Divergent paths to adulthood in Mexico

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1. Introduction

The social and economic changes that Mexico experienced before the turn of the century significantly altered the context in which young people transitioned to adulthood. On one side, the clear decrease in the fertility rates and the gains in life expectancy, the spread of mass education, communication media and information technologies, the fast growth of women's labor-force participation and the predominance of the urban over the rural population changed the ways in which young people in Mexico experienced the transition to adulthood. On the other, the young generation started their adult life in a context of prevailing high poverty rates and increasing income inequality. This modified the structure of opportunities for young people and lowered their expectations of achieving some social and economic mobility compared to the older generation. The paradox of social change under conditions of restrained economic opportunities occurred parallel to a crisis of those social institutions that had set the foundations for the gains in education and health during the last decades. They proved to be short to face the challenges of the rising economic inequality and the unequal access to opportunities for the young in Mexico during the nineties.

To understand the combined effects of the socioeconomic changes and the particular institutional setting on the paths to adulthood at the turn of the century, this chapter explores how Mexican adolescents born between 1976 and 1988 experienced five transitions to adulthood: leaving school, entering the labor force, leaving the parental home, starting a union and becoming a parent. Building on prior research on the transition to adulthood in Mexico (Echarri, 2007; Fussell, 2008; Giorguli, 2006, among others), this paper attempts to advance this field by studying several transitions together and linking them with the particular demographic conditions, social context and institutional

arrangements prevalent in the nineties when the generation under study transitioned into adulthood.

2. Growing Up at the Turn of the Century

While the eighties were defined as the lost decade due to the continuous economic swings, the inflation, and the negative economic balance, the nineties were characterized by the consolidation of the new liberal economic model, the continuation of the structural adjustment policies, and the consequent rearrangement of the state's role in providing social services. Family income fell dramatically during the eighties and did not recover afterwards. Furthermore, the structural adjustments meant the reduction of public social expenses in health and education. Finally, the new economic system changed the structure of the labor market, with the informal sector growing rapidly and absorbing most of the population that entered the labor market for the first time or that was displaced from the formal sector. The changes in the educational system and in the labor market contributed to deepen the differences in the structure of opportunities among the young, leading to the consolidation of heterogeneous pathways (Solís et al, 2008).

2.1 Changes and Continuities in Family Formation in Mexico

The last three decades have also seen a dramatic transformation of the demographic profile in Mexico linked to changes in its population dynamics. After a period of high population growth, Mexico experienced a rapid decrease in family size during the seventies. By 1986, total fertility rate had decreased to 3.8 (compared to 7.5 in 1967) and, by the year 2005, was close to replacement (2.5) (Zavala de Cosío, 2005 and CELADE, 2004). As a result of the changing demographic dynamics—rapid growth followed by a decrease in its pace—the population of the 12-to-24-year olds represented around twenty five percent of the total by the year 2000 and the dependency rate had decreased to 64.3 (Alba et al, 2007).

Union Formation and Age at First Birth

A paradox in the Mexican case is that the decrease in the fertility rates has not been associated with a clear delay in the age at first union and the age at birth of the first child (Fussell, 2005).[1] For women, the median age has slowly increased but remains low at around 21 years. For men, the reverse process has occurred as there is even evidence of a rejuvenation of the median age at marriage, set around 23.8 years for a cohort born in the late sixties (Samuel and Sebille, 2005; Parrado and Zenteno, 2005a).

Along with a pattern of early union formation, especially among women, the arrival of the first child happened shortly after marriage.[2] Furthermore, research on fertility trends showed that the decrease in the number of children per women was largely explained by the reduction in the probabilities of having a child after the second or third birth (Zavala, 2005). Moreover, Mexican women started using contraceptives to regulate their fertility after getting married and, more specifically, after the arrival of the first child (Brugueilles, 2005). There has been some reduction in the adolescent fertility rates, which has been linked to the increase in the educational attainment and the time spent in school among some women (Zavala de Cosío, 2005; Welti, 2000). Nonetheless, before the turn of the century, adolescent fertility was still high,[3] especially among indigenous women, for those living in rural areas and in the poorest states of the country (Welti, 2005).

Out of wedlock births are rare events; they represent less than ten percent of the births (Welti, 2000). Thus, the normative pattern of the transitions in the reproductive sphere has been very stable and well-defined: A couple would get married or live in a consensual

[1]. The minimum legal age at marriage with parental consent is 14 years for women and 16 for men; a young person can get married without parental consent when he/she turns 18.

[2]. Around 10 percent of the first births occur in the same year of the union (Burgeilles and Samuel, 2005).

[3]. Around one third of the women 15-49 had a child before turning 20 (Welti, 2005).

union[4] in their early twenties and have children shortly after marriage. Studies furthermore suggest some differences among rural and urban areas (Zavala de Cosío, 2005; Quilodrán, 2001). The differences, at least in fertility patterns, become evident in the probabilities of having higher order births.

In spite of the stable or slow change in the age at first union and at first birth, recent research has pointed out that pathways of Mexican individuals may be more heterogeneous than before. Although there may be small changes in the median ages, the age range for those who experienced the transition after the median age seems to increase, at least regarding the age at marriage (Solis and Puga, 2008).

Family structure

With union dissolutions being scarce in Mexico, a majority of the children (about three out of every four) is raised in nuclear dual parental household in Mexico. Nonetheless, an important percentage of all households are extended and the proportion is higher when there are newlywed children co-residing with their parents for some time or when older parents move in with their married children (Giorguli, 2004). Regarding the division of labor, families in Mexico still follow the "breadwinner model", although there is some evidence of marginal change, probably linked to women's increasing labor-force participation (Rojas, 2008).

Leaving the parental home in Mexico

One of the events commonly used as marker in the transition to adulthood is leaving the parental home, especially when it is linked to the formation of a new household and/or the assumption of new economic roles or responsibilities. In Mexico, leaving the parental home is closely associated with family formation. However, there are variations in the

[4]. Consensual unions are common in Mexico. In 2000, one out of every four 20-to-30-year-old individuals currently in a union was living in a consensual union (author's estimations based on the National Youth Survey, 2000).

timing of the process and in the order of the events. It is not uncommon to have a period of co-residence with the parents of either spouse right after marriage, which may extend to the arrival of children (Echarri, 2005 and Echarri and Pérez, 2007).

The age at which young people get married, have children and leave the parental home predicts the sequence and coordination of the three events. So that, for example, men who get married and become parents at young ages will probably leave the parental home at the oldest ages (late twenties). In contrast, those who leave the parental home before getting married and having a child do it early in the life course (during their teen years) and, in many cases, the reasons for moving are associated to migration for educational or labor reasons (Echarri, 2005). In those cases there is also a delay in the age at marriage and first birth.

2.2 Persistent Poverty, Economic Inequality and Family Strategies

Closely linked to the economic cycles, poverty decreased in Mexico during the seventies, grew notoriously during the eighties and, on average, remained almost stagnant during the nineties with some fluctuations related to the economic crises during the mid nineties and the period of slow economic growth at the end of the decade (Boltvinik and Damian, 2001; Cortes et al, 2003).[5] A conservative measure of poverty based on the household income in Mexico shows that half of the population was below the poverty line by the year 2000.[6] Although the proportion is higher among the rural population (78% versus 42%), in absolute terms, the number of urban poor individuals surpasses that of the rural context (31 million versus 19 million) (Boltvinik and Damian, 2001).

[5]. Income inequality as measured by the Gini index increased during the eighties and remained stable (around 0.52) during the nineties (Cortes et al, 2003).

[6]. I am referring to the poverty line defined by ECLAC, based on the household income and fixing an amount that is enough to cover the nutritional requirements. Measurements of poverty that include other dimensions and goods give higher estimates of poverty (71% in the urban context and 96% among the rural population; Boltvinik and Damian, 2001: 34).

