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## Chapter 1

# **Family determinants of second generation migrants' educational ambitions and outcomes: literature review**

The distribution of education is highly uneven in most societies, both in terms of its quantity and quality: individuals go to school for rather different periods of their lives and are more or less able to seize learning and occupational opportunities offered by schools. People perceive this uneven distribution as unequal when it reflects the distribution of individual attributes other than ability and effort. The distinction has been theorized by Boudon, who labeled the effects of merit on educational achievement as “primary effects” and the effects of other characteristics – such as gender, race or family background – as “secondary effects” (Boudon, 1974).

The family influence on educational achievement is multifaceted. It is the first and primary agent of socialization during childhood: children learn how to interact with the world around them looking at and communicating with their parents and close relatives. The family is the first place where learning takes place after birth so it shapes a lot of individual attributes, among which ability and effort. Following the distinction made by Boudon, this means that it is very probable that primary effects also stem from the family, even if they become increasingly independent from its influence over time. After the beginning of the school, the family remains one of the most influential social environments for individuals at least till adulthood, but its influence takes different routes. The family provides children with different types of resources (e.g. cultural, social, financial) that have a big influence on their educational careers, as well as it supports their efforts and conditions their will to succeed through parental ambitions.

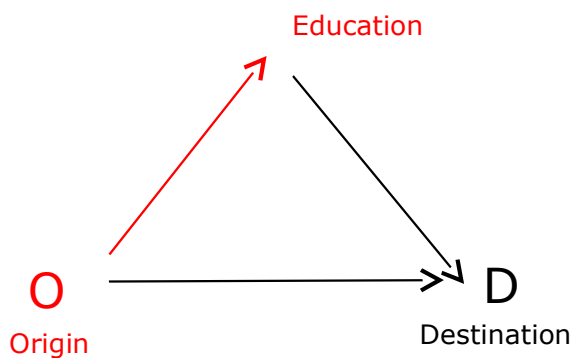
Social sciences have been producing a massive volume of literature exploring each aspect of the family influence on children's education. In this chapter I will first give an overview of the general themes of educational inequalities related to social origins and of migrants' education; then I will expand on three notable family determinants of immigrants' educational outcomes, namely the socioeconomic background, parental involvement and educational ambition.

## 1.1. Overview of the main themes

### 1.1.1 Social origins and educational inequalities

Among the effects on individuals' educational achievement stemming from family, those related to the family status are among the most investigated in the literature. Usually researchers measure the social background of individuals on the basis of their parents' job and educational level: a vast literature shows how these two main factors – but also the income, size, and structure of the family - are good predictors of children's school performance (e.g. Blau and Duncan 1967; Sewell and Hauser 1975). Because education is crucial for occupation, the extent to which educational achievement is related to students' socio-economic origins is important in order to understand the place people are going to occupy in the society, as clarified below in the OED diagram (Erikson & Jonsson, 1996). In this thesis I am interested in the OE link, which is the association between individuals' social origin and the level of their educational attainment.

*Figura 1 – The OED (Origin Education Destination) diagram*



The study of educational inequalities that are due to social origins revolves around two main issues: their persistency over time and the mechanisms through which the family background exerts its influence on the educational trajectories of individuals (Ballarino and Checchi, 2006). Here I will just give an idea about those two issues, in order to identify the line of research I am going to follow in my thesis.

#### *Evolution over time*

The evolution over time of educational inequalities due to social origins is the subject of a debate ongoing from the '70s among sociologists and economists of education. At the heart of this debate there are two different views about education: one sees it more as a mobility avenue, the other more as a mechanism through which social inequality reproduces itself.

The most prominent expression of the first party is the liberal thesis of industrialization (Blau and Duncan 1967): technological and economic advancement tends to promote the increasing importance of education – i.e. meritocracy – as the mechanism of status transmission. As a consequence, there tends to be greater equality of opportunity with respect to both educational and occupational attainment as nations industrialize. In other words, looking at the OED diagram above, the association between individuals' social origin (O) and the level of their educational attainment (E) tends to weaken, while the association between individuals' educational attainment and their class positions (D) tends to strengthen; and finally, when controlling for education, the association between the social origin and the destination tends to decline. The liberal thesis argues that these trends should be convergent in temporal and comparative perspectives.

Empirical results at the moment mostly find that the effect of social origins on educational attainment is decreasing over time: a general pattern of “declining inequalities” has been reported in most industrialized nations (Ballarino and Schadee, 2010), even if at first it was noted only in countries with extensive welfare state such as Sweden and Netherlands (Erikson and Jonsson, 1996; Muller and Karle, 1993) or for lower levels of education (Breen et al., 2009a 2009b). This is a macro-level issue, where the key variables are the characteristics of the institutional contexts and in particular of the school systems (the age of transitions between levels, the modes of selection). Since the main aim in the thesis is to investigate the impact of family-level determinants on the educational outcomes of the children of immigrants at an individual level, I will not further discuss this issue here. However, the finding of a persistent association between socioeconomic background and educational achievement underlines the relevance, today as ever, of this topic of research.

### *Mechanisms*

The second issue in the study of educational inequalities due to social origins is that of the mechanisms through which the socioeconomic background shapes the academic achievement of



individuals. These mechanisms have been extensively investigated by social scientists. Different types of resources are distributed according to the social hierarchy and uniformly within each class (Benoit-Smullyan, 1944), so that members of the higher classes are more educated, have better jobs and earn more than members of the low working-class. But in what way do different amounts and different types of family resources (e.g cultural, social, financial) exert their influence on family members' education? Unless we presume that education systems are money-driven markets of credentials, complex explanations are required.

Educational ambitions (Sewell, Haller, and Portes 1969) were identified as an important predictor of students' eventual educational achievement and are largely influenced by the socioeconomic background. Both socioeconomic background and educational ambitions as family determinants will be discussed in details in the rest of the chapter, looking at their contributions to the explanation of immigrants' children educational outcomes.

The mechanisms hypothesized by social scientists often focus on educational ambitions as the key variables mediating the effect of family background on academic achievement. For instance, the relative risk aversion mechanism, which is at the core of the rational choice approach toward the explanation of the origin-education association, explains why educational ambitions vary according to the socioeconomic background. Parents from every social position “seek to ensure, so far as they can, that their children acquire a class position at least as advantageous as that from which they originate” (Breen and Goldthorpe 1997). Hence, families of different classes are assumed to have the same general goal - minimizing the risk of downward social mobility for their children – but they are assumed to pursue different educational strategies because of their different social status (Goldthorpe, 1996 1998). Differences in cost and benefit structures produce different incentives to continue studying. Specifically, as we know from the line of research on ascriptive inequality, individuals from advantaged social origins tend to invest as much as possible in education because, even if this kind of investment does not pay off, they are still able to exploit their social capital and financial resources; whereas individuals from disadvantaged origins tend to sacrifice the long-term benefits in favor of the short-term payoffs in education. Hence, the social position has a direct effect on both parents’ and children’s educational ambitions (Erikson and Jonsson, 1996) that, in turn, have a direct influence on children's educational achievement. The relative risk aversion mechanism will be cited again discussing the educational ambitions of second generation immigrants in the following sections of the chapter and an adaptation of the mechanism will be proposed and empirically tested in the second part of the thesis.

## *Conceptualization and measurement*

A further issue received remarkably little attention in the past but has been recently raised by important scholars: the conceptualization and measurement of social origins. For a long time, when it came to the operationalization of social origins, a lack of integration between the theoretical and the empirical level seemed to characterize research on educational inequalities (Meraviglia and Buis, 2015). In theory the social background is a multidimensional concept but during 1960s and 1970s studies often looked solely either at the father's occupation or his education, both because of substantial and practical considerations. Later, diverse arrays of indicators (income, class, status, education) were used depending on the study. In recent research, instead, the social class has become the principal indicator of social origins. Looking back, it is difficult to avoid having the impression that some notion of the “interchangeability of indicators” (Lazarsfeld, 1939) has prevailed: in order to determine the extent of associated inequalities in educational attainment, it makes rather little difference how social origins are measured.

Bukodi and Goldthorpe are currently leading the quest for an improved operationalization of social origins. Unlike Jaeger (2007), who proposed an *ad hoc* decomposition of the concept of class, they propose to complement it with the two concepts of parents' status and education (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2013). In their view the three components capture different dimensions of the social background and the specific mechanisms through which they affect individuals' educational attainment. Parental economic resources, especially as they might be used to support children's education, are captured by the concept of social class; the social status indicates the extent of family's socio-cultural resources available to support children's education, for example, through parents' social contacts and networks, and forms of cultural participation; the parental education represents specific educational resources, for instance parents' ability to create a favorable home-learning environment or to provide their children with informed guidance through the educational system. The parental class, status, and education have been shown to have independent and distinctive effects on children's educational attainment, both in individual country cases (Bukodi, Erikson and Goldthorpe, 2014; Marzadro and Schizzerotto, 2014) and in comparative perspective (Bukodi and Eibl, 2015). The decomposition of social origins into different dimensions will be discussed again in the following sections of the chapter concerning the specific

population of second generation children, because the peculiarities of migrant parents' situation make it difficult to adopt Bukodi and Goldthorpe's proposal without modifications.

Another interesting line of research calls for a different operationalization of education, a fundamental component of social origins. Just like the multidimensionality of the social background, also the positionality of educational is recognised in theory but disregarded in practice. The concept of positionality (Hirsch, 1977) is simple: a good is said to be positional if its value is attributable, in part, to its relative scarcity in the population. The idea that education is a positional good is familiar to social scientist, because it was used by important scholars: the more abundant an educational credential is in the population, the lower will be its signaling power for employers (Spence, 1973) and its value for accessing lucrative jobs (Boudon, 1974 and Thurow, 1975), thus workers holding that credential will have lower average wages. And yet, sociologists continue to use absolute measures of education - with nominal categories such as primary and secondary - rather than relative ones – usually expressed in centiles. The question of whether education is a positional or nominal good is open in the literature but has important implications for the temporal trends of inequality of educational opportunity, because it has been shown in some country analyses that results could be very different depending on the type of measures employed (Shavit and Park, 2016). For instance Shavit's study on the change in educational stratification in Israel over time (Shavit 2011) has shown that considering education in relative rather than in absolute terms strengthens the effect of parents' education on children's educational attainment. Positionality allows researchers to account for modifications in the educational stratification over time and may do the same for modifications across space, even if this line of research is still in its infancy. The utility of a positional approach applied to the study of migrants' social origins will be discussed in the following sections of the chapter and empirically tested in the second part of the thesis.

The preceding overview of the main issues leading social research on the theme of educational inequalities related to social origins was needed to introduce the questions I am going to discuss in the second part of the chapter, concerning the specific population of second generation migrants. For the same purpose in the next paragraph I will give a similar overview on the general theme of second generation migrants' education, again without claiming to be exhaustive.

### **1.1.2 Children of immigrants at school**

A predominant part of the immigration literature focuses on immigrants' labour market perspectives (Schnepf, 2007). And yet, immigrants' disadvantages in acquiring human capital in their host country are a decisive factor for explaining labour market opportunities. Individuals who have migrated as adults have acquired their human capital in a society and in a language that may be very different from that of the country of residence. Because of that, first generation's migrants are very likely to maintain characteristics related to their foreign origin that may hamper the integration process, that is the convergence over time towards the outcomes of people born in the host country (Chiswick 1978). So it is the success or the failure of their children, raised and educated in the country of residence, that has been regarded by public opinion and researchers as the ultimate benchmark of integration. This is the reason why most of the literature on immigrants and education focuses on the explanation of second generation's school outcomes.

### *A comparison puzzle*

It's easy to lose orientation in the literature about second generation's school outcomes, for different reasons. A considerable source of heterogeneity in second generations' educational outcomes is their country of residence, as suggested by the studies analysing standardized performance tests of immigrant children in a cross-country comparative perspective (Schnepf, 2007; Dustmann et al., 2012). But probably the biggest source of heterogeneity in the educational outcomes reported by the literature is the chosen term of comparison.

Second generation's outcomes, in fact, are rarely considered *per se*. As a whole, they are often analysed by comparison with the outcomes of other groups, the most common being natives or subsequent generations in old immigration countries. In these cases, second generation's pupils are usually defined as the offspring of – one or two – migrant parents which are born abroad, without further specification of pupils' country of birth and age at migration. The comparison of second generation with subsequent (third, fourth) generations is a line of research currently in development in the United States and still in its very infancy in Europe for historical reasons. Southern European countries such as Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece, along with Ireland and Finland, became countries of immigration starting from late 1980s and their second generations are only now reaching the numbers that permit systematic research. Substantial second-generation populations are indeed present in several Western European countries<sup>1</sup> that were

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countries of immigration up until the 1973 oil shock, but even there the number of third generation's members is scarce.

Another common and increasingly popular research line looks at second generation's internal differentiation, breaking it into several groups on the basis of pupils' geographic (or ethnic) origin and/or their age at migration and then comparing the outcomes of the different groups. The graduated view of second generations (Rumbaut, 1997) based on pupils' country of birth and age at migration, allows researchers to distinguish among different grades of familiarity pupils have with life in the country of residence and in particular with its school system: pupils who are born in their parents' destination country and received there both primary and secondary socialization (generation 2.0) must be distinguished from pupils who have lived their infancy (generation 1.75) or experienced school (generation 1.5 and 1.25) in their parents' country of origin. The graduated view of second generations stresses the importance of assimilation into the new society, whereas the distinction among national or ethnic origins focuses on the role played by the culture of origin. In Europe, where immigrants are from very many countries of origin compared to those in the United States and immigration is a relatively new phenomenon, the latter criterion of differentiation is even more important.

Given the extent of the literature about second generation immigrants in education, I think it is best to offer in what follows a description of the two main theoretical perspective on the topic developed at the individual-level: the structuralist approach, which looks closely at socioeconomic factors, and the culturalist approach, which focuses on sociocultural aspects.

### *Structuralist approach*

Structuralist approach associates the school performance of students that have an immigrant background with socioeconomic factors and believes cultural factors are relatively unimportant. Consequently, structuralist studies focus mainly on the individual (micro) level and usually compare second generation's school outcomes with those of native peers. Taking the approach to the extreme, immigrant students from high socioeconomic background will perform just as well as native students from a similar background. As always, reality only partially falls into the scheme. In many Western countries it is a well-reported fact that often immigrant students achieve lower

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Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland.

results at school, compared to their native peers (Schnepf 2004; Marks 2005a; Jackson, Jonsson, and Rudolphi 2012). But there are also studies reporting of an immigrant advantage, especially in countries like the UK (Modood, 2004) or Australia (Dustmann et al, 2012). Heath, Rethon and Kilpi (2008) reviewed research in ten western European countries and found that, like in the United States, also in Europe the social background can explain at least half of the educational gap between immigrant and native students. In countries where children of native-born parents outperform the children of immigrants, this is primarily due to the more disadvantaged family background of the latter ones: immigrant parents tend to be less educated, work in lower status jobs and earn less than native parents. After conditioning on parental characteristics, the achievement gap is substantially reduced and in some cases immigrant children previously seen as disadvantaged even outperform native peers coming from their same socioeconomic background. But in countries where immigrants outperform natives, social background exacerbates rather than resolves the anomaly (Modood, 2004). The insufficiency of the classic socioeconomic explanation to the migrant-native gap is admitted by a large and growing number of scholars, but there is considerable debate about how to improve it. Both measures of socioeconomic background that are more appropriate to immigrant parents and additional factors distinctive to the condition of being a minority member may account for the remaining gap (Heat, Rethon and Kilpi, 2008). In the second part of the chapter I will explore the reasons why the current operationalizations of the concept of socioeconomic background is inappropriate for immigrant parents and reviewing the few alternatives proposed by the literature. An innovative operationalization of migrants' socioeconomic background will be tested in the empirical part of the thesis in order to find a better explanation for migrants' educational ambitions. Among the best candidates for complementing the socioeconomic explanation to the migrant-native gap there are language difficulties, parents' lack of knowledge about the educational system, educational ambition, social segregation and discrimination. In the second part of the chapter I will also discuss two additional family determinants of migrant children's educational outcomes, namely parental involvement and educational ambition.

Even if structuralist studies usually focus on the explanation of migrant-native gap, nevertheless they cannot avoid noting the existence of profound educational differentials among the origin-groups forming the second generation, which persist after controlling for individual socioeconomic variables. More specifically, socioeconomic background accounts for the biggest part of the immigrant-native gap when the least disadvantaged immigrant generations and nationalities are

considered (Fekjær and Birkelund 2007; Heath and Brinbaum, 2007; Levels et al. 2008). For instance, in Germany the disadvantage of second-generation groups of European ancestry is almost entirely explained by social class (Kristen and Granato, 2007). Any improvement to the classic socioeconomic explanation, be it a different operationalization of migrants' socioeconomic background or the finding of complementary factors, has to better explain also these origin-groups differentials in educational outcomes.

### *Culturalist approach*

As mentioned earlier, scholars have increasingly argued that it is necessary to go beyond the classic socioeconomic explanation, especially to understand why certain ethnic backgrounds, such as Chinese in the US, have positive effects, while other backgrounds, such as Mexican, have negative effects (Hao and Bonstead-Bruns 1998; Zhou 2001). In trying to explain such ethnic differences, culturalist approach has emphasized the fact that "broader cultural or social factors" affect group performance (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996), hence focusing on the adaptation patterns of the second generation as individuals within ethnic groups. This approach is mainly based on Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1974): students whose values, norms, understandings and knowledge are similar to those of the dominant culture are judged favorably by their teachers and obtain more educational opportunities, hence they are likely to be more successful in the educational system. Other important theories in migration studies move further and emphasize the importance of group-level processes in determining the fate of contemporary immigrants and their children. Among them, one of the most famous is the segmented assimilation theory (Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1999): the diverse endowment of family resources and human capital as well as the different "modes of incorporation" of each ethnic group into the receiving society (determined by the interplay between group's characteristics and its context of reception) explains the different patterns of adaptation among second generation youths. Although different outcomes occur for different individuals within the same national-origin group, this literature has tended to examine the outcomes of ethnic groups as a whole, suggesting that social and economic resources (or the lack of resources) that are available to ethnic-group members besides their family contexts can help facilitate (or undermine) individual achievement. Thus, the effect of an individual's family socioeconomic background may depend on

the circumstances of the entire ethnic group, such that poorer individual-level socioeconomic conditions may not be as detrimental for individuals within higher-status immigrant communities because these individuals have resources outside the family that are available to them.

As already anticipated, the topic of this thesis is the analysis of some family determinants of second generation's educational outcomes at the individual level and in particular I will focus on the improvement of the classic socioeconomic explanation, so this work in general follows the structuralist approach. However, from my point of view the culturalist approach has the merit of focusing on the country of origin as a fundamental criterion of second generation's internal differentiation.

## **1.2 Family determinants of second generation's academic outcomes**

### **1.2.1 Socioeconomic background**

In the great majority of researches about minorities the socioeconomic situation of immigrant pupils is inferred from the same variables used for their native peers: parental occupation and education in the country of residence. The appropriateness of the measures commonly used to investigate socioeconomic background has not yet raised a proper debate in the field of migration studies, even if some authors cite it as an important issue (Heath, Rethon and Kilpi 2008).

The experience of immigrant populations and their children in Europe has been a mixed one: different groups show great diversity in terms of income, employment, educational achievement and life chances. This diversity is due to a plethora of factors associated with life conditions before migration, the act of migration itself and the experience of life in the destination countries after migration. Thus, migration is a process rather than a single event, because it shapes the life of migrants and their children for a long time both before and after the travel. Nevertheless, this recognition took time to be fully developed and widespread in the social sciences.

#### *Before and after migration*



Immigrants' pre-migration experience, in particular, has been regularly overlooked. Unlike anthropologists, sociologists of migration have always been observers of the receiving societies from inside; migrants come to their attention after crossing the borders of their country and only from that very moment they begin to exist as a matter of public opinion, a social policies' issue and a topic of research. Theoretically, the emphasis put on the assimilation of immigrants and their descendants in the countries of destination by the two important theories of the "straight-line assimilation" (Alba and Nee 2003) and the "segmented assimilation" (Portes and Zhou 1993) has focused researchers' attention on factors relating to the immigrant family position in the new countries of residence. Empirically, pre-migration factors have rarely been examined also because of data collection's problems (Goldstein, 1976): surveys on migrant subjects are often conveniently administered in the destination countries<sup>2</sup>, many years after migration and by means of children's interviews, making the reconstruction of immigrants' past experiences in the countries of origin very difficult. Emphasizing immigrants' post-migration characteristics is also part of the "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer and Schiller, 2003) that is widespread in most disciplines and, more precisely, also part of one systematic error arising from it: mischaracterizing phenomena by situating them in an arbitrarily bounded context, in this case that of the destination countries. The adoption of a transnational point of view, which sees migrants establishing and maintaining socio-cultural connections across geopolitical borders (International Organization for Migration 2008), is more appropriate.

The consideration of only post-migration family characteristics becomes problematic if their life conditions were different prior to migration (Cheng and Yang 1996, Feliciano 2006), which is likely because international migration - especially from less developed countries to more developed ones - is often followed by a general social demotion of individuals. Social demotion takes place both at occupational and educational level. Downward occupational mobility typically follows migration in Western dual labor markets (Ambrosini 2005): immigrant parents have to take lower-level jobs in the country of destination, compared to the jobs they had before. Thus, it is often the case that individuals who are not able to transfer their experience and skills in the new labour market - because of difficult recognition of educational titles, low second language ability, lack of

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<sup>2</sup> Few notable exceptions are the so-called "ethnosurveys", which sample population in sending countries and 'follow' both emigrants and residents through time (see for instance Mexican Migration Project, Health and Migration Study). Qualche riferimento più dettagliato?

social capital and knowledge of the labour market etc. - often find themselves in low prestige and/or low paying jobs (Quinn and Rubb 2005; Lee, Toney and Berry 2008).

Along with social demotion, migrant parents often experience overqualification in their host countries. In Europe (Eurostat, 2011) the overqualification rate for foreign-born persons is 34% (36% for non-EU migrants), whereas for native-born is only 19%. This inequality has been observed in all countries except Switzerland and was particularly marked in Southern countries (Greece, Italy, Spain, Cyprus), where the gap reached 25 percentage points. Duration of residence reduces overqualification, probably because it increases migrants' proficiency in the host language, along with the possibility of having titles earned abroad recognised or earning new ones. The overqualification of immigrant parents may translate into a devaluation of the educational qualifications and cultural resources they have acquired abroad (Friedberg, 2000).

Summing up, there is a general lack of consistency between: a) migrants' qualifications and occupations in the host country; and b) migrants' socioeconomic position in the origin country and in the host country.

### *Inconsistencies and decomposition*

The inconsistency experienced by migrant parents in the host country, where they typically end up doing low prestige and/or low paying jobs for which they are overqualified, is known in the literature as under-rewarded status inconsistency (Lenski, 1954). Because of it, one-dimensional views of stratification are particularly rare in migration studies. Given that a certain occupation in the destination country may correspond to a variety of educational titles possessed by migrant workers and vice versa, parental occupation in the host country is useful to operationalize migrant children's socioeconomic background if it is taken as a proxy just for family economic resources. This way of doing is in line with the decomposition of socioeconomic background proposed by Bukodi and Goldthorpe (2013)<sup>3</sup>: among natives and migrants alike, the social class captures parental economic resources, especially as these may be used to support children's education. But the adoption of the other two components of social background, namely the social status and education, in order to index respectively migrant parents' socio-cultural and educational resources, needs more discussion.

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<sup>3</sup>See the paragraph before

An open question is if parental education among migrants is still able to capture specific educational resources, for instance parents' ability to create a favourable home-learning environment or to provide their children with informed guidance through the educational system (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2013). School-related resources may be diminished by language difficulties and lack of knowledge about the host country's educational system, as suggested by the Information Bias approach (Kao and Tienda, 1998). But a more serious problem for education arises from the second type of incongruence experienced by migrant parents, the one between the socioeconomic position they had in the origin country and the one they have in the host country. Educational distributions of Western developed – receiving – countries are very different, often shifted upwards, compared to less developed – sending – countries. This means that educational opportunities are usually very different in the country where migrant parents acquired (the most of) their educational credentials compared with the country where their children are attending school. A native parent who has not completed upper secondary school is likely to be in the lowest deciles of the educational distribution, whereas a migrant parent from a developing country with the same credentials could be above the average level of education in his country of origin. It is indeed very likely that immigrant qualifications have better standings relative to the countries of origin's educational distributions, as demonstrated by the literature on migrants' educational selectivity: nearly all immigrants are more highly educated than the populations that remain in their home countries, but the degree of selectivity varies depending upon the country of origin and the timing of migration (Feliciano 2005). Thus, migration emphasizes the positional value of education (Spence 1973, Goldthorpe 2009, Shavit 2011): the value of a qualification is all but absolute and depends on its relative position in the educational stratification considered. Most of the studies about the positionality of education use this approach to account for changes in the educational distribution over time, but migration studies could be a good workbench to account for changes in the educational distribution both over time and across space. What is peculiar about migration, in fact, is that it involves both dimensions of time and space, which gives the possibility to compare the position of immigrants' qualification in the educational distribution of their countries of origin when they left with its position in the educational distribution of their countries of destination at a certain moment of their (or their children's) lives. By means of this comparison, relative parental education could help to explain cross-national variation in children's educational outcomes: among immigrant students of different countries of origin in the same country of residence or among immigrant students of the

same country of origin in different countries of residence (e.g. Crul and Vermeulen 2003). Summing up, the size of the problem of the adoption of education as a component of migrants' socioeconomic background depends largely on what kind of mechanisms lie behind the correlation between the parental occupation, parental education and children's educational achievement (Heath, Rothon and Kilpi, 2008). In the empirical part of the thesis I will hypothesize one of these mechanisms and test it on data.

Last but not least, what about social status? In the case of natives, social status indicates the extent of family socio-cultural resources available to support children's education, for example through parents' social contacts and networks and forms of cultural participation. This third component of socioeconomic background is severely disrupted by the event of migration, which implies reestablishing social contacts and networks based on the new (and inconsistent) position in the social hierarchy of the host country. The fact that migrant parents' social status is a concept in need of revision emerges also from the second type of inconsistency experienced by migrant parents, between the socioeconomic position they had in the origin country and the one they have in the host country. We know from extensive qualitative research that the risk of a temporary worsening of the status is taken by migrant parents as a toll on their intergenerational strategy of social mobility (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) and that a high social status in the country of origin may resist as 'subjective' even if the actual status after migration is much lower and this may find expression in high parental ambitions (Nieswand, 2011).

Assimilation theorists think that the second generation, born and/or raised in the country of residence, doesn't carry the burdens of social demotion, language difficulties and knowledge gap and so will be much closer to their peers from the host community in educational and occupational terms (Gordon, 1964; Alba and Nee, 1997). Other scholars think that second generation will recover the latent class position of the first generation (Modood, 1997; Heath and McMahon, 2005). For instance in Britain, Indians or Chinese, who generally had more highly educated origins and were more likely to experience downward occupational mobility after arrival, were seen as reasserting their backgrounds in the second generation; while other national groups whose class position after the arrival showed greater continuity with a less skilled background were seen as continuing to remain at the less skilled end of the class spectrum in future generations. A perspective that incorporates both aspects of the assimilation thesis and the relevance of premigration history and background suggests that it is crucial what migrant parents

bring with them and what they transmit to their children, in terms of ambitions and determination to succeed in the context of and interacting with a specific social and institutional (and often hostile) environment (see, for example, Modood, 2004). Such a perspective locates potential for relative success within the second generation, but links it to particular and selected characteristics of parents. Specifically, the parental commitment to education and to achieving upward mobility through education is regarded as critical, and certain groups are identified as especially likely to hold – or reveal – such a commitment. This leads us to the importance of both migrant parents' and children's educational ambitions, that will be discussed in the next paragraph. In the empirical part of the thesis I will propose an attempted revision of socioeconomic background for second generation's children, in light of these literature and of the considerations abovementioned.

### **1.2.2 Educational ambition**

The key role played by educational ambition within immigrant families has already emerged in both the previous section, focused on socioeconomic background as a key determinant of children's academic outcomes. “The relationship between aspirations and achievement” is believed to be “one of the best established facts in social sciences” (Portes et al., 2010). The rationale behind it is straightforward: pupils having high goals may or may not reach them, but pupils not having high goals cannot reach them for sure. Adolescent ambition is a necessary – though not sufficient - condition for subsequent achievement. This applies both to academic and occupational achievement. Educational ambition plays an important role by shaping on the one hand choices that are relevant for the school career and on the other hand school-related behaviors that have an impact on school performances.

The literature on educational ambition shows a great variety of definitions of the concept and of the units of analysis. As for the concept, the trend has been toward a gradual abandonment of the general definition of educational ambition and an increasing differentiation of aspirations and expectations. 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). Educational expectations “more explicitly capture concrete plans for the future” (Feliciano 2006), and correspond to the level of education “that children realistically expect to achieve” (Portes et al. 2010). To sum up, while aspirations refer to what individuals *wish*

would happen, expectations refer to what they *think* will happen. Restrictions such as limited financial resources or insufficient academic abilities have much more influence on expectations, so that, consequently, expectations are generally lower than aspirations. Both aspirations and expectations are not static, though, and can converge over time.

Empirically, the distinction above has been adopted without regularity in the design of the social surveys, so that researchers are often forced either to adopt the general definition of ambition or to focus on one of the two specifications. Sociologists of education usually consider aspirations and expectations as determinants of children's academic outcomes and are rarely interested in the determinants of their variation. As for the units of analysis, some works focus on parental aspirations and expectations toward their children, others on those of children themselves.

In the rest of the thesis I will usually adopt the more general label of “ambitions”, and in the (rare) case I have to work on data collected having in mind the distinction between aspirations and expectations I will always identify ambitions with the more general and idealistic nature of aspirations.

