

CAUSES OF EARLY ADULTHOOD OF MEXICAN AND WHITE NON HISPANIC STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOL IN UNITED STATES*

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the early adulthood through dropout of school for a cohort of students in High School comparing among White non Hispanic youths and Mexican generations youths (1st, 2nd, 3rd). The main causes that we will analyze are: parenthood and labor force entry like reasons for school dropout. We will use like source of data the National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS 88). Our main findings are: an important percentage of Mexican and Native youths drop out of High School because they had problems in school; the second reason for High School dropout, mainly for Mexican, is parenthood, while for White non Hispanic youths is labor force entry.

Introduction

Some studies have founded that social, psychological and institutional factors operating in adolescence mediated the effects of socioeconomic origins on educational and occupational attainment, and earnings. In other cases some social transitions characterizing the passage to adulthood, like the completion of school, labor force entry, marriage, and parenthood (Hogan & Astone, 1986).

In America the experience of becoming an adult is different for individuals in different race and class groups as well as different for those of the two sexes. In United States major differences in the transition to adulthood exist between males and females, racial and ethnic groups, and social classes, as well as for groups experiencing the transition to

* This is an unfinished paper, for that reason we show preliminary results.

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adulthood in different times. Some of these differences are due to factors of selection; for example, insufficient funds can prevent high school graduates from attending college, or racial discrimination can make it difficult for young blacks to find full – time employment after finishing school (Hogan and Astone, 1981).

Some studies have demonstrated the effects of parent’s education, occupation, number of siblings, family income, and other characteristics of family background on the timing of school completion, labor force entry, marriage, and parenthood, and on their sequencing (Marini, 1978, 1984; Duncan et al 1972).

In United States, race and socioeconomic standing are important characteristics because their role affects the access to valued social resources that are institutionally controlled. This is a critical consideration in studies of the transition of adulthood since this is the time in which young people convert their ascribed attributes and social origins into attainments in public life. For that reasons we are distinguishing in this paper among Mexican and White non Hispanic youths.

Data and population

In this work we use the National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS 88-92), this survey is representative at national level, and it started with a student’s cohort in eighth grade in 1988 which ones were followed in different periods of time.

Our populations of interest are Mexican and White non Hispanic youths¹. For the first group we distinguished for generations: in the first generation we considered those who were born in Mexico and after they migrated to United States; in the second generation we have persons who were born in United States but their parents (mother and father, mother or father) were born in Mexico; in third generation we have those who are considered themselves like Mexican origin but they and their parents were born in United States.

¹ In this paper we use White non Hispanic and Natives in the same way.

School dropout and its causes

Different studies have demonstrated the influence of several variables on school dropout; these causes are related with gender, family structure, number of siblings, parent's education and kind of school.

Gender

In relation with gender, many investigations have showed that boys have less educational attainments compared with girls. In addition, it has been pointed out that gender affects the resources distribution inside the family, it means, parents can to invest differentially between their sons and daughters (Hagan, 1998). In other cases gender affects to the girls because they are educated for to have more responsibilities in home in relation to boys (Foote y Martin, 1993).

Family structure

Different findings in Mexico have demonstrated that nuclear family increase the probabilities of educational attainments for children (Mier and Terán and Rabell, 2004). In the case of immigrant's children with both parents, they have better grades and less dropout rates (Schmid, 2001). In United States there are similar results, it have showed that children who live in nuclear families present more attendance to school in comparison with those in extended families. Other important factor in educational achievements for children is the presence of father and mother in home (Rumbaut y Portes, 2001). As well, there is a distinction between those who live with both biological parents and those who live with step parents (step mother or step father), that is because biological parents invested more in their children in relation with non biological parents (Ginther y Pollak, 2004).

Some investigations in United States pointed out that in families with father or mother, and children, youths have less probabilities to dedicate their time only for school, because they trend to be occupied with school and work. In addition children with one parent have more probabilities of school dropout in contrast with those who have both parents (Hofferth, Boisjoly y Duncan, 1998).

As well, a great percentage of which drop out of school does not live with their parents and they have more probabilities of get marry that those of live with their parents (Fry, 2005). In the case of Mexico it has been indicated that youths from homes headed by women have greater probability of working and minor to remain studying (Mier and Terán and Rabell, 2004). Also, some field investigations in Mexico have showed that homes headed by women are more efficient and able to protect the levels of income and the patterns of consumption and that its income, although little, it is canalized towards areas of consumption considered high-priority by these women (like feeding, health and children's education) (González de la Rocha, 1997). For young people in the United States similar behavior has been observed, the mothers are more careful with their children that fathers (Ginther and Pollak, 2004).

Number of siblings

The number of siblings has a negative correlation with education (Bianchi y Robinson, 1997). Some studies have pointed out that youths with a large number of siblings have less probability to study; it is because the attention to children trends to diminish (Hofferth, Boisjoly y Duncan, 1998; Bianchi y Robinson, 1997).

