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'There's no future here': The time and place of children's migration aspirations in Peru

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Abstract

This article examines young Peruvians' aspirations and the role of migration in their imagined futures, from a generational perspective. The data come from *Young Lives*, a long-term study of childhood poverty combining survey and qualitative approaches with children and their parents. The paper uses a biographical approach that sees migration as part of individual biographies as well as social structures and life course processes. The aim is to deepen understanding of the social contexts in which aspirations for and by children are generated, paying close attention to family migration histories, dynamic household contexts, and children's migration networks. The analysis focuses on the time-spaces of migration aspirations, showing the way past, present and future are interconnected. It also emplaces aspirations by focusing on the way aspirations by and for children are constituted in and through particular places. The conclusion reflects on the role of poverty and argues that 'aspirations' are about much more than abstract 'futures'; they orient actions in the present and say a great deal about young people's current realities and relationships.

[Keywords: migration, aspirations, generation, children, Latin America]

'Reality without imagination is only half reality.'

- *Luis Buñuel*

Introduction

For impoverished and marginalized young people whose daily lives unfold on fragile ground, aspirations are generated within a context of uncertainty, the weighing out of the risks

between pursuing what is known and what is imagined as expected, probable and possible. This article is interested in young Peruvians' aspirations, the role of migration in their projected futures, and generational relations between parents and children.

The late Peruvian anthropologist, Carlos Iván Degregori (2007), examined changing aspirations among Andean peasants in Peru, in light of wider historic and social transformations beginning in the 20th century. He used the metaphor of the shift from the 'Myth of Inkarri' (an indigenous myth of reconquest) to the 'Myth of Progress' to describe the devaluing of indigenous knowledge and identity in favour of the promises of modernity. [1] Defined by schooling, Spanish language, and literacy, the 'Myth of Progress' promises Andean peasants 'freedom' from ignorance through education (p. 4-5). 'Progress' implies modernization, urbanization, growth and construction (Lobo 1982:64). Fundamental to the shift from 'Inkarri' to 'Progress' was a *temporal* reorientation, wherein Andean populations 'stopped looking to the past':

> They're no longer waiting for the Inka…The indigenous peasantry launched forward with an unsuspecting vitality towards the conquest of the future and of 'progress'. The school, commerce, and… salaried work, these are the principle instruments for this conquest, and migration to the cities – increasingly planned – opens up new horizons (Degregori 2007:6, translation mine).

Peru remains ripe ground to explore the relationship between social change, migration and young people's orientations towards the future. In recent years, the country has reported impressive levels of national economic growth accompanied by substantial investment in rural infrastructure and increased public social expenditure (Cueto et al 2011:17). But inequality persists, and poverty remains concentrated among the country's rural and indigenous populations; wealth and the best quality health and educational services cluster in the coastal region where Lima (the country's capital) is located. Disparities within the urban landscape are evidenced by the highly visible informal settlements built up over the decades by rural migrants on the hillsides surrounding Lima (Anderson 2007:221). Although Lima represents only 10 per cent of the country's geographic space, it claims at least one third of its population, including twenty-seven per cent of the country's adolescents (MINSA 2005). Other towns and cities also attract young people wishing to leave behind rural livelihoods characterised by scarcity, stagnation, harsh climate, and arduous working of the land.

The Myth of Progress and the promises of schooling remain powerful narratives shaping aspirations in Peru. It is more than a localized, exotic 'myth'; the valorization of school education underpins an increasingly globalized view of modern childhood and the research and policy agendas that fuel its circulation. Enrolment in primary education is near universal, and secondary school enrolment is increasing, although over-age (being older than the expected age for the school year) and repetition are problems (Cueto et al 2011: 20). This reflects part of a global trend wherein educational attainment has come to be an expectation of childhood, a sign of child wellbeing, and an indication of moral fortitude among youth (Johnson-Hanks, 2006).

This study is part of a larger research program, 'Young Lives', exploring children's changing experiences of poverty in four countries, including Peru. [2] This paper is interested in how children and their parents narrate experiences and aspirations of migration, drawing on interview and survey data. The analysis is presented in a series of inter-related theoretical themes that speak to the time-spaces of aspirations, of which the paper's title ('There's no future here') is indicative (quoting a rural mother's explanation for why her daughter would one day leave the village). In the next section, I draw connections in the literature between childhood, aspirations and migration. Then, I describe the research design and country context, before presenting the empirical data in two main sections, drawing on multi-generational perspectives. The first section starts to build a picture of the social contexts in which aspirations are generated, focusing on the role of mobility in family lives and childhoods. The second section takes a closer look at young people's networks and relationships. It draws attention to the ways in which space and place are agentic in how young people structure and achieve their aspirations. The conclusion reflects on the role of poverty and argues that 'aspirations' are about much more than abstract 'futures'; they orient actions in the present and say a lot about young people's current realities and relationships.

Bringing children and aspirations into migration's view

There are several potential literatures to exploit that address migration, aspirations and children/childhood, and a constellation of ideas -- from geography, anthropology and cultural sociology – have inspired my approach. I follow other researchers who advocate a biographical approach to studying youth migration (Ní Laoire 2000) and those calling for a greater focus on temporality (Cole and Durham 2008) and on time-spaces 'to move beyond

the individual, to see young people in relation to their wider contexts and in particular their relationship with others, as these shape outcomes' (Ansell et al 2011:541).

