

Title: Moving Up or Moving On: The Role of Parental Aspirations to Migrate in their Children's Education in Mexico

Mathew Creighton

INTRODUCTION:

An important social consequence of parental aspirations to migrate domestically and internationally is on the educational trajectory of their children. This is particularly relevant in the context of Mexico given the large amount of internal migration as well as the strong and active migratory relationship with the United States. Being open to, envisioning, or actively planning a future move could influence the degree of emphasis an individual or their parent place on schooling. Importantly, the role of migratory aspirations in an individual's own educational trajectory could be distinct from that of his/her child as migration decisions consider members of the family beyond those who might undertake the move (Stark and Bloom 1985). For example, forgoing education to prepare for a migration may have the opposite relationship with dependents who may be the intended beneficiaries of the move. In this way, parental aspirations to migrate and their child's educational outcomes may differ from the relationship between a parent's aspirations to migrate and their own education. In this study, we use data from the first wave of the Mexican Family Life Survey (MxFLS-1) to measure the association between a parent's aspiration to a future migration and a child's enrollment in school. The goal is to build upon previous work that has linked past migration and an increased orientation toward future migration to an individual's own education, looking at how these different orientations affect other members of the family, focusing on educational outcomes of children. Understanding the implications of aspirations to migrate across generations is fundamental to assessing the long-term social consequences of migration.

THE LINK BETWEEN ASPIRATIONS TO MIGRATE AND EDUCATION:

Pathways linking aspirations to migrate, migration and education, rooted in the work of Kandel (2003), Kandel and Kao (2000), and Kuhn (2006) are defined by a number of countervailing relationships. In the case of international migration, potential negative consequences are generally tied to the disruptive nature of migration for those left behind and the perceived limited utility of available education at the place of destination (Kandel and Kao 2000). If only these factors are considered, aspirations to international migration would have a negative association with the educational attainment of an individual as well as his/her child. However, a **child** of an aspiring migrant may not be negatively affected by perceived limited returns to education in the destination country as parental aspirations to migrate may not extend to the child. In this scenario, a child would perhaps experience disruptions in terms of parental proximity, but, unlike the parent who aspires to move, his/her educational trajectory would be independent of the perceived utility of education at the intended destination. As a potential positive consequence of a future move could be an increased household budget for educational expenditure due to remittances and the absence of a household member, aspiring to migrate may imply a greater focus on the child's education and would therefore have a positive relationship (Taylor 1987). Families in this scenario would be focused on mobility within the country of origin and would therefore consider education to be of a greater priority than if they expected their child to also be oriented toward a future

international move. From this perspective, aspiring to move may signal a long-term strategy compatible with educational support for the child. The work presented here seeks to focus on the migratory aspirations of the parent, specifically looking to clarify the role these aspirations play in the educational trajectory of the child.

Aspirations and the Culture of Migration:

A primary pathway through which migratory aspirations are linked to education is through the culture of migration, which posits that families, households, and communities that are networked directly and indirectly to migration become oriented toward a future move (Kandel and Massey 2002). This theoretical framework has been used to describe migration flows that cannot be explained simply by economic self interest, but has implications for educational attainment as well. In the case of international migration, the theoretical link is one in which exposure to migration triggers migratory aspirations. For example, the reception of economic benefits from past and current migration, often in the form of remittances from a spouse or relative, acts as a trigger, shifting non-migrant beneficiaries' orientation toward a future move. Findings in Morocco indicate that the reception of remittances is significantly and positively associated with migratory intentions (Dalen, Groenewold, and Fokkema 2005).

This shift in orientation could have negative consequences for an individual's schooling as aspiring to migrate to the U.S. results in reduced incentive to invest in schooling as "the U.S. labor market does not reward educational investment acquired in Mexico to anywhere near the degree that the Mexican labor market does" (Kandel and Kao 2000). Kandel and Kao (2000) find that in the case of Mexico, the migration history of a father is positively associated with aspirations to work in the United States and negatively associated with aspiring to attend a university suggesting that international migration may be perceived as an alternative to continued educational attainment en route to a better income or quality of life. In addition, students with past and/or current exposure to migration are associated with higher GPAs, but reduced odds of aspiring to college enrollment (Kandel and Kao 2001). Despite the findings of a negative association between migratory aspirations and education for individuals, the role of a parent's orientation toward a future migration in the educational outcomes of other family members, particularly children, remains unexplored.

Domestic vs. International Migratory Aspirations:

Some empirical evidence suggests that this relationship may differ depending on the intended destination. Individuals who are over-qualified for their local occupational options may choose internal migration, but their under-skilled equivalents will prefer international migration (Quinn and Rubb 2005). Similarly, the idea of moving domestically versus making a move internationally could imply different degrees of academic preparation depending on the perceived future utility of education in the destination and its value at the point of origin. In other words, a parent's stated goal of a future international or domestic move could be associated with a reduced or increased incentive to continue their own education.