### *Areas of agreement*

While reviewing empirical findings on educational ambition among immigrants, Portes and Rivas (2011) made a list of five key points on which studies generally converge. Sociological and psychological literature on this topic is mainly US centered, whereas in Europe research on the topic is still in its infancy (Minello, 2013).

1. The first point on which researchers agree is the hypothesis of an ambition advantage of both second-generation students and their parents when compared to third-generation and native counterparts. Considerable evidence of an ambition advantage both of immigrant parents (Zéroulou 1988; Van Zanten 1997) and their children (Brinbaum and Cebolla-Boado 2007; Van Houtte and Stevens 2010) has been recorded in Europe, too.
2. Second, studies consistently find that immigrants of different national origins vary significantly in both ambition and performance. In the US at one end of the spectrum we find Asian-origin students, with very high and stable ambition matched by high school performances, and at the other end Latino-origin and black Caribbean students, having poor performances and lowering their ambition while growing up. National-origin

differences in US are partly attributable to parents' socioeconomic status but do not entirely disappear after controlling for it. The European picture is much more complex and blurred than simply one ethnic group outperforming another (Crul and Schneider, 2013) because large internal differences exist within ethnic groups. Data collected by the TIES project<sup>4</sup> on European second generations show that high numbers of drop-outs and of students moving to higher education coexist among Turkish and Moroccan second-generations. Differences within the same ethnic group across Europe are likely to be due to the national context in which the second generation is growing up: European states, in fact, are economically linked but have very different institutional regulations.

3. The third point on which studies generally agree is the powerful influence of parents and peers on the ambitions of immigrant and native children, though that influence significantly differs by national or ethnic or racial origins.
4. Fourth, girls consistently have higher ambition and school performances than boys.
5. Fifth, ambitions and academic performances are highly correlated, probably reinforcing each other in a sort of causal loop. Nevertheless, the shaping power of ambition may not be enough to achieve the aspired outcomes and this is particularly evident among immigrants, where high educational ambitions are often matched by a low school attainment in practice. This phenomenon became known in the literature as the 'aspiration-achievement' paradox<sup>5</sup>. The aspiration-achievement paradox does not apply to all immigrant groups and is more or less pronounced depending on the national group and the destination country considered. For instance, Asian immigrants in the US do not only have higher educational goals, they are also overachieving natives (Kao and Tienda 1995; Hao and Bonstead-Bruns 1998).

### *Approaches explaining the ambition advantage of second generations*

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<sup>4</sup>The Integration of the European Second generation (TIES) project. See the following link for more details:

<sup>5</sup>It has not to be mistaken with the so-called 'paradox of migration' regarding first generation migrants: the gain of status in the country of origin, produced by a simultaneous loss of status in the receiving country (Nieswand 2011).

The literature offers different approaches claiming to explain the ambition advantage of second-generation children and their parents compared to natives and third-generation counterparts. The reasons for the ambition advantage descend from the experience of migration and settlement in a new country made by migrants, thus most approaches explain the occurrence of high parental ambitions and only indirectly of children's ones.

The approaches can be divided in two categories depending on whether the reasons for the ambition advantage are embedded in the ambition formation process or in the translation of ambitions into educational degrees (Salikutluk, 2013).

The Immigrant Optimism approach and the Blocked Opportunities approach belong to the first type of explanation. In the literature the fact that parents have a strong influence on their children's ambitions is uncontested. Their key role on children's ambition formation process is twofold: on the one hand, parents act as models with their own educational title; on the other hand, they directly formulate and communicate their expectations toward children's school careers. In general, the defining function of parents is stronger than the modeling function (Cohen, 1987) and among immigrant parents who completed their education in the country of origin the modeling function can be even more diminished. The two approaches make specific assumptions regarding the defining function performed by immigrant parents. According to the Immigrant Optimism approach (Kao and Tienda, 1995), immigrants are positively selected because they were willing to leave their home country and to settle in another country to improve their socioeconomic condition; their wish is maintained even if they find themselves at the new society's bottom and it is transmitted to their children. According to the Blocked Opportunities approach, immigrated parents who have experienced structural and social barriers in the new country's labour market anticipate such obstacles to their children, who can compensate these restrictions overachieving natives in school (Sue and Okazaki, 1990) or performing below average since they don't see education as a possibility for upward mobility (Gibson and Ogbu, 1991). Attaining higher education is seen as a way to achieve an intergenerational goal, which is the improvement of parents' socio economic situation according to the Immigrant Optimism approach or the overcoming of discrimination obstacles according to the Blocked Opportunities approach. What both approaches fail to explain is what are the conditions which lead parents and children to believe education is the way to obtain such intergenerational goal. In both approaches Ogbu's distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration (Ogbu, 1987) is used as an explanation of



the national- origin differences in the degree of ambitions and achievement: the precondition for high ambitions is voluntary migration, that makes migrant parents keep holding on their wish of socioeconomic improvement even after their unsuccessful experiences in the labour market.

Other approaches point out reasons behind the ambition advantage that are embedded in the translation of ambition into educational degrees. The Information Bias approach is one of the best known: it was initially hypothesized for Hispanic students (Kao and Tienda, 1998) and applied later to immigrant parents in general. A lack of knowledge about the educational system of the host country can bias the perception of school experience and led to unrealistically high ambitions, both of immigrant parents and of their children. Parents who completed their education in the country of origin may not have clear ideas about standards and demands of the school system in the host country and hence may formulate high ambitions about their children's school careers, which in turn could push upward their children's own ambition. Alternative information can compensate for the missing parental experience or not, depending on the source: when parents' social networks are composed mainly of same-origin relatives and friends the risk of a fatal overestimation of the children's possibilities is high. The Information Bias approach ignores the important role that could be played by elder siblings in providing first-hand experiences of the host country's educational systems to all the other family members and eventually in proposing themselves as models if they managed to attain higher education. Once more (see also paragraph 1.2.2), older siblings might have a crucial compensatory role.

All the cited approaches suffer from a lack of empirical evidence (Salikutluk, 2013). Although the focus of each abovementioned approach differs, they are not mutually exclusive and can be merged into one another. In the empirical part of the thesis I will try to explain the high educational ambitions diffused among second generation students through a new operationalization of socioeconomic background for migrants.

## Chapter 2

### Discussion and formulation of hypotheses

#### 2.1 An explanation for immigrant parents' and children's educational ambitions

In the previous chapter I cited the well-established and long-supported fact that in the general population the socioeconomic background has a direct effect on both parents' and children's educational ambition, which in turn have a powerful influence on children's educational outcomes (see par. 1.1.1). This is the focus of the "social position theory" by Erikson and Jonsson (1996) and the "relative risk aversion" mechanism by Breen and Goldthorpe (1997), among others. Is this literature useful to interpret also the educational outcomes of immigrant children?

Immigrant parents' and children's educational ambitions are an important predictor of educational achievement, much more so than for natives (Kerckhoff and Campbell 1977; Portes and Wilson 1976). Immigrants' educational ambitions show a weak association with their social background, whereas the association is very strong among natives (Hanson, 1994; Qian and Blair 1999).

Overall, immigrants are more ambitious than natives and this is the so-called "ambition advantage" (see paragraph 1.2.3). Asians, blacks, and Latinos hope to go further in higher education than may be expected, given their socioeconomic backgrounds (Kao and Tienda 1998). Native ambitions decrease along with the background much more than those of immigrants, so the ambition advantage is stronger in the lower backgrounds. Immigrants are disproportionately concentrated at the bottom of the social scale, so the overall ambition advantage is mainly due to the high ambitions of the immigrants from lower social background.

*HP 1.0: Immigrant parents and their children are more likely to have high educational ambition than their same-social background<sup>6</sup> native counterparts, and particularly when they come from low social backgrounds.*

Two main reasons could lie behind the weakened effect of socioeconomic background on second generation immigrants' educational ambition.

First, the formation of educational ambition may be different among immigrants, so that specific mechanisms are in place. This is the most explored path of research: as seen in the previous chapter (see again paragraph 1.2.3), theories explaining the ambition advantage of second generations often revolve around the idea that immigrant parents have high ambitions towards their children because they are positively selected on ambition by migration. The big limit of this approach is that it is not able to explain the international evidence of considerable variability among different origin-groups in terms of ambition and educational outcomes: selection for ambition, in fact, ought to apply to some extent to all migrants (Jackson, 2012).

Second, the definition of socioeconomic background may be different among immigrants, so that the same mechanisms identified in the general population are in place but with a different point of reference. This path of research is currently underexplored. As seen in the previous chapter (see paragraph 1.2.1), the operationalization of immigrants' socioeconomic background in the same way as natives' is problematic because of two likely inconsistencies: a) between migrant parents' qualifications and their occupations in the host country; and b) between migrant parents' socioeconomic position in the origin country and in the host country.

### **2.1.1 Decomposition of socioeconomic background for immigrants**

The first of the two cited above inconsistencies calls for the use of at least both educational and occupational variables to index immigrant children's socioeconomic background. Such a strategy is in line with the decomposition of socioeconomic background in social class, education and social status proposed by Bukodi and Goldthorpe (2013) for the general population (see paragraph 1.2.1), but it poses specific questions when it comes to immigrant parents. The main question originates from the second inconsistency cited before, the one between immigrant parents'

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<sup>6</sup>Indexed as usually is by parents' absolute level of education and their class or income

socioeconomic position in the country of origin and in the host country. In what follows I will propose a potential solution for it, while discussing the application of Bukodi and Goldthorpe's decomposition to the specific population of the children of immigrants. In doing so, a possible explanation for the “ambition advantage” of immigrant parents and children will emerge.

The first component of socioeconomic background proposed by the cited approach for the general population is social class: it captures parental economic resources, especially as they may be used to support children's education. Due to the global inequalities in wages, immigrant parents' social class in the country of origin rarely represents a source of economic resources in the country of destination. At least this is the case for labour migrants coming from less developed countries, who amounts to the majority of the immigrant population in both the US and Europe. Thus, immigrant parents' social class in the host country is the best candidate as a measure of their economic resources. As far as I know this usually goes uncontested in migration studies, so there is no need to formulate a specific hypothesis about it.

The second index of socioeconomic background in Bukodi and Goldthorpe's proposal is absolute parental education, which in the general population captures specific educational resources such as parents' ability to create a favorable home-learning environment or to provide their children with informed guidance through the educational system (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2013). But parents' absolute level of education is not a good index for family educational resources when it comes to the specific subpopulation of immigrant parents. The problem is the contextual value of educational credentials. Because immigrant parents attended school in a different language and within a different educational system than their children, their resources of educational resources is necessarily lower than the one possessed by same-educated native parents and so they are less able to help and guide their children's school career than native parents are.

Proposing an alternative index of specific educational resources for the immigrant population is therefore necessary, but I will leave its formulation and the discussion of the related hypotheses for the next paragraph, when I address the topic of immigrant children's school performance. In what follows it will become clear that, within the threefold definition of immigrants' socioeconomic background proposed here, it is the index of social status the one to focus on when trying to explain immigrant parents' and children's high educational ambition, which is the topic of this paragraph.

The third and last index of socioeconomic background proposed by Bukodi and Goldthorpe concerning the general population is social status, which indicates the extent of family socio-cultural resources available to support children's education as through parents' social contacts and networks and forms of cultural participation (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2013). Here is the place where the inconsistency between the two socioeconomic positions of immigrant parents is potentially more disruptive. We know by extensive qualitative research that the risk of a temporary worsening of status after migration is taken by migrant parents as a toll on their intergenerational strategy of social mobility (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) and that immigrants' representations of the world, including their attitudes toward education and school, are strongly influenced by the social position they held in their country of origin (Santelli, 2001; Sayad, 2004). Hence, the social status in the country of residence is very likely to be perceived by immigrant parents as a contingent circumstance that does not directly influence their behavior, whereas the social status in the country of origin is very likely to be the one they behave accordingly to. This pattern was described in the literature as "the status paradox of migration" (Nieswand, 2011): because of immigrant selectivity and social demotion following migration, social status in the country of origin is often higher than in the country of residence and may resist as 'subjective' after migration.

Given these premises, my general hypothesis is that a mechanism of relative risk aversion works for immigrants as well as for natives, but with a different point of reference: their subjective social status, not their current one in the country of residence.

*HP 1.2 (step1): Immigrant parents who have high subjective social status are more likely to have high educational ambition toward their children than those who have a low subjective social status.*

### **2.1.2 Measuring immigrants' subjective social status**

The best candidate for measuring immigrants' subjective social status is relative education (see paragraph 1.1.1), because of both substantive and empirical reasons.

Educational distributions of Western developed – destination – countries are very different, often shifted upwards, compared to less developed – origin – countries. A native parent who has not completed secondary school is likely to be in the lowest deciles of the educational distribution, whereas a migrant parent from a developing country with the same credentials could be above the average level of education in his country of origin. It is indeed very likely that immigrant qualifications have higher standings relative to the countries of origin's educational distributions, as demonstrated by literature on migrants' educational selectivity. Nearly all immigrant groups – with the exception of those who suffered forced migration and refugees - are more educated than their compatriots that didn't leave homeland, even if there is substantial variation in the degree of positive educational selection (Feliciano 2005). The different structure of educational opportunities and the phenomenon of educational selectivity make it evident that measuring education in absolute terms is not sufficient. To be sociologically meaningful, education should be measured both in absolute terms, as it is usually done, and in relative related to the country of origin where it was acquired (Ichou, 2014). Adapting Bukodi and Goldthorpe's decomposition of socioeconomic background to the immigrant population, my intention is to measure education in absolute terms in order to capture immigrant parents' specific educational resources and in relative terms to capture their subjective social status.

Concerning pre-migration situation, it might be that immigrant parents' educational credentials were not fully rewarded in the country of origin's labour market. Research has found that those individuals that have an under-rewarded status inconsistency are more likely to migrate in order to rebalance status dimensions (Quinn and Rubb 2005; Lee, Toney and Berry 2009). This means that immigrant parents' relative education might not correspond to their actual pre-migration socioeconomic status, but it can still be considered an indicator of their subjective social status, that in this case is the one they migrated to achieve. If after migration they do not succeed in achieving the status for themselves, because of all the obstacles first generation has to face (just to cite the most common ones: difficult recognition of educational credentials, language acquisition, discrimination), it is plausible to think that their high educational ambition toward children are even reinforced.

A last empirical reason behind the choice of relative education as the optimal proxy for the subjective social status is that parental education is a variable always collected by surveys, whereas parental occupation before migration rarely is; besides, when this rare circumstance

occurs, the variable displays many missing cases and it is likely to be a bad proxy for social position because of the common early age at migration.

Now I am able to formulate the general hypothesis presented above substituting the concept of subjective social status with its operationalization, which is education relative to the country of origin.

*HP 1.2 (step 2): Immigrant parents who have a high educational level relative to the country of origin are more likely to have high educational ambitions toward their children than those who have a low relative education.*

### **2.1.3 Hypotheses concerning mechanisms**

The mechanism of relative risk aversion would imply that immigrant parents seek to ensure that their children reach in the country of destination a relative educational level at least equal to their relative one in the country of origin. For instance, suppose that immigrant parents with lower secondary education find themselves around the median of the educational distribution in their country of origin: their ambition toward their children would be that they keep on studying to reach at least the median of the educational distribution in their current country of residence, which probably means gaining a higher educational title than their one, such as an upper secondary or tertiary qualification. Because immigrants are often positively selected on education in their own countries of origin, their ambition toward their children would be that they exceed the median of the educational distribution in the host countries, which in most Western European countries means gaining more than an upper secondary title. In the United States one recent finding is that immigrants' children maintain an advantage over their native peers only in aspiring to go beyond the normative level of schooling, namely to attain a graduate education (Feliciano and Lanuza, 2016). I expect that my analyses will lead me to a similar conclusion. In light of this argument I need to specify one more time the hypothesis made before:

*HP 1.2 (step 3): Immigrant parents who have a high education relative to the country of origin are more likely to have university ambition toward their children than those who have a low relative education.*

On this point, a further specification can be advanced. In two databases on which I will conduct my analyses, I have the possibility to distinguish between ambition to brief and to long university paths. My hypothesis is that immigrant children are more likely than natives to have “cautious” university ambitions, that means aspiring to brief paths rather than to long one, especially when they come from low backgrounds and have a low school performance. In fact, even if they aspire to university more often than native peers because of their parents' subjective social status, aiming to study just a couple of years after the secondary school examination is going to minimize the risk of failures that is still high without the support of family resources and the encouragement of a good school performance. So my hypothesis is that:

*HP 1.3: Immigrant children are more likely to aspire to brief university path than same-background and same-performance native children, and especially when they come from a low background and have a low school performance.*

The decomposition of immigrants' socioeconomic background proposed before makes use of absolute education only to capture immigrant parents' specific educational resources. For this reason I expect that the association of immigrant parents' educational ambitions with their absolute education is much lower than the one with their subjective social status. Empirically, it means that:

*HP 1.4: The positive association of immigrant parents' educational ambitions toward children with their education is weaker than the one with their subjective social status.*

Moving from the argument exposed so far, a couple of secondary hypotheses can be put forth. Consistent with a large literature (see paragraph 1.2.3) I expect to find a discrepancy between educational ambition of immigrant parents and those of their children:

*HP 1.5: Immigrant parents' educational ambitions toward their children are higher than their children's educational ambitions for themselves.*



Because the mechanism of relative risk aversion works primarily on parents and because immigrant parents' subjective social status of reference is not the actual one their children experienced, I expect that:

*HP 1.6: The association of immigrant parents' subjective social status with their own educational ambitions toward children is stronger than the one with their children's educational ambitions.*

Nevertheless, parents' educational ambition has a strong influence on children's educational ambition and among immigrants this influence is even stronger than among natives (see paragraph 1.2.3). Thus, my supposition is that:

*HP 1.7: The weaker association between parents' subjective social status and children's educational ambitions becomes even weaker when parents' educational ambitions are considered.*

*HP 1.8: The association of immigrant parents' educational ambition on their children's educational ambition is strong and significant.*

As far as I know, this is the first attempt to study the effect of individual immigrant parents' relative level of education in their country of origin on their own and their children's educational ambitions. Mathieu Ichou's work (2014) is the most similar and promising precedent: he found a significant positive effect of immigrant parents' education relative to their country of origin on their children's educational attainment, even after controlling for socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of immigrant families in France. My hypothesis above and the corresponding analyses are built precisely on the conclusions of Ichou's work: he hypothesized that the effect he found was produced through the key role of educational ambition (both of parents' and children's) but his data didn't allow him to test it. The CILS4EU dataset allows me to do it, as it includes measures of both immigrant parents' and their children's educational ambition. Moreover, information on parental ambitions is more reliable because it has been collected directly from the parents and not reported by children. Therefore I will test most of my hypotheses on it.

## **2.2 An explanation for the gap between educational ambition and school performance among immigrant children**

According to the literature, the association between educational ambitions and school performance - both before and after school ambitions are collected - is less strong among minorities than among natives (Kao and Tienda, 1998). Among immigrant children, the relationship is often described as paradoxical: even if they are highly ambitious, their poor school results seem scarcely correlated to motivation. The first description of this phenomenon dates back to fifty years ago (Coleman et al., 1966), but since then a lot of studies have build considerable evidence on it: just to cite some references, Jonsson and Rudolphi (2011) refer to this phenomenon as “weak performance and strong determination”, Brinbaum and Kieffer (2005) speak of “ambition and perseverance”, Jackson (2012) talks about “bold choices”. The issue poses interesting theoretical challenges, because current models of school decisions place family resources and school success at the centre of the picture (Boudon, 1974; Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997) and thus are hardly able to explain long educational careers pursued by immigrant children coming from low-income families and although they have poor school performances.

*HP 2.0: Immigrant children who have poor school performance are more likely to have high educational ambitions than native children with the same performance and of the same social background<sup>7</sup>*

In the previous paragraph I proposed an adaptation of Bukodi and Goldthorpe's socioeconomic background decomposition (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2013) to immigrant population. From such proposal I derived some hypotheses aimed at explaining immigrant parents' and children high educational ambition. In this paragraph I will keep on following this thesis, in search of an explanation for the common paradoxical combination of immigrant children's high educational ambition and low school performance.

### **2.2.1 Under-rewarded educational inconsistency**

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<sup>7</sup> Indexed as usually is by parents' absolute level of education and their class or income

Stratification dimensions – like income, education and occupation – usually are highly correlated in the general population (Benoit-Smullyan, 1944). Nevertheless, inconsistencies exist and individuals often try to alleviate them adopting deviant or innovative behaviors (Lenski, 1954). A particular type of inconsistency which has drawn the attention of researchers is under-rewarded social inconsistency: this is the case when occupational prestige and income, which are respectively the social and financial reward, are lower than the typical ones for the possessed level of education, which represents the investment (Brown et al., 1988). This type of social inconsistency has been researched in the context of origin as a push-factor of migration: under-rewarded individuals are more likely to migrate as a strategy to rebalance social dimensions (Quinn and Rubb 2005; Lee, Toney and Berry 2008). In the context of destination the phenomenon has been analysed especially as regards the skilled migrants facing the problem of difficult recognition and use of their educational titles acquired abroad.

The notion of under-rewarded social inconsistency could be also applied to the decomposition of immigrants' socioeconomic background proposed in the previous paragraph, defining a situation that is very common among immigrant parents and likely to affect their children's education.

When looking at education as an investment embedded in the context in which it was acquired, and in order to index the subjective social status of immigrant parents, once again it is useful to consider their qualification in relative terms by factoring in the educational stratification of their countries of origin. In the countries of destination immigrant parents' investment in education is neither rewarded nor recognised because they are scarcely able to help their children at school. After migration, in fact, they are likely to have less economic and educational resources for supporting their children's school career than the typical resources attached to the relative value of their education. From now on, I will call this situation under-rewarded educational inconsistency (UEI), so as to distinguish the concept from the well-known social one.

In the previous paragraph I have already discussed how immigrant children's high educational ambition may be especially associated – mainly by means of their parents' educational ambition – with one component of their threefold socioeconomic background: immigrant parents' high subjective social status. In what follows I will expand the argument, hypothesizing that one of the main reasons behind the common gap between immigrant children's high educational ambition and low school performance is the inconsistency of parents' high subjective social status with the other two components of their socioeconomic background, namely low economic and educational resources. Going back to the operationalization of immigrants' socioeconomic background

proposed in the previous paragraph, I define under-rewarded educational inconsistency (UEI) among immigrants as the inconsistency between on the one hand, high parental education relative to the country of origin (index for subjective social status) and on the other hand low parental social class (index for economic resources) and low parental absolute level of education (index for educational resources). Thus, I expect that:

*HP 2.1: Among the children of immigrant parents having both low social class and low education, those with a high subjective social status (UEI background) are more likely to display a low school performance matched with high educational ambitions than those with a low subjective social status.*

The association of immigrant children's school performance with their parents' social class and level of education is not new: it has been confirmed by an extensive literature both on the US context and on the European one. Both variables are usually intended as indexes for immigrant children's socioeconomic background, which emerges from the literature as associated with their school performance but with low or null association with their educational ambition (see paragraph 1.2.3). So far, the novelty of my approach is the addition of immigrant parents' subjective social status to the variables composing immigrant children's socioeconomic background, and the definition of a common type of inconsistency within the three components which may be associated with the coexistence of both phenomena, namely high educational ambition and low school performance.

# Chapter 3

## **Educational ambitions of second generation migrants in France**

### **3.1 Description of the dataset**

The Trajectoires et Origines' survey (TeO from now on) was conducted in 2008 in France, jointly by the Institut National d'Études Démographiques (INED) and the Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques (INSEE). The survey responded to the necessity of collecting extensive evidence about immigrants' descendants and their integration in France, in order to properly study a topic that had been of increasing importance in the national debate for decades.

The main sample comprises 24,000 respondents residing in France at the time of the survey: mainly immigrants (people born abroad as foreign nationals) and their descendants (born in France), and a smaller group of natives (people born in metropolitan France, whose parents were born in the same place) for confrontation. They responded to the main questionnaire, which was administered face to face, also on behalf of other relatives living in the house. The questionnaire is meant to investigate three main themes: the family and social context, the access to different social resources, the different dimensions of origins and cultural identities.

An additional questionnaire was left behind by interviewers, to be self-administered and then submitted by every respondent's child being from 15 to 24 years old and living in the same house. 3,034 additional questionnaires were collected. Only these last questionnaires contain detailed information about children's education that are essential to the purposes of this thesis, e.g. their school ambition, so I had to focus my attention on the limited group of descendants that filled them, while I could not consider the big group of 9,600 immigrants' descendants that filled the main questionnaire. The subsample is also self-selected because, of all the distributed questionnaires, less than 50% were collected in the end and, presumably, these are the ones of the more motivated children. Another limitation of the dataset is the absence of information

about parents' educational ambition toward their children, which is one of the main dependent variables of my hypotheses.

Despite these limitations, the data are still of interest for the purposes of this thesis for different reasons. First of all, they allow me to test a couple of hypotheses on children of immigrants in France and this is of remarkable importance *per se*. France in fact is not participating in the CILS4EU project, so it is excluded from what is probably the largest existent specific dataset about immigrants' descendants in Europe, despite the country's ancient history of immigration. My interest in these data is also due to the fact that most of my hypotheses are built on the conclusions of Mathieu Ichou's work (2014), who analyzing TeO dataset suggested the key role of educational ambition in producing the effect of immigrant parents' education relative to their country of origin on their children' educational attainment. Last but not least, TeO data were collected interviewing both parents and children and this allows me to be confident that both information about children's ambition and parents' education are trustworthy: this is crucial for my purposes, both because parental education has a key role in my hypotheses and because I suppose that different mechanisms link it with children's and parents' ambition. On a final note, regarding the two hypotheses that can be tested on this dataset although its limitations, I need to confront immigrants' children with natives' and, luckily, this is a viable way here. The inclusion of natives among respondents it is not uncommon practice in surveys about immigrants, nonetheless it is not a quality that can be taken for granted (for example, my Italian dataset lacks it).

## 3.2 Hypotheses

In the second chapter I developed hypotheses about two intertwined phenomena: the so-called “immigrant ambition advantage”<sup>8</sup> and the “ambition-performance gap”<sup>9</sup>.

The first hypotheses that I am going to test in the chapter are the exploratory ones, questioning if the phenomena cited above are actually in place among TeO subjects. Performing bivariate analyses with the appropriate measures of association and correlation is the simplest way to test such hypotheses. The analyses will also identify the specific low socioeconomic conditions

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See paragraph 2.1 in Chapter 2

<sup>9</sup> See paragraph 2.2 in Chapter 2

associated with these phenomena in the Teo dataset. The lack of information on parents' educational ambitions in the dataset allows me to investigate the first and main phenomenon of interest, namely the immigrant ambition advantage over natives, only on children:

*HP 1.0: Immigrant children are more likely to have high educational ambition than same-social background<sup>10</sup> native children, and particularly when they come from low social backgrounds.*

If data will show that immigrant children having poor educational and/or financial resources are regularly more ambitious than native children with the same low family resources, evidence will support the existence of the main explanandum of my thesis.

Teo data allow me also to distinguish between children's ambition to brief and to long university paths. This is the related hypothesis, presuming the existence especially among low background and low school performance immigrant children of a “cautios” attitude toward their educational future pointed to minimize the high risk of failure in university.

*HP 1.3: Immigrant children are more likely to aspire to brief university path than same-background and same-performance native children, and especially when they come from a low background and have a low school performance.*

The second exploratory hypothesis is a development of the first one, where the control variable of school performance is added into the picture.

*HP 2.0: Immigrant children who have poor school performance are more likely to have high educational ambitions than native children with the same performance and of the same social background<sup>11</sup>*

Little can be done, instead, to test most of my explanatory hypotheses. In fact, the main mechanism I suppose to be behind the occurrence of these phenomena primarily shapes immigrant parent's educational ambitions toward their children<sup>12</sup> and in TeO dataset I don't have

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<sup>10</sup>Indexed as usually is by parents' absolute level of education and their class or income

<sup>11</sup> Indexed as usually is by parents' absolute level of education and their class or income

<sup>12</sup>See paragraph 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 in Chapter 2

any information about them. Nevertheless, in the end of the chapter I will perform a regression analysis on the educational ambitions of immigrant students, in order to assess the effects on them of the traditional socioeconomic background variables (parents' education and social class) and of school performance. The final step will be the addition into the regression of the new socioeconomic background variable (parents' education relative to their country of origin, indexing their subjective social status) in order to estimate its effect on immigrant children's educational ambitions and its interaction with the other variables.

### 3.3 Variables and models

In TeO survey, 3,034 children filled the additional questionnaire containing the item on educational ambitions. Unfortunately I had to drop 20% of the subjects as a first step, because either they are no longer in education or they don't show any information about their education. After this selection, I was left with 2,453 subjects. In order to identify the children of immigrants and of natives, I used the country where the parent who filled the main questionnaire was born: 1,357 subjects were identified as children of an immigrant (born abroad) and 519 as children of a native (born in France). Together (1,876) they represent the eligible subjects for my analyses. This is already a restricted group of subjects, and yet still a very heterogeneous one: the school level attended at the moment of the survey for example is crucial, because only secondary students had the whole range of school continuation options ahead of them. For this reason I will perform the analyses on secondary students only (1,203).

As a measure of parental education I will use a classification in three categories<sup>13</sup>, where the lower one merges together three educational levels (without scolarization, primary and lower secondary level) because there are too few natives in them. The classification is based on the Isced97 international classification of titles of study. As a measure of parental social class I will use a classification in four categories<sup>14</sup>, derived from the Isco88 international classification of occupations, where the two main categories I want to confront are the working-class (blue collar) one and the clerical (white-collar) one. As a measure of composite family background I will use the combination of parental absolute education and parental social class.

