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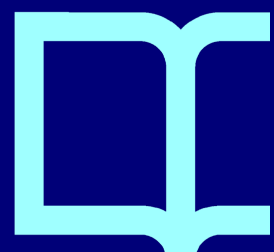

Generational cohorts versus national origin: explaining the educational attainment among children of Latin American immigrants in Spain

ABSTRACT

Over the last twenty-five years, Spain has experienced a significant increase of Latin American immigrants, which has raised questions about their children's adaptation process. Yet, there is little evidence on the factors that explain school success or failure among this group. This paper aims to fill this gap by using data from the Longitudinal Study of the Second Generation in Spain (ILSEG in its Spanish acronym). The findings show that the children of Latin American immigrants are more likely to attain lower educational levels than the children of Spanish natives. However, concentrating on the national origin variable risks obscuring some underlying adaptive processes —associated with generational age cohorts— involved in differential educational outcomes among immigrant children. The data analysed show that Latin American immigrant children born in Spain are likely to attain the same educational levels as their native Spanish peers. This finding highlights the importance of being raised in the host country in easing adaptation to the new society and the school system. The paper concludes with some policy suggestions in the field of education. Instead of treating all child migrants uniformly, public policies should address the specific needs of the target groups, emphasising later arrivals.

KEYWORDS

Migration; generational age cohorts; national origin; educational achievement; Latin America.

Introduction

Spain has established itself as an immigrant-receiving country over the past twenty-five years (CES 2019: 12; Cebolla-Boado et al. 2020: 1), with a significant increase in Latin American flows (Ayuso and Pinyol 2010; Portes et al. 2016: x-xi; Vickstrom and Portes 2019: 777). Closely related to this process, the number of sons and daughters of Latin

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American migrants who arrived in Spain at an early age or who were born in Spain during this period has also increased (INE, various years). The generic term to refer to these children has been "second generation" (Portes and Rumbaut 2005: 987; Thomson and Crul 2007; Myers et al. 2009; Alba and Holdaway 2013: 3; Portes et al. 2018: 151). Far from having a biological connotation, this concept is used to account for the process by which immigrant children adapt to the host society. They may have educational and work trajectories similar to those of their parents or have trajectories comparable to those of the sons and daughters of natives (Rumbaut 2004; Myers et al. 2009; Alarcón et al. 2014: 1615; Oberdaberniga and Schneebaumb 2017: 3701; Jiménez et al. 2018: 1040-1041; Feliciano and Rumbaut 2020: 199).

The question of whether the second generation assimilates into the mainstream middle class of the host society has received considerable attention in migration research (Hartmann 2016: 369). Since the process of immigrant integration occurs mainly through the school system (Beck et al. 2012: 155; Alba and Holdaway 2013: 2; Engzell 2019: 83; Aparicio and Portes 2014: 163; Portes et al. 2018: 150), some studies view with concern the significant gaps in educational attainment that separate immigrant children from their native counterparts, with adverse effects on the integration process and their future employability (Carrasco et al. 2013; Carrasco et al. 2018; Fernández et al. 2019: 36; Bayona-i-Carrasco et al. 2020: 2). Others have expressed a certain optimism about the educational integration level that these children have achieved in Spanish society. It is argued that immigrant children's educational achievement is not associated with national origin, but rather with family socio-economic status (Aparicio and Portes 2014: 199-202; Portes et al. 2018: 165; Haller and Portes 2019; Fernández et al. 2019: 48). However, as several studies outside Spain have shown, the class background does not explain the entire

educational achievement gap between groups (Kristen and Granato 2007: 344; Khattab 2018: 459).

On the other hand, there is little evidence to rule out the possibility that such differences may also be explained by national origin (Álvarez-Sotomayor 2015: 55; Álvarez-Sotomayor and Martínez-Cousinou 2016: 529-530; CES 2019: 172) —as the experience of several European countries would suggest (van Niekerk 2007; Thomson and Crul 2007; Kristen and Granato 2007; OECD 2019)— or age at arrival (Aparicio 2007; Alarcón et al. 2014: 1618; Schnell and Azzolini 2015: 218, 223, 235; de Miguel-Luken and Solana-Solana 2017: 734; Haller and Portes 2019: 1827). We still know very little about the school success or failure of immigrant children in the Spanish context, mainly due to the lack of adequate data (Azzolini et al. 2012: 47, 64; Álvarez-Sotomayor et al. 2015: 52; Portes et al. 2016: x, 56-57; de Miguel-Luken and Solana-Solana 2017: 735).

Furthermore, there is a significant gap in longitudinal research on second generations in Spain (Medvedeva and Portes 2018: 23; Vickstrom and Portes 2019: 776-777), and very few studies have approached the question of how the children of Latin American immigrants adapt to their new lives (Aparicio et al. 2014), despite being the most important non-EU migrant groups since 2005 in Spain (Ayuso and Pinyol 2010) —followed by Africans— according to the *Padrón Municipal* register. This group has characteristics that it shares with *native people* and also distinctive features, all of which are relevant to understanding integration processes and how its children have adapted to the Spanish context. While Latin Americans share cultural traits with *native Spaniards* such as language and traditions, and receive preferential treatment under Spanish nationality law, the different groups entering Spain from abroad have been the main precursors of the diversity of the Latin American population (through different

periods, origins, and composition by age, gender, ethnicity, and social class). This heterogeneity has been described as 'the Latin American migratory kaleidoscope' (Domingo, Sabater and Verdugo 2015: v, viii).