Parents' education

Schmid (2001) indicate that the educational attainments of parents are an important factor in their children's education. It means, children with parents with high education trend to study and read more and they watch TV less than others (Bianchi y Robinson, 1997). The family income and educational attainments of parents are related directly with a poor children's performance in school (Levine, 2001).

In specific cases it has showed that mother's educational attainment has a significant direct effect on the probability that a nonwhite and white male youth on school dropout. Other studies have demonstrated (Hill, 1979) that the parent's education is associated with parental encouragement and this positively affects the son's subsequent education independent of several other socioeconomic factors.

School

Some studies suggest the influence between the kind of school and educational attainments of youths. For example, some investigations have pointed out that students from catholic schools have more educational attainments in relation with those who are in non catholic schools (Zander, 1999; Evans, 1995; Murnane, 1984; Hofferth, Boisjoly y Duncan, 1998). Besides, the students from private schools have better educational attainments than those from public schools (Smith y Meirr, 1995).

High School dropout for Mexican and White non Hispanic youths

As we mentioned in the previous section there are many causes that have showed to have some influence on educational attainments of youths. In our case, we are interested in High School dropout for Mexican and White non Hispanic youths. In an specific way, we have that socioeconomic level has an important influence in High School dropout, it means, who belong to low socioeconomic level have greater probabilities of school dropout in relation who are in a high socioeconomic level (Table 1).

When we analyze Mexican generations, we have that 1st and 2nd generation have more probabilities to stay in High School compared with Natives. This is not the same for 3rd generation, because they have greater probabilities of High School dropout in relation with White non Hispanic youths. Men have more probabilities to drop out of school in relation with women, but this variable is not relevant in statistic terms (Table 1).

About family structure we can see in table 1, that those who don't live with both parents have more probabilities to drop out of High School compared with those who live with mother and father. At the same time, youths who have a reduced number of siblings (none to three) show greater probabilities to stay in High School in relation with youths with six or more siblings.

Parent's education has an important influence on children's High School dropout, for example, Mexican and Native youths with less educated parents have more probabilities to drop out of school compared with youths with parents who have college or more (Table 1).

Finally, as we can see in table 1, those who are enrolled in public schools have more probabilities to drop out of school compared with those who attend to private non religious schools.

TABLE 1. Logistic regression for High School dropout, Mexican and Native youths, United States, 1988 - 1992		
	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp (B)</i>
Socioeconomic level		
Low income	0.565 *	1.76
High income	0.000	1.00
Generation		
1st generation	-0.483 *	0.62
2nd generation	-0.365 *	0.69
3rd generation	0.262 *	1.30
White non Hispanic	0.000	1.00
Gender		
Men	0.027	1.03
Women	0.000	1.00
Family structure		
Mother and step father	0.569 *	1.77
Only mother	0.477 *	1.61
Other relatives or non relatives	0.801 *	2.23
Mother and father	0.000	1.00
Number of brothers/sisters		
None	-0.332 **	0.72
One	-0.527 *	0.59
Two	-0.353 *	0.70
Three	-0.366 *	0.69
Four	-0.164	0.85
Five	-0.137	0.87
Six or more	0.000	1.00
Mother's education		
Less of HS	0.991 *	2.70
High school	0.295 *	1.34
College or more	0.000	1.00
Father's education		
Less of HS	1.112 *	3.04
High school	0.546 *	1.73
College or more	0.000	1.00
School		
Public	0.722 *	2.06
Private religious	-0.095	0.91
Private non religious	0.000	1.00

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.1$

Source: NELS 88 - 92

Students' reasons for High School dropout

There are several causes to drop out of school. For example, as it indicates McNeal (1997), the labor force entry of different members of the home (different from the parents) for the obtaining of income, can imply the early entrance of the young people in labor market. In this sense, it is to hope that a student who integrates itself to an economic activity, opposite greater conflict to make compatible the organization of the time to maintain the role of student and the one of worker, increasing her/his probabilities to leave school (Rendón, 2004; Entwisle and Alexander, 2004). Some children can attend school while they work, however those children have greater probabilities of failing in the test required at the end of the year, or before (Foote and Martin, 1993). This way, the familiar economic pressures can force the students of low income to take works that interfere with the school (Entwisle and Alexander, 2004).

On the other hand, Bauman (1967) suggest that persons who first marry at a young age are more likely to drop out of school than persons who do not first marry at a young age. The reasoning behind this hypothesis is that persons who first marry at young ages are likely to be in high school or college, that marriages while in school are likely to result in dropout, because of social pressure or financial necessity. In many cases, marriage while in school is a consequence of premarital pregnancy.

About the reasons for which the students drop out of High School, we founded that some students mentioned one or more reasons, like we can see in table 2.