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<sup>13</sup>University, Upper secondary education, Lower secondary education or less.

<sup>14</sup>Low skilled blue-collars, High skilled blue-collars, Low skilled white-collars, High skilled white-collars



Table 1 – Distribution of key variables by origin-groups of secondary students, percentages.

		Immigrant children	Native children	Total
<b>Parental education</b>	less than upper secondary	50.2	25.4	43.3
	upper secondary	30.3	48.3	35.3
	university	19.5	26.3	21.4
	missing	0	0	0
	total of respondents	100.0 (868)	100.0 (335)	100.0 (1,203)
<b>Parental social class</b>	low skilled blue collars	35.7	19.2	30.8
	high skilled blue collars	21.2	11.6	18.4
	low skilled white collars	19.1	29.5	22.2
	high skilled white collars	24.0	39.7	28.6
	missing	83	6	89
	total of respondents	100.0 (785)	100.0 (329)	100.0 (1,114)
<b>Combination of parental social class and parental education</b>	lowsk blue & less than upsec	23.3	8.2	18.8
	lowsk blue & upsec	8.0	8.6	8.2
	lowsk blue & university	2.6	1.0	2.1
	highsk blue & less than upsec	11.5	2.7	8.9
	highsk blue & upsec	6.5	7.8	6.9
	highsk blue & university	1.4	1.8	1.5
	lowsk white & less than upsec	7.3	8.8	7.8
	lowsk white & upsec	8.9	16.4	11.1
	lowsk white & university	4.0	1.6	3.3
	highsk white & less than upsec	2.9	3.7	3.2
	highsk white & upsec	7.5	14.8	9.7
	highsk white & university	16.1	24.6	18.6
	missing	131	7	138
	total of respondents	100.0 (1,226)	100.0 (512)	100.0 (1,738)
<b>Children's educational ambition</b>	uncertain	18.0	16.0	17.4
	less than university edu	12.7	14.0	13.0
	brief university paths	40.3	35.2	39.1
	long university paths	29.0	34.8	30.5

	missing	144	77	221
	total of respondents	100.0 (724)	100.0 (258)	100.0 (982)
<b>Children's self-evaluated school performance</b>	under the mean or on the mean	58.0	57.1	57.7
	over the mean	42.0	42.9	42.3
	missing	32	9	41
	total of respondents	100.0 (836)	100.0 (326)	100.0 (1,162)

The principal dependent variable in my analyses is children's educational ambition. I will use a condensed version of the variable created by the survey team, with three categories<sup>15</sup>: aspiring to less than university education, aspiring to brief university paths (maximum 3 years after the BAC examination at the end of upper secondary school) and aspiring to long ones (more than 3 years after the BAC). The other dependent variable in my analyses is children's self-evaluated school performance, which is not available for students who are working or are in search of a job (42 subjects). The original variable is collected using a scale in five categories, but the polar ones count too few subjects to be meaningful, so I condensed them in two categories<sup>16</sup>. This is the only measure of school performance available in the dataset and I am aware that its unspecific<sup>17</sup> nature has to be taken in mind when interpreting the results.

A first look at the distribution of the variables (see table 1) reveals well-known basic differences and expected similarities between the two origin-groups of secondary students. Immigrant children more often come from a poor family background, either in terms of educational resources (+25% of parents with less than an upper secondary title) or financial resources (+26% of parents doing a blue collar job) or them taken together (+15% of parents doing a low skilled blue collar job and having less than an upper secondary title). But despite the disadvantaged family background, they are not very different from native children when it comes to educational ambitions and perception of school performance. Regardless of the origin-group of belonging, 7 out of 10 secondary students aspire to university education. And yet, the length of the university path matters: +5% of immigrants aspire to keep on studying not more than 3 years after the end of upper secondary school, while +5% of natives aspire to university paths longer than that. About school performance, immigrants slightly more often than natives tend to locate themselves at the

<sup>15</sup>Uncertain, less than university education (Bac or less than it), brief university paths (till Bac+3), long university paths (more than Bac+3).

<sup>16</sup>Under the mean or on the mean, over the mean.

<sup>17</sup>It does not distinguish student's performance on different subjects. Usually student's performance in the language of the survey country (sometimes with performance in liberal arts requiring a good use of it) is excluded because it varies a lot depending on several variables (age of arrival, distance between native and second language, etc.) .

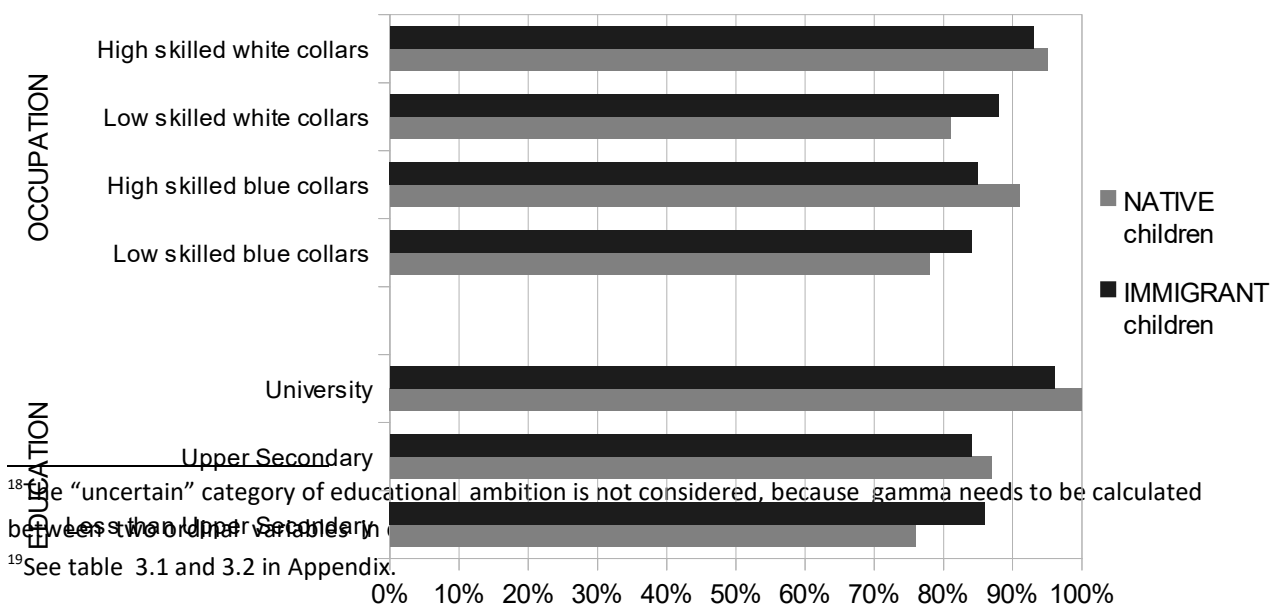
bottom of their class (+3% “under the mean”), while conversely natives are a bit more likely than immigrants to locate themselves at the very top of it (+3% “very over the mean”).

### 3.3.1 Low and educationally consistent socioeconomic resources are behind second generation's ambition advantage over natives.

In what follows I will analyse the relation between family background and ambition, in search of evidence that immigrant children of low family background are more likely to have high educational ambition<sup>18</sup> than native children of the same background (hypothesis 1.0). I will measure family background using common proxy variables like parental education and parental social class, first considering them alone and then together in a composite measure.

Figure 1 shows that in both origin-groups there is a positive and significant association of parental education with children's school ambition, which is stronger among natives than among immigrants. As expected, among natives the relationship of children's school ambition with parental social class is weaker than the one with parental education, while among immigrants it has the same (low) strength but it is almost non significant<sup>19</sup>. This is evidence that family educational resources have a severely reduced role in the explanation of immigrant children's school ambition, compared to their same role among natives.

Figure 1 - Children's university ambition by parental education and parental occupation, percentages within origin-groups

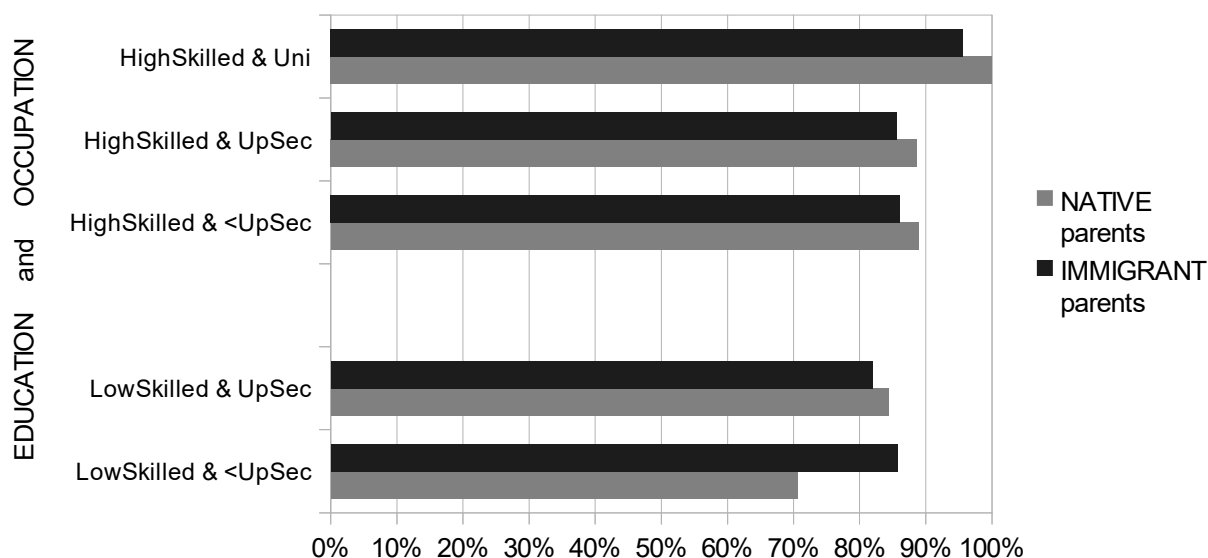


<sup>18</sup>The “uncertain” category of educational ambition is not considered, because gamma needs to be calculated between the upper and lower categories.

<sup>19</sup>See table 3.1 and 3.2 in Appendix.

Now it is useful to compare the trends of school ambition between the two origin-groups, both by family educational resources and by financial ones. The immigrant's ambition advantage over natives, which is well known in the literature, is all but pervasive here. Immigrant children more often (+11%) aspire to university education than native children when they have poor educated parents, while they aspire to it a bit less often (-6%) than natives when they have university educated parents. Comparing the trends of school ambition by parental social classes between the two origin-groups, another regularity emerges. Immigrant children of low skilled workers, either blue or white collars, aspire to university education more often than native children of the same social classes (respectively +6% if blue and +7% if white collars). Among the children of high skilled workers, either blue or white collars, the ambition advantage is reversed so as to favour natives over immigrants (respectively +6% if blue and +2% if white collars).

Figure 2 - Children's university ambition by the combination of parental social class and parental education, percentages within origin-groups<sup>20</sup>.



Both parents' low level of education and parents' occupation requiring a low level of skills seem to define the socioeconomic background favouring the ambition advantage of immigrant children

<sup>20</sup> See table 3.3 in Appendix

over natives. In order to be sure, it is necessary to look at the trends of school ambition by a combined measure of parental education and occupation (see figure 2). The detailed comparison of this composite measure between origin-groups suffers from the limited number of subjects in some categories, due both to the restricted sample size of the native group and to the uncommon mismatch of education and occupation within native population (see table 1): for this reason I chose to aggregate its categories on the basis of the level of required skills, emerged above as very meaningful, regardless of the distinction between blue and white collars, and I also chose also not to represent the residual category of low skilled parents with university education.

My early guess is confirmed by figure 2: the only socioeconomic category where immigrant children have university ambition more often than natives (+15%) is the one defined by a combination of low parental education and of parental occupations requiring low skills<sup>21</sup>. This specific socioeconomic background is all but uncommon among immigrants: more than 1 immigrant student out of 3 (35%) comes from it, versus only 1 native student out of 10 (11%).

The descriptive analyses performed so far showed that in TeO data immigrant students are overall equally likely to have university aspirations than native students, despite their more disadvantaged background (see table 1). university ambition, in fact, has a weak correlation with both family educational resources and economic resources among immigrant students, while both correlations are stronger among natives and especially the one with education.

When comparing students of similar background, it emerges that immigrant children are more likely to aspire to university than natives (see hypothesis 1.0) only when coming from a family background characterized by both low parental education and low skilled parental occupations (without taking into account the distinction between blue and white collar jobs). The relevance of the finding is increased by the fact that more than one third of the immigrant sample shares this socioeconomic condition. It is neither a case of classic under-rewarded social inconsistency (high education and low social class), nor a case of classic social consistency (low education and low social class) because of the presence of low skilled white collars. It seems a case of educational consistency (low education matching the low skills required by the social class), but the mechanism linking this parents' educational condition to high children's aspirations is unclear. Adding parents' subjective social status (indexed by high education relative to the country of origin) as a third component of the immigrant socioeconomic background could turn this condition

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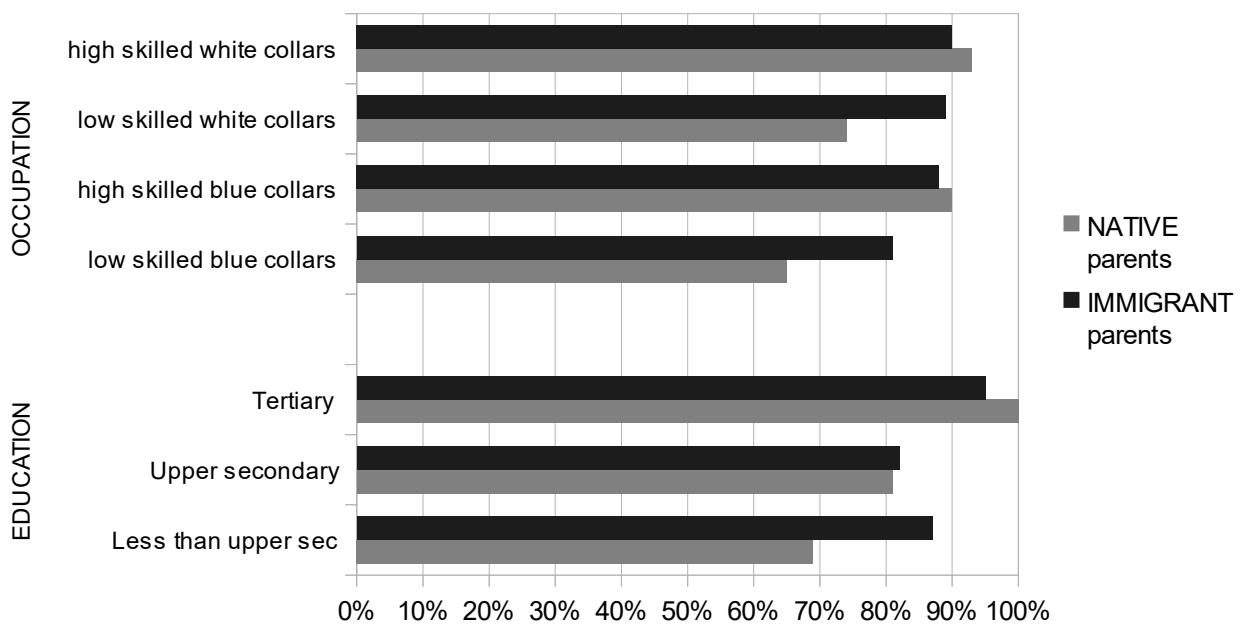
<sup>21</sup>See table 3.3 in Appendix.

into under-rewarded educational inconsistency (UEI)<sup>22</sup>, which I suppose is behind immigrant parents' high school ambition toward their children. Unfortunately this hypothetical mechanism cannot be tested properly on TeO data, because there is no information about parents' educational ambition toward their children. Nevertheless, in the last paragraph of this chapter I will make an attempt to explore the relationship between the low and educationally consistent background described above and immigrant parental education relative to their country of origin.

### 3.3.2 Low school performance paradoxically increase second generation's ambition advantage over natives

Moving on to the testing of hypothesis 2.0, now I search for evidence that among low school performance students, immigrant children are more likely than natives to display high school ambition and this is particularly true when family background is low. Like in the previous paragraph the comparison between the two origin-groups when controlling for socioeconomic background suffers from the limited number of native subjects in some categories<sup>23</sup>.

Figure 3 - University ambition of low school performance\* children by parental education or parental occupation's skill level and origin-groups, percentages.



<sup>22</sup>See paragraph 2.2.1 in Chapter 2

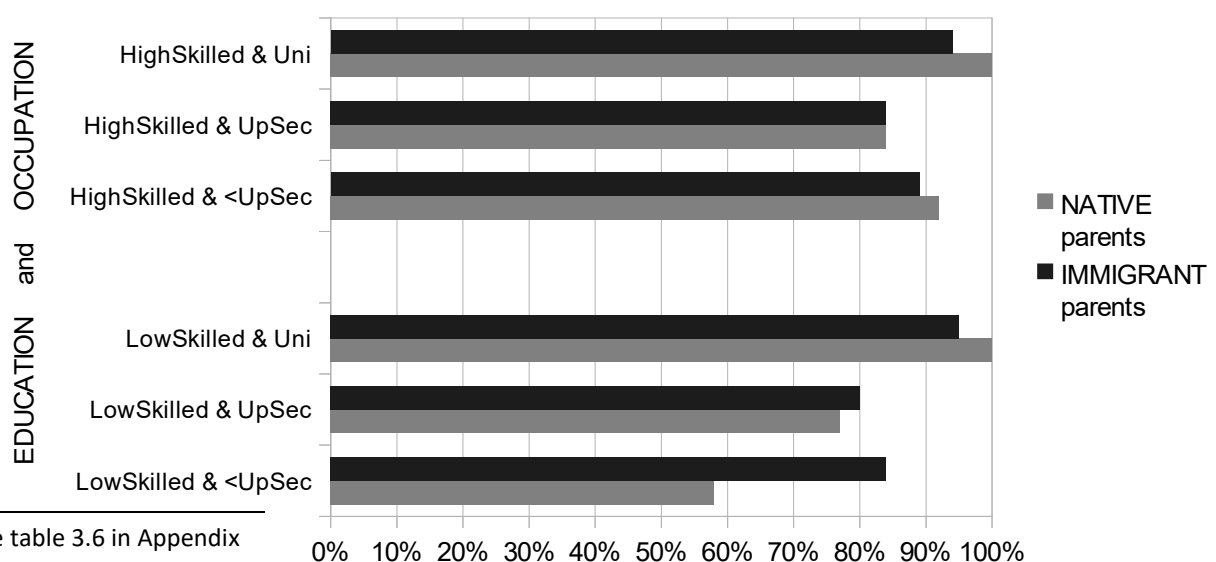
<sup>23</sup>See table 3.4 and 3.5 in Appendix

\*low performance= less than the mean of the class or on its mean; high performance= over the mean of the class

Low performance students amount to almost 6 out of 10 students both among native and immigrant children (see table 1). Among low performance students overall, immigrants aspire to gain a university school title a bit more often than natives (87% vs. 83%). Figure 3 compares the ratio of university ambition between immigrant and native low performance students of the same socioeconomic background, when this is indexed by parental education or parental occupation: in general, native children are more likely to aspire to university than immigrant ones; over-aspiring immigrants can be found only among children of low educated parents (+18%) or among children of parents doing a low skilled jobs (blue collars +16% and white collars +14%). The trend of the ambition gap between the two origin-groups when restricted to low performance students is very similar but more pronounced than the one found on all the students, without considering their school performance (see paragraph 1.3.1).

To be completely sure that high performance students do not share the same trend of low performance ones, I did the same analysis on them too. Among high performance students overall, immigrants aspire to acquire a university title less often than natives (89% vs. 94%), contrary to what happen among low performance students. Controlling for socioeconomic background, among high performance students there are no categories where there is a considerable immigrant ambition advantage (barely +2% among children of low skilled white collars or of low educated parents).

Figure 4 - University ambition of low school performance\* children by the combination of parental social class and parental education and by origin-groups, percentages<sup>24</sup>.



<sup>24</sup> See table 3.6 in Appendix

\*low performance= less than the mean of the class or on its mean; high performance= over the mean of the class

Finally, as in the previous paragraph, in figure 4 the analysis is repeated using a combination of parental education and of parental occupation's skill level to index socioeconomic background. Once again the trend found among the low performance students is very similar but more pronounced than the one previously found among all the students (see paragraph 1.3.1): low performance immigrant students are more likely, and a lot more (+26%), than same-performance natives of having university ambition when they come from a low and educationally consistent socioeconomic condition (both parental low education and low skilled occupation)<sup>25</sup>.

The phenomenon of second generation's school ambition advantage over natives emerged as increasingly paradoxical from this further analysis: immigrant children are more likely than natives to aspire to university only when they are not supported by family educational resources, because their parents have both a low education and a low skilled job (clerical or manual makes little difference), and especially when they are not encouraged by a good school performance.

Of course, the university ambition of these immigrant kids could be just labeled as unrealistic, but still the mechanism originating and sustaining them in spite of such depressing forces remains unknown. In chapter 2<sup>26</sup> I discussed how the mechanism of relative risk aversion may work with a different point of reference for first generation migrants to produce immigrant parents' high school ambition for their children, that in turn led to high children's ambition for themselves. Unfortunately the absence of information about parents' school ambition toward their children in the TeO dataset prevents me to properly test the supposed mechanism. Nevertheless, as I have already anticipated, in the last paragraph of this chapter I will make an attempt at finding out if the main explanatory variable involved in the supposed mechanism may help explain high immigrant children's ambition for themselves.

### **3.3.3 Second generation's ambition advantage over natives is entirely on brief university paths**

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<sup>25</sup>See table 2.6 in Appendix 2  
<sup>26</sup>See paragraph 2.1.1 in Chapter 2



In order to add a valuable information to the frame emerged so far, I have the possibility to analyse more in deep the type of students' university school ambition. TeO data in most cases allow me to distinguish between students' ambition to brief university paths and to long ones: following the distinction introduced in Europe by the Bologna process<sup>27</sup>, brief university paths are the ones that can be completed within 3 years after the upper secondary school examination (BAC), while long university paths require more than 3 years of university to be completed.

Figure 5 - Children's brief and long university ambition by the combination of parental social class and parental education and by origin-groups, percentages<sup>28</sup>.

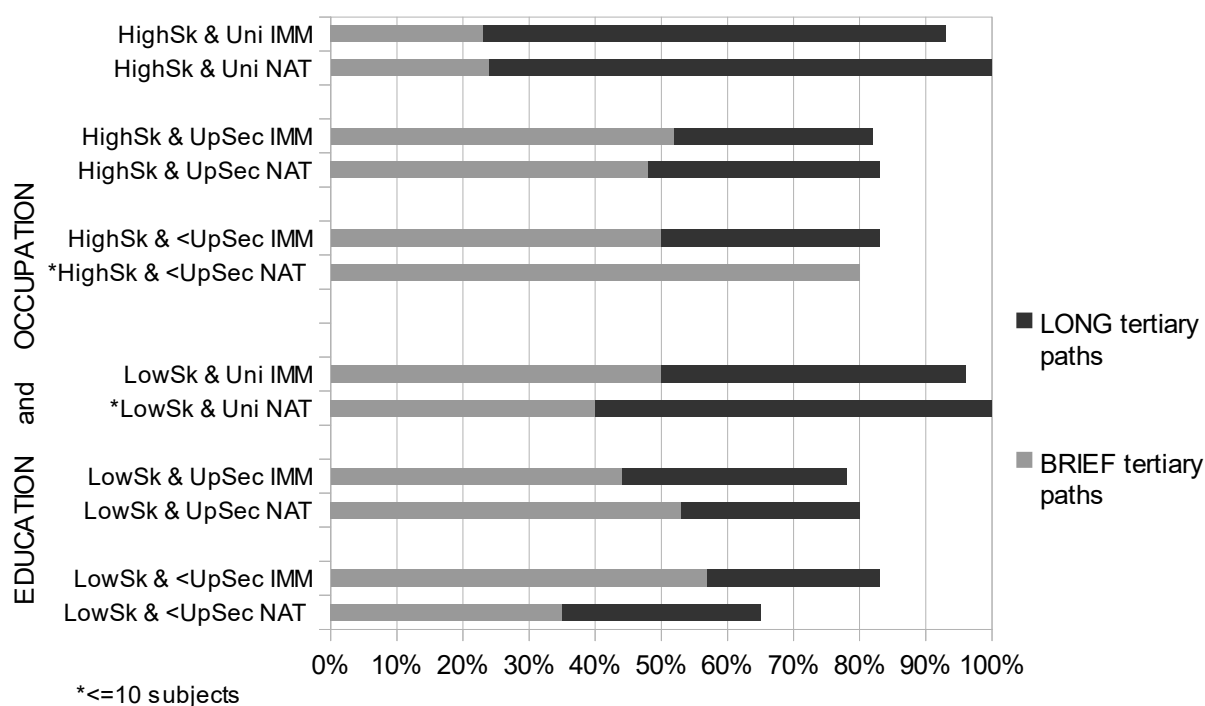


Figure 5 shows that the general disadvantage suffered by immigrant students on university ambition when compared to natives of the same socioeconomic background is mainly due to the fact that they are less likely to aspire to long university paths, while their aspirations to acquire brief university titles are much more similar to natives<sup>29</sup>. In the only socioeconomic category identified above where immigrants show an ambition advantage over natives, this is entirely due to their higher rate of ambition to brief university paths (+22%) while they aspire slightly less (-4%) than natives to long ones.

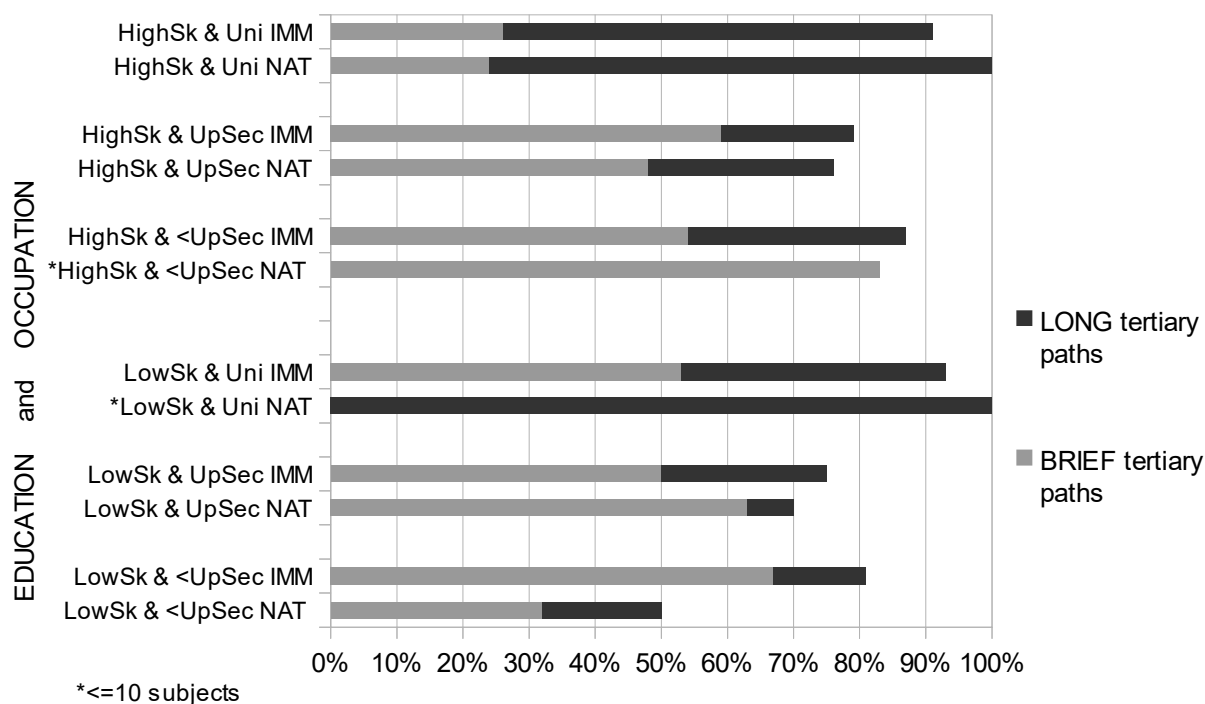
<sup>27</sup> Bologna Declaration (1999), *The European Higher Education Area. Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education Convened in Bologna at the 19th June, 1999.*

<sup>28</sup>See table 3.7 in Appendix

<sup>29</sup>Very inconsistent categories where there are less than 10 native subjects to compare immigrants with were not considered.

Figure 6 shows that the university ambitions of low performance immigrant students lean toward brief university paths in the very majority of the cases (83%), while when considering all students together, regardless of their school performance, shorter ambitions are less prevalent over long ones (68%).

Figure 6 - Brief and long university ambition of low school performance\* children by the combination of parental social class and parental education and by origin-groups, percentages<sup>30</sup>.



This evidence sheds some light on the so far apparent paradox of immigrant children coming from a low and educationally consistent background and having a not-so-good school performance who are more likely to have university ambitions than same-background and same-performance natives. These immigrant students are actually equally likely than their native counterparts to have long university aspirations, but a lot more likely than them to aim at brief university paths. In these terms, their behavior sounds a lot more realistic (hypothesis 1.3 is supported): they still aspire to university more often than natives that have the same low educational support in the family and the same not promising school performance, but their ambitions are cautious since they require to keep on studying for only a couple of years after the end of upper secondary school. Aspiring to

<sup>30</sup>See table 3.8 in Appendix

brief university paths might be the expression of a general cautious attitude that immigrant children coming from this specific socioeconomic background have toward their educational future, in order to minimize the risk of failures that is high without the support of family educational resources and a good school performance.

