homogeneous in terms of its social composition, characterized by a large low working class living in poverty –it is the county with the highest rate of poverty in Greater Buenos Aires.

These general characteristics create contrasting social context and opportunities for the transition to adulthood. One of the most important differences refers to the local labor opportunities that both neighborhoods provide. In Lanús's working class neighborhoods, local micro and small manufacturing firms are the most common point of entry into the labor market for young males. Textile workshops and commercial activities provide similar opportunities for young females.

I started working at the factory that was round the corner from my house. I worked in a couple of factories until I got a job in a big supermarket. *"How did you get the jobs at the factories?"* Well, they were just round the corner from my house... [I got the jobs] through my acquaintances. There, I started as an office errand boy... [afterwards] I used to make coils for transformers and separator-plates for car batteries. After that, I worked in a clothing factory right opposite my house, across the street. *"Were they your acquaintances, too?"* Well, yes, they were right opposite [my house], you see. I stayed 8 months there. That was here, round the corner. And after that I got a job in a big supermarket, where I stayed 2 years. (Javier, 26, Lanús, Interview 2)

My first job was at a clothing store, selling clothes. I had been looking for a job and I saw this little sign, I went inside, I asked them, and they wanted to know if I could start right away, and the following day I started working, so... it turned out swell. (Lucrecia, 23, Lanús, Interview 26)

Young people in Florencio Varela do not have the same opportunities. Indeed, given its condition of dormitory suburb for a poor working class, Florencio Varela has not developed a local labor market, which is almost inexistent. There is a very limited local industrial activity, and as a result of the high levels of poverty, the commercial sector is mainly informal and based on very small family retail shops. Thus, young people have scarce local labor

opportunities, which are restricted to retailing, construction, and gardening and cleaning activities in weekend houses located in some areas of this municipality.

And...I would rather get a job that had something to do with my business studies on running and management, but generally there is a lack of this kind of jobs. Here in Florencio Varela you can get a job at a clothing store, or at a grocery store, or at a shop. Having a High School diploma you can get a job at a supermarket, as a cashier, that sort of thing, that is, not much [variety] really. But here, in Florencio Varela, it would be difficult, because there are no supermarkets. I would have to commute to Quilmes, the Capital [city], Avellaneda, places like those. (Florencia, 19, Florencio Varela, Interview 21)

I used to work as a gardener, you see, I used to cut the grass, to arrange gardens, while I was attending High School. I used to go to school in the afternoon and to work as a gardener in the morning. You see, there are many weekend houses around. You walk down there a couple of blocks and you'll find a bunch of them. So, I used to work in some of them (Raúl, 25, Florencio Varela, Interview 25).

I like to live here in Florencio Varela, because I am living here, that is, I like it because I've got used to it. But this place is hard [regarding job opportunities], there's nothing, there's no work, no places where you can say 'All right, I'm going to sign up here and see what happens.' (Soledad, 24, Florencio Varela, Interview 10)

I have always worked far away from here. No, no, never got a job here. The nearest place I went to work at is the case of the paper mill, that is at 14th and Belgrano. (Ernesto, 25, Florencio Varela, Interview 1)

These contrasting features of the local labor markets have several and diverse implications for the process of transition to adulthood. Labor opportunities, and particularly the level of development reached by the local labor market, have a strong effect on the characteristics and patterns of the school-to-work transition and the socialization process of young people after school.

In Lanús, the labor market represents a real and tangible alternative to education for secondary school leavers. Several interviews showed that working

class youths start to work in local workshops (in the same neighborhood) when they are still studying. After that, it is likely that they decide to leave the school, in order to continue with their labor careers, either because both activities may not be held at the same time, or because they give priority to present earnings, or because their incomes are needed in the family. Whatever the reasons and factors behind this decision, we observed that the local labor market gives young people the opportunity of thinking about education and work as real alternative options.

And...because I had got a sort of *changa* [an odd job], something like that, and...you are young and you want to have some money of your own, and.... I think I was about 14 years old. Yes, I had started High School [8th grade], and...well, that is the reason why I quit. "*What kind of job did you get?*" I was working at an alcohol bottling plant, that is, I used to bottle alcohol and some other stuff. That used to be down General Belgrano way, nearby this place (Federico, 21, Lanús, Interview 4).

I was working at a metallurgical workshop, as a minor worker, an assistant operative-worker, that was the category I was placed in. A friend of mine took me there.... I liked it there in the sense that I learned a lot: how to interpret blueprints, how to weld pieces with any kind of machine [...] I was taken on through a friend of mine. It was the right moment when he told me, it was summer time, I was on vacation and so I went there. After that I started school [High School], and...well, after that I had to give up attending school because I couldn't cope with my busy schedules. I used to arrive late all the time, and...twice arriving late...it means you are absent, and so I kept adding up [*absent* marks in the list]...I used to work 9 hours, from 7.00 am to 4.00 pm more or less. (Favio, 23, Lanús, Interview 8)

This is not the case in Florencio Varela. As a consequence of the underdevelopment of the local labor market, young people do not perceive work as a real alternative. The opportunity of work is not there, it does not exist; as Soledad said in her interview "*there is no place where to apply for a job*", which is clearly contrasting with the opportunities of Javier, Federico and others in Lanús, who

have several factories around their own neighborhoods. In this context, school and work are not competing alternatives in Florencio Varela. Young people tend to leave the school for different reasons but without concrete labor opportunities.

Several important implications, affecting the transition from school-to-work, result from these contrasting ecological characteristics. First, given the restricted labor demand, young people in Florencio Varela must generate or create their own labor opportunities using their own resources. Secondly, the school-to-work transition in Florencio Varela tends to be mediated by long periods out of school and work, and characterized by irregular and intermittent patterns of labor participation.

The scarce local labor demand makes young people in Florencio Varela heavily dependent on self-generated income activities and social networks in order to find a job. Informal activities and “*changas*” (casual jobs, odd jobs) are the common point of entry into the labor market and a predominant component of their labor careers. The early labor experience of young people is characterized in Florencio Varela by high levels of instability and intermittency, with permanent changes between short periods of employment, unemployment, and retirement from the labor market. In contrast, the local labor market in Lanús offers a wider and more diverse range of labor opportunities. These opportunities have a common feature: they are based on a relatively stable contractual relationship as an employee. This does not mean that young people in Lanús have stable labor careers. They also change their job frequently, but they tend to suffer fewer periods of unemployment and retirement from the labor market than young

workers in Florencio Varela. The following interviews provide good examples of the different opportunities that both areas provide.

Now I'm selling [goods] on my own, I'm selling socks. I sell them at 1 peso each pair of socks and I get a benefit of 5 pesos for every dozen pairs I sell. As I was idle and my wife was working...though actually she was only working one day a week, cleaning up houses. And... I felt miserable being idle while my wife was working, and so... with another guy, we managed to put aside some money and buy a number of pairs of socks. And we sell them in the street. (Ernesto, 25, Florencio Varela, Interview 1).

[How I got the] jobs? And...*all right*, because they saw how I had repaired my motorcycle, and then someone told me 'Che, how about repairing my motorcycle, do you dare?' 'And, yes, it's no big deal.' And...*all right*, I started repairing that motorcycle, and then another one, and so on, and after that I was always getting repairing work to do. Yes, always, I had to stop it, even, because I have my friend, from whom I learned a couple of things, and I didn't want to take work away from him, because the people [the clients] would end up coming to my house [to have their motorcycles repaired] all the time. I used to have up to 5 motorcycles at my home, and it was not a real workshop, it was something [an activity] I did as a hobby, for my pleasure. And then, obviously, I made good money and it was profitable, because it was a job I could handle on my own (Seba, 23, Florencio Varela, Interview 24)

"*And how did you get that job?*" Through a friend of mine, from the neighborhood. He was already working there and he took me... he took all of us...almost all the kids of our neighborhood used to work there. "*A factory in this neighborhood?*" Yes, at [Monte] Chingolo, but at the other side. Yes, 20 blocks from here. Yes, we used to go walking. We were about 7 kids, and so we used to go walking together. (Esteban, 25, Lanús, Interview 3).

There are substantial differences between these experiences. In the case of Esteban, when he was looking for a job his neighborhood presented or gave him labor opportunities. The matching process could be more or less difficult and competitive, but there was a local labor demand. In the case of Ernesto and Seba,

they were facing a much more restricted structure of opportunities. In that context, labor opportunities have to be actively searched, or directly self generated. The process of finding a job in Florencio Varela is strongly dependent on social networks and requires relative high investment for poor young people.

It is known that social networks represent a key mechanism of matching job opportunities and job seekers (Granovetter 1974), however social capital becomes particularly important in Florencio Varela. As a result of the constrained local labor market, young people have to look for a job outside their own community. Thus, social networks become a critical resource in order to obtain information about labor opportunities that are physically distant.

At the same time, searching for a job out of the neighborhood could be an expensive process. In the context of poverty, just to take a bus and have a meal away from home represents an important cost that very often discourages job seekers. As Tania states in her interview, the spatial isolation of Florencio Varela is an attribute that increases the difficulties of entering the labor market.

I signed up, I signed up. I got a job, but it was at the shopping, but it was too far away and I couldn't afford...Adding up, I was going to spend more in tickets, and may be in food if I had to eat something [out of home]...so, there wouldn't be much left, so no I decided not to take that job. (Tania, 25, Florencio Varela, Interview 13)

The second aspect associated with the characteristics of the local labor market is the socialization process of young people after leaving school. After education, the labor market, and particularly the “work place”, becomes one of the most important spheres of socialization (particularly for young males). Several studies of unemployment have shown that work plays a crucial psychological role

in the formation of self-esteem, identity and a sense of order. Jahoda's studies on unemployment (1979, 1982), for instance, have shown that employment provides an important source of psychological stability through providing a time structure, participation in a collective purpose, and identity, and a regular required source of activity. The first steps in the labor market start a process of labor socialization. During the early labor experiences young people not only become familiar with the world of work, but at the same time they begin to construct a particular type of relationship with work. Norms, attitudes, routines, meanings and expectations about "work" are internalized and re-constructed during the initial stages of the labor trajectories.

Different types of labor experiences during youth, however, will shape in different ways the psychological role of work, as well as, the process of socialization in the world of work (Craine 1997). The different labor opportunities of Lanús and Florencio Varela represent also different structure of socialization. The intermittency and precariousness of youth labor trajectories in Florencio Varela, are clearly contrasting with the more stable and formal labor experiences of young people in Lanús. In Florencio Varela, employment is always uncertain and it cannot be taken for granted. A job today does not guarantee the same job tomorrow, or a job at all. This is not an attribute necessarily associated with the formal/informal dichotomy. Although most of the young people from Florencio Varela work in the informal sector, those who have had labor opportunities in the formal sector have also experienced instability and precariousness. It seems that the segmentation of the labor market tends to overlap with spatial segregation.

Young people from Lanús and Florencio Varela face different levels of labor instability and precariousness, even in those cases in which they work in similar activities. Thus, their spatial segregation seems to push them to the "secondary" segments of the labor market.

In terms of the process of work socialization the interviews show important contrasts between both areas, which are associated with the characteristics of the labor opportunities. In Lanús, particularly in working class neighborhoods, young people are familiar with an industrial culture, making permanent references to labor benefits, worker's rights, payment rules, the extension of the working day, the value of extra-working hours, etc. Although most young people do not receive social benefits during their early labor experiences, this is perceived as an unfair situation, and even as exploitation. In their contacts with workmates, friends and neighbors they learn that social protection should be part of the world of work. The following paragraphs from interviews conducted in Lanús's working class neighborhoods show some of these tacit aspects of a blue-collar culture.

I started as an office errand boy, that is... I used to make coils for transformers and separator-plates for [car energy] batteries. I stayed one year there. Then I left, I took the case to trial and I won. They wanted me to sign my resignation, telling me that the following week I would sign a new contract. All lies. Once you have signed your resignation they won't make you any new contract at all! And so I hired this lawyer and that was it. Besides I was a minor [under-18-worker] and all that, I used to work 12 hours a day, being 15 years old. (Javier, 26, Lanús, Interview 2).

I used to work from 6.00 am to 2.00 pm. But we didn't have all we had to have [according to law], you see, because that was an unhealthy-condition work, and they were [positively] required to give you at least a glass of

milk for breakfast - which they didn't do, and I had to bring it myself - and the same about lunch, you see. (Esteban, 25, Lanús, Interview 3)

I get paid every 2 weeks; I get 200 pesos bimonthly, every two weeks. But... now I'm earning the minimum wage because I'm new, but I have been told that after 3 months the hour-pay is 2.20 pesos, that is, I will earn 220 pesos for the first 2 weeks – due to be paid on the 5th of each month – and 240 pesos for the second 2-week term – due to be paid on the 20th of each month-. So I'm doing well. Besides I have a health insurance plan and everything, paid vacations, retirement. “*And which are your working hours?*” From 8.00 [am] to 5.00 [pm]. And then I am paid the overtime hours apart. We don't work on Saturdays, but you may go [to work on Saturdays] if you want. (Marita, 19, Lanús, Interview 13).

Additionally, these types of labor experiences assigned to work a central role in young people lives. As Jahoda has contended, in these cases work becomes a critical activity, organizing and structuring everyday life. Just to mention two different examples, the traditional mechanism of two weeks payment and a 40 hours (usually longer) working week, give a strong time structure to young people's lives. Money is available (with relative certainty) at specific moment of the month,⁶⁴ thus income should be handled carefully and expenses planned in advance. The week is clearly divided between working days and weekend, which becomes a strong division in young people's lives, between sacrifice and pleasure, work and free time. From Monday through Friday life is limited to the work place and home; but Saturdays and Sundays, are days to meet with friends, drink, and play soccer. Individuals, but also the whole community, follow the pace imposed by the routine of work.

You have to bear staying 9 hours inside a factory without seeing daylight, nothing, because that also, you know...in summer-time you are inside the

⁶⁴ The 5th and 20th of every month is the payment date for the first and second two weeks.

factory, you can't see the sun, or in winter-time, someone who works from 6 in the morning to 6 in the evening, when he/she gets to work it's dark and when he/she leaves work it's dark, the only thing left for him/her is to get home, to take a shower, to have supper and to go to sleep, because the following day you have to go in there again... That routine kills you. No, no, no, now I'm working from 6.00 [am] to 3.00 [pm], but I've been already told that work is increasing and we'll have to stay until 6.00 [pm]. After 3 [pm] we are paid overtime, a 50% more, but anyway, [now] I'm earning 1,17 pesos an hour, and I'll get 2 pesos [an hour]. (Esteban, 25, Lanús, Interview 3)

I started working at Coca-Cola and I used to work from 6.00 [pm] to 6.00 [am]. I used to work all night long and I used to sleep all day long, then I used to get up to go to work, and that was it. So I would never have time to be on the streets, you see; that was very important also, because...

"Great sacrifices, wasn't it?" Yes, because, apart from working at my age... a kid of that age works Saturdays and Sundays, you know, a teenager... I used to work to the full, I didn't have time for anything else; maybe on week-ends I would play football a bit and then, on Sundays, I had to go back to work. (Fabián, 25, Lanús, Interview 11)

I work on Saturdays, yes, because I tell my ma 'instead of sleeping', in any case I can sleep on Saturday afternoon and Sunday, so, I can go to work on Saturdays [in the morning]. I work on Saturdays from 8.00 [am] to 1.00 [pm]. *"And what do you do when you are not working?"* I drive everybody crazy, everybody. Because I feel miserable, I don't want to be spoken to, because I feel terrible because I am not going to work. (Marita, 19, Lanús, Interview 13).

Florencio Varela contrasts with Lanús in the process of work socialization.

Comments or opinions on labor rights and benefits are not easily found when young people talk about their labor experiences. This is not because young people in Florencio Varela usually have unprotected jobs, but mainly because they generally work in areas of the labor market where rights and benefits are not expected. In other words, they are socialized in an environment where social protection is not part of the world of work.

If certainty and regularity are the central aspects of this process in Lanús, uncertainty and lateness are the main aspects to which young people are exposed in their labor careers in Florencio Varela. Work does not provide a regular time structure; young people work when work is available, and in the same way, money is used when money is available. The distinction between working days and weekends becomes blurred, since the labor experiences are constantly interrupted by jobless periods. There is not a structure of the working week either, since work opportunities emerge randomly during the week, therefore the traditional value of "Monday" in the working class culture is weakened. The extension of the working day is also irregular, since it depends on the amount of work to do. And finally, incomes are uncertain as a result of labor instability, but it is worth noting that this uncertainty is measured on a daily basis, not in months.⁶⁵ Most of these aspects are present in Julio's account of his recent labor experience.