This article seeks to partly fill this gap by analysing the impact of national origin and generational differences on the educational trajectories of the children of Latin American immigrants in Spain, based on a sub-sample from the Longitudinal Study of the Second Generation in Spain (ILSEG in its Spanish acronym). The findings contribute to the existing literature about the second generation in Spain by showing that, as a general trend, the children of Latin American immigrants are more likely to attain lower educational levels than the children of Spanish natives. Nonetheless, attributable to the national origin variable is viewed somewhat differently when taking the generational age cohort variable into account. Latin American immigrant children born in Spain are likely to attain the same educational levels as their native Spanish peers. The article concludes with a set of challenges for policy intervention in this increasingly large population segment in views of these results. Public policies should address the specific needs of the target groups, emphasising later arrivals in the field of education.

Theoretical background and hypotheses

The theory of segmented assimilation

From the theory of segmented assimilation, how immigrant groups adapt to the new society differs according to their individual/group characteristics and the structural context they find themselves. Individual/group characteristics may include parental human capital (education, occupational skills, and language ability), wealth, family structure (presence or absence of both biological parents), and cultural values and norms. From this perspective, the structural context of the receiving society may refer to

stereotypes about race or ethnicity, governmental policies towards specific immigrant groups (promoting exclusion, passive acceptance, or active encouragement), the size and characteristics of pre-existing co-ethnic communities (which may increase economic opportunities and support parental control), and labour market opportunities (Portes and Zhou 1993: 82-87; Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 44-69; Haller et al. 2011: 734, 736-737; Alarcón et al. 2014: 1631; Portes et al. 2016: 22-23; Hou and Bonikowska 2017: 1436; Haller and Portes 2019: 1827-1829).

Essentially, segmented assimilation theory asserts that immigrant groups disparities in terms of human capital and modes of incorporation may translate into patterned differences and multiple assimilation paths (with upward and downward outcomes) in the course of adaptation followed by their offspring (Haller, Portes and Linch 2013: 4). This heterogeneity concerning their integration into different segments of society (middle-class or lower class) is said to be a result mainly of their particular vulnerability and the lack of resources at their disposal, which, in turn, may vary depending on the context of reception (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 111; Hou and Bonikowska 2017: 1434). This theoretical approach emphasizes a process in which immigrants' backgrounds and contexts of reception influence the most crucial outcome for their children in early adulthood: their educational attainments (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 69, 267). Adapting to the new society involves a conjunction of individual and contextual forces at a given time and place, in a manner that is complex but not chaotic (Ibid.: 268).

Empirically, segmented assimilation may be measured by a set of strategic objective outcomes in immigrants' children's lives comprising educational attainment (including completed years of education and whether the individual is still in school), occupational status, and downward assimilation (Portes et al. 2005: 1016; Haller, Portes

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3 and Linch 2013: 9). As far as educational attainment is concerned, segmented assimilation
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5 assumes that not all children of immigrants will reach the same level of education (Stepick
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8 and Stepick 2010: 1160). Differences in the educational attainment of young people are
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10 explained mostly by parental human capital, family structure, co-ethnic social capital,
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12 experiences of racial discrimination, and opportunities offered by the economic structure
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15 (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 49, 62, 107; Aparicio and Portes 2014: 34, 52, 54; Portes et
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17 al. 2018: 153-4; Haller and Portes 2019: 1828, 1841-1842).
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19 Parental human capital determines the family's socio-economic status, which is
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22 relevant since most parents want the best for their children, but not all possess the means
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24 to promote their educational success (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 49, 62; Portes et al. 2005:
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26 1012). In addition to human capital, the family structure itself plays a significant role.
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29 Children growing up in families with both parents have access to greater adult guidance
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31 (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 64). This is in terms of greater capacity to control, supervise
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33 and support children's education, translating into higher school achievements (Aparicio
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36 and Portes 2014: 35; Portes et al. 2018: 154). In a similar vein, the social capital of pre-
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38 existing co-ethnic communities is a vital resource, especially among immigrants of
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40 limited means, because their networks support parental control against deviant lifestyles
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43 (such as involvement in gangs and drugs) or early school drop-out (Portes and Rumbaut
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45 2001: 65; Portes et al. 2005: 1013). Co-ethnic communities can also provide some
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47 necessary resources for upward mobility and prevent downward assimilation (Haller and
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50 Portes 2019: 1825). Finally, racial or ethnic stereotypes may generate a perception among
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52 certain types of young people that they are being discriminated against (Telles and Ortiz
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54 2008; Yiu 2013; Alarcón et al. 2014: 1619). The more intense this perception of
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57 discrimination, the lower the self-prognosis for successful integration into the host society
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59 (Aparicio and Portes 2014: 45, 111). Immigrant children's perceptions of discrimination
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may affect their ethnic identities and self-esteem, aspirations, and school behaviour patterns (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 55-56; Aparicio and Portes 2014: 192-3).