The fluctuations in the poverty rates are mainly the results of the change of real income, and affect largely the urban contexts, where the impact of the economic setbacks is felt in the short term. Since the eighties and during the nineties, families in Mexico have used different strategies to face the economic swings and the instability related to them. Some of these strategies directly modified the context in which young people were growing up and their roles and responsibilities within the households. It has been largely documented that Mexican families increased the average number of income earners during the eighties as a way to increase the household income (Cortés and Rubalcava, 1993; Giorguli, 2006). Women entered the labor force, pushed by the economic needs of the household (García and De Oliveira, 1994), and adolescents—mainly boys—did so in their teen years (González de la Rocha, 1997; Giorguli, 2004). In addition, women's labor-force participation, in a context of little institutional support for working mothers, increased the responsibility of older siblings—mainly of daughters—as caretakers. Moving from nuclear to extended family arrangements was one of the strategies to face the economic and labor instability.

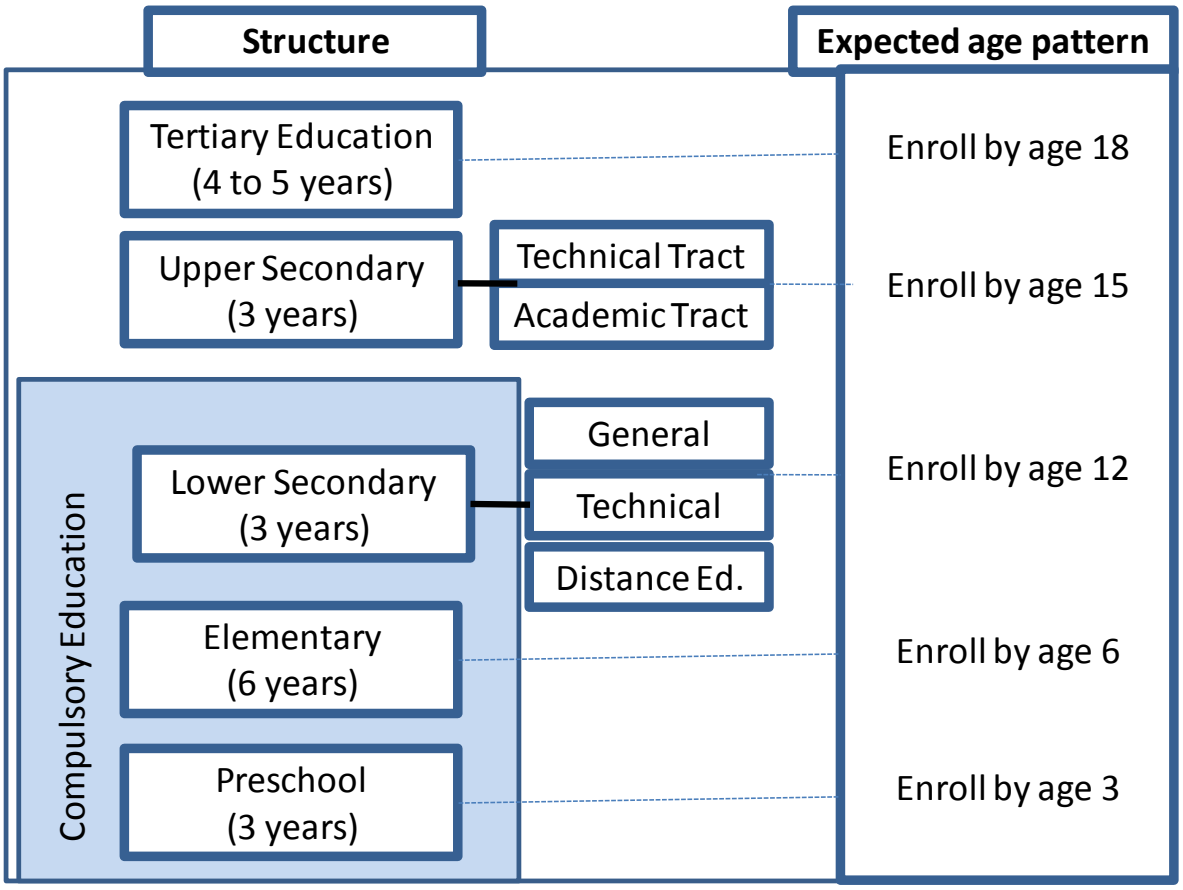
2.3 Institutional Arrangements Linked to Education, Labor and Welfare Programs

Educational System

The State policy towards public education in Mexico during the nineties concentrated on increasing the coverage of what was considered compulsory education (Reimers, 2006). The number of years of compulsory education augmented from six to nine in 1993 (on the organization of the educational system in Mexico, see Figure 1), covering six years of elementary and three years of lower secondary schooling.[7]

Figure 1. Organization of the Mexican educational system and expected age pattern

[7]. At the turn of the century, the legislation changed again, adding three years of compulsory preschool (starting at age 3) (see Figure 1).



By the year 2000, the average years of schooling in Mexico had reached 7.6 years, more than 95 percent of the children below twelve were attending elementary school and they had high probabilities (above 0.90) of finishing their primary education (INEE, 2004). The state was forced to rapidly expand the educational services. As demand increased and more children finished elementary school, the state searched for other options of public education at the lower secondary level, especially for children in rural contexts or living in geographical isolated communities. Along with the expansion of academic track secondary schools, technical schools and distance education (through *telesecundarias*) grew rapidly. By the year 2000, about one third of the students enrolled in lower secondary attended *telesecundarias*; and the proportion was even higher (above 50%) in small rural municipalities (Giorguli et al, 2009).

After the successful experience in the expansion of elementary school in the past decades, the growth of the enrollment and completion rates in lower secondary has been more modest. Even today, a large proportion of the youth drops out of school without completing the compulsory education or getting a diploma, and there seems to be a large problem of grade repetition during secondary school (Giorguli, 2006). Nonetheless, the demand for upper secondary and tertiary education has increased in absolute and relative numbers. The spaces available in the public sector for upper secondary—mainly concentrated in urban areas—have not been enough to respond to the growing demand (Coubés and Zenteno, 2005). Those who cannot pay for a private academic track or fail to enter the public academic track upper secondary schools (based on the results of selection exams), have the option of following less traditional tracks with flexible schedules or oriented towards technical certifications. It is also the case that some of the students finishing lower secondary decide to continue into a technical track for upper secondary or other options depending, for example, on their working status or on their perception of their possibility to go to college. Regardless of the track during secondary school, students who complete the three years of upper secondary (the equivalent to a high school) can apply to public universities. Given the limited number of spaces available, the entry process, based on an admission exam, is very competitive.

Since its conception, the educational system in Mexico has been linked to unequal access and varying quality of the educational services among rural and urban areas, between indigenous and non indigenous population[8] and among social classes (Mier y Terán and Rabell, 2003). In spite of the educational gains in rural areas and among indigenous groups during the eighties and the nineties, the lack of efficient compensatory policies in education resulted in the maintenance of a pattern of inequality similar to that of the mid

[8]. According to the 2000 Census, slightly above ten percent of the population was indigeneous. They concentrated mainly in rural areas, among low-income households, living in poverty and with less access to public education and health services.

seventies (Martinez Rizzo, 2002). The emphasis on the expansion of the educational system over its quality created a new line of social stratification. This involved the access to good or bad schools—increasingly associated with the divide between public and prestigious private schools (Reimers, 2006). Differences in the quality of education also occurred within the public educational system as the resources available to schools varied largely, for example, between rural and urban areas and depending on the type of education (general versus technical; long distance and tutorial classes or multigrade groups versus schools with a full-time teacher per grade).

Although private education has constantly grown, the State remains as the main provider of free education for most Mexican young people up to lower secondary (secundaria) and it also offers options of free or low cost education up to the tertiary level (college and graduate studies) (Santibañez, Vernez and Razquin, 2004).

