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The role of parental involvement, school resources and family environment on educational expectations of natives' and immigrant children in Europe

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Abstract

Our paper explores to what extent school resources, parental involvement in school and family environment shape educational expectations of migrants and natives in four European countries: Belgium, Ireland, Italy and Portugal.

We use unique cross-national data from the PISA2009 on children aged 15 that include information on the student, the parental home, the school and its interaction. We show that first and second generations are more likely to envisage that they stop their educational career at the end of secondary school than native children. Furthermore, the second generation overall has lower educational expectations than the first generation. School resources have a positive effect on educational expectations and reduce the gap between migrant and majority students. Parental background and possession of home resources enhance educational expectations and diminish the difference between migrants and natives.

Although family environment is found to play a key role on the expectations to reach tertiary education, school resources and parents involvement in school are found to be less important for shaping these expectations. The interaction between parents and school is relevant primarily for preventing minority students from leaving the educational system at an early stage. The school environment thus shapes educational expectations, but less so for those children who already have high expectations.

Key words: Education, Expectations, school characteristics, parent-school interaction, children of immigrants, PISA, Europe

Introduction: motivation and background of the study

The growing presence of the children of immigrants in European school systems is one of the most striking demographic and social changes in the past few decades. Children of immigrants are increasingly important in European societies (UNICEF 2009) and also in schools many children have a migrant background nowadays. Previous research has indicated that many of these young adults attain lower educational levels, have higher rates of drop out, and have more difficulty in translating their educational credentials into a position within the labor force (for an overview see Heath et al., 2008). At the same time, earlier studies show that educational aspirations and expectations are not necessarily lower for immigrant or minority students. On the contrary, these students, and

their parents, often have high educational expectations (Goldenberg et al. 2001). Nevertheless, most of the research on educational aspirations and expectations still focuses on North America, particularly the U.S. Thus far, research on European countries has been scarce but it is highly needed giving the changes facing the European student populations.

Recent literature has become more precise in distinguishing the concepts of expectations and aspirations. On the one hand educational aspirations “capture general goals or ambitions for the future” (Feliciano 2006) and correspond to “the level of education that respondents would ideally like to achieve” (Portes et al. 2010, p. 779). On the other hand educational expectations are more realistic in capturing concrete plans for the future (Feliciano 2006), and correspond to “the educational and occupational levels that children [of immigrants] realistically expect to achieve” (Portes et al. 2010, p. 779). Expectations thus relate to what a person *think* will happen, rather than what they hope *hope* will happen according to their aspirations (Jacob and Wilder 2010).

Focus on educational expectations is relevant, because literature confirms that educational expectations are good predictors of educational attainment, which in turn is a predictor of occupational and status attainment (Sewell et al. 1969; Sewell et al. 1970). Moreover, educational expectations of children of immigrants potentially measure immigrant social integration and can be seen as an indicator for social distances between origin groups.

Our article aims to define to what extent school context, and parental background and their involvement in school can interact to shape the educational expectations of immigrants and natives in four European countries: Belgium, Ireland, Italy, and Portugal. We distinguish between two educational expectation measures: those students expecting to continue their academic career after completing the secondary level and those who expect to reach the tertiary level of education. We will use PISA 2009 data concerning children who are 15 years old. While many existing studies focus on expectations of either first or second generation students in one country only, PISA2009 data allow for a direct comparison of children of immigrants (including both generations) across four European countries. We addition, the data are unique in the sense that they cover detailed information on school context and resources as well as information on parental involvement in the school, aspects expected to be relevant but hitherto hardly studied at a large scale empirically.

First, we explore the role of school context and resources on the educational expectations of children of different origin in each of the study countries. Second, we explore the interaction between the parents and the schools and, more specifically,

the parents' involvement in the school, in order to define the impact that this interaction has on the educational expectations of children from diverse backgrounds. Since school and family are supposed to cooperate in the aim of giving the child the chance to pursue his ambition, we will look at the cooperation between these two institutions. We will investigate the association between this form of interaction and individual educational expectations. Meanwhile, we will explore the impact of school resources on the educational expectations of children from diverse backgrounds. To the best of our knowledge, no existing studies focus on the link between parental involvement or school resources and educational expectations.

Third, we question the role of resources in the parental home play in defining the educational expectations of immigrants' children and natives. The literature agrees on defining human capital as one of the most relevant determinants of educational attainment (Kao and Tienda 1998, Feliciano 2006). Considering the weight of human capital, we will explore if family resources determine educational expectations among immigrants' children. We will introduce some new aspects that are able to capture a family's inclination to guarantee the maximum level of access to educational resources for their child. We assume that living in an encouraging environment can stimulate children to develop academic ambitions.

Literature and hypotheses

School resources and parental involvement

Schools with a higher quality of resources are able to provide enhanced academic experiences that increase student engagement. In low resource schools, the lack of crucial resources for instruction — an insufficient number of textbooks, for example — hinders opportunities to learn (Baker et al., 2002). Researchers have focused their attention on the link between resource availability and student performance. The effect that the quality of the school resources has on student performance is clear in schools in which there is more variation in resource availability (Fuller 1987). If schools differ greatly in their quality of resources, they will also differ on the opportunities they offer students to learn, thereby producing greater achievement inequality than resource-homogenous school systems.

The literature, nevertheless, does not uniquely address the link between resources and attainment. Hanushek (1986, 1997; Hanushek and Luque 2003)

states that resources are not effective in improving educational outcomes. Recent studies focusing on attainment and comparing different educational settings in different countries (Chiu and Khoo 2005), conclude that students who attend schools with more resources as well as come with families with more resources have higher test scores.

