

The Gender Order in the Oligarchical Argentine (1880-1930)

by Silvia Berger

This work in progress fits in the framework of “Historical Patterns of Development and Underdevelopment: Origins and Persistence of the Great Divergence” ((HI-POD); a project carried out by a consortium of seven universities dedicated to long-term comparative studies, and part of the 7th Framework of the European Union (Warwick University, Trinity College Dublin, Utrecht University, University of Tuebingen, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, the Universidad de la República and the Centre for Economic Policy Research). It includes a work entitled “Gender, demography and development”. The Project focuses on various Latin American countries with the goal of constructing a comparative of the 20th Century history dealing with gender inequalities and the evolution of gender discrepancies in three basic indicators of human development: education, health, and income.

Concerning Argentina, we chose to analyze the evolution of gender inequality within the framework of three different regimes of accumulation that mark the country’s development since its entry into the world market in the last quarter of the 19th century, after a long period of civil strife and disjoints in political space.

1. The first regime of accumulation corresponds to the Argentine Oligarchy and runs from 1880 to the beginning of the 1930s. Rapid growth, led by the cattle industry and later joined by agriculture, is the most important feature of this period. Growth, within a framework of unrestricted free-market policy, has its axis in the Pampa region. Economic growth had serious and interrelated implications for this region, which, except for Buenos Aires, Argentina’s port of entry, was scarcely inhabited at the time. The accelerated growth the population experienced went hand in hand with the death of pre-capitalist forms of production, which were still being practiced in the region’s oldest communities. It was impossible to compete with imported goods.

An enormous wave of immigrants supply the manual labor that growth requires, working in the agricultural sector as tenant farmers on land that had previously been appropriated by the oligarchy. They also contribute to the construction of new

infrastructure, essential for the expansion of the export industry (ports, railways, cold stores, etc.), and to the development of the region's cities (principally Buenos Aires and Rosario), which became the centers of this economic activity. Growth slows in the 1920's, and towards the end of the decade, with the infrastructure completed, the agriculture and livestock industries begin to compete for land. The impact of the worldwide crisis on work and income—a steep drop in exportation—brought this regime of accumulation to its end.

2. The exportation industry's reduced income causes a reduction in imports, creating the conditions for a process of substituting importation, through which the number of people employed in the manufacturing industry doubles between 1935 and 1945. This substitution, accompanied by rigid controls on import duties, is adopted as a deliberate strategy for growth in the post-war period. The crisis in agricultural production leads to limits in importation, which intensifies this process by providing the manual labor necessary for expansion; labor arrives through internal migration from the most backwards provinces in the country, but also from rural areas of the humid Pampa region. A second phase of importation substitution begins in the seventies. This process—focusing on intermediary goods, and especially durable goods, unlike the first, which focused on mass consumption goods—exerts significant pressure towards the compression and differentiation of salaries, as well as the redirection of public expenditure in social welfare to the creation of the necessary infrastructure for the fledgling auto industry and large purveyors of intermediary goods. These pressures were obviously intended to increase profitability and expand the market for new industry. In a country of scarce manual labor and strong unions, this set the stage for growing social conflict, in a context of increasing opposition by the primary export sectors, who objected to the high costs and taxes caused by import substitution.

3. With the coup d'état, a process of non-linear liberalization and deregulation begins, culminating in the 90's with the rapid breakdown of the industrial structure. Very

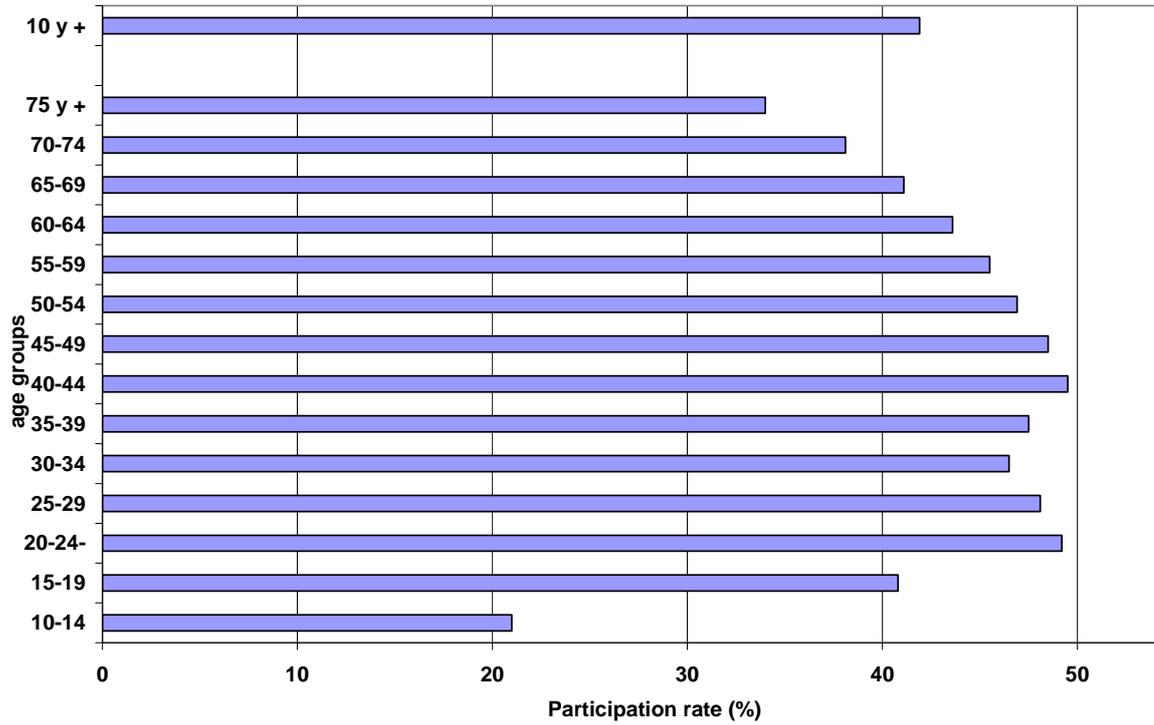
high unemployment and underemployment ensue: industrial wages fall 30% from 1974. Finance grows in importance, becoming large-scale capital investment's primary hub. Agricultural exports grow rapidly, but are unable to match the import growth caused by the opening up and dismantling of the industry. The deficit is covered, of course, by external borrowing, and when this external debt becomes unsustainable in 2001 a profound economic crisis results, generating a change in the regime of accumulation. The boundaries of this new scenario remain vague in many ways and will not be discussed in this paper.

