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Mobility and Gender in Mexico: A Regional Perspective

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Documento de trabajo no.

03/2019

Centro auspiciado por:  ESRU
FUNDACIÓN ESPINOSA RUGARCÍA

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Agosto 2019

Resumen

This study examines intergenerational socioeconomic mobility in Mexico, evaluating differences by gender and variation across regions of the country. Our measure of socioeconomic standing of parents and adult children is an index of economic wellbeing that combines ownership of assets and durable goods and access to services at the household level. Mexico features high levels of intergenerational persistence across both genders, but intergenerational persistence of socioeconomic status is stronger among women than men in 2017. The difference in mobility across gender is statistically significant but small in magnitude. The “excess immobility” of Mexican women is mostly accounted for by extra-educational factors, which likely include factors such as use of social networks and direct inheritance of assets. Wide differences in mobility are found across regions of the country. Both men and women are less mobile in the south than in other regions, although the mobility gap is wider among women.

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Introduction

Intergenerational mobility is an important indicator of inequality of opportunity in society. Usually measured as the extent of association between parents' and adult children's socioeconomic position, mobility serves as a proxy for the influence of the "accidents of birth" on individual economic wellbeing. A strong association indicates persistence across generations while a weak association indicates that opportunity is open to everyone regardless of social origins (Torche 2015a). As documented by a long sociological tradition, education is a key mediator of the intergenerational transmission process (Blau and Duncan 1967; Hout and DiPrete 2006). Education plays a dual role: It is a vehicle for the persistence of advantage insofar as advantaged parents are able to invest in more and better education for their children, and it is also an avenue for mobility insofar as factors other than social origins shape educational attainment.

To study mobility, researchers need first to measure the economic wellbeing of parents and children. The measures used depend on the disciplinary perspective. Economists favor pecuniary measures such as income, earnings and wage. Sociologists have historically tended to favor occupation —as a discrete set of categories or a continuous measure of occupational status. Both disciplines use educational attainment. All these measures are captured at the individual level and are sometimes aggregated at the household level, for example a measure of total earnings that considers earnings of all household member (Black and Devereux 2011; Jäntti and Jenkins 2015; Torche 2015a).

Theoretical Approaches: Mobility across Region and Gender¹

Mexico features wide disparities across regions in terms of infrastructure, educational attainment, and economic wellbeing (Rodríguez-Oreggia 2005), with the Southern region of the country lagging significantly behind. These disparities have widened in the recent past (Moy 2018), and raise the question about different opportunities for mobility across regions. Mobility is a descriptive aggregate measure, used to characterize units such as countries and historical periods. It can be estimated for different groups of the population in these units, for example different ethnic/racial groups or different regions of a country. However, the analysis of mobility across groups faces challenges if these groups have different levels of wellbeing because members of these groups will converge to different means (Mazumder 2011). As a result, high mobility within group could be accompanied by growing inequality between groups, a factor that needs to be considering when examining mobility across regions.

¹ This section draws almost verbatim from Torche (2015b).

Expanding mobility analysis to women raises a critical question about the relevant unit of analysis for the study of stratification dynamics —whether stratification is better understood as a family or an individual process. Most sociological approaches focus on the family as the theoretical unit of analysis, but they differ on how to measure collective family position. As stated by Sorensen (1994), a key problem is whether and how to combine information about individual family members into a single measure if more than one member is employed. Three approaches exist in the sociological literature — conventional, dominance, and joint.

The “conventional approach” claims that family class is best measured by the household male head’s occupational position and by the female head only if no male is present. The rationale is that men have the greatest commitment to and continuity in labor-market participation (Goldthorpe 1983:470). The “dominance approach” considers the household member with stronger labor-market attachment and higher individual class position —usually, but not necessarily, the male partner (Erikson 1984). This approach has not been widely used in empirical work, perhaps because few women have traditionally had a dominant position (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992:267), but a comparison of social fluidity findings using the conventional and dominance approaches has found some significant differences, at least in some contexts (Erikson 1984).

In the “joint approach,” both spouses contribute to family class if they are both employed. To date, there is no consensus on whether to include both spouses additively, interactively, merge them in a single measure, or focus on the difference between spouses (Britten and Heath 1983; Davis and Robinson 1988). Still, Beller (2009) has shown that models including father’s and mother’s class position (using any formulation) provide a better account of mobility in the United States than those using father’s class only.

A fourth perspective, held by feminist scholars, questions the family as the unit of stratification and suggests considering class position at the individual level for both men and women (Acker 1973; Stanworth 1984). Class mobility analysts tend to reject this “individual approach” and, in spite of their operationalization disagreements, tend to agree that the family is the unit of stratification. Given this agreement, it is curious they have not attempted to measure the family’s living standards directly in the consumption sphere and have relied almost exclusively on occupational position, an individual-level variable *par excellence*.

While sociological analysis of mobility examines class and occupational status, economists focus on earnings and, more recently, total family income (Chetty et al. 2014; Lee and Solon 2009; Mayer and Lopoo 2005). In contrast to earnings, total family income includes extra-occupational resources, such as financial assets and private and public

transfers, and some important family-level dynamics, such as spousal selection (assortative mating), intra-household division of labor, and union formation and dissolution.

This article uses an alternative perspective to capture family-level socioeconomic standing. It examines intergenerational mobility *directly* at the household level rather than attempting to choose or combine individual-level class positions, earnings, or income. This approach is based on the assumption that household members share resources and divide their labor in order to maximize collective welfare, and that household's well-being is the result of endogenous decision-making and different contributions by its members. This assumption does not mean that household arrangements are free from gender-based power dynamics and inequality. It means, however, that a direct measure of household well-being may provide a better indicator than the aggregation of individual-level resources.

Specifically, we construct an index of economic well-being by combining durable goods and services owned by the family. A growing literature in social sciences and development studies uses such indexes, particularly in context where monetary data for parents and children are not available (Ferguson et al. 2003; Filmer and Pritchett. 1999; Filmer and Pritchett 2001; McKenzie 2005; Sahn and Stifel 2003). In spite of widespread use, the interpretation of the concept captured by the indexes varies, even when researchers use similar indicators and analytical strategies. For example, Filmer and Pritchett (1999, 2001) indicate that the index captures household wealth, which they then interpret as a proxy for long-run economic status or expenditures, McKenzie (2005) refers to living standards, Ferguson et al. (2003) mention permanent income, and Sahn and Stifel (2003) speak of well-being (see Wai-Poi, Spilerman, and Torche (2008) for a review of this literature).

Our interpretation of the index of economic well-being is based on the distinction among three concepts associated with living standards —income, wealth, and consumption. Income captures a flow of pecuniary resources that can be subject to high short-term variability. Wealth is a stock of financial and real assets minus liabilities owned by the family. Consumption is level of material comfort the family can afford, expressed in goods owned and services used. Because the economic index is based on such goods and services rather than financial or real stocks of wealth, we see it as primarily associated with levels of daily material comfort most directly corresponding with household consumption level. We assume that the household's ability to sustain a particular level of consumption is the outcome of the family's occupational and extra-occupational resources, access to credit, and public and private transfers, that is, of all sources of family income. While income captures the inputs that support a certain

consumption level, the economic well-being index provides a measure of the consumption itself.