According to the segmented assimilation theory, nationality differences in educational attainment reflect the combined weight of the abovementioned factors. Nevertheless, each group's collective history, paths of integration, and the experiences that the child and the family bring from their country of origin will condition their achievement in school. Such factors alone cannot fully explain all differences among national groups, and therefore many significant nationality effects will remain (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 234-235, 242, 244, 250), "with this influence being much stronger among some groups than others" (Ibid.: 251). Therefore, segmented assimilation theory predicts significant educational attainment differences among the many nationalities comprising Spain's foreign origin population (Haller and Portes 2019: 1845). On this point, some studies have provided empirical evidence that addresses differences in educational attainment associated with national origin (Feliciano 2018: 189). In Spain's case, different tests show that second generation of Latin American immigrants performs worse than Spanish natives, despite having Spanish as their mother tongue (Álvarez-Sotomayor and Martínez-Cousinou 2016: 530; Azzolini et al. 2012: 46; Zinovyeva et al. 2014: 25-26, 29, 42, 50).

Moreover, since differences in the contexts of reception drive disparities between groups of different national origin (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001), the context of the 2008 economic crisis deepened the existing social and economic gulf between foreign-born and native-born populations in Spain (Pajares 2010; Mahía and de Arce 2014; Miyar-Busto 2017). In turn, immigrants from less developed countries were the hardest hit by unemployment (Bernardi et al. 2011). For immigrants of Latin American origin, given their concentration in particular economic sectors (with a

predominance of less skilled and low-paid jobs), the crisis blocked the processes of incorporation due to loss of employment, savings, and housing of many of those who remained in Spain (Tedesco 2010; Pajares 2010). This process may have affected their children's educational pathways and influenced early school dropout levels in Spain (Álvarez-Sotomayor and Martínez-Cousinou 2016: 531; Miyar-Busto 2017: 135-137; Fernández et al. 2019: 36; CES 2019: 170). In other words, "weak occupational attainments among the parental generation translate into a lack of material resources and investments available to families to foster their children's education" (Schnell and Azzolini 2015: 217). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> *H1. The children of Latin American immigrants are more likely to achieve lower educational levels than the children of Spanish natives, but their educational pathways differ according to national origin.*

However, considering that immigrant students include individuals with distinct migratory trajectories, what is sometimes understood as a feature linked to national origin may be interpreted differently if the analysis is based on their migration history (Bayona-i-Carrasco and Domingo 2019: 30), particularly on their age cohort upon arrival. In this sense, the national origin variable may risk obscuring some underlying social processes that generate educational attainment differences among immigrants' children (Stepick and Stepick 2010: 1161-1162).

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The effect of generational cohorts on educational attainment

The educational gap between the native population and immigrants' children is most often explained by deprivation since "many immigrants have a low socio-economic status and attend schools in socio-economically disadvantaged classrooms" (OECD 2019: 10). However, it is important to bear in mind that socio-economic background alone cannot explain the gap (Schnell and Azzolini 2015: 228; Feliciano 2018: 191; OECD 2019: Chapter 7). Poor language fluency, ethnic discrimination, and differences between cohorts based on age at migration, among other factors, may also affect educational attainment (Laganà et al. 2014: 20-21; Lemmermann and Riphahn 2018: 78-79, 90; OECD 2012, Chapter 4; OECD 2019: 32, 80). Immigrant generational cohorts are important because native-born children of foreign-born parents tend to perform better than foreign-born children of foreign-born parents (Azzolini et al. 2012: 48, 65).

Conceptualized as a cohort, the generation to which migrant children belong allows the origin and/or destination context to be considered (Myers et al. 2009). Moreover, it accounts for pre-migratory backgrounds (van Niekerk 2007) and subjective aspects linked to socio-cultural integration (Maxwell 2010), including the psychological costs of crossing social boundaries and adopting a new identity (Beck et al. 2012: 155). Ultimately, "there are fundamental differences in the pace and mode of adaptation between persons who immigrate as adults and those who do so as children" (Rumbaut 2004: 1166). The costs of adjusting to the new society are less severe among immigrant children who arrive at an early age experience than among those who arrive when they are older, increasing their likelihood of completing more years of education (Gonzalez 2003: 203-204, 211).

Students' adaptation to the new school environment is demonstrated by their academic performance (Goñi et al. 2018: 94). From a theoretical viewpoint, migrant

children's membership of different generational cohorts may affect various adaptation outcomes, including educational attainment, a good reason for not mixing them empirically, as is often the case (Rumbaut 2004: 1185). Rumbaut (2004) distinguishes the following generational cohorts of immigrant children based on their age and stage of life at arrival: generation 1.75 (who arrived as pre-school children, at ages 0 to 5 years); generation 1.5 (who arrived in mid-childhood, at ages 6 to 12 years), and generation 1.25 (who arrived in adolescence, at ages 13 to 17 years). Moreover, considering differences in the parental nativity of children born in the host country, generation 2.0 (when father and mother are both of immigrant origin) can be distinguished from generation 2.5 (when one parent is native and the other an immigrant).

Concerning the possible effects of generation on educational trajectories, those who emigrate in early childhood experience a similar path to those born in the host society. In contrast, those who emigrate in mid-childhood and particularly during adolescence are similar to their parent's generation (Rumbaut 2004: 1167; OECD 2006: 198-202; Aparicio 2007: 1170; Maxwell 2010; Söhn 2011). Thus, we would expect children's age at migration to be inversely associated with their educational attainment (Alarcón et al. 2014: 1618). The reason is that "[f]oreign-born adolescents, elementary school-age children, and pre-school children are at starkly different life stages at the point of migration, begin their adaptation processes in very different social contexts" (Rumbaut 2004: 1167). In this way, the generational cohort to which the children of immigrants belong, defined by their age at arrival, significantly affects their educational attainment (Rumbaut 2004: 1164; Van Tubergen 2006: 9; Bayona-i-Carrasco et al. 2020: 3). In other words, the migration process is associated with school results in that it determines both the age of entry into the educational system (some join from the starting point, while

others do so later) and its continuity (OECD 2006: 70-71; Bayona-i-Carrasco et al. 2020: 4-5).

