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Divided families, fractured schooling, in Mexico:  
educational consequences of children exposition  
to international migration

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# DIVIDED FAMILIES, FRACTURED SCHOOLING, IN MEXICO: EDUCATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF CHILDREN EXPOSITION TO INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION<sup>1</sup>

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This document aims to identify and analyze the consequences of international migration movements on the school itineraries and aspirations of children who have been exposed to international migration between Mexico and the United States (U.S.). Some of these children are active actors of migratory flows because they moved from one country to another. Others are not active migrants; however, given the fact that they belong to divided families due to international migration, they are exposed to the impacts of their family members' decisions. Consequently, two critical components of their migratory experiences will be the focus of our analysis. Firstly, we will analyze their school trajectory and secondly the family dispersion due to their migratory decisions. The first component includes what we identified as “fractured schooling”, that is to say, children who started their education in one country, continued it in other country, and then returned to attend new schools in their country of origin. The second component involves the family's decisions, which entail short or prolonged separation. That is what we refer to as “divided families”. Both components have impacts on the educational itineraries of children. Our purpose is to identify, measure, and describe some of those impacts.

Our surveys on this matter (Zúñiga, Hamann and Sánchez 2008), have allowed us to distinguish four different types of Mexican children's exposure to international migration. First of all, there are those children who were born in Mexico, but moved to the U.S. at some point; generally with their parents or at least with one of them and continued living in the U.S. Most U.S scholars have identified these children as the *1.5-generation migrants* (Gonzales and Chávez 2012; Ko and Perreira 2010), in total they added up to more or less 800 000 in 2011 ages 5-17 (Giorguli *et al.* forthcoming). In general, these children are members of working class families and are characterized by their social and educational vulnerability (Gandara and Contreras 2009). Nonetheless, this document will not discuss the realities of this first type of migrant children, although there are several studies in the U.S. migration literature that have focused closely on this issue.

The second type of children includes *children returnees*. These children were born in Mexico, eventually left to the U.S. (generally with their parents or at least one of them) and after some period of residency in the U.S., returned to Mexico. In general, those students started their schooling in Mexico and were enrolled in American schools and later returned to continue their education in Mexico. We estimated in 2010 that there were about 350 000 children returnees (Zúñiga and Hamann 2013).

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Thirdly, we distinguished the children who were born in the U.S. and came to Mexico for the first time in their lives, we will refer to them as: *international migrants* because this is indeed what they are. They have simply crossed the border and moved from one country to another. So, they do not simply return to Mexico even if they are Mexicans because of their parents' nationality. Some of them have had school experiences in American schools; some others arrived to Mexico before being school-aged. The Mexican Population Census in 2010 showed that about 500 000 children and youngsters (ages 0 to 18) were born in the U.S. and were living in Mexico (Giorguli and Gutiérrez 2011).

Fourthly, we have a number of children who belong, during a variable period of their lives, to families divided by the borders. This is the case of those who are studying in Mexico while their fathers, mothers, siblings, etc. are in the U.S. We decided to name this fourth category as *children left at home*. National estimations of the children left at home are not available, however, as we are going to discuss below, they are significantly more than the children who are active migrants. Nonetheless, this document will focus on the children living in Mexico, which we actually found in the Mexican territory (types 2, 3 and 4).

The categories described above are in fact a lot more complicated than they might seem as they could perhaps overlap each other. Often, *children returnees* and *international migrant children* also experienced family separation at different stages of their lives. Thus, those children are –or have been– *children left at home*. More overly, what complicates even more our typologies is the combination of the above given criteria:

- a) Children exposed to international migration who are themselves international migrants, while others aren't;
- b) Children who were born in the U. S., some others in Mexico;
- c) Children who are living separated from their parents –because of international migration–, others aren't, and
- d) Children who were separated from their families, and lastly some others who have never experienced family separation (because of international migration).

In fact, as we will show below, the probability of experiencing family separation is higher among active international migrant children than among non-migrant children (those who have never migrated from one country to another). It confirms what we know about transnational families. Nowadays, family dispersion is one of the singular features of transnational families.