Informal Jobs, Labor Vulnerability and the Labor Opportunities for Youths

The economic liberalization and the export-led model defined the dynamics of the labor market in Mexico during the nineties. Jobs in manufacturing increased steadily between 1991 and 2001, amounting to 18 percent of the working population at the turn of the century. At the same time, jobs linked to services also grew in relative terms so that by 2000, more than half of the labor force (54%) was working in the tertiary sector (Salas and Zepeda, 2003: 57-59).

The unemployment rate in Mexico is traditionally low (usually below 5%; Salas and Zepeda, 2003). The lack of unemployment benefits or other schemes of social protection forces job losers and labor market entrants to work in activities that may not be stable or with remuneration lower than expected based on the individual's qualifications. In the context of economic swings, the number of jobs created in the formal sector (waged jobs with some labor protection and stability) was insufficient to absorb the demand for new

jobs from those displaced by the changes in the economic structure and from the large number of young people to be incorporated into the labor market every year.[9] As a result, informal jobs increased rapidly since the eighties so that by the year 2000 more than 40 percent of the working population was either self-employed, on temporary jobs or with no contract or benefits (Parrado and Zenteno, 2005b and table 1). Recent research has stressed that young people are particularly at risk of being employed under more vulnerable conditions and in the informal sector (see table 1). This is especially true for those employed before age 15, many of them younger than the legal age to start working in Mexico.

Table 1. Selected indicators on the labor market. Mexico, 2000

Legal minimum age to work	14 years - no more than 6 hours a day 16 years - full time jobs
Urban unemployment rate	2.2
% working with critical labor conditions (1) All working population 12-14 15-19 20-24	 30.0 71.2 47.6 30.1
% waged workers with no labor benefits All working population 12-19 20-24	 42.0 68.6 43.6
Female labor participation rates (15-64)	30.5

(1) Population working part time involuntarily; working more than 48 hours a week and earning less than 2 minimum wages; working 35 or more hours a week and earning less than one minimum wage.

Sources: Unemployment rate from Salas and Zepeda, 2003; all the others from Alba et al, 2007.

[9]. In spite of the declining fertility, the number of young people entering the labor force was still high in absolute terms. Since the year 2000 and until 2015, around eight hundred thousand persons will be entering the labor market for the first time every year (Hernández Laos, 2004).

The present structure of the labor market is also notable with regard to the returns to education. The premium to tertiary education is very high—among the highest in all Latin America (López, 2001). However, the large informal sector distorts the traditional link between education and income. Although there are differences in the mean income related to educational attainment, the gains are small until the completion of upper secondary where the gap starts to increase. An additional year of schooling between elementary and lower secondary may not necessarily ensure access to a formal job in the waged sector or to a significantly higher income (López, 2001; for the case of Monterrey, also see Solís, 2007).

Finally, labor-market participation is highly gendered. Female labor participation rates in Mexico were especially low (around 30.5) at the turn of the century, although they had rapidly increased in the prior three decades. The low female participation rates are linked to a persistent traditional division of labor. Recent research has stressed that working women tend to interrupt their labor trajectories when getting married even before the arrival of children (Ariza and Oliveira, 2005).

Welfare State Provisions

The Mexican social regime has been defined as weak and fragmented as it is not universally available. Benefitting some groups of the population much more than others (mainly, urban sectors, state employees and those working in the formal sector), it has not been able to mitigate the social impact of the economic setbacks and the structural adjustment (Filgueiras and Filgueiras, 2002; Fussell, 2005 and 2008). The latter also implied a reduction in social expenditures during the eighties, affecting not the coverage of the services but their quality, especially regarding the public provision of health and educational services.

The reorientation of the economic policy also resulted in a change in the programs to reduce poverty from an approach focused on improving the local infrastructure and services to the design of target-oriented programs for the poor. The programs included

cash transfers for families with school age children. Research on the evaluation of the programs suggested that the cash transfers conditioned on the attendance to school increased the enrollment rates of teenagers (Parker and Skoufias, 2001).[10]

2.4 Transitioning into adulthood in a context of economic instability

The young cohort analyzed in this paper experienced the transition to adulthood in a context of severe economic instability and a weak welfare state. Under such conditions, family strategies become very important as safety nets for facing uncertainty. The literature suggests that, in the Mexican case, adolescents have played an important economic role as part of those strategies, either as income earners or caregivers. We can thus expect that the transitions in the productive sphere, mainly the entrance into the labor force, will be largely defined by the economic needs of the household, reproducing the structure of inequality that characterizes the Mexican context.

Interestingly enough, the assumption of adult responsibilities within the household and the early transitions in the productive sphere[11] do not give young people greater agency for decisions in the reproductive sphere. On the contrary, regulated by traditional values, strong family control and social pressure over sexuality will determine the timing of the transitions in the reproductive sphere, resulting in a pattern of stability and less variation in the age at marriage and at first birth.[12]

3. Data and Methods

The results presented in this chapter are based on the *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud 2000* (National Youth Survey, 2000). This nationwide representative survey collected

[10]. As the cash transfer program started in 1998, it will not affect the analyses presented here given that they are based on data collected in 2000.

[11]. In accordance with the norms of mandatory education in Mexico, I define as early any transition in the productive sphere (i.e., leaving school, labor-market entry) occurring before finishing lower secondary.

[12]. A similar hypothesis was proposed by Echarri and Perez (2007) on their study about the life course in Mexico.

information for young people living in Mexico at the time of the survey. It includes detailed information on the enrollment and working status as well as on family formation variables, such as marital and parental status.[13] I restricted the analysis to the 12-to-24-year olds as this age range covers the period when more than half of Mexican young people will experience the five transitions analyzed in this paper: leaving school, entering the labor force, leaving the parental home, entering into marriage or union and having a first child.

I use three dependent variables. The first one refers to the productive sphere, reporting the school enrollment and working status of the 12-to-24-year olds. It is grouped in four categories: only studying (*reference category*), working and studying, only working, not studying and not working. The other two variables refer to the transitions in the reproductive sphere, capturing marital status, parental status and headship (as a proxy of leaving the parental home).[14] Marital status and headship (or spouse of the head) will reflect whether the young person has ever lived in a formal or consensual union and whether he/she is still living in the parental or in-law household or has formed an independent home. The variable is grouped in three categories: never married/not head nor spouse of the head (*reference category*), ever married/head or spouse of the head, a residual category. The last variable captures whether the individual is already a parent in combination with the marital status. The three possible outcomes are: not a parent (*reference category*), never married/parent, ever married/parent.

The methodological strategy includes the description of the data by age and sex as well as the estimation of multinomial logit models for each transition controlling for age, place of

[13]. In contrast to most nationwide surveys in Mexico, it contains information on parental background independently of the co-residence status relative to the parents. The large sample allows for detailed analyses, even by individual age, of the transitions in the productive and the reproductive spheres.

