

# THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD OF YOUNG MEXICANS WITH MIGRATION EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES, 2010

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— *Abstract*—

This study examines the effect of the migratory experience in the United States on the transition to adulthood in five events, the first sexual relation, the first marriage or union, the first live-born child, the leaving school and first job. The National Youth Survey of 2010 (ENJ 2010) is used as the primary information source for its elaboration. The results show that the international migratory experience has a positive effect on the occurrence of the events of entry to the labor market, first sexual relation and leaving the school and negative in the postponement of the first marriage and the first live-born child.

**Keywords**

*Young people; Mexico; Transitions to adulthood; Migration; Maternity; Work.*

**M**igration is an important economic strategy that young men and women use to achieve certain objectives such as access to a well-paid job, the search for economic autonomy, the accumulation of purchasing power, the formation of a family, among others. The importance of the relationship between migration and youth is not limited to the fact that both events take place in the same age group, nor to the structural and cultural situations that drive youth migration, but rather to the effects that the migration experience has on the life course.

The migratory experience could generate contradictory effects in the course of life, by becoming a catalyst to advance or delay some events, so its examination will be of fundamental importance. Then we could ask ourselves: what is the effect of the migratory experience in the first sexual relationship, the first union as a couple, leaving school, the entry into the labor market and the birth of the first child?

The objective of this work is to compare the calendar and the intensity of the events that make up the transition to adulthood such as: the first sexual relationship, the first marriage or union in couple, the first maternity or paternity, leaving school and the first work, among Mexican youth with migratory experience to the United States and non-migrants, to test whether the particular migratory experience has an effect on the behavior of transitional events. The micro data of the National Youth Survey of 2010 (ENJ2010) are used for its preparation.

The research is carried out from the perspective of the life course, which is a fruitful tool to examine the calendar and the intensity of the reproductive and familiar transitional events of the key young migrants in the performance of their adult roles.

The study of the interconnection between migration and the transition to adulthood has been little explored in the international and Mexican literature. Due to the methodological problems that include the lack of adequate or sufficient data, the dependence of cross-sectional surveys (Mussino and Strozza, 2012), the difficulties associated with the application of demographic measures for a mobile population (Parrado, 2011) and the lack of a conceptual framework that defines the basic concepts (Wilson and Sigle-Rushton, 2014), among others.

However, there are a series of studies on the effect of migration on some of the events of the transition, for example with:

- The sexual relationship (Mberu and White, 2011, Anglewicz, Gourvenec, Halldorsdottir, O'kane, Koketso, Gorgens and Kasper, 2013).
- Marriage or union as a couple (Parrado, 1998 and 2004, Jampaklay, 2006, Chattopadhyay, 1999, Kandel and Massey, 2002, Fan and Huang, 1998, Lindstrom and Giorguli, 2007 and Pérez Amador, 2008).
- Maternity and paternity (Parrado, 2011, Wilson and Sigle-Rushton, 2014).

In literature about Mexico, it has been empirically proven that there is a series of social and economic inequalities that have an effect on the acceleration or delay in the occurrence of the events that make up the process of transition to adult life (Echarri and Pérez Amador, 2004 ; Mier and Terán, 2004, Coubès and Zenteno, 2005, Gandini and Castro, 2006, Oliveira, 2006, Mora and Oliveira, 2008, Ávila and Jáuregui, 2014), but few studies have been conducted to determine the effect of migration on the transitional events that are examined in this study (Parrado, 1998 and 2004, Araiza, 2005, Lindstrom and Giorguli, 2007, Pérez Amador, 2008).

## METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted with data derived from the exploitation of the ENJ2010 micro-data, which includes a battery of retrospective questions about sexual activity, marriage, fertility, first job and leaving school, from which it can be determined the age at the time of sexual initiation, the first marriage or union as a couple, the birth of the first child, the completion of formal education, entry into the labor market and migration.

For the analysis of the occurrence and timing of the transitions of young people from 15 to 29 years old, the age group is divided into two subgroups, the first is called migrants and is referred to those who have migratory experience in the United States, and the second is composed of young people without migratory experience. Both subgroups are identifiable in the ENJ2010.

To analyze the transitions comparing the calendar and the intensity of occurrence, continuous event history analysis were used, a statistical technique that allows the use of fixed variables and over time variables and that does not require assumptions of proportionality (Allison, 1982). The year / person is considered as the unit of analysis, since the responses to the duration of the events are in years, this approximation guarantees the appropriate estimators of the standard errors and the tests of significance (Petersen, 1991).

In particular, life tables were drawn up to compare the intensity and timing of the transitional events of the young people according to their migratory status, the Log-Rank and Wilcoxon tests (Breslow) were also applied to determine if there was a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the survival curves (Hosmer, Lemeshow and May, 1999).

## RESULTS

The majority of young people with a migratory experience in the United States have already experienced three transitioning-events: entering the labor market, having the first sexual relationship and completing their school instruction. Thus, eight out of ten young migrants had experienced their first sexual relationship and had completed their formal education, and nine out of ten had had their first job (see table 1).