After that I worked in up-keeping buildings at Puerto Madero [at the Capital city, Buenos Aires], Afterwards, the job was over, because there was no more work to do; I worked there for a month and a half, and...all right, the job was over and I had to leave. I stayed at home also, I stayed 6 months idle. Then I got a job, at night, as an assistant bricklayer worker, making the sidewalks in the pedestrian street, Lavalle Street, in downtown Capital Federal. I worked there for 2 months and then the construction stopped. *All right*, that work stopped and I was quite a long time, about seven months and a half without working. After that there was a *changa* [odd little job]. My dad says 'Let's go and make this little odd job at the harbor, where I have to repair a couple of things.' 'Ok. let go', I say to

⁶⁵ It is worth noting that the increasing deterioration of the labor market, in terms of unemployment and job insecurity, has expanded job instability and income uncertainty among different geographical and social sectors of society (see Chapter IX). The comparison between Lanús and Florencio Varela developed in this chapter focuses on differences between a process that is deeper and more extensive in Florencio Varela than in Lanús, but not unknown in middle and working class neighborhoods.

him. And then they needed people there, and as my dad was working at the harbor and could not go, I did. There, at the [ship cargo] containers depot, to get the containers down [from the ships] I had hook them down. I was there...less than one month, but I earned good money, I earned 30 pesos a day. “*And now you don’t have a job, do you?*” Yes, but sometimes I get some *changas* [odd little jobs]; assistant bricklayer worker, 1 or 2 days long, and I do that. When I am idle, I stay at home, I help at home and all that. Because my ma works in the *Plan Vida* [a Buenos Aires provincial social assistance program], and so, I stay at home, I take care of my brother, and my ma is a “*manzanera*” [a manager, for that block of houses, of the social assistance Plan Vida] also, so I deliver the milk, I cook, I clean up my house, and then, when my ma comes back I take my bike and I go out, or I stay in my room. (Julio, 19, Florencio Varela, Interview 6)

In sum, we found that ecological characteristics in both areas have different effects on the school-to-work transition. The comparison with Lanús highlights that the restricted opportunities the local labor market provides in Florencio Varela generates a process of cumulative disadvantages for young people. The limited local job opportunities increase the importance of other resources -such as social networks and money- in order to find a job outside the community. The paradox is that these resources become critical in a context of greater poverty -that is, in a context where social and economic capital are scarce. As a result, young people are pushed either to the secondary ladders of the labor market or to self-generated and precarious activities. In turn, this type of labor experiences, characterized by insecurity and instability, lead to a process of socialization where work does not provide either regularity or certainty in young people's lives. It is worth noting, however, that even under these contexts and experiences, when young people from Florencio Varela were asked about an ideal job, "labor stability" was mentioned recurrently in their interviews. In other

words, an early socialization in instable work careers helps to cope with its negative consequences, but does not preclude the hope of a stable job.

8.3 THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD: FIGHTING FOR THE PUBLIC SPACE

8.3.1 Perceptions of the neighborhood

Lanús and Florencio Varela are not only different in terms of their local economic and ecological characteristics. Social norms, attitudes, and values among young people and their peer groups also show significant differences in both areas.

One initial strategy to explore this issue is through the perceptions people have of their own and other neighborhoods. In general terms, the structural differences between Lanús and Florencio Varela are reproduced in the “common” and “public” perceptions on both areas. Lanús is depicted as a neighborhood dominated by working class norms and values, and Florencio Varela, in contrast, is portrayed with attributes of an underclass ghetto, where “lack of education”, delinquency and drugs are its distinctive features. Through a social process where social prejudices, individual experiences, the mass media, and state intervention played a central role, the public images of Lanús and Florencio Varela have already been defined: the first as a place of “work” (*trabajo*), the second as a place of “crime” (*afano*). In a process of social objectification of pre-existent perceptions both municipalites have gained their own identity in society. These identities, however, are not necessarily rooted in empirical facts. Rather, they

have acquired autonomy in reproducing themselves in the collective imaginary of the society.

When I was ready to start my fieldwork, friends, relatives and acquaintances (who have never been either in Lanús or Florencio Varela) gave me the same advice: “*be careful in Florencio Varela, it is too dangerous*”, but no one told me about the extreme risks and violence of some neighborhoods in Lanús. Despite the heterogeneity of both municipalities (more evident in Lanús), they have a single and distinctive identity. The following interviews with young people from Lanús, but with close contacts with Florencio Varela, highlight the public image of both urban settings.

“In what ways did your life change when you moved from Florencio Varela to Lanús?” It changes because of the acquaintances one makes. Because in Florencio Varela or in Solano, I used to have a relationship with people who were on drugs, who were on drugs because of the impossibility of...because of the many social problems they had; and here in Lanús, [instead] the kids that were on drugs had other standards, you know? a different scale of values. It is like...[here in Lanús] they were more like impish kids, who used drugs because it was fashionable, like going out, passing exams, or this and that... or bullshit. But out there, in Florencio Varela, it was like...the kids did it because they needed to survive sometimes, you know? One had to take 3 or 4 tablets to be able to go and steal things, [one had to take the pills] to have the balls [the guts] to start stealing. It was like... out there one had to bear so many problems... it was a different story. (Aníbal, 23, Lanús, Interview 15).

There were three houses where we lived. The one in the front yard was my uncle's, the middle one was ours and the house in the backyard was my grandmother's. My uncle also had had a quarrel [with his parents] and had left, but he went to the Pepsi Neighborhood, in Florencio Varela. No, it was a pity that he left. You could tell seeing the children, my cousins, the big difference, huge difference, between the way they were like and the way we were like. Big differences regarding vocabulary, education, everything. “*And you think the neighborhood is to be blamed for that?*” Absolutely. Absolutely, because the eldest [girl among my cousins] is

pretty much like me, because she grew up at the house in San José [Lanús] where we used to live. The people who live in San José are hard-working people [working-class people], humble, but fairly well educated, that is, there are no shantytowns, there are no rogues... “*And what are the differences between you and your cousins?*” [Many] from the vocabulary [they use], the music they listen to... it’s all *cumbia*, I don’t listen to *cumbia*, for example, [although] I dance some, but I prefer a different trend in music... may be these are silly things, but.... About friends, also. Their friends, out there, go around armed with weapons, and I don’t have that kind of friends here... I didn’t meet boys who smoked or drunk alcohol until I was 22, I was grown-up then, while they [my cousins] have been with all that kind of people from the time when they were little kids. (Vicky, 25, Lanús, Interview 28)

This opposition between “work” (*trabajo*) and “crime” (*afano*) associated with social and cultural differences between groups is a particular example of a basic oppositional mechanism of social identity construction. A basic distinction between “we” and “they” is reproduced at different levels. In this sense, at a macro level -Greater Buenos Aires- Lanús is associated with attributes of “working class” and Florencio Varela with attributes of “underclass”,⁶⁶ but when we go down into these communities new distinctions between “we” and “they” appear. In a new social locus the oppositional mechanism is reproduced distinguishing different social groups associated with different social and cultural aspects (values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, etc). In Lanús there is also an underclass group and a middle class group, and in Florencio Varela there is also a working class group.

⁶⁶ From this point on I use the expressions “Working class neighborhoods” and “underclass neighborhoods” in order to make reference to the different characteristics and features that tend to be associated with different neighborhoods. These characteristics and their association with specific areas, however, are not result of my own research but of people perceptions, they are not categories of the researcher but of the subject of the research -that is they are an *emic* construction.

When talking about the situation of young people in Lanús, José Jose was clear in emphasizing the differences between “we” (the working class) and “they” (the underclass), contrasting the characteristics of youngsters from his own neighborhood (*el barrio*) and from the bordering shantytown (*la villa*). In this case, the social distinction between “we” and “they” overlaps with a spatial differentiation between *el barrio* and *la villa*.⁶⁷ But even inside the shantytown, in the same geographical space, young people established a social distinction between “we” and “they”⁶⁸. Antonio, a resident of a Lanús shantytown, was also interested in make clear the social distinction between young people like him (working class) and the other young inhabitants of the shantytown (the underclass). In Florencio Varela, which is a highly homogeneous municipality with less evident spatial contrasts⁶⁹, we found that young people make a similar social distinction between different groups associated with attributes of working class and underclass. Julia, for instance, expressed in her interview her intention of moving into a “neighborhood of workers” like her family is; thus, people in her current neighborhood are depicted as non-workers, particularly the youth.

Mind you, a 70% of the guys here, either they are drug-addicts or they are robbers. Because this is all low class neighborhoods, you see, and 21-year-

⁶⁷ Ariel Gravano (1991) points out the symbolic role of shantytowns and tower blocks in the construction of the neighborhood identity (*identidad barrial*). He observes that the shantytown could be located in the same neighborhood (as a physical space) but as a social and cultural space it is defined as a non-neighborhood; that is, the shantytown appears as a symbolic objectification of ‘*lo no barrial*’.

⁶⁸ This distinction between “we” and “they” is also present inside the working class neighborhood. In this case, the differentiation comes from middle class youths living in working class neighborhoods. Thus, “we” is now a middle class and “they” is the working class.

⁶⁹ This does not mean that socio-spatial distinctions are absent. The most recent areas of land invasion as well as the complex of block tower apartments, known as Barrio Pepsi, represent examples of such distinctions. But in terms of the socio economic conditions of its population Florencio Varela shows less notorious contrast than Lanús does.

old guys, like me, a 60 or 70 % [of them] are lying at a street corner, drinking beer...I drink beer, too, but...what I mean when I say drinking beer is that they are taking drugs, and stealing things.... or they ask you some coins when you pass by. *“But, don’t you live in this neighborhood?”* No, I live out there. Out there it’s different, it is more of a real neighborhood, [with] more civilized people...On this side there are passageways [to pass between/among houses, instead of streets]...it is more like a settlement, while out there [where I live] it is more like a real neighborhood, with paved streets and all that. Look, I think these boys are likely to be drawn into [drugs abuse] because they have a special mental attitude, because of their background, because they are surrounded by delinquency, more than that, right there they can get drugs, drugs are being sold there, close at their hands. (José José, 21, Lanús, Interview 6)

I don’t have any [real] friends in the neighborhood, I rather have acquaintances. Because there’s no real friendship here. Besides, I don’t know, they seem to have no brains, I am 21 years old but I seem... I don’t know, to have the mental attitude of a 40 or 50-year-old. *“You are a kind of exception in this neighborhood?”* I don’t know...if you can say that much, but something like that, yes. *“Why?”* Because I don’t like messing around, screwing things up. Here they don’t have manners or decent behavior, they haven’t got a good education, they belong to another class [of people]. Besides, there is a lot of drugs abuse. And...ok, if you don’t want to get acquainted with people like that, the best thing to do is avoiding them. (Antonio, 21, Lanús, Interview 9).

No, I hope I’ll be better, regarding all levels. For example, the whole block [of houses] here, they are relatives and I wouldn’t like getting to...it is not that I think this is an ugly neighborhood because it has got this or that, but I would like to change, to make some progress, to get out [of here], even to one of those [humble] working-class neighborhoods, [here] you can see how they gather at the street corner to sell drugs, all that stuff, and it is awful. (Julia, 18, Florencio Varela, Interview 14).

The distinction between “we” and “they” becomes a central component in the social process of identity construction. Both categories are associated with contrasting social and cultural attributes, and objectified in different groups of people. These groups, however, are relative and flexible depending on the level at which the distinction is established. In this sense, an individual belongs to “we” or

“they” depending on the reference group of comparison. For instance, in the context of Greater Buenos Aires, Julia would be identified with the attributes of “underclass” since she lived in Florencio Varela, but in Florencio Varela she would be identified with the attributes of “working class”; Antonio, who lives in a shantytown of Lanús, would be “working class” when his condition of Lanusense is emphasized, “underclass” when his condition of shantytown inhabitant is considered, and once again “working class” in the local context of his own neighborhood.

Young people are aware of these social perceptions of themselves. Their everyday lives and social interactions are permanently affected by these perceptions. The identity that young people form as a result of their spatial and social location can be emotionally rewarding and increase their power and self-esteem; but it can also be a source of exclusion and rejection (Elias and Scotson 1994). The distinction between “we” and “they” is also a hierarchical differentiation in terms of social status and sometimes an ethical distinction in terms of what is desirable in society. Antonio gave us a good example of how social interactions are affected by these social perceptions. His interview also shows the relativity of these perceptions. Remember that Antonio defined himself as different from other young people in the micro context of his neighborhood; in the following paragraph, however, this distinction disappears and he presents himself as a common youth from a shantytown. The context of the interaction changed and in turn the social perception of himself.

Two months after the accident I got another girl friend...Afterwards we broke off because her mother knew where I lived... afterwards she found

out that I lived here. She was much of a stuck-up woman. “*Why? Is it something bad to live here?*” And...what does a mother want for her daughter? A mother that is, for example, a high fashion dressmaker; she was well off, she lived in an apartment...and I come along, suddenly. (Antonio, 21, Lanús, Interview 9).

The previous analysis on the social perceptions of neighborhoods underlines the extent that social and cultural distinctions are associated with spatial distinctions. Florencio Varela is associated with social and cultural aspects similar to those used to defined the concept of “underclass”; Lanús with social and cultural aspects characteristic of traditional “working class” neighborhoods; even within Lanús, there are neighborhoods associated with middle class, working class, and underclass attributes. Nevertheless, when the analysis focuses on these local communities the homogeneity disappeared and tensions and conflicts appear between different groups. Two important research questions emerge from these observations. The first question refers to the association between specific neighborhoods and specific social and cultural aspects, -i.e., why are young people from Florencio Varela associated with underclass attributes. The second question refers to the process of distinction between “we” and “they” within local communities -i.e. who are “we” and “they” in Florencio Varela? What are the implications of belonging to one of these groups for young people? The following section explores these issues.

8.3.2 “We” and “They” in Working Class and Underclass Neighborhoods

The interviews were conducted in three different social settings: middle class, working class, and low working class neighborhoods. The analysis of this

section focuses on working class and low working class neighborhoods. In Lanús boundaries between these areas are clearly established (spatially and socially) and I have been able to conduct interviews in both types of urban contexts (*barrios and villas*). In Florencio Varela, the socio-economic characteristics of its population are less contrasting and more homogenously associated with a low working class.

The goal of this section is to explore the social and cultural aspects associated with young people living in these different socio-economic neighborhoods and the effect of these aspects on their transition to adulthood. The analysis of the interviews shows that dwellers (including youths) characterize their neighborhoods with a concrete and specific set of social norms, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors associated with young people. That is, young people from working class and low working class neighborhoods are associated with different “sub-cultures”, and in turn these sub-cultures are associated with the neighborhood. But the interviews also show that within these neighborhoods there are clear and deep divisions between “we” and “they”. Thus, the young people from a working class neighborhood are associated with a *working class subculture*, but then we learn that not all of them remain fixed in that picture or recognize themselves as part of that subculture. The same situation appears in low working class urban areas; they are associated with attributes of an *underclass subculture*, but there are also internal divisions.

In both types of neighborhoods there are “we” and “they”, and only one of these groups represents the subculture associated with the entire neighborhood.

Using an expression of Elias and Scotson (1994) (which is also the title of their study in an English neighborhood), in each of these neighborhoods are “the established” and “the outsiders”. In our case, “the established” and “the outsiders” are those who follow the social norms and cultural values of the neighborhood, and those who belong to the community but reject and deflect from those social and cultural patterns. However, the outsiders are not always associated with a lower social esteem than the established. The outsiders could be associated with those excluded in a particular social context, but not necessarily with an inferior social status. In an underclass neighborhood, “the outsiders” have a lower status in their local context, but not outside the community given that they are responding to the expectations of the mainstream society.

In an underclass neighborhood the established are those who follow and fulfill the social and cultural aspects associated with an underclass. For young people this means that they are out of school and work, they spend most of their time in the neighborhood’s streets, drinking and doing drug, chatting and fighting with other young groups, and usually becoming involved in crime activities. Pedro and Diego talk about their experiences as members of “the established” of underclass urban settings.

When I was 16 I used to “live” at the street corner, sleeping right there on the sidewalk, with my brother. I used to be lazing around all day long. And look, you stand up at the street corner all day long and you start asking money to your neighbors, just like that, all the time, and you gather enough money, I don’t know, to buy a demijohn [of wine], to buy a “faso” [marihuana cigarette], and you stay there all day long, and you go to your house to have something to eat, and then you come back. I used to live like that a couple of years, about 2 years...And all my friends were like that, too, we were 15 or so, besides the ones that came from other places,

just dropping by from their neighborhoods. But, mind you, my brothers and I never took to stealing. Sometimes I used to tell my ma 'thank God we never took to stealing'. No, I used to think of my mother all the time, I used to think of my ma and say [to myself] I can't do this, I am drunk, I am a drug-addict, the only [bad] thing missing is to become a thief and to be found [one day] inside a ditch. (Pedro, 22, Florencio Varela, Interview 8)

Then some problems began to spoil the group relationship, the kids began to drift apart, some started using drugs, and stealing... and me too, I had some problems, so I said no, never again, and I gave up [...] It is the neighborhood, the kind of neighborhood it is. For example...the generation that comes before us - today they are 25 or 26-year-old kids -, when we used to play football, those kids were already drinking beer and smoking marihuana and... taking cocaine and all that. We used to see that, but we never paid the slightest attention to it, because we weren't conscious of what it was or what they did. Sure, because that neighborhood...they sell narcotics there, and all that, tablets, acid...it's a real "shopping center" at night...there's far more night life than day life, because there appear cars, trucks, buses, everything. And... it was like that. One of us got into this [situation], and then another got into it, and another one, and another one, and so, all of us were drawn into it... almost everyone. (Diego, 21, Lanús, Interview 23).