Each one of these regimes—and this is the orienting hypothesis of this investigation—involves not only different rates of women's participation in the labor market, but also distinct configurations in the process of social reproduction in which the domestic sphere assumes different tasks, in terms of care giving including the provision of the material items necessary for reproduction. Although many of these changes could be thought of in terms of general tendencies linked to development, their speed, scope, and characteristics seem to take on peculiar aspects in the context of these regimes.

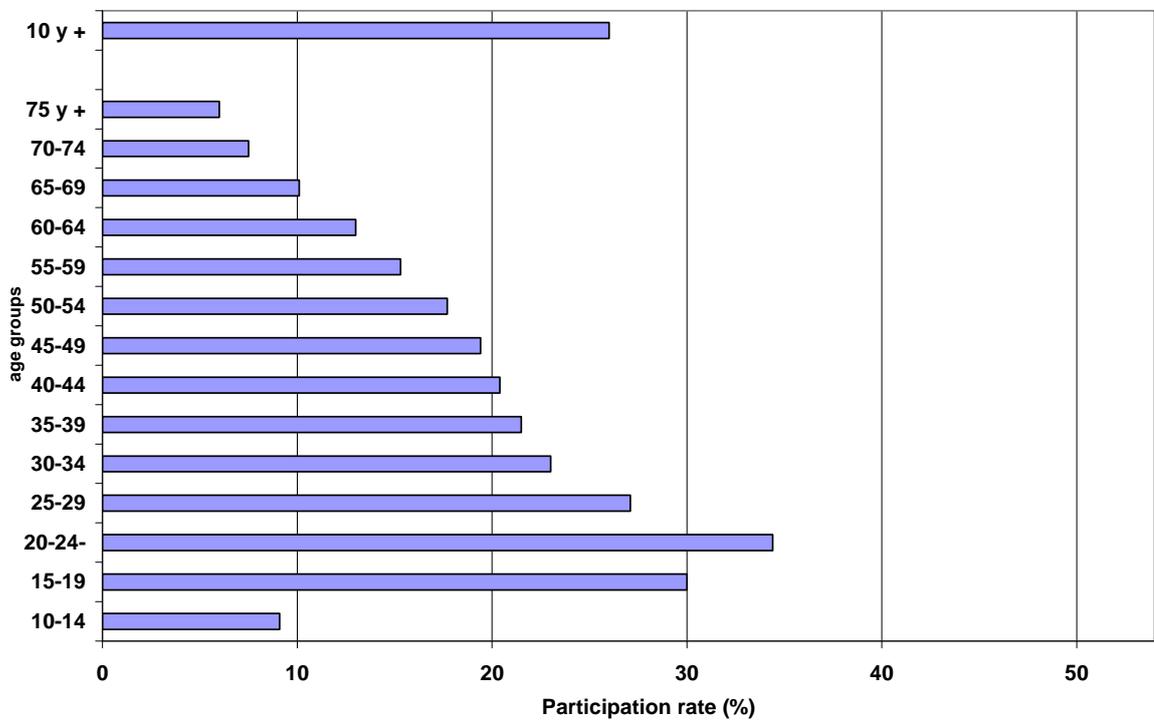
This observation is particularly compelling in the context of a country such as Argentina, whose development has followed a special parabola. According to its income per capita, Argentina was one of the world's ten richest countries at the start of the century. Census data does not allow for a thorough examination of the different regimes of accumulation, covering the years 1869, 1895, 1914, 1947, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1991, 2001. We can, however, use the data from 1895 and 1947 as an approximation to study changes in women's participation in the labor market during the Oligarchical Argentine; the censuses of 1947 and 1980 as a reference for the import substitution stage, and the figures from 1980 and 2000 for the financial recovery scheme. The results are a primary and solid validation of our basic hypothesis.

The following charts describe the periods of 1895-1947, 1948-1980, and 1980-2001, showing profound changes in women labor force participation rates by age group.