The educational attainment of young immigrants improves their socialization process in the host society the earlier they begin. This is not only a matter of learning the foreign language but also because the stress caused by migration is likely to affect educational performance less if experienced at an early age —very young migrants adapt better to the new culture and institutional framework of education (Siahaan et al. 2014: 7; Azzolini et al. 2012: 48; OECD 2012: 68, 77; Lemmermann and Riphahn 2018: 78-79; Gindelsky 2019: 38; Goñi et al. 2018: 95; Honkaniemi et al. 2020. 2, 8). Difficulties in embracing diversity and conflicts between classmates are common problems that schools must face daily (Goñi et al. 2018: 95). Some European studies have shown an increased prevalence of depressive symptoms among older arrivals (Honkaniemi et al. 2020: 2) and that "[m]ost of the crises leading to negative adaptation outcomes originate in adolescence" (Haller et al. 2011: 739). There is an important acculturation component beyond language proficiency (Gindelsky 2019: 34), which tends to decline with age at migration (Ibid.: 32). Immigrants' children face a tense relationship between their parents' culture and that of their new country (Portes et al. 2016: ix) making it more difficult for these young people to identify with the host society (Ibid.: 109). Those who arrive at later stages (in secondary education) and experience cultural barriers in addition to linguistic ones tend to find it less easy to progress to post-compulsory stages (Arrasate 2018; Güell 2020).

Immigrant children who arrive when older, with less exposure to schools in the host society, need more effort to catch up with their native classmates (Galloway and Gjefsen 2020: 2). Similarly, "[c]hildren brought at a late age to the country and placed, for that reason, in classrooms with younger peers tend to adjust their aspirations

downward and to perform worse academically" (Portes et al. 2016: 226). For an important segment of those who emigrate later, this mobility process can represent an obstacle for continuing their studies, thus accelerating their transition to the labour market (de Miguel-Luken and Solana-Solana 2017: 739). Moreover, "[a] late age at arrival implies higher integration costs because of more formidable adaptation challenges" (Beck et al. 2012: 138). Additionally, many young people will have spent several years learning in developing countries with schooling systems of precarious quality and uneven access, finding themselves ill-equipped to compete in the new educational system (OECD 2012: 68, 75; Engzell 2019: 87, 97). Those who arrive at an older age tend to reduce their educational aspirations and expectations (Portes et al. 2018: 159) and, in turn, are more likely to be left out of the education system than native youths (Miyar-Busto 2017: 123).

In sum, the earlier immigrant children are incorporated into the school system in the host society, the better the academic results they achieve (Rumbaut 2004; OECD 2006: 70-71; Siahaan et al. 2014: 1, 7; Schnell and Azzolini 2015: 228, 234; Portes et al. 2016: 226; Clarke 2018: 209, 233; Lemmermann and Riphahn 2018: 90; Galloway and Gjefsen 2020: 1, 11; Bayona-i-Carrasco et al. 2020: 13). This aspect highlights the importance of being raised in the host country since it facilitates adaptation to the new country and school system (Azzolini et al. 2012: 65). Among those who were born in Spain, although it is essential to distinguish the children of mixed parentage from those with two foreign-born parents (Cebolla-Boado 2009; Azzolini et al. 2012: 65; Álvarez-Sotomayor 2015: 55-56), the presence of both generations is mainly found in the first years of compulsory education (Azzolini et al. 2012: 50, 55; de Miguel-Luken and Solana-Solana 2017: 734), so they were considered together.

H2. Latin American immigrant children born in Spain —generations 2.5/2.0— are more likely to reach educational attainment levels similar to the children of Spanish natives than immigrant generations that arrive later, especially the generational cohort of children who arrived after the age of twelve.

Research design and data

The research design is based on the Longitudinal Study of the Second Generation in Spain (ILSEG). The ILSEG's longitudinal design allows us to trace individual and collective change over time and establish causal relationships between variables (Medvedeva and Portes 2018: 24; Haller and Portes 2019: 1830). The survey included three waves in Spain and collected a statistically representative sample of the children of immigrants of different national origins who attend schools in Madrid and Barcelona. In this article, we use the second and third waves carried out in 2011/2012 (7,300 cases with an average age of 18 years) and 2016/2017 (2,922 cases with an average age of 22 years), which also included a sample of children of native Spaniards as a control group (Aparicio and Portes 2014; Haller and Portes 2019).

We selected a sub-sample consisting only of children of Latin American parents[1] and Spanish parents as a control group. The sample was composed as follows: in the second round the $N = 5{,}216$ cases (37.7% children of Spanish parents and 62.3% children of Latin American parents), while in the third round the $N = 2{,}079$ cases (33.4% children of Spanish parents and 66.6% children of Latin American parents). However, since attrition bias in the last survey was significant, statistical adjustments had to be introduced to make results representative. The multivariate statistical analysis includes a correction for sampling bias based on the Heckman method, comparable to the procedure implemented by Portes et al. (2018) and Haller and Portes (2019). In correcting the

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3 sampling bias, the variables used were sex, city of residence, schooling of parents/guardians, educational aspirations, and national origin (“Spain”). Additionally, to minimize potential biases due to missing data, in terms of parameter estimates and the precision of confidence bands, imputations were conducted with SPSS multiple imputation data module using the *Expectation maximization algorithm*. Values were imputed utilizing the information provided by the rest of the variables and then averaged over the imputed dataset before the statistical analyses.