We could then imply that these dynamics are worldwide dynamics. Quantitatively speaking, a recent survey done by UNICEF Save the Children Organization has indicated that 25 per cent of the worldwide children population in selected sending countries is estimated to have at least one parent abroad (Mazzucato 2011, Glick 2010, Stark 1991). In this sense, transnational families encompass a complex phenomenon, and show us how the ways in which human beings are doing “family” are becoming increasingly pluralized and relationships ever more less clear-cut (Grillo 2008). Researchers have described these families as transnational because not only do they involve themselves in mobility around continents and nations, but even when established and settled they play off strategies which overpass the boundaries of generations, complex webs of relationships and physical borders (L. Ryan, R. Sale, M. Tilki and B. Sara 2009; Schamlzbauer 2004, Guarnizo, Portes and Landolt 1998; Martiniello 2006).

On the other hand, transnational families are indeed not a new phenomenon for historians had already confirmed similar patterns in the past. However, they seem to be a proof of how modern technology and the relative affordability of international transport developments have allowed certain familial configura-

tions to maintain themselves even across distances (Foner 2009; Perlman & Waldinger 1999). Although some researchers have considered them as a temporary syndrome of globalization, evidence suggests that perhaps in the future they will become rather than an exception to the rule, an evidently important element to take into consideration when studying the contemporary dynamics of international migration (Martiniello 2006; Goulbourne, Reynolds, Solomos, Zontini 2011). In the case of this document they become an indispensable tool that could certainly help us to analyze the school trajectories of our subjects of study. Having had clarified the aims and goals of this document through the following section we will describe the methodology used in the fieldwork analyzed through this document, in order to then draw into the analysis of the categories announced in this introduction.

## SOURCES

In order to achieve our main goal and analyze the consequences of international migration on the educational trajectories of children in Mexico, we decided to use the results of our more recent survey conducted in the school system of Jalisco, which is located in the central western region of the country (*Migración Internacional y Educación en Jalisco* UDEM/Secretaría de Educación de Jalisco, database 2010). From this survey, we got information about a representative sample of 9 701 children and adolescents attending from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 183 public and private schools of the state.

Jalisco is recognized as one of the most historical migratory regions in Mexico with more of one hundred years of circulatory flows from Mexico to the U.S. and vice-versa. In addition to this, Jalisco is one of the most populated states in the country with more than 7 million inhabitants in 2010. Across the school year 2010/2012, precisely when we conducted the survey, its school system (grades 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>) had more than 1 348 000 students.

The survey used a representative sample of students enrolled in elementary (1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade) and secondary schools (7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade), public and private. We randomly selected 183 schools from a universe of 7 787 taking into account two criteria of selection: a) rural/urban locals and b) intensity of international migration in each municipality. This procedure allowed us to get a sample that represented small localities as well as big cities, and regions with a high migratory intensity as well as those with a low intensity.

Once in the schools, we randomly selected one classroom in each grade and asked every child to respond a questionnaire. Our experience showed us that the smallest children (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade) experienced certain difficulties to respond a written questionnaire. This explains why we decided, for the purpose of this article, to only use the responses given by older children (4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grades, formally 9 to 16 years old). This methodology then guided us to survey 9 701 children.

## RETURNEES, INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS AND CHILDREN LEFT AT HOME, IN JALISCO: QUANTITATIVE ESTIMATIONS

On Table 1 we are able to see the distribution of children enrolled in 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grades who responded to the questions about their own migratory experience and about their family trajectories. From this survey, we estimated that 1.8 per cent of children were *returnees*. This means that approximately between 19 000 and 24 000 children enrolled in the Jalisco school system, in 2010, were born in Mexico, migrated to the U. S. in some period of their lives and then returned to Mexico.

	Family separation	A period separated from their father (because of migration)			A period separated from their mother (because of migration)		
Migration		Yes	No	Subtotal	Yes	No	Subtotal
Migrant children	Returnees (born in Mexico)	112 (1.2%)	52 (0.6%)	164 (1.8%)	45 (0.5%)	110 (1.2%)	155 (1.7%)
	International migrants (born in the U. S.)	133 (1.5%)	94 (1.1%)	227 (2.6%)	47 (0.5%)	175 (1.9%)	222 (2.4%)
Non migrants	(born in Mexico)	2,170 (24.1%)	6,437 (71.5%)	8,607 (95.6%)	242 (2.7%)	8,360 (93.2%)	8,602 (95.9%)
Total		2,415 (26.8%)	6,583 (73.2%)	8,998 (100%)	334 (3.7%)	8,645 (96.3%)	8,979 (100%)

**Table 1 - Children's (9-16 years old) exposure to international migration, the case of Jalisco, Mexico, 2010.**

Source: Universidad de Monterrey/Secretaría de Educación de Jalisco survey, November-December 2010 (N= 9701).