This set of norms, values and behaviors are not spontaneous or inherent to specific groups of young people. Some theorists have argued that the emergence of an underclass is a result of some kind of defective culture. From this perspective, poverty and exclusion are attributed to specific cultural characteristics of specific social groups. Young people leave school, because education is not a value among their peer groups, or they become involved in gang activities because violence and crime are sources of prestige and self-esteem. Indeed, the interviews show that in effect young people defined as an underclass have a culture with values and norms that differ from those of the mainstream society. For "the established" of an underclass neighborhood,

education is not a respectable value but violence and drug abuse are the accepted behaviors. The problem is not with the characterization that culturalist and conservative theorists make of the underclass culture; the problem is, as Massey and Denton (1993) have observed, that the connection between culture and the structural conditions of these groups in society was forgotten.

Situations of extreme poverty and lack of opportunities make it difficult for young people to follow the norms and values promoted by the mainstream society.⁷⁰ Several authors (Massey and Denton 1993, Wilson 1996) have observed that social groups under these situations tend to develop a set of alternative norms and values. Perceived as deviant from the mainstream society, this new set of cultural values and social norms allow them to cope with the hardship of their socio-economic situations and the frustration generated by unattainable goals. These issues become even more critical during youth, a period of the life course in which individuals tend to be uncertain of their own worth and role in society. The socio-economic constraints and the lack of opportunities to succeed in the mainstream society, generate not only feelings of hopelessness and frustration, but

⁷⁰ Studies conducted in Latin America (B. Roberts 1973), as well as in the US (Stack 1974) that took issue with the culture of poverty thesis argued that opportunities are relative to context. Roberts, for instance, found that in Guatemala City, the poor were extremely active in pursuing mainstream values, as were their children, despite the evident lack of opportunities for significant betterment. The type of urbanization meant that there were a large number of small-scale opportunities for improvement – invading land, building your own house, working in the informal sector etc. In contemporary Argentina, however, I found two main differences. On the one hand, Argentina had a more formal urbanization than other Latin American countries, and therefore opportunities and constraints imposed by the urban context are defined more formally. On the other hand, the recent socio-economic changes have weakened the sense of possible social improvement for certain segments of the population (see chapter 2 and 3). Indeed, this study shows that the generational gap (between parents and children) in terms of social mobility opportunities has increased; while previous generations of poor found some opportunities of mobility, the young poor are facing increasing difficulties and barriers.

also a crisis of self-esteem and identity in a critical period of the life course. The construction of the individual as a person (psychological) and a citizen (social) is undermined. Ethnographic studies (Fordham and Ogbu 1986, Elias and Scotson 1994, Craine 1997) have shown that under these conditions young people tend to develop alternative status-systems, which in most cases are based on social norms and cultural values contrasting to those of the mainstream society.

In previous chapters we have seen that family formation (through marriage, consensual unions, or childbearing) provides young women a respectable and socially accepted mechanism of acquiring a new status-role. Family formation gives young females new activities and responsibilities, but most important, it provides them a new social identity as wives, mothers, or housekeepers. Young men find a similar alternative status system in the *street culture*. In the context of underclass neighborhoods, young males develop an alternative cultural environment, which, in most aspects, is defined in opposition to the norms and values of the mainstream society. This new cultural environment works as a defense mechanism for young men: some of them find in the *street culture* a new source of prestige, self-esteem, and identity; others find a window for escaping the reality.

Violence, drugs, crime and money from an underground economy, could provide new opportunities of social prestige; moreover, the street provides a status and an identity in a socially interacting group. Anderson (1990, 1991) and Craine (1997) arrive at similar findings studying poor neighborhoods in the United States and England respectively. Both authors have observed that the *street culture* could

become a life career for disadvantage young (male) people. In Argentina, this is also true for some youths, but for others, perhaps due to a context of greater poverty and hardship, the *street culture* represents just the opportunity for escaping and avoiding their everyday life problems. That is, the street becomes a place where time can be spent without doing anything, where there are no recriminations or prejudices for leaving school and being out of work, and where alcohol and drug are available.

I used to spend the whole day with the guys [my group of friends]. We used to talk about anything that would suit us. One of us would go home, then he would come back and...that is, we weren't the whole day sitting there, you know; someone would go home, then he would come back, then another would go home, and then another, and so on, but we always knew that we could go there and there they [our friends] would be. (Diego, 21, Lanús, Interview 23).

"What did you do most of the time, when you were 'on the street'?" I drank [wine, beer], and I joined my friends who were on drugs. They used to take drugs and they would offer me some but I never accepted; I was about to do it, but I never did. That group of friends, it is like... I used to go [with them] and forget about my problems. And I think that is what affects the kids: thinking that their problems are over [that's why they need to join the group]. (Ernesto, 25, Florencio Varela, Interview 1).

The worst years [in the neighborhood] were the '90s, until 1998. For example, here, 4 years ago, not just anybody could pass by, not just anybody could walk along the street where my house was. They were robbed and beaten up. *"Who did that?"* Some people who are in jail or missing now, I don't know where they are. *"They were kids your age?"* My age, older and younger, all kinds. *"And why was there so much violence?"* Because there were so many of them and they were excited, euphoric. *"Because of drugs?"* Because of everything, and also because of believing themselves also.... due to ignorance also, believing themselves more... [superior to others]; and at the same time feeling themselves the objects of discrimination...But among their own people they felt proud of being the best [at doing bad things]...That sort of things. I used to play

football with them, but I always had clearly in mind who are my friends and ... (Alberto, 23, Lanús, Interview 10).

I always stayed at the 'street-corner'. But there are worlds and worlds of street-corners, that is, to 'make the street-corner' [*hacer esquina*]. [On one hand] you have the kids "*careta*" who stand up at the street-corner, but these are the kids who never do anything [really evil], that is, may be they smoke a cigarette and drink some wine, but, in the world of those who use drugs, "*caretas*" are those who do not take drugs [and pretend to be good kids], and so, they are *giles* [jerks], but... until one realizes that one is the real jerk, because the other one never ruins his life as much [as one does]. [And on the other hand] the other street-corner guys are the typical layabouts smoking marihuana, and drinking beer, or wine, or some other kind of alcohol. You stay there all day long, drinking some wine with the people, chatting a bit about whatever is going on, and there's always someone who boasts of being the best at stealing and using drugs. (Lautaro, 18, Florencio Varela, Interview 27)

It is worth noting that the norms and values of the street culture are not always firm among "the established". In general, young people from the street culture are insecure and uncertain about which norms and values they should follow. Out of their local context they express a recurrent idea: that they want to *rescatarse* ("rescue themselves").⁷¹ This expression means that they want to make a "change" in their lives: to leave the street culture and practices, to quit drugs or alcohol, crime and violence, or to return to school or find a job, or even to establish a family. But in their local contexts, they will say and show that they are not interested in those things, that that is the life of the *giles* (the jerks). In other words, *rescatarse* means to become a *gil*. Thus, the street culture emerges as a defense mechanism, showing its inherent and basic contradiction.

⁷¹ For instance, in the context of the interviews, young people talked about their participation in the street culture as a past experience. In some cases they said that they were in that context until one or two months ago, but not any more. All of them defined themselves as *rescatados* -that is, they have already rescued themselves.

That is, when they ask me what for I used to stay at the street-corner and what for I used to take drugs so much, I say ‘Ok, to get away from reality’, because that is the truth. It’s an excuse; at that moment it was an excuse [or a reason]. For myself it was a pretext to stay at the street-corner, it was ‘Ok, I am going to the corner and I stay there with the guys, I drink a couple of wines, I smoke a couple of *fasos*, and you are isolated from the real world. And then may be you get depressed and you get worse, or may be you end up not knowing what to do. But most of them [most of the kids] are willing to get away from all that and they are waiting...[hoping] Because, you know, the kids are not bad kids; they simply live inside a bubble. They get up, they smoke a *faso*, and they spend the whole day drinking; the night comes and they are still drinking until they must give up and go to sleep. But they are not truly evil, they haven’t got wicked minds. (Lautaro, 18, Florencio Varela, Interview 27).

In these neighborhoods, however, there are also young people (perhaps most of them) who do not share the same set of norms, values and behaviors. They are the outsiders or the *giles* –that is, those who attend school or work, do not use drugs, and are not involved in violence and crime activities. Antonio lives in Villa Jardin, one of the shantytowns of Lanús where the interviews were conducted. Although Villa Jardin is in the process of becoming a neighborhood, the place is extremely dangerous for those who do not belong to the community; but it is also a risky place for those who living in the community are defined as outsiders or *giles*. Antonio explains why is difficult for him to live in his neighborhood

Sometimes it’s *fucking* hard to live here. That is to say, it depends on how you get on with the people, you know? if they take you to be a *gil*, then it will be hard for you to live here. “*What is a ‘gil’?*” A *gil* for them is someone who works, who goes to school, *all right*, something like that. “*You would be a gil?*” Sure. Someone who is not on...who has no friends like those...guys who steal things and all that. (Antonio, 21, Lanús, Interview 9).

Living in an underclass neighborhood is extremely difficult for the outsiders or *giles*. If the street culture has a strong effect on the transition to adulthood of "the established", the interviews show that this effect is equally important among "the outsiders". They are subject to extreme psychological, social and physical pressures from "the established" and the street culture.

We have seen that sometimes the young people defined as "the established" are insecure about the norms and values that they should follow. The same insecurity is present among "the outsiders". They attend school or have a job, do not use drugs, and are not involved in crime activities. But the socio-economic constraints and limited opportunities they have in mainstream society, as well as the social and physical pressure that *street culture* exerts over them, permanently undermines the certainty of those norms and values. When the likelihood of succeeding or being rewarded in mainstream society is seen as remote and unrealistic, alternative models become attractive. In other words, in contexts of extreme poverty and lack of opportunities, the *street culture* has a strong power of seduction and cooptation.

Yes, my brothers are deeply involved in drugs abuse. I think they were drawn into it when they joined these people who smoked that stuff because they used to tell my brothers 'You are a *careta*, you are a *blabbermouth*, get out of here', you see...and they didn't like being treated that way, and so they started...At least, that is how my brother told me [it had happened]. I think if I hadn't gone to this Church, I would have gone the same way. (Norma, 19, Lanús, Interview 12).

The kids here are lost now. I don't know, I say...because people are starving and also because of drugs. More because of drugs, because as they haven't got a job they are stealing, so that they can buy a pair of sneakers Adidas. But they go and buy themselves clothes and everything, and 3 hours later they are stealing again, and they have already got the

clothes and what they need is money for drugs. It works like that. “*And how come you are not doing the same?*” Because I fear... I think ‘What if I go out stealing and I get shot at?’ Sometimes I feel like going and stealing things, but not to buy a pair of sneakers, you know? to help my family, you see. But one day you lose, one day you lose, you know? I was in jail once, already. (Matías, 21, Lanús, Interview 14)

I didn’t see school from that point of view, because I had a number of mates who didn’t attend High School. That is, the kids that were my friends in the neighborhood, almost none of them attended High School, you know? And my ma used to tell me ‘You’ve got to study, you’ve got to study’, but I wouldn’t see it that way, to me it was only finishing Primary School and that was all. Because it was like... within my social background everybody used to finish Primary School and that was all, and then... ‘Let’s go fucking around and having fun.’ (Andrés, 18, Florencio Varela, Interview 12)

So... if you don't want to stay in that kind of groups, the best you can do is to avoid them. (Antonio, 21, Lanús, Interview 9).

Avoiding the *street culture* in an underclass neighborhood, however, is not easy for "the outsiders". The interviews show that to survive in an underclass neighborhood is a difficult, and some times risky, task for "the outsiders". This special condition, by itself, places them in a situation of extreme risk and vulnerability.

A combination of social isolation and confrontation emerges as the strategy of "the outsiders" to cope with the pressure of "the established" and the street culture. In his studies on the American black ghettos, Wilson (1987, 1996) has observed a process of class-selective migration -that is, black middle class families leave the community escaping from a context of limited economic opportunities, poverty, violence and drug abuse. This process of out-migration of those families with better socio-economic conditions generates a vicious circle of increasing concentration of poverty and disadvantage in the ghetto community. I

have not seen a similar process of out-migration but several youths expressed their desires of leaving the neighborhood. Diego, for instance, when he decided to *rescatarse* [rescue himself] after a drug problem, he moved out of his neighborhood to his grandparents' home. Similarly, Mauro, talked about his plans of studying in a boarding school in order to avoid the influence of the *street culture* of his neighborhood.

Afterwards, I came back to live at my grandmother's. Because it is not the same, to be there in that neighborhood, because now it is not like...when I was a boy... we used to play football, we used to play hide-and-see... but not now, now the kids... the only thing they do is to use drugs, to take drugs and steal things, and all that. So, as I don't like that...Let them live as they like, but I can't join them any more, because if they screw things up really bad, then the police come and they [the police] don't care who...I still have friends out there, what happens is that I am not in touch with them, because some of them work and others...[they rob] and the others I do not want to see them any more. "*How come you didn't choose the same way they chose?*" I did, I followed the same path, but then... what happened was that I *me rescaté* [rescued myself] a bit, besides I had no problems with drugs...and I said 'That's it, it's over, it's over' and I came here, to my grandmother's (Diego, 21, Lanús, Interview 23).

I want to enroll in that school because there you have to stay in from Mondays to Fridays and you leave on weekends...I need trying...because I know I can do it, and many people told me that I could do whatever I want to. I want to study. Some of my teachers told me I could do it if I wanted, everybody said the same, that lazing around is fucking me. Sure, I have to stay in [every week-day] until the week-end, then I can leave on week-ends, [then] I can smoke with the layabouts [my friends], we can go out to dance, may be I get drunk and then [when] Sunday comes... I sleep till 4 or so in the afternoon, and I go back [to school] again. (Mauro, 17, Florencio Varela, Interview 28).

The interviews also showed a more extended process of social isolation of "the outsiders" within the neighborhood. Young people who do not share the social and cultural aspect of the street culture retreat from the public spaces of the

neighborhood. They do not make friends in their neighborhoods, avoid the streets, parks, and local retail shops, cut their relationships with neighbors, and attend private schools. This strategy contributes to a vicious circle of cumulative disadvantage. On the one hand, the retreat of the outsiders means an increasing presence of the established, and the *street culture* becomes the culture of the neighborhood. On the other hand, the retreat of the outsiders means a loss of social capital for the entire neighborhood: relationships between neighbors weaken, interactions between different social groups disappear, alternative role models from the *street culture* become less visible, and fear, insecurity and distrust extend in the community.

“Do you have any friends in the neighborhood?” No. We just talk ‘Hi, how y’ doing’, and no more. I am like that, I get home from work and either I stay at home or I stay with my boy friend. That is, I get home and I don’t leave [again], may be I go out to buy something I need, but then I stay...I’ve got only one friend here [girl]. (Marita, 19, Lanús, Interview 13).

“Do you have any friends from your neighborhood?” No, because it is like... each one minds his/her home, his/her family. Besides there are not many kids my age... well, yes, there are, but they are addicts, they are wrongdoing people. They meet at the street-corner nearby, where the palm tree is. They join the group to drink, to take drugs, to make a mess all the time. (Martita, 19, Florencio Varela, Interview 3).

No, my friends are from school [private school], no, I don’t make acquaintances among the people in this neighborhood. When I was a kid I used to join them, I used to play football with them, but afterwards I didn’t...Because... well, these kids, they don’t do anything but lazing around all day long. Besides they keep bad company, they stay out there, at the street-corner, the whole night, drinking beer. They are not good company as for making friends among them. I don’t know, they are a different kind of people, because they were never interested in school. For example, these kids in my neighborhood, none of them is studying, none of them is doing anything [they are lazing around]. I always see them

when they go to play football in the field [out there, nearby], then they go from the field to the grocery store opposite my house, to drink beer and play *metegol* [table football game], and then they keep on drinking beer at the street-corner. (Daniel, 18, Florencio Varela, Interview 31).