Measurement

Dependent variable. Educational attainment is measured by the level of schooling attained or current, since most of the young people were still part of the school system (65 percent). For this measurement, the questions and their respective response categories were matched between both applications of the ILSEG surveys. Reference is to the last level completed in those no longer in education and the last current level for those who are still studying, as follows: Level 1 = Basic secondary or less; Level 2 = Mid-Level technical; Level 3 = Advanced secondary/Superior technical; Level 4 = University.

Independent variables. In allocating *national origin* to the children of immigrants, the criterion adopted was their country of birth and, for those born in Spain (with at least one foreign-born parent), their parent’s country of birth (Aparicio and Portes 2014: 143). Individuals from the largest nationalities —over 153 cases belonging to a specific national origin group in the ILSEG-II (and over 65 in the ILSEG-III)— were classified individually by nationality. Nationality groups with smaller representations in the sample were aggregated into the “other” category. Meanwhile, *generational cohorts* were defined as: generational cohort born in Spain with one foreign-born parent (generation

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2.5), generational cohort born in Spain with both foreign-born parents (generation 2.0), generational cohort arrived before the age of 6 (generation 1.75), generational cohort arrived between the ages of 6-12 (generation 1.50), and generational cohort arrived after the age of 12 (generation 1.25).

Control variables. As a first control block, we include *socio-demographic characteristics*: sex (0 = Female, 1= Male), age (years), marital status (0 = Unmarried, 1 = Married), and early motherhood/parenthood (0 = No, 1 = Yes). The second block incorporates *parental resources*: living with both parents (0 = No, 1= Yes) and a *family socio-economic status index* elaborated by Portes and Haller (2019) (based on the standardised sum of the parents' education, their occupation, and whether they own their home, divided by 5). In the third block we introduce *migration status and discrimination*: Spanish citizenship (0 = No, 1 = Yes) and perception of discrimination (0 = No, 1 = Yes).[2] Finally, we control for *educational ambition* (based on the Wisconsin model of status attainment): the "educational aspiration" is understood as the highest level of education that the respondent would like to achieve (as an ideal), while the "educational expectation" has been conceptualised as the highest level of education that the respondent realistically expects to achieve. In both cases, the original values have been recoded as follows: 1 = University or postgraduate degree; 0 = Other.

Data analysis and findings

Table 1 shows the importance of national origin (ethnic communities and their resources) in the educational attainment of young people. Measures of educational achievement in the ILSEG-III survey were taken in early adulthood at an average age of 22 years in the overall (sub)sample. The majority (64 per cent) at that time were continuing their studies.

In general, Latin American children's levels of educational attainment differ from and are lower than those of Spanish natives, as expected by the segmented assimilation theory. Among those left behind (Level 1 and Level 2), the children of migrants of Bolivian, Ecuadorian, and Dominican national origin exhibit the most pronounced gaps with the children of Spanish natives. The disadvantage of immigrants' children vis-à-vis natives is also evident at university level. While 51.5 per cent of the children of Spanish natives were undertaking university studies or had completed them, the corresponding figure among immigrants' children was considerably lower. The children of Argentinian immigrants appear to be the only exception (see also Authors year). Moreover, it is relevant to bear in mind that, when the ISEG-III survey was applied, 94.6 percent of the total number of cases who were at educational Level 4 were still studying in university and only 5.4 percent had dropped out prematurely.Thus, it is to be expected that a considerable proportion of students would increase their levels of education up to B.A/B.Sc. university degree level or higher. However, it is also probable that the rate of dropout from university studies would rise more steeply among children of immigrants than of native-born Spanish people, thus increasing the gap in educational achievement between both groups, as well as between children of immigrants of different national origin.

[Insert Table 1]

Table 2 displays a clear trend in the relationship between generational cohorts and educational attainment. As we move from the 2.5/2.0 generations to the 1.25 generation, the educational achievement of the children of Latin American immigrants can be seen to decline. As we get closer to the 1.25 generation, the proportion of immigrants' children who are at the lowest rungs of the educational ladder (Levels 1 and 2) tends to *increase*. And if we focus on the highest educational levels (Level 4) the opposite occurs: the

proportion of immigrants' children tends to *decrease* as we get closer to generation 1.25. In both cases, the most pronounced differences are between the generational cohorts 2.5/2.0 (those born in Spain) and the generational cohort 1.25, which arrived after the age of 12. As expected, however, these gaps in educational achievement tend to disappear when the 2.5/2.0 generations are compared with the children of natives, for example, at educational Level 1 or Level 4. Nevertheless, it is notable that those who arrived before the age of six (generation 1.75) exhibited an educational path more like the generation 1.50 than generation 2.5/2.0 at educational Level 4 (university).

However, these results should be interpreted with caution since the database of the third ILSEG survey is not weighted—the bias introduced due to cases lost between the second and third application of the survey has not been corrected—so they need to be retested in a multivariate analysis that includes a sampling bias correction factor. More important, we need to determine whether the gaps observed in educational attainment are satisfactorily explained by generational cohort or by national origin, once they are controlled by the effect of other relevant variables, including family socio-economic status and educational ambition.