The biographical approach to migration advocated by Halfacree and Boyle (1993) is useful for exploring the role of human agency vis-a-vis the socio-economic structures that shape migration decision-making. They encouraged researchers to attend to three undervalued facets of the migration, namely that: (a) migration is a process in time rather than a simple one-off event; (b) migration decision-making is complex, such that from migrants' perspectives any one move may have multiple intertwined motivations; and (c) migration is a cultural construct and related to societal norms. Building on this, Ní Laoire (2000) studied the way Irish rural youth formed their life-paths in light of the choices and constraints presented by their everyday contexts. Similarly, Findlay and Li's (1997) study of Hong Kong emigrants in Canada and the UK situated individuals' migration decisions within the life course and not just in the moment when the decision is made. Biographical studies see migration as part of individual biographies as well as social structures defined by shifting inequalities and power structures (Ní Laoire 2000: 229).

Such biographical approaches developed in light of wider efforts by researchers to increase attention to the 'non-economic' reasons that inform much migration behaviour (Halfacree 2004). Earlier dominant explanatory models emphasized rational choice and were premised on the assumption that, when faced with the decision to migrate, potential migrants make cost-benefit calculations aimed to maximize their individual net benefits, and much focus was on economic factors and wage-differentials (Todaro 1969:139). There remains a tendency to explain migration choices by the logic of labour markets, as opposed to 'the exploration of everyday life situations wherein individuals and groups attempt to resolve their livelihood problems' (Long 2008:38). Economic explanations take precedence over 'compelling personal concerns' that also matter (Wikan 1990).

Unsurprisingly, approaches concerned primarily with 'economic migration' tend to neglect children's perspectives and actions within migration processes, since children are not considered economic actors. Dominant figurations of childhood continue to consider children as economic dependents (Levison 2000; Zelizer 1994), viewed as passive recipients of adult decision-making, and, to borrow Orellana and colleagues' (2001:578) apt metaphor, 'the luggage' in their family migration projects. In policy terms, children who migrate on their own are considered 'out of place' and in need of adult protection and a localized family

rooting; children's rightful place is within the nuclear family, in households that are fixed in bounded spaces (Boyden and Howard 2013; Ní Laoire et al 2010). Independent child migration from this perspective represents a threat to family cohesion. However, the study of transnational migration has gone some way towards greater inclusion of children's experiences, of 'children left behind', and the challenges of managing care, family relations and identities across borders (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002).

A growing body of child-centered scholarship, including in low-income countries, recasts young people in migration processes; mobility is a resource to negotiate social exclusion (Azaola 2012), transition experiences (Punch 2007), gender networks (Heissler 2013) and household poverty (Crivello 2011, Leinaweaver 2008). Other work considers the way different discourses compete to define and govern the appropriate time-spaces of childhood (Bastia 2005; Boyden and Howard 2013; Stryker 2013). The metaphor of 'circulation' addresses the complexities of children's agency within the context of their 're-location' (Leinaweaver 2007a), problematizing the notion of childhood as fixed in particular times and locations (Stryker and Yngvesson 2013). These studies point to the importance of situating children within the context of power relations, and in this respect, Doreen Massey's (1991:24) notion of the 'power geometry' of time-space compression offers a useful analytic lens. She asks: *What is it that determines our degrees of mobility, that influences the sense we have of space and place?*

> For different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections... not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn't... it is also about power in relation to the flows and the movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it (1991:25-26).

Power relations shape aspirations towards the future, and while aspirations, by definition, embody a sense of the future, they also influence and represent people's orientations, values, and actions in the present (Allport 1955; Zimbardo and Boyd 2008). In other words, aspirations are not only the outcome of conditions; they 'do' something and play an important function in people's everyday lives. And yet, the study of aspirations is marginal within

mainstream migration research, possibly because it is unclear how aspirations relate to actual migration outcomes. The sociologist Mische (2009: 694) unpacks the relationship between aspirations and experience, and she conceives of imagined futures as mobilizing forces, such that, 'Forces of pressure pose and define a question. But it is the forces of aspiration which formulate and offer an answer (citing Desroche 1979:3).' In a similar tradition, Frye (2012) set out to understand the apparently 'irrational' optimism reflected in the high educational and career aspirations reported by Malawian schoolgirls living in poverty. Frye argues that high aspirations are not based on rational calculations of the future; rather, they represent girls' attempts to make moral claims about their present selves. In Peru, Leinaweaver's (2007b) examination of the reasons why young people sometimes 'choose to move' away from their families, into orphanages or 'fostering' situations, also emphasizes the moral underpinning of decision-making. This paper draws on insights from these strands of research to bring children and aspirations closer into migration's view, and in the next section, I describe the specific study and data sources underpinning the analysis.

Current study

Since 2002, Young Lives has been following nearly 3,000 boys and girls (in roughly equal numbers) in two age groups (born 2001 and 1994), in Peru, using a longitudinal survey that is administered every few years to children (aged eight and above), caregivers (who provide household and personal information) and community representatives (for contextual information) in twenty sites selected to cover rural, urban, peri-urban and jungle areas. [3] Around thirty per cent of households relocated between 2002 and 2009, mostly from rural areas (Cueto et al 2011:10). Urban households tend to be wealthier and urban children fare better in terms of health and education (ibid:55).