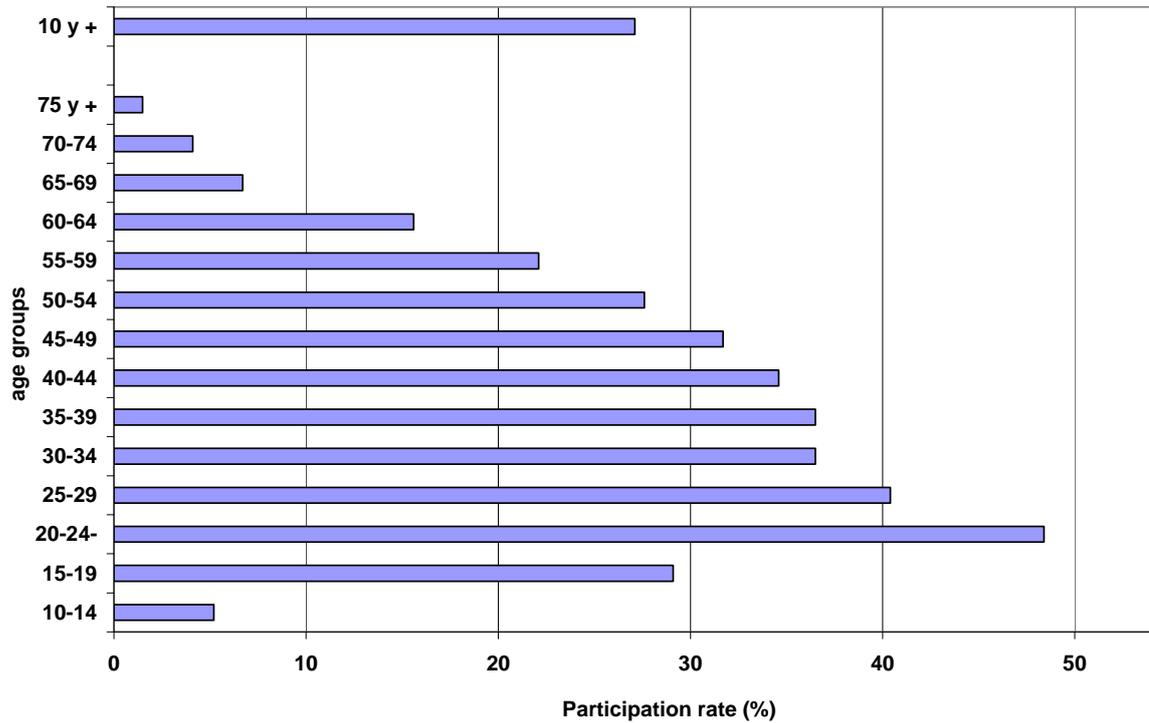
1895. Women labor force participation rate by age groups



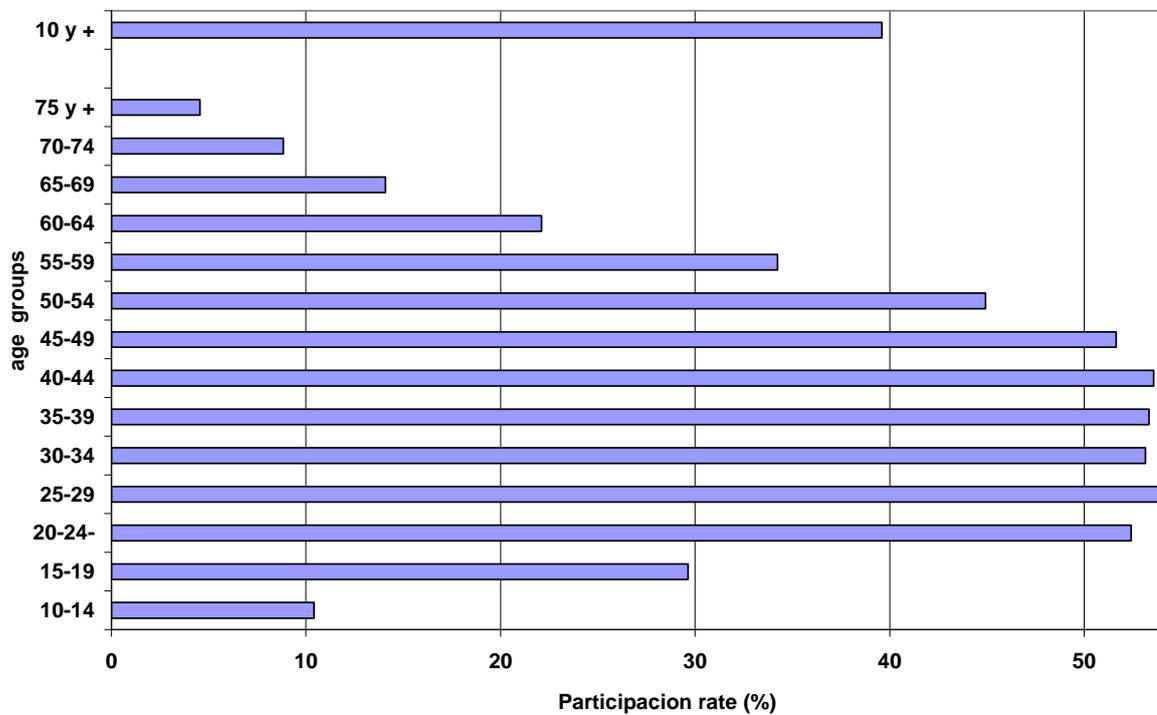
1947. Women participation force rate by age groups



1980. Women labor force participation rate by age groups



2001 . Women participation rate by age groups



Evidently, changes are not linear. Advances and setbacks in participation rates occur at different times for different demographic groups, and show changes related to the economic organization and dominant gender order.

**The investigation at its current stage. Argentine oligarchy at its constitutive moment.
1880-1914.**

The current stage of the investigation is based on the transformations occurring between 1895 and 1914, the period in which the logic that would be central to the regime of accumulation and its reproduction is established. At the beginning of this period, women's participation in paid economic activity was very high (up almost 40% for all age groups between 15 and 59 years). The figures from 1947 show major changes (see graph): the causes and consequences of these changes should, then, be analyzed.

I. The Regime of accumulation¹

Around 1870, two factors create evident opportunities for agricultural exportation: the effects of English-led free-market policies and a fall in transportation costs. Large Pampean landowners and their corresponding political elite begin a complex attempt to consolidate national organization, attract foreign capital for infrastructure projects, and induce robust immigration. Europeans were even offered free travel. From 1880 on, these policies come along with measures favoring the introduction of a specific kind of mass immigration, one that is highly heterogenic from the standpoints of culture, language, and religion. These policies were very successful in accomplishing social insertion through civil marriage laws, and free, secular, and obligatory public schooling. A period of rapid economic growth begins and continues until 1930.