When I was just a girl, say, 10 or 12 years old, I used to have friends in the neighborhood, but after that I didn't. Because, first, there was this friendship...with neighborhood kids...because most of us used to go to the same school [Primary School]. But then, when I started High School... well, everybody saw me...they saw me like [a rich kid, I guess], since the school I used to attend – the *Regina*...[Catholic school for girls] – it was like the kids said 'Heh, Inés, look the kind of school she goes to.' It was like [my parents] wouldn't let me go out much. Because they said the prime thing was studying and also that... going out with boys... I was too young for that. And so, well, it is like...Sure, here in the neighborhood, every girl, well, not every girl, it's a way of saying ... girls are pregnant at 16 or 17 years old, and currently they have a bunch of children, and they are neither working nor studying...and you look at them and they look like 30 or 40-year-olders, and may be they are just my age. (Inés, 25, Florencio Varela, Interview 30).

Social isolation within the neighborhood is not always possible. In the neighborhood life there are situations and spaces where the outsiders have to face the established. The outsiders, particularly the young males, are subject to enormous pressures from the *street culture* and their own norms and values. They must adopt the principles of the street culture in order to deal with the established and avoid the status of "*gil*", but at the same time they must be strong enough to pursue their own norms and values. The experiences of Alberto and Aníbal, who are both studying a college degree, reflect these pressures and their effects. Alberto told us that even though he is not a violent person, in his neighborhood he has to respond with violence to the violence of the street culture. Aníbal, said that his tattoos helped him to gain respect in his neighborhood; today he has moved

out from Florencio Varela, and his tattoos have become a stigma that increase his difficulties to interact with other people (at the university) or to find a job.

I felt this affected me, somehow. Because I didn't have the same mental attitude as they had... and violence came over me... I had to face violence, and I couldn't make them understand my thoughts, I couldn't explain them [my thoughts], and so I had to do the same as they did, in order to survive. "*What does it mean that 'violence came over you'?*" Should someone appear, who wanted to beat me up or anything, I would try to avoid it, but there was a moment when I couldn't talk any more and I had to give the same response [to hit back], because they would never get to think the way I did. "*If they would fight you, then you would fight?*" Sure. "*And why would they fight you?*" Because of nonsense. Because they saw I was studying and I was not like them, so they wanted to try me, something like that. "*And what would they tell you?*" No, they wouldn't tell me [anything], they would throw [things] at me. They would throw pieces of grease and stones at me, all the time. Sometimes, if I could avoid them [avoid taking notice of them] I would do it. But when I was sure they knew I was paying attention to what was going on, then I had to give a response, that is the way things are around here... this is like that. (Alberto, 23, Lanús, Interview 10)

I have my body covered with tattoos; I am all "written down". I think it was a matter of gaining respect, to show who I was, related to the kind of place where I used to live. It was fucking hard there. I used to move around this fucking hard social background. I used to move around a number of kids who were on drugs, thieves... those were my circumstances, to be there, at that place. "*Would you like to have your tattoos taken off now?*" Oh, yes, yes. Because you've got an appearance to show to the world, and there's only one. I can't say that the first impression is the most important, but the first impression you give may cause you to find many doors closed. There are many jobs that I could never get because I have my skin tattooed, you know? In short-sleeves [garments] I can't get a job anywhere; that's a problem I have now. (Aníbal, 23, Lanús, Interview 15)

Working class neighborhoods have a similar dynamic. Distinctions between "we" and "they", or "the established" and "the outsiders" are also present. Indeed, working class neighborhoods have also their own "street culture".

Most of the research on these types of issues has focused on underclass neighborhoods because the established and the street culture of these urban areas are rejected by and deviant from the norms and values of the mainstream society. However, working class neighborhoods also show similar processes of social differentiation between young people who follow contrasting (but both socially accepted) norms and values.

The *street culture* of a working class neighborhood is organized by a basic and determinant principle: work, particularly manual work. As we have seen in previous section of this chapter, work represents a source of identity, self esteem, and it provides a time-structure for every day life. In urban areas where their inhabitants share similar labor opportunities, these individual aspects become attributes of the neighborhood. The street culture of young people is based on a working class culture, and the established are those who follow these norms and values.

The street in working class neighborhoods is also an important place of interaction for young people. Evenings after work and during the weekend they meet with friends to talk, to listen to music, and to drink a beer. They are the established, and therefore the public spaces of the neighborhood are their spaces.

I didn't like studying, I didn't like going to school at all, besides I used to choose some bad company. That is, I belonged to a group of kids who liked to be fucking around [having fun], staying at the street-corner all day long, drinking beer.... and we were too young to be doing that sort of thing...we were under the age to be entitled to that [drinking...], that's why I didn't go to school. "*And what did you do, most of the time?*" I was lazing around all the time. We used to chat, always staying at the street-corner [meeting point], we used to drink a beer, as I told you...just fucking around, as we say, idling. Even now, we still gather sometimes, to

listen to music, and then may be we go to somebody's. But now it's different...it's not the same. When I was a boy I didn't care about anything, and now I have my own family and I have to stop messing around, otherwise...[either] my dad can throw me out of the house... or there is the risk that your wife might leave you and she might not let you see your children. (Esteban, 25, Lanús, Interview3)

As in the underclass neighborhood, young people also occupy the street. However, they do not generate a feeling of fear or insecurity. They have fluid and friendly relationships with the older generations of the community. Anderson (1991) has observed that the relationship between "old heads" and "young boys" is one of the community's most important institutions. The author argues that the dissolution of this relationship has had strong negative effects on black inner city ghettos; "the role [of "old heads"] in the community was to teach, support, encourage, and, in effect, socialize young men to meet their responsibilities regarding work, family life, the law, and common decency" (Anderson 1991:381). This fundamental relationship is still present in working class neighborhoods. Fabián, for instance, says in his interview that adults from the neighborhood have a significant role showing young people the "right path".

At that time, when I was a kid, I used to stay at the street-corner, drinking beer with the other layabouts, the typical thing... playing football, you see. The fact is that in my neighborhood we have a group of kids that... we even look after the youngest, we plant trees... that is, since we were children we have been led by the older ones, who led us the right way, out of wrongdoing like stealing and taking drugs...[...] The only thing we cared about was to play football, we didn't drink beer then, because we were too young for that, but we gathered at the street-corner, we were there all day long, [lying or sitting on the sidewalk] playing cards. And then may be we said 'What are we doing next Saturday?', 'We meet here at 10 in the morning and we are going to cut the grass in the main square and we are going to plant a couple of trees', you see. The main square opposite my house, we made it [we cut the grass, we cleaned up, etc].

“How come you thought of doing that?” Because apart from that, I always say that I happened to live [to share friendship] with kids who were really good guys, with no wickedness of mind, beyond the [evil] things they might do or have done, they always lacked wickedness. (Fabián, 25, Lanús, Interview 11).

The *street culture* of the working class neighborhood facilitates an atmosphere of trust and friendship that becomes a collective asset. These characteristics of the neighborhood relationships represent the basic unit of social capital. Warren, Thompson and Saegert (2001:7), argue that social capital as structural feature of communities “is fundamentally rooted in the cultural traditions and institutional forms of those communities, as well as in the physical spaces that they occupy”. That is, the *street culture* of working class neighborhoods promotes and facilitates collective actions between neighbors, which is social capital. Fabián, in his interview (cited above) gave us an example of these collective actions. The following two quotations from Fabián’s and Emilio’s interviews show that in this case, the established and their street culture represent an asset in itself for the entire neighborhood. It is part of a virtuous circle in which a working class culture occupies the public space of the neighborhood and this invites a greater involvement in the public sphere of the community.

Most of my friends are from here, from my neighborhood. We gather at the street-corner, we listen to music, sometimes we have some “*mates*” [most popular infusion in Argentina] in the afternoon, may be. “*And at night you gather at the street-corner, don’t you?*” Yes, also, yes. “*And doesn’t that bother the neighbors, don’t they get cross?*” No, as we are all from here, people know us, we are not on weird things, so, people don’t care. More than that, they stand by us, if they see that the police stops here, they come and watch out what’s going on. (Emilio, 19, Lanús, Interview 5).

We joined a fine group of friends. We did a couple of [good] things, at least, and at night we stayed at the street-corner having some wine [or beer] and the people [the neighbors] kept relaxed because we were there. Imagine, the police, you know, sometimes they come and want to take you [to the police station] with them, well... the people in the neighborhood would come out in our defense, to tell them not to do that, because we are good guys, the people would tell them to go and look for real thieves, you know? that kind of thing. (Fabián, 25, Lanús, Interview 11).

Working class neighborhoods, however, are not homogeneous. While for some young people the *street culture* could have a positive influence, other will feel that it limits their aspirations. The street culture of working class neighborhoods provides role models of work (against crime) and family, gives a time structure to everyday life (free time vs. working time), and is not strongly associated with drug abuse. These are positive aspects that in context of peer groups could be a favorable influence for some disadvantaged youths. But it is also a context where secondary education is not a priority, where money is required, and where family formation tends to occur early in the life cycle. These are not always seen as positive influences. Some young people consider that these aspects constrain their opportunities and aspirations. They are “the outsiders” of the working class neighborhood. They want to study secondary education and more, they have a different time-structure, which at times becomes a barrier to making friends in the neighborhood. They have different models of family and independence.

But...yes, may be to have children [I'd like to], but when I am older. I don't know, for example, my friends in Lanús, they have a different kind of thoughts. They are...they say, for example, 'Yes, I am in love with that boy, I am in love and I want to marry him and I want to have children, everything.' And I tell her 'No, how come, you've got to finish High School', I say...[What I mean is you've got] to do something you would

really like to do, and not to stick simply to the role of mother and wife, just family life and nothing else. (Raquel, 19, Lanús, Interview 16).

Most of the girls in the neighborhood have already been pregnant, they are married, they already have different [family life] stories and they have stuck to that situation, at the same place where they used to be [to be kids]. I am more ambitious, even when I know my constraints; I work hard and I put a lot of effort into achieving more, because... I didn't want to die in the neighborhood, married and with a child; I wanted to study, I wanted to work, I wanted to have my own house, to live on my own [...] Had I gone out with the boys from this neighborhood... The other day they were talking... and to a friend of mine, we are only the two of us [friends, girls], the boys were telling her 'You did right not going out with the boys from the neighborhood, that's why you don't have a child yet.' Even the boys from the neighborhood would tell her that! Every girl in the neighborhood, here, nearby, most of them already have children (Vicky, 25, Lanús, Interview 28)

As in the underclass neighborhoods "the outsiders" tend also to isolate themselves within their own communities. The social isolation of the outsiders in the working class neighborhoods seems to be less planned than in the underclass neighborhoods. There is not here a direct confrontation between "we" and "they", but different activities, interests, perceptions and values tend to block the interaction between both groups. The outsiders tend to attend private schools or public schools out of their neighborhoods, to establish friendship relationships with classmate but not neighbors, and to have a limited presence in the public spaces of their own communities. Vicky, could be defined as an outsider in a working class neighborhood; in her interview, she also makes clear that the distinctions between "we" and "they" could be multiple and relative according to the context. In a previous quote from her interview, she said that in her neighborhood, San Jose, *"people are working class, poor, but educated, that is, there are neither shantytowns nor thieves"*. She was comparing her own

neighborhood with Florencio Varela, where her cousins live. At this level, "they" are the young people from Florencio Varela; but, when we were talking about San Jose, "they" were her own neighbors, the working class young people.

Because I never had relationships with the people in my neighborhood. I always made my friends among the people in school. *"And there were any differences between the kids from the neighborhood and the kids from school?"* Yes, yes. From the music they listened to, to the way they talked, the clothes they wore...everything, everything. In the neighborhood they were [people] with lower incomes than we had, but we [my family] weren't well off people. I lived a contradictory situation, now that I think about it, between the place where I lived and the place where I studied. Where I studied they were all upper middle-class people, either really upper middle-class, or making themselves out to be so. I never stuck to one side or the other [regarding this contradiction]. (Vicky, 25, Lanús, Interview 28).

8.3.3 Neighborhood's social capital: informal networks and local organizations

Two different types of social capital based on neighborhood relationships can be analytically distinguished. On the one hand, the individual and informal social networks generated as a result of sharing a common ecological and social place of residence. On the other hand, the formal organizations rooted in the local community both in terms of their participants and goals.

In both urban areas, Lanús and Florencio Varela, young people recognize that social networks represent a critical asset in order to find a job. However, social capital is an abstract term. Considered without reference to the characteristics of the participants in the networks, it does not say much about its value. The fieldwork showed that the worth of the social capital depends on the

socio-economic characteristics of the neighborhoods and their inhabitants. Poor neighborhoods tend to be also poor in terms of their social capital. The contrasts between Lanús and Florencio Florencio Varela are clear.

In Lanús contacts with friends and neighbors are a key asset to find a job. But this is strongly associated with the characteristics of this urban area, in which people still have jobs and some labor opportunities are still available. The characteristics of the urban context become particularly important for the poorest neighborhoods. In Lanús, for instance, people living in pocket of extreme poverty work outside their own neighborhoods, either in other areas of Lanús or even in Buenos Aires city. These workers represent a valuable asset for their neighbors. Marita and Matías live in Villa Jardín, an extremely populated and poor shantytown in Lanús, but both work in Buenos Aires city thanks to neighbors that have given them information and contacts for a possible job opportunity in their own workplaces.

She lives near my house. She used to be one of my schoolmates and then we continued being friends. And... then [when I lost my job]...besides my dad didn't have a job, either, and we weren't doing well. And so she told me 'Don't worry, I'll talk to my boss, we'll get you something.'
And...well, she talked to her boss [woman] and she said yes. So I waited 2 weeks, until she [the boss] summoned me and told me to go [following day] so that I could be tested [in this job]. So I went there to be tested and I stayed, I stayed from that same day. And I've been working there for three months now. (Marita, 19, Lanús, Interview 13)

After that, when I was 16 or 17, a Paraguayan [worker] took me to work as an assistant [-worker]. "Did you know him?" No, no, I got to know him through one of my neighbors. As I was a good kid and all... because we...those houses where we work painting, wallpapering and up-keeping facilities, those houses are superior... they belong to rich people. (Matías, 21, Lanús, Interview 14)

This is a significant difference between poor neighborhoods in Lanús and Florencio Florencio Varela. The limited local labor opportunities, the spatial distance from Buenos Aires city, the prominence of informal and casual jobs, and the high levels of unemployment weaken the quality and value of social networks between neighbors. Neighbors and friends could help to find a *changa* (a casual job) for two or three days, or more often a *Plan Trabajar* (a job program for 6 months), but information and contacts for better job opportunities are scarce in Florencio Florencio Varela. In this context, social networks that go beyond the local community become particularly important and valuable, but also scarce. The fieldwork in Florencio Florencio Varela showed that young people that have worked somewhere else in more stable jobs, have found these opportunities through family members, and in particular, through their parents. That is, given that contacts and information about possible jobs outside the local community are limited, they tend to be kept in the inner circle of the family.

Local formal organizations have not been a central focus of this research project. Nevertheless the fieldwork in neighborhoods of Lanús and Florencio Florencio Varela gave me the opportunity to make contacts with a good sample of them, and even to conduct interviews with some of their participants. A general impression from the fieldwork is that traditional organizations from local communities, such as the "sociedades de fomento", do not represent a significant space of social participation or civic involvement for young people. On the one hand, youths are rarely involved as active members in these types of institutions; on the other hand, the activities of these organizations are rarely focused on the

young population. Social organizations from poor neighborhoods in Lanús and from Florencio Florencio Varela seem to have a perception of young people dominated by the "street culture" of those neighborhoods. That is, that young people are not interested in social and public issues, and that they are involved in drugs, violence, and crime activities.⁷² In general, there is a prevalent feeling of fear and distrust of youths and, therefore, there is a tacit assumption that it is better to keep them outside the organization.

Nevertheless, I have been in contact with two organizations that present exceptional features. One of them, *Fundación Encuentro*, is located in a working class neighborhood of Lanús (Monte Chingolo). The other, *Centro Cultural Mariano Moreno*, is located in Florencio Florencio Varela. Both organizations have strong links with political parties; *Fundación Encuentro* with the Justicialist Party (Peronism), and the *Centro Cultural Mariano Moreno* with the FREPASO, a center-left political front in which a significant proportion of members had previously been affiliated with the Peronists. In spite of their different political orientations, they have a set of common characteristics that make them, from my perspective, an exceptional model of local organizations, and clearly contrasting with more traditional community organizations.

⁷² This perception is not an abstraction rather it is based in the daily experience of the neighbors with the young people of the street. However, it has a double bias. On the one hand, it disregards the existence of young people with other norms and values -that is, "the outsiders". On the other hand, it considers that norms and values of the established cannot be changed; as we have seen before, however, they are waiting for an opportunity to change, to *rescatarse*. This is a clear example of the vicious circles that characterize the underclass neighborhoods. Young people exclusion pushed them toward a "street culture", which generate fear and distrust that in turn increase their exclusion from society.