Qualitative research follows-up with a nested sample (totalling fifty children) spread across four (of the twenty) sites, and data collection is scheduled so that it takes place in between rounds of the main survey. It is also longitudinal, meaning the same group of children participated in four rounds of data collection between 2007 and 2014, along with caregivers, peers and community members. Site selection sought to capture contrasts: *Rioja* village is located in the upper Amazon jungle region in northern Peru, and many residents are Andean immigrants from the neighbouring region. [4] *Andahuaylas* village is an indigenous Quechua-speaking community in the southern highlands, one of Peru's poorest regions especially hard-hit by civil war. *San Román* is a multicultural urban neighbourhood in Juliaca,

the economic and commercial centre of the region, with a high proportion of rural migrants. *Villa María del Triunfo* is an urban shanty town in Lima and families trace their origins to places all over Peru.

A team of Peruvian social scientists generate data with participants using an integrated suite of qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews, creative tools (e.g., drawing, mapping, and photography), group discussions and observation (Crivello et al 2013). They spend around one month in each site. This paper used the first three rounds of data (2007, 2008, 2011) to trace how aspirations (for and by children) and children's migration patterns change over time, based on accounts from children and parents. Interviews in 2011 recorded information on mothers' own childhoods, including their migration histories. Lifemaps explored young people's narratives of their lives, mobility and aspirations over time (see also Ansell et al 2011; Bayer 2010; Worth 2009). Following Findlay and Li (1997:37), 'it is not factual information about the life course which is the concern, but rather how one may elicit migrants' formerly held values and interpretations which have been overwritten by their current perceptions of the meaning of their experiences', as well as their imagined futures. Qualitative analysis sought to understand socio-biographical complexity over time and to identify themes emerging from cross-case analysis, contextualized within the wider trends indicated by the survey.

Peruvian migration

Peru's migration history runs deep. Historically, livelihood strategies depended on family members' mobility, thus creating links between and within rural and urban locations and between ecological zones (Takena et al 2010: 4-5). By the 1940s, rural to urban and circulatory migration was well established, and by the 1980s, around half of metropolitan Lima's population was living in informal squatter settlements ('*pueblos jovenes*') established by migrants (Lobo 1982: xv). These were considered hubs of violence and chaos by long-term Limeños (ibid: xii), but settlers had high expectations of achieving economic security, respect and inclusion, and they organized themselves to establish services in their fledgling communities, building homes and forming associations (Altamirano 1984; Anderson 2007). At the same time, many of them began to shed the symbols of their rural origins, adopting the dress and tastes of urban middle class life, a social process which has been described as the gradual '*cholification'* of Lima (Degregori 2007:4; Varallamos 1962: 106). [5]

During the 1980s and into the first half of the 90s, an armed conflict between the State and the self-denominated Communist Party, Shining Path, accelerated migration processes already underway. The violence was heavily concentrated in the Andean region, and it resulted in entire communities in the central and southern highlands abandoning their homelands in search of safety. The war produced over 69,000 deaths, and an estimated 600,000 people were displaced (CVR 2003). Such was the social and political backdrop of childhood and adolescence experienced by many of the mothers and fathers in Young Lives. The Truth and Reconciliation Committee described their generation as having 'had its educational development cut off or impoverished as a result of the conflict' (ibid). It is unsurprising then that many of the mothers reported a history of migration (60 per cent of younger cohort mothers and 67 per cent of older cohort mothers surveyed in 2009 were born in a different community). However, when asked why they had moved to their current localities, the main survey responses were 'work', 'marriage/cohabitation', and 'seeking independence'. 'Violence', either political or interpersonal, was rarely mentioned, perhaps because it is a sensitive topic. In many respects, the reasons for migration in Peru have changed dramatically over the past few decades. But migration is an ongoing process of family adaptation, with strong cross-generational linkages.

Children and household contexts: mobility, proximity and distance in family lives

Aspirations are not generated in a vacuum, and children's households provide an important context for understanding how migration relates to other family and life course processes. Many households are organized *translocally* (across multiple locations) and membership is fluid, as individuals move in and out in response to household shocks, the exigencies of schooling and work, for adventure, to meet changing care needs, or in relation to the formation (or dissolution) of romantic partnerships. Manuel's family is an example (Andahuaylas). For years, his father spent long periods away from home working in a mining town. In 2008, he returned home, then left again, taking Manuel's brother with him to work. Manuel's mother believed that Manuel (then 13) would probably also leave one day since 'his father travelled… so maybe that's what it will be like for him...he gets used to (*acostumbrarse*) travelling.' By age 16, Manuel was working in the mines with his father and attending evening classes [he could not be interviewed]. His mother said that she did not want him to return to the village: 'If he stays, he'll be nothing but poor, like his mother.'

Many families in this study 'got used to' moving in this respect, and the migratory processes in which they are involved need to be understood in relation to the more general practices associated with translocal livelihoods and mobility (Long 2008:40). The 'circulation' of children is a part of this, such that moving children from one household to another is an established tradition in the Andes; typically this involved the relocation of unmarried girls from impoverished rural households to wealthier urban households, often on the basis of kinship ties (Leinaweaver 2007a, Weismantel 1995). Often the agreement is intended to benefit both households and the girls who may be promised the opportunity of schooling. In exchange, the girls provide domestic help – cleaning, childcare and companionship – and their households are relieved of the financial burden of their care. Rather than representing an escape from oppressive gender systems, this form of circulating girls reflects rather than challenges these processes.