¹ Arceo, Enrique(2003) Cortes Conde , Roberto (1979) Scoobie, James (1968)

Evolution Gross Domestic Product Index and Per capita income Index in U\$S . (1869-1930)

YEAR	GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT BASE (1900-1904=100)	PER CAPITA INCOME IN U\$S (GEARY KAMIS) BASE 1900-1904=100)	YEAR	GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT BASE 1900-104=100)	PER CAPITA INCOME IN U\$S (GEARY KAMIS) INDEX BASE 1900-1904=100)
1869		67,77	1900	81,8	92,12
1870		69,40	1901	89	94,56
1871		67,45	1902	91,8	97,04
1872		71,17	1903	109,6	104,79
1873		72,82	1904	127,8	111,49
1874		70,33	1905	149,6	131,51
1875	21,4	72,49	1906	148,1	135,33
1876	21,9	68,84	1907	144,7	129,98
1877	24,1	76,95	1908	170,2	143,68
1878	22,9	71,92	1909	183,2	145,20
1879	24	69,18	1910	190,5	152,36
1880	23,5	66,59	1911	196,8	146,43
1881	23,8	71,13	1912	228,1	161,60
1882	30	90,09	1913	230,4	158,81
1883	33,6	93,62	1914	185,8	137,81
1884	36,1	98,80	1915	196,5	141,51
1885	42,3	83,33	1916	188,8	151,15
1886	42,4	81,23	1917	166,5	169,92
1887	45,3	107,96	1918	218,6	237,52
1888	52,6	112,20	1919	205,3	231,73
1889	57,7	93,63	1920	208,9	245,41
1890	52,9	72,57	1921	214,3	166,51
1891	50,1	44,87	1922	239,9	173,19

1892	59,8	62,84	1923	274	179,58
1893	63,4	68,54	1924	308	195,44
1894	73,1	71,97	1925	290,1	220,47
1895	81	83,00	1926	297,9	212,18
1896	89,6	106,84	1927	325,9	227,74
1897	72,7	78,52	1928	325,4	235,06
1898	78,8	84,86	1929	331,6	234,69
1899	92,7	100,15	1930	303,3	188,04

Source: Ferreres, Orlando (2005)

Massive English investment in railways made this growth possible. The Pampa region is the hub of expansion, and production there goes successive transformations according to fluctuations in the prices of its products and transportation costs. New developments in product preservation, the introduction of new animals, new methods of cultivation, and new labor contingents, all directed towards maximizing income in a context of rapid change, play a crucial role.

As a result, leather and beef tallow exportation phases into wool exportation, stimulating solid growth in sheepherding, and with it, Irish immigration. The cold store industry sees a change, in its early stages, from merino sheep (specialized in wool production), to the Lincoln system, which begins with mutton but later makes a transition to the crossbreeding of local cattle (Shorthorn and Heresford) for beef exportation, which is first frozen, then chilled. The gradual development of agriculture attends this process from 1870 and accelerates at the turn of the century; the mixed-breed cattle need alfalfa to be fattened, and this product, provided by the agricultural industry, becomes Argentina's principal exportation product.

Land use is highly extensive. The growing army of agricultural producers (mostly Italian, but also Spanish) exploit the natural grasslands on which the cattle feed as tenant farmers, because it was already owned and under exploitation by the Oligarchy when they arrived. High land prices made individual ownership impossible.

Immigrant farmers use a system of shifting cultivation. The soil was cultivated for a variable number of years according to its quality. When depleted, use was shifted to cattle herding, which restored the fertility of the soil. Mechanization levels around 1920 are similar to those in the U.S.A., but in Argentina a much larger area is exploited. Most of these are family farms, but the bulk of production is controlled by companies dependent on salaried labor.

This model of growth, based on free trade, fosters barely any development in the large cities of the Pampas and eliminates the outmoded production methods in the interior. However, the protection of two regions—Cuyo, producing wines and spirits, and Tucuman, producing sugar—form part of a national agreement that keeps national unity alive.

The other side of extensive agricultural production is a population explosion in the cities, which was most intense in ports of exit: Rosario, and more importantly, Buenos Aires.

The development of activities related to transport, commercialization, and processing of agricultural production requires more labor than agricultural production itself. This situation, in turn, impels an expansion of services and construction in urban centers. 72% of the population growth due to immigration took place in urban environments. As Bunge² indicates, Argentina's system of land exploitation required four times less labor than systems used in European countries, "because an equal volume of agricultural and livestock production requires much less rural population than in... European countries. However, public administration, transport, manufacturing, commerce, and public services require (on

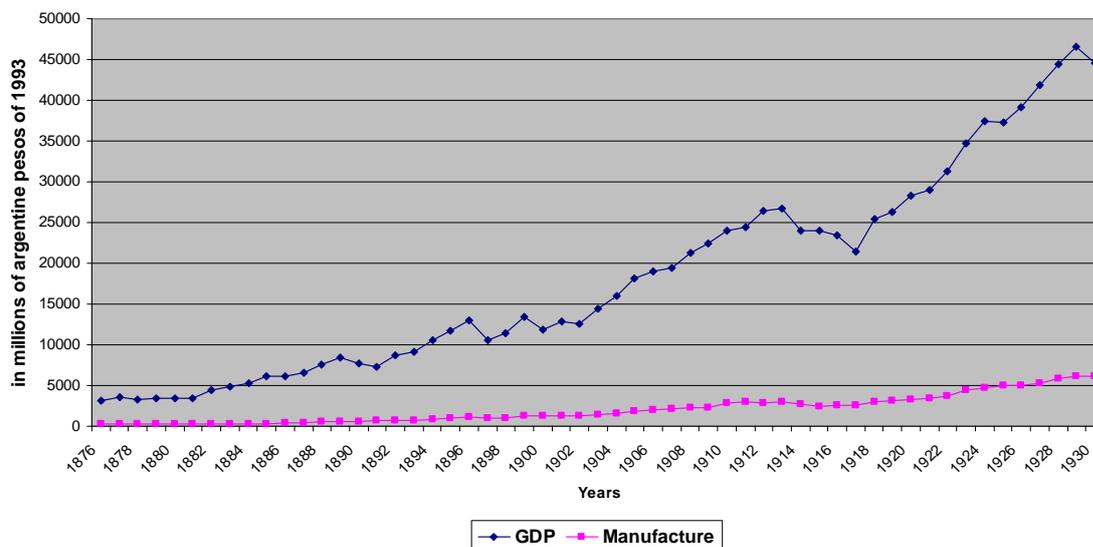
² Bunge, Alejandro (1984)

same movements) a nearly equal number of persons in this country as in those previously cited. For this reason, the proportion of population in rural areas is much less.” According to the 1914 census, only 26% of the population was concentrated in the agricultural sector (30% of men and 6% of women).