Our hypothesis is that the availability of resources in the school is connected with the individual expectations of the children. Consequently, the more assets offered to the students, the higher their expectations will be. Students attending schools with more resources (as measured by proportion of high qualified teachers, higher teacher-student ratio and higher quality of educational resources) are more likely to have higher educational expectations (HP1).

Nevertheless the few studies on the impact of school resources have focused primary on the majority group students. Only few small scale studies (see e.g., Schwartz and Stiefel 2004) look at the impact of resources on the educational performance of immigrants. Most of them focus on variations between the share of school-level expenditures and the presence of immigrants in the school. Our scope in this article is different: We would like to examine the extent to which school resources explain the differences between natives and children of immigrants in terms of educational expectations. We expect that resources of the school can partially contribute to cover the gap in educational expectations between students who are part of the majority population and minority students (HP2).

Past studies show that greater parental involvement promotes “positive attitudes toward school, improves homework habits, reduces absenteeism and dropping out, and enhances academic achievement” (Sui-Chu and Williams 1996, 126). Parental involvement is a multidimensional construct and takes many forms, including high aspirations relating to personal fulfilment, contact with schools to share information; participation in school events; participation in the work of the school; and participation in school governance (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003, 4).

Parental aspirations are found to have a powerful influence on achievement among students in the U.S. both directly and indirectly, through discussion (Singh et al. 1995). Garg et al. (2002) confirm that students’ perception of their parents’ educational aspirations shapes educational aspirations. High levels of parental expectation, consistent encouragement, and actions to enhance learning opportunities in the home were all found to be positively associated with high aspirations and college enrolments in students, regardless of students’ SES or ethnic background (Sacker et al. 2002).

Moreover, researchers confirm a positive relationship between school-initiated practices to inform, empower, and involve parents and the children's educational outcomes (e.g., Epstein 1996, Epstein and Lee 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al. 1987).

Although, parental involvement, especially in the form of parental values and aspirations modelled in the home, is a major force shaping pupils' achievement and adjustment it may act differently among ethnic groups (Coleman 1987). Apart from norms for success, parents from some ethnic groups may not feel comfortable communicating with teachers or participating in school activities because of language barriers or differences in cultural values (see Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). Earlier studies also indicated that parent's involvement differs by origin as to the extent that parents are aware of the working of schools and the wider educational system (Fuligni 1997) and/or because of language obstacles (Suàrez-Orozco 1989).

Following the existing literature, our hypothesis is that parental involvement in students' education in the school (measured as the direct influence of parents in decision-making about budgeting, instructional content, and assessment practices, and the level of parents' expectations of the school) enhances the educational expectations of their children (HP3a). Moreover, we expect that parental involvement, as an indicator of inclusion in the host society, will reduce differences between natives' children and immigrants' children (HP3b).

The role of parents and origin

Earlier studies have clearly shown that part of the differences between educational aspirations and expectations are related to parental characteristics as well as to the resources available in the parental home. In the literature it has been demonstrated that parental human capital, and mainly the educational level of the parents, plays a crucial role in determining educational expectations. This is not only true for majority group (native students) but also for children of immigrants where for example parental educational level in the country of origin is an important determinant for educational expectations of their children raised in the new settlement country (Kao and Tienda 1998, Inoue 1999, Feliciano 2006, Portes et al. 2011). Parents with higher levels of education are more likely to have "the educational experience and resources to draw upon when helping their children

achieve a college or graduate level of education” (Spera et al. 2009, 1141). Moreover, students with more resources (e.g., books, teacher attention, and family income) typically have more learning opportunities and capitalize on them to perform better academically (e.g., Backer et al. 2002). Furthermore, scarce resources may “limit parents’ ability to help their children achieve the educational aspirations they set for them” (Spera et al. 2009, 1141).

Based on this literature, we expect that children whose parents have higher human capital, better socioeconomic status, and more resources to help them (reflected in home possession of cultural and economic assets), have higher educational expectations than those whose parents have less resources in these different domains. We expect this hypothesis holds among all origin groups (HP4).

Studies from the United States, however also indicate that there are potential differences in educational expectations and aspirations clearly show that children of immigrants have elevated educational expectations between children of different origin. It is concluded that children of immigrants have elevated expectations compared to their non immigrant peers (Goyette and Xie, 1999; Hao and Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; St. Hilaire, 2002). The educational aspirations and expectations of European natives and immigrants’ children are still largely unexplored. Recent studies in Spain and Italy report low levels of educational ambition among first and second generation children (Portes et al. 2010, Minello and Barban 2012).

However, many North America studies describe the so-called “immigrant paradox”. Although immigrant origin youths have an initial advantage with respect to their native peers, the length of their stay in the U.S. is associated with a reduction in their performance and their aspirations (Fuligni 1997, Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 1995). This has been raised in face of the risk of downward or segmented assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), immigrants’ children tend to face difficulties in social integration that lead to low educational achievement. It is generally demonstrated that second generations, more than first, face this issue. A longer period of time in the host society can cause immigrants to face deeper discrimination or to have a more realistic perception of future educational chances. As a result the second generation is more likely to have lower educational ambitions than the first generation of their parents; many of whom migrated in order to achieve a better socioeconomic position for themselves and their children.

At the same time first generation migrants face challenges due to the “social and cultural dislocations inherent in the process of migration and the

challenge of language acquisition”(Suárez-Orozco et al. 2009, 714) that can bring about lower educational performance and lower expectations, as previous studies have found.

Despite the scarcity of literature comparing the educational expectations or aspirations of natives and immigrants’ children, recent work in Italy and Belgium (Van Houtte and Stevens 2009 and Article 5 of the present thesis) show much lower educational expectations for children of immigrants. In line with this earlier work, we expect for our study, that, due to the immigration experience and the adaptation process in the new society, the educational expectations of children of immigrants are overall lower compared to the expectations of natives (HP5a). In line with the theory about second generation decline and segmented assimilation, we furthermore expect that those of the second generation of immigrants are less ambitious than their first generation peers (HP5b).