[14]. The information on marital status and parenthood is only available for the population 15 and older. The analysis of the transitions in the reproductive sphere thus covers the age range from 15 to 24.

residence (rural or urban) and parental characteristics (education of both parents and father's occupation). [15]

4. Results

Status Transitions in the Productive Sphere

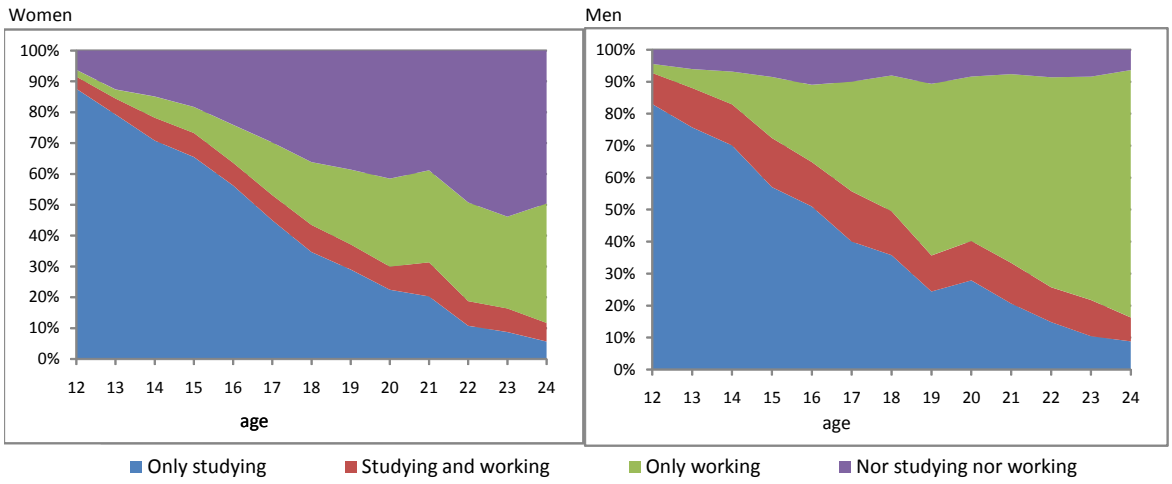
Figure 2 shows that, in the year 2000, more than 90 per cent of the 12-year olds were in school, the expected age for finishing sixth grade and transitioning into lower secondary. The gradual and constant decrease in the proportion of young people studying after age twelve indicates that there are no clear cuts pointing to a standard age (or ages) when some of the young people finish studying (e.g., the end of lower or upper secondary at ages fifteen and eighteen,respectively). Even though the completion of lower secondary is compulsory in Mexico, the exit from school is not clearly standardized. By age 14, the expected age of enrollment to the last year of lower secondary , close to twenty percent of boys and girls was no longer enrolled. By age 18, the expected age for finishing upper secondary, 31 percent of the young people had not finished secondary (estimate based on the National Youth Survey, 2000).

For a large proportion of Mexican teenagers, entering the labor force is the first transition they experience (Pérez, 2006). This information helps us understand the continuous presence of a portion of young people who combine school and work, mainly among boys. The fact that this proportion is small and constant through all ages suggests that, even if adolescents start working while still studying, it is possible that they leave school shortly afterwards.[16]

[15]. Unfortunately, the dataset used for this research does not include information on ethnicity, another important dimension of divergent pathways to adulthood in Mexico. However, we expect place of residence and parental education to capture to a large extent the differentes between the indigenous and non-indigenous population.

[16]. Around 22 percent of those who had left school and were working in the survey year experienced both transitions at the same age. Another 27 percent left school one or two years after starting to work.

Figure 2. School and work statuses by age and by sex. Mexico, 2000



Source: Author's estimates based on the *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000.*

Figure 2 also shows gender differences in the trends in the productive sphere. Although these differences in school attendance are small during the early teens, most girls who were not in school were not working in nondomestic jobs. They were most likey engaged in domestic chores or taking care of younger children or elder adults in the household. In contrast, boys enter the labor force more often than girls. This result supports prior evidence suggesting that adolescent labor reflects a household strategy with boys' labor preferred over girls' entrance into the labor market (González de la Rocha, 1997).

Regarding the participation of young women in the labor force, the data shows that it is higher than the national levels. By age 20, the proportion of women working (36% considering those still in school and working) surpasses the female participation rate at the national level in the year 2000 (30.5), and remains high (around 40%) by age 24.

Even this simple descriptive information highlights the existence of diverse pathways in the productive sphere. For one,a group of young people leaves school and assumes adult

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Around a third (35.8%) left school before entering the labor force (Estimations based on the National Youth Survey, 2000).

roles or responsibilities during their early teens *before* finishing compulsory education. At the other extreme, a small proportion of young people delay labor-market entry and remain in school until their early twenties, mainly enrolled in tertiary education. The multivariate analysis presented below shows that parental education differentiates adolescent trajectories in Mexico the most (Figure 3 and table A.3). As parents' education increases, young people are able to delay both transitions—leaving school and entering into the labor market.

The results suggest the existence of two groups: young people whose parents have elementary or no education and those whose parents have secondary education and beyond. For boys belonging to the first group, the probabilities of only working are higher and school enrollment is lower compared to boys of the second group. Combination of school and work is low, suggesting that the combination of statuses is more a resource among higher socioeconomic groups. Finally, in spite of the possibly greater economic need in their household, the probability of not working nor studying is higher. Although this remains as a question for future research, it may partially be explained by the waiting time periods resulting from the high rotation of informal jobs among young boys.

For girls of low-educated parents, the early exit from school reflects mainly the greater probabilities of not working nor studying, although the probabilities of only working also increase. Assuming that girls whose parents have some primary education or even less are leaving school mainly because of the household's economic needs, the high probabilities of not working nor studying seem paradoxical.

[FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The other characteristic separating a group of young people from the rest is father's occupation. Children of skilled service workers show a significantly different trajectory in the productive sphere. The delay in leaving school for these men is related to the lower probabilities of only working compared to the rest. For women, along with the high probabilities of staying as full time students, the chances of combining school and work

are also greater. The probabilities of neither working nor studying (0.127) compared to the other categories of father's occupation are lower (ranging from 0.268 to 0.34) .

Although the differences by place of residence (rural and urban) are significant (Figure 3), once we look at the probabilities, they do not reflect in large differentials as the other variables capture most of the variation (table A.3). The probabilities show, however, that young women not in school are more often not working nor studying in rural settings, which coincide with the lower female participation rates and with a more traditional division of labor in these settings.

The findings for the transitions in the productive sphere suggest that the absence of clear age cuts, manifested in the gradual decrease in school enrollment, is linked to the inefficiency of the educational system. Despite the expansion of public lower secondary facilities around the country, a significant proportion of adolescents are not completing secondary in time or at all. This pattern is reproduced among those who do access upper secondary. Due to grade repetitions and dropouts before obtaining a diploma, the educational system plays a weak role in standardizing the transitions in the productive sphere. Furhtermore, the lack of clear age cuts may be also linked to the modest gains in the returns to education at the different secondary levels as they may discourage young people and their families to invest further in obtaining a high school or middle school diploma.

It is the characteristics of the family of origin that largely determine the timing of the transitions. Parental education is the great divider for juvenile transitions in the productive sphere. Taking into account the weaker effects of father's occupation, this suggest that, along with the economic needs of the household, a lower cultural capital or other factors related to the learning environment may be playing an important role in young people's educational trajectories.

Another interesting finding is that, for young men, the combination of work and school is associated with higher parental education (but not with a higher socioeconomic status

measured by father's occupation). We know little about the meaning or the impact of the combination of work and study on their educational and future labor trajectories. We can hypothesize, however, that they either allow some young men to stay longer in school or that parents' with higher education may encourage their children to keep on studying even if economic needs force them to enter into the labor force without having completed their studies.

Coherent with the breadwinner model and the traditional sex division of labor in Mexico, the paths out of school and into the labor force are clearly gender differentiated since adolescence. The enrollment rates do not vary widely by sex, but what young people are doing after leaving school is different. The gender stratification of the entrance into the labor market is deeper in rural settings.

Finally, there is one group that sticks out from the rest. The children of skilled workers in services show a notoriously different path. They have large probabilities of staying enrolled as full time students—probably studying up to tertiary education.