[Insert Table 2]

The multivariate analysis presented in Table 3 reinforces the previous findings: educational attainment is associated with generational cohorts. The data in Model 2 and Model 4 allow us to confirm hypothesis H2. Once control variables are introduced, Latin American immigrant children born in Spain (generations 2.5/2.0) share a likelihood of attaining a given educational level that is similar to the children of Spanish natives. This result contrasts with later arrival immigrant generations, especially the generational cohort that arrived after the age of twelve. On the other hand, national origin has a

statistical impact on educational attainment in Model 1 and Model 3. Overall, the children of Latin American immigrants —except for those from Argentina— are more likely to achieve lower educational levels than the children of Spanish natives. This is particularly clear in the cases of immigrant children from the Dominican Republic and Bolivia (see also Authors year). Consequently, the data analysed allow us also to confirm hypothesis H1. It is important to note that while both hypotheses are confirmed, the generational cohort variable brings to light something that the national origin variable was unable to show. National origin matters, yet under certain circumstances. It matters only for foreign-born immigrant children (especially for later arrival immigrant generations), highlighting the influence of being raised in the host country since this facilitates adaptation to the new society and school system.

[Insert Table 3]

Among the socio-demographic characteristics, early motherhood/parenthood (6.9 per cent of the sample) has the strongest impact, affecting education levels negatively. Regarding the other factors included in the models, educational ambition (with a strong positive impact of aspirations and expectations) and parental resources (mostly family socio-economic status) significantly influence educational attainment. Such results are consistent with the findings of Haller and Portes (2019), working also with the ILSEG-III data set and the Wisconsin model of status attainment, in combination with the segmented assimilation perspective. According to the psycho-social approach of the Wisconsin model, young people's aspirations are crucial in determining their degree of educational (and occupational) success. Central to this model is the role of significant others, parents among them. The effect of parental social class on offspring's education is mediated by parents' ambition, which, in turn, is transmitted to their children (parental

influence on the development of aspirations). Children from higher-status homes have more favourable opportunities to develop cognitive skills and receive greater emphasis on academic achievement from their parents; thus, they strive for high grades in school. Such aspirations then affect their subsequent levels of attainment. Furthermore, the direct effect of the family's socio-economic status on educational (and occupational) achievement would tend to dissolve once this latter mediating factor is taken into account (Sewell, Haller and Portes 1969: 83-86, 91; Haller and Portes 1973: 62, 65, 68, 70, 87-88; Sewell et al. 2003: 17-18, 25; Portes et al. 2013: 561, 568; Haller and Portes 2019: 1825-1826, 1829).[3] On the other hand, the segmented assimilation perspective emphasises parental socio-economic status (and the role of co-ethnic communities) as a critical structural factor in determining children's educational achievement. Those who benefit from family resources (economic capital and better-educated parents) are also more likely to access high-quality schools. From this perspective, the influence of family socio-economic status persists even after controlling for children's ambition (Haller and Portes 2019: 1825, 1828, 1829). However, since the Wisconsin model initially attempts only to clarify the causal process of how aspirations are developed and how they influence young people's subsequent attainment (Haller and Portes 1973: 65, 68, 87), both perspectives can be seen to be complementary. As Haller and Portes (2019: 1825) point out: "[r]esults show that both family socio-economic status and ambition, measured by adolescent educational aspirations and expectations, play important roles in educational and occupational attainment."

Finally, the perceived discrimination does negatively influence the educational achievements of young people, as expected by the theory of segmented assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 55-56; Aparicio and Portes 2014: 192-3), yet its impact is moderate in both waves. Such a finding suggests that, up to a point, Latin American

children of immigrants in Spain face a favourable context of reception, characterised by fewer racist reactions against them (Portes, Aparicio and Haller 2016: 115). According to several public opinion polls, Latin American immigrants —as a whole or from a particular country— are among those immigrant groups least rejected by the Spanish population (Cea D'Ancona and Valles 2015: 257-258). Previous studies analysing the ILSEG dataset have also shown that most children of immigrants in Spain (except for Muslims) report low experiences of discrimination and high levels of self-identification with the country. They do not differ substantially on these variables from the children of Spaniards, which has been interpreted as indicative of their successful integration into Spanish society (Aparicio and Portes 2014: 111-112; 115-117; Portes, Aparicio and Haller 2016: 114-116; Portes, Aparicio and Haller 2018: 162-163, 165-166, 178).

We can infer, then, that perceived discrimination among children of Latin American immigrants, as part of the context of reception, may have less relevance than shared structural elements and the economic context of arrival—when we consider how the economic crisis impacted their parents' generation in terms of unemployment, loss of savings and housing (Fernández et al. 2019; CES 2019). Such adversities may have affected the educational strategies adopted for their children more than stereotypes about race or ethnicity or even the degree to which the different co-ethnic communities have been accepted (Authors, in press). However, it may be too soon to appreciate a clear tendency in this regard. A recent study shows that discrimination in the Spanish education system affecting the children of immigrants has increased from 13% to 20% between 2013 and 2020. The experiences of discrimination are mainly associated with teasing, insults and bullying among students, and exclusion from games and activities. The dissemination of stereotypes and prejudices has also been observed among teachers, conditioning their treatment and expectations of children having different immigrant

origins (CEDRE 2020: 227). Avoiding such situations is vital for integration processes, as schoolchildren from immigrant families who have not experienced discrimination report feeling more integrated into Spanish society (ibid. 233). Ultimately, there is also some concern that experiences of discrimination —under certain circumstances— may favour the emergence of reactive identities and violent protests against the host society (Vickstrom and Portes 2018: 5-6).

