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‘Becoming somebody’: Youth transitions through education and migration in Peru

Gina Crivello

Abstract

The past few decades have witnessed international pressure to get more children in the world educated, for longer. The view that school education is core to definitions of good childhoods and successful youth transitions is increasingly widespread, globally and locally. However, structural inequalities persist and migration for education has become an important individual, family and community response to overcome these gaps. This article explores the relationship between migration and educational aspirations among a group of young people participating in *Young Lives*, an international study of child poverty, in Peru. It draws on survey and qualitative data collected on a cohort of children being tracked by the study over a fifteen-year period, from the time they were eight years old (2002) into early adulthood (2017). Young people and their parents connect migration with the process of ‘becoming somebody in life’ and with their high educational aspirations. This is linked to intergenerational dependencies and the roles that children play in mitigating family poverty. Their aspirations are generated against a country backdrop of economic and social inequalities, a recent history of political violence and resulting mass displacement, and established and diverse patterns of internal and international migration.

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Introduction

‘Because with her studies, she can go anywhere and get any job, you know...

(Mother, Rioja community)

The link between migration and education is gaining increasing attention in the literature on children’s and young people’s migration (Hashim 2005; Adams and Kirova 2006; WDR 2007). In part, this is fuelled by international pressure over the past decade to get more children educated, for longer, as exemplified by such related initiatives as the Dakar EFA (Education for All) Goals (UNESCO, April 2000) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, United Nations, September 2000). In Peru, as elsewhere, education has become one of the defining features of modern childhood, within the context of what has been described as the global rise of the ‘knowledge economy’ and the ‘credentialization’ of society (see UNESCO 2007), favouring the service sector over the agricultural sector. For many young people growing up in resource-poor communities, education has become their main hope for escaping poverty, especially rural poverty. There is growing evidence in Peru that education is highly valued, including in impoverished areas and households (Ansión *et al.* 1998; Ames 2002; Cueto *et al.* 2005; World Bank 2007). The hope that education promises a pathway out of poverty is mediated by children’s material realities and by the social and moral obligations that shape their roles and responsibilities beyond the schoolyard. Growing aspirations for education are often not matched by access to good quality local schools, particularly at the secondary level and beyond. Migration-for-education is therefore proving an increasingly common response to this gap.

‘Migration’ is conceptualised here in broad terms, encompassing a wide range of young people’s everyday mobilities, and their aspirations. Migration is above all a process and more

than a single act or event of relocation. In this article I situate migration in relation to other youth transitions, as the reasons why young people migrate or why they aspire to do so are often multiple and interrelated. Their aspirations are similarly ‘bundled’ in such a way as to make it difficult to separate out what is ‘individual’ from what is ‘collective’, what is aspiration from what is expectation, what is for education from what is for work or for adventure. This line of enquiry is based in a wider research effort being carried out by Young Lives, a long-term study of childhood poverty that has been operating in Peru since 2000. This article focuses on education as the main hope for interrupting the intergenerational transfer of poverty (e.g., Moore 2001; Bird 2007) and the role of migration within this. I argue that young people’s aspirations reflect complex processes of intergenerational dependence, continuity and change, whilst also pointing to the hopes, concerns and strategies that they and their families have for moving out of poverty.

In the next section, I briefly highlight the link between youth poverty and migration, and then move on to describe the Young Lives study sample and design. Survey data are presented first, followed by findings from in-depth qualitative work with young people and their caregivers. The latter is introduced with case studies of a boy and a girl who demonstrate the fluidity of migration and the importance of children’s mobilities for achieving their educational aspirations. The conclusion argues that structural inequalities threaten children’s high aspirations and the hope that is being invested in them to lead their families out of poverty.

Poverty and young people on the move

It is claimed that today’s youth represent the largest cohort ever to enter the transition to

adulthood, and it is estimated that nearly half the people in the world today are under 25 years old; nine out of every ten of them live in developing countries where the majority of the poor are children and youth (World Bank 2005:v). Uneven processes of globalisation mediate the priorities, aspirations and expectations of young people and shape current forms of migration. Young people are more likely than any other group to migrate, due to a range of individual, family and community factors (Lloyd 2005, p. 313; WDR 2007, p. 189). This matters for development because migration provides new opportunities for youth transitions, as well as novel risks (WDR 2007, p. 192). The reasons why they migrate are often multiple and interrelated, economic motives being just one of many potential drivers. Young people move to obtain a better education, to find work, to get married, to seek out status and adventure, and as part of wider family migratory projects.