One of the most important characteristics is that they are mostly made up of young people. Of course, both have local political patrons who are professional politicians that provide them political and financial support. But almost exclusively young people carry out the administration of the institutions and their activities.

A second contrast with traditional local organizations is the type of activities that they offer to their communities. *Fundación Encuentro* provides courses for children, youths and adults. They have an organic vegetable garden that children from local schools can visit. They offer activities for visually impaired children, courses of road education for children, and soccer training classes in cooperation with an Evangelical Church. Through an agreement with the National Institute of Agricultural Technologies (INTA), they teach neighbors to develop their own organic vegetable gardens and to raise chicken and other farm animals for domestic consumption. The *Centro Cultural Mariano Moreno* also has several initiatives and services for the community. Among the most important are a small childcare center, a community library that also provides extra-school classes for primary and secondary students, and a community radio. In both cases, young people work in these activities without remuneration or with employment programs such as *Plan Trabajar* or *Plan de Emergencia Laboral*.

A third common feature of these organizations is that they are open to the community, and particularly to the youth. The benefits that these organizations provide to the young people of their communities depend less on the results of the activities, than on the activities themselves. These organizations have opened their

doors to young people encouraging them to carry out the activities that they like. This has an intrinsic value that social policies toward youth rarely take into account. The concrete and significant direct impact of a community radio in the neighborhood is enhanced when young people are directly involved in its organization and development. Young people from the neighborhood were attracted by the possibility of talking in front of a microphone, to have a program with their music, to prepare and find the technical equipment, to have a nice place for the studio, etc., etc. Similarly, in the *Fundacion Encuentro* the positive effects of the organic vegetable garden and the garden courses are not mainly in what children and neighbors can learn from these activities, but in the involvement of young people in these activities. They were interested in having a good garden, increasing the facilities of the institutions, talking in front of others, feeling that they are doing something positive for their neighborhoods, etc. The young people's involvement and commitment to these activities have multiple and strong beneficial effects for the local community. Esteban and Lautaro, talking about their participation in the *Fundación Encuentro* and the *Centro Cultural Mariano Moreno*, respectively, show some of these, usually unseen effects.

I was lazing around for 2 years. "*And what did you do, most of the time?*" And...I was around...idling...I didn't contribute any money at home. "*And here you found an activity, then?*" Yes, besides here I make other acquaintances, I learn different things that... when I was at home or at the street-corner I couldn't learn at all. "*Do you prefer being here?*" Oh yes, no question about it. Because here I have something to do [real work]...I don't know, may be when I was with the other kids, I don't know, to be part of the group they made me become self-confident, isn't it? Because... how can I explain this? At the street-corner, actually, I was idle: I chatted, I drank liquor, and here instead I have learned a bunch of things, we took courses, even plumbing courses. "*Besides, you talk to a different kind of*

people.” Sure, people with a different intellectual level, because here you can find all kinds of people, teachers, town council employees, it is like...if you stay at the street-corner you’ll never have that kind of contacts. They are always the same faces [...] I wouldn’t like to leave here, to leave Chingolo because it is like...I don’t know, it is the neighborhood where I was born. This is the main thing, this institution that... I put a lot of effort into it, always without help and without a coin. To leave this, no... There used to be nothing, out here, it was just a garbage dump, and now it isn’t... We made a track for training in road-driving skills; we made a thatched arbor to have barbecue food in it; we have the tables in the shade under the trees; we used to have a green nursery, you know? We work with schools, I don’t know, I wouldn’t like to leave this place. I had been a layabout, I already had a family of my own and I didn’t have a job and then I started here. This [institution] changed me [my life] totally. (Esteban, 25, Lanús, Interview 3).

I mean, I always felt like changing. That is, actually, I never intended to do all the wrongdoing I did, you know? I don’t know why I used to do it. I needed something [I lacked something] ...some kind of strong motivation to get myself started...but I didn’t have any.... nothing that I wanted to see, either [...] My friends, my acquaintances, that is, the people who I could talk to, they weren’t *sanos* [good people], and so I stayed isolated from everything. And I couldn’t go to my grandmother for help or to my little brother – who was the only thing I had -; to my sister I couldn’t go because she would bring me the Bible and that drove me crazy, more than before. So, I began to go [...] This was an ugly place, no painting, the backyard was a filthy mess, and... I used to spend the whole day, mornings and afternoons, cleaning up, painting, cutting the grass; everybody used to paint [walls/doors] here...Martita arrived in here, Omar was here, Vero was here, everybody was here, everyone putting their effort and their will, so that this place would look fine. And many months went by like that, until this was like my second addiction. And so, I used to come everyday, everyday, I used to come in, and this was like my own recovering center. (Lautaro, 18, Florencio Varela, Interview 27).

These types of activities have at least two main effects. On the one hand, they represent an occupation for young people. Sometimes they provide an income (and this is an important aspect to take into account), but, beyond that, these activities represent something that young people are interested in and

motivated to do. The involvement of young people in these activities provides them with a time-structure for their everyday lives, instills in them norms of responsibility, compromise, and teamwork, gives them the opportunity to experience a “goal achievement” and the idea that sacrifice could be rewarded, and increases their self-esteem and their expectations about the future. On the other hand, these activities represent an opportunity of social interaction, with persons from outside the community and also with other neighbors. The consequences of this social interaction are multiple. Young people increase their social networks but also have the opportunity of finding new and different role models. The increasing participation of young people in these organizations, but also the activities of the organization in the community, represent an active presence in the public space of the neighborhood. This last attribute is particularly important in underclass neighborhoods where the public space is dominated by a *street culture* that increases young people’s vulnerability. Finally, these activities create the opportunity to meet new people from the same neighborhood, make friends, and establish norms of trust and cooperation. In other words, they contribute to generate social capital.

It is worth noting that these organizations are seldom aware of the beneficial effects of these types of activities. Moreover, given their political party affiliations, they are motivated to develop activities with direct and immediate (but short life) benefits for the neighbors. Thus, there is a potential risk that the previous activities be replaced with other activities more visible and effective from a political party perspective.

8.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has shown that different urban contexts affect the opportunities and constraints of young people in their transitions to adulthood. The cumulative effect of local socio-economic disadvantages seems to lead to a process of increasing ecological and social isolation. Florencio Varela, and some areas of extreme poverty in Lanús, are not yet ghetto communities with an underclass. These areas still have a relative heterogeneity in terms of their economic, social, and cultural composition. Nevertheless, the prolonged and high level of unemployment and economic recession the country has been suffering during the last six years is pushing these neighborhoods in that direction. The inhabitants of Florencio Varela, and some poor neighborhoods in Lanús, have always had a weak and precarious link with the labor market, and therefore they are strongly affected by the economic crisis that the country is currently experiencing. Moreover, the opportunities of social mobility experienced by older generations, seem to become increasingly limited for the youngest generations. As several authors have noted, the development of ghetto communities or an underclass cannot be observed in one generation. The previous analysis, however, shows that conditions favorable to that process are already present in some neighborhoods. Two main insights follow from these observations. First, I have suggested possible consequences of current processes of poverty concentration and social segregation that demand new (and urgent) social policies in order to mitigate these trends. Secondly, the analysis makes clear the effects of structural

determinants on process of cultural changes, rejecting culturalist interpretations of situations of poverty and the underclass.

Chapter 9. The Value of Work in the Transition to Adulthood: Becoming Adult in a Context of Job Insecurity

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Labor market conditions deteriorated sharply during the 1990s, particularly during the second half of the decade. Unemployment grew to record levels, and job insecurity increased. Chapter 5 showed that young people were particularly affected by this process of increasing labor market insecurity (precarization). One important finding of that chapter was that although unemployment is high among young people, labor insecurity is a more extensive problem among this age group. Youth unemployment is part of an extended and generalized problem of unemployment affecting the entire working population; indeed, during the 1990s, unemployment grew faster among adult than young workers. In contrast, job insecurity is particularly strong among youths. Youths entering the labor force face a labor market where instability, underemployment, lack of social protection and poor incomes are the central aspects. By the end of 2000 more than one out of four economically active youths were unemployed, but among employed young workers 20.2% were underemployed, 55.4% were not protected, and 32.5% received very low wages (see Chapter 5).

Changes in labor market conditions have a major impact on the life course, and particularly on periods of life transition such as that of youth. Argentina, like many other cultures, does not have initiation rites that mark the entry into adulthood. As Allat and Yeandle (1992) have noted this entry is a partly

achieved process, in which labor market participation and economic independence have a critical role. Thus, a weak and precarious link with the labor market increases the vulnerability of this transitional process.

The analysis of the relationship between labor market participation and the transition to adulthood has, at least, three main dimensions of analysis. First, several important instances of the life course, such as family formation and departure from the parents' home, are strongly associated with the characteristics of the school-to-work transition. Different types and conditions of labor participation during youth could be either an asset or a liability in fulfilling other transitional processes toward adulthood. Serge Paugam (1995) has observed that many French young people, and especially very young people still living at the parental home and waiting for entry into the social and economic world, are placed in a situation of socio-economic “fragility” that is affecting their life course. This space of fragility is characterized by a high degree of instability in the relation with the world of work. The author observes that “the obstacles that they [young people] meet when trying to attain a secure occupational position forces them to delay conjugal relations and renders their social and family relationships more fragile; their insecurity is, in fact, proportional to the risk that with the passing year, they will not be able to attain the ideal situation [of social and economic integration], and the fear that their experience may, in fact, be one of long periods of unemployment” (Paugam 1995:61). In this chapter I explore the experiences of young people in terms of their labor participation and its

effects on other dimensions of their life, especially family formation and residential independence.

Secondly, the entry into the labor market implies a renegotiation of family relationships. For the majority of young people the transition to adulthood starts inside the parental home and within an established pattern of family relationships (Allat and Yeandle 1992). The labor participation of the young members brings a new role for them inside their families. They acquire a new status and identity within their homes, but also a new source of power (economic and symbolic) to renegotiate their place in the family structure and dynamic. This is another aspect to be explored in this chapter.

Finally, having a secure job is not only a support for family and residential transition and a source of changes within the parental home; it is also a key mechanism of integration into society (Castel 1997, 1999). Labor participation is directly associated with a social identity, opportunities of social interaction and participation, incomes and expectations about the future. In this sense, a context of labor insecurity has a strong impact on youth perceptions about their own role and place in society. The interviews show that as a result of the new conditions of job insecurity in Argentina young people experience feelings of depression and frustration rooted in their uncertainty about the near future. These experiences are particularly evident among young people from middle and working classes, whose families have experienced a process of upward social mobility in previous years. These issues are analyzed in more detail in this chapter.

In sum, this chapter is organized in three sections. The next section presents some general perceptions of young people about the new conditions of the labor market and their experiences in the labor force. The second section focuses on the association between these labor experiences and other significant dimensions of the transition to adulthood. These dimensions are: the construction and negotiation of adulthood inside the parental household, the process of family formation and the transition to an independent residence. Finally, the last section focuses on the social and psychological impacts of labor insecurity, particularly in terms of young people perceptions about their role in society and their future expectations.

9.2 YOUTH EXPERIENCES OF LABOR PARTICIPATION

Several qualitative studies on youth labor participation in Argentina have shown that young workers tend to work under precarious conditions. In his study on youth education and work in the late 1980s, Victor Mekler (1992) observes that, as a result of those conditions, most young people have a common and extended perception of work as an "inescapable and necessary bad experience" (*un mal necesario*). In this sense, this author argues that work has not lost its centrality in young people's lives, rather what has changed is the value of work: it has lost its substantive value (as a satisfactory and rewarding activity in itself), and has become just an instrumental activity to meet other goals. The instrumental character of work is associated with its perception as a "*mal necesario*".

Our interviews, conducted more than ten years later, show similar findings regarding the value of work. The majority of young people conceive work as an instrument to fulfill other goals, and particularly as a mean to obtain income. Our fieldwork, however, showed that there are changes with respect to the past. In order to explore possible changes in the substantive value of work a basic initial question is required: has work had a substantive value for young people from popular sectors (working and low working classes) anytime in the past? Although this question tends to be neglected, most studies on youth labor experiences tend to assume an affirmative answer; the tacit assumption is that there was a period in which work was an end by itself, perhaps due to a common sense perception that the past in Argentina was always better than the present. Qualitative studies on youth labor participation conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, however, show that work was not a rewarded and enjoyable activity for young people from popular sectors. My impression is that the substantive value of work was a perception restricted to young people from middle and high social classes, who were able to chose a professional activity. But for most young people work is not (and has not been) a result of free choice or a space of personal development; for them work is (and has been) the result of a combination of constraints and opportunities, and a mechanism to earn incomes in order to satisfy their needs and increase their living standards.

I argue, that what young people are currently experiencing is precisely an increasing difficulty to have a job that fulfills this instrumental value traditionally attached to work. What has changed about work is its value as a source of regular

income and as a basic foundation to think and obtain a "better future". In general terms, the perception of "work" as an instrument of social mobility is undermined. This changed in the perception of work is not just an ideational phenomenon; it is the result of the major changes in the labor market that were analyzed in earlier chapters: increasing unemployment and job insecurity.

Enrique, for instance, in his interview observes that he has achieved higher education than his parents, however, the current conditions of the labor market make it more difficult for him to obtain the same levels of well-being that his parents were able to obtain in the past.

Some things are going to be easier for me; the education level, for example, that we have, any of us -my brothers and I- is higher than... formal education I am talking about... is higher than that of my parents. My parents didn't finish Primary School, neither of them did, they reached 4th and 3rd grade. My brothers, they have got college education, both of them. I don't know, may be... what might become harder is the material or economic situation due to the current lack of jobs, I think... but if this [problem] recedes it won't be impossible. Today, for example, it is impossible for me to afford a house of my own, which my parents did achieve. It was different then, may be even easier, easier because there were many jobs available. I don't have a regular job now; I work 3 days a week. (Enrique, 25, Lanús, Interview 20).

When young people talk about employment, two main issues emerge as the most mentioned problems associated with their work experiences. On the one hand, there is a recurrent reference to the precariousness of work conditions. The hardship of the physical conditions of work and the lack of social benefits associated with a formal labor relationship are common aspects mentioned by the interviewees. In general terms, young people's comments focus on long working days, being forced to work extra time, even during the weekends, excessive

physical effort, lack of appropriate equipment and infrastructure, and black contracts with no respect for protected labor rights. Most of the studies on youth labor participation in Argentina have focused on these aspects (Mekler 1992, Macri and Van Kemenade 1993). In part, these are aspects that have become almost inherent in the youth labor market; that is, they are associated with the type of job opportunities that young people have access to. Informal activities, micro and small firms, and the lowest job positions are the most frequent opportunities of entry into the labor market for young people -particularly for those with low education and an early initiation in the world of work. Nevertheless, the interviews show that these conditions, especially black contracts, have become more extensive than in the past, affecting new segments of the labor force such as professional teachers working in private schools.

Well... I got some sporadic jobs as a substitute teacher [kindergarten], for a week, for some days, all at private schools, that is, working *in black* [illegally]... They will pay you the amount they consider your help was worth, so... and so far I haven't... Later, halfway through 1998, I got this job at the kindergarten where I am now, but it is private also, and I am working *in black*, with mediocre wages... but it is the only job I have, so, you see? I am tied down there, because... (Susana, 24, Interview 18, Lanús)

On the other hand, young people emphasize the uncertainty associated with the work experience. Insecurity, both in terms of job opportunities and regular incomes, is, in the perception of the young workers, one of the most important aspects affecting their labor experiences, and perhaps the most significant change with respect to the past. Although young people give importance to the precariousness of the labor conditions mentioned above, the insecurity and uncertainty that characterize the world of work emerge as the

central issue of concern. As we will see in the next sections, this concern is related to the impact that an insecure and uncertain labor career has on this transitional stage of the life course.

In terms of job opportunities, labor insecurity refers to the instability of youth employment. Economically active youths have intermittent labor experiences, alternating short periods of employment in different sectors and activities, as well as periods of unemployment in between. Those working in the informal sector have discontinuous and short labor opportunities, spending most of their time unemployed, looking for a job, or inactive as a result of a discouraged withdrawal from the labor market. But even formal workers are experiencing a significant intermittency between very short periods of work. Different types of labor contracts (training and trial contracts, employment programs, subcontracts through employment agencies, etc.) allow employers to hire young workers according to their needs. In addition to this, the deep economic recession and instability experienced by the country over the last years, has favored an increasing turnover of the labor force. As a result, young workers with different types of employment are facing a similar problem to find and follow a continuous and regular labor career. The informal and formal labor careers of Julio and Graciela, which were reported above illustrate the instability that characterizes the work experience of young people. In both cases, there was a high degree of instability.