One important concern for mobility researchers is whether the measure of economic well-being captures permanent standing purged of short-term fluctuations. This concern is based on the permanent income theory, which assumes that household consumption at any point in time is determined not just by current income but by expectations about income in future years, taxes, price increases, and other long-term considerations (Friedman 1988 [1957]). Mobility researchers use different approaches to address this concern. Studies of economic mobility produce multi-year averages of earnings or income centered around age 40 to approach such permanent measure (Black and Devereux 2011). Analyses of class mobility rely on the assumption that class position does not change much after individuals reach “occupational maturity” in their mid-30s (Goldthorpe 1980; Heath and Payne 1999). The index of economic well-being provides a plausibly closer measure of permanent income insofar as it directly captures the level of material comfort that families are able to maintain.

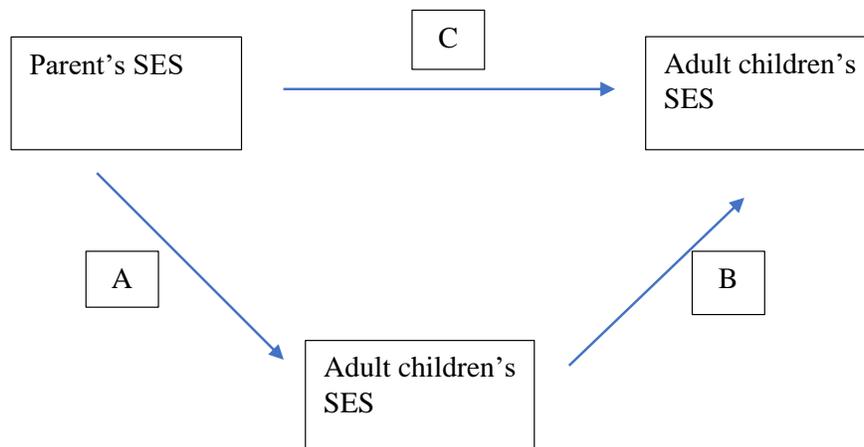
Several studies of class mobility examine men and women, but few directly compare across gender (e.g. (Breen 2004). One exception is Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992, 246–59), who compare men’s and women’s mobility using the individual and the conventional approaches across European countries and find a slightly weaker intergenerational association among women. They also find that mobility analysis using men only and analysis including men and women through the dominance approach yield similar findings (1992, 264–75; see also (Breen and Whelan 1995), which leads them to suggest that incorporating women to the analysis will not alter our understanding of the mobility process. Studies of class mobility in the United States tend to use the “individual approach” and suggest no gender difference or small indication of weaker association among men (Beller 2009; Hout 1988), although the analyses are based on log-linear models with many parameters, which preclude a straightforward gender comparison.

In terms of income or earnings mobility, the intergenerational earnings association appears to be weaker for women than men (Fertig 2003; Jäntti et al. 2006). However, the intergenerational association of total family income appears to be similar across genders (Solon 1999) and the literature cited therein; (Chadwick and Solon 2002; Mayer and Lopoo 2005), probably driven by strong educational assortative mating (Chadwick and Solon 2002; Ermisch, Francesconi, and Siedler 2006). In sum, the relatively limited evidence comparing men’s and women’s mobility suggests that the intergenerational association is somewhat weaker among women than men when measured at the individual level but not necessarily so when well-being is measured at the family level.

What are the theoretical bases for expecting gender-based differences in mobility? A useful way to address this question is to distinguish mobility pathways. The status attainment tradition has shown that education is both the main mechanism for intergenerational persistence and the main vehicle for mobility (Blau and Duncan 1967; Hout and DiPrete 2006). Education is a vehicle for reproduction because advantaged parents are able to afford more and better schooling for their children, which in turn pays off in the labor and other markets. Education is also a vehicle for mobility because factors other than parental advantage account for most of the variance in educational attainment, thus weakening the link between socioeconomic origins and destinations.

To understand gender differences in mobility, the total intergenerational association can be divided into the pathway mediated by education and a direct pathway that is net of education. The education pathway includes the association between parents' socioeconomic standing and individual educational attainment ("inequality of educational opportunity"), and the association between educational attainment and adult children's socioeconomic position ("returns to education"). These pathways are indicated by arrows A and B, respectively, in figure 1. The direct pathway that is net of education captures myriad factors, such as the direct inheritance of property, labor-force participation by social origin, the probability of marrying and assortative mating by social origins, use of family-based social networks or cultural capital, and the transmission of personality traits, to the extent that these factors are not correlated with educational attainment. It is indicated by arrow C in figure 1.

Figure 1 about here



We can use the simple model in figure 1 to outline potential gender differences in mobility. Although no study we know of examines gender differences in all of these

components directly, we can draw inferences from findings about each of them. In terms of the association between parents' resources and children's educational attainment (A), gender variation in mobility would emerge if parents invested differently in the education of their sons compared to their daughters, and if such gender difference varied by socioeconomic status. While mixed evidence of differential investment in sons and daughters by parents' socioeconomic advantage exists in the United States (Freese and Powell 1999; Hopcroft 2019), in some national contexts, such as Taiwan, son's preference in educational investment weakens as a family's socioeconomic status increases (Yu and Su 2006). Although in Latin America a growing educational gap favoring females exists since at least the 1990s (Grant and Behrman 2010), Mexico may be the exception, with persistent gender educational parity or even a slight male advantage (Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi 2012). Furthermore, as in the case in Taiwan, sons' educational advantage over daughters' is stronger among poor families (Post 2001). *Ceteris paribus*, this interaction means that men from poor families would have a better chance to overcome their disadvantaged origins through education than women and would result in stronger intergenerational persistence among daughters, particularly at the lower end of the income distribution.

The second mobility pathway (B) links education with economic returns, using a traditional "returns to schooling" formulation (Mincer 1958). Research has found that earnings and other economic returns to schooling are higher for women than men in diverse national contexts (DiPrete and Buchmann 2006; Dougherty 2005; Montenegro and Patrinos 2013). This is also the case in Mexico, where earnings returns to education are slightly greater for women, although the analyses are restricted to employed women and may thus be affected by selectivity bias (Harberger and Guillermo-Peón 2012; Zamudio and Brancho 1995). *Ceteris paribus*, this gender difference would result in a stronger intergenerational association for women than men. No research we are aware of explicitly compares intergenerational mobility net of education across gender.

Thus, the limited evidence about mobility pathways suggests that socioeconomic persistence may be stronger for women. If poor families indeed invest more in their sons' than their daughters' education, this would result in stronger intergenerational persistence for women. Gender differences in the economic returns to schooling would also result in stronger immobility among women. The same schematic formulation of mobility pathways could be used to examine differences across regions. To the best of our knowledge, no prior research examines the role that education plays in the intergenerational transmission of advantage across Mexican regions. As such, we do not have a-priori hypotheses. Rather, we will provide the first assessment of the role that educational and extra-educational factors play across regions in Mexico.

Research questions and analytical approach

This study examines intergenerational socioeconomic mobility in Mexico, evaluating differences by gender and variation across regions of the country. Our measure of socioeconomic standing of parents and adult children is an index of economic wellbeing that combines ownership of assets and durable goods and access to services at the household level. Socioeconomic standing of both parents and children is measured at the household level by means of the aforementioned index of family economic wellbeing, which combines a set of household goods, assets, and services.

A principal component analysis is used to create the index. Principal component analysis is a technique that distinguishes different dimensions (“components”) accounting for the common variance across items included. We use the first component as a latent measure of socioeconomic status, the linear combination that accounts for the largest proportion of variance that is common to all items. This strategy produces empirical weights for each indicator based on the strength of its correlation with other indicators instead of assigning equal weights (as obtained by a simple count of indicators owned by the family), or using any other arbitrary weighting strategy (Filmer and Pritchett 1999; McKenzie 2005). Furthermore, the use of a measure based on the covariance across items disregards idiosyncratic determinants of each item’s ownership—for example, a preference for bicycles that is not correlated to economic constraints or the use of air conditioning in extremely warm regions.