Many mothers report histories of migration (34 out of 48 in the qualitative study), and experiences of being relocated as children for domestic work (in the older cohort, 11 of 27 mothers). [7] Most mothers currently living in urban areas (Lima and Juliaca) had entered the city to work as young housemaids in strangers' households, an occupation that has been characterized in terms of 'long hours, very low pay, heavy work, and often lack of respect' (Lobo 1982:56). Indeed, abuse, sadness and exploitation were common themes in mothers' narratives of 'lost' childhoods and suffering. They describe their relocation in terms of having 'been taken' to work in someone else's home, underscoring their lack of choice. Peter's mother's worst childhood memory is 'being sent' (*'me mandaba'*) by her mother at the age of eight to work as a housemaid and she was abused. Although she was re-located to a different household, aged twelve, abuse continued (49 years old).

Migration in childhood was rarely a one-off event; mothers moved multiple times, and their re-location at any one given point can be seen in relation to a longer string of events, decisions and adaptations (cf. Findlay and Li 1997:38). For example, Lupe's grandmother, now 61 years-old, was born in Ayacucho (in the southern sierra region), the third of eight children. Age eleven, her aunt took her to Lima to work as a maid; her sister was already there working in a different household. She was mistreated by her employers for over a year before her aunt relocated her to her own home where she provided childcare. After four months, she moved to a new household to work, and she was raped by her employer's son who was around 35 years old: 'I didn't have a good childhood. Because they had older sons, bigger than me, and, well…they hit me. It's not the same as being at home.' Age sixteen, she became

pregnant from her abuser and she 'was sent' to Ayacucho ('*Me despacharon. Pa´mi pueblo* / They sent me off. To my village'.) Eventually she returned to Lima, took her employers to court and received compensation.

Lupe's grandmother is somewhat exceptional in her claim to retribution, since a sense of justice is absent from other caregiver's narratives of mistreatment. Instead, the trail of childhood violence has a way of following individuals into adulthood. When Aurora's mother was four years old her mother died and her father sent her to work in Arequipa (a city in the southern coastal region) where her sister was already working as a maid. So young, she was beaten because she could not follow her employer's instructions. She moved to a different household and was abused. Age sixteen, she went to work in a mining town, and during her stay, she became pregnant by her brother-in-law. She and her children, including Aurora, currently live in the same compound as her brother-in-law and her sister (his wife) in Juliaca, in inferior conditions.

Many of the mothers were circulated as children and youth in the context of overt political violence; they also moved due to household shocks, such as parental death, intrafamilial violence and acute poverty. Meanwhile, the backdrop of contemporary childhood in Peru is woven from the ongoing structural violence of poverty in a post-conflict landscape. In 2009, most children were living in their natal communities (82 per cent of younger children and 71 per cent of older children in the survey). Mobility increases as children get older, and by age fifteen, 1 in 5 of the older cohort had migrated at least once between 2002 and 2009, mostly from rural areas. The main reasons in the survey for their migration were to study, to be close to family, and to work, and the majority of them already knew people in their destinations.

Statistics can, however, obscure the complexities underlying migration processes. As is the case for migration generally, it often proves difficult to identify a single reason for relocation or to discern the extent to which individuals influence migration decisions (cf. Halfacree and Boyle 1993:339). Elmer's case (Rioja) is illustrative. During primary school his family moved to a nearby ranch. Age twelve, he moved to Lima where his sister had migrated five years earlier. She sent for him so that he could look after her children while she and her husband worked. In exchange, she paid for Elmer's upkeep and schooling costs. The previous year, Elmer's brother (17 years old) lived there for the same reason, but he returned to Rioja to graduate with his friends. The following year, Elmer returned to Rioja, and his older brother, having graduated, returned to his sister's house for post-secondary schooling. Then,

his parents relocated to a different village where they bought land. When he was fifteen years old, Elmer's mother spent several months in Lima to care for her daughter who was ill, and Elmer and his siblings moved to yet a different village to attend school. Elmer said that he found it difficult when his mother left since he confided in her most: 'I spent a year without her'. She returned home and each weekend the children walked three hours to help in their parents' fields. Elmer missed his village friends and said that he found it difficult 'getting used to the [new] place'. But he didn't have any roots left in his hometown: 'I don't have family there… My parents no longer have their house there… They've sold everything, now we have nothing.'

It would appear as if Elmer's family is fragmented, if not chaotic, moving and dispersed as they are across multiple locations. However, decisions to move, and who moves (or stays), are often decisions made with the intention to *strengthen* family bonds. It is unclear from Elmer's account, however, the extent to which he had a say in his circulation, and whether he had a 'choice'. His movements can only make sense with reference to his individual life history as shaped by his family relationships and their social transitions -- and by their collective pursuit of wellbeing. One reason why Elmer went to live with his sister was because she left home when Elmer was still young so their mother hoped his move to Lima would strengthen their relationship. His most recent relocation was so that he and his siblings could continue in school, and education underpins so many of the family's shared goals to move out of poverty.

