Child Migrants Returning to Culiacán, Sinaloa, Mexico. A Familial, Educational, and Binational Challenge*

[English Version]

Menores migrantes de retorno en Culiacán, Sinaloa, México. Un reto familiar, educativo y binacional

As crianças migrantes retornam em Culiacán, Sinaloa, México. Um desafio bi-nacional, educacional e familiar

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Martha Cecilia Herrera**
http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4602-1224
México
Erika Cecilia Montoya Zavala***
http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5651-4789
México

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Abstract

Objetive: to characterize family profiles from those who return to Mexico after being in the United States and to learn about the difficulties faced by the returning migrant children. Specific attention is made to their adaptation within the Mexican school system as well as the actions undertaken by parents and teachers to

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** Professor and Researcher Social and Political Sciences of Autónoma University of Baja California. Member of the National System of Researchers, level I. Email: ceciherrera18@hotmail.com

*** Professor and Researcher of the Faculty of International and Political Studies, Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa. Member of the National System of Researchers, Level II. Email: ecmontoya@hotmail.com

help them through the process. **Methodology:** a random representative survey was carried out in elementary schools in Culiacán, Sinaloa between March 23rd 2015 and December 7th 2015. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with parents who returned and the teachers of the children who had returned. These interviews were held between March 13th 2016 and July 29th 2016. **Results:** it was shown that the majority of families are mixed and have a greater number of children who are United States citizens. The study also revealed that from a total of 534 children who had returned to primary schools, 87.4% were born in the United States. Those students suffer from a problem of invisibility in the educational system and, at the same time, face bulling because of their different appearance. Additionally, children and their parents struggle with depression in the adaptation process. **Conclusions:** return migration to Mexico has been a constant. For children, their families, and the society to which they return, the challenge in return migration is evident. It also creates challenges in a child's school life, especially due to the fact that they have little or no command of Spanish.

Keywords: Migrant children; Return; Mixed families; Mexico-EU.

Resumen

Objetivo: caracterizar el perfil de las familias que retornan de Estados Unidos a México y conocer las dificultades que enfrentan los menores migrantes de retorno, específicamente en el contexto de adaptación al sistema escolar mexicano, así como las acciones que emprenden padres y maestros para ayudarles en el proceso. **Metodología:** se realizó encuesta representativa aleatoria aplicada en las escuelas primarias en Culiacán, Sinaloa entre el 23 de marzo y el 07 de diciembre de 2015; también se aplicaron entrevistas semi-estructuradas a padres de retorno y docentes de niños en situación de retorno, realizadas entre el 13 de marzo y el 29 de julio de 2016. **Resultados:** se evidenció que la mayoría de las familias son mixtas y cuentan con un mayor número de niños ciudadanos americanos. También se halló que de un total de 534 menores retornados encontrados en las escuelas primarias, 87.4% son nacidos en Estados Unidos. Existe el problema de invisibilidad de estos alumnos en el sistema educativo y al mismo tiempo enfrentan bulling por apariencia diferente; asimismo, los niños y sus padres presentan problemas de depresión en el proceso de adaptación. **Conclusiones:** la migración de retorno a México ha sido una constante. Es evidente el desafío que el retorno significa para los menores migrantes retornados, sus familias y la sociedad a la que regresan; esto constituye un reto en su vida escolar, sobre todo, por su poco o nulo dominio del idioma español.

Palabras Clave: Menores migrantes; Retorno; Familias mixtas; México-EU.

Resumo

Objetivo: caracterizar o perfil das famílias que retornam dos Estados Unidos para o México e aprender sobre as dificuldades enfrentadas pelas crianças migrantes ao seu retorno, especificamente no contexto de adaptação ao sistema escolar mexicano, bem como as ações realizadas pelos pais e professores para ajudá-los no processo. **Metodologia:** foi realizada uma pesquisa aleatória representativa em escolas primárias de Culiacán, Sinaloa entre 23 de março e 7 de dezembro de 2015; Entrevistas semiestruturadas também foram aplicadas para pais que retornaram e professores de crianças em situação de retorno, realizadas entre 13 de março e 29 de julho de 2016. **Resultados:** constatou-se que a maioria das famílias são mistas e possuem um maior número de crianças cidadãos americanos. Constatou-se também que de um total de 534 menores retornados para as escolas primárias, 87,4% nasceram nos Estados Unidos. Existe o problema de invisibilidade desses alunos no sistema educacional e, ao mesmo tempo, eles enfrentam o bulling por causa de uma aparência diferente; Da mesma forma, as crianças e seus pais apresentam problemas de depressão no processo de adaptação. **Conclusões:** a migração de retorno para o México tem sido uma constante. O desafio que o retorno significa para o retorno de crianças migrantes, suas famílias e a sociedade a que elas retornam é evidente; isso constitui um desafio em sua vida escolar, especialmente por causa de seu pouco ou nenhum domínio da língua espanhola.