The level of this activity grows between 1880 and 1912 at an annual cumulative rate of 6.6%. The annual product per capita is 3.2%³, with a growth in total exportation of 6.1% in the same period.

Although manufacturing industry shows a high growth rate, this has limited impact on Gross Value Added or Gross Domestic Product, given the restraints imposed by free trade policy.

Gross Value Added (GDP) and Value Added by the Manufacture Industries (1876-1930)
(prices from 1993)



Source: Ferreres, Orlando (2005)

While agricultural industry’s elevated productivity and high international profits result in Argentina’s famed prosperity, the lack of pre-capitalist structures of any real importance (such as existed in Peru and in other Latin American countries) must also be taken into

³ Ferreres, Orlando “Historia Argentina en cifras” Dos siglos de economía argentina (1810-2004) Co-edition Editorial El Ateneo and Fundacion Northey Sur. Dec 2005 ISBN 950-02-5342-9

account, without ruling out marked heterogeneities in structures of production, circulation, distribution, and consumption. But, in spite of immense influxes of immigrants, real salaries grow, if at a slow rate; the appropriation of the land by a small majority causes high levels of inequality in the distribution of income and wealth.

Evolution of Real Wages 1865-1930

YEARS	REAL WAGES (1900-1904= 100)
1865-1869	52.0
1870-1874	53.8
1875-1879	48.9
1880-1884	62.0
1885-1889	74.7
1890-1894	81.3
1895-1899	87.4
1900-1904	100.0
1905-1909	88.3
1910-1914	91.5
1915-1919	68.1
1920-1924	99.2
1925-1929	122.0

Source: Beccaria, Luis (2006) Williamson (1998)

II: The impact of the regime of accumulation on gender.

As showed before, a sharp fall in women’s participation in the labor market accompanies economic growth. Our hypotheses are that this phenomenon has been caused by, on the one hand, the lack of dynamism in women’s activities resulting from the segmentation of the labor market, and, on the other, the profound impact of masculine immigration on the marriage rate, and on family structures. Over the course of this regime of accumulation, the homes that immigrants formed tended gradually towards nuclear families in which the married woman did not participate in the labor market.

II.I.-Characteristics of the available information

The first population census in Argentina took place in 1869; however, as the data from this census is not separated by sex, it is of little use for the purposes of this paper. The second and third National Census did allow for gender-based separation of data, and were completed in 1895 and 1914 with similar statistical criteria. These are the so called Ancient Censuses. Census population was one of the most important concerns among authorities during these census years, as well as its relation to party political representation⁴, which appears to be primarily addressed in Congress. Education is the next priority. The government is prematurely concerned with its quantitative and human-resources-related aspects. Agriculture and cattle raising come third, in accordance with the model's productive base; military statistics are last.

Old and modern censuses differ in the way the working population is defined, based on the category used. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the issue was having an inventory of "professions", or abilities, of the population older than 14 years, regardless of whether they were working at the time. Today, it is of interest to distinguish between those who had been occupied - practicing a profession (even the week before)- and others who were unemployed whether they lost their previous jobs, or were trying unsuccessfully to enter the labor market.

Sometimes a worker is defined as someone who has dedicated the greater part of his or her time to said activity, or at least a certain quantity of time of the previous week. Those who engaged in remunerative activity but spend fewer hours on it than other activities, or whose working hours did not meet the minimal pre-established requirement for a 'working day', were not registered. Working students and housewives fell into this category⁵, which the census defines as "professions, offices, and livelihood." This categorization of livelihood also included renters and panhandlers.

⁴ It should be noted that Argentina is a federal country, and particularly from 1880, all activities were firmly centralized at federal level. It was the cost of the National Union.

⁵ Nearly the entire world adopted this category in this period. For more information see Margo Anderson, *The History of Women and the History of Statistics* Journal of Women's History - Volume 4, Number 1, Spring 1992, pp. 14-36. In Argentina, the Italian Classification was adopted. For Chile, see "Seven decades of Registration in female labor, 1854-1920 Galvez Perez, Thelma, Bravo Barja, Rosa Revista de Estadística y Economía N°5 INE. Santiago de Chile.

Individuals who did not have their own, valid profession—whether they live off rents, or are too young (or old) to work, or can't find a job (unemployed)⁶— must be considered in the 1914 census, which uses the category mentioned above to define having a “profession”. “However, there is no clear distinction between those who don't work and those who do: some don't fit into one category or the other. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that a large number of people are without a stable profession, or practice several at the same time; their appearance in the censuses has been more striking than was previously thought. (Laborers who change between agriculture and industry depending on the availability of work; the numerous day laborers who change jobs with the seasons; the many free professions that the same individuals simultaneously practice (lawyer and journalist; doctor and professor; doorman and cobbler, etc.)” Nor is it clear whether the census-taker is owner or employee, etc.