### **3.3.4 Modelling the collected evidence to explain second generation's educational ambition**

In this last paragraph I will use regression analysis in order to sum up and systematize the evidence collected so far through descriptive analyses about the relationships between on the one hand immigrant students' school ambition and on the other hand their socioeconomic background and school performance. In the end I will make an attempt to improve the model by adding immigrant parents' subjective social status to the classic socioeconomic variables, even if the mechanism I suppose is behind the necessity of this third socioeconomic index for immigrants shapes immigrant parents' school ambition toward their children and only indirectly immigrant children's school ambition for themselves<sup>31</sup>.

As shown in the previous paragraphs, the big difference between the educational ambition of second generation's students and of native's is the length of the university studies they aspire to. The majority of students from both origin groups want to keep studying after the upper secondary school's final exam (BAC), but after it immigrant children are more likely to aim at university titles requiring a maximum of three years, while native students are more likely to imagine for themselves a longer future of university attendance. Even if here I am interested in building up a model to explain the educational aspirations of immigrant students only, both for sample size reasons<sup>32</sup> and for substantial ones<sup>33</sup>, my interest is bent toward the peculiarities of immigrants' aspirations when compared with the ones of native students. Thus, I choose as dependent variable in my regression the occurrence of brief university ambition versus the occurrence of long university ambition among second generation's youths, excluding from the analysis students not having university ambition. In order to estimate the effect of socioeconomic background and of school performance, which I know are negatively correlated with the occurrence of brief university

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<sup>31</sup>See chapter 2. TeO survey did not collect parents' educational ambition toward their children.

<sup>32</sup> Native children represent a restricted sample

<sup>33</sup>The reasonment and hypotheses made in chapter 2 are about immigrants only.

ambition among immigrant youths, I set as reference categories higher values of these independent variables.

The last step of the regression analysis will be to add another component of socioeconomic background to parental social class and parental absolute education: the new variable is parental education relative to the country of origin, meant to index subjective parental social status<sup>34</sup>. It is the percentage of same-sex and same-age population that falls behind parental educational level in the country where parents acquired the most of their education and at the moment when they finish their studies or left the country. Data about the educational distribution of the origin country are taken from the Barro-Lee dataset<sup>35</sup>. Sometimes in TeO data it is not present the country where parents lived before arriving to France but only the macro geographic region (e.g. South Asia) and this the reason why it was possible to create parental relative education only for 86% of those immigrant children that were attending a secondary school and that gave information about the parental level of education. The most common country of reference for parents' relative education is France (22% of the subjects), followed by Morocco and Turkey (9% each) and Algeria (8%).

Figure 7 confirms the regularities emerged in the previous paragraphs through descriptive analyses. Immigrant children's not-so-good school performances more than double their odds of aspiring to brief (rather than long) university ambitions and the effect is very stable and significant, whatever the socioeconomic background index is. Socioeconomic background indexes favour the ambition to brief university paths especially when they signal low family resources: parents doing low skilled blue collar jobs or having less than an upper secondary education more than triple the odds of having such aspirations and both their effects are very significant.

In model 3 and 4 socioeconomic background is indexed through the combination of the parental social class' level of skills with the parental education. They are the most interesting models, since they show also regularities that weren't evident in the descriptive analyses. In model 3, as expected, the lower and educationally consistent category (parents' low skilled jobs and low education) is the one having the biggest effect on immigrant children's propensity to brief university ambition: belonging to this category multiplies by more than six times the odds of having such ambition, compared to those of the high and educationally consistent reference category, and the effect is very significant. The other category that has an unexpectedly big and

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<sup>34</sup>See paragraph 2.1.2 in Chapter 2

<sup>35</sup> See [www.barrolee.com](http://www.barrolee.com)

very significant effect is that of children having parents with high skilled jobs matched by intermediate education: belonging to it multiply by five the odds of aspiring to brief university paths. The latter category didn't emerge from descriptive analyses as one showing a particular ambition advantage of immigrant children over natives, but immigrant children belonging to it actually have the higher rate of brief university ambitions after the highest rate displayed by those in the low and educationally consistent category.

Figure 7 – Logistic regression on immigrant children's brief university aspirations<sup>36</sup> (odds ratios)

Variables	Category	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Parental education (absolute)	University				
	Upper secondary	3.0***			
	Less than upper secondary	3.9***			
Parental social class	High skilled White collars				
	High skilled Blue collars		2.2**		
	Low skilled White collars		1.8*		
	Low skilled Blue collars		3.4***		
Combination of parental social class' level of skills and parental education	High skilled jobs & university				
	High skilled jobs & upper sec.			5.1***	4.3*
	High skilled jobs & less than upper sec.			3.5*	2.2
	Low skilled jobs & university			2.8*	4.1*
	Low skilled jobs & upper sec.			3.5*	3.7*
	Low skilled jobs & less than upper sec.			6.5***	4.5***
Parental education relative to the country of origin					0.98*
Child's self-evaluated school performance	Over the mean				
	On the mean or under the mean	2.4***	2.5***	2.5***	2.3***
N		490	443	443	376

<sup>36</sup>Base outcome is the occurrence of long university aspirations.

\*\*\*<0.001 \*\*<0.01 \*<0.05

Model 4 represents the attempt of adding a third socioeconomic component to the frame: parents' subjective social status, measured through their education relative to their country of origin<sup>37</sup>. I expect that parents' subjective social status has a weak effect on their children's school ambition for themselves (hypothesis 1.7) because the specific mechanism of relative risk aversion I described in chapter 2 works primarily to shape immigrant parents' school ambition toward their children, which unfortunately were not collected in TeO survey. The magnitude of the effect found here is negative and barely noticeable, but it has to be bore in mind that it corresponds to a one percentage point increase in the educational distribution of the country of origin. And yet it is noteworthy that the insertion of parents' subjective social status drops the significance of the high and educationally consistent category of socioeconomic background but not of the low and educationally consistent one: belonging to it still multiply by more than four times the odds of aspiring to brief university paths, compared with the odds of children whose parents attended university and have a high skilled job. It is hard to interpret this change, but it could be that the effect of this peculiar socioeconomic background on immigrant children's university ambitions is quite independent from the effect of parents' subjective social status on them. Just to guess, this could mean that the association between parents' subjective social status and this socioeconomic category<sup>37</sup> is low, for instance because among these subjects parents' low education does not correspond to parents' low subjective social status. Anyway, further analyses on much proper data will be needed to support the scarce evidence on this last point.

### 3.4 Results

On French Trajectoires et Origines' survey data (TeO) I have mostly searched for evidence supporting the occurrence of phenomena well-known in the literature about immigrants' educational ambition, such as the ambition advantage of immigrant children over natives (hypothesis 1.0) and the paradoxical coexistence of high ambitions and low school performance that is more common among immigrant children than among native ones (hypothesis 2.0). Both these phenomena usually emerge or are highlighted when comparing immigrant and native

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<sup>37</sup>See paragraph 2.1.2 in Chapter 2

youths sharing the same socioeconomic background, and are especially evident among the most disadvantaged individuals. Therefore it is appropriate to analyze the relationships between different measures of family background and students' educational ambition, in order to identify the specific socioeconomic conditions behind the unusually high educational ambitions of immigrant students.

As expected, the correlation of both parental education and parental social class with children's school ambition is stronger and much more significant among native students than among immigrant ones<sup>38</sup>. Family educational resources, in particular, have a severely reduced role in the explanation of immigrant children's school ambition, compared to their same role among natives. In fact, among children of parents with low education or, alternatively, low skilled jobs - both blue and white collars - immigrants are more likely than natives to have university ambitions (see figure 1). It is appropriate to use a composite socioeconomic index that considers both measures together, because inconsistencies between parents' education and occupation are likely to be more common among immigrants than among natives (see chapter 2). And yet, the low number of native subjects in the categories where inconsistency is extreme thwarts the comparison with immigrants. This further analysis proves that the only family background where there actually is an immigrant ambition advantage over natives is the one characterized by both low parents' education and parents' low skilled occupations: more than one third of the immigrant sample shares this low educationally consistent background. Considering school performance in the analysis (see paragraph 1.3.2) makes the phenomenon of immigrant ambition advantage over natives increasingly paradoxical: not only immigrant children are more likely than natives to aspire to university just when they are not supported by family educational resources, but they are also especially more likely to have such high school ambitions when they lack an encouraging good school performance.

Luckily TeO data allows me to distinguish in most cases the length of the aspired university path, because this simple operation deeply changes the picture (see paragraph 1.3.3). Immigrant students coming from the specific socioeconomic background described above are equally likely than their native counterparts to have long university aspirations, but a lot more likely than them to aim at brief university paths. The paradox emerged from previous analyses is no longer so paradoxical: these immigrant students still aspire to university more often than natives having the same low educational support in the family and the same not promising school performance, but

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<sup>38</sup>See table 1.1 and 1.2 in Appendix.

their ambitions are cautious since they require to keep on studying for only a couple of years after the end of upper secondary school.

In the last paragraph (1.3.4) I performed a regression analysis on immigrant students only, in order to sum up and systematize the evidence previously collected through descriptive analyses. Having a not-so-good school performance more than doubles immigrant children's odds of aspiring to brief (rather than long) university paths. The family backgrounds that have a significant and strong effect on the odds of immigrant children to have a brief university ambition are two: the stronger influence is registered by the low educationally consistent background, identified before as the only one where immigrants show an actual university ambition advantage over natives, followed by a less stronger but still great influence exerted by another family background characterized by parents' intermediate education and parents' high skilled jobs. My expectation that parents' subjective social status has a weak effect on their children's school ambition for themselves is supported, because the magnitude of the effect found here is negative and barely noticeable

The evidence collected in this chapter with analyses on TeO French data supported the occurrence of both phenomena depicted in the literature as typical of second generations educational paths: second generation immigrants' school ambition advantage over natives when coming from disadvantaged socioeconomic background and the growth of this ambition advantage among low school performance students. In particular, I was able to identify a specific family background, characterized by low parental education, behind such phenomena that meets the requirements of parental low skilled occupation: I called it low educationally consistent background and it was all but uncommon among immigrant children. Finally, the paradoxical nature of these phenomena was diminished by the important finding that the university ambition advantage of immigrant students over natives is entirely due to an increased preference of immigrants toward brief university paths. Still, the mechanism(s) originating and sustaining the higher rate of (brief) university ambitions among immigrants than among natives in spite of the same depressing forces remains unknown. Unfortunately, the absence of information about parents' educational ambitions toward their children in the TeO dataset prevents me from testing the mechanism I supposed is behind this advantage, because this mechanism primarily works to shape precisely parents' educational ambitions<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup>See paragraph 2.1.3 in Chapter 2



On a final note, the evidence collected on TeO data also encourages me to think a couple of other hypotheses I made are correct. First, I supposed that a particular configuration of immigrant students' background is behind the occurrence of my explananda: I called it under-rewarded educational inconsistent (UEI) background and I supposed it is composed by parents' high subjective social status matched with parents' low education and low occupation. The identification in TeO data of the low educationally consistent family background as the only one associated with these phenomena doesn't clash with my hypothesis but rather slightly modifies it: other than parents' education, what matters to define the family condition in the country of residence may still be the parents' occupation, only not ranked to index the derived economic resources but rather to index the required level of skills that could be consistent or not with parental education. Thus, UEI background will be composed of parents' high subjective social status matched by parents' low education and low skilled occupation. Even if in practical terms the change is minimal because UEI background remains indexed by the same variables as before, in substantial terms it means that what matters more to shape immigrants' educational ambition other than parents' educational resources is the consistency between those and the level of skills required by parents' occupation, and not parents' economic resources anymore. Anyway, more evidence on diverse data is needed to support such modification in my hypothesis.

The second finding that encourages me to think one of the hypothesis I made is correct is the fact that immigrants' ambition advantage over natives is entirely on brief university paths. It may be evidence that immigrant children are more likely than native's to have a general cautious attitude toward their educational future. Such attitude could lead them to take "precautionary" choices during their school career<sup>40</sup>, as I supposed it is typical only of immigrant children coming from a specific (UEI) background, but unfortunately once again this hypothesis cannot be tested on TeO data because they don't have a longitudinal structure.

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<sup>40</sup>See paragraph 2.2.3 in Chapter 2

## Chapter 4

# **Immigrants' university ambition and achievement in intergenerational perspective in four European countries**

### **4.1 Description of the dataset**

The “Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European Countries” (a.k.a. CILS4EU), funded by the NORFACE Programme, was built on the model of the prominent “Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study” (a.k.a. CILS) from the United States, in order to investigate the integration of the children of immigrants in Europe. The four participating countries are Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and England. The first wave of the project took place during the school year 2010/2011 on a sample composed of 14 year-old immigrant children of different generations as well as a native reference group. A school-based sampling was applied: in order to ensure that the sample contained a sufficient number of children of immigrants, schools with high immigrant proportions in this age group were oversampled. CILS4EU used a stratified three-stage sample design, with first stage sampling units being schools that were selected with probability proportional to size; the second stage sampling units are classes within these schools, whereas the third stage sampling units are the students enrolled in these classes. In the first 2010 wave, almost 500 schools were sampled and more than 18,000 pupils in the four countries were interviewed. The interviews in schools consisted of a 20–30-minute written test in cognitive and language abilities, as well as a 45-minute self-completion questionnaire. Additional 30-minute telephone interviews were conducted with one parent of each child selected for the core sample. Students were followed up over the next two years with two additional questionnaires, constituting wave 2 and 3 of the study. Interviews for subsequent waves took place again in the school context, when

possible, or alternatively via telephone, mail or web<sup>41</sup>. Almost 10,000 pupils participated to all three waves, forming the longitudinal sample of the study.

There are some limitations to the use of the CILS4EU dataset. Probably the most relevant one for my purposes is the fact that the collected variable “country of birth” is not released to researchers: it is present in the full version of the dataset, that can be accessed only from GESIS Institute in Cologne (DE). Immigrant parents' country of birth is essential for the creation of the variable that index immigrant parents' subjective social status, which is the new component of immigrant socioeconomic background I proposed to add in order to improve the association with immigrants' educational outcomes. During a research stay in Cologne I created the variable indexing immigrant parents' subjective social status and I was allowed to export it along with the basic regression outputs, but still the lack of the information about immigrant parents' country of birth has been a constant limitation for the analyses, because it doesn't allow me to control for the related compositional effects. Of course CILS4EU data has other minor limits, like the fact that information on children's educational ambition for themselves does not allow me to distinguish the length of the desired university path. In French TeO data analyses (see chapter 3), the distinction proves fruitful since it reveals that the immigrant children's ambition advantage over same-background and same-performance natives concerns brief university paths only.

Despite these disadvantages, CILS4EU dataset still represents the most interesting source for my thesis because it contains information about educational aspirations of both child and respondent parent, collected directly from the concerned individuals, which is very rare. Immigrant parents' educational ambition is a fundamental explanandum in the architecture of my thesis, because I supposed that it is the link between family background and children's educational ambition, and that's why several hypotheses cannot be tested without data on it. The parental questionnaire represents a reliable source of information about parental characteristics, such as not only their ambitions toward their children's school but also their education and occupation. Another advantage of the CILS4EU survey is its longitudinal perspective, which allows me to explore the development of the phenomena at the core of this thesis and their hypothetical explanations in a crucial time period of children's lives. Last but not least, the sample size makes possible to perform not only bivariate analyses but also multivariate regression analyses, using several control variables.

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<sup>41</sup> This is the case for nearly all wave 3 interviews, especially the Dutch ones, because after wave 2 most respondents either left school or made the transition to a higher level of education.

## 4.2 Hypotheses

The first hypothesis to be tested on CILS4EU data is an exploratory one, in order to see if the phenomenon of immigrant's ambition advantage over natives that is well-known in the literature takes place among the survey's subjects too.

*HP 1.0: Immigrant parents and their children are more likely to have high educational ambition than their same-social background<sup>42</sup> native counterparts, and particularly when they come from low social backgrounds.*

Hypothesis 1.0 above supposes that both immigrant parents and their children have higher school ambition than their native counterparts having the same family background. This makes it possible to see if the ambition advantage of immigrants over natives characterizes not only the young students but also their parents, thank to the unique presence of both variables in CILS4EU dataset. Moreover, thank to the large sample size, family background can be indexed not only by single parental characteristics such as their education and occupation, but also by a complete<sup>43</sup> combination of them, which can help understand the interplay of relationships between educational ambitions and the two classic dimensions of family background, before adding up the third dimension of subjective social status in the explanatory hypotheses. In order to test hypothesis 1.0 I will use bivariate analyses.

Because hypothesis 1.0 has to be tested both on parents and children, in doing so I have the occasion to test also a secondary hypothesis concerning the discrepancy between educational ambitions of immigrant parents and of their children. Consistently with a large literature, I expect to find out that among CILS4EU subjects too:

*HP 1.5: Immigrant parents' educational ambitions toward their children are higher than their children's educational ambitions for themselves.*

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<sup>42</sup> Indexed as usually is by parents' absolute level of education and their class or income

<sup>43</sup> In chapter 3 about French Teo data, due to the restricted sample size it was possible only to use the two opposite and internally consistent categories of such combination.

The following step is the testing of a number of explanatory hypotheses, in order to see if the point of reference of the relative-risk aversion mechanism among immigrant parents is their subjective social status and not their actual one in the country of residence. Even if the number of CILS4EU immigrant parents is not very large (2,506), and the creation of the variable indexing their subjective social status will further reduce it, this is a unique occasion for me to test these hypotheses properly, thank to the presence in the CILS4EU dataset of parents' educational ambition toward their children. I will measure immigrant parents' subjective social status through their educational level relative to the country of origin<sup>44</sup>. The first expectation I have is that:

*HP 1.2 (step 3): Immigrant parents who have a high education relative to the country of origin are more likely to have university ambition toward their children than those who have a low relative education.*

The consideration that specific educational resources, as indexed by parental education, are diminished among immigrants by a number of factors, among which their non-native knowledge of the language and of the school system in the country of destination, leads me to expect also that:

*HP 1.4: The positive association of immigrant parents' educational ambitions toward children with their education is weaker than the one with their subjective social status.*

In the end, performing regression analyses on both immigrant parents' and children's university ambition – respectively toward their children and for themselves – will allow me to add further evidence in support of the explanatory hypotheses cited so far and to test for the first time the following and last ones:

*HP 1.6: The association of immigrant parents' subjective social status with their own educational ambitions toward children is stronger than the one with their children's educational ambitions.*

*HP 1.7: The weaker association between parents' subjective social status and children's educational ambitions becomes even weaker when parents' educational ambitions are considered.*

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<sup>44</sup> See paragraph 2.1.2 for the complete discussion

*HP 1.8: The association of immigrant parents' educational ambition on their children's educational ambition is strong and significant.*

The second exploratory hypothesis to be tested on CILS4EU data asks whether the ambition-performance gap that is so common in the literature among immigrant students is actually in place among the survey's subjects too.

*HP 2.0: Immigrant children who have poor school performance are more likely to have high educational ambitions than native children with the same performance and of the same social background<sup>45</sup>*

I hope I will also be able to test the explanatory hypothesis concerning the phenomenon of the ambition-performance gap among immigrants:

*HP 2.1: Among the children of immigrant parents having both low social class and low education, those with a high subjective social status (UEI background) are more likely to display a low school performance matched with high educational ambitions than those with a low subjective social status.*

### **4.3 Variables and models**

Analyzing the CILS4EU data, I will select the subjects depending on the hypothesis I need to test. In order to select immigrant and native subjects, I will use the generational status as defined by members of the CILS4EU research team, using information about the country of birth of the child, of the parents and of the grandparents (Dollmann, Jacob, and Kalter 2014). Usually my sample is composed by children interviewed in the first wave who are identified as children of two native parents (8,759) or as children of two immigrant parents that are either born in the survey country or arrived there during the compulsory school age (4,870), thus immigrants' children being part of generation 2.0, 1.75 or 1.5<sup>46</sup> (Rumbaut 1997). When dealing with hypotheses about parents only,

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<sup>45</sup> Indexed as usually is by parents' absolute level of education and their class or income

<sup>46</sup> I excluded generation 1.25 because they arrived in survey countries at a late age, when they have already attended the most of the compulsory education abroad, thus their educational outcomes and ambitions are very different

my parental sample is composed by parents who responded to the parental questionnaire in the first wave and who are identified as immigrant parents (2,506) or native parents (6,250) of CILS4EU subjects. In order to account for the different individual probability to be selected for the survey, I will use the final student weight.

The distribution of the main variables that I will use in the CILS4EU analyses on both children's and parents' sample, within the origin-groups of native and immigrant subjects, can be found in Appendix<sup>47</sup>. My main independent variables are those indexing socioeconomic background, such as parental education or occupation, while my main dependent variables are those related to children's school experience, such as educational ambitions (both their parents' and their own), and school performance.

The measures of family socioeconomic situation, such as parental education or parental occupation, are created using the dominance method: when the variable is available for both parents, I picked the higher value in the parental couple. On the contrary educational ambition toward children is available from the respondent parent only.

I used a subjective measure to index children's school performance. The subjective measure is the self-evaluated performance in Mathematics, which was collected in all the four survey countries<sup>48</sup>. Even if a cognitive and language ability test was administered in school along with the main questionnaire, I am not interested in using an objective measure of performance. What really matters for my purposes is the paradoxical coexistence of high educational ambitions with the perception of a school disadvantage. Besides, same objective abilities could lead to different school performance perceptions depending, for instance, on the teachers' requests or on the perception of peers' performances.

The creation of the variable “parental education relative to the country of origin”, indexing immigrant parents' subjective social status, requires a longer explanation. As previously done in the chapter about French TeO data, I created the variable adopting the strategy used by Ichou (2008). I matched each immigrant parent with the information about the educational distribution in the country of origin contained in the Barro-Lee dataset (Barro and Lee 2010) and I created the

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from the ones of generations arrived at an earlier age.

<sup>47</sup> See table 4.1 in Appendix

<sup>48</sup> I did not consider self-evaluated performance in English, because the variable was not collected in England where it is the language of the survey country. I did not consider self-evaluated performance in the survey country language, as it is usually done, because it has a very different distribution among immigrants than among natives and because among immigrants only is too much dependent on a series of variables (country of origin, age of arrival, etc.)

variable using these additional data. Parental education relative to the country of origin is a continuous variable, equal to the percentage of same sex and same age of reference class people in the country of origin below the subject's educational level, plus half the percentage of the people possessing his or her own educational level. The age of reference is the age of their emigration from the country of origin<sup>49</sup>.

### **4.3.1 Detecting immigrants' ambition advantage over natives**

The first analytic step is devoted to detect if my main explanandum, the ambition advantage of immigrant parents and their children over the respective native counterparts, is actually in place in the CISL4EU sample and to what extent. I will test exploratory hypothesis 1.0 (see paragraph 1.2), first on parents and then on children.

#### **Among parents**

Figure 1 shows how native and immigrant parents' educational ambitions toward their children vary when parental education or parental occupation alone are used to measure socioeconomic resources. Immigrant parents are always more likely to aspire to university for their children, in every category of both control variables. The ambition advantage of immigrants, as expected, shows a negative association with family resources: it is wider among parents having a low dotation of resources – either educational or economic ones<sup>50</sup> – and becomes thinner when resources increase. As usual the association of educational ambitions with parental education is stronger and more linear than the one with parental occupation, especially among immigrants.

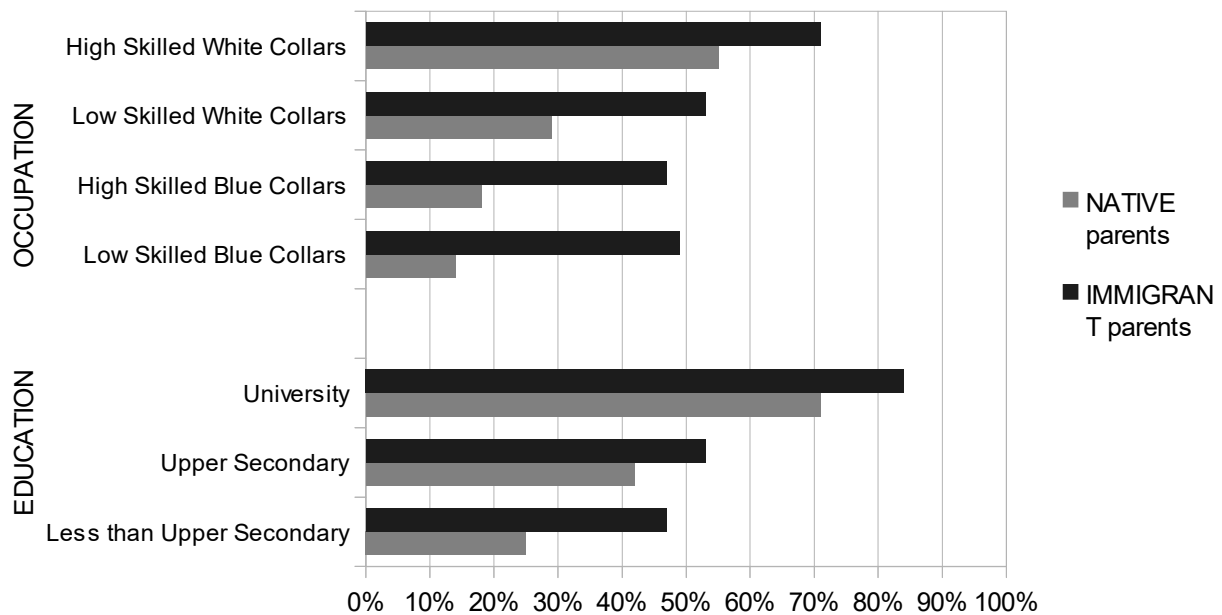
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<sup>49</sup> I created a second version based on the educational distribution of their age class in the country of origin at the time of the survey, and the difference between the two versions is minimal, which means that the most of their same-age peers' educational careers in the country of origin was already completed at the time of the subject's emigration.

<sup>50</sup> Please remember that occupational categories distinguish between high and low skilled jobs according to the level of qualification required to do the job, which does not necessarily correspond to the effective level of education possessed by individuals.



Figure 1 – Parents' university ambitions toward their children, by parental education and social class and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)<sup>51</sup>.



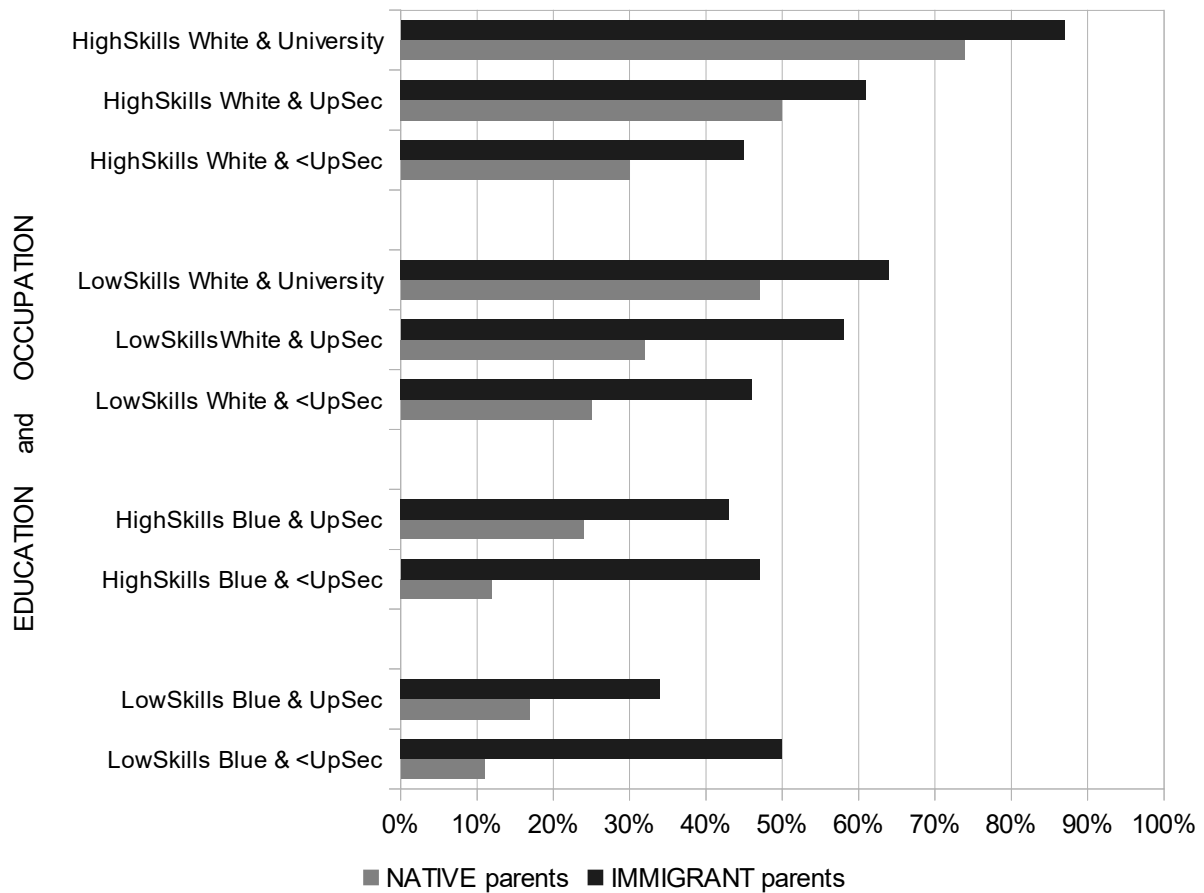
Now I will measure socioeconomic resources using a composite measure of both parental education and occupation, which might shed some light on the interplay of relationships between the two types of family resources and educational ambition in the different origin-groups of parents. I will exclude from the analyses<sup>52</sup> the categories containing a very limited number of subjects, namely the ones characterized by extreme under-rewarded inconsistency between the education and the social class, as low and high skilled blue collars having a university degree: together they amount to just 0,3% of native parents and 3% of immigrant parents.