Palavras-chave: Crianças migrantes; Retorno; Famílias mistas; México-EU.

Introduction

The migration of Mexicans into the USA has a history of more than a century; likewise, the return has been a constant since the beginning of the migratory relationship, at different contexts and levels.

An important fact on return migration is the one resulting from "The Great Depression", which was a period of crisis and growing unemployment in the US. This caused economic difficulties for the Mexicans living in the United States, who faced increasing hostilities under the consideration of keeping the jobs of Americans. Between 1929 and 1939 the figures of Mexican returnees, volunteers and non-volunteers are between half a million and a million (Guerin, 1985, Alanis, 2004).

However, before 1986, Mexican migration was predominantly circular: every year millions of Mexicans emigrated, and a large amount returned. Massey and Singer (1995) state that "between 1965 and 1986, 85% of undocumented migrants returned; therefore, the increase in the number of Mexicans in the United States had a fairly modest annual growth "(cited by Massey, Pren and Durand, 2009, p. 105).

The growing phenomenon of undocumented entry of people into US territory in the 1970s increased the public debate on migration; but it wasn't until 1986 when the US government opted for a new migratory position through the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), also called the Simpson-Rodino Law, as a measure to stop the entry of undocumented immigrants.

This law allowed both the regularization of foreigners who had lived in the United States up until January 1st, 1982 and the regularization of people who had worked for at least 90 days in agricultural work until May 1986. Under this policy, around 2.7 million people and 2.3 million Mexicans became legally permanent residents (Migration Policy Institute [MPI], 2013; Pew Research Center, 2015; Durand, 2007; Meyers, 2005).

Although, this law benefited people who were illegal in the country, it also meant an important injection of resources (human and economic) to improve the border patrol and other provisions, such as those established for employers who imposed sanctions on undocumented migration (Meyers, 2005, p. 3). Even though there were regulations on border control prior to the aforementioned law, the IRCA had established an important list of legal resources for migratory control. After the "Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act" (IIRIRA) in 1996, the penalties to control the undocumented migration were hardened.

Paradoxically, due to increased border control, Mexican migration to the United States increased "because of the difficulties involved in the return, the

increase in costs and risks at the border crossing, immigrants stopped traveling and began to settle indefinitely" (Massey et al., 2009, p. 102). In other words, with the hardening of immigration policies, migrants decided to reunite their families, but on side of the border to where there were risks involved in recurrently crossing undocumented; thus, a family-type of migration was observed with a trend towards settling (Massey et al., 2009, p. 102).

In addition, some of the migrants with their immigration status already regulated thanks to the IRCA also opted for their families to migrate, but with the possibility of doing so through a documented status. "The erosion of the mechanisms of circularity and the change towards a permanent migration modality has promoted the establishment of Mexican families and their reproduction in that country" (National Population Council [CONAPO], 2012, p.14).

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have constituted a turning point in US immigration policy. These events led to the making of laws that grant security agencies more technological, budgetary and legal capabilities. The link between terrorism and migration caused an increase in border control and the persecution of undocumented workers in the interior of the country, "The war against terrorism quickly turned into an anti-immigrant war ..." (Massey et al., 2009, p.108; Durand, 2007, p. 30).

The US immigration policy and, therefore, the immigration legislation is federal jurisdiction. However, since the early 2000s, the use of the policy "attrition through enforcement" has gained momentum; in other words, a strategy of attrition through enforcement, which encourages "voluntary" without the intervention of immigration enforcement agencies. In other words, it encourages voluntary compliance with immigration laws through more robust interior law. (Vaughan, 2006, 1-2).

According to Vaughan (2006), this strategy requires state and local laws to discourage the settlement of the migrant population. These laws reflect efforts to make undocumented migrants lives so unbearable that they consider returning to their places of origin. Some of these laws are more restrictive than others; they mandate that police check the legal status of anyone they take into custody, that far to those mandating public schools check the immigration status of their students and students' parents. (Muse, 2012, p.12; Vaughan, 2006, pp.2). In general, state legislative activity has focused on areas within its jurisdiction (state and local) that affect the daily lives of migrants and their families; they are laws whose objective is the migrant population.

On the other hand, according to the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), the US economy entered into a recession during the last quarter of 2007, worsening in late 2008 and early 2009. This crisis was characterized United States, among other factors, by a loss of jobs (D'Anglejan, 2009, p.8; Orga-

nization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OCDE], 2014) in sectors such as: construction, manufacturing and commerce. The loss of jobs in these 3 sectors accounted for over 6 million jobs, representing 75% of the more than 8 million jobs lost in total between 2007 and 2009. In 2007, the rate of Mexican migrants working in these 3 sectors was 51%; Mexican migrants, due to their labor characteristics, were a population especially affected by the economic crisis (Fundación BBVA, 2012, p.6).