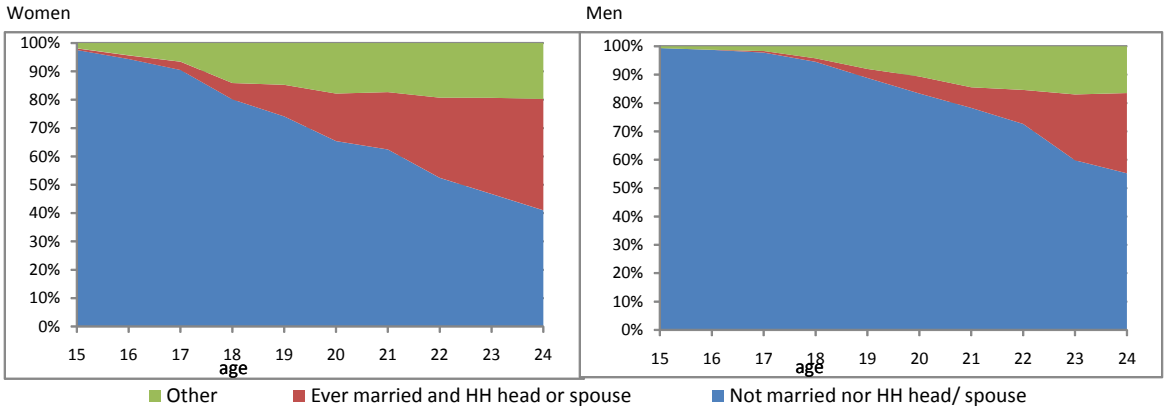
Status transitions linked to union formation and leaving the parental home

Figures 4 shows how Mexican young people start the process of family formation and to what extent this process is linked to establishing an independent household (leaving the parental home). These two transitions occur earlier for young women than for men. By age 24, 60% of the women will have experienced at least one of the transitions, while for men the same proportion is 45%.

During the teen years for women and up to age 22 for men, it was more common to have experienced one transition than both ("other" category). Most of those who experienced just one transition were married (around 80% of men and 90% of women). Especially for those who married young (before age 20), the majority remained in the parental (or in-laws) household. However, by age 24 around 30 percent of those married were still not heads or spouses of the head of the household.

As with the transitions in the productive sphere, we do not see clear cuts in the age at marriage but a gradual movement into living in a union. There is a difference in the age pattern, however, as the transitions in the reproductive sphere occurred later than those in the productive sphere, specially among men. The combination of an early transition in the productive sphere with a period of residence in the parental home after marriage for a large proportion of the young people suggest that the entrance into the labor market is not inexorably related to the economic independence necessary to establish a separate household.

Figure 4. Marriage and headship statuses by age and by sex. Mexico, 2000



Source: Author's estimates based on the *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000.*

In spite of the great differences between young people growing up in rural and urban settings, there is no significant variation in the patterns of entry into marriage and/or leaving the parental home (Figure 5 and table A.5). However, the variables that influence these transitions diverge by gender. Parental education shows strong effects on the transitions into marriage and headship for women, and for men it is father's occupation. For the former, as parent's education increase the probabilities of experiencing one or both transitions decrease. However, the effect is stronger in reducing the odds of being married and head or spouse of the head. For young men, there seem to be different patterns depending on father's occupation (Figure 5 and table A.5). At the lower end of the social hierarchy, sons of unemployed or not working fathers have the highest

probability of experiencing one or both of the transitions in the reproductive sphere. Following a different path, sons of unskilled workers employed in services and manual skilled workers transitioned into adulthood through a normative path of getting married and forming an independent household.

[FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE]

As seen in the productive sphere, there is finally a group—those young men and women whose fathers are skilled service workers—who show the most divergent behavior. We had reported that this group clearly delayed the entry into the labor market and the exit from school. Accordingly, they also postponed the transitions in the reproductive sphere.

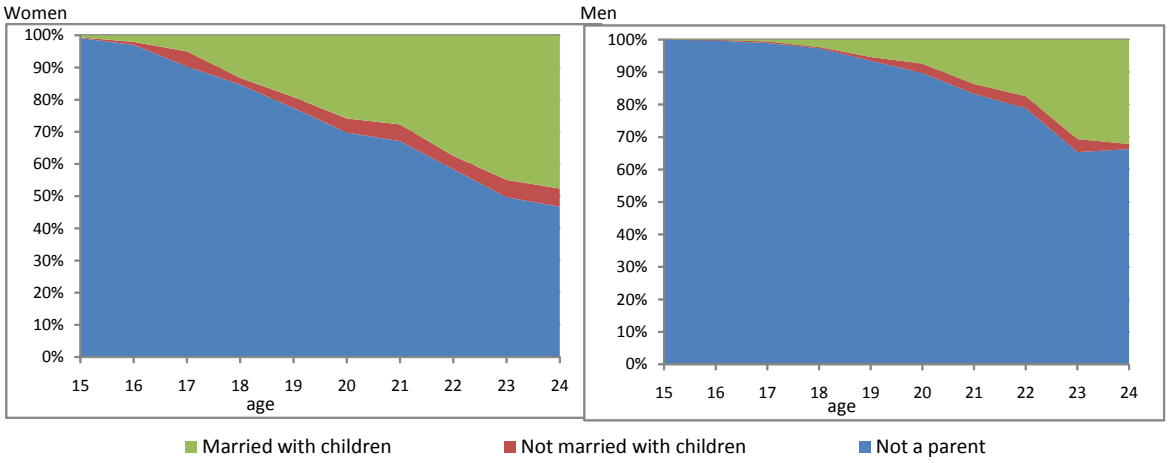
For women but not for men, the lines differentiating the pathways to adulthood in the reproductive sphere are the same as those observed in the productive sphere. For women, it is likely that the expectations around education and labor-force entrance related to higher educational attainment delay the transition into marriage and forming an independent household, an effect captured by parental education. For men, the effect in the reproductive sphere is more contradictory and difficult to read. The lack of resources, measured by the father's occupation, could be an argument for delaying the process of marrying and leaving the parental home; however, the results show the opposite.

Status transitions linked to union formation and childbearing

As with union formation and leaving the parental home, the transition into parenthood occurs gradually among Mexican young people and earlier among women compared to men (Figure 6). Childbearing during the teen years is low for women (3% by age 16 and 10% by age 17) and practically inexistent for men (less than 2% for those 18 or younger). In a context where abortion is illegal and abortion rates are lower than in other developing countries (for example, compared to South Korea), it is interesting to note that

the occurrence of out-of-wedlock births is small. This can be linked to the conservative family values and the strong social control over young people given the dependence on the family as a safety net. This suggests that there either is a strong surveillance around the sexual behavior of young people or they may be pushed into marriage when there is an unplanned pregnancy. Only among very young women, those age 17, the proportion of married and unmarried mothers is similar (4.5% in both cases). By age 18, the proportion of unmarried mothers is clearly smaller (2.1% vs. 13% of married mothers) and the predominance of married versus unmarried mothers remains and increases for the following individual ages analyzed in this paper.

Figure 6. Marriage and parenthood statuses by age and by sex. Mexico, 2000



Source: Author's estimates based on the *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000.*

Parenthood out of a union is not associated with the economic characteristics of the family of origin or with the place of residence. Only age showed a statistically significant positive relation with the probabilities of being a single parent (Figure 7). However, the effect is stronger for the expected normative path of being married and parent—where the change in the probability as age increases is greater.

[FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE]

As with the other transitions in the reproductive sphere, parental education clearly differentiates the paths of young women into motherhood. The probabilities of not being a mother decrease gradually as parental education increases (table A.7). For men, only some categories of father's occupation were significant. When the father was unemployed or not working, the probabilities of being married and a parent were greater compared to children of manual unskilled laborers, for both men and women. The scenario is contradictory as the group with probably the most vulnerable economic situation is the one entering into parenthood earlier. In the analysis of the transitions in the productive sphere, there were no significant effects of this category on the odds ratio. Probably children of unemployed or not working parents do not have access to family planning services although this explanation may be insufficient to explain why their transitions in the reproductive sphere occurred earlier. Their expectations, the greater economic uncertainty in the family of origin and the sense of lack of agency and control over their lives may accelerate the transitions. Prior studies have also suggested that, for a group of young people, marriage is the way out of the household, given that emancipation (leaving the parental home without being married) is a rare option among Mexican young people (Pérez, 2006 and Echarri and Pérez, 2007).[17]

Finally, the daughters of skilled service workers stick out with a very different behavior from the rest. They have the lowest risk of being a parent—which is coherent with the evidence on the delay of the other transitions analyzed in this paper.