The context of the study

Our study covers educational expectations of children from migrant and native origin in a range of countries of residence in Europe. On the one hand Italy and Ireland can be considered to be countries of new immigration, whereas on the other side Belgium and Portugal have a long story of immigration flows and migrant settlement. We expect that countries of old (Belgium and Portugal) and countries of recent (Italy and Ireland) immigration histories, having different tools to deal with newcomers which may translate in different levels of educational expectations.

Italy and Ireland have been countries of emigration until the ’90s, while during the last decades the immigration flows have become to increase drastically. Immigrants to Italy at the beginning of the period came mainly from Sub-Saharan and other African regions, while in the second phase of the immigration course, after the extension of EU boundaries, migration from Central and Eastern Europe has become predominant (Eurostat 2009). Recent data show that the percentage of foreigners residing in Italy reached 7.5% of the population in 2011 (Istat 2011).

Also in Ireland the economic growth of the ’90 began to attract first of all returning Irish nationals, but also asylum applicants mainly from Nigeria and Romania, as well as non-EU nationals. Later on, in Ireland like in many other EU countries the effect of EU enlargement towards the East has changed the immigrant population substantially and many immigrants now come from European countries (Eurostat 2009). The foreign born population living in Ireland

was the 8.7% of the total population in 2000, and increased to 17.2% of the total population in 2009 (OECD 2011).

Belgium, on the other hand is a country with a long immigration history reflected also in a heterogeneous immigrant population. Contrary to other European countries, intra European (and more specifically EU) migration to Belgium has been important for a long time already. Also in recent years almost half of the migrants coming to Belgium have an EU origin; 45% of all working-age immigrants come from EU-15 countries (OECD 2009). 6.6 % of those residing in Belgium come from another country of the European Union and 3.1 % from a non-EU country (Vasileva 2011). Among the non-European immigrant origins, the Turkish, Moroccan (both countries from which low-skilled labour migrants were recruited in the 1960s) and Congolese (nationals of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and former Belgian colony) communities have the largest numbers of citizens in Belgium.

Since the 1960s immigration to Portugal has largely been determined by former colonies, the PALOP. Although flows of immigration of foreign nationals remain modest (if compared to the other European countries), immigration increased after the 1974 Carnation Revolution. The boom of immigration was in the late 90s and was related to an increase of labour demand. Also in the case of Portugal, large parts of this new wave of immigrants came from eastern and south-eastern Europe and, to a lesser degree, from Asia (Góis and Marques, 2009; Baganha, 2009). While in 1975 there were roughly 32,000 foreign-born residents in Portugal, by 1990 that figure had increased threefold to 107,767 and to 454,191 by 2009 (SEF 2009).

This diversity in migration histories is also reflected in the presence of children of immigrants in the schools in each of the countries and, consequently, in the level to which the system could adapt to students of immigrant origins. Foreign students in the Italian school system in the academic year 2008-2009 were 7% of the whole student population (629,360 persons out of a total of 8,945,978) (Italian Ministry of Education- MIUR 2010). And this percentage was slightly higher (8.3 and 8%) when also including primary school and middle school. Over the past 10 years the presence of children of immigrants in Italian schools has increased by almost six times. Immigrants, whose presence is significantly lower in secondary than lower educational levels, display higher probability of enrolling in vocational schools and lower propensity to choose general and pre-academic schools (Barban and White, 2011; Azzolini and Barone, 2011).

Also in Ireland, the presence of children of migrants in secondary school is comparably low, while the number of foreign students in primary school is higher. This reflects the relatively recent nature of the migrants in Ireland many of whom had children after migration who are currently still primarily in primary education. In 2008, children of immigrants represented already more than 20 per cent of the student body in primary school (Smyth et al., 2009), a sign of a growing presence of first and second generations children of immigrants.

Children of foreign origin in Belgium account for approximately 30% of pre-primary and primary level pupils. In Wallonia (the French-speaking part of Belgium), 20% of secondary school students are foreigners. Previous studies have consistently shown an educational disadvantage of children of immigrants who are represented more in technical and professional schooling than in general academic tracks. For example while 15% of Belgians are attending technical-professional classes, about 70% of Turkish students attend these sections (Baysu and De Valk 2012; Jacobs and Rea 2011; Manço 2010).

In Portugal there were 75,990 immigrant children (0-19 years old) officially registered in 2009 (SEF, 2011). This group accounts for 16.8% of the total immigrant population in the country. Based on SEF's data and general educational statistics, we can estimate that immigrant children of the school age (5-19 years old) cover over 3% of the total number of children in the Portuguese education system in 2009. The largest number of foreign nationals attending Portuguese schools appears to be of Brazilian and Cape Verdean origin, followed by Ukrainians (Tereshchenko and Araújo 2011).

Educational systems of the studied countries plan compulsory school until the age of 15 (Ireland) or 16 (all the others). Our sample is composed of 15 year old students. They are all still involved in compulsory education. All systems distinguish among three different tracks of secondary school: general, which prepares the kids for college or university, technical, which prepares for both a professional or an academic career, and vocational tracks, which prepares for the labour market¹. After secondary school all countries offer the triple choice of

¹ In Italy children at age 14 have to choose between three different alternative tracks: *liceo* (High Schools and Art School, the general), *istitutwe tecnicwe* (technical institutes), *istitutwe professionalwe* (Vocational schools). In Belgium pupils attending the second period of secondary school, can chose among four possible tracks: ASO (general secondary education); KSO (artistic secondary education); TSO (technical secondary education); and BSO (secondary vocational education). In Ireland at the age of 14 or 15, after a first common period, children are asked to choice among *secondary*, *vocational*, *community* (broad curriculum embracing both practical and academic subjects) and *comprehensive* (combining academic and vocational subjects in a wide curriculum) schools. Portuguese school system plans two types of courses: general courses and technical/vocational courses, providing instruction in technical, technological, professional fields and in the

either leaving the educational system and entry into the labour market, choosing tertiary education (university courses) or choosing courses beyond secondary school.