Job insecurity is also associated with irregular incomes. Unstable labor careers have a direct effect on young people's earnings given that recurrent

periods of unemployment mean periods without incomes. Additionally, the instability of the labor career generates a perception among young people that having a wage or an income is a temporary condition. To have an income this month does not guarantee an income for the next month, and even more, it does not say anything about when incomes could be available again.

There is, however, an extra source of income insecurity. Numerous interviews have shown that young people currently working are not certain about when they will be paid and how much of their payments they will actually receive. Although this situation is more extended among informal workers, the deep financial crisis affecting the country has extended this phenomenon to other sectors, even to public employees. Marita, and Matías, describe the income uncertainty that they experience in their jobs and some of the impacts of this situation.

The only thing [trouble] she had [the employees had with their boss] was that we worked weekly there... Saturdays we had to work all day long, all day long to be able to hand in the work... And may be she gave me the work [to do], but she would come to me with a voucher [credit coupon to buy goods] and say 'Look, today I'm giving you 20 pesos because I won't make it... I have paid my debts and I won't make it to pay you'. And it was like that, may be I was already counting on that money to meet my expenses, and I had everything set up... and she would come to me and say 'I'll give you 10 pesos, look, I have no more'. And that way the amount [she owed me] was increasing. Once, she owed me the payment of 3 weeks and I went on working and went on working... Then I told her 'If you don't pay me right now I'm not coming any more'. *All right*, and she began to pay me little by little, but she would always do the same. (Marita, 19, Interview 13, Lanús)

"Did you work 'in black', generally?" Yes, I usually worked *in black* [illegally]. *"You didn't have any social benefits, did you?"* No. And I got paid about 260 pesos every 2 weeks, working from Mondays to Fridays, from 6.00 [AM] to 3.00 [PM] and Saturdays from 6.00 [AM] to 12.00 at

noon. “*And did they always pay you?*” Yes, he always paid, but always...for example, when the 2-week term payment was due, most of the time he would give us a half of the amount... The man was a good man, but he always delayed the payments. When the 2-week term was due he would give you a half... and then he gave you...little by little...and so you actually didn't get the profit...He would give us, I don't know...50 pesos, then, a week after, he would give us the other 50, and so...you never got to gather all the money together...and then you had been spending some and spending some more and when you got the 2-week payment you had already spent it all, you understand? (Yanina, 22, Interview 19, Lanús).

They don't pay me; that is what happens, they don't pay me. Sometimes, for some jobs I used to do, I earned 250 pesos a week, but they paid me 100... no, they don't pay everything. And so the amount they owe you increases on the payroll. When I have a job I can get about 250 pesos a week; and when I don't have work to do, *say*, I go to this [interior] decoration firm and I get 60 or 70 pesos working as an office errand boy...they help me [the owners of the firm], you see, when I am out of work. Apart from that, they pay me what they owe me, little by little, they pay me...(Matías, 21, Interview 14, Lanús)

The new labor conditions and particularly the increasing job insecurity affecting the labor market are undermining this instrumental character of “work”. This situation generates a complex and critical paradox in young people's lives: on the one hand, work represent, for most of them, a critical resource in order to fulfill other important stages of the transition to adulthood; but on the other hand, the new labor conditions are dramatically weakening this instrumental aspect of work. In the following sections we will explore some of the concrete effects that job insecurity has on young people's lives, but in general terms, as Javier tell us in his interview, they experience an increasing uncertainty about the future, particularly about their own possibilities of social integration as adult members of the society.

The future, I can't see a future for myself. I see everything black, maybe I am not an optimist person, I don't know, you understand? Here, at the present, I can't see a future ahead of me I see everything black. "*What is it that you would like to have and you see that you can't?*" Look, I am not asking to be a business manager...who wouldn't like to be a manager! but I am only asking for a steady job. To reach the end of the month and get your money, not having a hard time day after day, here, working 12 hours a day. And...*all right*, you know it's different. You know you work 8 hours and you leave. You don't have to worry about anything. The end of the month comes, you get paid and that's it. But not here, in this job. (Javier, 26, Interview 2, Lanús)

9.3 THE ROLE OF WORK AND MONEY IN THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

The entry into the labor market is by itself a sign of an increasing participation in the adult world. It implies new statuses, time-structures, responsibilities and rights, as well as the participation in adult spheres of social interaction. But work is also the most important source of incomes and, in turn, incomes represent a critical factor in the process of becoming adult. Economic independence is one of the main rites of passage to the adult world in most western societies. Economic independence provides both the opportunity to cover personal needs and to participate in spheres of consumption according to individual interests, as well as the possibility to achieve other transitional stages such as residential independence and family formation.

Labor participation is one of the transitional processes that usually take place when young people are still living with their parental families. As we have seen in Chapter 7, it is common that young people –particularly those from the working classes- give part of their incomes to their parents, making a significant contribution to the household economy. However, labor participation is not only

due to family needs; equally important are the individual needs of young people. Most of the interviewees give account of their decisions to work emphasizing their personal needs, which either their families could not satisfy (as in the case of Graciela) or they want to achieve by themselves (as in the case of Seba and Florencia).

I started at the age of 15 years old, working at a family home. *“And why did you start working?”* Because we were always hard up at home. I wanted to buy my own stuff, to have my things, and my ma and my dad couldn't afford them. As we were many siblings they couldn't afford them. (Graciela, 25, Varela, Interview 29).

I wanted to work; I wanted to buy myself my own stuff, to become financially independent. I lived at home, but I wanted to become independent at the same time; that is, that my dad shouldn't have to help me in that sense, nor my sister. It didn't seem right to tell them *‘Che, give me some money to go out or do something’*. I was ashamed, I didn't like it, and so I decided to work and have my own money. (Seba, 23, Varela, Interview 24).

And afterwards, the following year, I started working, but due to my own decision and not because I was obliged to do it or anything like that. I started to work at a family home, cleaning up... I worked twice a week, 4 hours more or less. *“And not being obliged, how come you decided to work?”* It was a matter of financial independence, let's say. Because I didn't like to depend on my parents, that is... may be I had to go out and I had to ask them money for the ticket, for this, for that... and so, as a matter of financial independence I preferred to work and to have my own money. And so I started to work and... all right, I bought my clothes, I went out, I bought the things I needed, and I helped at home. *“Was it necessary that you had a job?”* No, let's say it wasn't, but this was a matter of being a grown-up and not depending on one's parents... so, in this sense, yes, let's say it was necessary. (Forencia, 19, Varela, Interview 21).

The last two interviews show that at a certain stage of the life course young people begin to be ashamed of asking their parents for money. Indeed, this feeling of “shame” represents a social sanction that establishes what is socially

expected of a young person. Multiple transitional passages socially established, both in their form and timing, provide the “correct” guidelines to complete the process of becoming adult. Although the contemporary society shows a secular trend to less structured patterns of transition to adulthood than in the past, social norms still define when and how a young person is expected to fulfill specific passage rites such as going out at night, drinking alcohol, leaving their parent's home, forming a new family, or covering personal needs with his or her own incomes.

Additionally, these socially established landmarks in the process of transition to adulthood vary among different social sectors. As observed in Chapter 7 regarding school attendance, the “child role” and the obligations, rights and expectations associated with it change according to different social classes. Economic independence is also associated with these socially established and heterogeneous expectations about the “child role” and the “adult role”. For instance, among working classes the expectation of economic independence occurs earlier than in the middle classes, and among school leavers there is a higher pressure for economic independence than in young people still at school. Thus, the social expectations on when youths should work, earn their own incomes, and become self-sufficient for specific needs change in different social settings.

Nevertheless, there is a socially accepted perception that at a certain stage of the life course young people should be able to rely on their own incomes to cover some of their own needs –that is, those needs more associated with adult

roles. The main characteristic of these “adult needs” is that they depend not on family (or parental) decisions but individual decisions. As a result of the combination of these two factors –the social pressure for economic independence and the emergence of new individual needs- work acquires a critical role in the process of transition to adulthood. This aspect has several implications.

When young people living with their parents start to work, family relationships are re-shaped. As Jones and Wallace (1992:88) have pointed out “growing up in a family also involves changes in the power relations within families. Many of these changes have an economic axis: it is by taking on economic roles that children start on the road to adult independence, and become emancipated from parental control”. Young workers have taken a significant step toward adulthood, and therefore their “child” role begins to change. This new status assigns them a new set of rights and responsibilities inside the family context. At the same time, the incomes from their own jobs are a source of power and self-esteem. Economic contributions to the household economy increase their involvement in family decisions and their independence in taking decisions. Moreover, money also allows them to make gifts and loans, -that is, to participate in networks of reciprocity, with some capacity of “giving”, which is a source of power, self-esteem and pride. Marita, for instance, says in her interview that as a result of her participation in the labor market she “suddenly grew up”, while Seba says that saving from his work allows him to lend his sister money for the first time, which made him feel proud of himself.

The fact is when I began working... it is like... I grew up quite a lot; because I started... it is like... I grew up at once. Besides, I have always

been working on the streets and as I am working I can see things, I meet older people and it is like I have more experience [in life][...] “*To bring money home made you grow up at once?*” Yes, because I felt like I had the right to command the others [in my family], to give orders, too. I used to come and say ‘Look, I want to do this’, and as they did it for me it is like... I felt grown up, and I also felt responsible... Especially when he didn’t work and it was me who brought the money for home expenses. To have my money to buy food [to live on]. I felt responsible whenever I brought money home. (Marita, 19, Interview 13, Lanús).

And... all right, I managed to have an amount of money put aside, about one year ago, I had... I had gathered about 1,200 pesos. It is quite a great amount, and so I could buy myself a small motorcycle. Well... I gave myself many a treat like that. I bought myself a fishing tackle, I bought myself the drums, I made the first loan to my sister... that made me feel proud, to say... ‘Here, take it, I lend you...’ I had given her 240 *mangos* [pesos], I remember, that was a lot of money. (Seba, 23, Varela, Interview 24).

Given this central role that work has in the process of transition to adulthood, unemployment and joblessness become a critical problem in young people’s lives. A common assumption of social policies, particularly those regarding unemployment, is, however, that young people living with their parents are “dependent” members of their families, and therefore social protection, -i.e. against unemployment- is less needed. Our research fieldwork shows that this assumption is not always true. Young people living with their parents are in an ambiguous condition when economic independence and the transition to adulthood are under way. Even when young people do not have to pay for their board, this does not mean that they do not have other equally important needs. As we have seen before, beyond shelter and food, young people have other needs that sometimes families cannot (economically) or should not (socially) satisfy. Family economic restrictions as well as social pressure in terms of patterns of

consumption should be taken into account when considering the level of economic independence of young people.

Young people need money not only for helping their families or covering their board; even those living with their parents require an independent source of incomes as a critical aspect to start and fulfill the transition to adulthood. Economic restrictions but also social pressure are the basis of this need of an independent source of income. Young people can be pushed into risk behavior (such as school dropout, crime activities, etc) as a result of their need for economic independence, even when they are living in non-poor families. The lack of employment and money also become a source of shame, depression, and even social isolation in young people lives. As is shown in the interviews of Susana, Julio and Javier, job insecurity has social and psychological consequences in this period of the life course.

Then, also, you feel badly because you can't get a job and...how can I say this? Sometimes you become depressive and you suffer from deep depression all day long; and you don't know why. Sometimes I am like that [depressive] and my brother-in-law comes and says 'What's the matter with you?' and I say 'I don't know'. But you are not well, you look blue. I think that happens to me because I have no money. That is, I don't have my own money; I can't support myself financially because I don't get a job. My money, when I have my money I feel well, I don't want my ma to give me money, to say 'It's all right, take these 10 pesos'. With my money I can do what I want, because it is my money... It's all right, I can give some [money] to my ma and all that; but I know that I can say 'Tomorrow I'm going to the movies', or 'Tomorrow I'm going to *la cancha*' [to watch the football match at the football field], because I have my money, I am not asking money to anybody... To have nothing [to have no money at all] makes me feel bad. "*Now you have to get by with what your ma or your dad give you sometimes, don't you?*" And...yes, sometimes they don't have enough to give me. I am ashamed...I know the situation is hard; it's not easy to ask them for money. "*At home, do they*

bother you for not having a job?" No, they don't... It's me... I fuck myself. At home, no, my dad says 'and...all right, it will come when it may come don't worry'. (Julio, 19, Varela, Interview 6)

I need to feel that I can depend on my own, that I can be financially independent and also... I don't know, to feel this satisfaction of achieving things by myself. Because when you are not financially independent you feel you are out. "*Out of where?*" Out of society. It is like... if you can't support yourself [make a living on your own] and you have to ask money from your parents...you feel like... being 24 years old and depending on the money your parents give you...makes you feel bad. "*And even when you have a job you can't meet your expenses?*" And... no, because as I said I am working *in black* [illegally], the wages are awfully low...the payment is always delayed, so the wages come when...when they come and you have to take them. (Susana, 24, Lanús, Interview 18).

Here...it is like there was a general dead stop, that is, you keep becoming older each year, you keep growing up, but in everything else there has been a dead stop, it is like...since my 18th birthday I have stayed there... I haven't made any progress. And so, these are lost years, they are lost years...May be, if I had had a job earlier in life, if I had started working when I was a kid and were still at that job...may be I would have made some progress...may be I would be married right now, for example, you understand? But, there was this complete stop. And well, my expectations are to make some progress if I'm lucky tomorrow... that, you can't guess. (Javier, 25, Lanús, Interview 2).

In this last interview, Javier points to a second aspect of the transition to adulthood associated with employment. Youths' work and incomes have critical effects on relationships in the family of origin as well as on the prospect and opportunities of achieving a complete independence. Employment is a key factor in gaining independence within the parents' home, but also for leaving the parents' home (the house and the family). Economic independence represents a determinant pre-condition for achieving residential and family independence.

The critical aspect here is not only unemployment; job security becomes a determinant condition affecting the opportunities of starting the residential and

family transitions. The lack of incomes generated by unemployment, but also the uncertainty about future incomes generated by job insecurity inhibit young people from taking fundamental steps in their transition to adulthood. Job insecurity restricts economic independence and thus the opportunities of planning a future life outside the family nest.

The situation of married and single young people is different in residential transition. As Isla, Lacarrieu and Selby (1999) have observed in a recent study based on a large qualitative survey, it is a norm in Argentinean society that married young couples should live in their own house. In other Latin American countries, strong “familistic” values encourage new couples to remain at home, at least for a transitional period, and lead to extended families. In contrast to this general trend, in Argentina the common expectation of parents and young children is that new couples leave the parental home, and that independent nuclear families represent the ideal household organization. These common social expectations are expressed in a popular Argentinean saying: *el casado casa quiere* (the married person wants the own house). Enrique, for instance, started to buy a plot of land when he was 18; in his interview he explains the reasons that led him to take this decision

I was 18 years old when I bought a plot of land in Calzada; it had cost me 22,000 pesos. That is, when I was 18 the first thing I did was buying the plot of land. Because, for as long as I can remember I have wanted to have my own house. It is something I... it is something about which I am still in debt to myself now. I remember I was 15 years old and they used to ask me the typical question ‘*Che*, what are you going to do when you are a grown-up?’ and I used to answer ‘Look, to own a house, to have a good job, a small [or a cheap] car, for the family...I would be satisfied with that, and then what may come besides that will come, but those are my

basic wishes.’ The main thing is a house of your own. We had this clearly in mind from the first month of our engagement, I guess...we would get married, we would have at least one child, and we wanted our own place to live. (Enrique, 25, Lanús, Interview 20).

When Enrique decided to buy the land plot he was working, as a truck driver for Pepsi Co., and his monthly wage was around 1,500 and 1,800 pesos. He paid a deposit of 7,000 pesos and monthly installments of 350 pesos in order to get the land whose total value was 22,000 pesos. However, one year later his salary plummeted to 300 pesos per months and he started to work in different jobs. He was still able to pay his land plot for one year more, but finally when he became unemployed and money was even scarcer he could not pay anymore. After having paid a total amount of 12,000 pesos he had to sell his land for only 3,000 pesos. He is currently living with his wife and daughter in his parents' home, using his old single bedroom. Enrique considers that *la casa propia* (the own house) is *una asignatura pendiente* for him (an unresolved matter).

Job insecurity emerges as the main reason blocking the residential transition of married couples. There is an extended expectation among young people from different social sectors, of leaving the parental home after marriage; the main obstacle for achieving residential independence is the condition of the labor market. This is also clear in the case of Matías, who comes from a very poor family living in a shantytown from Lanús. In spite of the lack of resources, Matías and his wife decided to live alone, independently of their parents' families. Matías's job insecurity and lack of income were the only reasons that pushed them to move back with his parents. He finally found an opportunity as a

caretaker of some sport facilities in his own neighborhood, where he is currently living with his own family.