One important concern about the principal component methodology is the ability of the index to discriminate across the entire socioeconomic structure in the context being analyzed, including the lower and upper ends. This is achieved by including items that distinguish access to resources among the poor (for example in the Mexican context, access to pumped water and refrigerator), as well as among the wealthy (for example, ownership of computer or domestic service). Based on our examination of the data, a practical advantage of using a set of household goods and services is that respondents’ reports about these items have good recall properties and elicit low refusal rates when compared with survey questions about income/earnings and even occupation.

We included the following items in the index to capture the level of economic wellbeing in the respondent’s household: Piped water, electricity, inside bathroom, boiler, domestic service, gas or electric stove, washing machine, refrigerator, microwave oven, digital TV, electric toaster, vacuum machine, DVD/Blu-ray, videogames console, cable or satellite TV, landline phone, cellular phone, Internet connection, computer, tablet, work animals, cattle, agricultural machinery or equipment, informal group savings, popular bank savings, checking account, credit card, store credit card, loan or credit line, a second house/apartment, commercial land/ establishment, a business, land, other kind of land,

cars). The same items were used to evaluate the parents' household when the respondent was 14 years old, based on retrospective information provided by the respondent. Items were combined via principal components, and the first component was extracted (note that items that are weakly correlated with others will be given a small weight, bypassing the need to eliminate items)².

The sample is restricted to men and women ages 25–55. This age range ensures that respondents have for the most part established their own households and are in a relatively similar stage of the life course. According to the earnings mobility literature, this age range reflects respondents' long-term socioeconomic standing purged of life-cycle effects, which are strong at the beginning and end of the occupational career (Haider and Solon 2006; Mazumder 2005), a rationale that probably also applies to other measures of socioeconomic standing. We restrict the sample to heads of household and spouses/partners to ensure that the index reflects the actual respondents' level of well-being, rather than the wellbeing of a family that hosts the respondent.

Data and Variables

Data for this analysis come from the 2017 ESRU Survey on Social Mobility in Mexico (ESRU-EMOVI 2017), undertaken by the Mexican *Centro de Estudios Espinosa Yglesias*. The ESRU-EMOVI is a probabilistic nationally and regionally representative sample of non-institutionalized Mexican men and women 25–64 years of age. Respondents are randomly selected household members within the age range, regardless of their relationship with the head of the household. The survey uses a multistage stratified sampling design. Primary sampling units (PSUs) are localities stratified by population size, SSU are Basic Geostatistical Areas (AGEBs) and were selected in urban areas only and were stratified by SES, and final sampling units are households. The survey includes information on respondents' demographic characteristics, education, employment and occupation, income, and assets and evaluation of their socioeconomic circumstances. It also collects retrospective information about family structure, education, occupation, and assets of the parents of respondents. The total sample size is 17,655 households (*viviendas*). Weights were constructed to bring sample distribution in accordance with the population by estimating the inverse of the probability of selecting each household into the survey and were used in all analyses.

² As a robustness check a polychoric correlation analysis was performed and the first principal component on the resulting correlation matrix was obtained. This analysis provides a better way to handle non-continuous variables. The indexes based on PCA and polychoric PCA are virtually identical (correlation for parents' index= 0.9896, correlation for children's index=0.9996).

Variables: In addition to the economic wellbeing of parents and adult children, the analysis considers the respondent's sex, education, age, and region of residence at age 14. Sex is a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent is male. Education is measured quasi-continuously as total number of years of schooling. Age is measured as years of age and a quadratic formulation is used. Region of residence at age 14 classifies Mexico's 32 states into 6 regions, as follows: North (Baja California, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Sonora, Tamaulipas), North-West (Baja California Sur, Durango, Nayarit, Sinaloa, Zacatecas), Center-North (Aguascalientes, Colima, Jalisco, Michoacán, San Luis Potosí), Center (Guanajuato, Hidalgo, México, Morelos, Puebla, Querétaro, Tlaxcala), Federal District, and South (Campeche, Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Veracruz, and Yucatán.)³ We consider region of residence during the respondent's adolescence as an exogenous variable that is not shaped by the respondents' migratory decisions in search of educational, occupational or economic opportunities (as current region of residence would be). We acknowledge, however, that even if measured early in the life course region of residence may include an endogenous component if, for example, parents of children who show exceptional educational promise or who highly value their children's educational attainment decide to move in search of better educational opportunities. For these processes to introduce endogeneity however, these families moves should cross regional lines.

The analysis proceeds in three steps. First, we evaluate overall intergenerational mobility for men and women. In a second stage, we stratify the sample by region of residence at age 14 and evaluate difference in mobility opportunity for men and women by region. The third step examines the role of education in the mobility process, and its variation by region. Intergenerational mobility is evaluated using three analytical strategies. We start by implementing a linear regression model in which adult children's socioeconomic wellbeing is predicted based on parents' economic wellbeing. Controls for age and age squared are included in all models to account for changes in economic wellbeing across the life course. Data are pooled across genders, and the model allows for a different intercept and slope for each predictor for men and women (this formulation is therefore equivalent to running two separate regressions by gender).

Linear regression models follow the mobility canon and provide an initial approach by capturing the overall socioeconomic association between parents and children (Jäntti and Jenkins 2015). However, they reduce the association to the conditional mean value of children's socioeconomic wellbeing at each level of parents' wellbeing and assumes that this association is linear. To relax these constraints, we also examine mobility matrices that cross-classify quintiles of parents' and adult children's SES, separately for

³ Note that Mexico City, located in the center region of the country, is treated as a separate region given the size of its population and possible distinct mobility patterns.

Mexican men and women. Mobility matrices allow us to examine persistence in the extremes of the distribution —persistence of wealth and poverty as well as downward and upward directional mobility.

Finally, we implement a quantile regression formulation to further examine differences in mobility patterns across gender. Quantile regression models estimate the association between parents' SES and adult children's SES at several conditional percentiles of children's SES (Hao and Naiman 2007). In this case, we selected the 10th, 30th, 50th (median), 70th, and 80th percentile of adult children's socioeconomic wellbeing separately for men and women. By comparing the intergenerational association at different percentiles of the respondent's wellbeing, quantile regression allows evaluation of the variation in children's outcomes across different levels of parents' wellbeing, providing an alternative measure of mobility.