Data and method

We use unique cross-national data from the PISA 2009 survey; The OECD initiated Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a research project of the OECD member countries, aiming to investigate 15-year-old school performances as well as their educational outlooks and attitudes. PISA is an age-based survey, and only surveys 15-year-old students in school which has been conducted every three years since 2000. Via test scores on reading, math and science comparable data are collected across countries. In each data collection round this information is combined with a questionnaire assessing origin and background of the child. For the 2009 wave of the survey 14 out of 65 PISA participating countries complemented these student data collection with unique information from the parents and the school (via a separate questionnaire). This resulted in unique data that go beyond traditional measures and allow for inclusion of parental involvement in school, an assessment of school resources and interactions between parents and school².

PISA not only assess test scores but also questions educational expectations as part of the survey which at the best of our knowledge, has not been explored before. The data collected in the different participating countries have been harmonised which makes a cross-national comparison possible. For our study we integrate data from the Student Survey with those collected from the school and family questionnaires.

Our dependent variables have been derived from a question regarding future educational expectations of children (questioned in the Educational Career module of the questionnaire). Children were asked to declare the level of education (iscd code) they expect to complete. This information was recoded in two dependent variables as part of our analyses: the expectation to continue education after secondary level and the expectation to reach tertiary level of education for those who want to continue (distinguishing between university and upper secondary education). These two dependent variables are complementary as they on the one

Portuguese language and culture. The teaching and practice of technical, technological or artistic courses are provided by vocational schools and special schools for education in Arts.

² for further details on PISA2009, the data collection, questionnaires etc, please visit the project website www.pisa.oecd.org

hand indicate who expects to continue education or leave the educational system soon. On the other hand it sheds more light on those with prolonged educational ambitions, a group of students regularly overlooked in studied on migrant's educational performance. It gave better insight into the extent to which the latter are oriented towards academic or vocational careers. The two dependent variables are defined as binary categories; the first dependent includes all students the second only those who state that they expect to continue education after secondary school.

Since we are interested in the educational expectations of children of immigrants and majority group students in Europe as well as the role played by parental involvement, school resources and its interaction we have access to data from four countries in PISA that meet these requirements. The selection results in a total sample of 41,305 students who are 15-years-old and who are attending Belgian, Irish, Italian, and Portuguese schools. The sample from Italy, with 24,302 students, is the largest, while the sample from Ireland is the smallest, consisting of only 3,208 cases. The Belgian sample consists of 7,749 students and the Portuguese sample consists of 6,046 students. For our second dependent variable, which excludes children aiming to reach secondary level of education or lower, the sample is limited to 25,290 students in total.

Our data cover both first generation migrant students (5% of the sample) and second generation students (2% of the total sample). Although first and second generation student are represented in all countries there are some differences in the size of the migrant student sample in each of the four countries. Ranging from the highest percentages in Belgium (6.9% second generation and 7.3% first generation).to the lowest share in Italy (1.2% and 1.4% for first and second generation respectively). When we select only those children with higher educational expectation in the second part of the article, the composition of the sample, in terms of first and second generation, only slightly changes (second generations remain 2% of the sample and first generations is reduced to 4%). The country specific patterns largely remain as described before as does the order between countries in share of the migrant students.

Codification of variables

Detailed information on the characteristics of our sample in terms of composition on the independent variables can be found in Table 1.

Migration status. We differentiate our sample of students into three categories: (1) native students (those students who have two parents born in the country), (2) first-generation students (those students born outside the country of residence and whose parents were also born in another country), and (3) second generation students (those born in the country of residence but with at least one parent born in another country).

School resources. To test our first hypothesis concerning the association between school resources and educational expectations, we introduce three indexes in our analyses. These measure both the quantity and quality of the teaching staff at a school and the quality of the school's educational resources. The "student-teacher ratio" has been obtained by dividing the school size by the total number of teachers. The number of part-time teachers is weighted by 0.5 and the number of full-time teachers is weighted by 1.0. The "proportion of high qualified teachers" (ISCED 5A or more) has been calculated by dividing the number of high qualified teachers by the total number of teachers in the school. "Teacher shortage" has been derived from four items measuring the school principal's perceptions of potential factors that hinder instruction at the school (e.g. lack of mathematics, language or science teachers). More positive values on this index indicate higher rates of teacher shortage at a school. "Quality of educational resources" has been computed on the basis of seven items that measure the school principal's perceptions of the potential factors hindering instruction at the school (e.g. shortage or inadequacy of computer, internet connectivity or library materials). In this case, since the items were inverted for scaling, more positive values on this index indicate higher levels of educational resources.

Parents' involvement. Referring to parents' involvement at the school, according to recent literature, we include one variable regarding the level of expectations parents have towards the school. Categories refer to largely absent pressure, pressure by a minority of parents, and constant pressure by many of the parents. Moreover, we include measures of parental group influence on budget, instructional context, and assessment.