*International Migrants children* represented 2.5 per cent of the sample. They were born in the U.S. and as of the day of the survey, they were in Mexico and continued their education in a Mexican school. We can estimate that those children were between 30 000 and 36 000. Children with any personal international migration experience were the majority (95.7 per cent), however, about a quarter of them can be classified as *children left at home* (Dreby 2010a) because they experienced (or are experiencing) separation from their fathers, and about 4 per cent of them, from their mothers, due to international migration. Thus, we found that *children left at home* were between 340 000 and 375 000.

The data included in Table 1 allowed us to get another conclusion. The probability of experiencing family separation is higher for children who have participated actively in international migratory journeys than for non migrant children. For instance, 59 per cent (133/227) of international migrant children (born in the U.S.) and 68 per cent (112/164) of children returnees knew what being separated from their father meant while only 25 per cent (2 170/8 607) of non-migrants knew what this meant. Those differences are more pronounced for mother's separation as 21 per cent (47/222) of international migrant children knew what living separated from their mothers meant, and as for children returnees 29 per cent (45/155) had a positive answer to this question and finally only 3 per cent (242/8 602) of non-migrants knew what this meant. The probability of being separated from their mothers is seven to ten times higher for the first two types of children than for non-migrant children. These observations confirm, once again, one of the most singular features of transnational families: geographical dispersion. Children returnees and international migrant children belong to dislocated families, moving from one country to another, taking advantage of the given opportunities, facing challenges, and avoiding risks (Glick 2010; Grillo 2008; Mazzucato and Schans 2008).

### REPEATING/MISSING SCHOOL YEARS

The highest educational risk faced by international migrant children is to drop out of school. Unfortunately, our methodology impedes us to measure this type of negative consequence on Mexican children because we conducted our surveys inside the schools. So, we did not find children who stopped their school

trajectories. Instead of measuring the dropout rates among migrant children, we considered asking them about school year repetition and missed school years that could have been a result of a decision related to migration.

School year repetition is usually the result of the school principals' decisions, both in Mexican and in U. S. schools. Children testimonies show how they have suffered the consequences of impersonal resolution in the following terms: if the student finished, for example, the 5<sup>th</sup> grade in one country, he/she was forced to repeat the same school year in the other country. This, of course, as they often get the message from school officials that they have failed to learn what they had to learn in order to follow on with a regular school trajectory.

Missing school years are the consequence of the mismatch timing between the school's official calendars and the dates when the migratory decisions were taken. Children testimonies show how they could not be signed up in schools because they arrived to their destinations for example in the month of February. The inflexibility of dates (admission, registration, accommodation, etc.) is more visible in Mexican schools than in American ones. The consequences are automatic: these children miss the entire school year and have to wait for the official back to school dates to restart a new school year.

We divided our sample in nine groups taking into account the experience of family separation - especially separation from parents - and the type of migratory movement. Table 2 shows these results. The differences are visible when comparing the children who have experienced international journeys (returnees and international migrants) with those who had lived their whole lives in Mexico. The first group missed and/or repeated school years more frequently than those who had lived their entire lives in Mexico. Indeed, the evidence shows that school systems did not respond to international migrant children's needs. Schools are still being conceived as instruments serving immovable, stationary children.

On the other hand, the experience of family dispersion seems not to be very important when explaining why children miss or repeat school years. Instead, data on Table 2 shows that fractured schooling is more clearly associated with children's dislocated geographies than with family separation experiences. However, comparing the two categories of non migrant children (those who were left at home to those who did not have the experience of being separated from their parents) we can identify some differences, particularly for the children who were separated from their mothers because of international migration. These children repeated school years not because they moved from one country to another one, but because they faced emotional troubles probably associated with their families' separation. In a longitudinal

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study, Dreby (2010b) described the cases of children and adolescents left at home who suffered the consequences of belonging to divided families. One particular consequence is school failure and dropout.