Migration can alleviate or exacerbate risks and deprivations and can increase or decrease social inequalities (DFID 2007, p. 10). In Peru, social networks facilitating migration and remittance flows are crucial, owing to the persistent inequalities between regions and groups. In relation to young people, 'circulating' or re-locating children (particularly girls) from poorer to better-off households is a historically important family strategy that creates and mobilises kinship networks. In Peru, the practice is especially predominant in Quechua-speaking highland communities where poverty rates are high. Leinaweaver (2007a, 2007b; 2008) has highlighted this form of children's mobility within the context of systemic poverty, mass migration and ongoing violence. Rural-urban migration, she argues, is linked to the idea of 'improving oneself' (*superar*) by overcoming poverty and through efforts at self-improvement (Leinaweaver 2008).

Other researchers in Peru have highlighted the impact of migration on well-being, such as Benavides et al. (2006) who described how education in rural communities is believed to enable one to '*progresar*' or to improve one's self. Lockley's (2006) research drew on the concepts of 'establishing oneself' (*establecerse*) and 'progressing' (*sobresalir*) to analyse the impact of migration on the well-being of (internal) migrants, while Wright-Revollo (2007) examined the perceived obstacles to achieving well-being amongst a sample of Peruvian migrants in London and Madrid.

The Young Lives study

Young Lives (YL) is a long-term study (2000-2017) that is tracking the life trajectories of some 12,000 children and young people growing up in four countries: Peru, Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh state) and Vietnam. It aims to improve global understanding of the causes and consequences of child poverty and how specific policies and interventions impact on children's lives. In each country it follows around 3,000 children, one younger cohort born in the year 2000/01 and an older cohort born in 1994. Over the course of the study it will capture experiences from early childhood through to early adulthood, as well as intergenerational processes. The sample is 'pro-poor', with nearly eighty per cent of YL children in Peru classified as living below the national poverty line (Escobal et al. 2008).¹

The research component is made up of two longitudinal strands, a survey and a qualitative sub-study. Surveys are administered every few years to all participating children, including separate questionnaires for their caregivers and for gathering community-level data. These cover a range of topics, from household livelihoods and assets to attitudes and aspirations.

¹ For a detailed account of the sampling approach, see Escobal and Flores' Technical Note 3 available at: <http://www.younglives.org.uk/publications/technical-notes>

The first survey was carried out in 2002 (older cohort was aged 8, N = 714), then again in 2006 (aged 12, N = 685), and more recently 2009 (aged 15, N = 678), with further rounds planned for 2012 and 2015.

Analysis of Young Lives survey data suggests the country's economic and policy context has become more favourable for children and young people in recent years (Escobal et al. 2008). There has been a national reduction in aggregate poverty rates and increased social public expenditure. However, inequalities between different groups persist, and evidence shows that rural and ethnic minority children are more likely to experience poorer nutrition and poorer educational outcomes (*ibid*). Persistent social and economic inequalities drive migration, especially from rural to urban areas and via established migrant and kin networks, but also internationally. During the four years between R1 and R2 survey, over 1 in 10 households in the sample reported a change in residence (crossing a district border). By R3, over one in four participating households had moved.² This is in line with the country's high levels of internal mobility with movements particularly in the direction of rural to urban areas. Lima, for example, claims around one third of the country's population, despite representing just one tenth of its territory.

Migration in Peru is not just for economic reasons. During the 1980s and early 1990s widespread internal armed conflict between the Peruvian armed forces, the Maoist guerrilla group Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*) and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement led to thousands of deaths, and forced disappearance and migrations.³ The Peruvian Truth and

² These figures are based on R3 survey data (2009) which are currently being checked for consistency, so are included here cautiously.

³ The impact of mother's migration history within the context of political violence on children's welfare has been explored using Young Lives data by Escobal and Flores (2009).

Reconciliation Commission published its final report in 2003 estimating 69,000 deaths and disappearances due to the conflict. For decades prior to the violence, rural to urban migration was already well-established. Many poor rural migrants to Lima self-organised into residential areas by claiming outlying land to create 'spontaneous settlements' (Lobo 1982; Matos Mar Santos 1967). By 1990 there were an estimated 400 of these squatter settlements surrounding Lima, as well as 6,000 migrant regional clubs in the area (Altamirano 1984).