Family resources. To capture the family possessions that are supposed to stimulate children expectations, we introduce three indexes: cultural possessions, home educational resources, and home possessions. These indices are based on a battery of questions extracted from the student questions regarding the presence in the house of material or cultural assets. The home possession index has been constructed by estimating parameters for each country based on an item set. These item parameters were anchored. The remaining country-specific items were added

and each country was scaled separately. Cultural possessions (measured as having at home literature, books of poetry and works of art) and home educational (measuring the existence at home of e.g. a quiet place to study, a computer and technical books) indices were scaled in a single step, but the item parameters were allowed to vary by country.

Individual and parental characteristics. Parental human capital has been measured through two international standard measures: ISEI (international socioeconomic index of occupational status) and ISCED (OECD, 1999) scales. We included the highest occupational status of parents (HISEI), which corresponds to the higher ISEI score of either parent or to the only available parent's ISEI score. Parental education is classified using taking the highest educational level of parents (HISCED), which corresponds to the higher ISCED level of either parent. For the purpose of our study we recoded the original six categories into four larger groups: lower secondary or lower, technical secondary, general secondary and tertiary education.

Control variables. Demographic characteristics (sex and country of residence), children of mixed couples (i.e., only one parent born in the residence country) and an indicator of the orientation of the school attended (vocational or general) have been included in all of the models.

Table 1 *Description of dependent variable by sample definitions, mean and SD*

	Total sample			II dependent variable sample*	
	n	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Migration status	1-3	1.11	0.44	1.10	0.41
School resources					
Student-teacher ratio	0.56–26.5	9.28	2.94	9.82	2.95
Quality of educational resources	-3.38–1.92	-0.04	0.93	-0.01	0.94
Teacher shortage	-1.02–3.34	0.07	0.90	0.04	0.89
Proportion of high qualified teachers	0/1	0.60	0.37	0.61	0.39
Parents involvement in school					
Parental expectations towards school	1-3	2.17	0.67	2.09	0.69
Parents groups influence budget	0/1	0.12	0.32	0.13	0.33
Parents groups influence instructional content	0/1	0.14	0.36	0.15	0.35
Parents groups influence assessment	0/1	0.14	0.35	0.15	0.36
Home resources					
Home possession	-6.85–4.21	0.08	0.84	0.25	0.83
Cultural possession	-1.61–1.35	-0.08	0.89	0.09	0.85
Home educational resources	-4.31–1.33	0.05	0.92	0.19	0.87
Individual and parental characteristics					
Socioeconomic status	16–90	47.41	16.52	50.8	16.81
Parents' education level	1-4	2.70	1.10	2.91	1.04
Control variables					
Country	1-4	1.88	1.17	1.76	1.06
Female	0/1	0.49	0.50	0.54	0.50
Mixedcouple	0/1	0.10	0.29	0.10	0.30
Isced General orientation	0/1	0.44	0.49	0.30	0.46

*To analyze the pupils who expect to obtain upper secondary or tertiary education, we exclude from the sample those children who expect to stop at secondary level

Methods

We start with providing a descriptive overview of our two dependent variables. In a second step we include the two dependent variables in separate logistic regression models. In these models we account for clustering of students in schools. We therefore corrected for this rather than opting for multilevel modelling which was not preferred due to the limited countries in our study as well as the absence of indicators for higher order levels combined with the fact that the core aim of our study is not to explain differences between countries but rather to focus on different characteristics of schools, parents and the parental home. Therefore accounting for clustering in schools is crucial as we did in our study. Nevertheless we checked the results that would be obtained when applying

multilevel analyses. Findings largely reflected those obtained from the logistic models in which clustering in schools was accounted for.

Explanatory variables are stepwise included in the regression models. First we introduce variable able to capture parental human capital, second we add information on the household possession in terms of cultural possession and home educational resources. Then, we focus on school resources and on parent's involvement in school. This allows for studying the impact of the different aspects considered and, moreover, we can check their influence into the first and second generations groups.

Descriptive analyses

Our first aim is to shed light on the educational expectations of students in the four study countries. We find that overall more than 60% of the students interviewed in the four study countries express that they expect to continue their academic career after the end of secondary school. Of these students who expect to continue after secondary school, 70% expect to reach a tertiary level and 30% upper secondary courses. We do find some differences in expectation between students of migrant origin and native students. 61% of natives expect to reach more than secondary level, compared to 57% of second generation and 50% of first generation students. The expectation to obtain a university degree is expressed by 69% of natives, 62% of second generations and 63% of first generations.

Differentiation is evident if we consider the country where the students live. While existing studies often focus on one country only, in our research we expand the comparison to four European countries, with different migration histories. First explorative analyses give us some details on educational expectations of natives and children of immigrants in each of the four countries. Figure 1 indicates the percentage of students who expect to continue their academic career after secondary level of education (the first dependent variable in our study).

In all the considered countries, first generations have a higher propensity to expect finishing their career maximum at secondary level. Belgian natives are more prone than all the others to expect continuing their academic career after secondary school followed by Irish and Portuguese children and Italians at the end. Furthermore we find differences between origin groups in the four countries: First generation students have the lowest expectations in all countries. Contrary to

these lower expectations of the first generation, second generation students in Portugal and Ireland are more inclined to continue after secondary school than their native counterpart. This is not the case for Italy and Belgium in these countries the percentage of students with educational ambitions clearly decreases from natives to those students who recently arrived (belong to the first generation). The difference between first and second generation children living in Italy is smallest of all countries and overall these migrant students expect more than natives to leave school at the end of secondary school or before reaching secondary diploma. From this first analysis second generations seem to have higher expectations than first generation students and in some cases even higher than those of native origin. Multivariate models will show how the situation changes if we take into account the different individual, school and parental characteristics.