TABLE 2. Reasons for High School dropout, Mexican and Native youths, United States, 1988 - 1992 (Percentages)

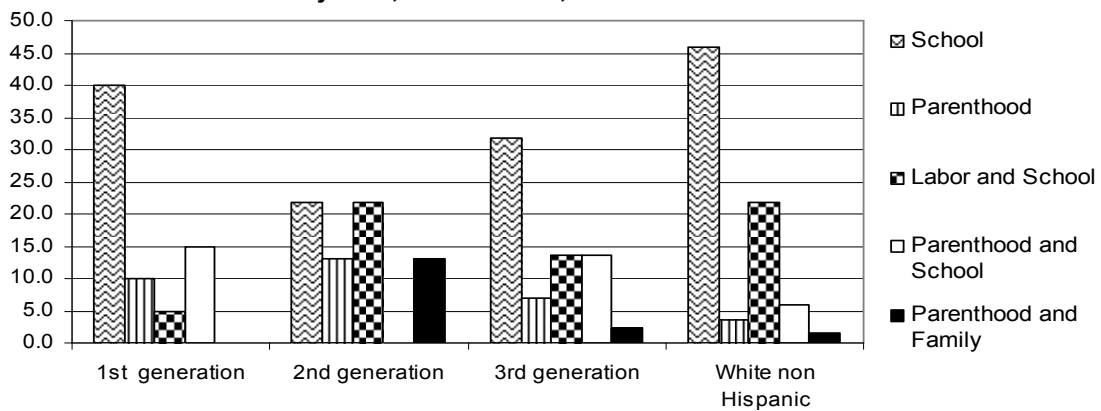
	L	S	F	P	RM	L	S	F	S	P	P	P	L	P	P	S	L	L	S	TOTAL
1st generation	5.0	40.0	5.0	10.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	5.0	15.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	5.0	100.0	
2nd generation	8.7	21.7	4.3	13.0	0.0	21.7	0.0	0.0	4.3	4.3	0.0	13.0	0.0	8.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	
3rd generation	4.5	31.8	2.3	6.8	0.0	13.6	2.3	0.0	0.0	2.3	13.6	2.3	2.3	9.1	2.3	2.3	0.0	4.5	100.0	
White non Hispanic	4.9	46.0	0.3	3.7	0.0	21.8	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.8	5.8	1.5	2.5	2.1	1.8	2.5	1.5	2.1	100.0	

Source: NELS 88 - 92

L Labor entry
 S School problems
 F Family problems
 P Parenthood
 RM Residential Mobility

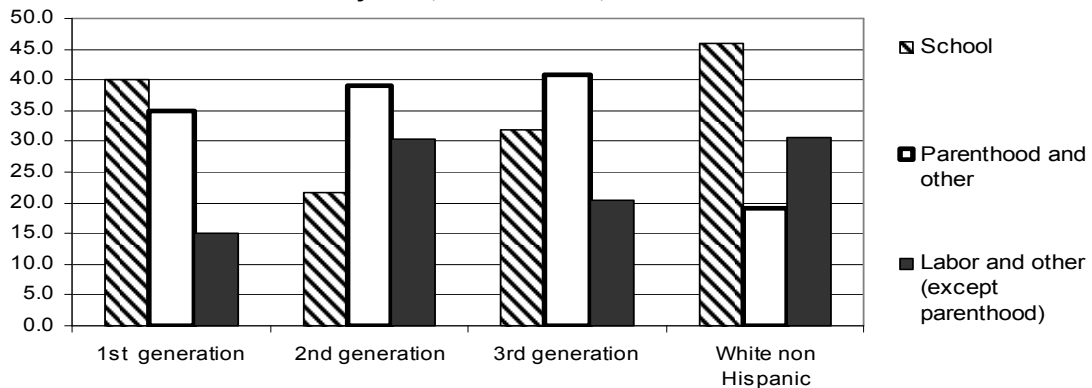
If we take the main reasons for High School dropout, we can see (Figure 3) that problems in school, parenthood and labor force entry and a combination of them, are the main reasons for Mexican and Native youths. However, we have some differences among Mexican generations, for example one of the main reasons for High School dropout for 1st and 3rd generations and White non Hispanic youths is to have problems in school. For 2nd generation the problems in school and labor force entry are the main reasons for school dropout, besides they have an important percentage of youths who drop out of school for parenthood and family problems (around 20 %).

FIGURE 3. Main reasons for High School dropout, Mexican and Native youths, United States, 1988 - 1992



Now, if we grouped parenthood with other as a single reason, we can see in figure 4 that problems in school is the main reason for school dropout in the case of 1st Mexican generation and White non Hispanic. On the other hand for 2nd and 3rd generations the parenthood is the main reason for High School dropout. Labor force entry is very important for 2nd generation of Mexican and Native youths.

FIGURE 4. Main three reasons for High School dropout, Mexican and Native youths, United States, 1988 - 1992



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