The implications for a child of an aspiring migrant could be positive in that the move could imply an effort to provide resources to the family, some of which could be used for schooling. In the domestic context, this would be helped by the positive feedback of

migratory intentions for other members of a household. In other words, parents that aspire to domestic migration could both be taking steps to support their child's education and be indirectly passing on an incentive to continue schooling as part of an inherited desire to pursue a similar migration. In the international context, the implicit emphasis on securing resources that could be beneficial for a child's education would be present, but the feedback of passing on a desire to migrate internationally to the child would be tied to the perceived utility of education at the destination, which would be negative in the U.S.-Mexico case. These distinctions result in the following testable hypotheses.

HYPOTHESES:

H1: In Mexico, having a parent who aspires to migrate domestically will be significantly and positively associated with being enrolled in school.

H2: In Mexico, having a parent who aspires to migrate internationally will not be significantly associated with being enrolled in school.

DATA AND METHODS:

The Mexican Family Life Survey is a longitudinal survey with the first wave (MxFLS-1) completed in August of 2002. MxFLS-1 includes extensive data on migration, education, and remittances for 8,440 households in 150 communities, composed of around 38,000 individuals. Education and migration were both instruments in MxFLS-1 and retrospective migration and education histories were collected at the baseline. The study design is generalizable to private dwellings nationally and regionally.

The outcome of interest is the current enrollment status of children between the ages of 5 and 18. The education information contained in MxFLS-1 includes completed level and year as well as interruptions, repeated grades, and the reception of state support for children 15 or younger. The resulting education histories allow for the reconstruction of the current educational status and educational history of all sampled individuals.

The explanatory variable is the migratory aspirations of a sample child's parents. These aspirations are divided separately for mothers and fathers into those that are considering a domestic move and those that are oriented toward international migration. Parents with no migratory aspirations are considered the reference.

The modeling strategy is to look at the association between a parent's aspiration to migrate and the odds of their child being enrolled in school at the time of MxFLS-1. A second set of models will be estimated using the second wave of the Mexican Family Survey (MxFLS-2), which was collected in 2005. Of those sampled in MxFLS-1, 94% were located in MxFLS-2 (Rubalcava, Teruel, Thomas, and Goldman 2007). These models will consider the parental aspirations at wave one and the change in enrollment status between the two waves. Controls for the educational and migratory background of the parents, the core demographic characteristics of the child, and the economic and geographic context of the household will be considered.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS:

Table 1 shows preliminary findings looking at the association between the migratory aspirations of parents and the school enrollment status of their children using MxFLS-1.

Two separate models were estimated for elementary school age (6 to 12 years old) and middle and high school age (12 to 18 years old) children. Although few controls were included in the model, model 2 supports H2 for elementary age children in that there is no significant association between mothers or a fathers aspiring to migrate internationally and the enrollment status of their children.

For middle and high school age children, model 2 is supportive of both H1 and H2. In support of the first hypothesis, having a mother who aspires to migrate domestically is significantly and positively associated with being enrolled in school. In support of the second hypothesis, these preliminary findings suggest that there is no significant association between a mother or father aspiring to migrate internationally and the enrollment status of the child. These findings are far from conclusive as controls for the migratory background of the parents, the core demographic characteristics of the child, and the economic and geographic context of the household have yet to be included. In addition, information about enrollment status of the child subsequent to the measure of parental migratory aspirations, derived from MxFLS-2, has yet to be included in the model.

Table 1: Logistic Regression of the Effect of Parental Aspirations to Migrate on School Enrollment of Children in Mexico

	Elementary School				Middle and High School			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	Odds Ratio	(z)	Odds Ratio	(z)	Odds Ratio	(z)	Odds Ratio	(z)
Aspirations to Migrate:								
Mother (ref. No Aspirations)								
Domestic	0.49	(-1.460)	0.28	(-2.460) *	2.81	(3.370) **	1.97	(2.280) *
International	1.99	(0.640)	1.49	(0.370)	0.74	(-0.830)	0.69	(-1.000)
Father (ref. No Aspirations)								
Domestic	3.73	(1.340)	3.27	(1.240)	1.49	(1.290)	1.30	(0.800)
International	0.39	(-1.190)	0.26	(-1.560)	0.59	(-1.160)	0.62	(-1.020)
Parental Education:								
Mother (ref. No Formal Education)								
Elementary School (1-6 years)			1.83	(1.700) +			1.55	(3.090) **
Middle School (6-9 years)			5.43	(3.210) **			2.43	(4.550) ***
High School or More (9+ years)			12.37	(2.290) *			5.75	(4.860) ***
Father (ref. No Formal Education)								
Elementary School (1-6 years)			1.75	(1.450)			1.10	(0.620)
Middle School (6-9 years)			3.78	(2.620) **			1.58	(2.430) *
High School or More (9+ years)			3.46	(1.530)			3.93	(4.960) ***
Sex of Child (1=male)			0.98	(-0.100)			0.97	(-0.290)
Pseudo R ²	0.010		0.086		0.009		0.069	
n	2,850		2,850		2,169		2,169	

Source: MxFLS-1

Note: All estimates use robust standard errors to adjust for clustering within households.

+ $p \leq .10$, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

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