In a second step we focus at the ambition to reach tertiary level of education for those who expect to go on after secondary level, reflected in figure 2. Now we find contrary to what we saw for overall expectations of continuation of school (Figure 1) that, Belgian native children have the lowest level of educational expectations, while the percentage are more positive for their migrant counterpart who are more likely to expect to go to university. In all countries the level of expectations of migrants is equal or superior to that of natives. Italy is the only country where the percentage of students with academic expectations clearly decreases from natives to students who arrived recently.

Figure 1 *Percentage of students expecting to continue after secondary in the European countries by migration status*

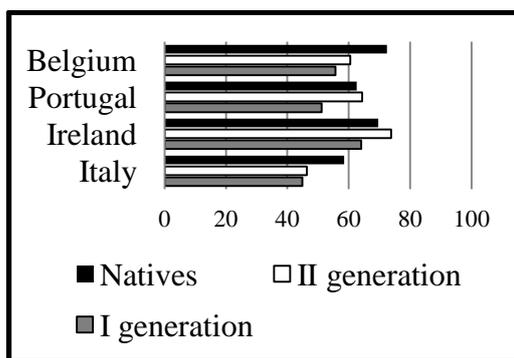
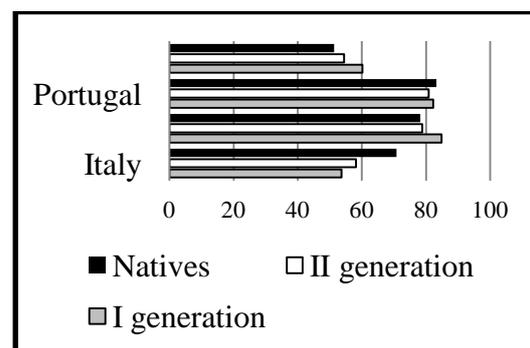


Figure 2 *Percentage of students expecting to reach tertiary education in the European countries by migration status*



If we compare the gap in expectations between children of different migration statuses, we obtain a direct measure of the extent to which immigrant origin in that country might be a relevant determinant for expectations (Table 2). Looking at the students' expectations to continue on with their education after completing secondary school, it is evident that, apart from the Portuguese and Irish second generation students, all the other immigrants' children have lower expectations than their native counterparts.

Examining the expectations of reaching the tertiary-level of education, we clearly see two patterns. In north-western European countries (Belgium and Ireland), immigrants' children have the same or higher expectations than the natives, while in southern European countries (Portugal and Italy), the gap between natives and immigrants' children is negative for the immigrants. Italy demonstrates the highest differentials between natives and children of immigrants. In Portugal and Ireland, the situation is different for first and second generation students. While the first group evidences lower expectations to reach the tertiary-level of education, the second group exhibits lower higher expectations.

Table 2 *Gap (in percentage points) between migrants and natives in the expectations to continue after secondary education and to reach tertiary education*

	Belgium	Portugal	Ireland	Italy
Expectations to continue after secondary level				
Second Generations vs Natives	-10,93	2,02	7,52	-10,39
I generation vs Natives	-17,52	-8,03	-5,55	-12,09
Expectations to reach tertiary level				
Second Generations vs Natives	1,53	0,12	0,27	-8,11
I generation vs Natives	11,74	-3,67	5,11	-14,61

These first preliminary analyses need to be expanded in much more detail in order to capture the differences. While we expected to find different patterns between new and old immigration countries, our first descriptive analyses reveal the unique situation of each studied country. The previously-mentioned differentials in the migration histories of the countries and the dissimilarities of countries of origin of the immigrants can partially contribute to explaining these differences. In the next section, we will look at the impact of human capital measures and school environment, as well as the new measures of family context in terms of the interactions between school and family, and we will consider the distinctions among countries and between natives and immigrants' children. In the multivariate models, these different spheres of influences can be better disentangled to grasp the main mechanisms that lie behind the educational expectations of children of diverse origins.

Results

To test our hypotheses, we performed logistic regression models accounting for clustering in schools. We present models able to disentangle both the role of school resources and parents'

involvement in school and the role of individual and family characteristics. Models essentially demonstrate that home resources are relevant in defining educational expectations. Also school resources shape the expectation to go on with education after secondary school. The proportion of high qualified teachers in the schools is decisive. At the core of our analysis was to study whether parents' involvement in school is determinant to define educational expectations. Our indicators of parental expectations on schools and parent groups influence in the allocation of resources. The analyses show that both elements have an effective impact on expectations. A child attending a school where there is constant pressure by many parents on educational expectations is clearly more motivated to continue after secondary school than a child attending a school where parental expectations are largely absent. If parents are involved in the allocation of assessments, budget or content children are more prone to have high educational expectations. Important to note is that when introducing school resources in the models, the differences between natives and first generations disappear, the second generation gap is resilient to all the aspects considered.

When we look at the expectation to obtain university degree, the effects of school resources and parents involvement are much less relevant, with the exception of student ratio and the pressure of parents. Family characteristics and family resources are key variables to define high educational expectations, and the migration status maintains its relevance in all the models. It is clear that first and second generation students that aim to continue after secondary school, are primarily expecting to reach university degrees.

Looking at the findings of our analyses in more depth, Table 3 shows the models performed to analyse expectation to continue after secondary school. In models 1 and 2, we tested hypotheses 4 and 5a and b, regarding human capital, socioeconomic characteristics, home possession and migration status. Models show that, with the exception of being child of a mixed couple, which loses its significance once home possession indices are introduced. As expected (Hypothesis 5b), second generations are less ambitious than first generations. The introduction of home possessions in the models reduces the significance of the odds indicating the distance between first generations and natives. The level of school currently attended indicated with the ISCED, sex and the level of education of the parents are all clearly relevant. Female students are more ambitious than males, and students with lower education parents are less ambitious. The level of the vocational school is a clear indicator with those in lower levels clearly expects to stop education at secondary level or lower.