As shown by Elmer's case, migration decisions are commonly made within the context of mutual dependence between the generations, and in light of expected reciprocity over the life course. Kinship ties are crucial for ensuring economic survival, and those who lack family bonds are often considered amongst the poorest. It is telling that the Quechua word for 'poor', *waqcha*, literally translates to mean an orphan, or one who lives without parents, relatives or social networks (Altamirano 1988:27). Describing social life among migrants in a shanty town, Lobo points to the cultural need to 'be with people' as vital to one's happiness, and that survival is thought of in terms of interaction with others and reciprocal benefits (Lobo 1982:72).

Social relationships are at the core of what children understand to be a 'good life'; parental presence, harmonious relations, intergenerational support, and a sense of belonging with others figure as essential ingredients to child wellbeing in their view. In a group

discussion in Andahuaylas (2011), children, aged ten, listed the attributes that they felt described children who were doing well in the community, and then they ranked the top three: 'Mom buys him/her school supplies and clothes'; 'S/he likes going to school'; and, 'Helps mom to cook'. On the other hand, they know a child is not doing well when: 'S/he doesn't ask mom for permission'; 'S/he doesn't study at home'; and, 'S/he plays in the fields and doesn't help.' Generally, it was common for children in the study to define *illbeing* in terms of a child being alone, on their own, or coping with weak parental care. In urban areas, physical and social isolation are intertwined, and the poorest households are often located at the uppermost reaches of the hillsides, 'where there are not even roads or stairs' (Fabian, 13 years-old, Lima) (Cueto et al 2011:46). [6]

The reality of daily life often differs markedly from the idealized vision of family togetherness and harmony, and a potential contradiction arises between the values of family cohesion and proximity on the one hand, and family mobility and absence, on the other. 1 in 3 of the older children (age 15) and nearly 1 in 4 of the younger children (age 8) report not seeing their fathers daily (2009 survey), and the main reasons (74%) were because the father 'abandoned the family' or 'was never around'. There is a gender dimension to absence/presence, since fathers and mothers have distinct roles in family life, and boys and girls may be differentially affected. Becoming a father is essential to becoming a man, since fatherhood signals virility and responsibility which are key in defining masculine adulthood. Fathers are thought to play a distinct role in children's trajectories:

> The father figure is defined as the one who determines the destiny of his children. Fathers who are present and provide for their families guarantee future success for their children, whereas those who abandon their families condemn their children to poverty. Thus, the father is a contradictory figure because his presence is defined as crucial, but the possibility of his absence is always latent. (Fuller 2001:328)

Children's sense of wellbeing, their aspirations, and their sense of place in the world are influenced by the presence *and* absence of people in their lives (Sladvoka 2007:190). Around half of the fathers live 'full-time' at home; several fathers work away from home; others had left the family due to domestic violence or infidelity (older cohort, qualitative study). Mothers invoke the absence of fathers to explain changes in children's temperament and behavior. For example, Esmeralda's father (Lima) had a mistress and he left the family when Esmeralda was four. According to her mother, Esmeralda cried when she saw photos of him, and she

began misbehaving. When she was seven, her father returned home but her parents' relationship became violent. When she was nine, a researcher asked her to draw a girl her age for whom she thought life was going well, and she said 'her parents don't fight', whereas 'not doing well' is when 'parents fight and the children cry'. About her own father, she said, 'He's still a drunk, but now he's not with this woman…. [He's] with my mom,' and Esmeralda feels 'good' and 'happy' that he has returned. Esmeralda's desire for her father to be physically present in her life contrasts with her mother's current hope – that he leaves Peru to work in Europe – to give her some peace.

Mothers' absence is also thought to negatively impact child wellbeing, and mothers themselves identify this as a problem (usually after they have made the decision to spend less time away). For example, Isabel (Juliaca) became sad and worried when her mother worked away from home for weeks at a time. Her mother reflected that the children were not being cared for (*descuidados*), 'they went around with matted hair, dirty (*chascosos, cochinitos*)… when I'm not around their clothes are filthy.' She decided to spend more time at home, re-establishing a maternal presence. In other cases, mothers are represented as failing to meet familial expectations, as with Lupe (age six) whose parents fought a lot, and her mother eventually left the household to be with another man. Lupe and her sister were taken in by their maternal grandmother who attributed Lupe's falling grades to 'trauma' and what she called 'unverbalized sadness' (*tristeza no verbalizada*) resulting from her mother's absence; and Lupe became rebellious (*renegona*). Lupe got in trouble for waking up late because she would stay up waiting for her father (who visited but did not live with them): 'He said 'I'm coming at 6… to help get you changed… but sometimes he didn't come and I felt bad because my sister and aunt would hit me… 'get up already'.' When she was ten, Lupe reflected back on that time ('I wasn't as obedient'), and how she had since changed. She used to lash out at others which she explained in terms of 'the trauma that comes with all this.' 'I started to educate myself, to obey, to have a little respect…but I still fight with my sister [laughter].' She had seen a counsellor, and by this time, her mother was visiting daily.