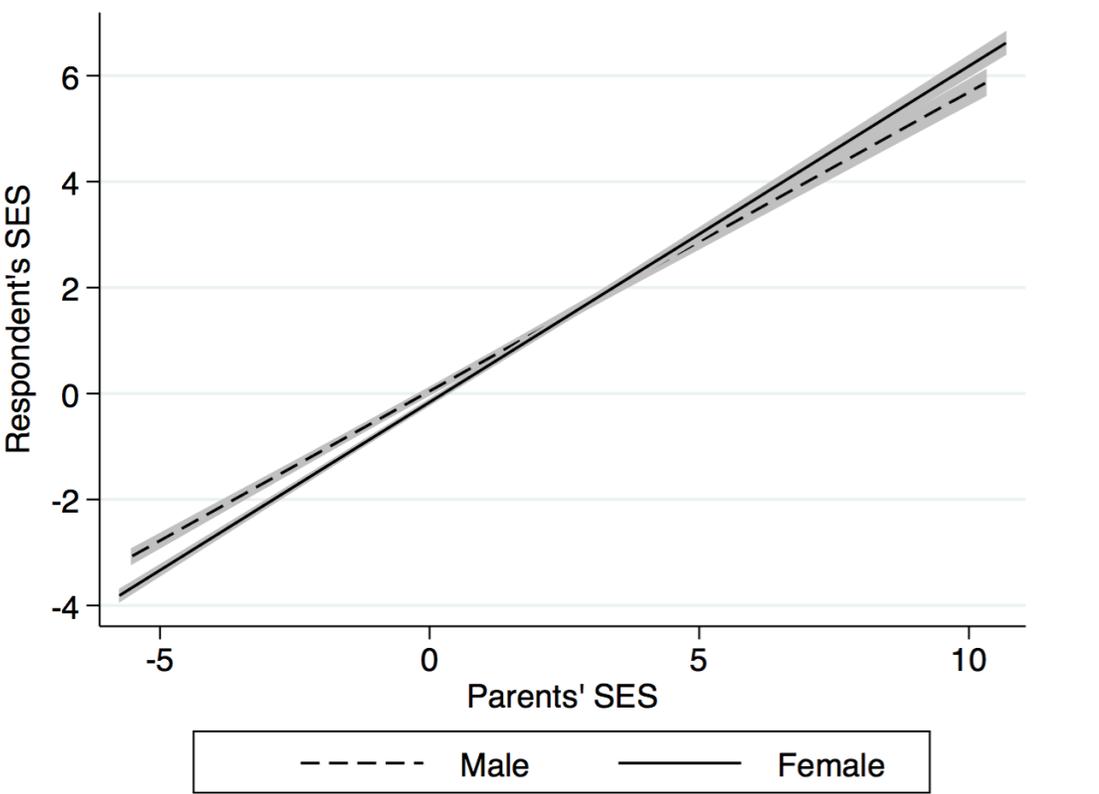
Findings: Intergenerational Mobility in Mexico by Gender

Column 1 in Table 1 examines intergenerational mobility for the entire country, and Figure 2 uses the parameter estimates and standard errors from this model to depict the intergenerational association for Mexican men and women. The gender difference in baseline economic wellbeing is given by the parameter estimate for the dummy variable "male," and the gender difference in intergenerational persistence is given by the interaction between the "male" dummy and the measure of parents' economic wellbeing. The level of intergenerational association reaches .62 for Mexican women but only .55 (.621-.076) among Mexican men (the difference is significant at the $p < .03$ level). This finding indicates that there is stronger intergenerational persistence among women than men. An alternative measure of association is the correlation coefficient, a standardized measure that uses standard deviations as metric. The partial correlation coefficient after accounting for age confirms stronger persistence for women than men: .652 for women and .604 for men (the overall intergenerational correlation is .585).

It is useful to benchmark these measures of intergenerational reproduction using prior findings for Mexico and findings for other countries. A comparable analysis based on ESRU-EMOVI 2011 using an analogous analytical strategy yielded regression estimates of 0.578 for Mexican women and 0.660 for men. The estimates are comparable in magnitude to the ones obtained here, but they signal higher intergenerational persistence for men than women (Torche 2015b). The intergenerational earnings elasticity varies from approximately 0.15 in Nordic countries to values between 0.40 and 0.50 in the United States, Italy, and the UK (Blanden 2013; Corak 2013). Using these figures, the intergenerational association for both men and women is much stronger in Mexico. Given that the metrics of the variables are different, a better comparison is

provided by the unit-less correlation coefficient. Jäntti et al. (2006:13) report intergenerational earnings correlations for men ranging from around 0.10 in Scandinavian countries to 0.36 in the United States (and lower correlation values for women), much lower than in Mexico. However, analysis of economic mobility uses an over-time average of individual earnings or household income as a proxy for economic well-being instead of a household goods and services index used here, which may result in artefactual differences in findings between Mexico and advanced industrial countries. We can compare Mexico with Chile, where a similar asset index to measure mobility has been used (Torche 2010). The intergenerational association among Chilean men reaches 0.47, somewhat lower than the 0.55 figure found for Mexican men (unfortunately, no comparable analysis for women exists in Chile). While these comparisons are not conclusive, given the different approaches used to measure economic well-being, they suggest strong intergenerational persistence in Mexican society, a finding consistent with international comparisons using a class approach (Huerta-Wong, Burak, and Grusky 2015).

Figure 2. Intergenerational Socioeconomic Association among Men and Women. Mexico 2017



Note: Obtained from regression model measuring intergenerational mobility at the national level in Mexico (column 1 in table 1). Black lines depict the strength of the intergenerational association for men and women. Shaded areas are 95% confidence intervals.

Table 1. Intergenerational socioeconomic association among Mexican men and women. National level and by region of the country. 2017

	National Level	By region of the country						
		North	North-West	Center-North	Center	Mexico City	South	
Male	1.270 (0.774)	2.739 (1.886)	1.459 (2.233)	-3.038 (1.737)	3.566 (2.248)	-1.420 (1.868)	-0.453 (1.363)	
Parents' SES	0.621*** (0.010)	0.461*** (0.024)	0.530*** (0.030)	0.520*** (0.023)	0.643*** (0.030)	0.468*** (0.023)	0.701*** (0.020)	
Male * Parents' SES	-0.076*** (0.014)	-0.074* (0.033)	-0.114** (0.043)	-0.074* (0.032)	-0.112** (0.041)	-0.015 (0.033)	-0.077** (0.028)	
Age	0.185*** (0.028)	0.225*** (0.068)	0.102 (0.082)	-0.046 (0.062)	0.282*** (0.085)	0.137* (0.067)	0.158** (0.048)	
Male* Age	-0.051 (0.041)	-0.123 (0.100)	-0.074 (0.119)	0.175 (0.092)	-0.137 (0.121)	0.065 (0.099)	0.021 (0.073)	
Age squared	-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	-0.003** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	
Male* Age squared	0.001 (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.002* (0.001)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)	
Constant	-4.766*** (0.529)	-5.112*** (1.275)	-2.891 (1.551)	-0.203 (1.178)	-6.554*** (1.582)	-2.467 (1.264)	-4.709*** (0.911)	
Observations	10,999	1,995	1,408	1,936	1,325	1,777	2,558	
R-squared	0.403	0.262	0.268	0.332	0.408	0.315	0.464	

Source: ESRU-EMOVI 2017. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05. Parents' and children's socioeconomic wellbeing measured by an index based on the household's ownership of goods and assets and access to services. See text for details.

Mobility Matrices

The linear regression model constraints the intergenerational association to be linear and constant across the parental distribution of socioeconomic wellbeing. To relax these constraints, we now obtain mobility matrices by dividing parents' and adult children's levels of wellbeing into quintiles and obtaining the cross-classification of these quintiles. Table 2A and 2B offer mobility matrices for men and women, respectively.