As we expected (Hp 4), the possession of home resources clearly increment children's educational expectations. In model 1 (with the control variables) we found clear differences between countries and migrant status. In line with descriptive findings we see that expectations are higher in Belgium compared to Italy and lower in the other two countries. These differences persist but become less emphasized when including other characteristics in models 3 and 4 (see below). As for student origin we find lower expectations among migrant students of both first and second generation compared to their native peers, however this difference reduces when taking into account parental characteristics in model 2 and partly becomes insignificant when adding characteristics of school and parental involvement (see below).

Models 3 and 4 add the indicators of key interest for our study and for answering Hypothesis 1 to 3b regarding school resources and parental involvement in the school. School resources are determinant to defining educational expectations and the proportion of high qualified teachers is probably the key variable to determine the success of the school in terms of enhancing educational

expectations. If many of the parents in the school are involved in expressing their expectations, the chance of a child expecting to continue after completing the secondary level is higher. Moreover, it is helpful to have groups of parents involved in influencing the school's budget and educational content, but their impact is higher if they are involved in influencing assessment.

Introducing variables concerning school resources and parental involvement eliminates the differences among first generation students and natives, while the differences between natives and second generation students are resilient. However, it is clear that potentiating school resources and parental involvement is a good way to reduce the inequalities that arise from family background.

In order to go beyond the general picture and shed light on country specific differences, we also performed distinct multilevel random intercept effects models for natives and migrants and for each considered country³. We noticed that while the relevance of involvement in the school is reduced if we consider only natives, the home resources are stronger predictor of educational expectations for the same group. School resources act differently in different nations. While, the quality of educational resources and the presence of high qualified teachers in the school are crucial in Belgium, they have no significance in the other countries. If we only consider individual and family characteristics, the differences among the countries disappear. It has to be noted that the role of the parents' educational level seems to be determinant in all of the countries, except for Belgium.

³ models are available from authors

Table 3: *Logistic models of educational expectation to continue after secondary school.*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Migration status				
Ref. Natives				
Second Generations	0.74***	0.81**	0.84**	0.85*
First Generations	0.73***	0.88*	0.88*	0.91
Sex				
Female	1.47***	1.46***	1.46***	1.46***
Ses	1.02***	1.01***	1.01***	1.01***
Country				
Ref. Italy				
Belgium	1.47***	1.56***	1.80***	1.85***
Ireland	0.69***	0.88*	0.71***	0.70***
Portugal	0.87**	0.75***	0.96	1.02
Parents' education level				
Ref. Tertiary Education				
Less than secondary	0.45***	0.55***	0.55***	0.55***
Vocational oriented	0.76***	0.82***	0.83***	0.83***
Secondary teoretically based	0.85***	0.90***	0.90***	0.90***
Mixedcouple	0.92**	0.94	0.98	0.98
Isced orientation				
Ref. general				
Vocational oriented	0.24***	0.26***	0.29***	0.31***
Home resources				
Home possession		1.24***	1.24***	1.23***
Cultural possession		1.22***	1.21***	1.21***
Home educational resources		1.19***	1.19***	1.18***
School resources				
Student-teacher ratio			1.05***	1.04***
Quality of educational resources			1.06**	1.06**
Teacher shortage			0.93**	0.94**
Proportion of highqualified teachers			1.36***	1.36***
Parents involvement in school				
Parental expectations towards school				
Ref. Largely absent				
Constant pressure by many parents				1.40***
Pressure by minority of parents				1.12*
Parents groups influence budget				1.17**
Parents groups influence instructional content				1.10*
Parents groups influence assessment				1.22***
Pseudo R2	0.15	0.17	0.18	0.18

Notes: ***<0.01 **<0.05 *<0.1 Analyses are weighted and presented as odds ratios.

Table 4 shows the models concerning the expectations to attend university for those children who express they wanted to continue with their education after completing secondary school.

The ratios clearly show that, in this case, while family background and family resources maintain their determinacy (and have similar effects as reported before), school resources and parental involvement are less influential in shaping educational expectations.

Students of migrant origin by and large more often expect to go to university rather than upper secondary education. We potentially have to interpret this as related to the fact that these migrant students are part of an extremely selected group. Immigrants' children who expect to attend more than the secondary level of schooling can be prone to invest all their resources to reach the maximum level of education. Furthermore, first generation students might have access to less information about the chances and job opportunities after having completed upper secondary courses in the host country.

Overall female students are again found to be more ambitious than men. Also children of highly educated parents have the highest educational expectations and children who attend general schools are more prone to declare their expectation to go to university.

If we look at school resources, the only variable that maintains its significance is the student-teacher ratio. Furthermore, in this study, when parents stimulate the school environment by adding pressure in terms of educational expectations, the students are more encouraged to enhance their expectations.

Multilevel models for native students, students with immigrant background and for each of the four countries give some additional information⁴. Parental involvement at the school and home possession are found not to be determinant for children of immigrants, while cultural and educational resources appear determinant for this group. Territorial analyses shows extremely marked differences. Parental involvement is relevant only in southern countries (Portugal and Italy), while it is not in the other countries (Belgium and Ireland). While previous models showed the relevance of student-teacher ratio, this variable loses its significance for students in Ireland and Portugal. While Portuguese females are extremely more ambitious than Portuguese males; Belgium is the only case where males are more ambitious than females. Moreover, Belgium is the only country where first and second generations expect to reach tertiary level more than their native peers.