Both censuses are determined to define women doing housework as “without profession” unless they expressly demonstrate having one, “in spite of the fact that these tasks contribute to men's well-being.”⁷ The 1914 census makes an additional instruction: “Leave the line blank if the census taker is a minor or woman without profession, living off of the work of her husband or father,” meaning that he or she will be registered as “without profession.”

On the other hand, certain economic activities carried out by women are characterized by ambiguity and obfuscation. The constant mobility that characterized women's work in this period must be taken into account, as much for their fragility as the flexibility necessary to practice professions at different periods of their life cycles. In cases of marriage, pregnancy, caretaking of children, the elderly, and sick family members, women had to accede to their family's demands—they were irreplaceable. Other sources of the period highlight the fluidity of women's employment. In the search for a better salary, women changed from seamstress to prostitute, domestic servant to factory worker, washerwoman to business employee. All these considerations—the association of women with domestic work,

⁶ We know that at this time the problem of unemployment, as such, did not exist in Argentina; to the contrary, the extension of the working day was a problem, from 10 to 14 hours according to the activity. There was a scarcity of labor.

⁷ Census of the Population of Argentina, 1895. Volume II.

prostitution and occupational mobility—hinder a faithful censal measurement of female productivity. Although any attempt to quantify work done by men and women equally has these inherent limitations, for the reasons above, they are particularly meaningful for the measurement of women’s work at the start of the twentieth century.

II.II.-Women in the Labor Market, 1875-1914

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the rate of female participation in the work force was high. Carried out in family industries like workshops or small businesses, it was characterized by a combination of often undifferentiated domestic and economic functions. Work done in the home but for the market constituted an important part of production in the agricultural sector, but also, to a certain degree, in the manufacturing and service sectors. For Kritz (1974), the economically active population did not keep pace with the population growth resulting from the process of modernization. This gap can be explained by the marginalization of women in new production activities. The opening of international trade and the integration of the internal market snuffed out the occupations in which women participated in the 19th century, such as hand weaving. “The decline of cottage industry⁸ in the interior as well as the spectacular economic development of the Pampa region⁹ resulted in a drastic reduction in the percentage of adult women who either claimed a profession or received remuneration for their labor”.

The survival conditions of backward production forms were effectively eliminated with the country’s integration into the world market. This was the fundamental cause of the decline of artisan hand weaving, which was in 1869 the principal source of work for women in the provinces of Catamarca, Jujuy, La Rioja, Salta, Santiago del Estero and Tucuman. Even cotton farming practically disappeared at the turn of the century, since fewer women chose to spin thread and fabrics when products manufactured in Great Britain and the United States became available. Wool knitters faced a similar situation. Consequently, in 1914, spinning and weaving of wool and cotton nearly disappeared in the Argentine industrial sector.

⁸ Guy, Donna (2008)

⁹ Approximately 50 million hectares, particularly suitable for growing grains and forage species because of its ample rainfall and the qualities of its soil.

According to a report in 1909, only one 9000 spindle cotton mill and five cotton cloth factories with 1200 looms were in operation in Argentina. These six companies employed 1575 workers¹⁰.

On the other hand, the provinces in the Pampa region, City and Province of Buenos Aires, Cordoba, Entre Rios, and Santa Fe, where 51% of women between the ages of 14 and 59 lived, the demand for women in the factories had no impact whatsoever in this sector of the textile industry.

In Buenos Aires, working from home (known as the sweating system) developed in this new reality, done outside of the factories but under their control¹¹. This type of work, which meant the equivalent of low salaries, poor health conditions, and excessive work days, was very advantageous for the industry. It saved on machinery, energy expenses, rent and especially wages for fixed labor.

In textile industry (shoes and clothing), this system was already being applied from the end of the previous century. It grew in the first decade of the 19th century, and the majority of the female work force worked under these modalities (piecework). 13 to 14 hour work days were the norm.

¹⁰ Guy, Donna (1981)

¹¹ The capitalist could give as many small "contracts" to weavers, dyers, or spinners as they were able to market. The system is also called in Europe putting out.

**Women's Principal Occupations. Number and Percentage of total Women Labor Force.
1895 y 1914.**

Occupation Group CIU0 Rev 1	Census 1895		Census 1914	
Classified Professions-Occupations	475.205	97,7%	627.647	93,6%
Professionals and Technicians (Teachers and Professors) (Group 0/1)	6.157	1,3%	30.020	4,5%
Merchants and Vendors (Group 4)	8.760	1,8%	9.780	1,5%
Service Providers (Group 5)	202.187	41,6%	291.273	43,4%
Cooks, waiters, bartenders and similar	30.240	6,2%	60.365	9,0%
Laundresses	72.904	15,0%	78.874	16,2%
Drycleaners	25.216	5,2%	28.578	5,9%
Servants	70.739	14,5%	117.569	17,5%
Subtotal	199.098	40,9%	285.386	58,7%
Agricultural, Forestry Workers, etc. etc (Group 6)	67.287	13,8%	41.533	6,2%
Agricultural workers	61225	12,6%	26.178	3,9%
Agricultural Laborers	5.730	1,2%	15.334	2,3%
Non-Agricultural (Industrial) Workers, Machinery, Heavy Truck and Bus Drivers (Group 7/8/9)	175.931	36,2%	233.220	34,8%
Weavers, Spinners, Drycleaners and similar workers ,	38.274	7,9%	28.764	4,3%
Dressmakers	118.702	24,4%	142.644	21,3%
Fashion Designers	8.306	1,7%	45.127	6,7%
Tailors, furriers and upholsterers	2.894	0,6%	9.793	1,5%
Food and Beverage Workers	3.105	0,6%	2.635	0,4%
Tobacco Workers	4.391	0,9%	4.058	0,6%
Not classifiable				
Part-time Workers	14.883	3,1%	21.821	3,3%

Source: Kritz , Ernesto Reclassification of 1895 and 1914 Censuses. Chart 21

In summary, in 1914 three-fourths of the female labor force was still concentrated in the same half-dozen traditional occupations as 1895, with some occupations in full retreat (weavers).