Table 2A. Mobility Matrix Cross-Classifying Parents' and Adult Children's Quintiles of Economic Wellbeing. Mexican Men 2017

Children Parents	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Total
Quintile1	53.41	22.54	14.89	5.9	3.26	100
Quintile2	34.88	21.88	22.08	10.94	10.22	100
Quintile3	16.45	19.37	28.82	21.57	13.79	100
Quintile4	6.74	16.04	22.59	31.95	22.68	100
Quintile5	2.5	4.51	10.58	26.12	56.29	100
Total	18.69	15.57	19.65	21.13	24.96	100

Table 2B. Mobility Matrix Cross-Classifying Parents' and Adult Children's Quintiles of Economic Wellbeing. Mexican Women 2017

Children Parents	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Total
Quintile1	49.94	27.3	14.74	5.81	2.21	100
Quintile2	33.95	29.59	19.44	11.89	5.12	100
Quintile3	17.2	32.9	22.42	20.03	7.45	100
Quintile4	4.44	19.34	27.01	30.02	19.2	100
Quintile5	1.57	7.77	14.7	25.8	50.16	100
Total	20.16	23.32	19.98	19.32	17.22	100

Expectedly, the highest frequencies in Table 2A capture the intergenerational reproduction at the two extremes of the socioeconomic gradient: Persistence of poverty and wealth. Among Mexican men, 53 percent of those born to parents in the poorest quintile remain as poor as their parents, and 56 percent of those born to parents in the top 20 percent of the socioeconomic distribution maintain their high socioeconomic status. In terms of long-range mobility, only 3 percent of men born to poor parents reach the top quintile of the socioeconomic distribution and only 2.5 percent of men born in the most advantaged quintile experience long-range downward mobility to the bottom quintile. The comparison with women (Table 2B) indicates that women display lower levels of persistence of both poverty and wealth, with 50 percent of women born in the bottom

quintile persisting there and 50 percent of women born in the wealthiest quintile persisting there.

This finding contradicts the results of the linear regression model (Figure 2): If overall socioeconomic persistence is stronger for women, why is it not reflected in the persistence of wealth and poverty in the mobility matrices? The reason has to do with gender differences in the marginal distribution of economic wellbeing in the current generation. By comparing the last row of Tables 2A and 2B it can be seen that while 25 percent of men are placed in the top quintile, only 17 percent of women are. This difference is likely due to the fact that many more women than men are heads of single-headed households, and the economic vulnerability of single-headed female households is well documented (Aguilar 2016). In order to adjust for differences in the marginal distribution of economic wellbeing across gender, tables 3A and 3B express the percent distributions across quintiles of parental SES as factors of the marginal distribution for men and women. Once these differences are accounted for, the intergenerational persistence of poverty is 2.8 and 2.5 among men and women, respectively. In turn, the intergenerational persistence of wealth is 2.3 for men but a substantially larger 2.9 for women. At the same time, women are less likely to experience long-range downward mobility from the wealthiest than the poorest quintile than men. Once adjusted by the gender-specific marginal distribution of economic wellbeing, results are consistent with the linear regression analysis: Intergenerational persistence is stronger among women than men.

Table 3A. Mobility Matrix Cross-Classifying Parents' and Adult Children's Quintiles of Economic Wellbeing Adjusting for Quintile Distributions among Adult Children. Mexican Men 2017

	Children Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Total
Parents						
Quintile1	2.86	1.45	0.76	0.28	0.13	100
Quintile2	1.87	1.41	1.12	0.52	0.41	100
Quintile3	0.88	1.24	1.47	1.02	0.55	100
Quintile4	0.36	1.03	1.15	1.51	0.91	100
Quintile5	0.13	0.29	0.54	1.24	2.26	100
Total	1	1	1	1	1	100

Table 3B. Mobility Matrix Cross-Classifying Parents’ and Adult Children’s Quintiles of Economic Wellbeing Adjusting for Quintile Distributions among Adult Children. Mexican Women 2017

	Children Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Total
Parents						
Quintile1	2.48	1.17	0.74	0.30	0.13	100
Quintile2	1.68	1.27	0.97	0.62	0.30	100
Quintile3	0.85	1.41	1.12	1.04	0.43	100
Quintile4	0.22	0.83	1.35	1.55	1.11	100
Quintile5	0.08	0.33	0.74	1.34	2.91	100
Total	1	1	1	1	1	100

The final component of the comparative mobility analysis by gender is based on a set of quantile regression formulations. Conditional quantile regression estimates capture the intergenerational association at several percentiles of children’s SES, including the 10th, 30th, 50th (median), 70th, and 80th percentile of children’s socioeconomic status separately for men and women (figures 3A and 3B). (Unconditional quantile regression models without controls for age and its square were also estimated, and produce virtually identical results, which are available upon request).

By plotting regression lines for each conditional percentile graphically, the changes in the variance of the distribution of children’s SES across levels of parental socioeconomic advantage can be examined (Figures 3A and 3B). This adds to the regression analysis by focusing on the predicted dispersion in addition to the predicted mean of children’s outcomes at different levels of parental advantage (note that the percentile regression lines would be parallel if the model was homoscedastic). As indicated by Jäntti et al. (2006), it is possible for two groups to have highly similar mean persistence (measured by the linear association) but for one to have more mobility around such mean. The group with wider variability around the mean can be seen as having higher mobility.

Quantile regression analysis shows that for both Mexican men and women the variance in children’s socioeconomic wellbeing is wider at the top than at the bottom of the parents’ socioeconomic distribution. This “fanning out” pattern suggests that Mexicans with disadvantaged social origins experience strong intergenerational persistence –they are likely to be homogeneously poor —while those with more advantaged origins experience more variation in their socioeconomic wellbeing around their higher mean. These findings complement measures linear association that focus on mean intergenerational persistence and highlight that poverty is “stickier” than wealth in Mexico,

probably because of strong structural barriers than even the most exceptional individuals have trouble overcoming.

Figure 3A. Quantile regression for men

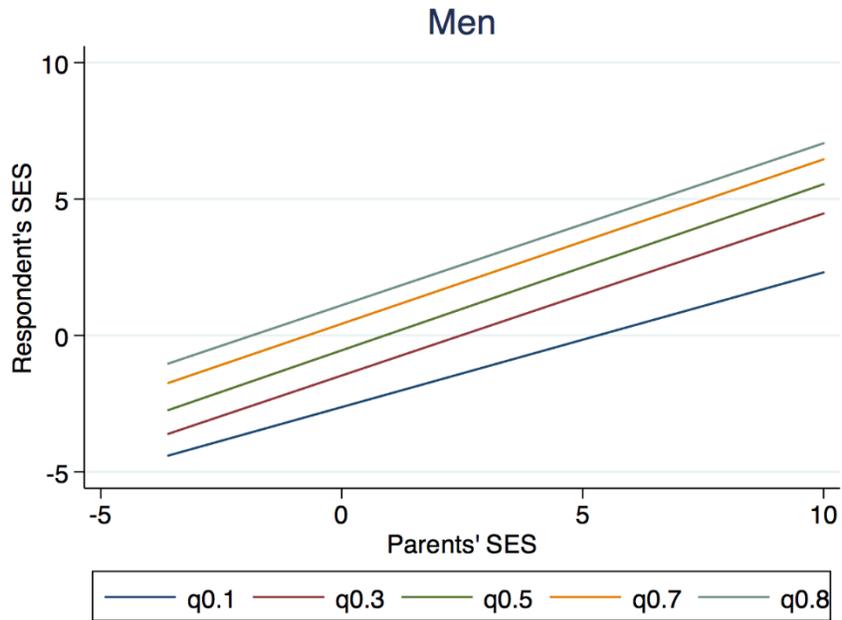
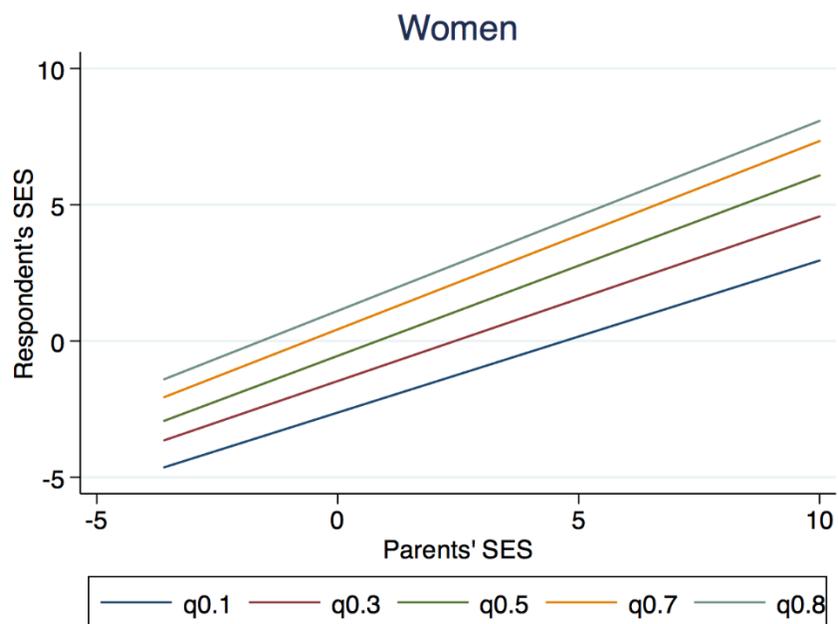