Thus, the effects of parental absence are sometimes pathologized in terms of rebellion or sickness: 'that is what has made him rebel.' / *'eso le ha hecho rebelar'* (Luis' mother, 40 years old, Rioja). Rodrigo's mother noted changes in her son when she went away for work: 'He became ill, he missed me so much.' He did not eat, lost weight, and complained of headaches and fever. These explanations echo findings from Pribilsky's (2001) ethnographic study in the Ecuadorian Andes describing the way boys develop a culturally specific form of

depression (‘*nervios*’) which affects them when they are separated from their fathers who migrate to the USA. Their mothers explain their symptoms (stress, headaches, changes in character) in terms of extreme heartache due to fathers’ absence. The author argues that *nervios* is brought on by a breach in reciprocal relations from which boys have become excluded, and *nervios* is a culturally acceptable way for boys to articulate emotions that they otherwise would be ashamed to express.

Separation, absence and abandonment by parents were themes in mothers’ accounts of their own childhood experiences of relocation and migration. Cesar’s mother (34 years old, Lima) was too young to remember being given to her grandmother to be raised due to her parents’ domestic violence. When she realized her grandmother was not her mother, she felt ‘abandoned’ by her mother, and said she became depressed in her teen years. Indeed, intra-familial violence was a common experience for both generations, and violence remains an everyday problem for children (Bayer 2011, Rojas 2011). Among the older cohort, 11 out of 27 reported some form of family violence, although the interviews do not specifically probe for violence. In the 2009 survey, fifteen year-olds reported ‘family disputes’ as one of the main reasons for migration.

Atilio’s (Andahuaylas) example shows how violence motivates migration decisions. In 2011, he was not in the village, and from his mother we discovered that he had recently left school and migrated to Lima with his girlfriend without telling his family. She believes he left on account of the constant fighting at home. His father drank a lot and was violent, throwing his mother out of the house. She said Atilio told her, ‘My dad gets me so angry, that’s why I can’t stand it anymore.’ He was further upset because his brother-in-law was abusive to his sister (they were living with Atilio’s parents), and he wanted to intervene by fighting him. Instead, he left.

Young people’s reasons for migrating also change, and violence might be one among many reasons. Diana’s case (16 years old, Rioja) is illustrative. Age twelve, she said studying is important ‘so you can be somebody in life’. But by age fourteen, she was no longer in school; she had met a young man working in the community and became pregnant. She left with him without telling her mother, and eventually moved in with his family in another part of the country. Her boyfriend and his mother became abusive to Diana, and after two years, she returned with her baby to her mother’s home. She does not view her return migration as a sign of failure, since she feels happier and safe. She would like to find work in Lima, like her

sister, but she accepts that this would be difficult with a baby. It is apparent that young people formulate and navigate their aspirations within the complex emotional terrain of family life. Their imagined futures are much more than lofty 'fantasies' beyond the realm of possibility, and they reflect everyday reality of social and economic life.

'Linked lives' and 'places' – a relational view of children's networks and aspirations

The notion of 'linked lives' (Elder 1994) frames the way aspirations for/by children reflect 'the long-term interlocking pathways of family members' lives' across space and time (Hagan et al 1996:371). Aspirations are rarely just about the goals of *individuals*, nor are they simply reflections about the *future;* they are shaped by relationships past, present and future. Drawing on Simmel's theory (1955) of relational intersections which views social networks as extending into the imagined future, Mische develops the notion of *sociality* to refer to the way future projections are 'peopled' with others, and of *connectivity* to describe the imagined logic of connection between temporal elements (eg, past, present, future) (Mische 2009:701). Imagined futures by/for children are 'relational', 'connected to others', reflecting a sense of reciprocal obligation into the future when the balance of child-adult dependency is expected to shift as adult children assume greater responsibility for their ageing parents. John's mother associates migration to the USA with improved future prospects for her son, that way, when she is old (*ancianita*), he can send her a little 'tip' (*propinita*). Lobo also noted how the actions of migrants in Lima were fuelled by the belief that 'the future will be an improvement, if not for themselves, then for their children' (Lobo 1982:66).

Mobility intertwines with life course processes, such that aspirations to migrate reflect young people's understandings of social being and becoming. Notions of 'being' and 'becoming' have been a point of contention in the children and childhood literature (James et al 1998; Qvortrup 1991; Uprichard 2008), since the conventional preoccupation has been on the preparation of children for future adult roles rather than on children as persons today. In this study, 'being' and 'becoming' overlap and interact, and several terms articulated actions linking present and future temporalities, such as 'progressing' or 'improving oneself' (*superar, progresar and sobresalir*), 'establishing oneself' (*establecerse*) and 'becoming somebody in life' (*ser alguien en la vida*) (eg, Benavides et al 2006; Crivello 2011; Leinaweaver 2008; Lobo 1982). Yet, escaping poverty is a shared goal, and much hope is placed in the younger generation to spearhead progress, given their unprecedented access to

formal education: 'I also walk in the fields with sandals (*ojotas*). At least [my son] will go with shoes (*zapatitos*) if he gets a good head with education (Father, Juliaca, 2007) (cf Boyden 2013; Rojas and Portugal 2010).

Children's networks

Young people use their networks to get ahead. In Peru, networks have been explored in terms of translocality (Long 2008), rural-urban linkages (Paerregaard 1997), and transnational communities (Berg and Paerregaard 2005; Paerregaard 2008). In this study, children's extended family, sibling and peer networks were vital for them to translate abstract aspirations into more concrete plans and actual migration. Children's and parents' networks overlap, but young people are differently situated within these networks, or 'power geometries', and they create new links. When Maria (Rioja) was twelve, she moved to her grandparents' in the city to access a better secondary school. Talking about the village, Maria's mother says, 'Here there's nothing. Here, where's she going to study?' When she was fifteen, Maria's aunt wanted her to live with her in Chiclayo where she could study and work. Maria's mother has plans to relocate the entire family wherever Maria goes, since Maria's little sister will also need to continue her education.

