

Family and Social Transitions to Adulthood of Young Men: the case of Mexico

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Extended Abstract

In the past years, our knowledge of transitions to adulthood was limited. Only recently, there has been a number of contributions in our understanding of the process from adolescence to adulthood. However, the discipline still has gaps that need to be filled, especially in methodological approaches in order to study the relationship between the various events involved in the passageway to adult life that lead to numerous pathways or trajectories - leaving education, entering work force, parental home leaving, sexual initiation, entering first partnership and entering childbearing.

In the last decades, Mexico has gone through significant socio-economic and demographic changes. During the last three decades, the population doubled its size. In 1970, the population census registered a total of almost 50 million people, and according to the 2000 population census, the population size reached 100 million. The 1970 population growth rate was extremely high, 3.1%. By 2000, it reduced to 1.4%. A process of aging of the whole population has been initiated. In 1970, the median age of the whole population was 17 years and by 2000 it increased to 22 years. Fertility began its decline during the early 1970's, going from a Total Fertility Rate of nearly 6.5 children per women to 2.4 by the year 2000. The life expectancy at birth rose from 60 years in the late 1960's to 75 years in 2000. Levels of mortality in Mexico, initiated a declining trend since the 1940's until the 1980's period, in which the reduction slow down. In the economic sphere, the rapid process of industrialization, jointly with a rapid urbanization, resulted in an increase in the female participation in the labour force and expansion of the educative system. In addition, the

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globalisation of the world has had a fast effect on the population, by transforming the attitudes and many of the behaviours.

All these changes have modified and are still modifying the practices of the population, establishing a process of modernization of the Mexican society with effects and consequences in all aspects of reproduction, traditions, customs, way of life, etc. As a result of this “new” society, Mexican young people of today are experiencing different conditions compared to those lived by their parents when they were young. Youth of today are facing different circumstances; they can opt from a variety of alternative not available in the past. For example, the meaning of marriage has changed among young people; premarital sex is more common and more accepted; pregnant unmarried women can choose to become single mothers and for those wishing to marry (shot gun marriage), men might refuse; there has been an increase in the number of women in the labour force, etc. These changes in the pathways available to young people are partly attributed to the effect of the modernization of the country. Mass media is responsible for some of new emerging pathways to adulthood. Nevertheless, this modernization of the Mexican society is accompanied by some negative effects. For example, the pandemic of AIDS and several sexual transmitted infections (STI's) affect young people of today, the labour market is more competitive and obtaining a job is more difficult, just to mention some.

In the majority of the demographic and reproductive health studies in Mexico, women were used as unit of analysis. Relatively few studies until present have focused on young people or men. This is possibly due to the very recent recognition of men as key players in the reproductive health of women and in the process of family formation (Ojeda de la Pena 1989; Lopez, Salles et al. 2001). Young men play a key role in society, in particular in a country like Mexico, which is characterized by traditional gender roles and where the decisions of men are of paramount importance within the family, the work place, the public sphere, etc.

The paper argues despite the diversity of Mexican society and the recent gains in educational attainment, patterns of social transitions are experienced at various paces by different social groups of young people (Table 1), whereas family transitions occur rather uniform among different socioeconomic clusters of young men and women (Table 2).

Therefore, the objective of the study is to examine the processes involving social (education drop out, labour force first enrolment, parental house leaving) and family (sexual initiation, first partnership and first birth) transitions in different groups of Mexican young people, and to explore the main associations between transitional events that lead to different trajectories followed by young men and women in contemporary Mexico. Applying event history techniques to retrospective data from the 2000 Mexican National Youth Survey, preliminary results suggest the lack of explanatory power of the proxies used as indicators of socioeconomic status in the occurrence of family transitions. However, the same variables show significant effects on the occurrence of social transitions.

Table 1. Mexico 2000 ENJ. Proportion having experienced school drop out, work force enrolment, and parental home leaving by age 24.

	Educational Drop out		Work Force enrolment		Parental home Leaving	
	Urban	rural	urban	rural	urban	rural
Males	82%	94%	96%	96%	48%	51%
Females	85%	94%	84%	63%	57%	63%

Source: Author's calculations.

Table 2. Mexico 2000 ENJ. Proportion having experienced sexual ,marital and childbearing transitions by age 24.

	Sexual initiation		First marriage		First birth	
	Urban	rural	urban	rural	urban	rural
Males	84%	80%	47%	55%	37%	47%
Females	72%	73%	62%	69%	59%	67%

Source: Author's calculations.

References

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