Figure 3B. Quantile regression for women



Regional Variation in Mobility

Before moving to the analysis of mobility by region, Table 4 displays the distribution of current region of residence across region of residence at age 14. Most Mexicans remain in the region they resided during adolescence, ranging from 96.7 percent in the Northern region to 69.7% in Ciudad de Mexico (however, the vast majority of those who leave the Mexican capital move to the adjacent Centro region). With the exception of Ciudad de Mexico, the percent of stayers is above 90 percent across regions, suggesting a relatively low prevalence of regional mobility (or short-range mobility within regions).

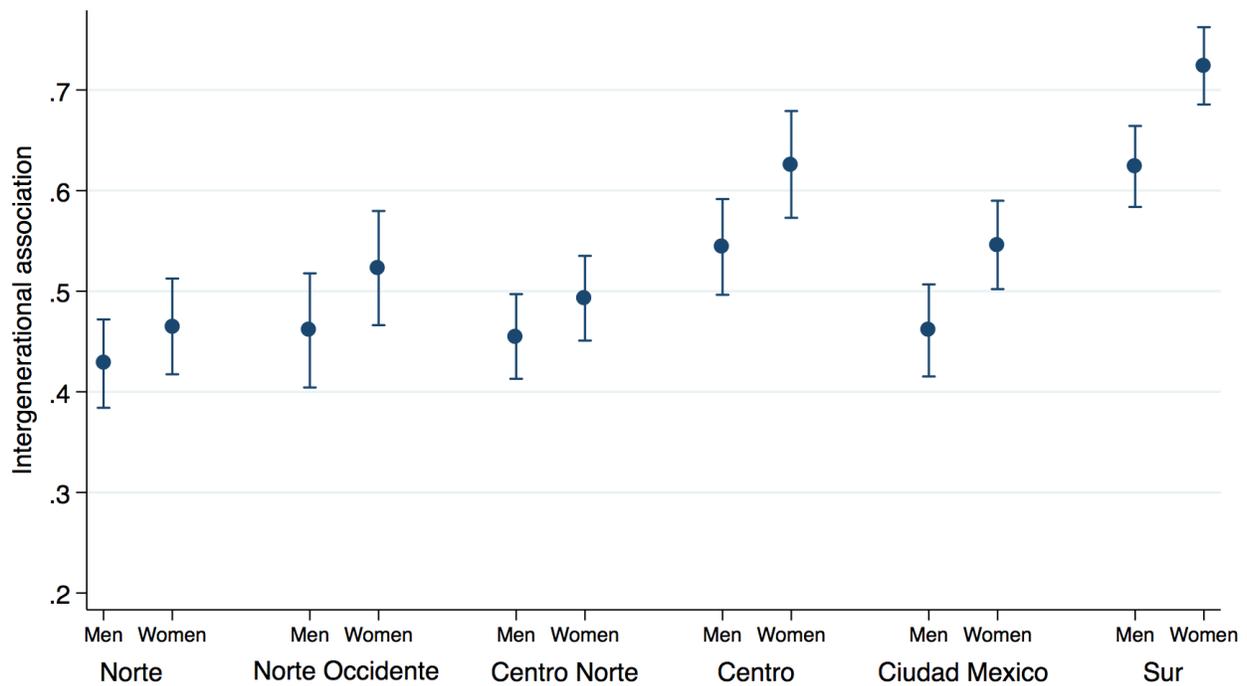
Table 4. Migration matrix cross-classifying region of residence at age 14 and current region of residence. Mexican men and women 2017

Current region Region age 14	North	North-West	Center- North	Center	Mexico City	South	Total
North	96.73	1.01	0.99	0.76	0.14	0.36	100
North-West	13.52	81.66	2.53	1.28	0.38	0.62	100
Center-North	4.33	0.84	90.52	3.07	0.47	0.77	100
Center	1.11	0.35	1.14	91.9	4.38	1.13	100
Mexico City	1.39	0.55	1.29	24.9	69.68	2.19	100
South	5.53	0.78	1.56	3.35	0.73	88.06	100
Total	18.62	6.62	13.8	29.51	8.97	22.48	100

Note: Sample restricted to heads of households and spouses/partners 55 years old or younger.

Columns 2-7 in Table 1 stratify the sample by region of residence when respondents were 14 years old and replicate the analysis of intergenerational mobility among men and women across region. Figure 4 displays the focal parameter estimates capturing the intergenerational association by gender for each region, along the 95% confidence intervals. Probably the most striking finding is that intergenerational persistence is much more pronounced in the South and Center regions of the country, with relatively smaller differences across other regions. The level of intergenerational association in the South is .62 for men and .70 for women, which is exceptionally high in comparative perspective. The most mobile region of the country is the North, where intergenerational persistence is .38 for men and .46 for women. In all regions, persistence is more pronounced for women than men, and the gender differences are significant in all regions except for Mexico City. Interestingly, among those who resided in Mexico City at age 14, there is no gender difference in mobility.

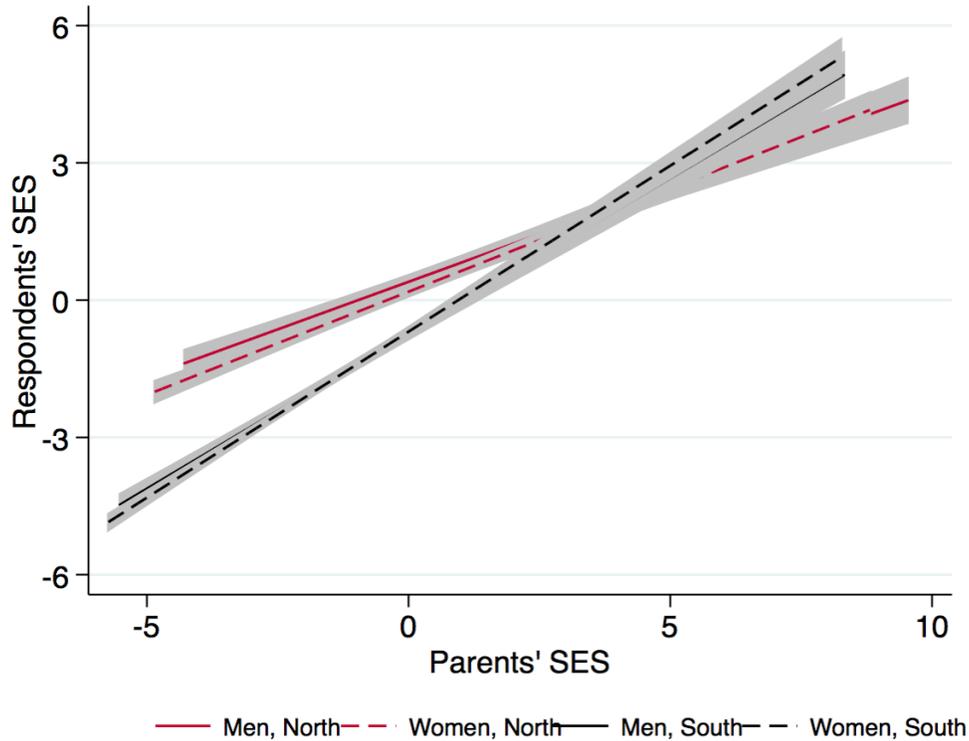
Figure 4. Intergenerational socioeconomic association for men and women across region of residence at age 14. Mexico 2017



Note: Solid dots are parameter estimates, vertical lines are 95% confidence intervals. Source: Table 1, Columns 2-7.