**Table 1.** Percentage of young migrants and non-migrants who have experienced the occurrence of life events in the transition to adulthood, 2010

Transitional event	Non-migrants	Migrants	Total
First sexual relationship			
Yes	61.3	85.5	61.8
No	38.7	14.5	38.2
	100.0	100.0	100.0
First child			
Yes	28.0	39.5	28.3
No	72.0	60.5	71.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0
First marriage			
Yes	33.2	53.3	33.5
No	66.8	46.7	66.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0
Leaving/finishing school			
Yes	60.0	82.5	60.5
No	40.0	17.5	39.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0
First job			
Yes	70.9	91.8	71.3
No	29.1	8.2	28.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Own elaboration based on the ENJ2010.

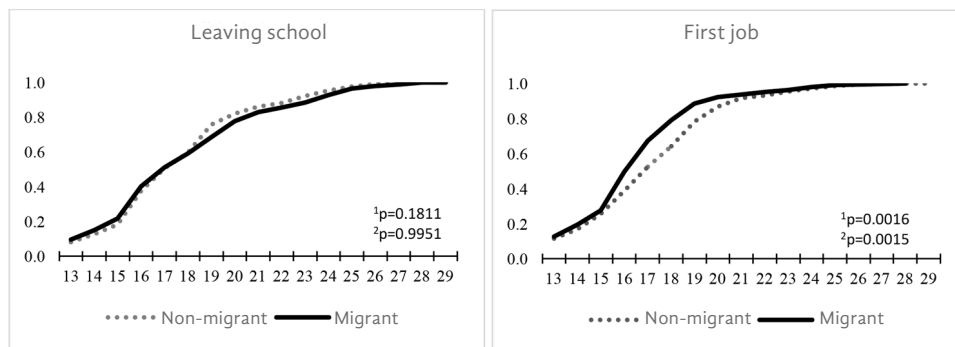
The union in couple is the third transition in prevalence, a little more than half of the young migrants had already experienced marriage at the time of the survey. The birth of the first child was the least experienced transition; only about a third of the young migrants had made it.

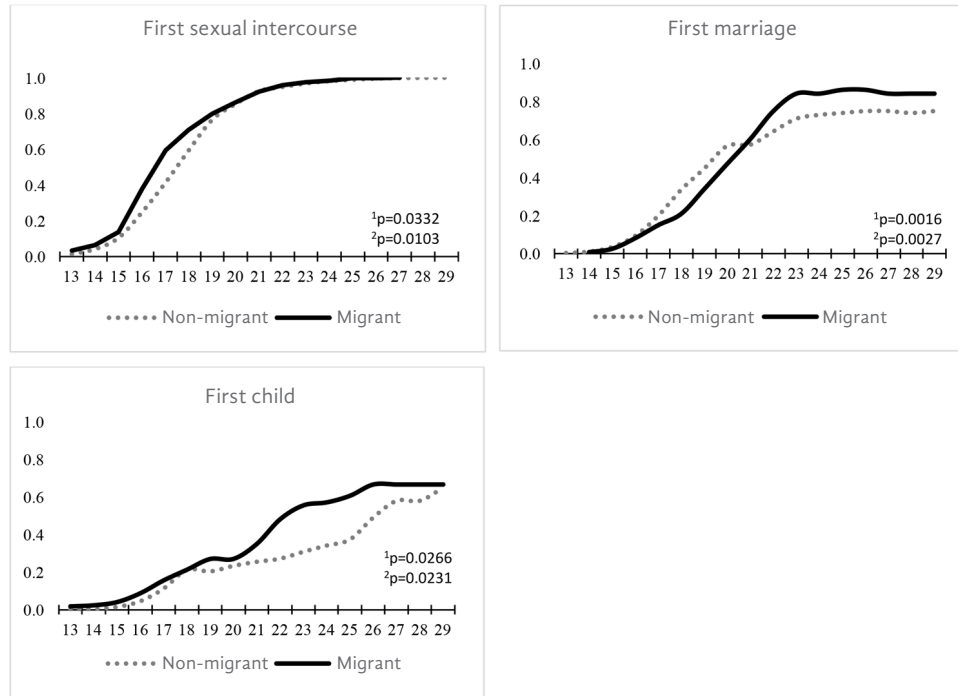
The patterns of transition to adulthood of young Mexicans differ according to their migratory status, since young migrants experience in a higher proportion all transitional events with respect to their non-migrant similes. Thus, the proportion of young migrants who had already experienced their first sexual relationship at the time of the survey is 24 percentage points higher than non-migrants, 85.5% for migrants versus 61.3% for non-migrants.

In the same sense, there is a greater proportion of young migrants who had already experienced their first job, the completion of formal education and the first union as a couple compared to non-migrants, with a difference of around 20 percentage points. While those who had experienced the first paternity or maternity the difference between migrants and non-migrants was reduced to 11 percentage points.

The analysis of the life tables by estimating the accumulated proportions of the occurrence of each event allows us to make an analysis of the temporality of sexual initiation, marriage, birth of the first child, exit from school and first work of young people with or without migratory experience in the United States (Figure 1). The ages correspond to the values of 25%, 50% and 75% of the age distribution of the events.