Figure 2 shows that, above all other categories, immigrant parents having a low education and doing a blue collar job – makes little difference if it requires low (+39%) or high (+35%) skills - are much more likely to have university ambition toward their children than same-background natives. Only 3 out of 100 native parents but almost two out of ten (19%) immigrant parents share this low and consistent socioeconomic background.

<sup>51</sup> The sources of the data are table 4.2 and 4.3 in Appendix

<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, they are still included in the tables in Appendix for the sake of completeness.

Figure 2 - Parents' university ambitions toward their children by the combination of parental education and parental social class and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)<sup>53</sup>.



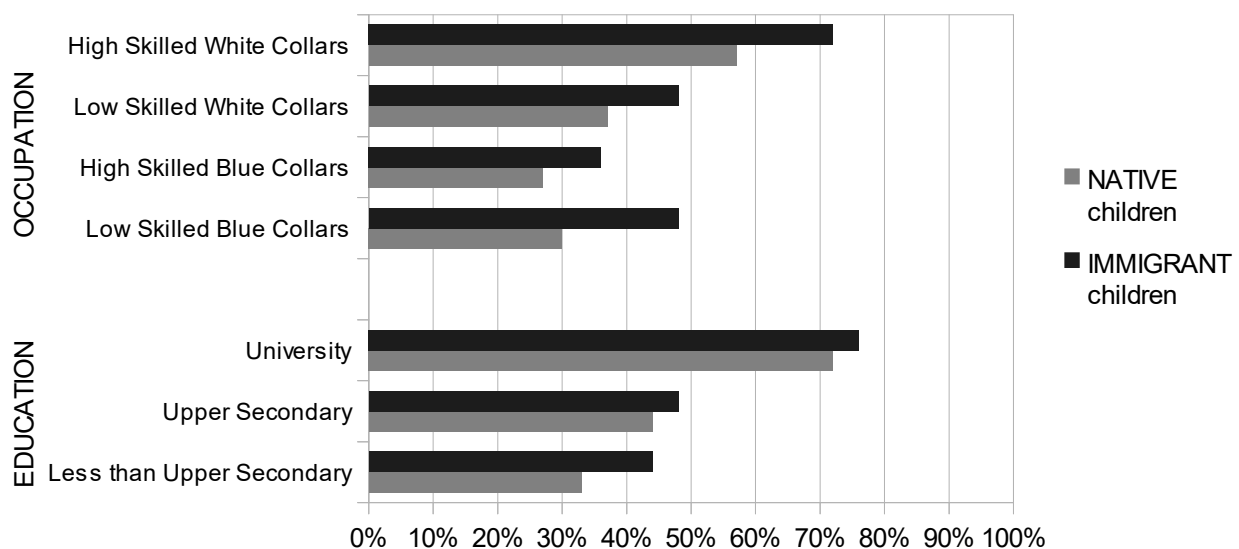
Within each social class, immigrant parents' ambition advantage is to its maximum when parental education is to its minimum. What really differs is the trend of immigrant parents' educational ambitions between social classes: immigrant parents' university ambition toward their children decreases as expected together with their education for white collars but seems to do the opposite for blue collars. This latter counterintuitive trend characterizing the blue collar immigrant parents is not easy to interpret: neither the distinction between consistent and inconsistent categories nor the one between low and high skilled categories are useful.

### Among children

<sup>53</sup> The source of the data is table 4.4 in Appendix

Now I will move on to the testing of hypothesis 1.0 on CILS4EU students, in order to see if the phenomenon of immigrants' ambition advantage over natives concerns not only the parents but their children too. I will consider students' school ambitions in wave 1, when they were 14 years old, because it is the same wave in which parental questionnaires (thus, parental ambitions) were collected and because it involved a larger sample of students than the subsequent two waves.

*Figure 3 – Childrens' university ambitions for themselves by parental education and social class and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)<sup>54</sup>.*



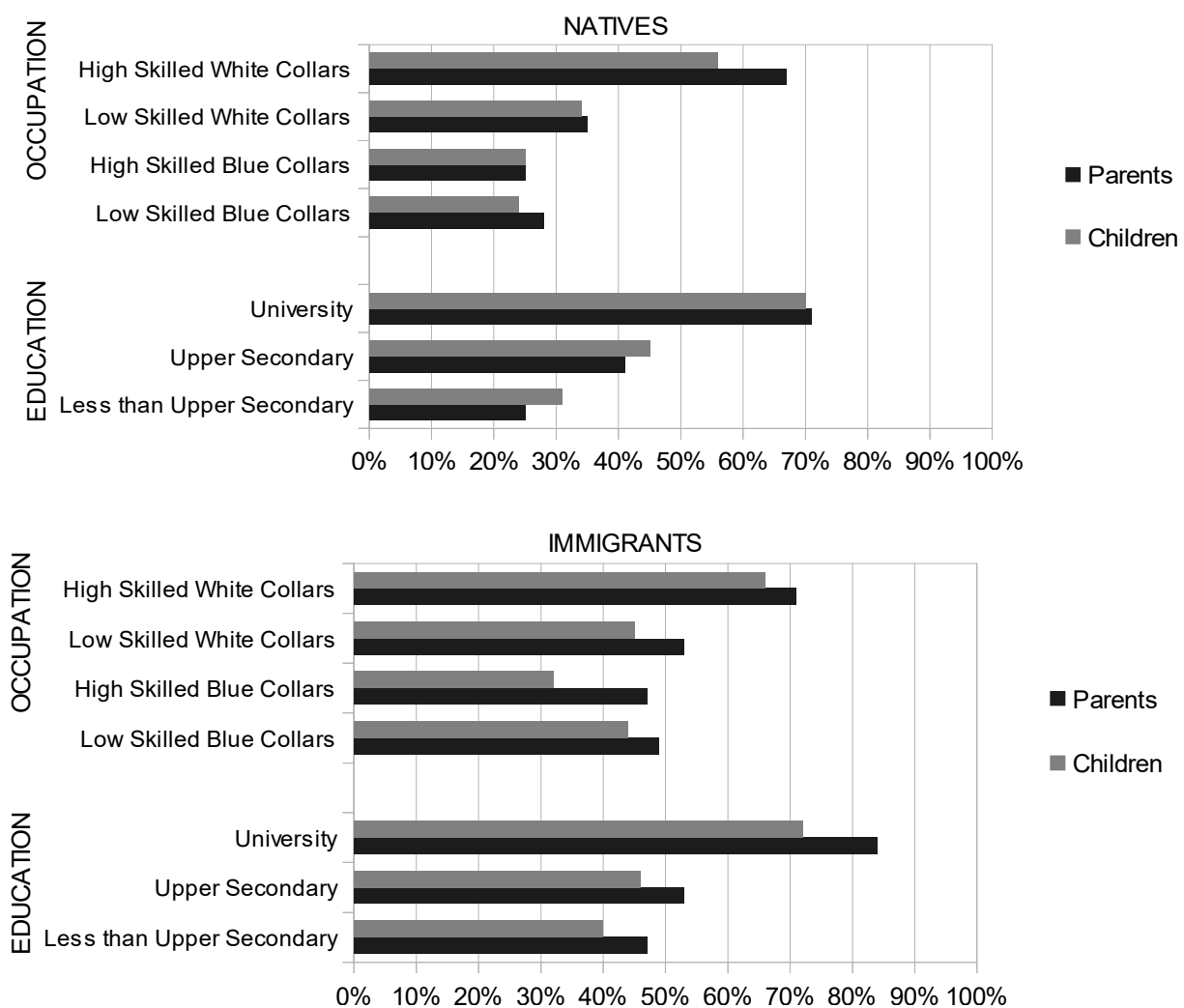
Comparing figure 3 with figure 1 shows that, just like their parents, immigrant children are always more likely to aspire to university for themselves than native children, in every category of both control variables. Immigrants' ambition advantage over natives is to its maximum when family resources – either educational or economic ones – are to their minimum, as it is among their parents.

The difference is the smaller magnitude of immigrants' ambition advantage among children than among parents: the advantage is halved among children of low educated parents and in most categories is even more reduced compared with the one in place among their parents. Figure 4 shows that behind the reduced immigrant ambition advantage among children there is a different intergenerational gap regarding educational ambitions in the two origin-groups. Native children are usually almost likely as their parents to have university ambition or slightly more likely than them, while immigrant children are always less likely to have such aspirations than their parents.

<sup>54</sup> Sources of the data are table 4.5 and 4.6 in Appendix.

Parents' educational ambitions seem to exert a weaker influence on their children's among immigrants than among natives. In particular, it is interesting to observe how the intergenerational gap in educational ambitions evolves linearly across parental education in both origin groups, but in different directions: when parental education decreases, immigrant children more and more close the gap with their higher parents' ambitions, while native children more and more open the gap with their lower parents' ambitions.

Figure 4 – Children's own and parental university ambition by parental education and social class and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)<sup>55</sup>.

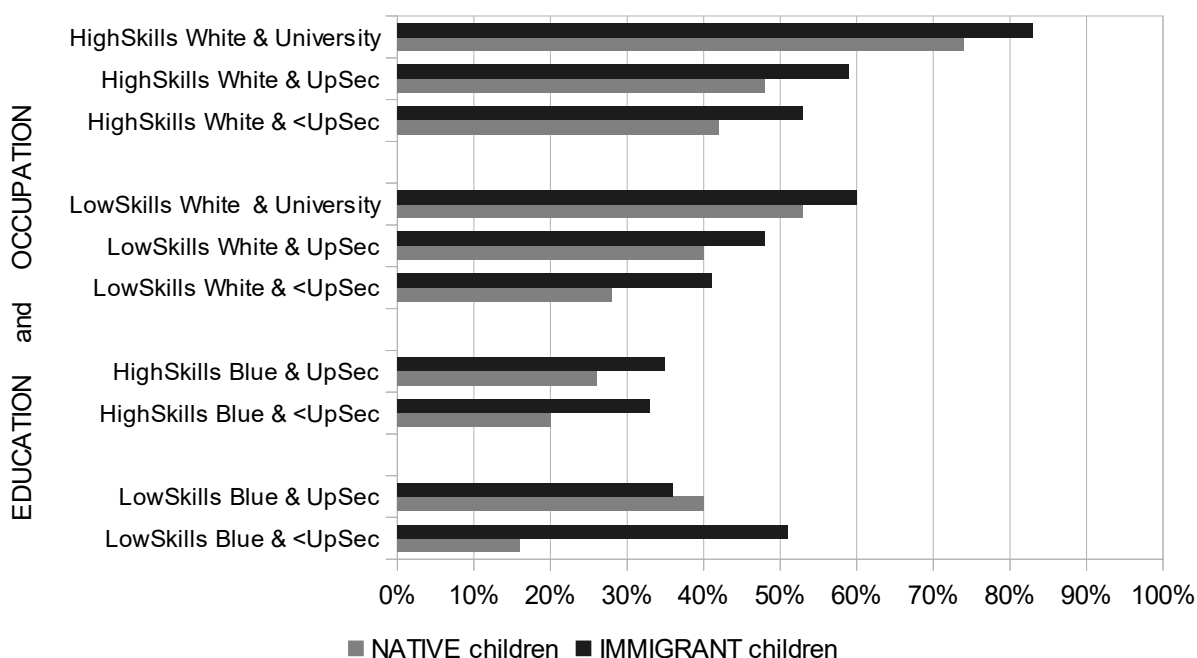


In figure 5 family socioeconomic resources are measured no longer by single variables but by a composite measure of both parental education and occupation. As I did before, also here I do not consider blue collars having a university degree, because of their very limited number. Above all

<sup>55</sup> See table 4.7 and 4.8 in Appendix.

other categories, immigrant children of low educated parents doing low skilled blue collar jobs are those much more likely (+36%) to have university ambitions for themselves than same-background natives. This is the same socioeconomic category where the maximum immigrant ambition advantage among parents was found. Contrary to what happened for parents' ambitions, though, the level of skills required by parental occupation makes a big difference among low educated blue collars: children of those whose jobs require high skills show a much lower (+13%) immigrant ambition advantage over their native counterparts.

Figure 5 - Children's university ambitions for themselves by the combination of parental education and social class and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)<sup>56</sup>.

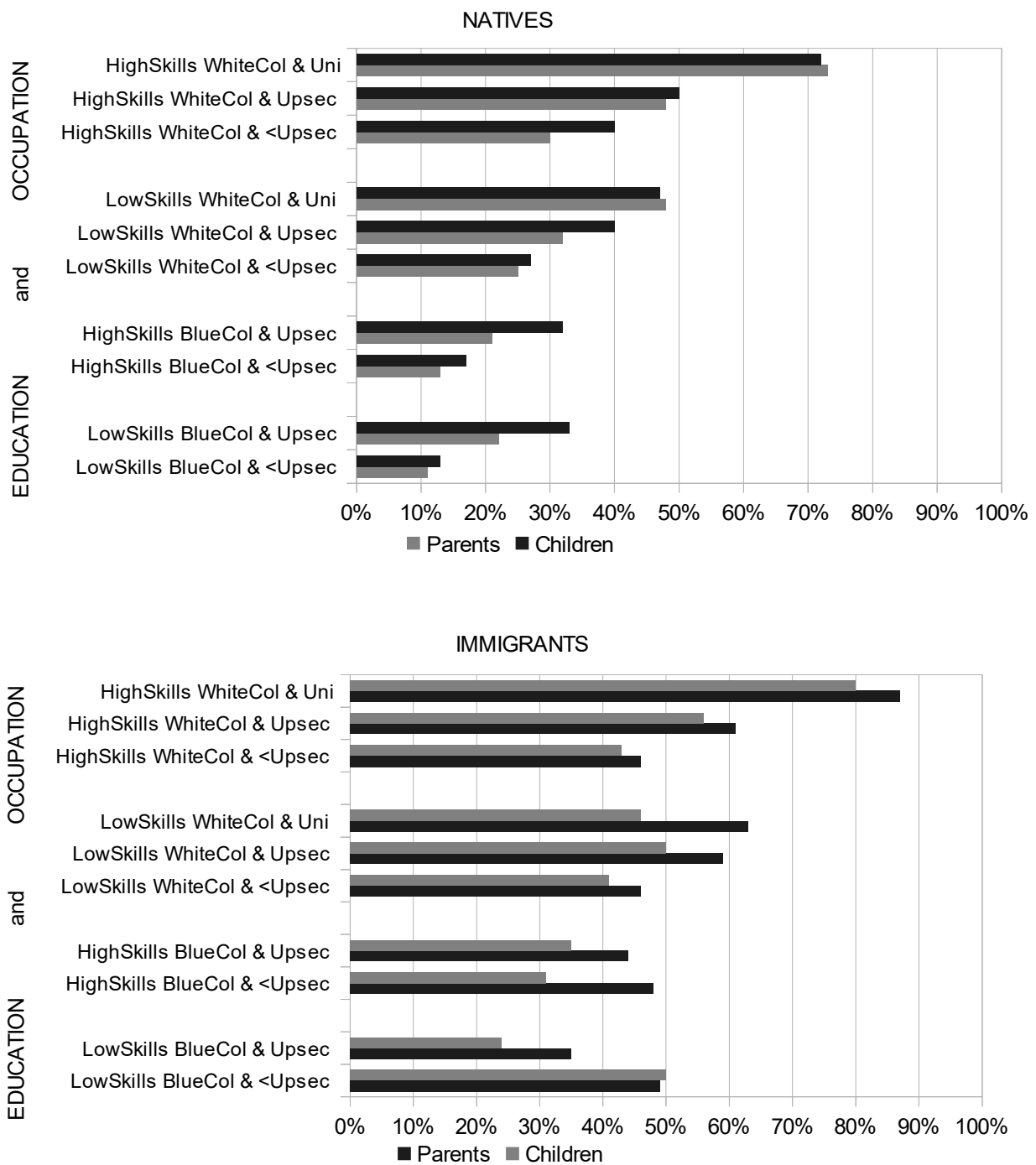


Closely looking at the pattern of children's ambitions within each origin-group, they usually decline together with parental education and the immigrant ambition advantage registered, almost without exception<sup>57</sup>, in every socioeconomic category is due to the different paces at which ambitions decline among immigrants and among natives. The only big exception to such regularities is precisely the rate of university ambition among immigrant children of low educated and low skilled blue collar parents, which is quite high (50%, compared with 15% among same-background natives). This socioeconomic condition is shared by only 1 out of 100 native children (1%), but almost 1 out of 10 immigrant children (9.5%) in my sample.

<sup>56</sup> Source of the data is table 4.9 in Appendix

<sup>57</sup> Low skilled blue collars with upper secondary education registered a small native advantage (+4%)

Figure 6 – Children's own and parental university ambitions by the combination of parental education and social class and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)<sup>58</sup>.



In figure 6 I search for evidence that the intergenerational gap on educational ambitions is different in this specific socioeconomic category compared with the others. Among immigrants this low and consistent socioeconomic background is indeed peculiar because it is the only one where children are slightly more ambitious than their parents (+1%), while in the other categories

<sup>58</sup> Source of the data is table 4.10 in Appendix.

they are always less ambitious than their parents even if the negative gap varies a lot (from -3% to -17%). Among natives it is a category where children are only slightly more ambitious than their parents (+2%), which is not uncommon. It may be that the pronounced immigrant children's ambition advantage over native's found in this category is also the result of an increased influence of parents' ambitions on their children's, but the mechanism behind it remains unknown.

The evidence presented in this paragraph supports exploratory hypothesis 1.0: both immigrant parents and their children are indeed more likely<sup>59</sup> to have high university ambition than native parents and their children of the same social background - both when this is indexed by parental education or occupation alone and when it is indexed by a combination of the two variables – but immigrants' ambition advantage reaches its maximum when subjects come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. This is the paradox that is well described in the literature: educational ambitions are higher among immigrants than among natives, especially when educational or economic resources do not support them. The generic disadvantaged socioeconomic condition behind the pronounced immigrants' ambition advantage over natives has been delimited by the analyses above to the categories of low educated blue collars, when parents' ambition are considered, and to the more specific category of low educated and low skilled blue collars, when the focus is instead on children's ambitions. With the expansion of the comparisons to the intergenerational dimension, also the secondary hypothesis 1.5 is supported by CILS4EU data: immigrant's ambition advantage is regularly wider among parents than among children, because immigrant children are always less ambitious than their parents, while native children are usually equally ambitious or slightly more ambitious than their parents. The specific low and consistent socioeconomic condition (low educated and low skilled blue collar parents) behind the most pronounced immigrant children's ambition advantage over native's is the only one where immigrant children aspire to university more often than their parents.

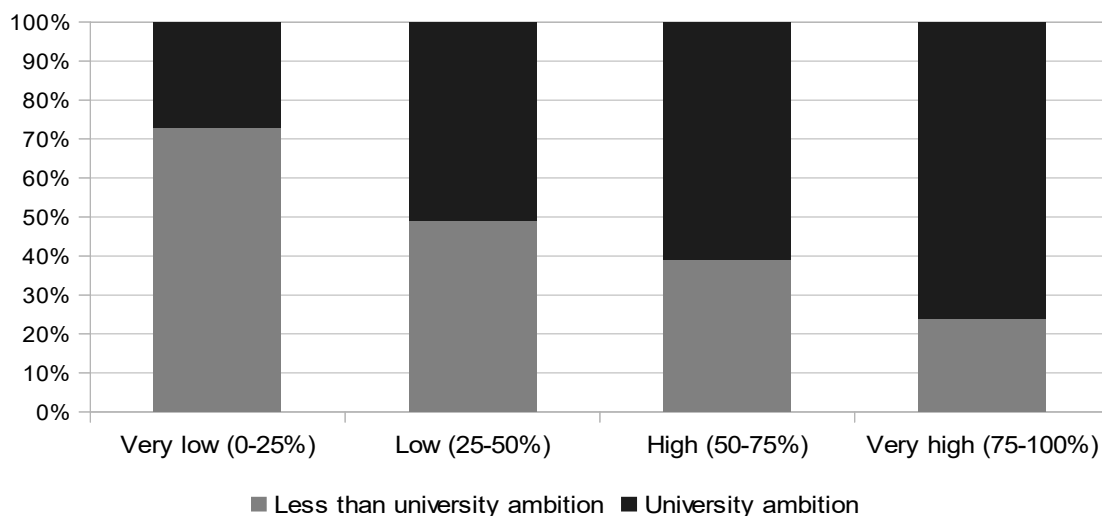
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<sup>59</sup> The sole exception is the category of low skilled blue collar having an upper secondary education, whose children display a weak ambition advantage of natives (+4%) over immigrants.

### 4.3.2 Testing an alternative component of immigrants' socioeconomic background: immigrant parents' subjective social status

In the previous paragraph I found evidence that immigrants – both parents and their children – are advantaged over natives regarding educational ambition: specifically, they are more likely to aspire to university than their native counterparts of the same socioeconomic background, and their advantage is wider when family resources (educational, economic or both together) are scarcer. In this paragraph I will test several hypotheses trying to better explain the occurrence of high educational ambitions among immigrant parents – especially among those having poor educational and economic resources – and ultimately hoping to improve the concept of socioeconomic background for immigrants.

Figure 6 –Immigrant parents' educational ambition toward their children by levels of their subjective social status (weighted percentages)<sup>60</sup>.



Following the theoretical argument made in chapter 2<sup>61</sup>, the first hypothesis (1.2 step 3) asks if in CILS4EU data immigrant parents' university ambition toward children has a significant association with their high subjective social status. Parents' subjective social status is the third component of

<sup>60</sup> See table 4.11 in Appendix

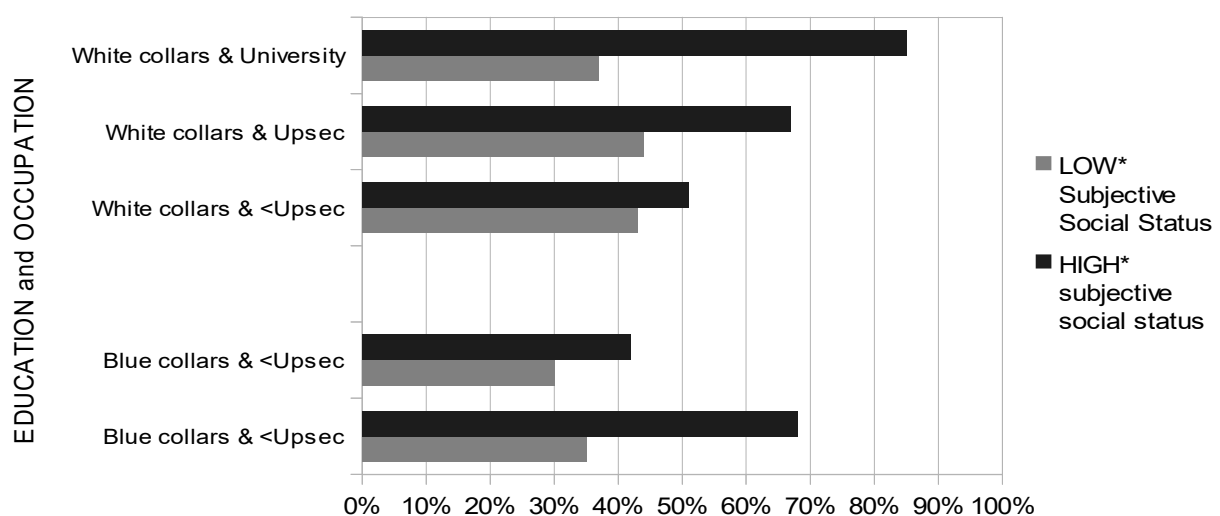
<sup>61</sup> See chapter 2, paragraph from 2.1.1 to 2.1.3.



immigrants' socioeconomic background that I propose to add to the classical ones of parents' education and occupation. It is indexed by parents' education relative to the country of origin. To give an intuitive estimation of the relationship, I grouped the subjects in four quartile-levels of subjective social status. Figure 6 shows that the relation between the level of subjective social status and parents' university ambition toward their children is quite strong and very significant: 27% of immigrant parents having a very low subjective social status (between 0 and 25% of the educational distribution of reference in their country of origin) aspire to university, and the rate increases for higher levels touching 76% of university ambitious parents among those displaying a very high subjective social status (more than 75% of their educational distribution of reference in the country of origin).

Immigrant subjective social status, though, may have a stronger or weaker correlation with immigrant parents' university ambition depending on the composition of the selected immigrant group. The evidence collected in the previous paragraph pointed out that immigrant parents' ambition advantage over native's is to its highest among low educated parents doing blue collar jobs: if the correlation of immigrant parents' subjective social status with their university ambition toward their children is particularly stronger among them, it could be a part of the explanation.

*Figure 7 – Immigrant parents' university ambition toward their children by the combination of parental education and social class and by the level of their subjective social status (weighted percentages)<sup>62</sup>*



\*Low means less than 50% of the educational distribution in the country of origin ; high means 50% of it or more.

<sup>62</sup> Source of the data is table 4.12 in Appendix.

Figure 7 shows that the strongest and most significant correlation of university ambition with parents' subjective social status (two levels) is found in the category of university educated white collars, but this is not very relevant because, as expected, only 5% of these subjects display a low subjective social status, and only about 15% of them aspire to less than university for their children. The category showing the second strongest and most significant correlation is indeed the one of low educated blue collar parents: +33% of university ambition is found among parents with a high subjective social status compared with those with a low one. The finding is relevant, other than for the pronounced and counterintuitive ambition advantage immigrant parents have on native parents in this category (see paragraph 1.3.1), also because 45% of these subjects have tertiary ambitions for their children and more than 30% of them have a high subjective social status despite their low absolute education.

Now I will test the next related hypothesis 1.3, asking if the positive association of immigrant parents' university ambition with their education is weaker than the one with their subjective social status. In other words, I suppose that the third component of immigrants' socioeconomic background has a greater influence on immigrant parents' educational ambitions toward their children than the other two more traditional components. Parental education captures parents' specific educational resources that have a very important role in the explanation of children's educational outcomes in the general population, but a rather limited one in the immigrant population<sup>63</sup>. The analyses performed in the previous paragraph showed that parental education displays a stronger correlation with native parents' university ambition than with immigrant's. Here I want to test the correlation between on the one hand the traditional components of socioeconomic background - namely parental education and parental social class, alone or combined together - and the proposed additional component - namely parental subjective social status – and on the other hand the university ambition toward their children of immigrant parents only.

Table 1 shows that my supposition was right: for those immigrant parents that display information on each considered variables, the socioeconomic component showing the highest correlation with parents' university ambition toward their children is the parental subjective social status, followed by the parental education and by the combined measure of the parental education and the parental social class. The correlation of the parental subjective social status with the parental education is high because the former is indexed by the parental education relative to the country

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<sup>63</sup> See chapter 2, paragraph 2.1.3

of origin, whose creation uses information on parental education (along with sex, country of origin, birth year etc.). The scale of the subjective social status variable - from 0 to 100 – while the other components are ordinal variables with a number of categories from 3 to 6, is not the reason behind the highest correlation: when using a 4-levels (quartiles) version of the subjective social status the correlation index remains quite stable (0.38). Hypothesis 1.3 is supported: immigrant parents' university ambition toward their children is more correlated with their subjective social status than with their education.

*Table 1 – Correlation of parental education, parental social class, their combination and parental subjective social status with immigrant parents' university ambition toward their children*

N = 1303	<b>University ambitions of immigrant parents toward their children</b>	Parental education	Parental social class	Combination of parental education and parental social class	Parental education relative to their country of origin
University ambitions of immigrant parents toward their children	1.00				
<b>Parental education</b>	<b>0.30</b>	1.00			
Parental social class	0.18	0.44	1.00		
Combination of parental education and parental social class	0.25	0.70	0.87	1.00	
<b>Parental subjective social status</b>	<b>0.39</b>	0.59	0.27	0.42	1.00

Another hypothesis (1.6) to test asks if the correlation of immigrant parents' subjective social status with their university ambition toward children is stronger than the one with their children's university ambition for themselves. This supposition is based on the fact that the mechanism of relative risk aversion works primarily on parents - so I expect that part of the influence this component of socioeconomic background has on children's ambitions passes through parents' ambitions - and on the fact that immigrant parents' subjective social status is not the actual one

their children experienced during the most of their lives in the country of destination. In table 2 the same correlation table of table 1 can be seen with the addition of immigrant children's educational ambition in it. Comparing the correlation of each socioeconomic background component with, respectively, parents' and children's university ambitions, it can be noted that the biggest intergenerational reduction concerns the correlation of parents' subjective social status (-0.08), followed by parents' education (-0.3) while there is an increase of the correlation of parents' social class (+0.07) and of the combined measure of the parental social class and parental education (+0.03). Parents' subjective social status is still the component of socioeconomic background displaying the highest correlation with children's university ambition, but now it is followed closely by both of the other two traditional components.

Table 2 - *Correlation of parental education, parental social class, their combination and parental subjective social status with immigrant parents' own and their children's university ambition.*

N = 1240	<b>University ambitions of immigrant parents toward their children</b>	<b>University ambitions of immigrant children for themselves</b>	Parental education	Parental social class	Combination of parental education and parental social class	Parental education relative to their country of origin
University ambitions of immigrant parents toward their children	1.00					
University ambitions of immigrant children for themselves	0.42	1.00				
Parental education	0.30	0.27	1.00			
Parental social class	0.17	0.24	0.44	1.00		
Combination of parental education and parental social class	0.24	0.27	0.70	0.87	1.00	
<b>Parental subjective social status</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>0.31</b>	0.59	0.27	0.42	1.00

A stronger importance of parents' social class, indexing family financial resources, in shaping children's university ambition compared to parents' is expected, while the reduced role of parents' subjective social status may be due to the limited experience immigrant children have of its reference context: at best they lived their early childhood in their parents' countries of origin or they never lived there and it was just a place for vacations. A simple way to check if my guess is right is to compare the correlation of immigrant parents' subjective social status with their children's university ambition between the different generations composing my sample: generation 2.0 (born in the actual country of residence), generation 1.75 (arrived there before the compulsory school age) and generation 1.5 (arrived during the compulsory school age). Table 3 shows that going from generation 1.5 to generation 2.0 the correlation of parents' subjective social status with their children's university ambition decreases (corresponding to a smaller part of their lives lived in the country of origin). The majority of my sample is composed of immigrant children born in the country of destination (generation 2.0), otherwise I would have had an overall stronger correlation of parents' subjective social status with children's university ambition for themselves.