As mentioned before, an important caveat in the analysis of mobility across groups such as regions is the evaluation of differences across groups should consider variation in slopes and also in intercepts, as well as the relevant range of the independent variable across different groups. We explain these points through Figure 5, which compares the intergenerational association for men and women in the North region (the one with the highest level of mobility) and the South region (the one with the least mobility), restricting the respective ranges of parental socioeconomic wellbeing to the region-specific percentiles 1 to 99. As shown in Figure 4, the intercept is much lower in the South than in the North, signaling higher levels of poverty and vulnerability. Given higher levels of persistence in the South, those from advantaged origins reach similar or slightly higher levels of wellbeing as their counterparts in the North. However, men and women with disadvantaged and middle-class origins fare much worse than those with similar social origins in the North, perpetuating the differences in wellbeing across regions.

Figure 5. Intergenerational Socioeconomic Association among Men and Women in the North and South Regions of the country. Mexico 2017



Source: Table 1, Columns 2-7.

The Role of Education in the Mobility Process

The last analytical step considers the role of education in the mobility chances of Mexican men and women. As discussed, education is both the main pathway for the intergenerational socioeconomic persistence and the main source of mobility by detaching individuals from their social origins. The extent to which education plays one role or the other varies across time and place. In Latin America, prior research suggests that educational attainment contributes more to intergenerational immobility than in other contexts given the highly stratified access to education by social origins and to the high economic returns to education leading to an “inherited meritocracy” — intergenerational persistence that is legitimized and naturalized by educational attainment (Torche 2014).

We examine the role of education in the mobility process in Table 5. Model 1 simply replicates column 1 in table 1 and will be used as benchmark. Model 2 examines the association between parents’ SES and adult children’s years of schooling to evaluate the extent to which educational attainment depends on parental advantage. The model shows that for each unit increase in parents’ socioeconomic wellbeing, adult children’s years of schooling increase by 0.7 years for females and 0.6 years for males. Is this a large effect?

To assess its magnitude we can standardize the parental wellbeing measure. The standard deviation of parents' SES is 2.95. A one-standard deviation increase in parents' wellbeing will result in a gain of 2.1 years of schooling for women (0.7×2.95) and 1.8 (0.6×2.95) years of schooling for men. Consistent with prior research, the association between social origins and educational attainment is substantial and is stronger for women than men (Torche 2015b).

Table 5. Role of education in the intergenerational mobility process for men and women. Mexico 2017

	Model 1 Adult children's SES	Model 2 Years schooling	Model 3 Adult children's SES
Male	1.270 (0.774)	-0.335 (1.326)	1.171 (0.741)
Parents' SES	0.621*** (0.010)	0.703*** (0.017)	0.494*** (0.011)
Male * Parents' SES	-0.076*** (0.014)	-0.098*** (0.024)	-0.068*** (0.015)
Years of schooling			0.180*** (0.007)
Male * Years of schooling			0.016 (0.011)
Age	0.185*** (0.028)	0.002 (0.048)	0.185*** (0.027)
Male * Age	-0.051 (0.041)	0.030 (0.071)	-0.057 (0.039)
Age squared	-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.002*** (0.000)
Male * Age squared	0.001 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Constant	-4.766*** (0.529)	10.575*** (0.906)	-6.674*** (0.507)
Observations	10,999	10,998	10,998
R-squared	0.403	0.281	0.465

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Model 3 examines the intergenerational socioeconomic association controlling for the respondents' educational attainment to capture the portion of intergenerational persistence that is net of education. After controlling for education, the intergenerational association drops from .621 to .494 for women and from .545 to .426 for men—a decline by 21 percent and 19 percent respectively. Education plays a substantial mediating role that is similar across genders, but it leaves a large proportion of intergenerational

persistence unaccounted for. This suggests that direct extra- educational pathways — such as the direct inheritance or inter-vivos transfer of assets, the probability of marrying and assortative mating by social origins, use of family-based social networks or cultural capital, and the transmission of personality traits, to the extent that these factors are not correlated with educational attainment— play a major role in in the persistence of advantage across generations in Mexico. (Models using a categorical instead of continuous version of educational attainment, and including respondents’ labor force participation status yield very similar results, see Appendix Table 1).

It is also interesting to note that the stronger intergenerational persistence among women than men remains after controlling for educational attainment, indicating that extra-educational factors are not only the most important component of persistence, but they contribute for gender differences in mobility. A note of caution is in order to interpret this mediation analysis: As it is the case with overall mobility, no causal interpretation can be offered about the mediating role of education. Given that education is not randomly allocated (Elwert and Winship 2014; Imai et al. 2011) cannot claim that parental socioeconomic advantage causes educational attainment or that the intergenerational socioeconomic association net of educational attainment is causally driven. The analysis offers, however, descriptive evidence about differences in the mobility dynamics for Mexican men and women.

Role of education in mobility: Regional Differences

Table 6 and Figure 6 examine the intergenerational socioeconomic association net of educational attainment across region of residence at age 14. As for overall mobility, intergenerational persistence net of education is much higher in the South than in other regions of the country. However, after controlling for education, it is not the case anymore that women are consistently more immobile than men. In fact, only in the Center region intergenerational persistence is higher for women. In all other regions there is no gender difference, and in the North and Mexico City intergenerational persistence is somewhat higher among men.