The Peruvian Young Lives sample reflects these high levels and patterns of mobility. One third of children from the older cohort and over half of their mothers were migrants in the Young Lives site (R2); in other words, they had been born elsewhere. The main reasons provided by mothers for their migration were to improve their family dwellings, to seek independence and to find work. Preliminary results from R3 survey suggest that migration of the older cohort may be linked to their transition to secondary school; of the fifteen year-olds who reported leaving their previous locality, the main reason for doing so was to 'study'. Over 70 per cent of those who had moved said they were 'better off' now compared to before they had migrated. Evidence of the importance of children's mobilities for accessing secondary schools had emerged earlier in R2 survey, in that 1 in 3 rural children enrolled in secondary school attended a school located outside of their village (Ames and Rojas *forthcoming*). Many of the twelve year olds in our rural sample were already more educated than their mothers; 19 per cent of rural mothers had never been to school, compared to 4 per cent of urban mothers. Most rural mothers had between 1 and 6 years of schooling (53 per cent), while urban mothers had between 7 and 11 years of schooling (48 per cent).

Even where maternal education was low, there were high aspirations for children's schooling. Over 60 per cent of caregivers in the sample imagined their child would still be in school,

aged 20. The majority of children and caregivers (over 90 per cent) wanted (children) to go to university or technical school, and they thought this was achievable. 'Fees/school materials too expensive' was identified by children and caregivers as the main threat to early drop-out. However, family problems and relationships were also a concern for youth, including 'my father doesn't help me,' 'my father is looking for another job' and 'my brother doesn't want to teach me.' Few saw children's future in farming (3 per cent children; 4 per cent caregivers), and responses by and for boys and girls were similar. This contrasts with rural children's realities where farming is central to survival and the main reported activity of their heads of household.

Young Lives qualitative research works in-depth between survey rounds with a small number of sub-sample children (around 50 per country), involving their caregivers, peers, teachers and other community members. Equal numbers from the younger and older cohorts and of boys and girls participate. The second round of qualitative research was completed in 2008, with two more rounds planned for 2011 and 2013. The analysis presented in the next sections mainly covers older cohort data from the first round of qualitative research which was carried out between August and December 2007.

Research Settings

Peru is a highly diverse country and four communities were selected for in-depth qualitative exploration to capture some of these differences, based on location (rural, urban), region (coast, jungle, mountain), poverty and ethnicity (including an indigenous group). These

communities are referred to as Rioja (rural jungle), Andahuaylas (rural mountain), San Román (urban market town) and Lima (urban shanty town) and are briefly described below:⁴

1. *Rioja* is a rural community situated in the upper Amazon jungle region in the northern part of Peru and is part of San Martin Department. It is a ten minute drive from the district capital and four hours away from the regional capital. Rioja has high levels of poverty and most of its 270 households obtain their livelihoods from agriculture and cattle raising, with coffee the main cash crop. Families cultivate tropical fruits, manioc and corn for self consumption. Like other villages in the region, Rioja is largely populated by Andean immigrants originating from neighbouring Cajamarca. The main regional highway passes through the village. There is a preschool, primary school and secondary school; higher education is one hour away in the provincial capital.

2. *Andahuaylas* is a village located in the southern highlands, with lands between 3,000 and 3,500 meters in altitude, in the Department of Apurimac, one of the country's poorest regions. The area was hard hit by the civil war. Andahuaylas is half an hour from the district capital and eight hours from the regional capital. It spreads across the surrounding hills in which the farming land is located. There is a preschool, primary school and secondary school, but the nearest place to pursue higher education is in the provincial capital (45 minutes away). The 335 households in the community are mostly indigenous Quechua-speakers who support themselves through agriculture and cattle-raising. The main crops are potatoes and corn.

4 Selection was based on survey variables related to: i) subjective poverty; ii) home services; iii) health index; iv) receipt of benefits; v) male school attendance; vi) female school attendance; vii) child work; viii) minority ethnicity; and ix) caregiver education. Community names are not used in order to protect participants' identities. Community descriptions were adapted from fieldworker reports (Ames et al 2009).

3. *San Román* is an urban neighbourhood located in the city of Juliaca, in the southern Andes, at about 4000 meters in altitude, in the region of Puno. Juliaca is the economic and commercial centre of the region and many of San Román's 3000 households are dedicated to formal and informal trade, commerce and the textile industry. The area is notorious for its drug dealing and smuggling activities. It is a multi-cultural city with Spanish, Quechua and Aymara speakers, many of whom are rural migrants to the area. There is a public preschool and a public primary school in the neighbourhood, as well as a few private schools. Secondary schools are located in nearby neighbourhoods, and institutions to pursue higher education are available throughout the city and in Puno, the regional capital (45 minutes by car).