Table 3 - *Correlation of parental education, parental social class, their combination and parental subjective social status with immigrant children's university ambition for themselves, by typology of second generation they belong to.*

	University ambitions of immigrant children for themselves		
	Generation 1.5	Generation 1.75	Generation 2.0
University ambitions of immigrant children for themselves	1.00	1.00	1.00
Parental education	0.28	0.37	0.26
Parental social class	0.37	0.38	0.19
Combination of parental education and parental social class	0.39	0.41	0.23
<b>Parental subjective social status</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>0.35</b>	<b>0.30</b>
N	153	220	883

So far, bivariate analyses support the hypotheses. In order to collect further evidence now I will use regression analysis to estimate the net effect of each immigrants' socioeconomic background component on both immigrant parents' university ambition toward their children and immigrant children's university ambition for themselves. Clearly, my interest focuses on the effect of the new component I proposed, which is immigrant parents' subjective social status: I will adopt a stepwise method to understand if and how its inclusion influences the effects of the two traditional background components, namely parents' education and social class.

Table 4 shows the results of the inclusion of parents' subjective social status (model 2) in the logistic regression of parents' education and social class on immigrant parents' university ambition toward their children (model 1).

*Table 4 – Logistic regression on immigrant parents' university ambition toward their children (weighted odd ratios)*

Variables	Category	Model 1	Model 2
		or	std.err.
Parental education	Less than upper secondary		
	Upper secondary	1.24 (0.30)	0.66 (0.18)
	University	4.52*** (1.90)	1.76 (0.83)
Parental social class	Low skilled Blue collars		
	High skilled Blue collars	0.91 (0.34)	0.99 (0.38)
	Low skilled White collars	1.03 (0.33)	1.06 (0.35)
	High skilled White collars	1.59 (0.53)	1.58 (0.54)
Parental subjective social status <sup>64</sup> (from 0 to 100)			1.02*** (0.005)

<sup>64</sup> I also tried out the four level (quartiles) version without practically any changes but the magnitude of its effect, which becomes 1.78\*\*\*.

	<i>N</i>	<i>1,303</i>	<i>1,303</i>
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Model 1 shows that no social class has a significant effect on immigrant parents' propensity to aspire to university for their children compared to the reference social class of low skilled blue collars, while parents' university education has a strong effect on it, compared to less than upper secondary education. This is not a surprise, since bivariate analyses showed that especially among immigrants the correlation of parents' university ambition with social class is lower than the one with education<sup>65</sup>. And yet, the inclusion of parents' subjective social status in model 2 also brings about the effect of university education no longer significant.

The effect of subjective social status on immigrant parents' university ambition is very significant and its magnitude only seems weak because it corresponds to an increasing of just one-percent point in the position of an immigrant parent's title of study in the educational distribution of his country of origin. Just to make a clarifying example: if among low educated blue collars the highest educational title in the parental couple is placed around 30% of the country of origin's educational distribution (meaning that 30% of people of the same sex and age have lower education) the probability of aspiring to university for their children is 40%, whereas if the same study title is around 90% of the country of origin's distribution (meaning that almost all same-sex and same-age people have lower education) the probability of having university aspirations for their children is almost 80%.

Table 5 shows the results of the inclusion of parents' subjective social status in the logistic regressions performed above, but this time on immigrant children's university ambition for themselves (model 2). The effect of subjective social status on immigrant children's university ambition for themselves is halved compared to its effect on immigrant parents' university ambition for their children (see table 4). Just as it happened before, the only significant effect of parents' university education on children's university ambition is no longer significant after the inclusion of subjective social status. Immigrant parents' subjective social status emerges again as the only component of socioeconomic background having a significant effect, this time on immigrant children's university ambition as before it did on immigrant parents'.

An additional step (model 3) is included to assess the effect that immigrant parents' educational ambition for their children have on their children's university ambition for themselves: it is strong

<sup>65</sup> See figure 1, paragraph 1.3.1

and very significant (hp 1.8 is supported). I suppose that the consideration of immigrant parents' educational ambitions will drop the effect of parents' subjective social status on children's ambitions, because a considerable part of this effect passes through parents' ambitions. In fact, my supposition is confirmed because in model 3 the effect of parents' subjective social status is no longer significant (hypothesis 1.7 is supported).

*Table 5 – Logistic regression on immigrant children's university ambition for themselves (weighted odd ratios)*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Parental education	Less than upper secondary			
	Upper secondary	1.03 (0.25)	0.74 (0.20)	0.75 (0.20)
	University	2.10 *(0.68)	1.25 (0.46)	0.94 (0.32)
Parental social class	Low skilled Blue collars			
	High skilled Blue collars	0.62 (0.25)	0.65 (0.26)	0.58 (0.23)
	Low skilled White collars	0.85 (0.26)	0.86 (0.27)	0.80 (0.26)
	High skilled White collars	1.81 (0.59)	1.80 (0.60)	1.72 (0.57)
Parental subjective social status <sup>66</sup> (from 0 to 100)			1.01**	1.00
Parents' educational ambition toward their children	Less than university			
	University			6.58***
	<i>N</i>	1,256	1,256	1240

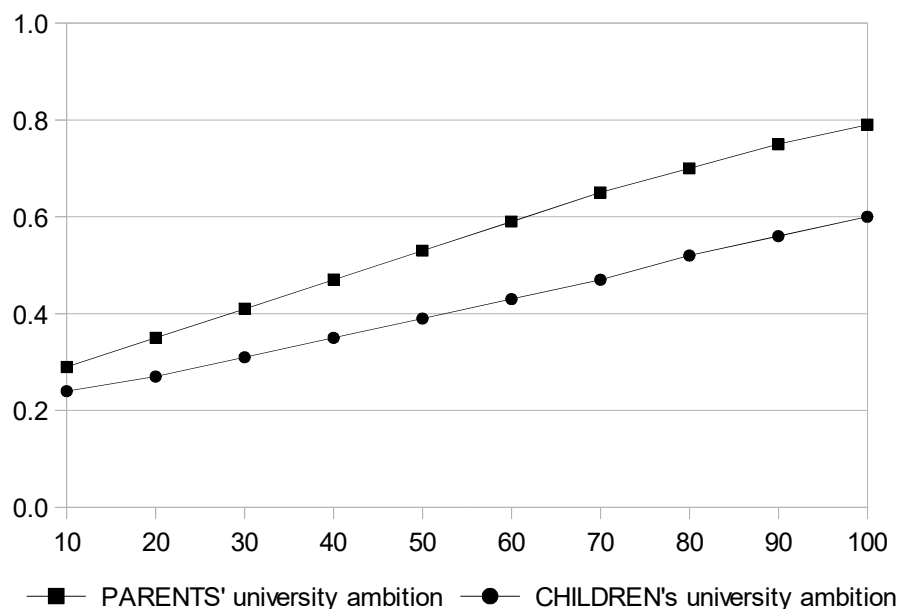
The last step I want to take here is to deepen the investigation from an intergenerational perspective, comparing immigrant parents' and children's university ambition (respectively toward

<sup>66</sup> I also tried the four level (quartiles) version and the effect becomes 1.33\* (model 2) .



children and for themselves) as predicted by the regression, in a couple of selected socioeconomic categories. Graph 1 makes the comparison between generations in the category of low educated blue collars. The higher the values of subjective social status, the bigger the difference between the predicted university ambition of parents' and of children's. For instance if subjective social status' value is 30%, the probability of aspiring to university decreases from 40% among parents to 30% among children, whereas if the value of subjective social status is around 90% the probability goes from almost 80% among parents to less than 60% among children.

*Graph 1 - Predicted\* immigrant parents' and children's university ambition (respectively toward children and for themselves), by parents' subjective social status in the category of blue collar parents with less than upper secondary education<sup>67</sup>.*



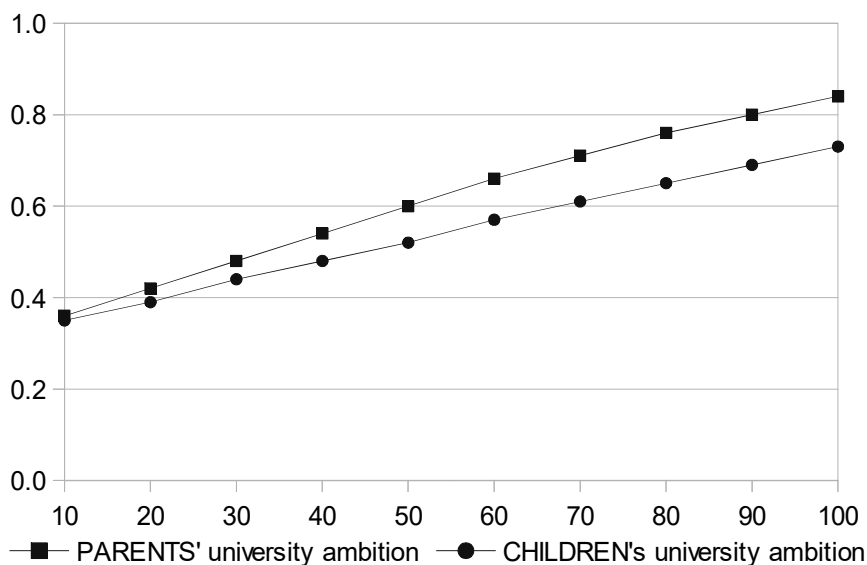
I guess that one of the reasons behind this gap may be that parents' subjective social status is not the actual one children experienced during the most of their lives and the more it is different from the latter, the less it exerts a direct effect on children's university ambition (but still it exerts an effect through parents' ambition). In the specific socioeconomic category represented in graph 1, I presume that the social status of blue collar parents having less than an upper secondary title in the actual countries of residence is very low, so the higher is the placement of their titles in the

<sup>67</sup> Based on model 2 of the regressions in table 4.13 and 4.14 in Appendix, where the combination of parents' education and social class is used. Confidence intervals are not represented in order to avoid confusion.

countries of origin's distributions, the lower is the effect of their subjective social status on children's university ambition.

Just in order to find again a little support for my guess, in graph 2 is represented the same intergenerational comparison in an opposite socioeconomic category, namely white collar parents with upper secondary education<sup>68</sup>. I presume that their actual social status in the country of residence is quite high and the placement of upper secondary education in their countries of origin's distributions - and consequently their subjective social status - is likely to be intermediate or higher. Thus I expect to find overall more convergence between the effects of parents' subjective social status on parents' ambition and on children's ambition.

*Graph 2 - Predicted\*immigrant parents' and children's university ambition (respectively toward children and for themselves), by parents' subjective social status in the category of white collar parents with upper secondary education<sup>69</sup>*



And in fact the intergenerational gap is much narrower here than before (graph 1). Nevertheless, here also the convergence slightly decreases when subjective social status increases, which is not in contrast with my argument: it may indeed happen that the placement of upper secondary education in the immigrants' countries of origin is much more higher than the one in their

<sup>68</sup> I did not choose the category of white collars with university education because university is at the very top of any country educational distribution, so the variation in terms of subjective social status is going to be minimal.

<sup>69</sup> Based on model 2 of the regressions in table 4.13 and 4.14 in Appendix, where the combination of parents' education and social class is used. Confidence intervals are not represented in order to avoid confusion.

countries of residence, but even in this case the difference of parents' subjective social status with their actual one is not big because they succeeded in matching their education with a white collar job. In fact, the maximum divergence between the predicted probabilities of parents' subjective social status on parents' university ambition and on children's university ambition doubles (from 0.11 to 0.23) moving to the category of upper secondary educated parents having a blue collar jobs, because despite the same education their actual social status in the country of residence is likely to be much more lower. Nevertheless, this was only a little exercise because my guess will require much more robust evidence to be supported.

### **4.3.3 Detecting the ambition-performance paradox among immigrant children**

Now that the main explanandum – immigrants' ambition advantage over natives - has been explored in CILS4EU data along with the possibility to improve the explanation of university ambition among immigrants through the use of parents' subjective social status, I will devote my attention to another explanandum. Literature describes it as a typical phenomenon among immigrant children, once again more common than among their same-background native peers and more pronounced for disadvantaged backgrounds: it is the low association between educational ambition and school performance, or in other words the fact that among immigrant students those having poor school results are only slightly less likely to have high educational ambitions than those displaying a good school performance. Because educational ambition and school performance have a reciprocal influence on each other, the paradoxical phenomenon can be described as the persistence of low school performance as unaffected by high motivation or as the persistence of high educational ambition in spite of low school performance.

In order to index children's school performance I will use a subjective measure, namely the self-evaluated performance in Math <sup>70</sup>.

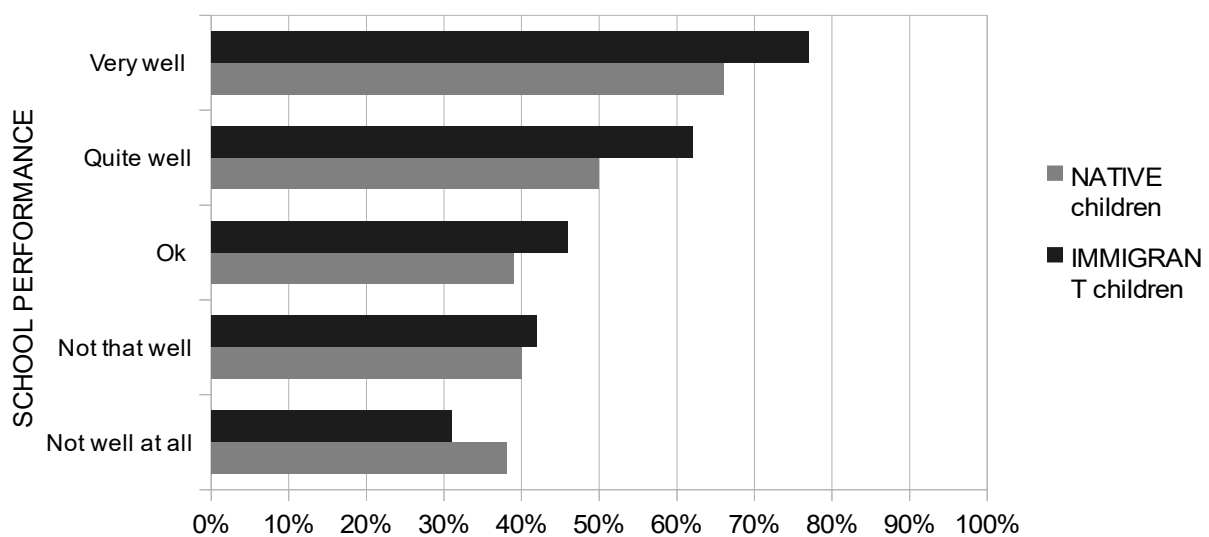
Figure 8 shows that, contrary to my expectations, perceived school performance has a slightly stronger positive correlation with university ambition among immigrant children than among native's. Immigrant children are usually more likely to aspire to university than same-performance

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<sup>70</sup> See paragraph 1.3.2 for details

native children and especially when they rate themselves as top performers (+11%); the only exception is when they rate themselves as very bad performers and are instead less ambitious than natives (-7%). The ambition gap between the poles of the school performance distribution is actually much wider (46%) among immigrant students than among native ones (28%), contrary to what I expected. Perceiving their own school performance as particularly good or bad seems respectively to boost and to depress university ambition much more among immigrant's than among native children, while less definite perceptions of their own school performance seem to have a much more similar effect between the two origin-groups. My guess is that the perceived school performance, especially if it means labeling students in a very positive or very negative way, has more influence on immigrant children's school career plans because they usually lack the feedbacks of parents and other relatives, because immigrants are less able than native to judge children's performance in the language and the school system of the country.

Figure 8 – Children's university ambitions by perceived school performance\* and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)<sup>71</sup>.



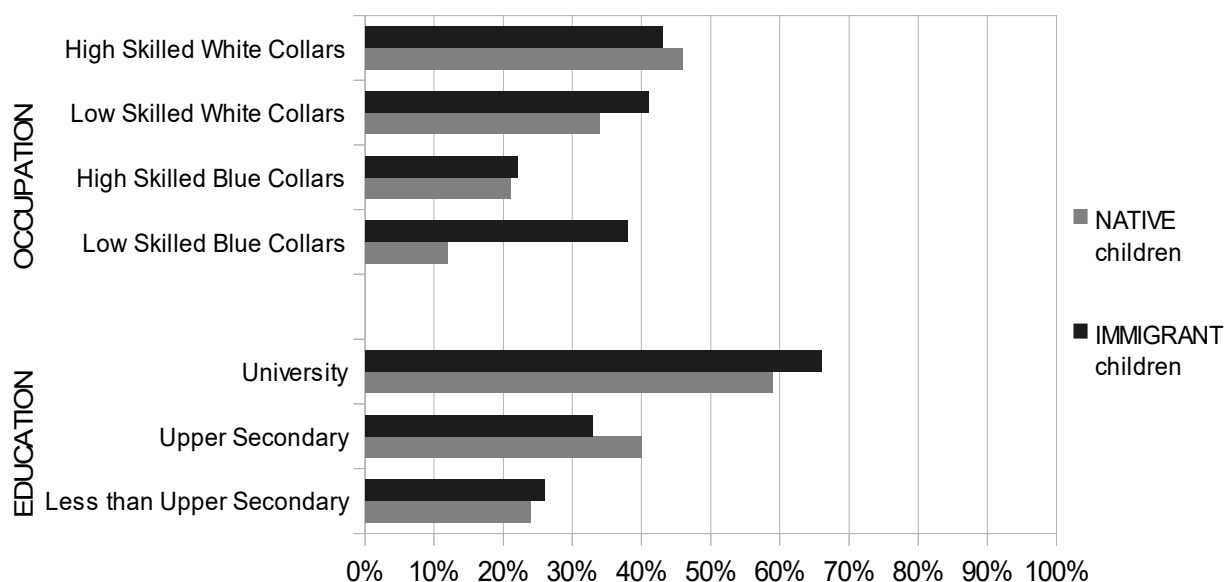
\*The scale goes from 1 ("not well at all") to 5 ("very well") and is about self-performance in Math

Now I will take a further step to test hypothesis 2.0 on my data: it asks if immigrant children who have poor school performances are actually more likely to have high educational ambitions than native children with the same performance and of the same (especially low) social background. I define poor school performance as perceiving to perform "not that well" or "not well at all",

<sup>71</sup> Source of the data is table 4.15 in Appendix

because on the one hand I don't want to include the indefinite meaning of the most chosen central scale value (performing "O.K.") and on the other hand the limited number of extremely bad performers is not sufficient to do the analyses. Without controlling for family background, low performance students are slightly more likely (+5%) to have university ambitions among immigrants than among natives. Breaking down origin-groups by parental education and parental social class (see figure 9), it emerges that low performance immigrant students are usually more likely to aspire to university than same-performance and same-background native students, and the gap is to its maximum among the children of low skilled blue collar parents (+26%).

Figure 9 – University ambition for themselves of children having low perceived school performance\*, by parental education and social class and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)<sup>72</sup>

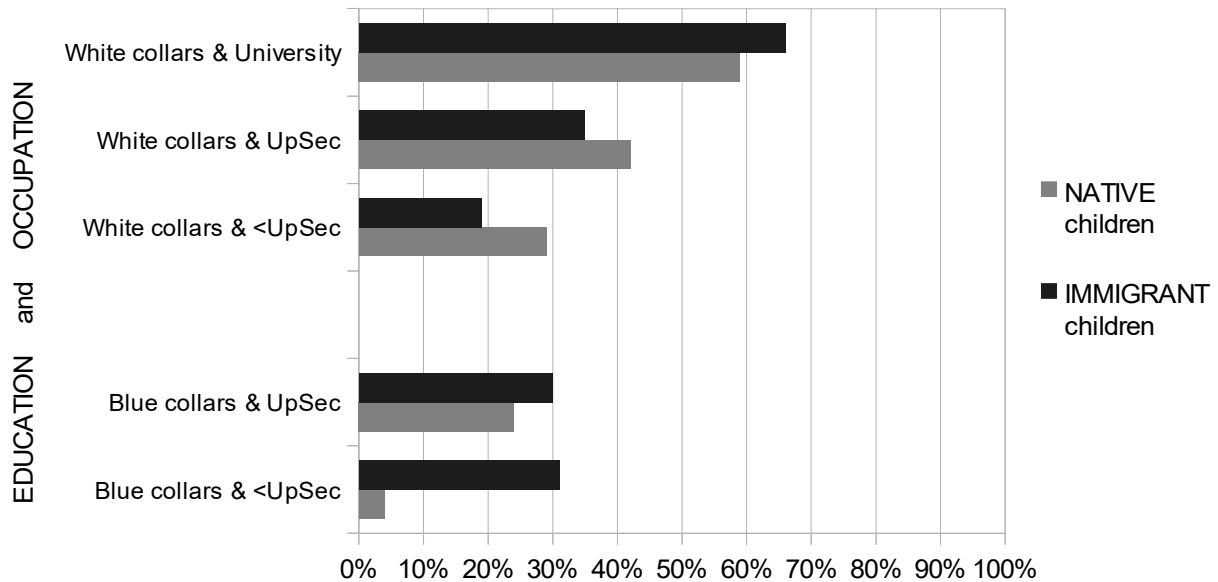


\*less than 3 ("O.K.") on a scale going from 1 ("not well at all") to 5 ("very well") about self-performance in Math

In figure 10 a composite measure of both parental education and parental social class is used to index low performers' family socioeconomic background. Due to the limited number of subjects, I cannot distinguish social classes on the basis of the level of skills required by the job. As done in the previous paragraphs, I exclude from the analysis the most under-rewarded inconsistent category (blue collars with a university title) because it contains too few subjects. Low performance immigrant students display a higher rate of university ambition especially among those coming from the lower social class (blue collars), and the most pronounced gap is found when parents display also a low education (+27%).

<sup>72</sup> Sources of the data are table 4.16 and 4.17 in Appendix

Figure 10 – University ambition for themselves of children having low perceived school performance\*, by the combination of parental education and social class and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)<sup>73</sup>



\*less than 3 on a scale going from 1 (“not well at all”) to 5 (“very well”)

In sum, the collected evidence does not support the existence of an ambition-performance paradox among CILS4EU immigrant children overall: immigrant children having a poor school performance are not usually more likely to have university ambition than native children with the same performance and of the same social background (hypothesis 2.0), but only when coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and especially from the one where both parents' education and parents' social class are low. In the next paragraph I will test the explanatory hypotheses related to phenomenon of the ambition-performance paradox<sup>74</sup>, if necessary modifying them in order to fit the specificities just emerged.

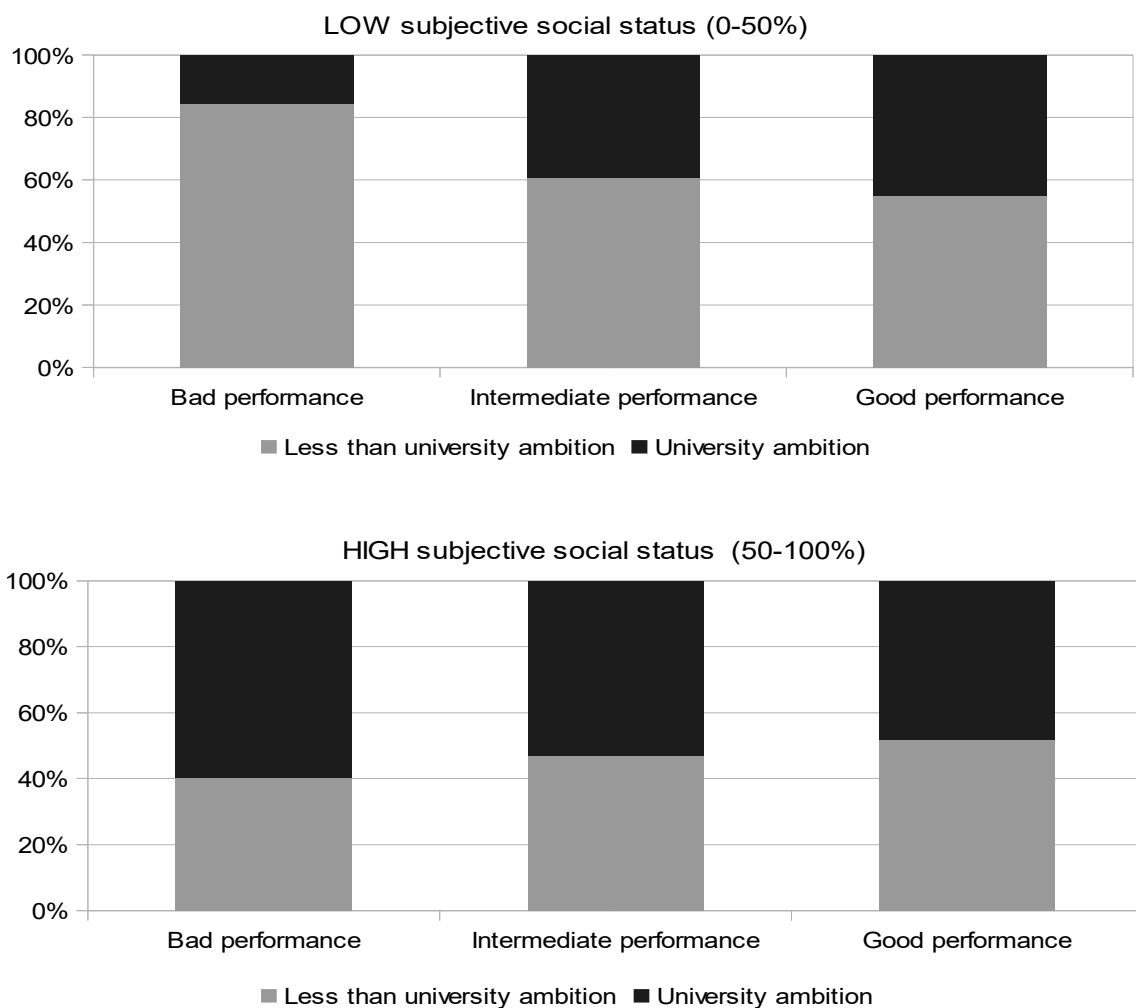
<sup>73</sup> Source of the data is table 4.18 in Appendix

<sup>74</sup> See chapter 2, paragraph 2.2.1 and 2.2.2

### 4.3.4 Under-rewarded educational inconsistency as a possible explanation for the ambition-performance paradox

The first hypothesis (2.1 step 1) asks if among the children of immigrant parents having both low social class and low education, those with a high subjective social status (UEI background) are more likely to display low school performance matched with high educational ambition than those with a low subjective social status.

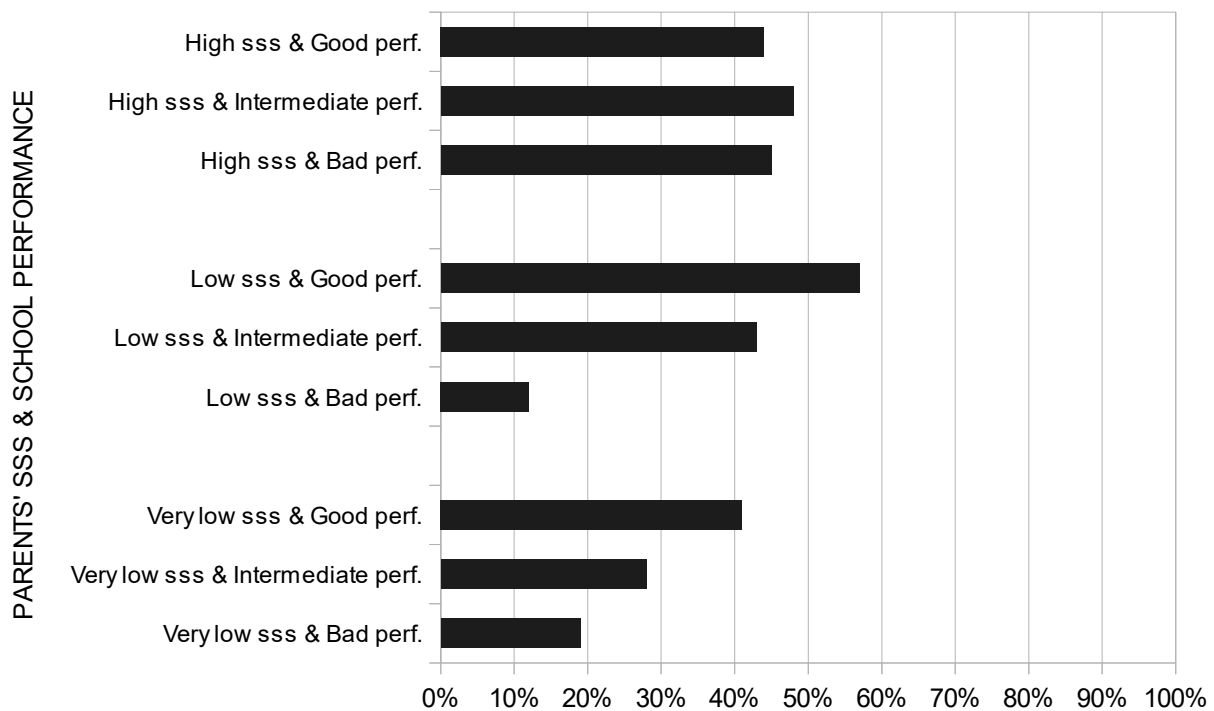
Figure 11 - University ambition of immigrant children coming from a low socioeconomic background combination (blue collar parents having less than upper secondary education), by their perceived school performance and by the level of their parents' subjective social status (weighted percentages)<sup>75</sup>



<sup>75</sup> Source of the data is table 4.19 in Appendix.