We also learned, from our in-depth interviews with returnees and international migrant children that they subjectively experienced pain in moving from one school system to the other. Our interview with Angel (Zacatecas, North Central Mexican State, November 2005) could illustrate, as a synecdoche, what migrant children feel:

- V: How old are you, Angel?  
 A: *I am 15 [he is older than his peers in the classroom]. It happened that they decided to bring me down in school.*  
 V: Did you repeat a school year there (in the U.S.)?  
 A: *No, here (in Mexico).*  
 V: How many years did you lose?  
 A: *Two, one because I repeated a school year and the other one because I failed in school.*  
 V: Did you lose two years?  
 A: *Yes, just because I came back from there (the U.S.).*  
 V: How do you feel about that?  
 A: *Bad, so bad.*

Experiencing international migration and returning migration during early ages carries not only linguistic, content, and school practices' ruptures (Coe *et al.* 2011) but it also certainly complicates school trajectories themselves in two different ways (Hamann and Zúñiga, 2011). Firstly, returnees have often experienced

Family separation		Percentage of children missing/repeating school years		
		One or more years	None	
Children experiencing separation from	Father	Returnees	23%	77%
		International migrants	21%	79%
		Left behind	7%	93%
	Mother	Returnees	27%	73%
		International migrants	31%	69%
		Left behind	9%	91%
Without experience of separation	Returnees	38%	62%	
	International migrants	22%	78%	
	Non migrants	5%	95%	

**Table 2 - Missing/repeating school years, children (9-16 years old) of Jalisco, Mexico, 2010.**

Source: Universidad de Monterrey/Secretaría de Educación de Jalisco survey, November-December 2010 (N= 9701).



school year repetition, both in the U. S. and Mexico. 1 out of 4 of returnees repeated one school year. We also found that 5 per cent of returnees repeated more than one school year (two or three). In addition to school year repetition, returnees have lost entire school years for different reasons. The most important reason to miss a school year is often the mismatching times between school calendars and the days in which the migration decision is taken. Almost 8 per cent of young migrant returnees in Jalisco lost a school year because they could not restart school given the date they arrived to Mexico. Secondly, as an inevitable consequence, returnees are often “students left behind”. By this we mean: students who lag behind in Mexican schools, generally as many as 1 or 2 years, as Angel narrated in the interview.

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#### PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL SUCCESS IN THE U.S. AND MEXICO

Our survey asked the children to describe in a simple way their own success in school. Children were then asked to classify their success in one of the following categories:

- a) My grades are bad
- b) My grades are average
- c) My grades are good, and
- d) My grades are excellent.



In another section of the questionnaire, we asked the children who attended schools in the U.S. to compare their grades in their Mexican school with those they got in the U.S.

The result of the first exercise is the following distribution: 4 per cent of 9 701 students acknowledged that their grades were bad; 47 per cent choose the level “my grades are average”; 40 per cent thought that their grades were “good”, and finally only 9 per cent considered their grades as “excellent”.

Interestingly, the proportion of self declared “bad-graders” children increases when they experienced separation from their mothers (6 per cent of them) in contrast of only 3.8 per cent of children who never separated from their mothers. Moreover, the combination of the following variables increased even more the proportion of “bad-graders”: children born in Mexico, who never lived in the U.S. but who experienced separation from their mothers presented the highest proportion of bad-graders-perception (8 per cent). Among this last group (n=236), we found one of the lowest proportions of children who had the perception that they were achieving “excellent” grades. Quite the opposite we observed within the children who were born in the U. S. and were enrolled in the U. S. schools and did not have the experience of being separated from their mothers: almost 16 per cent of them leveled themselves as “excellent-students”.

The survey also allowed us to compare the perceived scholarly success in Mexican schools with the perceived scholarly success in American schools for the children who attended school in both countries. We did this by asking the children about their grades in American and Mexican schools. The questions were: “In general, how are your grades in school, now?” “In general, how were your grades in the schools” and “In the U.S. where you were studying?” A sub-sample of 275 children was actually able to do this exercise.