4. *Lima 3* is an urban neighbourhood, one of the so called '*pueblos jóvenes*' spontaneously settled around Lima, dating back to the 1950s. This neighbourhood has around 1118 households who trace their origins to places all over the country. Their economic activities are various, but generally not related to agriculture. There is high service access, including several schools in the area, including public and private preschools, primary schools and secondary schools, as well as one *wawa wasi* (day care), PRONOEIs (non-formal preschool), a vocational centre and an academy that prepares students for university admission. Institutions of higher education are available throughout the city and district.

In each of the four communities the same mix of qualitative research methods was used to explore the way poverty mediates children's experiences of 'wellbeing' and of key 'transitions' in childhood. This included a mix of individual and group-based activities with young people, such as the creation of life-course timelines, daily time-use diaries, mobility maps and individual semi-structured interviews. Key adults were interviewed individually, or in groups, including the caregivers and teachers of case study children, and observations of

children's classrooms, homes and community environments were recorded. Migration was not an explicit research topic but it emerged in the course of conversations with children and adults, namely in relation to their expectations and aspirations related to school and work.

Elmer and Maria

By way of introduction to the further analysis, two case studies are presented. Elmer and Maria were both from poor households in Rioja and had left their communities shortly before the qualitative research commenced. Maria's migration was for better quality schooling and was rural-to-rural in direction. Elmer moved to Lima to help his sister with childcare and to spread the economic cost of his care and education. Their cases were selected for inclusion because they demonstrate how migration can be a multi-faceted and fluid experience for young people, a response to changing circumstances, involving negotiation within households and between generations.

Elmer Rubio

Elmer had lived most of his life in the 'Rioja' community, although his family re-located during his third through sixth grades of primary school to work on a nearby ranch, which meant the children had to attend schools that were of notably poorer quality. Like many others in the area, Elmer's family had migrated into Rioja, having moved there in search of agricultural work a year before he was born. When he was six years old he began to work (unpaid) during school holidays in the fields, 'for experience' and when he got older he worked harvesting coffee, for which he received ten soles per day (\$3). He thought agricultural work was 'so-so', it was hard, but he enjoyed helping his father. He thought

combining school and work was best for him, but said that when children only worked it was ‘wrong, they should study’.

Shortly before beginning secondary school, Elmer moved from Rioja to Lima where his twenty-five year old sister had migrated five years earlier. She sent for him so that he could look after her two children (aged 3 and 6) while she and her husband went out to work (she worked in a restaurant, her husband as a carpenter). In exchange for his help, his sister paid for his school-related expenses. Before the move, Elmer and his sister did not know each other very well, as she had left home when she was 13 years old and Elmer was a baby. Their mother considered this an opportunity for them to become closer. The previous year the eldest brother (17 years old) had been living there for the same reason, but had since returned to Rioja in order to graduate with his old classmates, which was also Elmer’s plan. When asked which place was nicer, Lima or Rioja, Elmer quickly answered, ‘Rioja’, ‘because there are more trees’ and ‘all my family is there’. But he said it was important for him to go to Lima, ‘to know more things’.

Moving Elmer and his brother within the family meant some of the economic burden was lifted from their parents’ household, while also benefiting their sister. It also confirms the value placed on education, with Elmer’s mother claiming, ‘education is better in the city, not so backward as it is over here’. She insisted, ‘I don’t want him to be like me, with no education...it’s not a time for not having studies, not anymore.’ Money was a constant concern and Elmer had already told her that if he was unable to continue studying, he would work to support his younger siblings. But his mother wanted him to continue studying, ‘otherwise, we all go and take the machete’. She didn’t think Rioja had any work for Elmer, ‘only in the fields’ (*chacra*).

When the research team returned to Rioja the following year they found that Elmer, now aged thirteen, had moved back to live with his parents. His eldest brother, having graduated, returned to Lima to pursue higher education and to live with their sister. Elmer's parents planned to move the family the following year to a different community where they had already purchased a plot of land on which they would cultivate rice, and which would entail another move for Elmer.

Maria Vargas

Maria's parents had migrated to Rioja a year before she was born. Her village, located five minutes away from Elmer's, did not have a secondary school. When it came time for her to start secondary school, she was sent to live with her maternal grandparents about an hour's drive away in 'San Juan' because the school there was 'better'. Her parents sent money for her schooling, and she helped her grandmother with daily chores. Maria liked San Juan, especially because she had water and electricity and no longer needed to use candles to do her homework. Despite these comforts, she considered 'home' to be where her mother, father and sisters lived, not her grandparents' house.