First we lived at my mom's around 8 months because we didn't have another place to go..., because I didn't work steadily. Later on, when I began to do better with my work we rented a room in Villa Diamante. We stayed there for almost 9 months, but afterwards my work began to drop, to decrease, I got less money, little money, and the owner wanted the rent. After that we went back to live one month at my mom's, and then I came to live here. (Matías, 21, Lanús, Interview 14)

The situation of single young people is different, primarily because there is little social pressure to leave the parents' home. Therefore, the residential transition among single young people is not only associated with the achievement of economic independence. This could be a necessary or convenient condition, but it is not a determinant factor. On the one hand, as we have seen in previous chapters, there are "push" factors (i.e. family conflicts and violence) that lead young people to leave their homes irrespective of their current economic condition; on the other hand, most young people with secure jobs will not leave their parents' home until marriage. As we have seen in chapter VI and VII the residential transition is more likely to occur simultaneously with the process of family formation. The residential transition tends to be linked to the family transition.

Nevertheless, the interviews show that in some cases, job insecurity is the main reason retaining single youths in their parents home. This situation is more common among the middle classes, where young people tend to postpone family formation and where leaving the family nest before marriage is increasingly accepted and encouraged. . In some cases, as Inés explains in her interview, the

lack of job and income stability become the main barrier for obtaining the desired residential independence; Inés, and her family, found an alternative solution that has increased her independence without demanding significant investments.

Inés is a clear example of social mobility. Her parents have only primary education and have worked in low skill jobs; Inés, however, was able to finish a tertiary degree (primary teacher) and is currently studying Social Work at the University of Lanús. No, no, it is like... now I feel more dependent, I feel that... being my age and having a job that is not a secure job because... I am a [Primary School] teacher, and I am working as a substitute teacher, one day at a school, one week at another school, and so on... This job, actually it is a steady job since [the last] winter vacations, because before that I used to work every other week... it is like... I have a salary, but my wages are not high enough to leave home, which I would like to do. Now I have my own room at the back of the house... I live there on my own, apart [from the rest of the family] since I started college, last year. It was like... I needed that, to live apart, on my own. First, this was a sort of shed at the back. Then, we decided to remodel the little shed making it into a one-room hut, where I sleep. I have my room, but when I need to go to the bathroom I have to go to the house at the front, so it is somehow... but this is a way of living still within my family and... the relationship with my brother is still... I seem to be still [regarded as] a little girl. That is why I think I would have a different attitude in life if I were really on my own. (Inés, 25, Varela, Interview 30).

Employment, particularly in terms of job and income stability, is also an important factor conditioning the timing of the family transition. Susana gives an account of young people's perceptions about the association between the labor status and the family expectations.

I guess today is harder... people are not getting married as commonly as they used to... not only because there is a general culture of 'non commitment', but also because of the economic instability, because years ago it was like... the man used to work and they used to buy a house, and get married, and then they went to live in there... and that was it. But now it is much harder than that. It is hard to save money to buy or to rent [a place to live] and then to bring children to birth... you never know if you'll lose your job tomorrow and so... you say 'what will I give my

children?' In that sense it is like... there is a lack of hope. (Susana, 24, Lanús, Interview 18)

It is worth remembering, however, that very often marriage (formal or informal) is the result of push factors (pregnancy, family conflicts, etc.). In these situations, the employment situation of the future couple receives less attention, and other strategies are used to cope with the family transition (family economic help, living with parents, etc.).⁷³ In contrast, when marriage is the result of free choice and part of a planned life project, job insecurity becomes a critical determinant. The cases of Cintia and Mercedes show some of the effects of job insecurity on the process of family formation.

Yes, we are planning to get engaged next December and, God willing, to get married in a year or two. We have this idea of getting married, but sometimes it seems we won't be able because he can't get a steady job, I can't get a job, and so...it is like we are 'in zero', because we can't get a place where we can go to live. (Cintia, 20, Lanús, Interview 7)

And...we started planning to get married when I was 22 or 23 years old. When I was 22, we had already been engaged for 5 years and he used to tell me we could get married any time, if I wanted to. We delayed this matter of the wedding for quite some time because I was working for this consultancy firm at the time and the wages were not fixed wages, because I worked according to the firm's demand. There were months when I would earn good money -I earned 400 pesos- and there were months when I would earn 200. It depended on the amount of work they got from their clients and I earned a kind of percentage. And so, it was like... I didn't have a true financial stability to meet... even when he was working [...] Besides, I couldn't count on my financial stability, may be I could rely on his [stability] but I always wanted to depend on my own economic stability to help him. (Mercedes, 24, Lanús, Interview 29).

Summing up, job insecurity is a critical factor that usually restricts young people's opportunities to fulfill key processes of the transition to adulthood such

⁷³ See chapter 7.

as residential and family transitions. In most of the interviews, the main factor behind this effect is the uncertainty about the future that results from job and income instability. In the following section I explore in more detail the association between job insecurity and youth perceptions about the future, particularly their expectations about their future opportunities of social integration.

9.4 JOB INSECURITY AND YOUTH PERCEPTIONS ON THE FUTURE

In a recent study of youth values and expectations based on a large national qualitative survey,⁷⁴ Emilio Tenti (1998) found that almost 60.0% of the young people between 14 and 25 years of age declare that “having a good living standard based on a secure and stable job” represents the main ambition (or hope) of their lives. As the author has observed, however, there is a clear and deep contrast between young people’s aspirations and their objective living opportunities -that is, between what they want and what they can achieve. As we have seen in previous chapters, the increasing deterioration of the labor market makes it difficult for young people to materialize those aspirations based on a secure and stable job.

These findings raise a critical question that has not yet been explored by sociologists of youth in Argentina. It refers to the consequences and effects on young people’s lives of this divergence between aspirations and hopes and their real and concrete opportunities. How do young people react to and deal with this

⁷⁴ The “First National Survey on Childhood, Adolescence and Youth” was conducted in 1995 and supported by UNICEF-Argentina.

incongruity between the ideal and the real employment opportunities? Beyond the economic constraints, what are the effects of job insecurity on young people lives in terms of their social and psychological well-being? Which kind of expectations do young people construct about their future adult lives after facing the new conditions of the labor market?

A first characteristic is the central role played by "work" in young people's perceptions and expectations about the future. In contrast with postmodernist approaches that argue that "work" has lost its dominance, particularly in developed countries, as a critical axis structuring young people lives, our fieldwork shows that the youth life-course is strongly dependent on employment opportunities. This statement does not refer to the substantive value of work, either in terms of providing a source of social identity, a life project, or a space of personal development. This value might be true for the middle or higher social classes where work may be the result of some kind of choice, but for most young people work represents just the main (and usually the only) source of income. This instrumental value determines the critical role of work.

Work as the main mechanism to obtain income determines young people's opportunities of participation in different spheres of social life. Several interviews showed that young people tend to see the increasing difficulties in finding a secure job as the root of a process of cumulative disadvantage. These disadvantages are not only the impossibility of satisfying basic needs. In most of these cases, parental families provide for their basic needs, such as food and shelter, and it is likely that these young people are defined as non-poor in official

measures, since the family income may be above the poverty line. The disadvantages that young people mention in their interviews refer to a broader problem of social integration. Unemployment, labor instability, and in turn irregular incomes constrain the opportunities of residential independence, family formation, social interaction, and basic levels of consumption; elements that by Argentinean standards are common and accepted expectations. The following quotations reflect these ideas.

Speaking about youngsters, in general, I think the main problem is the lack of jobs. Because I see my acquaintances, my friends, everybody... the most serious problem for youngsters is the lack of work. Young people become thoroughly depressive, and I am one of them. The situation gets you down. It is like... you fall into a deep well... you fall into a well "*And that is a matter that affects other things in life, isn't it?*" Sure, but on the basis of this fact: not having a steady activity or job. That triggers several other things [problems]. It is like a chain: you don't have a job, you can't do this, you can't do that... (Javier, 25, Lanús, Interview 2).

[To have no job] makes you feel like shit, because you can't do anything, with anybody... It drifts you apart from anybody... it drifts you apart from any kind of... social relationship or social links... You often need money for that [socializing, making new acquaintances], because if you want to visit someone you need to pay for the bus ticket or other means of transport... or you need, say... if you want to go to dance somewhere, or you want to meet someone, you need money to commute, to pay for the ticket... (Aníbal, 23, Interview 15, Lanús).

Years ago I used to think... when I started studying graphic design, I used to think that I was going to study for this and for that [reasons, projects], that I was going to make and build things, and that at the age of 30 I would be able to do this and that... Now I have given up thinking... Mainly due to the socio-economical situation we are going through, in which you are likely to find most doors closed rather than open, and to keep a job is becoming harder everyday, and to be able to study is becoming harder day by day, and everything is becoming harder all the time... Even couple relationships are complicated now, because if you live at some distance [from your couple-partner's] you can't even see each other, because it

requires extra expenses... I don't know... if you don't have a place to go, for example, to spend the night with your boyfriend requires a sum of money that you don't have, so then... everything becomes complicated, everything...(Vicky, 25, Lanús, Interview 28).

A second aspect emerging from the interviews refers to young people's responses to the "discovery" that their expectations become "out of reach" under the current employment conditions. As we have seen in chapter 8 in areas characterized by the concentration of labor problems (unemployment, job insecurity and poverty), a street culture is likely to emerge among young people constructed in opposition to the values of the mainstream society.

Unemployment and job insecurity, however, are neither concentrated in specific neighborhoods nor restricted to particular social groups. The street culture of the neighborhoods that I have called "underclass areas" is just one of the possible results of labor problems. There are, however, other reactions to the incongruity between aspirations and real opportunities less visible but no less important.

When young people realize that their expectations are unlikely under the current social conditions, that society does not allow them to pursue the values and aspirations that it promotes among their members, and simultaneously there are no alternative social spaces of participation and integration, individual and internal reactions emerge. Against a society that sends a contradictory message between goals and means for the youngest generations and the real opportunities that it provides, young people tend to abandon the idea of a future and retire from society. My analysis suggests that the increasing percentage of young people who are out of the educational system and out of the labor market, needs to be

explored from the perspective of disaffection with society. Both spaces –school and work- are weakened and questioned as valid mechanism of social mobility (Wortman 1998) and as channels of social integration during an independent adult life.

Asked about the attitudes towards the future, most of the interviewees have said that the future scares them, and that they prefer to avoid thinking about the future. The uncertainty generated by the increasing deterioration of the labor market affects a broad segment of the population, but its effects are particularly alarming for young people. Youth is inherently a period of transition, a period that some authors have defined as a moratorium in the process of becoming adult. From a life course perspective, the future represents for young people adult life in society -that is, the consolidation of the status of being an autonomous member of society. Young people's fears about the future are, therefore, fears about their opportunities of social integration as independent adult members of society –that is, as citizens.

I am terrified at the thought of the future. I am terrified because I don't know what is going to happen to me in 10 years time. For example, I have a project... when I am 25 or 27 years old I want to have my own house or to have my house being built. The thought of reaching the age of 30 and have nothing [like a house] and be still living at my parents' and not... that thought scares me... (Estela, 20, Lanús, Interview 30).

So far I have never thought *en bajar los brazos* [of giving up struggling for life], but I fear to find myself in a situation in which there be nothing else to hold on to, there be no job... I don't know... I fear not being able to support myself, or to keep my things [my belongings]. I am afraid of living alone, for example (Patricia, 23, Varela, Interview 18).

“Do you think about the future?” Oh, yes, yes!!! but I don't want to think about it sometimes, because, suddenly... the way I am now, I say ‘What

are you going to do, you jerk?’ ... Sometimes it is as if I were two people, and I say to myself ... ‘What are you going to do, jerk, if you haven’t got anything...’ That is, it is not that you haven’t got anything, but the way you are.... I fear that. And besides, the way things are [the situation]... to speak about social or economic matters drives me mad or desperate, I don’t even want to watch the telly... When I turn on the telly I only select music channels because I don’t want to watch the news about murder, about the shit [the situation] in our country, about the way things are around the world, as we are talking of the global matters. (Seba, 23, Varela, Interview 24)

However, young people cannot escape from their future as adult members of this society. As several studies have argued, (Urresti 1999, Wortman 1998) young people are abandoning expectations of a new society constructed through revolutionary change that were predominant in the Latin-American youth of the 1960s and 1970s. Additionally, the expectations of social mobility or "a good living standard" are undermined by a reality of job insecurity and uncertainty about their future adult lives. In the case of Federico he is neither studying, nor working nor looking for a job; he explains in his interview that an uncertain future has led him to isolation and depression; similarly, in the case of Tania, she acknowledge that her current employment situation has undermined her self-esteem and expectations about a better future.

“Did you get bored being idle?” Yes, obviously. *“And how do you feel when you are out of work?”* You feel bad, you can’t count on anything, you can’t plan ahead anything, from the beginning, you can’t make any plans, nothing... It [this situation] cuts down everything, it changes all, you are always depending on whatever may appear.... any sort of *changa* [odd job], right? as I was telling you before and... well... that. *“What did you do, all day long?”* No, no, I used to read, I secluded myself at home, I used to watch the TV and I shifted alternatively from one thing to the other: I read, I watched TV, I listened to music and so on... *“And now you don’t do that any more?”* Yes, up to the present I still do it, but now I have some more activities, I used to seclude myself at home, I felt

depressive in a way. Because of the same reasons I'm telling you... no job, I couldn't make any plans. Actually it is not a truly deep depression which I go through... of those you lie [in bed] and you give up totally, no... I stay there, thinking about my problems... "*Which problems?*" Erm...the future, how I'm going to... how I'm going to make a living on my own, I don't know...I want to have my own house some day, and how I'll achieve that, that worries me. (Federico, 21, Interview 4, Lanús).

"*Being idle, don't you get bored sometimes?*" Yes, yes, sometimes I do. When I am not doing anything or I'm watching the TV it is like I feel completely...how can I tell you? completely worthless... I don't know, I wonder 'I don't have anything better to do, right?' or 'Actually, would I be able to do anything better than this?'... And then it is when I feel stupid [...] And so... my everyday life is like this now: I don't have a job. Even when I 'm looking for a job. Sometimes I say '*Loco* [hey man] it is always me, only me, who goes through all this!' And when you consider these matters... I say '*All right*...perhaps to be well off, to have a good job...it is not for everybody, I don't know'. (Tania, 25, Varela, Interview 13).

Other studies have also found other effects associated with these extended perceptions and feelings of exclusion among young people. An interesting study conducted by Pablo Bonaldi (1998) shows that violent deaths among young people have grown during the last decade, giving to Argentina a considerably higher rate of violent deaths in comparison with most developed countries. Among the causes of these deaths, homicide has been the only factor that has decreased, while traffic accidents, other accidents, and suicides have experienced a significant increase since the 1980s and particularly during the 1990s. Based on the classical Durkeimian study on the social causes of suicide, Bonaldi argues that the increase in violent deaths among youth can be explained as a result of a weakening of the social bonds of Argentinean society. In particular, the author highlights two main factors: on the one hand, young people have difficulty in constructing an idea of membership in the current society; on the other hand, the

society does not provide clear norms or guidelines on how social integration could be achieved.

The insecurity characterizing the labor market generates a strong feeling of uncertainty among young people. The opportunities of becoming a full member of the society seems remote for a significant proportion of them. In particular, job insecurity has undermined the idea of progress, in terms of both inter and intra generational (upward) social mobility, which has been a critical determinant of membership in society for the Argentinean working and middle classes. Several young people expressed this extended perception that associates job insecurity with feelings of exclusion from mainstream society.

It is awful, it is awful. You become deeply depressive... I used to go out looking for a job... as if obliged to do it, because I knew I wouldn't get a job. Then I used to come back and go to bed and sleep... The only thing I wanted to do was sleep, to avoid realizing that life -as I saw it- was passing me by, and I was out, totally out of the system. (Enrique, 25, Lanús, Interview 20).

"You've just told me that you had gone through a period of depression some time in the past" Yes, and I couldn't talk to my parents about it; they knew it came from not getting a job. *"Why did you feel bad?"* Because I felt I had studied so hard and my parents had supported me financially with great effort... and all that effort had no reward. *"That happened to you when you finished your [Primary School] teaching course, right?"* Yes, [Primary School] teaching course. I felt there were so many things that the lack of a job would trigger, you see, and that I was going to be left apart from society, that sensation of... of not existing to society...and all that effort...for nothing. (Susana, 24, Lanús, Interview 18).

During the last decades, Argentinean society has experienced paradoxical and contradictory changes. Since the late 1970s, Argentina has turned toward a neoliberal social model, where the rules of the market penetrate all the spheres of social life. Indeed, as different theorists have argued there was a silent but radical

transformation of citizens into consumers. On the other hand, however, most of the neoliberal economic policies and their implementation have led to an increasing deterioration of the labor market. The instrumental character of work as the main (and only) source of income for most of the population has been undermined by a context of increasing unemployment and job insecurity. The result of this process is a model in which social integration is becoming based on market participation, but it is a model that simultaneously denies a large segment of the society access to the market. Young people's feelings of disaffiliation and disaffection with society are the expression of this inherently contradictory model that characterizes contemporary Argentina.