There is therefore a spatial dimension to the way that children and families rely on their networks (Hansen 2005), and this can be particularly instrumental for girls wishing to migrate (without their parents), since parental attitudes towards them tend to be more protective. In urban areas, the street is a masculine space associated with virility and is opposed to the feminine space of the home (Fuller 2001:319), so having an aunt in Chicalyo, or a married sister in Lima, buffers these gendered risks. Samantha Punch's (2007) study of Bolivian migrants in Argentina found that girls migrated later than boys did, and that it was widely believed that girls needed to be looked after, whereas boys required less protection.

Siblings play an important role in mediating risk and figure crucially in children's migration networks. For example, one of Luis' (Rioja) brothers recently returned from working in Ecuador and is studying music in Chiclayo. Luis used to want to be a police officer in Lima, but now he wants to go to Chiclayo to study music. Siblings also constrain aspirations, as in the case of seventeen year-old Esmeralda (Andahuaylas) who is desperate to join her friends and sisters in Lima, but her older brother insists that she study closer to home,

so they can keep an eye on her. Thus, gender, age and networks mediate the ways in which young people are located within shifting power geometries.

Children leaving family behind

The final theme stems from rural accounts focusing on place and generational change, and the ways in which aspirations are constituted in and through particular spaces (Holloway and Valentine 2000:770). Places are important for young people because they 'play a large part in constructing and constraining dreams and practices' (Aitken 2001:20). A common desire is for children to obtain a certificate when they complete formal schooling and to become a 'professional' in the city, this offering the kind of stability and financial security rarely found in 'the fields' (*la chacra*). But the possibility of migration as a pathway to rural children's progress is underpinned by feelings of ambivalence. Mothers invoke the language of suffering and hardship to describe rural life and peasant livelihoods, speaking from their own embodied experiences of relentless working of the land with few signs of ever 'getting ahead' (Crivello 2011). They want better for their children. The image of 'the fields' provides a foil to the aspirations they have for their offspring, deriving 'in large part, precisely from the specificity of its interactions with 'the outside'' (Massey 1994:169), in this case, the image of the city.

Children's aspirations also invoke elements of the physical landscape; such as Eva (Andahuaylas) who insists that she does not want 'to be a *campesina'* – a peasant working the land – and Marta, from the same village, who does not want 'to suffer any more in the mud' (cf. Boyden 2013). At the same time, their families are dependent on the land for their livelihoods, so it is unsurprising that, according to children, lack of land ownership is a sign of being poor (Cueto et al 2011:46).

Although the circulation of children is a long-standing response to household poverty, according to mothers' accounts, a new social category is emerging – that of the 'children leaving family behind'. Emergence of this new social category signals a generational shift wherein mothers sense that 'nowadays' the departure of young people is increasingly habitual and inevitable, and a process over which they have little control. This sentiment is most

poignantly expressed by mothers in Andahuaylas, all of whom are from Andahuaylas (in contrast to urban mothers who are themselves migrants).

The generational shift is discursively constructed through the language of space and time. The future orientation of the young is outward-looking, and mothers' longing to remain physically close to their children competes with the material and social realities that require children to leave them behind. Luis' mother (Rioja) says of her children, 'they come and go' / *'se van y vienen'*. Natalia's mother (Rioja) reflects that, nowadays, children move away, not like before 'when everyone was together', 'work is what tears us apart.' But she warns Natalia, 'Staying here, there's nothing, there's no future here.' Natalia said, troubled, that 'all the good people' seem to leave the village.

The claim that 'there's no future here' draws attention to the emplaced nature of aspiration, and in Peru, this is often expressed in language contrasting the countryside with the city. Esteban's mother (50 years old, Rioja) explains:

> It's not the same here in the countryside like it is in the city. In the city, I see how they progress more... [I] want my son to move forward… that he becomes a professional... So perhaps he can be an example to others… [He] says he wants to go to the city… [I]f he decides to go to study, what can I do? I could tell him, 'you make me feel bad, son', but I have to be strong and tell him 'you go'. Because if I tell him, 'No, no, don't go,'… I'm going to hold him back. I don't want that, I want him to carry on. (Rioja, 2011)

This passage constructs Esteban's mother as a 'good' mother through the discourse of emotional sacrifice and of choosing to support her son's migration despite feelings of ambivalence and uncertainty. John's mother (Lima) expressed a similar sentiment when she said 'I'm his mother, but I'm not his owner', meaning she is resigned to the fact that John will probably try to emigrate to the USA, which is his dream.

Over the years, Esteban's mother has witnessed her other children leaving; she has a daughter in Jaen, two in Chiclayo, one in Rioja city, and two daughters in Lima. Within this scenario, Esteban's aspiration to move to Lima does not appear far-fetched. His mother reflects, 'more and more, we're more alone, it's not like it was before where you're with your children. This is the change… they begin to leave, and one feels more...more alone.' Sixteen year-old Eva (Andahuaylas) is the last daughter at home, and she wants to move to Lima; her

mother says she will miss the simple things, 'talking about whatever, talking when we cook...when we finish doing things we also sit, we laugh...'