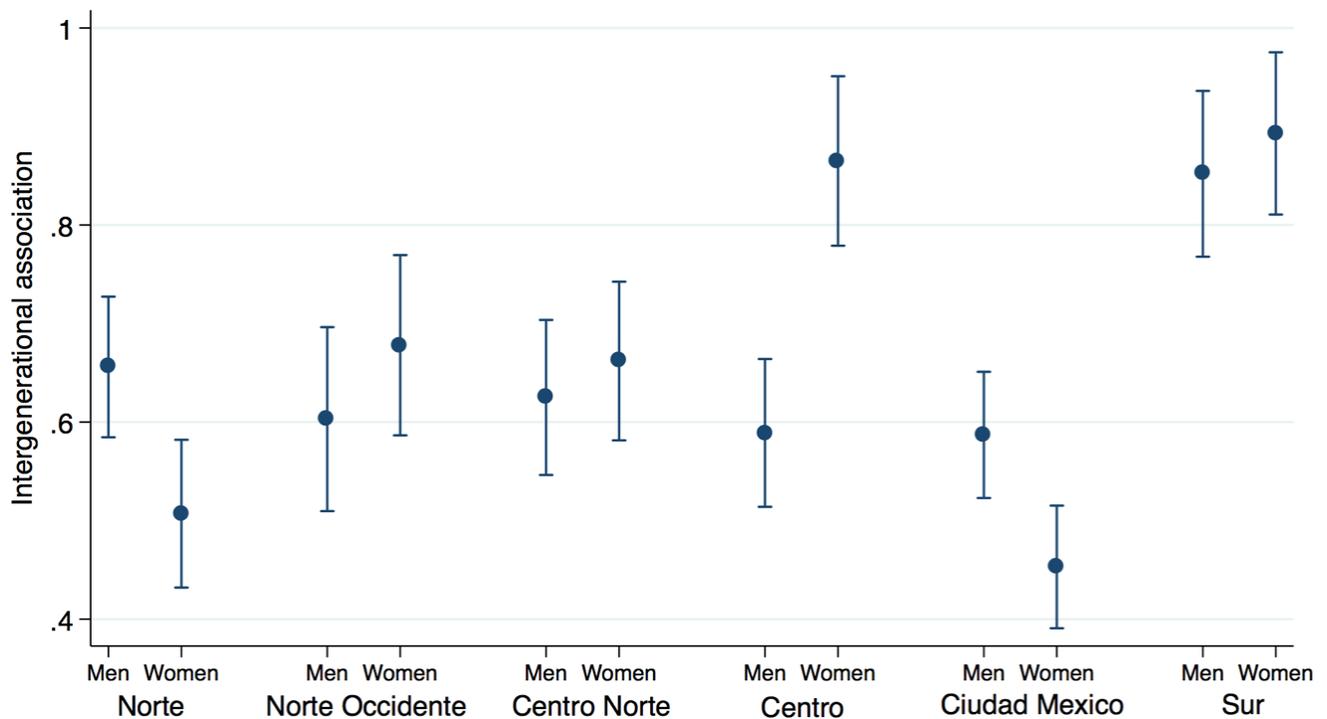
This finding suggests that educational attainment is a stronger vehicle for intergenerational among women than men, and that extra-educational factors —such as the direct transfer of property or assets, use of occupational social networks— play a more important role in driving intergenerational persistence among men. This finding is consistent with Torche’s (2015b) findings based on the 2011 ESRU-EMOVI that the “excess persistence” among Mexican men was entirely driven by a direct transmission of parental advantage to sons than to daughters net of children’s educational attainment and returns.

Table 6. Role of education in the intergenerational mobility process for men and women, by region of residence at age 14. Mexico 2017

	North	North-West	Center-North	Center	Mexico City	South
Male	1.186 (1.774)	0.879 (2.153)	-3.871* (1.636)	3.932 (2.190)	-1.038 (1.808)	0.535 (1.284)
Parents' SES	0.363*** (0.025)	0.395*** (0.033)	0.409*** (0.024)	0.486*** (0.034)	0.370*** (0.024)	0.574*** (0.021)
Male * Parents' SES	-0.128*** (0.034)	-0.092* (0.045)	-0.105** (0.034)	-0.035 (0.045)	-0.040 (0.035)	-0.097** (0.030)
Years schooling	0.177*** (0.019)	0.195*** (0.022)	0.160*** (0.016)	0.199*** (0.024)	0.204*** (0.021)	0.148*** (0.012)
Male * Years schooling	0.087*** (0.026)	-0.002 (0.031)	0.071** (0.023)	-0.054 (0.033)	0.021 (0.031)	0.029â€ (0.017)
Age	0.189** (0.063)	0.108 (0.078)	-0.042 (0.058)	0.276*** (0.082)	0.148* (0.064)	0.178*** (0.045)
Male * Age	-0.085 (0.094)	-0.042 (0.113)	0.181* (0.086)	-0.130 (0.116)	0.033 (0.094)	-0.053 (0.068)
Age squared	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	-0.003* (0.001)	-0.002â€ (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)
Male * Age squared	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Constant	-6.207*** (1.195)	-5.134*** (1.491)	-1.884â€ (1.110)	-8.577*** (1.540)	-4.983*** (1.231)	-6.769*** (0.865)
Observations	1,994	1,408	1,936	1,325	1,777	2,558
R-squared	0.357	0.344	0.421	0.454	0.381	0.534

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Figure 6. Intergenerational socioeconomic association net of respondents' educational attainment by region of residence at age 14. Mexico 2017



Note: Solid dots are parameter estimates, vertical lines are 95% confidence intervals. Source: Table 5.

Concluding remarks

Mexico features high levels of intergenerational persistence across both genders, but intergenerational persistence of socioeconomic status is stronger among women than men in 2017. The difference in mobility across gender is statistically significant but small in magnitude. The “excess immobility” of Mexican women is mostly accounted for by extra-educational factors, which likely include factors such as use of social networks and direct inheritance of assets. The relevance of extra-educational sources of intergenerational persistence among Mexican women departs from findings based on the 2011 ESRU-EMOVI (Torche 2015b) and call for further investigation of mobility trends for men and women over time.

Wide differences in mobility are found across regions of the country. Based on a comparison across six regions —north, northwest, center-north, center, Mexico City, and south— the southern region features the lowest levels of mobility, regardless of whether region of residence is measured when respondents were 14 years of age or currently. Both men and women are less mobile in the south than in other regions, although the

mobility gap is wider among women. Intergenerational immobility in the southern region of Mexico is explained by both a strong association between parents' socioeconomic status and respondents' education, and by extra-educational factors. The pronounced intergenerational persistence in the southern region adds to lower levels of educational attainment and economic development to describe a context that provides very limited opportunity to its residents. The combination of widespread poverty and reduced opportunity in the South suggests that disadvantage in this region is likely to persist over time unless there are substantial migratory flows and/or robust policy intervention.

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Appendix Table 1. Role of categorical version of education (Model 1) and labor force participation (Model 2) in the intergenerational mobility process for men and women. Mexico 2017

	Model 1 Adult children's SES	Model 2 Adult children's SES
Male	1.373 (0.743)	0.907 (0.857)
Parents' SES	0.496*** (0.011)	0.487*** (0.011)
Male * Parents' SES	-0.069*** (0.015)	-0.064*** (0.015)
Years schooling		0.174*** (0.008)
Some primary (omitted)		
Primary graduate	0.730*** (0.104)	
Some secundaria	1.079*** (0.149)	
Secundaria graduate	1.270*** (0.095)	
Some preparatoria	1.478*** (0.152)	
Preparatoria graduate	1.825*** (0.106)	
Some college	2.486*** (0.143)	
College graduate	2.565*** (0.126)	
Male*Years schooling		0.022* (0.011)
Male*Primaria Grad.	-0.534** (0.165)	
Male*Some Sec.	-0.396** (0.230)	
Male*Secundaria Grad.	-0.454** (0.148)	
Male*Some Preparatoria	0.318 (0.216)	
Male*Preparatoria Grad.	-0.047 (0.160)	
Male*Some college	-0.031 (0.214)	
Male*College grad.	-0.296** (0.178)	
LFP: Retired (omitted)		
LFP: Student		-0.960* (0.416)
LFL: Household		-1.371*** (0.342)
LFP: Disability		-1.313** (0.434)
LFP: Other inactive		-1.129** (0.414)
LFP: Employed		-1.087** (0.341)
LFP: Unemployed		-1.774*** (0.351)
Male*Student		-0.154 (0.561)
Male*Household		0.203 (0.511)
Male*Disability		0.848 (0.612)
Male*Other inactive		0.204 (0.573)
Male*Employed		0.376 (0.458)
Male*Unemployed		0.382 (0.478)
Constant	-6.304*** (0.508)	-5.377*** (0.593)
Observations	10,998	10,998
R-squared	0.465	0.472

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05