Conclusions

Over the last twenty-five years, Spain has experienced a significant increase in Latin American immigrants that has raised questions about how well their children have adapted to their new country. This article has focused on educational attainment, as immigrant inclusion occurs mainly through the educational system, which is also the most important predictor of future socio-economic integration. Using longitudinal data from the Spanish ILSEG study, the analysis shows that —in agreement with the theory of segmented assimilation— educational attainment is associated with national origin. The general trend is that children of Latin American immigrants, except for those from Argentina, are more likely to achieve lower educational levels than are the children of Spanish natives, even after controlling for demographic characteristics, parental variables (including family's socio-economic status), migration status, perception of discrimination, and educational ambitions. The combination of all these factors reduces but does not eliminate national effects on educational attainment. This is particularly so in the cases of children from the Dominican Republic and Bolivia. Moreover, since the 2008 economic crisis deepened the existing social and economic gap between Spain's foreign-born and native-born populations, this process may have negatively impacted Latin American children's educational attainment.

However, the national origin variable may risk obscuring some underlying social processes that generate differential educational attainments among children of immigrants. What is interpreted as a characteristic attributable to national origin may be portrayed somewhat differently when account is taken of the socialisation process immigrant children undergo in the host society. The age cohort to which they belong at arrival seems to play an important role in their adaptation to the new educational institutional framework, especially when students come from developing countries with schooling systems of precarious quality, as well as in building a new identity. Immigrant children who arrive at earlier ages might be expected to experience lesser costs of adjustment to the new society. For this reason, generational cohorts should not be lumped together under the single umbrella of belonging to a second generation, as is often the case in Spain. As we have seen, the ILSEG data analyses show that —*ceteris paribus*— Latin American immigrant children born in Spain are likely to attain the same educational levels as the children of Spanish natives.

This second finding highlights the importance of upbringing in the host country, as it facilitates adaptation to the new society and school system. It is also likely that the 2008 economic crisis had a differential impact on immigrant families that partially explains the gap observed between Latin American immigrant children born in Spain and later arrivals. The advantage could be due to families' upward social mobility with a more extended residence period in Spain during the economic boom years, which would have allowed them to cope with the financial crisis's effects better than late arrivals (Álvarez-Sotomayor et al. 2015, 74-75). Future studies are needed to clarify this aspect. Closely related to the above, further research should pay more attention to country origin variations in the educational outcomes of Latin American children born in Spain. It is also necessary to distinguish between mixed parentage children and those with two

foreign-born parents. Mixed-parentage youth constitutes a small but rapidly growing population group in Spain. To what extent individuals navigating mixedness have more choices than constraints in achieving greater social inclusion (Rodríguez-García et al. 2018; Rodríguez-García et al. 2021) and higher educational achievements (Cebolla-Boado 2009; Azzoline et al. 2012; Álvarez-Sotomayor et al. 2015; Bayona-i-Carrasco and Domingo 2021) requires additional investigation.

The findings allow us to identify some challenges for Spanish public policy, especially regarding those children of Latin immigrants who have a reduced possibility of educational success than children of Spanish natives. Public policy can be more effective if the most vulnerable groups are identified. National origin certainly matters, but not equally for all generational cohorts. Instead of treating child migrants uniformly, immigration policies in the field of education must be sensitive to the nature of assimilation processes (Gindelsky 2019: 55). They should address the needs of the specific groups they are targeting (OECD 2019: 71), especially in the case of late-arriving adolescent immigrants (Cobb-Clark et al. 2012: 40; Lemmermann and Riphahn 2018: 90). An extra effort should be made to provide more assistance on curriculum recovery (Galloway and Gjefsen 2020) —which could be given to all those students who have spent several years learning in developing countries with schooling systems of precarious quality (OECD 2012: 68, 75; Engzell 2019: 87, 97)— complemented with greater access to pre-school and kindergarten programmes for earlier arrivals (Oberdabernig and Schneebaum 2017: 3716). Moreover, since immigrant children face upper-secondary choices in a much more complex way than their local peers (Kalalathi et al. 2017), schools should be more inclusive of ethnic communities (Arrasate 2018) to prevent early school dropout (García-Carrión et al. 2017). Barriers such as the longstanding separation of migrant children from mainstream classes or the lack of recognition of pre-migratory

knowledge and capital should also be removed to contribute to their continuation in post-compulsory studies (Berggren et al. 2020).

Finally, since family socio-economic status and ambition are relevant variables that explain young people's educational attainment, school authorities should support (and promote) high goals among immigrant children and their parents, mainly focusing on the poorest and least culturally integrated immigrant families (Portes et al. 2013: 582-583). Such encouragement will need to be complemented with measures to mitigate the adverse effects of racism and discrimination within the school (Eleme 2013; CEDRE 2020; OECD 2018, Chapter 7; OECD 2021, Chapter 9) and school segregation (Cebolla-Boado and Garrido Medina 2011; OECD 2018; Bayona-i-Carrasco and Domingo 2021; Murillo and Belavi 2021).