Again, here, respondents classified their school grades in four categories: “bad”, “average”, “good”, “excellent”. Table 3 presents the results of these comparison; they are telling. First of all, the proportion of children reporting “excellent” grades is higher in U.S. schools. The table shows that a third of them (84/275) considered they got “excellent” notes in the U.S. while only 11 per cent when they were in Mexico. Second, almost half of them (46 per cent, 127/275) felt that their grades decreased in Mexican schools. Some of them even went down from “excellent” grades in the U.S. to “bad” grades in Mexico (n=2) or “average” (n=22). Only 11 per cent of children seemed to improve their school achievement in Mexico (for instance, to move from “average” grades to “good” grades, etc.). Third, among the 84 children who reported “excellent” grades in U.S. schools, only 17 (20 per cent) considered they continue being “excellent” students in Mexico.

The data give us an idea about one of the most painful consequences of fractured schooling: migrant children, returnees or not, moving from one school system to another, sense they lost their capacity of being successful. They believe they achieved better in the school system they left behind. Additionally, the data

<i>Grades in the U. S.</i>	<i>Grades in Mexico</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>Bad</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>	
<i>Bad</i>	0	1	2	1	4
<i>Average</i>	2	33	13	2	50
<i>Good</i>	4	54	68	11	137
<i>Excellent</i>	2	22	43	17	84
<i>Total</i>	8	110	126	31	275

**Table 3 - Comparing school grades in American schools with grades in Mexican schools, children (9-16 years old) of Jalisco, Mexico, 2010.**  
Source: Universidad de Monterrey/ Secretaría de Educación de Jalisco survey, November-December 2010 (N= 9701).

pointed out to other important issues which, we shall not discuss in this particular document: Mexican schools and teachers are not prepared to welcome transnational children (Zúñiga 2012). In fact, both children returnees, and international migrant children feel they equally lost their capacity to be successful when they return to Mexico.

Nonetheless, transnational students provided us with an interesting piece of information (those who previously were attending school in the U.S.) when we asked them the reasons behind their grades in American schools. The “excellent” graders students named reasons in the questionnaire such as: “*I learned more [in the U.S.]*”, “*I was the best student in the school*”, “*I was the favorite student of my teacher*”, “*I understand better English [than Spanish]*”, “*The school was easier [in the U.S.]*”, “*Teachers congratulated my parents*”, “*I liked the school*”, “*I liked to study there, here is boring*”, “*Teachers motivated me to study*”, “*Teachers recognized my work*”. In general, successful children’s explanations emphasized the attitudes of teachers who cared for their learning processes. On the contrary, children who classified themselves as “bad” or “average” graders in American schools generally pointed out to the language barriers as sources of their poor school achievement.

The minimum level of education demanded by the contemporary Mexican labor market is a second diploma entitled: secondary school diploma (*certificado de secundaria*), which 3 years to complete.

### SCHOOL ASPIRATIONS

Besides the student self image of school success, our survey asked children and youngsters about their school aspirations. The school system in Mexico is divided into four main levels after kindergarten. First, there is elementary school (*primaria*), which lasts six years and allows students to get the more basic diploma (*certificado de primaria*). There was a moment in time in which, the elementary school diploma had some value in the Mexican labor market; as it was required in order to be employed in the lowest positions in organizations and enterprises. Today, this certification is not even useful for the less qualified activities in the modern economy. The minimum level of education demanded by the contemporary Mexican labor market is a second diploma entitled: secondary school diploma (*certificado de secundaria*), which 3 years to complete.

Surprisingly and unfortunately, we found some students in our sample who responded that their educational aspiration was simply to finish elementary (1.2 per cent) or secondary school (6.6 per cent). In other words, they feel as though they might have lost their ambitions, as though they couldn’t aim to be successful in school.

The third school diploma is the high school diploma (*certificado de preparatoria*), which takes two or three additional years to complete.

Children who selected low or very low educational levels showed that they are accepting to live as members of the poorest social strata.

It represents some advantage in the context of the contemporary labor market; however it does not allow people to get qualified positions and high salaries. Almost 10 per cent out of our sample choose this option as a personal aspiration. Indeed, again, these students have no high expectations about themselves (or perhaps they match their ambitions to their own family's economical resources).