In this context, the anti-immigrant environment in the United States was reinforced by the 2008 US financial crisis, which was one of the conditions that has stimulated the contemporary return.

Thus, return migration in Mexico has grown in the last 20 years; According to estimates from the National Population Council (CONAPO), there is a return migration increase in Mexico from 267,150 in 2000 to 824,414 in 2010 (CONAPO, 2000, CONAPO, 2010). Afterwards, in 2015, 495,400 returning migrants were estimated, lower amounts were also estimated in 2010, but still represents almost double that recorded in 2000 (Migration Policy Unit and CONAPO, 2016, p.25).

In the State of Sinaloa, return migration in 2000 added 5,233 migrants, with the entity having a national participation of 2% (CONAPO, 2000); Later, in 2010, the returned migrants were 19,292, with a 2.3% participation (CONAPO, 201 0). There is an increase of 14,059 migrants who returned in 2010 compared to the previous period, this means a total increase of 268%. In 2015, the State of Sinaloa followed the national trend: it fell compared to 2010, but the number of returnees is still higher than in 2000. Sinaloa received a total of 9,908 returning migrants in 2015. These figures include family-type returns, whose members include migrant minors who were born and/or raised in the United States, and the implications such a return can have on the children.

Now, migrants going back home are increasingly those who have spent long periods in the US (Passel, Cohn and González, 2012, p. 22; Paris, 2010, p. 18). This is reflected in the entire family return, "the migrants already established and in their fully productive age are the ones who are feeding the new return to Mexico ... as the migrant return is family type, and includes minors" (Moctezuma 2013, p.172). Thus, different studies refer to the presence of families and migrant minors in the contemporary return migration (Moctezuma, 2013, Passel, et al., 2012, Woo, 2015, Zenteno, 2012, Ramírez and Uribe, 2013, Ruiz and Valdez, 2012; Zúñiga, 2013).

Minor return migrants

Moctezuma (2013) asserts that contemporary return migration is characterized as a family-type; families are accompanied by their descendants, mostly binational minors "as the migrant return to Mexico is family-like, it also includes minors. But not all minors are really returned. Those who were born in the United States, strictly speaking, are not, because they migrate for the first time to Mexico "(Moctezuma, 2013, p.172). So, the author proposes binational migrant minors as the term of reference. Another example of term diversity is found in Durand (2004) when referring to transgenerational migrant return, "It is about the return, not of the migrant, but of his offspring: children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren" (p.105).

In this regard, from the school point of view, Zúñiga (2013, p.4) makes use of two terms, transnational students and binational students. The former are those who travel from the school system from one country to another, "for those born in Mexico, the transits are of two kinds: from a Mexican school to one from the United States and then back"; while using the term binational "for those who were born in the United States and attended some school years in that country, the transit is usually one ... the so called binational children (Zúñiga, 2012b), because they have dual citizenship". The author clarifies:

> "These two groups are not exclusive. There are, among the students of the first group, who were born in the United States. At the time, among those born in the United States there are many who came to Mexico before starting their school life. Although it sounds like a play on words, we find transnational students who are binational ones, as there are binational children who are not transnational students and, of course, there are transnational students who are not binational "(Zúñiga, 2013, p.4).

The term return migration implies that the individuals return to their family, political and economic development in their home social context, having experienced the immigration process and having lived in another context outside their country. However, we are clear that there are people who, being immigrants, have not lived through the migratory process or migrating to their place of origin. In this regard, migrants who left their place of origin when they were small do not remember or do not live the experience of changing family, social, and cultural contexts, etc. with the return migration process. It can be stated that they live the migratory process once and it is not by returning but by emigrating. The same situation applies to Mexicans born in the United States, but

their family background leads them to live a migration to Mexico, rather than a return, in the strict sense of "living experience".

However, the foregoing, if considered the nationality (in the Mexican case, dual citizenship is allowed and the children of Mexican parents can by right obtain citizenship) and the family context, the concept of return migration does include those who "return" to where they have never lived and those who have not experienced emigration. In the family context, it is noted that under 1.5 or second generation[1] can be considered return migrants (Herrera and Montoya, 2015, pp.78-79).

Taking into account the family return, whose members include migrant minors who were born and/or raised in the United States, this article aims to: 1) show that the profile of returned families, in this new context, has changed; they are mixed families and have a greater number children with American citizenship studying in Mexico. 2) to know the difficulties faced by returning migrant children, specifically in the context of adaptation to the Mexican school system, as well as the actions taken by parents and teachers to help them in the migratory process, and to demonstrate that the challenge faced by the children migrant returnees is a problem not only of a family and educational nature, but it also concerns and demands binational and comprehensive attention.