9.5 SUMMARY

This chapter argued that the increasing deterioration of the labor market has a direct effect on the life experiences of young people. On the one hand, unemployment and job insecurity restrict young people's opportunities to fulfill key processes of the transition to adulthood such as economic independence, but also residential and family transitions, and the construction of an adult identity. There is a deep contradiction between what society demand as part of the process of becoming adult and the opportunities that it provides in order to achieved these demands. On the other hand, (and partially as a result of that contradiction), young people experienced an increasing uncertainty about their future adult life. In general terms, the perception of "work" as an instrument of social mobility is undermined, and felling of social disaffiliation expand among youths.

Chapter 10. Conclusion

10.1 MAIN FINDINGS

The main purpose of this study was to make an initial exploration of the transition to adulthood in contemporary Argentina. A basic assumption of this research was that the socio-economic changes experienced by the country during the last decades had an impact on the process of becoming adult. Thus, this research was designed and carried out in order to identify and understand the characteristics and effects of this new socio-economic scenario -particularly in terms of its capacity of social integration- on youth transition.

The main axis of social integration in Argentina has been a common expectation of social "progress". Poor and other disadvantaged sectors, even when facing significant levels of socio-economic hardship, did not lose their feelings of membership to society, in that they shared this common expectation. This, however, has not been only an ideational phenomenon; the idea of social "progress" was based on the existence of different mechanisms of (intra and inter generational) upward social mobility. The labor market, the formal education, the State and the community were seen in Argentina as mechanisms and resources of social mobility. Thus, social integration appears in Argentina as a process of multi-affiliation, and social exclusion as a process of cumulative disadvantages, where the main determinant factor is the access to those basic channels of social mobility.

Youth has been defined as a period of the life course characterized by a set of transitions to adulthood. The transition from school-to work, but also the formation of a new family and the achievement of residential independence, however, are not only social markers of adulthood, but also instances in which most of the future opportunities or limitations of social mobility are defined. Thus, "youth" represents a period of transition to adulthood but also a period of transition to social integrations as an independent adult member of society.

One of the central findings of this study has been the identification of general and specific trends. During the 1990s the process of becoming adult in Argentina can be describe by certain general characteristics and trends. At the same time, however, these general trends hide particular and distinctive process affecting specific groups of young people. General and specific trends were identified and analyzed in the public and private spheres of the transition to adulthood.

During the 1990s the educational level of the young population has increased and, therefore, young people remain longer in education. However, education has assumed a new role, and it does not represent a general channel of social mobility. Secondary school has become a clear gatekeeper for occupations but also for future opportunities of social mobility. In a context characterized by increasing levels of schooling attainment and a growing deterioration of the labor market, education has become an institution that exclude.

During the last decade, Argentina has also experienced a sharp deterioration of the labor market conditions. Unemployment and job insecurity, as

well as low incomes and labor instability, became common features of the labor market. In this context, youth lost relative weight as a group particularly subject to labor problems. But general trends have various and specific effects on different social sectors. Chapter 5 showed that in a context of general labor deterioration, young people with educational vulnerability and living in poverty have become almost excluded from secure jobs; they are also more subject to unemployment. This chapter also suggests that disadvantaged households tend to increase the disadvantages of their children in the labor market; this is particularly relevant in that the labor market has been a traditional mechanism of social mobility. Young people labor opportunities are associated with the educational and occupational class of the household, but also, and even more clearly, with the labor status of their parents. Young people whose parents are unemployed or have an insecure job are more likely to be economically active, but they are also more subject to unemployment and job insecurity. This is particularly relevant since Argentina has experienced during the last 7 years a new and extensive phenomenon of young children raised in families affected by recurrent periods of unemployment, labor instability and job insecurity.

The private spheres of the transition to adulthood show similar contrasts between general and specific trends. Argentinean youths have experienced a process of increasing postponement of family formation and residential transition. Most of the young population has experienced an increasing delay of marriage and residential independence, following a secular trend observed in different national contexts, but also as a result of the extension of the formal education and

the increasing difficulties to achieve the required economic independence. A deeper exploration of these general trends, however, showed the persistence of early marriage as well as an increasing proportion of adult young couples still living with their parents. Moreover, these two situations seem to be associated with other social disadvantages such as poverty, education vulnerability, and employment precariousness. Indeed, these "atypical" patterns -in the Argentinean context- of family and residential transitions represent particular aspects of an ongoing process of cumulative disadvantages.

These general and specific trends suggest two main characteristics of the process of becoming adult in contemporary Argentina. First, an increasing vulnerability of young people in terms of their future opportunities of social integration. Secondly, the consolidation of a sector of the young population immerse in a circle of cumulative disadvantages, whose future opportunities appear much more restricted. These two aspects are the youth expression of general trends affecting the whole social structure: the increasing social impoverishment of the middle classes, and the concentration of disadvantages in already disadvantaged social groups.

Therefore, social vulnerability and the risk of social exclusion is not an exclusive attribute of youth. The particularity of these aspects among young people is that it is experienced in a transitional stage of the life course. Young people are part of vulnerable families -and even communities-, and they start the transition to adulthood under vulnerable conditions. This is a new phenomenon in Argentina. They represent the link between a generation that was part of a

dynamic process of upward social mobility but is currently experiencing a process of social impoverishment, and a future generation that is growing up in a context of concentrated disadvantages and limited (or none) opportunities of social mobility.

The study of the family, the labor market and the neighborhood, showed some of the effects and links between cumulative disadvantages, as well as the resources and opportunities of young people in order to cope with them. Indeed, these three major structures⁷⁵ are critical in shaping the outcome of vulnerable transitions.

The family of origin (in terms of their economic, social and emotional resources) has a significant effect on youth transitions, contributing either to cope with some initial disadvantages or to increase and promote a growing process of cumulative disadvantages. The labor market is a central axis in the process of transition to adulthood since it represents the main source of economic independence and a key aspect of the social construction of the adult identity. The employment conditions of young people are directly associated with the vulnerability of other life course trajectories. Different urban contexts represent also different opportunities and constraints for young people becoming adults. In this sense, it is particularly relevant the cumulative effect of local socio-economic disadvantages, and the generation of processes of ecological and social isolation - that is, the construction of spatial and cultural dimensions of social exclusion.

⁷⁵ The state should also be included; however it has not been a central issue of this study.

10.2 MAIN IMPLICATIONS

A final question -observation- emerges from the previous trends. It refers to the possible implications of the findings of this study both in terms of a future research agenda and the social effects that could be expected. Are the patterns of transition to adulthood highlighting a process of transformation of the Argentinean social structure? I have decided to present these final implications with an open question since I do not have a final answer. At the same time, I think this should be the main perspective for future studies of youth transitions in Argentina. Nevertheless some general observations could be suggested.

Regarding possible changes in the Argentinean social structure, this study suggests two main ongoing processes. On the one hand, an increasing social vulnerability among young people from middle and (high) working classes. These sectors experience a deep uncertainty about their future opportunities in society. The process of becoming adult face them with an increasing uncertainty about the channels that would allow them an upward social mobility, which was a central feature of the past experience of their families of origin. During the late 1980s several studies observed a phenomenon of "new poverty"; these young people are the new poor' children. Their feelings of uncertainty, expressed in the interviews and observed in their employment instability and insecurity, are also analytical uncertainties. It is difficult to hypothesize if their current vulnerability is a transitional situation or the beginning of a process of cumulative disadvantages. It is clear, however, that these alternative outcomes are tied to their current and

previously accumulated resources, as well as to the evolution of the structures of opportunities and constraints (particularly the labor market).

On the other hand, this study suggests that segments of the young population are already experiencing a process of cumulative disadvantages. These are young people from poor and disadvantaged sectors, for whom the current and future opportunities of social mobility have been seriously restricted. This process of (social and spatial) concentration and accumulation of disadvantages generate a real risk of social exclusion and the possible consolidation of a polarized social structure. In order to reverse these trends active social policies from the State are needed; to rely on their resources and the structure of opportunities, is unrealistic and unfair. As this study has shown the educational system, the labor market, and the urban space have become mechanisms of exclusion.

Regarding a future research agenda three main issues could be suggested. First, a comparative study of the transition to adulthood among young people and their parents, respectively. This would provide a better understanding of the main characteristics and differences -changes- in the process of becoming adult in two clearly contrasting socio-economic scenarios. Secondly, a deeper exploration of the intermeshing between the family context and the transition to adulthood of the young members. In this case, the analysis should be focused on the family dynamics and socio economic conditions. In this sense, for instance, we need a better understanding of the effects of parents' labor instability or long-term unemployment on the life course of their children. The analysis of these two issues requires family case studies, with interviews conducted both with young

people and their parents.⁷⁶ Finally, the findings of this study suggest that a deeper analysis of youth in urban contexts characterized by spatial and social segregation is needed. During the 1970s and 1980s several studies have been conducted with young people living in *villas miserias* (shantytowns). However the *villas miserias* and other poor urban neighborhoods are developing new characteristics that were not present before. Some of these new aspects are the expansion and generalization of unemployment among head of households, the growing dependence on employment programs and other assistential social policies, the expansion of drug abuse, and the increasing levels of crime and violence. The inner city ghettos studied by Julius Wilson did not have a parallel phenomenon in Argentina; it is necessary to explore if they are a new characteristic of our society and which are their specificities in a developing country. This is a short agenda that will help to answer our uncertainties about the transition of the Argentinean society.

⁷⁶ Biographical surveys are an excellent instrument for this type of analysis. However, they are still a resource only available in most developed countries.

Appendix

Topic guide for the interviews

1.- Demographic aspects:

Gender and age

Marital and residential status

Educational and labor status

Parents' education and occupational status

Household composition

2.- Labor participation:

Characteristics of current and previous jobs

Meanings and consequences of being employed or unemployed

Mechanisms and obstacles in order to get a job

Expectations of labor mobility

Characteristics and consequences associated with an ideal job

3.- Educational experience:

Educational trajectory

Reasons for attending or dropping out of school

Family support and influence of friends

Relationship between education and other life trajectories

4.- Family formation:

Conditions and reasons to get married

Conditions and reasons to become pregnant

Strategies to cope with the initial needs of a new family

Family support and influence of friends

Relationship between family formation and other life trajectories

5.- Residential transition:

Experiences of residential independence

Value of the residential independence

Conditions and reasons for leaving the parents' home

Strategies to achieve residential independence

Relationship between the residential transition and other life trajectories

6.- General aspects:

Change in family relationships during the transition to adulthood

Household environment (violence, addictions, poverty, etc.)

Peer groups and activities

Future expectations

Table of interviewees' characteristics

Interview	Name	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Family Status	Residence
Lanús 1	Nora	Female	26	Complete Tertiary (primary teacher)	Housekeeper	Married, 2 children	Rented house
Lanús 2	Javier	Male	26	Incomplete Secondary	Taxi driver Student	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 3	Esteban	Male	25	Incomplete Secondary	Industry worker Student	Cohabitation, 1 child	Parents' home
Lanús 4	Federico	Male	21	Incomplete Secondary	None	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 5	Emilio	Male	19	Complete Primary	Casual jobs (gardening)	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 6	José	Male	21	Incomplete Secondary	Casual jobs (cleaning)	Cohabitation, 2 children	Parents' home
Lanús 7	Cintia	Female	20	Complete Secondary	Student (tertiary level)	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 8	Favio	Male	23	Incomplete Secondary	House painter Student	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 9	Antonio	Male	21	Incomplete Secondary	Student Unemployed	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 10	Alberto	Male	23	Incomplete College	Student Unemployed	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 11	Fabián	Male	25	Incomplete Secondary	House painter Student	Single, 1 child	Parents' home
Lanús 12	Norma	Female	19	Complete Primary	None	Single, 1 child	Relative's home
Lanús 13	Marita	Female	19	Complete Primary	Employed in a garment workshop	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 14	Matías	Male	21	Incomplete Secondary	Casual jobs (construction)	Cohabitation, 1 child	House caretaker

Lanús 15	Aníbal	Male	23	Inc. College	Student Unemployed	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 16	Raquel	Female	19	Incomplete College	Student	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 17	Guillermina	Female	20	Incomplete College	Student	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 18	Susana	Female	24	Incomplete College	Pre-school teacher Student	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 19	Yanina	Female	22	Complete Secondary	Employed	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 20	Enrique	Male	25	Incomplete Secondary	Unemployed	Married, 1 child	Parents' home
Lanús 21	Marcela	Female	22	Complete Secondary	Unemployed (social program)	Single (pregnant)	Parents' home
Lanús 22	Natalia	Female	17	Incomplete Secondary	Student	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 23	Diego	Male	21	Complete Primary	None	Cohabitation	Parents in law's home
Lanús 24	Victor	Male	20	Incomplete College	Student	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 25	Marisa	Female	24	Incomplete Secondary	Unemployed	Single, 1 child	Parents' home
Lanús 26	Lucrecia	Female	23	Complete Primary	Unemployed	Separated, 2 children	Parents' home
Lanús 27	Irene	Female	19	Complete Primary	Unemployed	Single	Parents' home
Lanús 28	Vicky	Female	25	Incomplete College	Clerical worker	Single	Rented apartment
Lanús 29	Mercedes	Female	24	Complete College (Psychologist)	Clerical worker	Married	Rented apartment
Lanús 30	Estela	Female	20	Incomplete College	Student	Single	Parents' home

Interview	Name	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Family Status	Residence
Varela 1	Ernesto	Male	25	Complete Secondary	Unemployed	Married, 1 child	House owner
Varela 2	Mariano	Male	23	Incomplete Secondary	Employed (transportation firm)	Single	Parents' home
Varela 3	Martita	Female	19	Incomplete Secondary	Unemployed	Single	Parents' home
Varela 4	Elena	Female	18	Incomplete Secondary	None	Cohabitation, 1 child	Parents' home
Varela 5	Angie	Female	20	Incomplete Secondary	Unemployed	Single, 1 child	Parents' home
Varela 6	Julio	Male	19	Incomplete Secondary	Unemployed	Single	Parents' home
Varela 7	Roberto	Male	17	Incomplete Secondary	Student	Single	Parents' home
Varela 8	Pedro	Male	22	Incomplete Secondary	None	Single	Parents' home
Varela 9	Mirta	Female	19	Complete Primary	Unemployed (social program)	Married, 2 children	Parents' land plot
Varela 10	Soledad	Female	24	Complete Primary	Unemployed (social program)	Married, 1 child	Parents' land plot
Varela 11	Vivi	Female	25	Incomplete Secondary	Unemployed (social program)	Single, 2 children	Parents' land plot
Varela 12	Andrés	Male	18	Incomplete Secondary	Student	Single	Parents' home
Varela 13	Tania	Female	25	Complete Secondary	Unemployed	Single	Parents' home
Varela 14	Julia	Female	18	Complete Secondary	None	Single	Parents' home
Varela 15	Guillermo	Male	16	Incomplete Secondary	Student	Single	Parents' home
Varela 16	Joaquín	Male	18	Incomplete Secondary	Unemployed (social program)	Cohabitation, 1 child	Parents' home

Varela 17	Gerardo	Male	18	Complete Secondary	Unemployed (social program)	Single	Parents' home
Varela 18	Patricia	Female	23	Complete Tertiary (kinder teacher)	Unemployed (social program)	Single	Parents' home
Varela 19	Mario	Male	19	Complete Secondary	Unemployed (social program)	Single	Parents' home
Varela 20	Carmen	Female	21	Incomplete College	Student	Single	Parents' home
Varela 21	Florencia	Female	19	Incomplete Secondary	Student	Single (pregnant)	Parents' home
Varela 22	Clara	Female	18	Incomplete Secondary	Student	Cohabitation, 1 child	Parents' land plot
Varela 23	Dora	Female	25	Complete Primary	Housekeeper	Cohabitation, 2 children	Parents' land plot
Varela 24	Seba	Male	23	Complete Primary	None	Single	Parents' home
Varela 25	Raúl	Male	25	Complete Secondary	Unemployed	Single	Parents' home
Varela 26	Walter	Male	18	Complete Secondary	Unemployed	Single	Parents' home
Varela 27	Lautaro	Male	18	Incomplete Secondary	None	Single	Friend's home
Varela 28	Mauro	Male	17	Incomplete Secondary	Student	Single	Parents' home
Varela 29	Graciela	Female	25	Incomplete Secondary	Unemployed (social program)	Single, 1 child	Parents' home
Varela 30	Inés	Female	25	Incomplete College	Employed (primary teacher)	Single	Parents' home
Varela 31	Daniel	Male	18	Complete Secondary	None	Single	Parents' home

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