⁴ models are available from authors

Table 4: Logistic regression models for the expectation to reach the tertiary level of education

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Migration status				
Ref. Natives				
Second Generations	1.11	1.22*	1.24**	1.23**
First Generations	1.27**	1.43***	1.47***	1.50***
Sex				
Female	1.16***	1.16***	1.15***	1.15***
Ses	1.01***	1.01***	1.01***	1.01***
Country				
Ref. Italy				
Belgium	0.39***	0.41***	0.44***	0.44***
Ireland	0.68***	0.82***	0.68***	0.69***
Portugal	1.24***	1.07	1.34***	1.34***
Parents' education level				
Ref. Tertiary Education				
Less than secondary	0.62***	0.71***	0.72***	0.73***
Vocational oriented	0.56***	0.60***	0.60***	0.61***
Secondary teoretically based	0.72***	0.77***	0.77***	0.78***
Mixedcouple	1.08	1.09*	1.09*	1.09*
Isced orientation				
Ref. General				
Vocational oriented	0.16***	0.16***	0.19***	0.20***
Home resources				
home possession		1.19***	1.18***	1.18***
cultural possession		1.19***	1.18***	1.19***
home educational resources		1.13***	1.14***	1.14***
School resources				
Student-teacher ratio			1.06***	1.06***
Quality of educational resources			1.02	1.02
Proportion of high qualified teachers			1.01	1.01
Teacher shortage			1.13	1.13
Parents involvement in school				
Parental expectations towards school				
Ref. Largely absent				
Constant pressure by many parents				1.15**
Pressure by minority of parents				1.06
Parents Involvement				
Parent groups influence budget				0.91
Parent groups influence instructional content				0.99
Parents groups influence assessment				0.97
Pseudo R2	0.18	0.19	0.19	0.19

Notes: ***<0.01 **<0.05 *<0.1 Analyses are weighted and presented as odds ratios.

Conclusions

In this article we aimed to shed more light on the role of schools, parents and their interaction in shaping education expectations of students of native and migrant origin. We did so by using unique data from PISA 2009 that allows for an assessment of each of these factors in four different European countries: Belgium, Ireland, Italy and Portugal. We looked at two different but linked expectations: whether or not to continue education after secondary school and the expectation to continue to university for those who expect to prolong their educational career after secondary school.

Overall our findings indicate that first and second generation students are more likely to consider ending their educational career at the end of secondary school. As expected, the second generation, overall, has lower educational expectations than the first generation. In line with earlier studies, parental background and possession of home resources enhances educational expectations and diminishes the differences between immigrants' children and natives. School resources have a positive effect on educational expectations and reduce the gap between immigrant and majority students. The analyses on the educational expectations of reaching the tertiary-level of education show that family environment plays a key role (in terms of the characteristics and the resources of the family), but school resources and parental involvement in the school are less important for these expectations. Furthermore, students of first and second generation immigrant origin who expect to complete the tertiary-level of education have higher expectations (i.e., to go to university) than do native students. In conclusion, the interaction between the parents and the school is relevant primarily for preventing minority students from leaving the educational system at an early stage. Thus, the school environment shapes educational expectations, but less so for those children who already have high expectations.

Our analyses emphasize territorial differences. Our findings brought attention to the importance of family background in Ireland whereas the opposite was true in Belgium where relevance of school resources and school involvement are more important. Moreover, we highlighted the importance of parental involvement in the school and noted that while it is a crucial determinant for immigrants deciding to attain more than a secondary education, it does not reveal its force for the selected group of immigrants' children who already decided to continue their education and attain the tertiary level.

The analyses presented in this article have primarily a descriptive aim, since we estimate statistical associations without a specific causal interpretation. Nevertheless, this study represents one of the first attempts to study the educational expectations of the children of immigrants comparing results from different countries and analyzing the relevance of school context and family involvement in children's education.

Despite territorial differences, we can, therefore, conclude our article with a general remark about the policy implications of our study.

Our results clearly claim the persistence of old types of inequalities that are linked to family background, ascribed characteristics, and the possibility of parents being able to guarantee both material and cultural resources. The territorial analysis deserves further investigation that we aim to face in future papers. Nevertheless, the role of school is clearly a determinant, at least in supporting children in their efforts to continue their education after completing the secondary school level.

We revealed that schools with more resources have more pupils that expect to continue their academic career after secondary school, while they don't have any impact on the students' ambition to reach the tertiary level. In the first case, the presence of high qualified teachers at the school is a key factor.

School can impact children's educational expectations in two ways: enhancing the availability of resources to students, and increasing parental involvement in school activities.

In schools that provide good resources, in fact, the gap in educational expectations between natives and immigrants is reduced. School resources are decisive in supplying the resources that immigrant families need, but which are often scarce due to the migratory process.

As expected, parental involvement, as an indicator of inclusion in the society, reduces the differences between native children and immigrants' children. Moreover, parental involvement in students' education at the school enhances the educational expectations of children. These two aspects clearly surface if one looks at the desire to continue with one's education after completing secondary school, while they are less evident in the case of the expectation to reach the tertiary-level of schooling instead of attending upper secondary courses. Our article decisively draws attention to the need to focus on the relevance of policies concerning the need for parental involvement in the school to enhance the educational expectations of students with immigrant background. Policies supporting parent meetings, giving parents up-to-date information about their children in an easy-to-understand form (we cannot avoid thinking about the linguistic problems that migrant families can easily have to face when they have to interact with school), as well as coordinating the parent involvement activities, are few suggestions to improve parental involvement. In this way, the role of parents in assisting their child's learning is strengthened and they are involved in decision making. Also in this case, measures have to take in account difficulties in getting immigrant parents involved in their children's school. Policy makers have to consider that the two main barriers to getting immigrant parents involved in the schools are language problems and culture differences between the schools and families. Our paper is decisive to focus the attention on the relevance of policies concerning involvement of parents in the school to enhance educational expectations.

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