Methodology

This paper is based on a survey of returning migrant children carried out in primary schools[2] in Culiacán, Sinaloa, as well as semi-structured interviews with returning parents and teachers. A random representative sample of 294[3] primary schools located in Culiacán, Sinaloa was calculated. The simple random sampling method for a finite population[4] was used; a sample of 167 schools[5] in

1 Generation 1.5 is known to migrants who arrived at an early age in the United States and have spent much of their lives and schooling in that country, while the second generation are those who were born in the United States as children of Mexican migrants.

2 In Mexico, the General Education Law establishes three levels of education: basic, upper secondary and higher education; basic education includes pre-school (three grades, children aged 3 to 5), primary (six grades, children aged 6 to 12) and secondary (three grades, teenagers aged 13 to 15). See Narro Robles, José; Martuscelli Quintana, Jaime; and Bárzana García, Eduardo (Coord.) (2012).

3 From this total, 235 are public schools and 59 are private ones. That is the reason why, when selecting them in the representative random sample, there are more public schools.

4 The confidence level (95%) and the confidence interval (5%) were based on the following formula: n=Z2NpqNE2+Z2pq.

5 From the selected schools, 134 are public and 33 are private. In accordance with Article 3 of the

which a census was conducted in the classrooms to identify and count students who had resided in the United States for at least one year[6].

The format used, besides being an instrument for the registration of students, made it possible to obtain preliminary information about the children and their return. The following information was compiled: identification of data, such as grade, group, age, sex and place of birth of the children, as well as general data regarding their stay in the United States and subsequent return to Mexico, such as how many years they lived in the USA, school attendance in that country and time since they had returned to Mexico.

In sum, information was collected in a total of 119 schools. Data collection in 48 schools could not be carried out for various reasons that will be addressed later. The visits to the schools began on March 23rd of 2015 and ended on December 7th of the same year. 534 migrant returning children that, in general, represent 1.45% of a total of 36,634 students of that level, were found.

Once returning migrant children were quantified, semi-structured interviews were carried out with returning migrant families, specifically the head of the family, in order to explore, among others, issues related to migrant children and their adaptation process. The determination of the eligible subjects for the interviews was made, essentially, based on the schools in which concentration of migrant children could be observed. Only one interview in a school outside this category was conducted. The interaction with the families was done throu-

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Constitution "Everyone has the right to receive education. The State (Federation, States, Mexico City and Municipalities) will provide pre-school, primary, secondary and upper secondary education. Pre-school, primary and secondary education make up basic education; this one and the upper secondary will be compulsory". In addition, it establishes IV. "All education that the State imparts will be free." Likewise, from the selected schools, 109 are in the morning shift, 50 are in the afternoon shift and 8 of them are full time. In Mexico, schools can have morning sessions (8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.) and afternoon sessions (2:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.), that is, a double shift schooling. "Bray (1989) has defined double shift schooling (DSS) as a policy in which "a group of students attend [the school] in the mornings and a completely different one attends in the afternoons", usually using the same campus and infrastructure and allowing the same teachers to assist to more than one group of students "(Cárdenas, 2011: 802). The author comments that double-shift schooling in Mexico began at the end of the 1950s, with the intention of increasing the attention span of the education system. However, in 2007 the Full Time Schools Program (PETC) was created. It was conceived as a pedagogical alternative that extends the school day of the students and the teaching and management staff in the schools. It operates in two ways: extended (JA, six hours a day), and full-time (JTC, eight hours a day) which has the obligation to provide food to students. The program started with 249 primary schools at the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year. Gradually, more schools were incorporated. For the cycle, 2014-2015, there were 23,182 ETC in operation (Social Commitment for the Quality of Education, 2015, pp. 34-40).

6 In the literature on return migration, there is no consensus regarding the temporality that should be adopted to assume a migrant as a returnee; however, several studies have as a common denominator the one year term. See Population Division Department of International Economic and Social Affairs United Nations Secretariat (1986).

gh the directors and teachers of the primary schools. Thus, 21 interviews were undertaken, most of them with the mothers of the families.

In relation to teachers and directors, a close interaction was carried out during the study, which allowed knowing their perspective on various aspects related to the return of children. Three taped interviews were made with teachers. A non-probabilistic and convenience sampling was used in the interviews with parents and teachers. The interviews were done between March 13th and July 29th of 2016.

Results

Characteristics of returning migrant children in Culiacán

In the visits to the schools, positive results were obtained, since the main objective of locating returned migrant children was achieved. From the empirical information obtained, some aspects that we consider relevant stand out: of the 167 schools selected in the sample, information was gathered from 119 schools; in these, authorization was requested from the director (or guardian teacher) to have access to the classrooms and perform the counting.

In addition, authorization was obtained from a total of 94 schools, in which information was collected classroom by classroom, through a census of the students. In 25 schools, most of them private, the information was provided by the academic unit; the directors, for privacy reasons, preferred not to have direct contact with the children.