Notes

1 Although the ILSEG survey samples include immigrants' children from different continents of origin, our sample focuses on those of Latin American origin for the reasons described in the introduction. We excluded only 64 cases that —according to the ILSEG-II survey— were already at university, and none of them was a child of Spanish parents (outliers). Regarding the remainder of the ILSEG sample, it should be noted that most have considerably less than 60 observations in the ILSEG-III survey, except for children from Morocco and Romania.

[2] The question was: "Do you think that in general, Spaniards discriminate against foreigners?" 0 = No, 1 = Yes.

[3] Underlying this approach is the idea that those who have higher aspirations, for example to reach university education, may or may not achieve it, but those who aspire to nothing will surely not achieve it (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 215-216; Portes et al. 2013: 558; Aparicio and Portes 2014: 32, 38; Cebolla-Boado et al. 2020: 1). Acknowledging that aspirations can be 'idealistic' or

‘realistic’ (Haller and Portes 1973: 83), the term *ambition* can be used to refer to both, while use of *aspiration* is reserved for its idealist meaning and *expectation* for its realistic one (Portes et al. 2013: 560; Haller and Portes 2019: 1832).

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Table 1. Educational attainment at early adulthood by national origin in Spain

	Spain	Argentina	Bolivia	Colombia	Ecuador	Peru	Dominican Republic	Other Lat.Am.	Total
Level 1	5.6%	9.8%	17.2%	14.0%	16.1%	10.1%	22.2%	12.9%	11.9%
Level 2	12.4%	9.8%	21.9%	14.6%	16.9%	10.1%	16.3%	17.7%	14.7%
Level 3	30.5%	34.4%	32.2%	35.4%	39.0%	39.0%	36.5%	32.9%	34.8%
Level 4	51.5%	46.0%	28.7%	36.0%	28.0%	40.8%	25.0%	36.5%	38.6%
Total	100% (694)	100% (61)	100% (87)	100% (178)	100% (626)	100% (159)	100% (104)	100% (170)	100% (2,079)

Note: Reference is to the last level completed in those no longer in education and the last current level for those who are still studying. Level 1 = Basic secondary or less; Level 2 = Mid-Level technical; Level 3 = Advanced secondary/Superior technical; Level 4 = University. Cramer's V = .140 (p < .000). Average age = 22 years.
Source: ILSEG-III Survey.

Table 2. Educational attainment at early adulthood by generational cohorts in Spain

	Native children	Generation 2.5	Generation 2.0	Generation 1.75	Generation 1.50	Generation 1.25	Total
Level 1	5.6%	10.1%	10.1%	13.0%	15.8%	21.2%	11.9%
Level 2	12.4%	10.1%	8.7%	13.5%	16.7%	28.8%	14.7%
Level 3	30.5%	24.7%	39.1%	39.0%	37.4%	34.6%	34.8%
Level 4	51.5%	55.1%	42.1%	34.5%	30.1%	15.4%	38.6%
Total	100% (694)	100% (69)	100% (69)	100% (223)	100% (972)	100% (52)	100% (2,079)

Note: Reference is to the last level completed in those no longer in education and the last current level for those who are still studying. Level 1 = Basic secondary or less; Level 2 = Mid-Level technical; Level 3 = Advanced secondary/Superior technical; Level 4 = University. *Spearman correlation* = -.227 (p < .000). Average age = 22 years.
Source: ILSEG-III Survey.

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Table 3. Determinants of educational attainment at early adulthood in Spain

	Model 1[(a)]	Model 2[(a)]	Model 3[(b)]	Model 4[(b)]
Sociodemographic				
Sex (male)	-.233***	-.222***	-.188**	-.175**
Age	-.028	-.025	-.046*	-.046**
Marital status (unmarried)	.150	.153	.131	.130
Early motherhood/parenthood (yes)	-.681***	-.666***	-.666***	-.651***
Parental resources				
Living with both parents (yes)	.234**	.233**	.227**	.224**
Family socioeconomic status	.414***	.390***	.379***	.355***
Migration status & discrimination				
Access to Spanish citizenship (yes)	.030	.012	.038	.020
Perception of discrimination (yes)	-.128*	-.133*	-.132**	-.137**
Educational ambition				
Educational aspirations[(c)]	.712***	.716***	.649***	.643***
Educational expectations[(c)]	.704***	.703***	.676***	.672***
National origin				
Spain (category ref.)				
Argentina	-.204		-.241	
Bolivia	-.306*		-.339*	
Colombia	-.273**		-.318**	
Ecuador	-.226***		-.281***	
Peru	-.279**		-.318**	
Dominican Republic	-.372**		-.393***	
Rest of Latin America	-.395***		-.417***	
Generational cohorts				
Native children (category ref.)				
Generation 2.5		-.169		-.204
Generation 2.0		-.103		-.159
Generation 1.75		-.311***		-.360***
Generation 1.50		-.291***		-.336***
Generation 1.25		-.505**		-.528***
Pseudo R squared				
Cox and Snell	.396	.397		
Nagelkerke	.430	.431		
McFadden	.199	.199		
Wald Chi^2			580.08***	562.36***
Athrho			-.297*	-.327*
Rho			-.289*	-.315*
Wald test of independence equation (rho=0)			4.01*	4.93*
N	2,079	2,079	2,079	2,079

Note: (a) Regression coefficients of ordered probit models. (b) Regression coefficients of ordered probit model with correction of sampling bias using the Heckman method. (c) Variables included as questions in the second wave and incorporated in both models. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.
Source: ILSEG-II and ILSEG-III surveys.