Teachers and professors, who grew to almost five times the registered number in 1895, were a limited exception. This resulted from the implementation of law 1420 (1884), which responded to the productive system's need for literate human resources. The approval of law 1420 signified enormous progress in terms of education and for the struggle against illiteracy, which fell to 53.5% in ten years. In 1914, the illiteracy rate was down to 35%. This progress was related to the period's concentration of income; 4420 women worked for the elite as teachers of language, plastic arts, music, governesses, etc.

Regarding the wage gap, efforts are being made during this period to find the facts regarding men's' and women's' wages. Highly significant differentials in the textile industry are immediately apparent in 1939.

Average Daily Pay (Wages) in the Textile Industry (wool and cotton sectors) by sex

<u>Subgroup</u>	<u>YARN AND FABRICS LOOMS AND SHUTTLE LOOMS</u>					
	MEN			WOMEN		
	Cotton	Wool	Silk	Cotton	Wool	Silk
Oilers	4,5			3,85		
Couplers	2,5			2,8	1,9	
Beam Tiers	4,65	7,4	7,4	3,2	4,2	4,65
Yarn Warpers	3,25	3,65	3,6	2,6	2,4	
General Operators	5,1	3,65	5,05	3,05	2,2	2,85
Bobbin Winders	2,8			3,05		
Embroiderers	5,15	5,3		6		
Shin Operators	3,9	2,5	2,65	3,2	2,1	3,3
Cardboard Operators	5,2			3,2		

Sorters		8,35		2,2	2,25	3,1
Cutters	3,55	6,45		4	3,65	3,25
Yarn Winders	4,35	7	3,9	2,95	2,95	3,2
Doublers	5,4	2,6	4,4	3,5	2,95	
Packers	4	4,85		2,35	2,85	3,7
Dispensers	4,45			1,35		
Fringe Makers	4,35			2,65	4,1	
Spinners	4,45	6,7	5,95	2,9	2,5	
Fiber Washers	5,8	6,05		3,4		3,9
Skeinners	4,75	2,4		2,15	3,3	
Machine Operators	4	8,45		2,65	2,05	
Markers		4,35			2,9	
Burners	4			4,35		
Fiber Mixers	3,9	4,45			2,6	
Yarn Spinners	4	3,7		3,95		4,65
Combers		4,2		2,9	2,4	
Pressers	5,15	7		3,9	2,35	4,85
Pattern Makers	2,2			2		
Setters	7,05	4,8		2,5	2,5	3,1
Overlock Operators		2,95		5,05	3,75	
Reviewers	4,8	5,6	7,75	2,6	3,5	3
Senior Reviewers		3,8		2,25	2,8	
Weavers	5,55	6,3	7,1	4,25	4,8	6,05
Dry Cleaners	5,2	7,9	5,8	2,6		
Yarn-Plaiting Equipment Tenders	4	3,9		2,4		
Warpers	6,45	5,25	7,25	3,95	4,35	5,95
Darners	2,7			3,3	3,3	4,2

Source. Figuerola, José (1939) Jefe de la División de Estadística. Informe Industria Textil. Capacidad normal de trabajo de los obreros de la industrial Textil, especialmente mujeres y menores. Buenos Aires

II.III. Gender impact on immigration

Total Population by Sex. Census Date

Years	Total	Men	Women
1895	3.954.911	2.088.919	1.865.992
1914	7.885.237	4.227.023	3.658.214

Source: Second and Third Argentine Population Census of 1895 and 1914

- Between 1895 and 1914 the nation's population doubled, with an annual growth rate of 36.25% residents¹² (Men 37.05% and women 34.4%). In 1869, the pyramids of the total population (by sex and age) adopted the distinctive form of young populations (a wide base of 41% between 0-14 years), and showed a rapid decline of older age groups. In 1895, the total population maintains its young structure, and the same could be said about the population of the 1914 census, which means that this entire period was characterized by high birth and death rates. Sex relations, however, do not remain unchanged. Male predominance over women intensifies as immigration increases, despite the decline of the immigrants' masculinity rate¹³.

¹² Between 1870 and 1914 around 7.5 million people immigrated to the country, of whom 4.5 million returned to their countries of origin. According to the population census of Argentina in 1895, Volume 2, no other country in the world had the same proportion (in relative numbers and, except for the USA, in absolute numbers) of foreigners as Argentina in this period. This is one of the most notable facts in demographic history. When the volume of immigration in relation to total receiving population is taken into account, the Argentine case is even more striking. In 1869, foreigners made up 12.1% of the population, and in 1895 this number (mostly Italians, with 61%, and Spaniards, 17.4%) rose to 25.4%. Among immigrants from the rest of Europe, Russians, Austrians, and Hungarians predominate. Though the US was farther away than Argentina (which possessed rich, fertile, and almost empty lands) this period saw nine million immigrants (14.7% of total population) arrive to its shores. Australia received 15.6%. In the Americas, only Uruguay had a similar or greater foreign population (unfortunately there was no recent census). Argentina's employment opportunities and relatively high salaries were the fundamental attractions.

¹³ Comments made by Dr. Martinez (the director of the census) illustrate a certain remarkable ideology of the period. He writes, in the 1895 census: 'it is advantageous because 'men are more active and better paid, and they contribute to the enlargement and prosperity of the nation to a greater degree than women', 'We can assume that, in the future, the difference between the sexes will decrease until the female population, finding itself densely populated, dominate (when immigration slows down). Again, the Census Director's reading of the 1895 census... 'Men consist of two thirds of this immigration, many of whom marry Argentine women—

Foreigners in total population and masculinity rate in the Ancient Census.