5. Paths to Adulthood in Mexico

The bumpy economic evolution during the eighties and nineties in Mexico happened parallel to the immersion into the global economy and the expansion of the mass media in a mainly urban country bringing along changes in the culture and in patterns of

[17]. Although the analysis in the prior section showed that coresidence with parents or with the in-laws is common in Mexico, most of those married lived in independent households.

consumption that influenced the preferences and expectations of the youth (Tienda, 2002). These changes were expected to transform the transition to adulthood in Mexico, slowly converging with the patterns characteristic of industrialized societies. The expansion of the educational system and the changes in the reproductive behavior were regarded as the main forces of the transformation process.

This chapter showed that social institutions had a very weak influence on the timing of the transitions in the productive sphere. In spite of the expansion of the educational system, schools failed to keep students enrolled until they finish the compulsory years of education. The flexibility of the system might have allowed young people who left the formal system to move to other modalities or to go in and out from school, but by the year 2000, the completion rates for lower secondary were still low. The insufficient expansion of public education at the upper secondary level and the distortion that the informal labor market creates on the returns to education add to the scenario of not clear age cuts (linked, for example to the expected age for obtaining a diploma) for a large proportion of Mexican adolescents. Furthermore, the educational system failed to compensate for the social differences by family of origin as the opportunities to stay in school beyond the compulsory education depended even more than before on family background.

In the last decades of the XXth century, adolescents in Mexico still played an important economic role within the household. Thus, the economic need in their households largely defined what they would be doing during their teen years and determined the early entrance into the labor market or the assumption of roles as caregivers or homemakers (for adolescent girls). However, the early adoption of these "adult roles" was not necessarily linked to greater autonomy as adolescents still largely depended on their families as safety nets.

The dependence on family resources also influenced how the transitions in the reproductive sphere occurred. The social acceptance of staying to live with the parents or

in-laws after marriage diluted the cost of establishing an independent household and explained why the change in the transitions in the reproductive sphere had been so slow and modest. The protective role of the family seemed to be specially important for those adolescents who experienced the transitions (getting married or having a child) very early—in their teen years. The probabilities of staying in the parental home beyond the occurrence of the transition were higher for them. As a result, the negative effects of a teenage pregnancy on the socioeconomic situation of the adolescent and on the future of his/her child might have been mitigated depending on the access to these family networks.

Having a child and getting married remain highly coordinated events in the life course of the youth. The prevailing pattern of occurrence of the transitions in the reproductive sphere at early ages (in the late teens or early twenties for women) combined with the dropout from school and the entrance into the labor market in the same age span suggest a rather short period of youth among the majority of Mexican adolescents.

The persistent social inequality in Mexico resulted in two distinct transition patterns to adulthood—one applying to the great majority and the other to a small elite group. The latter, a group of adolescents from the higher social classes, delayed the transitions in the productive as well as in the reproductive sphere. This highly privileged group of young people showed a pattern of transitions to adulthood that resembled the patterns characteristic of industrialized countries.

Finally, the research presented here on how the transitions occur in Mexico would be largely enriched by the analysis of the expectations and preferences that young people have about their future life. It is possible that a large proportion of young people in Mexico have a sense of little control over the decisions that define how they move into adulthood. The economic uncertainty resulting from the instability in the labor market probably discourages the investment of time in school, specially among low income families. Although we may expect that the years of schooling will keep on increasing, the

gains may be modest and occurring at a slow pace. The instability in the labor market and the weakness of social institutions—specifically regarding health and education—give no reason to think that the dependence on family resources will decrease in the short term. Although the exposure to global consumption patterns may orient young people's preference towards a delay in the transitions in the productive and reproductive sphere, the economic and social context sends a powerful message for the majority of them regarding the little margin of influence that they have on their economic future.

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7. Appendix

Table A.1 Sample characteristics and descriptive statistics for the independent variables. Population age 12 to 24. Mexico, 2000

Variable	Mean or distribution
Age	17.4
Sex	
Men	46.8
Women	53.2
Place of Residence	
Rural (less than 15,000 inhabitants)	37.9
Urban (15,000 inhabitants or more)	62.1
Highest Parental Education	
No schooling	8.1
Some elementary	46.3
Some secondary	32.0
Some tertiary	13.6
Father's Occupation	
Not working	14.2
Agricultural Worker	23.2
Manual unskilled labor	13.6
Services unskilled labor	22.4
Manual skilled labor	10.0
Services skilled labor	16.6
Number of observations= 35,718	

Source: *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000*

Table A.2 Results from the multinomial logistic models estimating the probability of school and work statuses by sex. Mexico, 2000

	Women			Men		
	Work and study	Only working	Not working not studying	Work and study	Only working	Not working not studying
Age	0.276 **	0.444 **	0.415 **	0.205 **	0.486 **	0.284 **
Rural (ref.)						
Urban	0.363 *	-0.064	-0.501 **	-0.050	-0.216	-0.435 *
No education (ref.)						
Some elementary	-0.047	-0.310	-0.657 **	-0.215	-0.448 *	-0.276
Some secondary	-0.384	-1.308 **	-1.683 **	-0.525 *	-1.758 **	-1.435 **
Some tertiary	-1.093 *	-1.654 **	-2.079 **	-0.658 *	-2.572 **	-2.194 **
Not working	0.141	0.284	0.396	0.276	0.026	0.155
Agricultural Workers	0.156	-0.070	0.236	0.405	-0.138	-0.147
Manual unskilled (ref.)						
Services unskilled labor	-0.227	-0.154	0.017	-0.003	-0.652 *	-0.389
Manual skilled labor	0.068	-0.035	-0.034	0.227	-0.250	-0.128
Services skilled labor	0.316	-0.863 **	-1.053 **	-0.197	-1.611 **	-0.718 **
Constant	-6.366 **	-7.681 **	-6.126 **	-4.269 **	-7.113 **	-5.052 **
Wald Chi-square		2194.56**			2019.37**	
Pseudo R-square		0.19			0.210	
Number of observations		18,865			16,335	

* p<=0.01; **p<=.001

Source: *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000*

Table A.3. Estimated probabilities of different school and work statuses by sex. Mexico, 2000

	Women				Men			
	S	W-S	W	Neither	S	W-S	W	Neither
Age								
15	0.728	0.066	0.073	0.133	0.701	0.142	0.102	0.055
19	0.354	0.096	0.211	0.339	0.368	0.169	0.372	0.091
24	0.066	0.071	0.361	0.502	0.068	0.086	0.777	0.069
Place of Residence								
Rural	0.474	0.067	0.145	0.314	0.482	0.164	0.256	0.098
Urban	0.509	0.089	0.150	0.252	0.531	0.172	0.227	0.070
Parental Education								
No schooling or incomplete elementary	0.247	0.069	0.208	0.477	0.236	0.120	0.512	0.132
Complete elementary education	0.346	0.093	0.214	0.347	0.310	0.128	0.430	0.132
Some secondary	0.562	0.107	0.128	0.202	0.552	0.167	0.207	0.074
Some tertiary	0.668	0.063	0.108	0.162	0.670	0.177	0.111	0.042
Father's Occupation								
Not working	0.399	0.075	0.187	0.340	0.419	0.173	0.313	0.095
Agricultural Worker	0.446	0.085	0.146	0.323	0.441	0.207	0.279	0.074
Manual unskilled labor	0.479	0.078	0.169	0.274	0.448	0.140	0.326	0.087
Services unskilled labor	0.496	0.064	0.150	0.289	0.549	0.171	0.208	0.072
Manual skilled labor	0.483	0.084	0.165	0.268	0.470	0.184	0.266	0.080
Services skilled labor	0.636	0.142	0.095	0.127	0.668	0.172	0.097	0.063

Note: Studying (S), Working and Studying (W-S), Working (W), and Not Working or Studying (Neither)
The probabilities were estimated keeping all the other covariates at their mean value. The full models are included in the Appendix.