When she lived at home she helped out in her mother's shop (*bodega*) for which she received a small wage. Although her mother thought Maria was too young to work on the farm, she believed working was good for children so they do not become lazy: 'because by knowing how to work they can earn their money and in that way they can be educated also.' Maria's mother was relatively well-educated in comparison to the other YL mothers in Rioja as she had seven years of schooling (of the twelve YL mothers in the qualitative research site, nine had either no or some primary school, and only three had attended secondary). Maria believed

formal schooling would be essential for her life, and hoped to complete technical college to become a teacher, though she did not expect to be able to, because the fees were too expensive. Her mother planned to relocate the whole family to San Juan in the coming year, since Maria's younger sister was expected to finish primary school and would need a place to attend secondary. She thought it would be too difficult for the grandmother to care for two girls on her own. That was why on weekends the family often travelled to San Juan to gradually prepare the land on which they planned to build their house. Maria's mother did not think her daughter would ever return to live in the Rioja community, and explained: 'Well, it's very difficult here, here there are no jobs. She will have to go to the city. She'll have to work there, to look for employment so she can study.'

But Maria did return, at will. By the following year, aged thirteen, she had returned to Rioja to her parents' home, saying she had missed her parents too much. The eldest daughter, Maria assumed a lot of the responsibility for the household's domestic work and for caring for her younger sisters. That year, she and her sister also started to work for pay, Maria as a day labourer during harvest period, and her sister washing dishes for food vendors at the market in the district capital.

Education: becoming different, becoming somebody

The case studies illustrate the growing value of education for impoverished families and the role of migration within this; as Elmer's mother said 'it's not a time for not having studies, not anymore'. A group activity with boys in Andahuaylas further introduces the key themes; their task was to 'complete a story' about 'what a teacher would tell a boy who was about to enter secondary school'. They answered in turn:

‘That he should study.’

‘So that he can be a professional.’

‘So that he’s not stupid.’

‘That he should keep studying so he doesn’t have to go to the fields!’

When asked what the boy’s father would tell him about secondary school, they responded:

‘That he should work so he can be educated.’

‘That he should keep studying so he’s not like him’ (the father).

Fundamental to their discourse is the notion that progressing through education promises the pathway to better lives and to ‘becoming somebody’ of value. I focus on four dimensions of this promise and discuss the role of mobility in fulfilling it. First, education brings literacy, which both young people and adults considered empowering (for example, in order to ‘defend themselves’). Second, education is necessary to become a ‘professional’ in life which brings security and respect. Third, education promises children better and different lives than their parents’ generation. Fourth, in many cases mobility is imagined as integral to the process of ‘becoming somebody’ through education and work.

To defend oneself

The idea that educational investments strengthen young people’s capacity to defend themselves against difficult systems and ‘bad’ people came mainly from rural caregivers. They believed that education would help their children to ‘defend’ themselves in the future, especially in the event of parental death or illness. The phrase *‘para que se defienda en la*

vida' (so that he defends himself in life) is a sentiment that resonated among this group, with one mother saying that her son would not have 'to suffer once he knows something, that he can defend himself' (*Andahuaylas*). A boy from rural Rioja maintained that school would be useful for his future 'because we can read and we don't get easily cheated out'. Another boy there said that school was important for the 'signs', so that when you go to the city you won't get lost. Mothers there had similar views. For example, one mother believed that education was important for her son 'so he can read...so he knows how to solve a problem or anything that might happen...people who don't know do things blindly'. Another mother described how her son could defend himself if accused of a crime because 'he already knows, he is already educated, he can defend himself, search for a lawyer'. She contrasts this with her own lack of education, saying, 'even if they accuse me of something, even if it's just a joke, I don't know what I'd end up telling the authorities.'

Literacy also positions some young people as mediators for their less-educated parents. This is the case for one mother who works alongside her son as a street seller in urban San Román. She said:

You know, if you know how to read...I don't know anything, so how can I tally the bill (*sacar la cuenta*)? ...Let's say someone tells me: 'loan me this'... since I don't know how to take note of it, that's how I go broke (*'a la quiebra'*).

In this way, through education young people are thought to acquire a greater capacity to defend themselves, as well as the possibility to help defend others. This capacity is linked

more generally to understandings of well-being or of 'faring well in life', with education playing a central role.