Figure 11 shows first evidence supporting the hypothesis: among immigrant children sharing a low consistent socioeconomic background (low parents' education, social class and low subjective social status), good school performing students are as expected more ambitious (+30%) than their bad performing peers, while among immigrant children sharing an under-rewarded educational inconsistent background (low parents' education and social class, but high parents' subjective social status) the relationship is inverted so that good performing students are slightly less ambitious (-12%) than their bad performing peers.

Figure 12 - University ambition of immigrant children whose parents have less than upper secondary education, by their perceived school performance and by the level of their parents' subjective social status\* (weighted percentages)<sup>76</sup>



\*The residual category of very high subjective social status has been excluded from the analysis

Because the number of immigrant children whose parents share this specific combination of low social class and low education is limited, I couldn't split them in more than two groups on the basis of parents' subjective social status. In order to check if the relationship I have just found out between school performance and ambition holds also for more discrete levels of subjective social

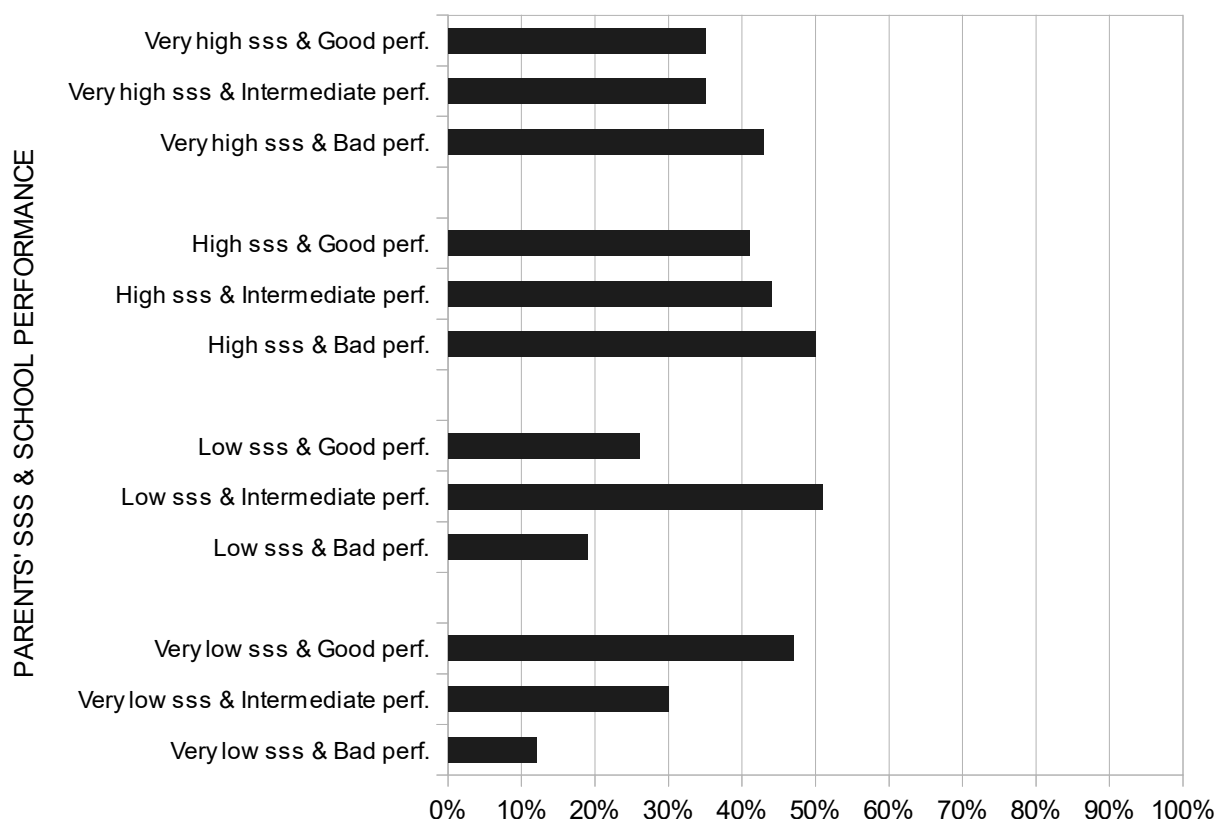
<sup>76</sup> Source of the data is table 4.20 in Appendix.



status, I will do this further detailed analysis on the larger groups of immigrant children whose parents have either low education (figure 12) or low social class (figure 13).

Among the immigrant children of low educated parents (figure 12), those having a high subjective social status display no association between their perceived school performance and their university ambitions, while in the lower levels of subjective social status the usual positive association favoring university ambition among the best school performers is in place. The very high level of subjective social status had to be excluded from the analysis because, unsurprisingly, the placement of less than upper secondary titles at the very top of a country educational distributions is very rare.

*Figure 13 - University ambition of immigrant children whose parents have blue collar jobs, by their perceived school performance and by the level of their parents' subjective social status\* (weighted percentages)<sup>77</sup>*

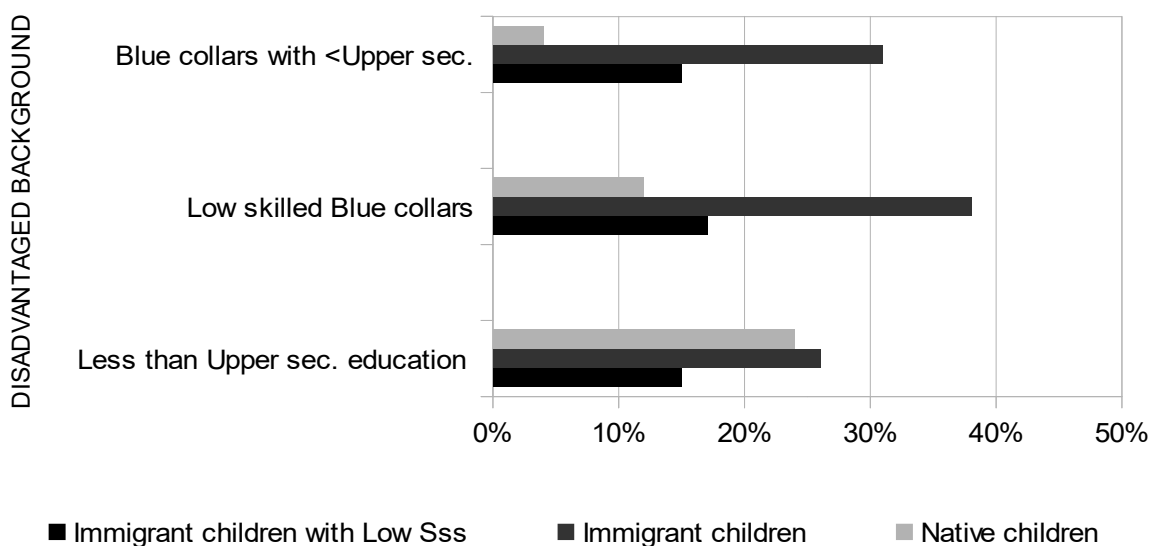


\*The residual category of very high subjective social status has been excluded from the analysis

<sup>77</sup> Source of the data is table 4.21 in Appendix.

Among the immigrant children of blue collar parents (figure 13), when parents' subjective social status is above the median of the educational distribution of reference (high or very high categories) the usual positive association between school performance and university ambition even becomes negative, so that bad school performers show the higher rate of university ambition. This evidence further supports the hypothesis cited above (2.1 step 1): the perceived school performance has no effect or even a counterintuitive effect on the university ambition of immigrant children from the most disadvantaged background, no matter how this is indexed, when their parents' subjective social status is high. In other words, in immigrant families with low educational and economic resources, high parents' subjective social status seems to act counterbalancing the depressing effect of low school performance on children's university ambition. Under-rewarded educational inconsistent (UEI) background – composed by high parents' subjective social status and both low parents' education and social class - is thus associated with the occurrence of paradoxically high university ambition among immigrant children of disadvantaged background and especially among those displaying a low school performance.

Figure 14 – University ambitions of children having low perceived school performance\*, by different measures of low family background, by origin-groups and a selection of the immigrant group having low\*\* parents' subjective social status (weighted percentages)<sup>78</sup>



\*less than 3 (“ok”) on a scale going from 1 (“not well at all”) to 5 (“very well”) about self-performance in Math

\*\*less than 50% of the educational distribution of reference in the country of origin

<sup>78</sup> Sources of the data are table 4.19, 4.20 and 4.21 in Appendix

Figure 14 shows in a very simple way that the phenomenon of aspiration-performance paradox found in place among low background immigrant students when compared to same-background natives<sup>79</sup> is no longer in place or very reduced when immigrant children whose parents have a high subjective social status are excluded from the comparison. As already noticed in the previous paragraph, the phenomenon of the aspiration-performance paradox is more pronounced when low social background is indexed by parents' social class alone (+26% of university ambition among low performance immigrants than among same-performance natives) or by its combination with parents' education (+27%), while it is barely visible when it is indexed by parents' education alone (+2%). When only immigrant children with low parents' subjective social status are considered, the phenomenon is largely reduced in the disadvantaged backgrounds, where it was more pronounced (respectively from +26% to +5%, and from +27% to +11%), and is even more common among natives, where it was barely visible (from +2% to -9%).

## 4.4 Results

In this last paragraph I will sum up the results of all the analyses performed in the chapter. My aim was twofold: detecting if two well-known phenomena in the literature about immigrants and education were actually in place among CILS4EU subjects and, if so, testing the addition of a new immigrants' socioeconomic background component to explain them. The two phenomena are the ambition advantage of immigrant parents and children over their same-background native counterparts and the ambition-performance gap characterizing immigrant children with respect to same-background natives. Both phenomena are usually found to be particularly pronounced for the most disadvantaged backgrounds, which intensifies their paradoxical nature: there are unexpectedly high educational ambitions among immigrant parents and children, completely unsupported by educational and financial family resources and by school performance. The new component of immigrant socioeconomic background I proposed to add to the traditional components of parental education and social class in order to better explain the occurrence of

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<sup>79</sup> See paragraph 1.3.3

these phenomena is parents' subjective social status, indexed by parental education relative to their country of origin<sup>80</sup>.

Paragraph 1.3.1 is devoted to the detection on CILS4EU data of the first phenomenon, namely immigrant parents' and children's ambition advantage over their same-background native counterparts. I found out that, as expected, both immigrant parents and their children are indeed more likely<sup>81</sup> to have high university ambition than native parents and their children of the same social background - both when this is indexed by parental education or occupation alone and when it is indexed by a combination of the two variables – and immigrants' ambition advantage reaches its maximum when subjects come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Specifically, the most pronounced immigrants' ambition advantage over natives was found in the category of low educated blue collars when parents' ambition are considered, and in the even more specific category of low educated and low skilled blue collars when the focus is instead on children's ambition. Moreover, expanding the comparisons to the intergenerational dimension proved fruitful because I found out that, as expected, immigrant's ambition advantage is regularly wider among parents than among children. This is the product of different intergenerational trends in the two origin-groups: immigrant children are always less ambitious than their parents while native children are usually equally ambitious or slightly more ambitious than theirs. The very specific socioeconomic category where the most pronounced immigrant children's ambition advantage over natives was found is the only category where immigrant children aspire to university more often than their parents.

Since evidence supported the occurrence of the immigrants' ambition advantage phenomenon in CILS4EU data, in paragraph 1.3.2 I tested several hypotheses regarding the potential role of a new immigrant family background component in the explanation of it. I found out that immigrant parents' subjective social status is indeed the socioeconomic component showing the highest correlation with their university ambition toward their children, as expected higher than the correlation of parents' education with them. The correlation of the new family background component is particularly strong among low educated parents doing blue collar jobs, which is precisely the socioeconomic category where immigrant parents' ambition advantage over native's is to its maximum. About the intergenerational dimension, I expected that the correlation of

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<sup>80</sup> See chapter 2 for the reasons behind the choice of the index.

<sup>81</sup> The sole exception is the category of low skilled blue collar having an upper secondary education, whose children display a weak ambition advantage of natives (+4%) over immigrants.

immigrant parents' subjective social status with their university ambition toward their children is stronger than the one with their children's university ambition for themselves. The expectation is supported by evidence, because among the three immigrant background components, parents' subjective social status is the one showing the biggest intergenerational reduction of its correlation when passing from parents' university ambition to children's: it still displays the highest correlation with children's university ambition, but followed closely by the other two traditional background components. The reduced role of parents' subjective social status in shaping children's educational ambition may be due not only to the fact that the relative risk aversion mechanism works primarily on parents, which is the reason behind my expectation, but also to the fact that my sample is composed mainly of immigrant children born in their actual countries of residence (the so-called generation 2.0). Members of generation 2.0 are very likely to have never experienced the life in their parents' countries of origin, which is the context of reference for subjective social status, while generations 1.75 and 1.5 lived there an increasing part of their childhood. And indeed I found out that the correlation of immigrant parents' subjective social status with their children's university ambition follows precisely this criterion, being to its minimum in generation 2.0 and increasing its strength in generation 1.75 and even more in generation 1.5.

The last step I took in the paragraph is regression analysis on both immigrant parents' and children's university ambition, in order to systematize the evidence collected so far and gain more robust evidence in support of my hypotheses. The only category of the two traditional background components having a significant effect on both children's own and parental university ambition is parents' university education, but the effect disappears when the new background component is considered. Parents' subjective social status emerged as the only component of immigrant background displaying a significant and appreciable effect on both children's own and parental university ambition, even if, as expected, both its magnitude and significance decreased passing from first generation's ambitions to second generation's.

Paragraph 1.3.3 is devoted to the detection on CILS4EU data of the second phenomenon of interest, namely the ambition-performance gap characterizing immigrant children with respect to same-background natives and especially pronounced among children from disadvantaged backgrounds. I found out that in my sample the phenomenon is not common overall: immigrant children having a poor (perceived) school performance are more likely to have university ambitions than native children with the same performance and of the same social background only when

coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and especially from the one where both parents' education (less than upper secondary) and parents' social class (blue collars) are low.

In paragraph 1.3.4 I searched for evidence that behind the occurrence of the ambition-performance gap among immigrant children coming from disadvantaged backgrounds there could be a specific background condition that I labeled as under-rewarded educational inconsistent (UEI) and that is the combination of parents' high subjective social status and both low parents' education and social class. I found out that among immigrant children of low educated blue collars, only when parents' subjective social status is high the usual relationship between school performance and ambition is inverted so that good performance students are slightly less ambitious than their bad performance peers. Deepening the analysis for more discrete levels of parents' subjective social status, it emerges that perceived school performance has no effect or even a counterintuitive effect on the university ambition of immigrant children from the most disadvantaged background, depending on how this is indexed, when their parents' subjective social status is high. In other words, in immigrant families with low educational and economic resources, high parents' subjective social status seems to act counterbalancing the depressing effect of low school performance on children's university ambition. Under-rewarded educational inconsistent (UEI) background – composed by high parents' subjective social status and both low parents' education and social class - is thus the socioeconomic configuration associated with the occurrence of the ambition-performance gap phenomenon among immigrant children.

In sum, the addition of immigrant parents' subjective social status as a third component of immigrants' family background proved very fruitful on CILS4EU data, because it helps explaining both the paradoxical phenomena of interest. Thanks to the unique presence in CILS4EU survey of both parents' and children's educational ambitions, it was also possible to explore the intergenerational dimension of this phenomena, leading to interesting findings that may represent paths for future research on the topic.

## Chapter 5

### **Educational ambitions of second generation migrants in Italy**

#### **5.1 Description of the dataset(s)**

Data about the educational ambitions of immigrant children in Italy are quite rare and come either from surveys on the general population, which usually lack specific items about the experience of migration, or from surveys on the immigrant population only, which usually lack the possibility to compare them with natives. The annual survey on second year high school students' learning assessment, conducted by the National Evaluation Institute for the School System (INVALSI), is a source of the first type while the survey on foreign citizens' social condition and integration, conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) in 2011-12, is a source of the second type. Neither of the two datasets has all the characteristics I need for my purposes, but they can complement one another: I will use the INVALSI data to see if my main phenomenon of interest – namely the immigrants' ambition advantage over natives - is in place in the Italian population of high school students, then I will investigate the value added in Italy by immigrant parents' subjective social status for the explanation of their children's educational ambitions using ISTAT data.

Common traits are that both datasets were administered in the same period of time (2011-2012) and both have information on children's educational ambitions for themselves but not on parental ones, which prevents me from testing the core hypotheses about the mechanism generating them. Apart from this, each of the two datasets has specific advantages and weaknesses related to the use I intend to make of them.

The INVALSI survey on second year high school students' learning assessment interviewed the whole Italian population of students at that point of their education. The biggest limitation of the INVALSI survey is that a questionnaire for parents was not included, so information about their education and occupation is given by children. It is the very first time in this thesis that I have to

rely entirely<sup>82</sup> on measures of the family background reported by children, and they could lead to biased estimates of the phenomenon of interest. Immigrant children in particular are more likely than natives to have inaccurate knowledge of their parents' school credentials<sup>83</sup>, probably because parents often acquired them in their countries of origin, so within educational systems that are different from the one children experienced. The only way I have to limit the risk of incorrect answers given by students on this subject is to select for my analyses only the ones who live with (at least one of) their parents: given the vast population of the survey, this is not a big restriction and it still left me with a vast group of children of natives (337,408) and a much more restricted but still large group of children of immigrants (14,485). On the bright side, an advantage of the survey item about educational ambitions is that it allows to distinguish between high school students' ambitions to brief and long university paths, which already emerged in the first chapter of analysis (on French TeO data) as an interesting interpretation key of the differences between origin-groups.

In the ISTAT survey on foreign citizens' social condition and integration all family members were directly interviewed, so information on immigrant parents' socioeconomic position and migration history is highly reliable. And yet, because of this I was again obliged to select for my analyses only the immigrant children living with (at least one of) their parents (8,724). Educational ambitions were asked only to secondary school students and unfortunately without distinction between the ambition to long and to brief university paths. The level of secondary school attended is available in the ISTAT survey, but not the year and this makes impossible to select second year high school students in order to compare their aspirations with those of immigrant students interviewed for the INVALSI survey.

## 5.2 Hypotheses

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<sup>82</sup> Working on TeO and CILS4EU data, I rely on them only when information given by parents themselves is missing.

<sup>83</sup> Just to give an idea, in CILS4EU data parents' maximum level of education was asked both to parents themselves and to their children. Overall, immigrant children show lower rates of right answers than natives and especially when asked about fathers' education: parents' and children's answers about mother's education display a correlation of 0.69 and 0.72 respectively among immigrants and among natives, while about father's education the correlation is respectively 0.59 and 0.69. The higher the titles, the higher the rate of correct answers given both by immigrant and native children, probably due to their desirability: another common trait between origin groups is the tendency to overestimate parents' education. Native children always omitted to report the rare condition of parents not having any school title, while immigrant children do it more often (20-25%).



As usual the first hypotheses that I am going to test in this chapter are the exploratory ones, questioning if the two phenomena of interest are actually in place among the INVALSI subjects. Performing bivariate analyses with the appropriate measures of association and correlation is once again the simplest way to test such hypotheses. The analyses will also identify the specific low socioeconomic conditions associated with these phenomena in the INVALSI dataset. Unfortunately, as it was the case for the French TeO dataset, the INVALSI dataset also lacks information on parents' educational ambitions and this allows me to investigate the first and main phenomenon of interest, i.e. the immigrant ambition advantage over natives, only on children:

*HP 1.0: Immigrant children are more likely to have high educational ambition than same-social background<sup>84</sup> native children, and particularly when they come from low social backgrounds.*

Thanks to the distinction in the INVALSI dataset between children's ambition to brief and to long university paths, I can also test the related hypothesis:

*HP 1.3: Immigrant children are more likely to aspire to brief university path than same-background and same-performance native children, and especially when they come from a low background and have a low school performance.*

The second exploratory hypothesis is a development of the first one, where the independent variable of school performance is added to the picture.

*HP 2.0: Immigrant children who have poor school performance are more likely to have high educational ambitions than native children with the same performance and of the same social background<sup>85</sup>*

Moving on to the explanatory hypotheses, I will have to test them on the ISTAT dataset. This is because the INVALSI survey did not interviewed parents, which means that the information about children's family background are not very reliable, and also did not collected the information about parents' migration history that I need in order to create the variable indexing immigrant parents'

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<sup>84</sup> As usual indexed by parents' absolute level of education and their class or income

<sup>85</sup> As usual indexed by parents' absolute level of education and their class or income

subjective social status. The main mechanism I suppose to be behind the occurrence of the phenomena of interest primarily shapes immigrant parent's educational ambitions toward their children<sup>86</sup> and the ISTAT dataset does not have any information about them. Nevertheless, after checking with a proxy strategy that the same trends found in place in the INVALSI dataset concerning the phenomena of interest are in place in the ISTAT dataset too, at the end of the chapter I will perform a regression analysis on the educational ambitions of immigrant students. My aim is to assess the effects on immigrant children's ambitions of all the three socioeconomic background components: the two traditional ones of parents' education and social class and the new one - specific for immigrants - of parents' subjective social status.

### 5.3 Variables and models

I have already cited in the previous paragraph the reasons why in both the INVALSI and the ISTAT dataset I had to select only the students living with (at least one of) their parents. Another necessary restriction to the number of subjects who are eligible for my analyses descends from the identification of immigrant and native children. I identified immigrant children as the children of two parents born abroad and I excluded as usual the so-called generation 1.25, arrived in Italy at a late age (after 12 years old), because their educational aspirations are strongly influenced by having attended the most of their school career abroad. In other words, in this chapter, as in the previous ones, the immigrant children I am talking about have two born-abroad parents and are either born in Italy (generation 2.0) or arrived in Italy at an early age, before 12 years old. Correspondingly, INVALSI native children are born in Italy from two parents both born in Italy. After this selection, the subjects eligible for my analyses amount respectively to 10,913 children of immigrants and 328,676 children of natives in the INVALSI dataset and to 5,563 children of immigrants in the ISTAT dataset.

Unfortunately, in the ISTAT dataset another big restriction to the number of the eligible subjects is due to missing values on the item about university ambition<sup>87</sup>, asked only to the secondary school students: it left me with 996 individuals. Due to missing values, I was able to create the variable indexing parents' subjective social status only for 923 of them: I am going to test most of my

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<sup>86</sup> See paragraph 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 in Chapter 2

<sup>87</sup> Another item asks to lower secondary school students if they aspire to go to the upper secondary school, but there is almost no variation because the great majority of subjects answer affirmatively.

hypotheses on them. It not a large sample, thus I cannot focus only on high school students to improve the comparison with the INVALSI dataset and I cannot deepen my analyses including several control variables.

The variables indexing socioeconomic backgrounds (parental education and social class) were created as usual using the dominance method: picking the highest value in the parental couple when both parents' values are available. The threefold classification of social class I used for the INVALSI dataset is different from the usual one I adopted so far in the thesis, because the item asking about parents' occupation is very simplistic and no standard classification of occupations was adopted. I'll disregard any correction weights for cheating in the analyses on the INVALSI subjects because I am working only on data taken from the general questionnaire and not from the cognitive tests. In the ISTAT dataset, I will apply the provided individual weight.

*Table 1 – Distribution of key variables respectively among INVALSI\* and ISTAT\*\* eligible subjects, by origin-groups (percentages)*

		INVALSI			ISTAT
		Native children	Immigrant children	Total	Immigrant children
<b>Parental education</b>	less than upper sec.	22.5	13.2	22.2	35.6
	upper secondary	49.6	57.1	49.8	52.0
	university	27.9	29.7	28.0	12.4
	missing	16,256	1,232	17,486	0
	total respondents	100.0 (312,422)	100.0 (9,624)	100.0 (322,046)	100.0 (996)
<b>Parental social class</b>	low skilled blue collars	-	-	-	37.4
	high skilled blue collars	-	-	-	31.7
	low skilled white collars	-	-	-	23.0
	high skilled white collars	-	-	-	7.9
	working class	20.9	51.0	21.8	-
	middle class	62.7	40.7	62.1	-
	upper class	16.4	8.3	16.1	-
	missing	22,211	1,156	23,367	66

	total respondents	100.0 (306,465)	100.0 (9,700)	100.0 (316,165)	100.0 (930)
<b>Second generation's typology</b>	generation 2.0 (born in Italy)		25.2		27.7
	generation 1.75		32.5		29.5
	generation 1.5		42.3		42.8
	missing		0		0
	total of respondents		100.0 (10,856)		100.0 (996)
<b>University ambition</b>	no	42.4	58.3	42.8	27.3
	yes	57.6	41.7	57.2	72.7
	missing	0	0	0	0
	total of respondents	100.0 (328,676)	100.0 (10,856)	100.0 (339,532)	100.0 (996)

\* *Survey on Second Year High School Students' Learning Assessment (INVALSI, 2011-12)*

\*\* *Survey on Foreign Citizens' Social Condition and Integration (ISTAT, 2011-12)*

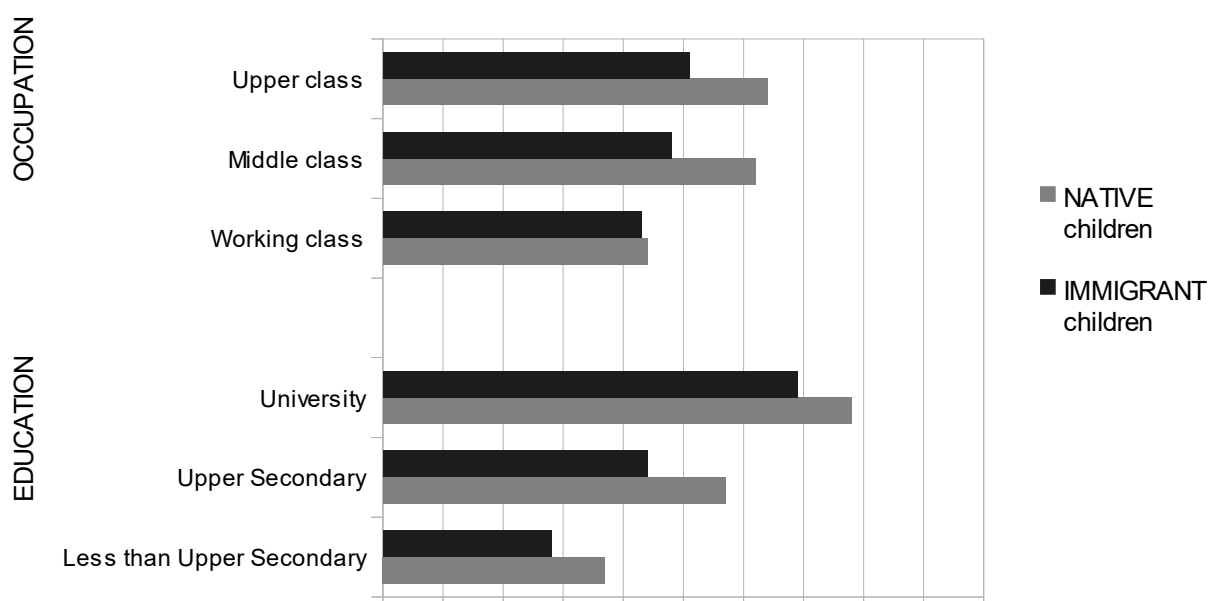
The distribution of the key variables that I will use for the analyses both on the INVALSI and on the ISTAT dataset can be found in table 1. ISTAT immigrant children come more often than INVALSI ones from low educated backgrounds (+22% have parents with less than upper secondary education) and seemingly also from low social classes, and yet they aspire more often to university. The two groups are similar concerning their migration history: immigrant children born in Italy (generation 2.0) are slightly more common in the ISTAT dataset (+3%), while those arrived in their early childhood (generation 1.75) are a bit more common in the INVALSI dataset (+3%). Knowing the differences between the two datasets on my main dimensions of analyses is important, because in what follows I am going to use them as complementary sources of information: first I will detect if the phenomenon of interest is in place in the INVALSI dataset, comparing immigrant and native students' ambitions, and then I will test my hypotheses about the role of immigrant parents' subjective social status in the explanation of their children's ambitions using the ISTAT dataset. Even if I cannot compare directly immigrant samples in the two datasets, because of the impossibility to select second year high school students among the ISTAT immigrant children, still the exploratory and the explanatory part of the chapter add value to each other: the findings emerged from the comparison between INVALSI immigrants' and natives' educational

ambitions may suggest interesting lines of analyses on the ISTAT data, and conversely the ISTAT analyses exploring the role of parents' subjective social status in the explanation of their children's ambitions may suggest possible explanations for the regularities found in the INVALSI data.

### 5.3.1 Equality of educational ambitions is still to reach for immigrant students in Italy

As usual, the first step is devoted to finding evidence that the phenomenon of immigrant ambition advantage over natives, which is more pronounced for disadvantaged backgrounds, is in place in the Italian school context (see hypothesis 1.0). The INVALSI survey on second year high school students' learning assessment is the data source I chose for this purpose. In order to measure social background I will use parents' education and social class, first alone and then combined together, but for the first time in this thesis such measures are built using information provided by children and not by parents' themselves, which make them less reliable. In the end I will also use an international index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) available in the dataset to see if it leads to the same findings.

Figure 1 – Children's university ambition for themselves, by parental education or social class and by origin-groups (percentages)<sup>88</sup>.