On the other hand, in 48 schools it was not possible to collect data for different reasons. In 7 schools they refused to provide information, objecting security issues; in 24 schools no response was obtained, despite having been visited and contacted by telephone more than four times; 10 schools did not exist at the time of traveling; this, for having merged with the other shift[7] located in the same space to become full-time schools; and finally, 7 schools were not located[8].

In this process, 534 returning migrant children were located out of a total of 36,634 students, representing 1.45%, and the bulk of them in public schools; of that number, 267 were female and 267 were male (see table 1).

7 Some schools have an afternoon and morning shift, in this case they joined the shifts to offer an extended schedule until 4:00 in the afternoon, but only one shif,

8 We went to the registered address before the Secretary of Public Education, however the school was not in the indicated place. We theorize that it may be a school that stopped working (the seven schools were private) or that it could be "ghost" business schools)".

Table 1. Returning children by type of school and gender

Gender	Type of school		Total
	Public	Private	
Female	234	33	267
Male	235	32	267
Total	469	65	534

Source: Own elaboration based on fieldwork

Regarding the place of birth of migrant children, 467 were born in the United States, 57 in Mexico and 10 students did not specify their place of birth (see table 2). The above means that 87.45% of the returned children were born in the United States. This is consistent with research on a characteristic of contemporary return migration: the return of whole families with children born in the United States (Moctezuma, 2013, Woo, 2015, Ruiz and Valdez, 2012).

In addition, this condition may have implications in the medium or long term for both the migrant child and their family. US citizenship gives them rights that in the future can be used, for example, when returning at some point to the neighboring country, which would form new bonds and strengthen existing bonds between the populations of the two countries.

Table 2. Birthplace of returning migrant children in Culiacán

Place of birth		
	Absolute	Percentage
EUA	467	87.45
México	57	10.67
Not specified	10	1.87
Total	534	100

Source: Own elaboration based on fieldwork

Regarding their school attendance in the United States, 170 attended school in the neighboring country, 211 did not attend school and 153 did not specify

their school attendance abroad (see table 3). This means that 31.83% of returned children have experience in the US education system, which implies that in addition to the process of adaptation to the society to which they return - that is, acclimatization to uses and customs different from those of the United States - they need adapt to the Mexican school system, which in some aspects is substantially different from the American one. The cultural shock they face, their difficulties with the Spanish language and school life in Mexico are themes that will be retaken later.

Table 3. School attendance of migrant children returned in the United States.

Asistencia escolar en EUA		
	absolutos	Porcentaje
Sí	170	31.83
No	211	39.51
Sin especificar	153	28.65
Total	534	100

Source: Own elaboration based on fieldwork

Now, the dynamics of the investigation made it possible to observe and discover that there is a problem of invisibility of the phenomenon of return. In the schools visited, in a generic way, it became evident that the directors are not aware of the phenomenon; in some cases, the school's management mistakenly state that this type of phenomenon does not occur in the school they run. Something similar, but to a lesser extent, happens inside the classroom, in some cases the teachers are not aware that in their group there are returned migrant children; although it should be noted that in some cases the phenomenon is obvious, especially when it comes to children recently arrived from the United States who do not speak Spanish well. "At school it was strange, they did not know that they came from another country, it was strange for them that being so big they could not read they could not read, until one told them they could understand" (the Rojo family).

The problem of invisibility arises, partly because for school management, teachers and the Mexican educational system as a whole, it is not usual to receive foreign students; therefore, it is assumed that they do not exist or that a new student comes from another city or area of the country. Which means that the background of children is not usually investigated until the phenomenon or differences, especially in terms of language, are obvious. Mechanisms are needed

to facilitate communication among parents, school management and teachers, to better serve the needs of migrant children.

Finally, it is necessary to clarify that due to the mechanics of the investigation in the respective part of the census, many aspects were not delved into, as a matter of respect for the privacy of children. However, more specific information was obtained through interviews with parents and teachers, which is shown below.

Migrant children: difficulties and experiences inside and outside the school environment

The return represents a challenge for migrant families in general; however, the culture shock is especially astonishing for returning migrant children. They return to a context in which they have never been, because they were born in the US, or consciously do not know, for having migrated at an early age. Thus, in this section the resistance, difficulties and the process of adaptation is apparent among migrant children.

As already mentioned, in this work a total of 534 returned children were found only at the primary level, of which 87.4% were born in the United States; In addition, children who were born in Mexico were taken to the USA at preschool age or less. The above is an indicator of the context of ignorance that children face when they return.