Becoming a professional

'Becoming a professional' is a widespread aspiration of and for young people in Peru (Ansi3n 1998; Ames 2002; Benavides *et al.* 2006). Schooling is viewed as a requirement for future well-being, owing to its role in becoming a 'professional'. In a group-based activity with boys in Andahuaylas, they were asked to think of a boy of their age in their community who was doing well in life; they described a boy who goes to school, to which the researcher responded: 'Why does someone who goes to school fare well in life?' One boy answered, 'because he can become someone in life...he learns.' The researcher asked if somebody who did not go to school could 'become someone in life'. 'No, because you do not know anything,' was a response. The researcher commented that 'there are people who have not studied and who know other things'. 'They know how to make children,' asserted one of the group, making everyone laugh. Another boy pointed out that if you do not study you do not have anything to draw on to support your children. Other conversations in this and in other communities confirmed high youth aspirations for education and professional jobs. Rural caregivers were less specific in what they wanted their children to study, but indicated '*hasta que sea profesional*' (until s/he becomes a professional). Urban caregivers were more varied and specific in their preferences, which included veterinarian, architect and engineer. None of the rural children aspired to 'agricultural' jobs, with the exception of one boy who wanted to be an agricultural engineer.

'Professional' work is associated with 'steady work', and as one boy explained, without a stable job, 'you have to search for work...and this requires time, and when time passes, you

lose time, and while you're losing time you run out of money, and while you run out of money, you run out of food and then you're left with nothing to live from' (*San Román*). A boy from Lima said that those who don't study end up becoming 'brutes' (*bruto*), lazy, and living on the street, 'carrying...bags of sugar, of rice'.

Education was also seen to afford a certain 'distinction' or status to the person. One mother in Andahuaylas asserted that if her son dropped out of school early he would be 'without value' (*no tendria valor*). But by studying he could 'end up being somebody...even if it's a street cleaner, if he'd studied well'. This was echoed by a city father who maintained that a life 'without studies...it's not worth anything' (*sin estudios...no vale nada*) (*San Román*).

Becoming a professional was a shared aspiration for both rural and urban children, but there was evidence of dual strategies (including a 'back up') for transitioning to adulthood, particularly in the two villages and the market town where children balanced school and work responsibilities. Children who worked learned useful skills in their daily activities, through farm work, herding and selling in the marketplace. Their work was valued because it represented something 'to fall back on' in case they failed to secure professional careers.

[B]ecause we're peasants (*agricultores*), he has to learn about everything...in the field...because when they get to be older, they don't get a profession, they have to dedicate themselves to the fields as well, so, the fields...(*Rioja, mother*)

Becoming different

All children participating in the qualitative research were enrolled in school, and their parents believed that education would offer children ‘better’ and ‘different’ lives than their own.

Rural parents in particular drew on various metaphors to contrast their experiences with their children’s, such as this father who said:

I also walk in the fields with sandals (*ojotas*). At least he will go with shoes (*zapatitos*) if he gets a good head with education (*si coge cabeza con los estudios pues*). (*San Román*)

The father refers to his sandals (*ojotas*) made from recycled car tires that are typically worn by local peasants, as they are more affordable than the factory-made shoes associated with city residents. What rural parents want for their children is generally very different from their own personal and childhood histories. Education is considered the key factor promising distinct and better lives.

The metaphor of ‘vision’ was used by caregivers in rural Andahuaylas to contrast younger and older generations in terms of being ‘with or without eyes’. One of the mothers said that if she had been educated like her daughter she would also have had a different life; instead, she goes ‘without eyes’ (*sin ojos*). To ‘have eyes’ is to be able to read and write and is a skill that either widens or narrows the intergenerational gap. Another mother there echoed the idea, saying that if she ‘had eyes’ she could help her son with his school work. Instead she is left with ‘nothing other than my mouth...I tell him to do his homework.’ Illiteracy creates a cultural divide limiting caregivers in the kind of support they can offer in relation to children’s schooling; as the mother above intimated, she can only use her mouth, to encourage her son to do well.

School participation may also produce changes in cultural identity that give rise to intergenerational tension. For example, a mother from Andahuaylas noted changes in her daughter who had recently begun to attend secondary school in the city. She pointed to the girl's preference for 'wearing pants' and not the customary *pollera* or skirt; she also said that her daughter has tried to '*castellanizar*' ('Spanishise') the family, who speak Quechua. Urban caregivers also referred to the distinct lives (*vidas distintas*) of their children. For example, a mother in San Román described her daughter's resistance to work and preference for 'doing nothing':

[L]ook at her hands how pretty, well, her hands are pretty because she doesn't do anything, because a working hand will never look how it should... 'don't you see my hand?', I tell her...it's all torn up...[T]hey don't work, they don't do anything, so of course (their hands) have to be like that.