Census Year	% of foreigners in total population	MASCULINITY RATE (men every 100 women)		
		Total Population	Native Population	Foreign Population
1869	12.1	104	95	251
1895	25.4	113	97	173
1914	29.9	118	99	167

Source: First, Second and Third Argentine Population Census of 1869, 1895 and 1914

With the start of the First World War, migration rates fall considerably, and the previous groups of immigrants get older. Foreigners become concentrated in the older ages. As a consequence, equilibrium between the sexes returns.

The increase of the masculinity rate among new arrivals causes an increase in the gross marriage rate, which is calculated by dividing the total number of marriages in one calendar year by the population at mid-year. The following table contains only legal unions. There is no data before 1900.

National **Gross marriage rate** (by thousand), (1900-1913)

Years	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906
Gross Marriage Rate	5.9	5.9	5.5	6.0	6.1	6.4	6.7
Years	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913
Gross Marriage Rates	6.9	7.0	7.1	7.2	7.2	7.5	7.1

Source: EVITAL, in Torrado, Susana (2007) Volume 1. *Poblacion y bienestar en la Argentina del primero al segundo Centenario*. Edhesa.

producing an intelligent and vigorous new race (the products of this mingling are superior to those who gave them life)' Text of the Argentine Population Census in 1895, volume II.

In 1914 when WWI began, the marriage rate falls to 5.9 .

Housing

The form of housing gives rise to a determined gender order. Due to the fact that various families, or extended families, lived in the same place, many women were able to dedicated themselves to remunerated tasks; caretaking work could be shared by other members of the community.

In the city of Buenos Aires – which counted for approximately half of the total population – the number of persons living in tenement houses (*conventillos*)¹⁴ fell from 27% in 1887 to 9% in 1904. This 9% was more cramped than before (the number of persons per room went from 2.3 to 3.5 (Yujnosky's estimate)¹⁵ .

The expansion of the city, which is incorporating outlying lands through the extension of the transportation network, makes an increase in the demand for satisfactory housing possible. With the installation of the rail network in 1882, the city had a complete infrastructure of six branch-lines centered in the capital with a full extension, in 1898, of 386.5 kilometers. The expansion of inhabited area of the cities, especially in Buenos Aires (enabled by the extension of the transportation system), allowed the popular sectors, and especially immigrants—who would have rented a room in a tenement—to build their own houses. They were able to stop living with other families, which were, moreover, extended (allowing them to work while other persons—women—took care of children and the elderly). As nuclear families are established, women are forced to take charge of the organization of caretaking work.

These changes come hand in hand with very important shifts on the ideological sphere.

- Women and men were not considered equal in this period in spite of the National Constitution of 1853, which upheld the equality of all inhabitants

¹⁴ In 1875, tenement is understood to mean any lodging in which more than four rooms are rented, sublet, or fitted out to be occupied by more than four persons, excluding the family of the house's owner.

¹⁵ Source. Oscar Yujnosky Revista Desarrollo Economico N°54 Volume 14 June September 1974 , Housing politics in the city of Buenos Aires, 1880-1914 Chart 5

without distinction of race, nationality, class, or sex. In general, women were treated as if they were minors. The civil status of women changed only in 1926; before this, society viewed women as minors or incompetents. Single women were allowed to work but deprived of rights. Once married, their capacity for rights diminished even more, and they were exclusively represented by their husbands. Legal acknowledgement of working women only appears in 1905, in the Sunday rest law 4661, where women are mentioned, and in 1907 with law 5291 (Women and Minor workers), which allows for the recognition of new social subjects: women and minor workers in industry and business.

- Regarding labor demand, the ideal of MOTHERHOOD is defined as an activity for women only, with no exceptions, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. According to Nari Marcela (1996) and Guy Donna (1994), social consensus solidifies around maternity regardless of class. Salaried work is a threat, and some jobs are seen as completely incompatible with motherhood—a result of how motherhood had been defined as a social and ideological practice. The opposite happens with domestic work, the raising and caretaking of children. Neither the difficulty of these tasks nor the material conditions under which they are carried out is relevant. They were so natural that they lost their status as work; nor was farm work, if undertaken within family exploitation, considered harmful.
- The arguments in vogue claimed that salaried work provoked the physical and moral deterioration of women¹⁶. When women arrived at factories and workshops, an earthquake shook the working world: everything had changed. Recalcitrant conservatives, socialists, and anarchists reacted against this phenomenon; the general agreement was that it was something negative. A grand campaign was launched, exalting the woman's role as mother and linchpin

¹⁶ Facing the inevitability of working women, in 1924 law 11317 prohibited single women under 18 years old from practicing any profession, self-employed or otherwise, in streets, parks, or public places. The law also prohibited employing women of any age at night, or in industries or tasks qualified as dangerous or unhealthy. Domestic employment and nursing, however, were not prohibited.

of the nuclear family, a role which, it was supposed, was given lip service when she worked outside the home. The arguments attacking the idea of women working in factories ranged from physiological (the female organism's alleged weakness) to moral, as factories were seen as 'dens of vice', especially for young people. Among the different 'solutions' for the 'problem' each sector proposed, the favorite was putting women back in their homes¹⁷. In any case, the consensus accepted this phenomenon as a 'necessary evil.'¹⁸ In real terms, this outlook meant salary reductions for women and/or displacement by masculine labor. Some politicians, and especially the labor movement, felt these threats.

So begins the construction of the nuclear family's ideological substrate: the male provider and female caregivers.

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¹⁷ 'Tensions between social reproduction and production: A case study of the women in the printing industry of Buenos Aires (1880-1914)', by Mabe Bellucci in 'Deprivatizing the Private', Women and work, by Lipszyc C., Ginés M.E. and Bellucci M.

¹⁸ The Family Salary Law was established (law 5291 was regulated in 1908 for the Federal Capital and National Territories and was only applied to industrial establishments. In 1924 it was modified and widened to apply to industries and businesses.

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