**Figure 1.** Age of occurrence of the events: first sexual intercourse, first marriage, first child, leaving school, first job, among young people according to migratory status





Source: Own elaboration based on the ENJ2010.

Note: <sup>1</sup>p= Test Log-Rank; <sup>2</sup>p= Test Wilcoxon (Breslow)

Of the total of young migrants, a quarter (25%) had left the educational system at the age of 15, half (50%) at age 17 and three quarters (75%) had left school when they turned 19. In comparison with the non-migrant youth, no significant differences are observed according to the Log-Rank and Wilcoxon tests, so the equity hypothesis of survival curves is accepted, that is, there is no effect on the age at which School drop-out occurs among young migrants compared to non-migrants.

The beginning of working life is the transition that takes place at a younger age among young migrants, 25% had started working at 14 years old and 50% at 16 years of age, while 75% of young migrants had already entered the labor market before reaching 18 years of age. However, there are significant differences in the calendar of entry into the labor market between young migrants and non-migrants according to the statistical tests applied, so there is an effect on the advance in the age of occurrence of the transition to working life among the young migrants, in such a way that they are the ones who start working a year before their non-migrant peers.

Sexual initiation is an event that happens to a quarter of young migrants at 15, while half experience it at age 17 and three quarters up to age 18. In

addition, young migrants had their first sexual intercourse a year earlier than non-migrants, this difference being significant, according to the Log-Rank and Wilcoxon tests, making it clear that young migrants are sexually initiated before non-migrants. This finding is consistent with that found in other studies that show how migration can accelerate the sexual initiation of young people (Anglewicz, *et al*, 2013). Due, among other situations, that the change of environment could increase opportunities for young migrants to initiate and participate in a wider range of sexual relationships than those that were available in their place of origin, which could increase exposure to risky sexual behavior among young migrants.

The beginning of life as a couple is an event that had experienced 25% of young migrants at 18, 50% at 20 years old and 75% of young migrants at 23 years. Comparing among young people according to the calendar of the first marriage or union as a couple and their migratory status, it makes it possible to establish how migrants enter into union as a couple one year later than non-migrant youth, this difference being significant according to the statistical tests performed. This is concomitant with the literature on the subject that indicates that migration has a negative impact on marriage, that is, it contributes to delaying the union of young migrants compared to their peers (Parrado, 1998 and 2004; Jampaklay, 2006). Chattopadhyay, 1999 and Pérez Amador, 2008).

It is striking that from the age of 21, the curves of migrants and non-migrants cross at this age, indicating that there are changes in the intensity of migrants' entry into the first marriage, since the percentage of who have had their first marital experience is greater than non-migrants (figure 1). This would be marking an irregular acceleration to the rhythm of the beginning of conjugal life among migrants, which slows down in the early years of their youth and accelerates at a dizzying rate after 21 years of age, this would indicate that it exists for young migrant people a time of social moratorium to join as a couple, that is, it is a waiting time where the union as a couple is delayed until after the migrant accumulates the necessary assets to join as a couple in accordance with the prevailing traditions in his or her place of origin.

The entrance to paternity and maternity, that is, the birth of the first child, occurs for 25% of young migrants at the age of 19, for 50% at the age of 21 and for 75% at age of 23. This behavior contrasts with the non-migrant youth who had their first child one year before the migrants, and there is a significant difference between young migrants and non-migrants in the age calendar in which they experienced the first maternity or paternity.



It was identified that three patterns of entry into parenthood or maternity coexist among young migrants, the first consisting of some young Mexican migrants who would be experiencing fertility at the adolescent stage, the second group which is the most numerous, would be postponing the first maternity or paternity in order to first go through other transitions, such as migration or marriage or union as a couple, while other groups of migrants choose not to have their first child in the youth stage, reaching the end of the period of observation without having made the transition to the first maternity or paternity, which shows the heterogeneity of the transitions made by the young migrants.

### CONCLUSIONS

The process of transition to adulthood of young Mexicans with migratory experience to the United States according to middle ages is the entry into the labor market that occurs at age 16, followed by dropping out at age 17, almost the same age happens the sexual initiation, three years later the beginning of life as a couple begins at 20 years, a few years later the first paternity or maternity occurs, these last two events being the least experienced by the Mexican young migrants before 29.

The results show that the international migration experience has a differentiating and catalytic effect on the timing and intensity of the events that make up the process of transition to adulthood in young migrants. In general, young migrants tend to advance their entry into the labor market and sexual initiation, while they tend to postpone both marriage/union as a couple, as well as the first paternity or maternity, compared to non-migrants. Thus, young migrants have a pattern of transition to adult life significantly different from non-migrants.

Although within the group of young migrants different patterns coexist both in the age of entry to married life and to paternity or maternity, generating a heterogeneity and complexity in the patterns of transition to adulthood within the group of young international migrants.

It stands out that from the age of 21 the migrants experience with greater intensity the entrance in union as a couple and the birth of the first child both events in relation to the non-migrants. That is, the social moratorium ends for young migrants and it is time to assume adult obligations.

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