Young people also forge migration paths for adults and younger siblings to follow, and several families were preparing land or housing so that they could join their migrant children in the future. Esmeralda (Andahuaylas) imagines she will live somewhere else in the future, 'because nobody will be here, not my mom, not my siblings.' In sum, aspirations reflect how 'lives' are linked, as are the 'places' of children's social worlds. Rather than presuming the fragmentation of family and weakening emotional ties, children's migration aspirations also reaffirm family social bonds and obligations, within and between generations. Children's agency, when and if it is discernible, is shifting and variable; they are both leaders and followers within migration processes.

Conclusion: Poverty, aspirations and migration

I have shown how children's aspirations are enmeshed within power relations and constrained by the 'politics of probabilities' (Bourdieu, 2000:228; McNay 2003:146). In present-day Peru, global and national inequality moulds differential probabilities for different categories and groups of children; in other words, *place* matters for children's life chances (Woodhead et al 2013). Through their aspirations and actions, they try to rewrite the scripts of what is possible for them. But '[t]he real ambition to control the future . . . varies with the real power to control that future, which means first of all having a grasp on the present itself' (Bourdieu 2000:221).

Are the aspirations I've described here rational, based on calculations of costs and benefits? To some extent they are. Poverty also brings uncertainty, making predictions tenuous, and hope essential, or if not essential, at least a valuable motivator. This may resonate particularly strongly among rural youth for whom leaving the countryside is considered a crucial step towards 'getting ahead' which is not all about material benefits, since migration narratives are also infused with emotion. Emotions surface in talk about family, past and present, and the families described here appear to be fundamentally characterized by separation and fragmentation. Indeed, experiences of migration are often expressed in terms of sadness and loss. Mothers' accounts of 'being taken' as young girls to work in the city are typically framed in these terms, and worse. Yet physical separation does not always equate to family breakdown, such that aspirations to migrate are often motivated by strong socio-emotional attachments. Children's experiences of migration cannot therefore

be viewed in a self-contained bubble. Families are constituted across space and time through a series of shifting absences and presences, departures and returns, displacements and emplacements – and children are actors within these complex power geometries, sometimes staying, sometimes going, but always relating. Cross-generational linkages bind young and old across space and time, and locate single migration decisions and events within deeper histories of family mobility.

These observations raise important questions about phenomenology, and what 'migration' and 'aspirations' mean in terms of the lived experiences of children and their first-person points of view. How might migration be experienced by a child when parental absence is due to abandonment rather than a job; or when the parent a child sees once every two years is living in Lima versus Madrid or Washington DC; or when a beloved brother or sister leaves instead of parents; or when 'I leave' rather than 'being left behind'. Strict adherence to separate migration categories and typologies is limiting and attention needs to be paid to the shared experiential threads that tie different scales and histories of migration together. Similarly, Long (2008:59) questions whether there is a great ontological divide between those living 'at home', or in some 'distant city' or 'transnational world'. These questions unsettle many prevailing categories used in research and policy to cast children in particular ways within migration processes – particularly figurations of the 'family' and of dichotomized 'rural' and 'urban' spaces, as well as the divisions between different migration types, such as 'internal'/'transnational' and 'unaccompanied child migration'/'family migration'. A view from biographical experience tells a different story of power and place, and provides a lens onto wider social structures, histories and futures. At the same time, it would be too easy to take at face value that children 'have agency', and aspirations need to be understood within the context of multiple constraints and complex moral economies. Increasingly, scholars are urged to draw stronger connections between current and future lives, 'both because experiences and actions in childhood and youth undoubtedly shape the futures of individuals and wider society, but also because young people's thoughts and actions are so often geared to the future, and this future orientation shapes their present worlds' (Ansell et al., 2014:387). It doesn't matter that children's aspirations are not perfect predictors of the future adults that they will become. More importantly, aspirations offer a complex window into inequality and children's current social and material realities, their changing place in generational relationships, and the human condition more generally.

Endnotes

1. The legend of Inkarri describes the demise of Atahualpa, the last Inka ruler, at the hands of Spanish conquerors who buried his body parts in several locations across the kingdom. Legend has it that one day Atahualpa will rise to reclaim his kingdom.

2. Young Lives tracks the life trajectories of 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states), Peru and Vietnam over 15 years. www.younglives.org.uk. It is core-funded from 2001 to 2017 by UK aid from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and co-funded by Irish Aid from 2014 to 2015. The views expressed are those of the author. They are not necessarily those of, or endorsed by, Young Lives, the University of Oxford, DFID or other funders.

3. In 2002, twenty sentinel sites were selected using available poverty data with the aim to over-sample poor areas. A random selection approach was used within district and *manzana* (street block) level, then children of the right age were randomly selected (2,052 younger and 714 older children). This paper refers to three survey rounds (2002, 2006, 2009). See Escobal and Flores 2008.

4. Pseudonyms are used for children and for communities with fewer than 40,000 residents.

5. In modern-day Peru, the term 'cholo' refers to individuals of indigenous, Indian ancestry. Depending on context, it can be used as a racial insult, or as a term of endearment between friends ('cholito/a').

6. Stairways have been built to give access to houses in Lima's shanty towns, and more recently settled areas do not have stairs.

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