The fourth educational level is what is known in Mexico as: "technical education" (*educación técnica*), a kind of vocational preparation for qualified activities in industries, services, banks, and trade. It varies from three to four years after secondary school or two years after high school. Almost 16 per cent of the students from our sample responded that they expected to accomplish these technical programs.

Finally, as it is in many countries, a college diploma is the highest diploma (*título de licenciatura*). It includes four to seven years after high school, depending on the type of program selected by the students. 67 per cent of the surveyed students declared that their educational aspiration was to get a university diploma.

Our question of depart, in this section was to understand how the migratory experience, family separation, and fractured school trajectories influenced the envisioned educational goals of children and adolescents. The analysis of our databases showed multiple and apparently contradictory conditions that affected the school aspirations of youngsters, in the following terms:

- Family separation: the experience of living separated from mothers had a small impact on the children school aspirations, but the combination of living separated from fathers and mothers reduced significantly children ambitions;



- Fractured schooling: the opposite happened when we observed the influence of transnational schooling on children aspirations. Students who attended schools in the U. S. before arriving or returning to Mexico are clearly more ambitious; the proportion of those who declare their desire to get a university diploma reaches 77 per cent;
- Binational status: children who were born in the U.S. had higher school aspirations than those who were born in Mexico.

In one way, we can interpret the children's school aspirations as preliminary definitions of their adult life goals and what children expect to achieve. Children who selected low or very low educational levels showed that they are accepting to live as members of the poorest social strata. They are probably convinced that they cannot change their own current conditions given the educational opportunities they find in the localities or regions in which they live. In fact, our data show that the proportion of children who expressed the lowest educational aspiration varies significantly from rural to urban localities and from small urban localities to big cities. For instance, we found 34 per cent of children with low school aspiration in the *Sierra Occidental* region (that includes eight rural municipalities of Jalisco). In contrast, only 11% of children enrolled in the schools of Guadalajara metropolitan area declared low school aspirations. In other words, school aspirations are a function of social classes and the real educational options children find in the specific contexts in which they live. However, binational children, even if they lived in a small, rural town, knew they could aspire to more than their peers because they have a dual nationality. They are conscious of their rights in the U.S. and eventually they are going to return there.

### EXPERIENCING FRACTURED SCHOOLING, BELONGING TO DIVIDED FAMILIES

We decided in this section to transcribe a fragment of an interview conducted by one of the researchers in our team in February of 2010 in a school located in a small town of the state of Puebla (central Mexico). Ari is a thirteen-year-old girl born in Los Angeles and raised in San Francisco. Her words and story show us how very intermingled are the fractured school itineraries with family geographical dispersion in the context of contemporary transnational working class journeys and movements. We felt like we needed to privilege Ari's voice because the statistical analyses presented above do not appropriately communicate the objective and subjective children's cosmologies.

- T: We wanted to know how was your life in the U.S., places you lived, time you spent there [originally in Spanish].
- A: *I lived there all my life, from my birthday until 11 years old* [originally in Spanish].
- T: You were born, where? [originally in Spanish]
- A: *Los Angeles, California.*
- T: Are there other places where you lived or only in Los Angeles? [originally in Spanish]
- A: *I was born in Los Angeles, but I was raised in San Francisco* [originally in Spanish].
- T: Wow, San Francisco, where we can see that beautiful bridge [in Spanish]. Do you want to speak in English?