> "When we arrived, the girl did not adapt, it was at the ranch (Gato de Lara, Angostura) and she did not adapt to the school there (...) I scampered her around Gato de Lara, she jumped the fence because she did not want to go to school here in Mexico (...) I said 'well maybe it's the school' (...) my brother lives here (Culiacán) and he told me to come here, and I came and brought her here, she came here in third year and she did not adapt either, the girl jumped, cried, kicked and did not want to go to school here, it was a suffering moment every time she was going to school (...) in Gato she said that because children told her things and I took her by force to school, if you had seen how she struggled! Sometimes I even spanked her, saying 'how will it be possible that she does not attend to school', and we brought her here and the same thing I cried and cried, she was running around the school (...) time passed and she was adapting and adapting" (Osuna Family).

However, the return process can be lived differently by the members of a family, which makes the different realities and needs of the children visible, even within the same family: "The child was very well and adapting for him was not

difficult ... but for the oldest girl yes, she cried the first year we arrived, she cried 'mom I do not want to go to school' 'mom I do not understand', I told her that she would understand that she will understand things, but little by little we have been adapting" (Lara Family). In this case, the youngest of the children, who had only had a brief interaction with the American pre-school education system, found it easier to adapt to the Mexican school system. Whereas, the oldest one, who had completed some primary school grades in the United States, found it more difficult to adapt to the school system in Mexico; this indicates that taking some school years in the United States can make the change more drastic for migrant children than when they do not.

The language is one of the most mentioned points in the interviews with families and teachers, because it hinders school learning of migrant children and prevents the social integration of children.

> "(...) the most difficult thing was the school, you don't imagine how they struggled (the children), they cried because of the language, they did not write Spanish, they spoke very badly (...) and that was very difficult, we arrived at school and that broke my soul and I cried with them when I saw that they really could not, they felt sad because they could not write, they could not understand sometimes even the Spanish (...)" (Flores Family).

> "The children struggled a lot to adapt to the subjects in Spanish, they are still struggling, because it is very different to speak only English and get here and speak only Spanish, since the language is different, they did not name many things as they should" (Ocampo Family).

> "My eldest daughter was very smart to learn written Spanish and English so she did not struggle here, but in his case (son) it was a little difficult because he there (US) almost did not speak to me the Spanish, he spoke only English and then when we arrived he spoke very badly, he understood it and right now he can speak it "(Murillo Family).

An important point is that out of the returning children registered, 170 attended school in the United States, which means 31.8% of the total. This attendance was at least one grade, which accentuates the level of integration into society and can hinder their integration in Mexico.

Regarding school attendance in the United States, it was reiterated in the testimonies collected the positive evaluation of the American school system; among the future plans of parents, one is often to send their children to study in

the US at some point in their school life, they value the fact of a free education with more endowment of services and educational attention than in Mexico.

Due to the differences in the social and school environments between the two countries, there is a constant comparison between the here and there, both positively and negatively: when such differences are manifested by the children in the classroom, they can be interpreted, by colleagues or teachers as dissatisfaction, denying of their country or presumption. In the stories it is common to refer to the way these children are pointed at by their schoolmates. They are regarded as the other, the gringo; in some cases, but not all, they are excluded from the group, which aggravates the problems or makes the adaptation process of the children slower.

> "(...) your child was being bullied. Yes, he fought back against it the first and second year (...) I used to spend almost every day here in school, helping the teacher and telling her to support me with him (...) his classmates did not want to talk to him. They did not want to be near him because he barely spoke (in Spanish). He said half of the words but he did not know the meaning (...) He learned alone to speak Spanish, I never taught him. He did not know anything of Spanish, he learned it by himself during his first year (...) and from there, he only adapted" (Paz Family).

> "At school, they pointed her out from the beginning, they called her presumptuous, la güerita, la gabacha, they tagged my daughter. She got scared because it was normal for her, but not for the children here. She was adapting and she became friends with everybody. Right now, she would not want to leave this school "(Pérez Family).

In some cases, the returned children are not rejected. They cause themselves a kind of sensation to come from abroad or to speak another language. The situations can be heterogeneous. Many times, it is the children themselves who, do not feel confident speaking the language, do not socialize and that can be seen, by their peers, as rejection towards them.

> "It was those (migrant children) who did not allow themselves to be near others. For example, it was break time and they stayed here sitting down and the whole group left the classroom. It was not rejection at all, they were the ones who did not want to approach. But now, they talk to students from all the courses and everybody knows them. They are already very popular here at school" (Teacher Ríos).

In addition to the involving challenges, there are the legal difficulties and access to services that some of the families face, due to the lack of formality in the children's dual citizenship; such as the difficulty to continue with their studies or access to health services. It was revealing, by hearing the interviews, the lack of existing information for issues such as dual citizenship. In many cases, word of mouth is the means of information, but it is not always the most accurate. Some families have even chosen to register their children again in the State, which, of course, has had legal and economic consequences for them.