Young people learn to value the process of 'becoming different', which is legitimised through educational discourse and the school environment. For example, a secondary school teacher in rural Rioja explained what he tells the students in his classroom:

If you want to be professionals you have to look after yourselves...if you don't look after yourselves, who will? Nobody. Only you. 'We', I tell them, 'We, as your parents, as your teachers, we give you all the support you need so you have to grab it and later on you'll be better for it, you'll be professional...Or do you want to be like your parents?', I tell them. 'Nooooo' (the students say).

This process of differentiation also applied to older and younger siblings. Elder siblings were sometimes described as having lost their chance to ‘become somebody’, but there was still hope for younger ones. Older siblings were positive role models, as well as models of what younger siblings do not want to become. A mother in rural Rioja said:

Nowadays the little boy tells you ‘mom, I want to study’... ‘I want to study more than Juan (his older brother). I want to go to secondary school.’

Sibling relationships were often defined by mutual responsibilities. Nicolas, for example, lived in Rioja with his mother and had three older sisters who had migrated to Lima to work as domestic maids. His mother said Nicolas wanted to drop out of school because it was becoming too expensive, but his sisters insisted he continue:

‘We’re working for you,’ they tell him, ‘so you can be well, so you can go to secondary. Don’t be like us who didn’t even pass through a secondary school for a single day. If we had finished our secondary we would be something else,’ they say, ‘we would be more, our work would be a little better.’

There were many reported cases where older siblings encouraged younger siblings to continue studying by offering material and moral support. One boy’s brothers reportedly told him, ‘Dedicate yourself to your studies. We’re working for your stomach!’

‘La chacra’: suffering in the fields

Getting an education and freeing oneself from dependence on the land are key requirements for rural youth aiming to ‘become somebody.’ School plays an instrumental role in this goal (Visscher 2004). Adults used an idiom of suffering to describe their lives working in ‘*la chacra*’ or the fields. ‘The *chacra* is hard, it is suffering’ is their deep-felt belief and education is the thing that counters it. One mother explained:

[I]n the fields we suffer...with nothing other than her [daughter’s] studies she’ll surely do well...we have to suffer a barbarity (*una barbaridad*).
(*Andahuaylas*)

Another mother wanted her daughter to be ‘not like me, everything a misery’ (*Andahuaylas*). She described a life of hard work, saying, ‘We suffer so much, eating dust, at times we go out and come back black...your feet black too, that’s how we work the land.’ She envisioned something different for her daughter in that ‘she’ll follow nothing more than her studies’. If her daughter has a ‘head on her shoulders’ (*si tiene cabezita*) she can get accepted into a course, so that ‘surely she won’t suffer like us’.

As a symbol of rural suffering, the *chacra* was also used as a threat by caregivers to spur their children to do well in school. This was rare in the cities, though one girl in San Román recalled her mother telling her, ‘If you don’t pass I’m going to send you to the countryside to herd little piggies!’. ‘The *chacra* is waiting for us’ is the way one mother in rural Rioja put it to her son, to which he responded, ‘I don’t want to work in the fields...I want to finish my studies.’ She emphasised the distinctive domains of ‘education’ and ‘the fields’ by saying, ‘what is of the *chacra*, is *chacra*, your studies no one can take away from you.’ Especially in rural communities, caregivers regarded education in terms of permanence, ‘a legacy that no

one can take away' (caregiver, Rioja). This contrasted with the uncertainty associated with their agricultural livelihoods and the image of the fields as suffering, hard work and instability. Even so, the *chacra* seemed to always be there, looming as the alternative trajectory if the individual failed in their education.

Education requires and increases mobility

For young people growing up in resource-poor communities, continuing education beyond primary school often entails travelling greater distances to the nearest secondary school. In the qualitative research, young people rarely aspired to migrate for the sake of migration. It was mostly an implicit assumption behind their aspirations and linked to schooling and job opportunities. Bello and Villaran (2004) have also linked high expectations for schooling with migration projects in Peru (in Benavides *et al.* 2006). 'They go far away, where the jobs are...they leave,' is what a mother in Rioja said about where she expects her son to live after finishing school. Especially in rural communities, education both requires mobility and increases one's capacity for being mobile. One of the mothers in Lima spoke about migration and the need to leave one's childhood community as inevitable. Referring to her daughter, she said:

She's got to become something, she has to become something... they can't stay here...with a profession that takes her far she won't experience many difficulties. If you drop out too soon and don't become a professional that's when you encounter difficulties.