- A: *Yeah.*
- T: Ok. Then I'll take over. We should introduce ourselves, my name is... but the reason I speak English well is because I am from the United States. I know that you went to... and then you went to 10th Street Elementary [the name of the school].
- A: *Yeah, that was in Los Angeles.*
- T: Do you remember what grades you did in that school?
- A: *When I went to [name of the school] I studied kinder and then first grade of school and then I finished like 4th grade and then transferred.*
- T: Why did you switch schools?
- A: *First of all, in [name of the school] I was there my whole life but we changed because my mom wanted to go to 10th street and then my mom came over here so my brothers send me over there to Los Angeles because my whole family is right there and to see my brothers and then when we went back. First we went to Zacatecas and then we came over here.*
- T: Ok, so let me see if I followed this right. You lived all your life until you were nine years old in Los Angeles.
- A: *Well, I started in [name of the school] and then 10th street independent.*
- T: Ok, so you started over in San Francisco?
- A: *Yeah.*
- T: Because you wrote here [on the questionnaire] "Los Angeles", so this was San Francisco?
- A: *Yeah.*
- T: So you left (...) so you could go live with your brothers in Los Angeles and then your mother came back here [state of Puebla, in Mexico].
- A: *With my dad.*
- T: And then your mother came back to San Francisco so you went to San Francisco to (...)
- A: *For middle school. Because my brothers changed work. They worked in a company before and then my brothers were like "do you want to go over there?" and I said "Yeah, I want to go" and then I went to middle school.*
- T: So you went to [name of the school] through seventh grade?
- A: *No, sixth grade. Half a year and then I came back.*
- T: Ok, so when you came back you went to Zacatecas first?
- A: *Yeah, first to Zacatecas and then here [the state of Puebla].*
- T: Ok, why did you go to Zacatecas?
- A: *My dad lives there.*
- T: Your dad lives there?
- A: *Yeah, he is from Zacatecas.*
- T: Is he there now?
- A: *Yeah, he lives there.*

- T: How did your mom and dad meet?  
 A: *They're separated.*  
 T: No, I mean way back because your mom is from Puebla.  
 A: *She's from here [Puebla].*  
 T: And your dad is from there so how did they first meet?  
 A: *Oh yeah, in Los Angeles.*  
 T: ...Anyway, so that's what I'm getting at. Tell us, if you would what your favorite school subjects are.  
 A: *Like math I don't like it at all; Spanish, yeah; History yeah; Spanish, English and those are the subjects that I like.*  
 T: And when you came here, did you find it hard to read in Spanish?  
 A: *No, 'cause I was in bilingual school?*  
 T: In San Francisco?  
 A: *Yeah [name of the school] but then, but when I came here it was different stuff that I didn't know then, and I didn't know any words like that, but I have a cousin that lives right here and she talked to me and then I got used to it.*  
 T: And so you've now been at this school for how long?  
 A: *Two years.*  
 T: Do you like it?  
 A: *Yeah, it's nice.*  
 T: What's your favorite thing to do here at this school?  
 A: *Well, the teachers are really nice to me. They help me a lot. My teacher helps me a lot with roman numbers and then other teacher helps me with some other stuff.*  
 T: Good, and so the *secundaria* goes to ninth grade or tenth grade. Do you think you will be in the United States or you'll still be here?  
 A: *Maybe, my brothers are trying to fix my passport.*  
 T: ...So if you were to join your brothers, where would you go?  
 A: *San Francisco.*  
 T: And are they older?  
 A: *Yeah, one is 24 and the other one is 21.*  
 T: Let's see, when you're an adult, where would you want work?  
 A: *In San Francisco.*  
 T: And why do you like it better?  
 A: *It's a little less crazy. There are less problems [than Los Angeles].*

Ari's itinerary allows us to get an idea of the interconnection between: a) dislocated geographies: even if she is thirteen years old, she has lived in four different places, two in the U.S., and two in Mexico; b) divided family: her geographical dispersal is closely related with her family's decisions; clearly she is a member of a family, however, her father, mother, and brothers are moving separately between the territories of two countries. Nonetheless, the family separation seems to be a useful resource for her or, at least, it seems to be part of her own transnational life; c) fragmented schooling: she switched from different schools in

California, and as the day of the survey, she was attending a middle high school in a small town in Puebla; d) all those conditions is what we summarized as “fractured schooling” and “divided families”, and these are the conditions that guide the way in which transnational children build their own future. Ari imagines herself in San Francisco and is working on her return. Her brothers favor her decisions as she likes to see herself living in San Francisco, at least because it is *a little less crazy*.

## CONCLUSIONS

Through this section we propose to give a general overview of this paper’s main findings and give our recommendations for future research on the topic. This paper brought out of the shadow various profiles of children whose scholarly paths have been affected by international migration movements. We then described: children returnees, international migrants and children left at home. The evidence suggested that these profiles are by no means homogenous and, that the consequences of international migration in their school itineraries were, in fact, different. However, one common characteristic among children returnees and international migrant children is their family’s dispersion across borders. This data then confirms that transnational families, at least in Mexico, shared one common characteristic: their geographic dispersion. This dispersion in turn has a tremendous effect in the scholarly paths of international immigrant children and returnee children. Nonetheless, what we have entitled to, as “fractured schooling” can be more clearly associated with the dislocated geographies of those children who have been left at home, particularly when they are left at home without their mother.