> "(...) we came back and it turns out that I registered the girl here as if she was born here. It was the biggest mistake we made, now we hired a lawyer who is fixing that, but it will be a show because she is canceling her birth certificate from Sinaloa (...) this certificate is about to be annulled. It will be translated, but the papers from the school are going to be with the old papers. It is necessary to pay again; so that they can annul the girl's papers and have the new ones because the act will be erased from the system. She is going to start high school and I do not know what will happen (...) I regret it because it was my ignorance. We could have done it well but we never knew, we did not investigate" (Rojo Family).

The ignorance about the context, the difficulties of Spanish language proficiency, as well as the rejection and socialization problems faced by the children, generate depression problems both for themselves and their families as the adaptation process is lived and shared with family. Certainly, when talking about difficulties in the adaptation process and ignorance about the place where they are returning, it does not mean that these children have not heard a word in Spanish or been on vacation in that country. Rather, it is referred to those interactions with culture which they have not been prepared to live and fully develop in that city.

For migrant children, as for their families, the return has meant starting over. The children adaptation process is shared with the rest of the family that provides the necessary support for this transition, which is relatively quick compared with the adults. Thus, at the time of the interview, most of the children did not want to return to the United States to live permanently, but rather to visit or go on vacation with relatives; although from their parents it was observed that they hoped that their children would study in the United States at some point in their school life.

Actions made for the integration of children

The challenge about what returning means for returning migrant children, their families and the society to which they return is undeniable. In Mexico, migrant children face a context in which they have never been, to be born in the United States, or consciously they do not know because they have migrated at an early age. This challenge is particularly palpable in their school life, in aspects which have been previously mentioned.

Within families, the return and adaptation process is lived differently by each one of the members. For example, the children's parents live the return implications with them, while they are having their own adaptation process. In the same way, the return is also a challenge for schools which receive migrant children in Mexico. Teachers face a phenomenon that until recently did not occur or it was present at a lower intensity. Teachers in Mexico, unlike teachers in countries with a strong presence of immigrants (for example, the United States), are not usually familiar with the tools to deal with groups of foreign students.

Undoubtedly, teachers and parents constitute to an important element for the children's adaptation. Given the challenges, teachers and parents have undertaken actions that, within their abilities, seek to help children in their adaptation process where language is one of the most tangible difficulties faced by children.

Thus, in a lack of programs focused especially on migrant children, mothers often work in cooperation with the school staff using the tools at their disposal. An example of these strategies has been the search for extra class support with the objective that children have personalized help and learn the language faster. In some cases, private education for children has been also taken into account, since some of these schools offer classes in English. However, this is not an available option for every family, as observed in the census results, most of the children are in public schools.

> "(...) the most difficult thing was the school, if you could see how hard they tried (the children). They cried because of the language. They did not write Spanish. They barely spoke the language (...). It was helpful that my husband's sister and her husband were teachers, they helped us" (Flores Family).

Teachers, for example, if the children do not know English, they ask their mothers or the school's English teacher for a list of key words to be able to communicate with the children while they learn what is necessary. Likewise, the strategy of leaning with first- or second-year group teachers is used. That

is, if students were placed in 4th year or higher, but they have a very low level of Spanish understanding, those students are sent to 1 or 2 hours a day to take classes with students who are learning to write (1st or 2nd year). It is reported by a teacher who taught classes to migrant children who were in 4th grade and who spoke Spanish poorly and could not write it.

> "Broadly speaking, I am trying to advance with them as much as I can. I have supported myself with the first grade teacher, the school principal and the support teacher ... Then, what can be done is being done inside the school ... They speak Spanish, but poorly with a lot of awkwardness; for example, sometimes they do not know how to say something so they use objects to make themselves understood ... Right now, their classmates have learned more words and the children have the task of helping them with the pronunciation and it has helped them" (Teacher Ríos).

However, teachers say that migrant children have come to enrich classes because they have knowledge and experience from outside the local context, and they also strive to participate. Although, to exploit all their potential, those students need a personalized attention, but, because of the large number of students in the classroom, it is difficult for teachers to give special attention.

> "Sometimes, they surprise me because, when I explain something that apparently I think they are not understanding, they want to participate. It is because they have knowledge about this context in the other country (...). They bring a lot of information but they still need to exploit it. I know that they are children who require personalized attention. They need a teacher just for them because they have a lot of disposition, when I say to them we are going to work, there is no problem, they do not leave incomplete activities, what they need is support" (Teacher González).

According to the pointing out and, in some cases, marginalization which returned migrant children have to face. A practice used by teachers by observing this situation was to talk with the group or some classmates, asking them the way to integrate them, which contributed to the improvement in those children's socialization.

> "(...) I used to spend almost every day here in school, helping the teacher and telling her to support me with him (...) his classmates did not want to talk to him. They did not want to be near him because he barely spoke (in Spanish). He said half of the words but he did not know the meaning (...). Right now, he already has his friends and they know him. He is more self-confident because, at the

> beginning, he told me that he wanted to leave because he did not want to come to school and, right now, he is delighted" (Paz Family).