In this view, dropping out of school early reduces options and opportunities for leaving the community, as a rural mother explained in reference to her son: '[If he] doesn't progress in

his studies, then he'll only live here' (Andahuaylas). Young people were also pragmatic in acknowledging the need for mobility in order to pursue quality education, especially if they aspired to university. Few of them, however, enthusiastically embraced the idea of long-distance, permanent migration and wanted to be close to their parents and home. Likewise, many caregivers said that when their children were grown they would like to continue living near them, but some of them viewed migration as inevitable. This came out clearly during an interview with a mother in Lima who had rejected several opportunities to migrate abroad with her husband. She talked about the lack of jobs throughout the country which pushed young people to leave. She expected that if her son became an engineer he would go abroad, but said, 'My heart will break...it's something that hurts me deep inside, I don't like it...but if it's necessary.'

When rural young people orient themselves toward migration, it is generally to the next biggest town or capital city. Young people in the urban sites, and particularly in Lima, tend to orient their mobility to a 'better neighbourhood' or internationally. Overall, there were no major gender differences in migration aspirations. Young women also aspired to migrate, though some caregivers expressed concern. A mother in San Román, for example, was clear that she did not want her daughter to move away because 'you run a risk with it, since they're young girls, not far away, because when they're here, you know, at times, you can control them.'

The city versus the countryside

Perceived differences between city and countryside influenced aspirations for youth migration. For many living in rural areas, the city represented less suffering, as one mother said:

I dream, always dream that the city isn't like it is here, here it's always suffering...well, as I see it, there can't be that much suffering [in the city], because they don't get wet, they don't get sunburned, they have their secure jobs, they have their daily schedule, and in contrast, here it's backbreaking. (*Rioja*)

The city represented opportunity, progress and a different way of life. Rural residents said themselves that young people there were backward compared to their quick and advanced city counterparts. With few exceptions, not many caregivers elaborated on why such differences exist, but one rural father explained it as a difference between those who have money (*plata*) and those who don't (*Andahuaylas*). Deeper structural inequalities and discrimination were otherwise rarely mentioned in the research conversations.

Conclusion

Children and young people remain overshadowed in the migration literature by a dominant focus on adult economic migration. They are generally conceptualized as the 'luggage' of their adult migrant parents (Orellana et al 2001: 578), this reflecting a modern view of childhood defined by children's dependency on adults. The evidence presented here challenges this view by highlighting intergenerational dependencies, especially among rural families who are also those for whom education, migration and decent work hold the greatest promise of escaping poverty and marginalization. Key decisions shaping children's lives are often made collectively, such as the decision for a child to leave school, to move communities, or to seek paid work (Punch 2001, 2002).

The globalizing discourse around the value of school education for defining good childhoods and successful youth transitions is widespread in Peru, this being reflected in the high educational aspirations for young people in our sample. Recent economic growth and expansion of services is perhaps providing the basis for supporting this ‘capacity to aspire’ (Appadurai 2004). In other words, children can aspire differently to their parents because the realities and perceived opportunities of their childhoods are different, and better. Urban caregivers wanted their children to have ‘better’ lives while rural caregivers wanted their children to have ‘distinct’ lives, and education was seen as central to disrupting the intergenerational transfer of poverty. This reflected a sense of mutual responsibilities within families and therefore intergenerational continuity. Mobility and migration were underlying, sometimes silent dimensions of these aspired transition processes. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the universal value of education is not being matched by universal opportunities, such that half of all children in Peru do not finish secondary school – with rural children disproportionately represented (Guadalupe 2002, in Cueto *et al.* 2005). The longitudinal design of Young Lives will enable us to track diverging pathways, to document how aspirations change over time, and to explain these changes.

All of this raises an important question about the role of school education in defining ‘failure’ or ‘success’ for children and young adults, globally, as well as within countries and regions where structural inequalities shape life chances and transitions to adulthood. Young people should be supported both in their ‘capacity to aspire’ and in their ‘capacity to achieve’ - whether at home, in the fields or city, or elsewhere. At age twelve, most young people in our study believed they still had the capacity to achieve and to ‘become somebody’ in life; for some of them, however, this may entail becoming somebody ‘someplace else’.

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