Source: *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000*

Table A.4 Results from the multinomial logistic models estimating the probability of different marriage and headship statuses by sex. Mexico, 2000

	Women		Men	
	Ever married/ Head or spouse	Other	Ever married/ Head or spouse	Other
Age	0.477 **	0.285 **	0.643 **	0.355 **
Rural (ref.)				
Urban	0.112	-0.204	0.079	0.058
No education (ref.)				
Some elementary	-0.487 *	-0.351	-0.402	0.079
Some secondary	-0.711 *	-0.612 **	-0.568	-0.256
Some tertiary	-1.124 **	-0.686 **	-1.368 **	-0.352
Not working	0.880 **	0.365	1.083 **	1.144 **
Agricultural Workers	0.321	0.053	0.419	0.621 *
Manual unskilled (ref.)				
Services unskilled labor	0.321	0.391	0.835 **	0.358
Manual skilled labor	0.363	-0.130	0.733 *	0.558 *
Services skilled labor	-1.243 **	-0.980 **	-0.292	-0.373
Constant	-11.013 **	-6.721 **	-15.891 **	-9.760 **
Wald Chi-square	114.26**		842.74**	
Pseudo R-square	0.17		0.20	
Number of observations	13,371		10,974	

* p<=0.01; **p<=.001

Source: *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000*

Table A.5. Estimated probabilities of different marriage and headship statuses by sex. Mexico, 2000

	Women			Men		
	None	Both	Either	None	Both	Either
Age						
15	0.950	0.010	0.040	0.987	0.001	0.012
19	0.829	0.062	0.109	0.936	0.017	0.048
24	0.425	0.344	0.232	0.572	0.256	0.172
Place of Residence						
Rural	0.888	0.029	0.083	0.967	0.006	0.027
Urban	0.898	0.033	0.069	0.965	0.006	0.029
Parental Education						
No schooling or incomplete elementary	0.832	0.056	0.113	0.954	0.012	0.034
Complete elementary education	0.880	0.036	0.084	0.955	0.008	0.037
Some secondary	0.904	0.030	0.066	0.966	0.007	0.027
Some tertiary	0.917	0.020	0.063	0.972	0.003	0.024
Father's Occupation						
Not working	0.817	0.073	0.111	0.919	0.013	0.068
Agricultural Worker	0.870	0.044	0.086	0.951	0.007	0.042
Manual unskilled labor	0.884	0.033	0.083	0.972	0.005	0.023
Services unskilled labor	0.840	0.043	0.117	0.957	0.011	0.032
Manual skilled labor	0.881	0.047	0.073	0.951	0.010	0.039
Services skilled labor	0.956	0.010	0.034	0.981	0.004	0.016

Note: Not Married nor Head/spouse in household (None), Either Married or Head/spouse in household (Either), Married and Head/spouse in a household (Both).
The probabilities were estimated keeping all the other covariates at their mean value. The full models are included in the Appendix.

Source: *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000*

Table A.6 Results from the multinomial logistic models estimating the probability of different marriage and parenthood statuses by sex. Mexico, 2000

	Women		Men	
	Parent-Single	Parent-Married	Parent-Single	Parent-Married
Age	0.277 **	0.408 **	0.359 **	0.553 **
Rural (ref.)				
Urban	-0.287	-0.073	0.015	-0.173
No education (ref.)				
Some elementary	-0.137	-0.403 *	-0.086	-0.295
Some secondary	-0.013	-0.716 **	0.107	-0.478
Some tertiary	-0.180	-1.044 **	-0.247	-0.728
Not working	0.023	0.723 *	0.730	0.694 *
Agricultural Workers	-0.338	0.165	0.579	0.346
Manual unskilled (ref.)				
Services unskilled labor	-0.695	0.334	0.931	0.416
Manual skilled labor	-0.036	0.140	0.900	0.545 *
Services skilled labor	-1.189 *	-1.076 **	0.873	-0.573
Constant	-7.919	-9.067 **	-11.978	-13.566 **
Wald Chi-square	1,059.65**		680.50**	
Pseudo R-square	0.19		0.21	
Number of observations	13,371		10,974	

* p<=0.01; **p<=.001

Source: *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000*

Table A.7. Estimated probabilities of different marriage and parenthood statuses by sex. Mexico, 2000

	Women			Men		
	No child	Single	Married	No child	Single	Married
Age						
15	0.964	0.012	0.024	0.994	0.002	0.003
19	0.858	0.033	0.109	0.962	0.009	0.029
24	0.470	0.072	0.458	0.651	0.037	0.312
Place of Residence						
Rural	0.911	0.026	0.063	0.981	0.005	0.014
Urban	0.921	0.020	0.059	0.983	0.005	0.011
Parental Education						
No schooling or incomplete elementary	0.869	0.023	0.108	0.976	0.005	0.019
Complete elementary education	0.904	0.021	0.075	0.981	0.005	0.014
Some secondary	0.920	0.024	0.056	0.982	0.006	0.012
Some tertiary	0.938	0.021	0.041	0.986	0.004	0.009
Father's Occupation						
Not working	0.845	0.031	0.124	0.972	0.006	0.022
Agricultural Worker	0.901	0.023	0.076	0.979	0.006	0.016
Manual unskilled labor	0.903	0.032	0.065	0.986	0.003	0.011
Services unskilled labor	0.895	0.016	0.089	0.975	0.008	0.017
Manual skilled labor	0.895	0.031	0.074	0.973	0.008	0.019
Services skilled labor	0.966	0.011	0.024	0.986	0.008	0.006

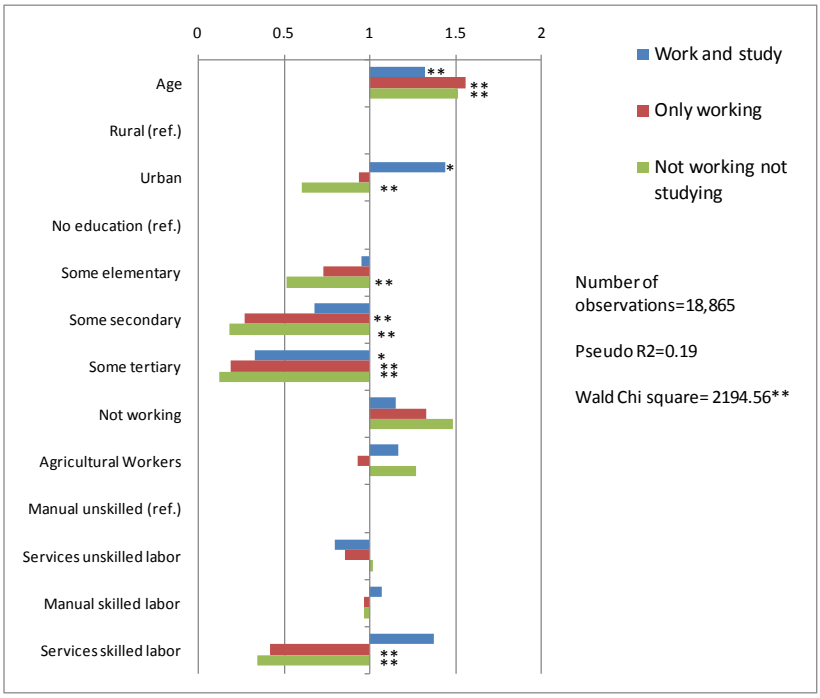
Note: Not a mother (No child), Never Married Mother (Single), and Ever Married Mother (Married).

The probabilities were estimated keeping all the other covariates at their mean value. The full models are included in the Appendix.