> "At first, she (a return girl) was very quiet. She did not live together with the group. Her classmates talked to her, but there was no answer. So, I tried to integrate her with her classmates, to work as a team and, little by little, she was integrated" (Teacher Esquerra).

In general, once they detected returning children, we found understanding by teachers and school management towards those children and their needs. As mentioned before, teachers and school directors, within their possibilities, undertake actions to integrate those children educationally and socially. However, some other cases were also found, although, in general by the workload, where children are treated the same as the rest of their classmates, in pedagogical terms, without giving them any specific attention. For example, the case of some migrant children enrolled in 4th grade who, according to their teacher, were candidates to fail in school that year; even she stated that there was an internal agreement, which established that if the children continued in school, they would be returned to the first grade to learn how to read and write in Spanish.

This is an action taken by the difficulties involved for teachers to provide personalized attention without neglecting the rest of the group, but, for migrant children, the possibility of going back several school years has a significant impact. Programs are needed to raise awareness among teachers and school managements about the return migrant children process.

When questioning the teachers about what actions they would recommend to help children with a better and faster adaptation in the Mexican school system, the answer was overwhelming: the actions must be focused on the language. Surprisingly, their suggestions were not aimed at establishing programs to help children with their Spanish language proficiency, but with the need for teachers with their English language proficiency to be prepared for this kind of phenomenon.

> "Right now, I am living this experience, I feel very helpless with my English language proficiency to be more effective working with them, because there are things that they want to comment on and I do not understand and can't communicate with them. Then, I am facing that barrier. It would be very appropriate for us to have some kind of English education, to do specific

activities and, right now, that technology is booming, we can take advantage of it" (Teacher Ríos).

"Right now, the universities, which are preparing teachers like the UPN (Universidad Pedagógica Nacional), are already teaching them English, just for these kind of situations and, I think, it is very good, because we do not know when a child, who only speaks English arrives, and you have to be prepared. With the experience we have had, I think it is very important" (Teacher Esquerra).

Conclusions

Return migration to Mexico has been constant in different contexts and magnitudes since the beginning of the migration of Mexicans to U.S. soil. Currently among this return contingent are families whose children have been born and/or raised in the United States.

The challenge is undeniable for returning migrant children, their families and the society to which they return. Migrant minors in Mexico face a context in which they have never been, because they were born in the U.S., or consciously do not know, because they migrated at a very young age. This challenge is particularly palpable in their school life; the challenges faced by minors are often related to their little or no command of the Spanish language, which hinders their school education and socialization; moreover, in relation to the latter, minors can be singled out and excluded.

In the same regard, return is also a challenge in the classrooms that receive migrant children in Mexico. Teachers face a phenomenon that until recently was not present or was present at a lower intensity. This lack of knowledge or invisibility of the phenomenon is part of the problem. Since Mexican classrooms are not used to receiving foreign students, it is assumed that they do not exist, or that a new student comes from another city or area of the country, that is to say, it is not customary to investigate the background of minors until the phenomenon or differences, especially linguistic differences, become obvious.

Teachers in Mexico, unlike teachers in countries with a strong presence of immigrants (e.g. the United States), are often unfamiliar with the tools for dealing with groups with a presence of foreign students. Faced with these challenges, teachers and parents have undertaken actions that, within their capabilities, seek to help minors in their adaptation process.

Programs to assist in the reintegration and adaptation process of migrant children are relevant. In the first place, due to the shock of return and various factors that generate depression problems in migrant minors, a priority need is

psychological care for minors and returnee families in general, which contributes to their reintegration and adaptation process in Mexico.

Secondly, it is necessary to provide information and advice to the returnee population regarding services and procedures necessary for their reintegration; this is because many of them have spent long periods abroad and are forced to carry out procedures that have changed substantially or that they have never faced. The most important information is related to issues of legal identity of minors, dual citizenship (in this research almost 90% of minors were born in the United States and only a small proportion have dual citizenship), revalidation of studies, education and health services.

Thirdly, special attention is needed for minors whose command of the Spanish language is deficient or non-existent, since this aspect aggravates or slows down the process of adaptation for minors; likewise, it is necessary to train and sensitize school personnel and the population in general on return, since having close contact with minors is a primary element in their reintegration.

Children pose challenges for teachers and the Mexican school system; however, they are also part of the cultural richness of the education system: you can learn from them with the cultural baggage they can bring to Mexican classrooms.

Returning migrant children represent a 'shared' population; they are a population that, due to their (binational) characteristics, can develop on both sides of the border. Joint actions by the U.S. and Mexican governments are necessary to serve this population. In the near future, young bilingual returnees, with school experience in two countries, will have ties and life options on both sides of the border, and social networks that will extend through them.

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