Interestingly enough, international migrant children are building their future basing themselves in their family’s mobility across borders, and at the same time experiencing “fractured schooling” which is not necessarily well supported by the scholarly institutions which welcome them. We realized that, unfortunately, school systems neither in the U.S nor in Mexico respond to international migrant children’s needs, nonetheless, this inflexibility is a lot more visible in Mexican schools.

In addition to the institutional issues these children might face, their perceptions of scholarly success are also highly affected by international migration movements. Family separation, especially from the mother, seems to be an aspect which profoundly affects the perception of success especially for those children who have been left at home. Meanwhile, international migrant children who have never experienced a prolonged separation from their parents seem to have a better image of their success in school. On the other hand, these perceptions of success are guided by the attitudes of teachers who care for their learning process. In this sense, American schools seem to have a better reputation. Conversely, for those who experience “bad grades” in the U.S. language barriers seem to be a reason for poor school achievement. Undoubtedly, the most painful consequence of “fractured schooling” is that transnational students, returnees or not, felt they have lost their capacity to be successful. As they will probably always feel their academic performance was better in the schools they left behind.

Another relevant finding is the relationship between: their migratory experiences, family separation, fractured school trajectories and the educational goals of these children/adolescents. These aspirations are a function of social classes and the real opportunities that are available to these children in the contexts in which they live. Therefore, we were able to confirm that in this case, international migration raises aspirations while family separation reduces them highly. However, these positive outcomes are more visible in international migrant children, regardless of their place of residence in Mexico rural or urban. Their bi-national status offers them the possibility of return to the U.S and thus allows them to have a more positive perspective about the future.



Finally, this document shows how interconnected are fracture school itineraries with the children's family geographical dispersion in the context of contemporary transnational working class journeys and movements. From a very early age, these children experience a geographical dislocation, which permits them to live in different countries, cities and contexts. They are members of divided families, but yet they don't always see this as something negative as it sometimes offers them the possibility to move across borders whenever it's necessary. And lastly, as a consequence of these past two variables they experience a "fractured schooling" in various countries and shape their perceptions of their future based on this last dynamic.

Fortunately, this paper concludes by proposing further questions on this subject. Clearly, more research is needed in order to precisely find out: What is the role of Mexican transnational families in the education of their children? Is this role sometimes gendered? More overly, what are the reasons behind Mexican migrants' decisions to send their children back to Mexico even if they perform better academically in American schools? An answer to these questions might not only help researchers in the understanding of such phenomena but it would also allow them to propose policies that could benefit both transnational parents and their children.

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The *Agence Nationale de la Recherche* (ANR) multidisciplinary research project in social sciences *La Fabrique des Migrations et des Savoirs Associés* (FabricaMig.SA) focus on the study of productive mechanisms and migration knowledge, as they are developed through the mobility and activity of transmigrant and transborder populations in two regions of the world: North and Central America and Maghreb-Mashrek. The aim of the project is to study the international migration phenomenon in its social dynamics, according to spatial, economic and temporal vectors, therefore questioning the assumptions of a knowledge-based society which is preponderant in the discourse of international organizations.

This paper presents findings based on a survey conducted in 2010. It uses a representative sample of students enrolled 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grades in the school system of the state of Jalisco, Mexico (n=9,701) and compares a) *children returnees* (born in Mexico, moved to the U.S. and returned to Mexico), b) *American-Mexican children* (born in the U.S. and came to Mexico); c) *non migrant children in divided families* –those who have never left Mexico– but experienced family separation because of their parents' international migration and d) *non migrant children* those who have never experienced family separation. The comparative analysis focused on family dispersion and school trajectories of these four categories of children. American-Mexican children and children returnees more frequently than other children lived separated from their fathers, their mothers and siblings. The paper will offer analysis about how this experience –living in divided families– impact the transnational students' school trajectories in terms of self reported success, but also in terms of learning outcomes and school transitions (from the U. S. schools to Mexican ones).

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