Source: *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000*

Figure 3. Odds ratios based on the multinomial logistic regression predicting different school and work statuses by sex (Reference: only studying). Mexico, 2000

Women

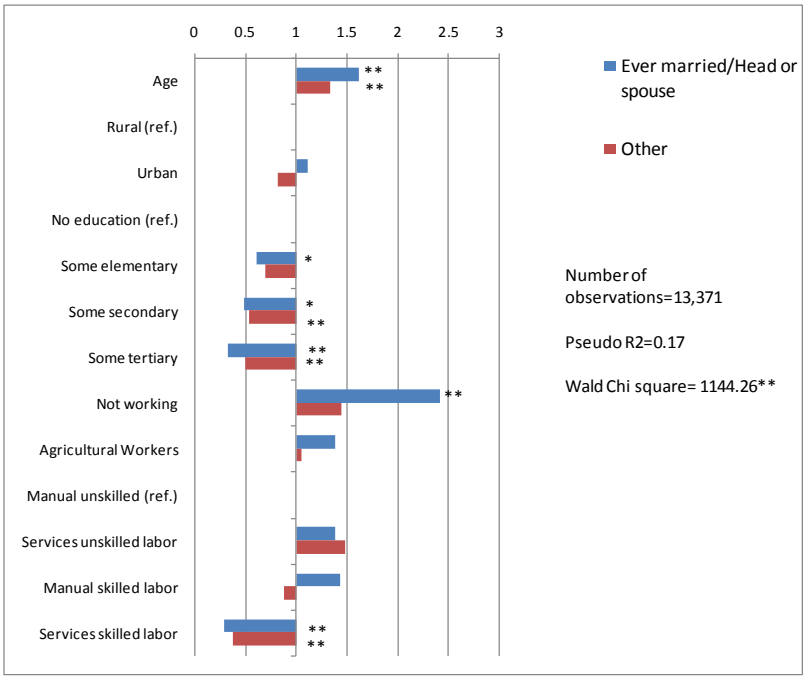


Men

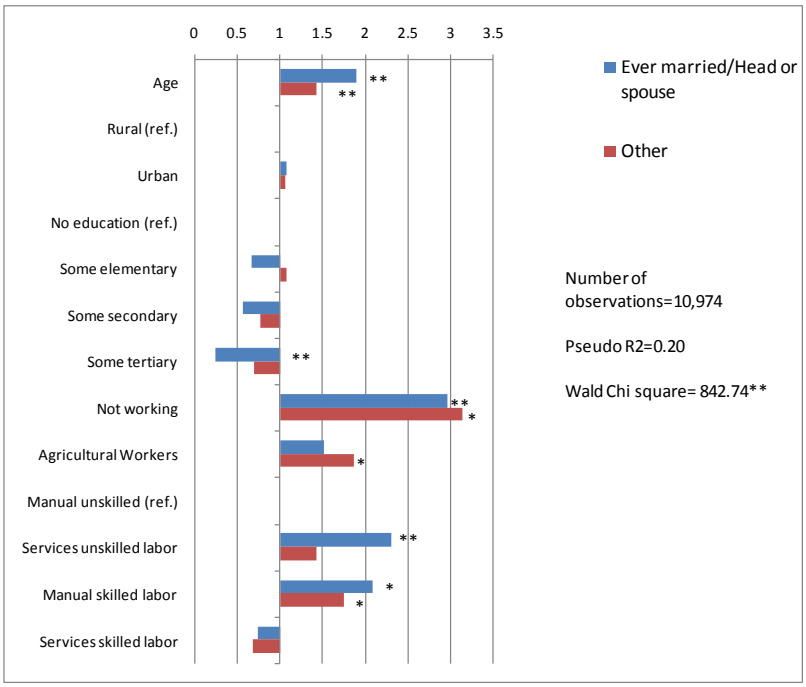
Source: *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000*

Figure 5. Odds ratios based on the multinomial logistic regression predicting different marriage and headship statuses by sex (Reference: no transition). Mexico, 2000

Women



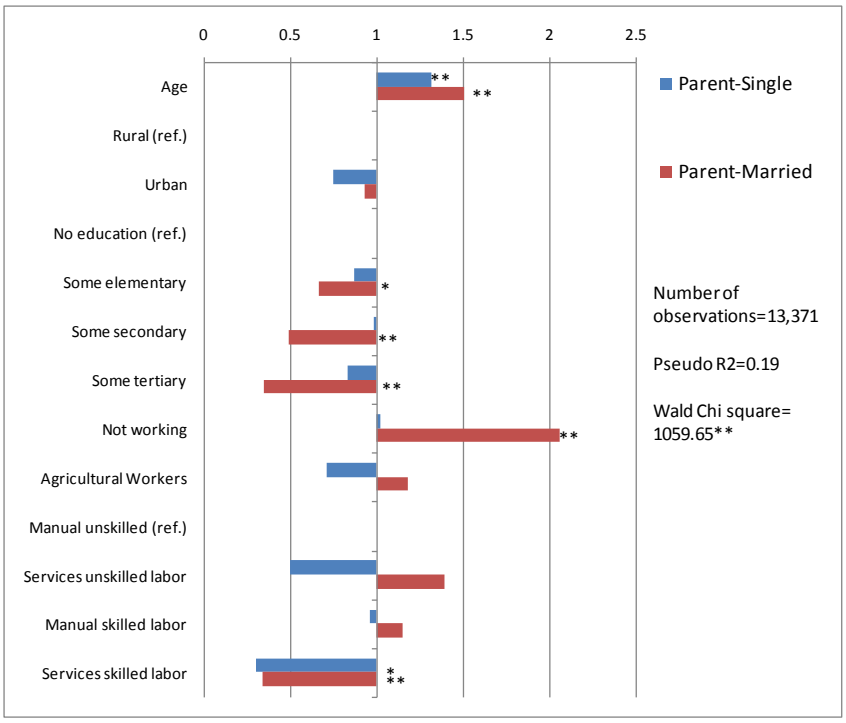
Men



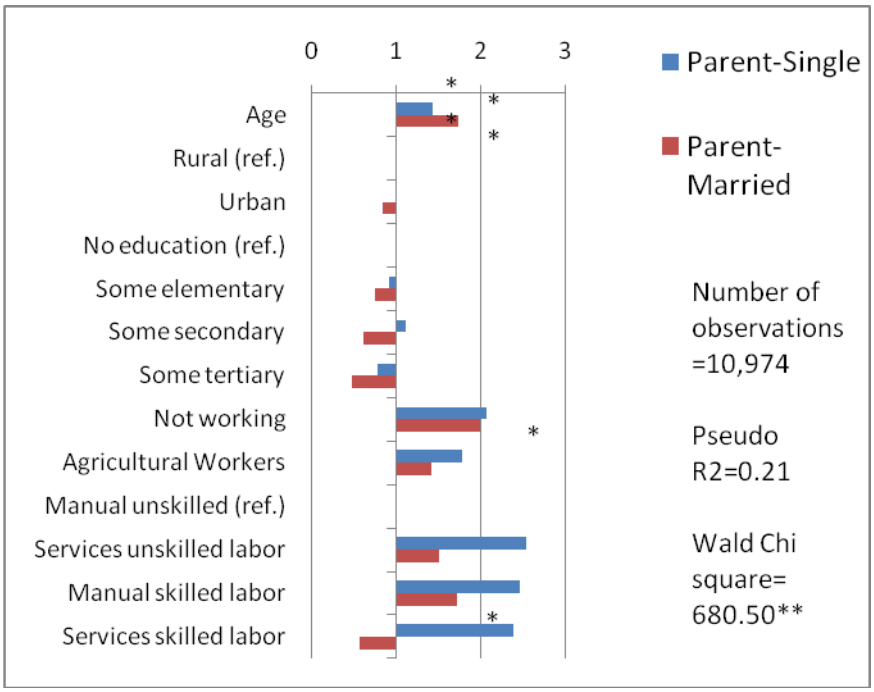
Source: *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000*

Figure 7. Odds ratios based on the multinomial logistic regression predicting different marriage and parenthood statuses by sex (Reference: no transition). Mexico, 2000

Women



Men



Source: *Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud, 2000*