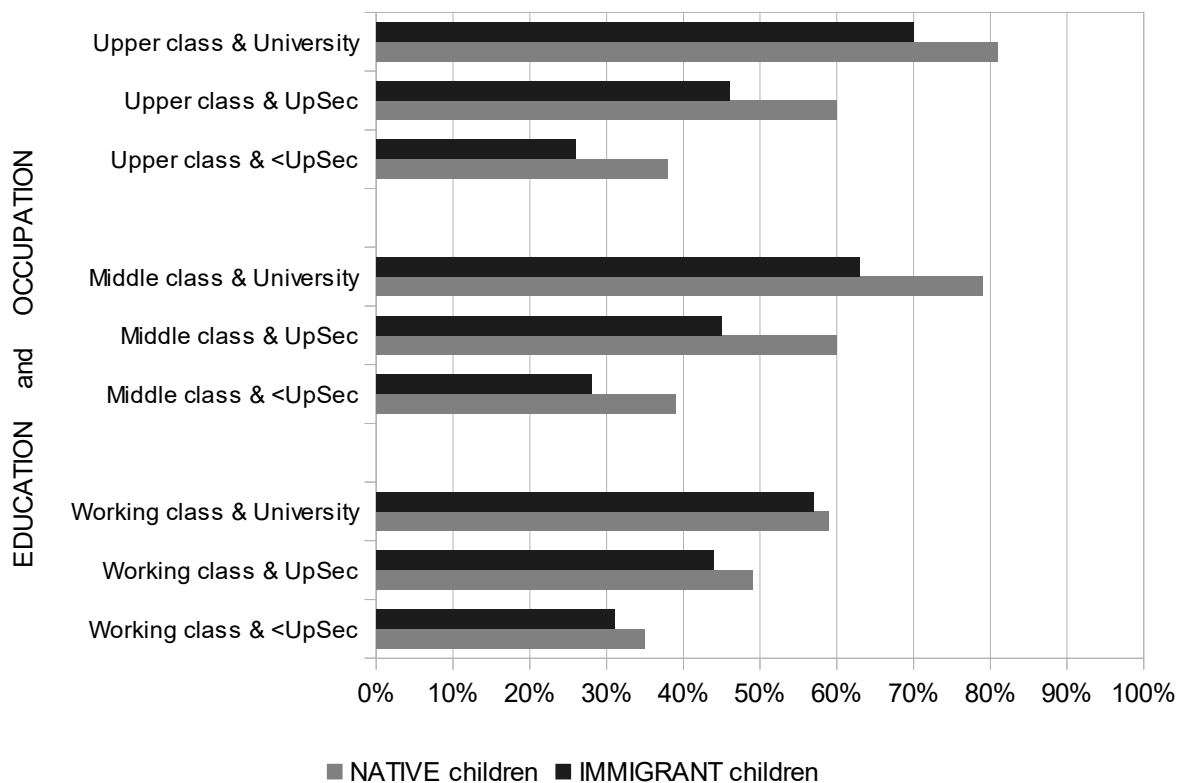


<sup>88</sup> The sources of the data are table 5.1 and 5.2 in Appendix

Source: 2011-12 survey on second year high school students' learning assessment, INVALSI

Figure 1 shows that, contrary to what I expected, native students are always more likely to aspire to university than their immigrant peers coming from similar backgrounds. The advantage is less pronounced for disadvantaged backgrounds and vanishes among the children of working class parents, who share the same rate of university ambition irrespective of their belonging to one origin-group or the other. The working class paradox is the result of different trends origin-groups have across social classes: immigrant children's university ambition shows very little variation between classes, while native children's ambition largely declines and especially moving from middle class to working class (-19%). One of the reasons behind these trends may lie in the different educational composition of the classes depending on the origin-group considered: working class immigrant parents are particularly more educated than working class native parents (respectively +15% and +14% of them have tertiary and upper secondary education).

Figure 2 - Children's university ambitions for themselves by the combination of parental education and social class and by origin-groups (percentages)<sup>89</sup>.



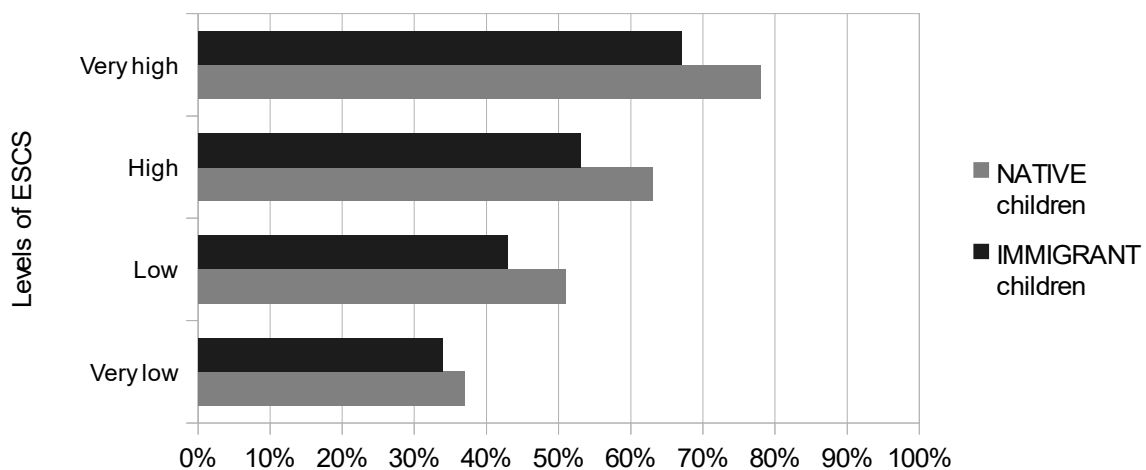
Source: 2011-12 survey on second year high school students' learning assessment, INVALSI

<sup>89</sup> Source of the data is table 5.3 in Appendix

Combining parents' education and social class together offers a more detailed view (see figure 2). The upper and the middle class share a very similar pattern of the ambition gap: native students are a lot more likely than immigrant ones to aspire to university, even if their ambition advantage gradually decreases along with the decreasing of parents' education. In the working class, instead, the gap is barely visible, quite independently from parents' level of education. The large population of native subjects makes possible the comparison with immigrants also for the most inconsistent socioeconomic conditions that are highly uncommon among natives (e.g. working class and university).

Finally I will use the ESCS index<sup>90</sup> created by the INVALSI to measure family background. The index has been validated in PISA international surveys and is a combination of several indicators, among which parents' education and social class but also the possession of some specific wealth goods in the family. I divided this measure in four levels (quartiles) in order to simplify it. Figure 3 tells the same story of figure 1: native students are regularly more ambitious than their immigrant peers but their advantage lowers with the decreasing of family sociocultural resources, becoming almost null (+3%) among the most disadvantaged students.

Figure 3 – Children's university ambition for themselves, by ESCS quartiles and by origin-groups (percentages)<sup>91</sup>.



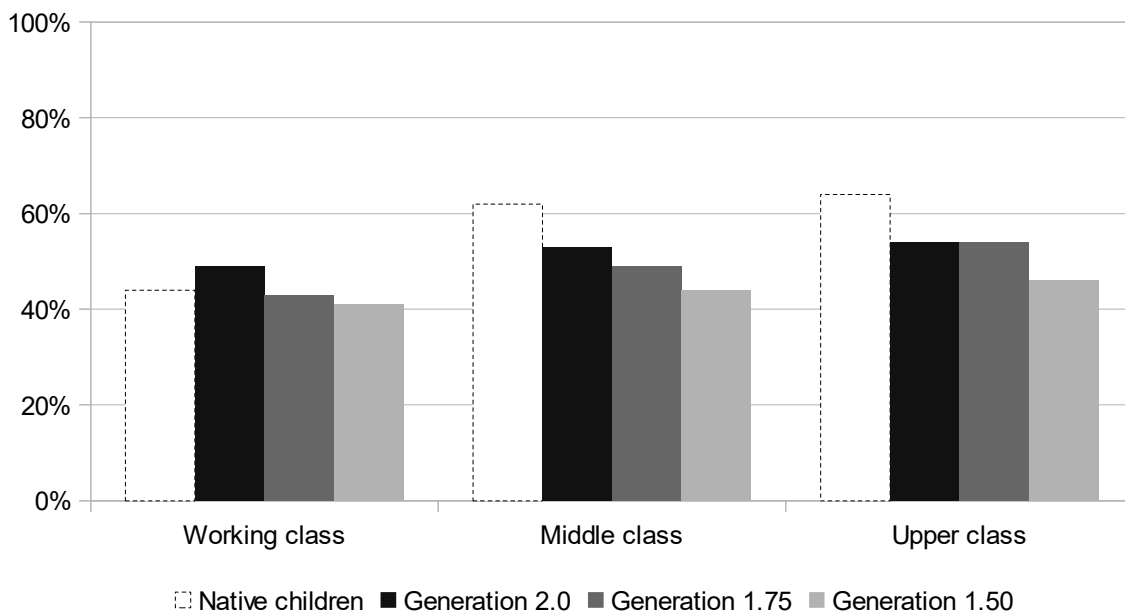
Source: 2011-12 survey on second year high school students' learning assessment, INVALSI

<sup>90</sup> PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) index of economic, social and cultural status.

<sup>91</sup> Source of the data is table 5.4 in Appendix

Summing up, the phenomenon of immigrant ambition advantage over natives, which is well known in the literature and has been found in a number of European countries (see chapter 3 and 4), emerged from the analyses as having peculiar traits in Italy. Immigrant second year high school students are usually less likely than their same-background native peers to have university ambition, except for the immigrant children of working class parents who paradoxically equal the university ambitions of natives from the same class. Therefore, the paradoxical phenomenon of high immigrant aspirations not supported by adequate family resources seems to hold also for the Italian context, even if in a diminished form where there isn't a proper immigrant ambition advantage over natives. Probably the fact that Italy is a relatively new country of immigration - with respect to the other European countries considered so far - has a role in the explanation of this peculiarity. Children of immigrants born in Italy (the so-called generation 2.0) represent a rapidly growing but still relatively little fraction of the immigrant population in the secondary schools of our country: at the moment of the survey, they amount to 28% of the foreign students in the lower secondary level and only to 10% in the upper secondary level<sup>92</sup>.

*Figure 4 – Children's university ambition for themselves, by parental social class and by type of second generation (percentages)<sup>93</sup>.*



Source: 2011-12 survey on second year high school students' learning assessment, INVALSI

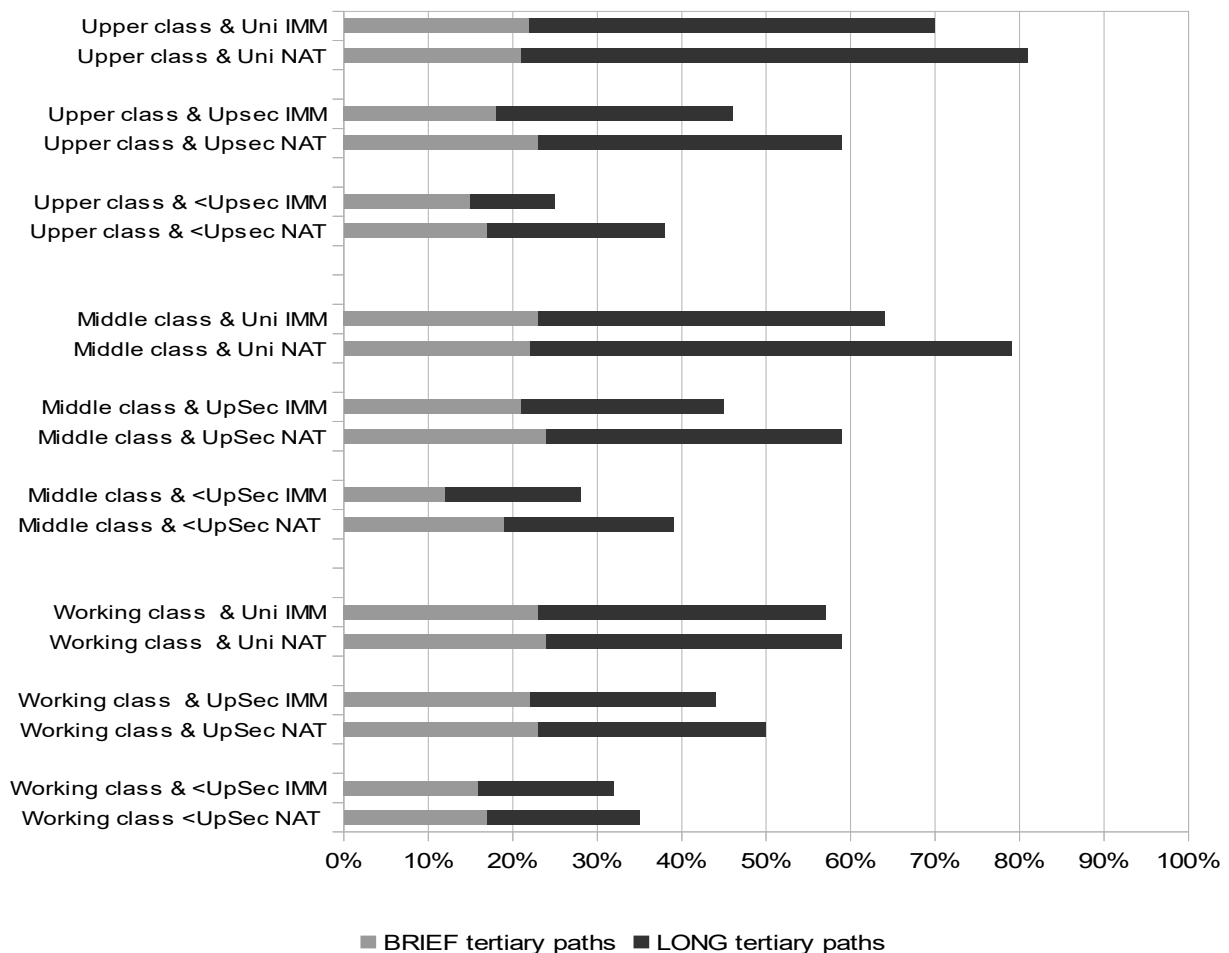
<sup>92</sup> Source of the data is the 2011/12 national report "Alunni con cittadinanza non italiana" (ISMU, Milano 2013)

<sup>93</sup> Source of the data is table 5.5 in Appendix



Among the INVALSI immigrant subjects eligible for my analyses, only one out of four (25%) is born in Italy. And yet, as can be seen in figure 4, they are the most likely to equal native peers' educational ambitions across social classes and are even slightly more ambitious than natives (+5%) when coming from the working class. My guess is that in a few years' time, with a more significant presence of immigrant students born in Italy in the high schools, the phenomenon will assume the same characteristics it has now in other European countries: a widespread ambition advantage of immigrant students over same-background natives, paradoxically more pronounced for low-backgrounds.

Figure 5 - Children's brief and long university ambition by the combination of parental social class and parental education and by origin-groups, percentages<sup>94</sup>.



Source: 2011-12 survey on second year high school students' learning assessment, INVALSI

<sup>94</sup> Source of the data is table 5.6 in Appendix

In what follows I will seize a precious opportunity given by the INVALSI dataset and repeat the analysis in figure 2 distinguishing between ambitions to brief (three-year degrees) and long (five-years degrees) university paths. Following hypothesis 1.3<sup>95</sup> supported so far by analyses on French data<sup>96</sup>, I will search for a less pronounced native ambition advantage over immigrants or, in other words, for more equality of ambitions between origin-groups, concerning brief university paths: I suppose they represent a less risky option that immigrant children tend to prefer to longer tertiary paths, especially when they came from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Figure 5 makes it clear that the widespread ambition advantage of native high school students over their immigrant peers emerged before is mainly pointed toward long university paths. The two origin-groups display overall much more similar ambition rates with respect to brief university paths than to long ones, and especially among the children of tertiary educated parents. Working class maintains its peculiarity compared to upper classes, because among its members the ambition rates of natives and immigrants to brief university paths are always very similar, irrespective of parents' education, and also the ambition advantage of natives over immigrants on the long university degrees is to its minimum, again rather irrespective of parents' education.

This detailed analysis further defines the features of the paradoxical phenomenon characterizing the educational ambitions of high school immigrant students in Italy: even if they are usually less ambitious than same-background natives, and especially toward long university paths, the university ambitions of those among them coming from the working class represent an exception because they are similar to those of the same-class native peers especially on brief university paths but also on longer ones, and almost irrespective of parents' level of education.

### **5.3.2 Immigrant parents' subjective social status diminished role**

In this paragraph I will try to add the new background component of parents' subjective social status in order to improve the explanation of ISTAT immigrant students' university ambitions. But first I will search for some evidence that ISTAT immigrant students also display the paradoxical relationship between low background and (relatively) high university ambition found in place in the INVALSI data through to the comparison with natives.

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<sup>95</sup> See paragraph 2.1.3 in Chapter 2.

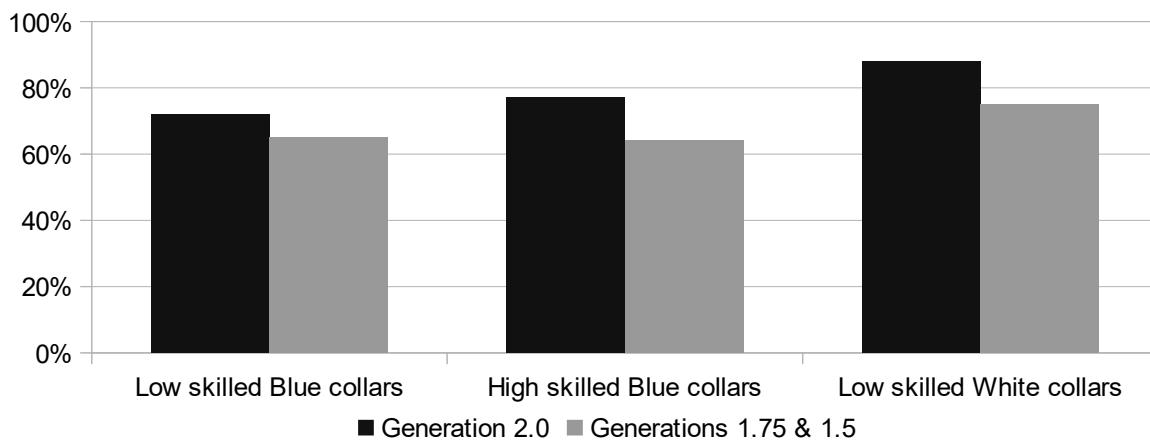
<sup>96</sup> See chapter 3

The immigrant students I selected in the ISTAT dataset are very different from those selected in the INVALSI dataset (see table 1). Concerning socioeconomic background, their parents have a much lower education (+22% with less than an upper secondary title) and yet are more equally distributed across social classes. The ISTAT immigrant students are also a lot more ambitious than the INVALSI ones (+31% of them aspire to go to university). The distribution of the two groups by the typology of second generations is instead very similar.

Knowing both from literature and from the previous analyses of INVALSI data that among immigrant children the rate of university ambition of those born in Italy (generation 2.0) is most similar to natives' and even higher than natives' for disadvantaged backgrounds (see figure 4), here I will use the rate of university ambition of generation 2.0 as a proxy for the natives' one that is missing. Therefore, I expect to find out that among ISTAT immigrant children with the same background, those born in Italy usually display a higher rate of university ambition compared to those born abroad with a minimum gap for disadvantaged backgrounds.

Figure 6 compares the university ambitions of generation 2.0 with those of generations born abroad (1.75 and 1.5 together), by parents' social class<sup>97</sup>. The ambition advantage of immigrant children born in Italy over those born abroad is evident in every social class, and as expected is less pronounced in the lowest class (+7%) compared with the others (+13%).

Figure 6 – Children's university ambition for themselves, by parental social class and by type of second generation (percentages)<sup>98</sup>.



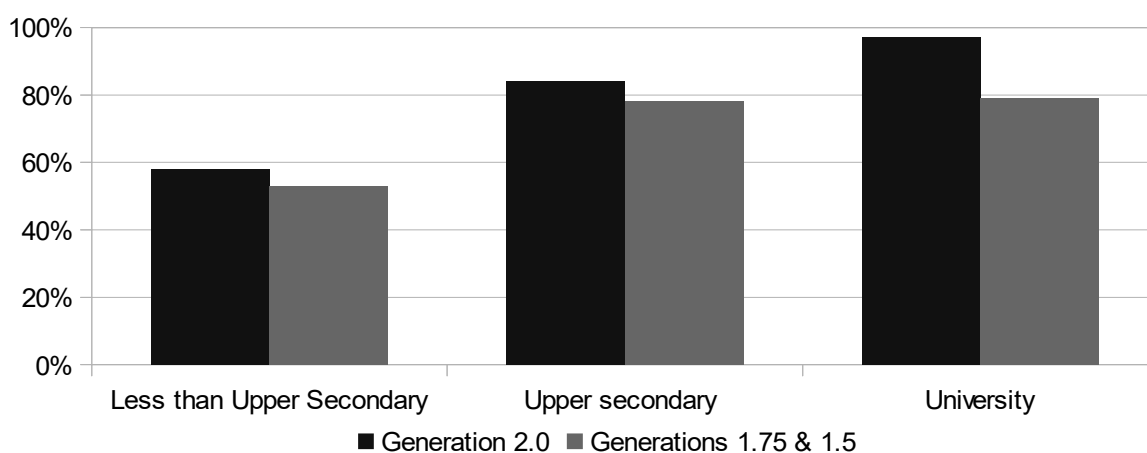
Source: ISTAT survey on Foreign citizens' social condition and integration (2011-12)

<sup>97</sup> High skilled White collar class is omitted because of the low number of its subjects .

<sup>98</sup> Source of the data is table 5.7 in Appendix

The same comparison between second generations' university ambitions, this time controlling for parents' level of education, can be found in figure 7. Once again the ambition advantage of the children born in Italy over the ones born abroad is evident for each level of parents' education, and once again it is less pronounced (+5%) among the children of low educated parents while it reaches its maximum (+18%) among the children of parents with university education.

Figure 7 – Children's university ambition for themselves, by parental education and by type of second generation (percentages)<sup>99</sup>.



Source: ISTAT survey on Foreign citizens' social condition and integration (2011-12)

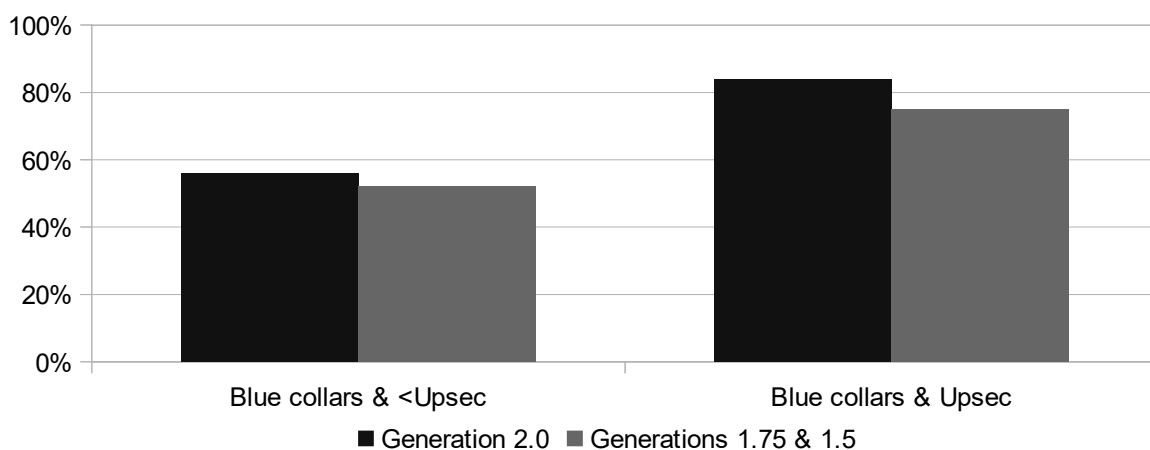
Unfortunately it is not possible to compare the children on all the combinations of parental education and occupation together, due to the limited number of subjects (especially from generation 2.0) in most of the categories. Nevertheless, given the importance of this operation in order to identify the socioeconomic background where there is a relative ambition advantage (i.e. a similarity) of students born abroad over those born in Italy, I will still show the comparison but limiting it to the two lowest categories where most of the subjects are concentrated. Exactly 63% of the students in both the two groups, in fact, are children of blue collar parents with less than university education.

Figure 8 reveals that, between these two most common backgrounds, it is again in the most disadvantaged one, where parents have both low financial and low educational resources, that the members of generation 2.0 (approximating natives) have a rate of university ambition more similar to the rest of the immigrant subjects.

<sup>99</sup> Source of the data is table 5.8 in Appendix

Using the rate of university ambition of native-born immigrant children (generation 2.0) to approximate the one of natives proved to be a fruitful strategy. The paradoxical relationship between low background and relatively high (i.e. similar to natives) university ambition found among the INVALSI immigrant subjects seems to exist also among the ISTAT immigrant subjects. What differ between the two data contexts are the characteristics of the disadvantaged background where the phenomenon occurs: the whole immigrant working class in INVALSI, the more specific category of immigrant blue collars having low education for the ISTAT source. These characteristics descend from the dimensions of immigrant disadvantage in the two data sources (see table 1).

*Figure 8 – Children's university ambition for themselves, by the most numerous combinations of parental education and social class and by type of second generation (percentages)<sup>100</sup>.*



*Source: ISTAT survey on Foreign citizens' social condition and integration (2011-12)*

Now that I gained some confidence about the existence of the phenomenon of interest in the ISTAT dataset (hypothesis 1.0 is supported), as usual I will perform a stepwise regression analysis on immigrant children's university ambition to understand if and how the inclusion of the new immigrant background component I proposed, which is immigrant parents' subjective social status, influences the effects of the two traditional components of parents' education and social class. I expect the net effect of subjective social status on immigrant students' university ambitions to be little (see hypothesis 1.6), because the mechanism of relative risk aversion works primarily on parents, and yet still relevant because in chapter 4<sup>101</sup> the new component exhibited a stronger

<sup>100</sup> Source of the data is table 5.9 in Appendix

correlation with the university ambition of immigrant children born abroad, compared to generation 2.0, and here almost three out of four immigrant students are not born in Italy.

Model 1 shows that parents' upper levels of education have a strong effect on immigrant children's propensity to aspire to university for themselves compared to less than upper secondary education, while the only social class having a significant effect compared to the reference social class of low skilled blue collars is the top one of high skilled white collars. Unfortunately in model 2 the effect of subjective social status on immigrant children's university ambition is null and not significant. Its inclusion even increases the magnitude of the effects of parents' upper secondary levels of education.

*Table 2 – Logistic regression on immigrant children's university ambition for themselves (weighted odds ratios)*

Variables	Category	Model 1	Model 2
Parental education	Less than upper secondary		
	Upper secondary	2.83*** (0.66)	3.20*** (0.83)
	University	2.99* (1.44)	4.01* (2.14)
Parental social class	Low skilled Blue collars		
	High skilled Blue collars	1.55 (0.41)	1.55 (0.41)
	Low skilled White collars	1.78 (0.54)	1.70 (0.53)
	High skilled White collars	3.82* (2.03)	3.83* (2.04)
Parental subjective social status <sup>102</sup> (from 0 to 100)			0.99 (0.006)
	<i>N</i>	861	861

This is not the result I expected, at least on the basis of the prevalence among the subjects of students born abroad, whose university ambition I supposed would exhibit a stronger correlation with parents' subjective social status because these children lived a part of their lives in the parents' country of origin, which is the context of reference for subjective social status.

In table 3 I checked that in this case the evidence does not support such supposition, contrary to what happened in chapter 4 on CILS4EU data: here the correlation of the new background component with the university ambition of born abroad children is very similar (barely weaker) to its correlation with the university ambition of generation 2.0. It is worth noticing that in both

<sup>101</sup> See table 3 in paragraph 1.3.2.

<sup>102</sup> I tried also the four level (quartiles) version and the effect becomes 0.92 (model 2).

groups the correlation of the traditional socioeconomic background components (and especially of parents' education) with children's university ambition is also very feeble. Among the born abroad immigrant students, the correlation of parents' subjective social status with their children's university ambition is very similar (barely stronger) to the one of parents' education with it.

Table 3 - *Correlation of parental education, parental social class, parental subjective social status with immigrant children's university ambition for themselves, by typology of second generation they belong to.*

	University ambitions of immigrant children for themselves	
	Generation 1.5 & 1.75	Generation 2.0
University ambitions of immigrant children for themselves	1.00	1.00
Parental education	0.07	0.15
Parental social class	0.19	0.19
<b>Parental subjective social status</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.09</b>
N	625	236

## 5.4 Results

Summing up the results of the analyses, I will follow the same structure of the chapter. First I will present the results of the exploratory analyses performed in the INVALSI dataset, then what emerged from the attempted proxy exploratory analysis conducted using ISTAT data in order to confirm the existence of the same trends found in place in the first dataset, and finally the results of the regression analyses on ISTAT immigrant children's university ambition meant to assess the effects of the three components of their socioeconomic background.

The phenomenon of immigrant ambition advantage over natives, which is well known in the literature, emerged from the analyses on the INVALSI data as having peculiar traits in Italy. Immigrant second year high school students are usually less likely than their same-background native peers to have university ambition, except for the immigrant children of working class parents who paradoxically equal the university ambitions of natives from the same class. Therefore, the paradoxical phenomenon of high immigrant aspirations not supported by adequate family resources seems to hold also for the Italian context, even if in a diminished form where

there isn't a proper immigrant ambition advantage over natives. My hypothesis is that the recent history of Italy as an immigration country matters, because children of immigrants born in Italy represent still a relatively little fraction of the immigrant population in the secondary schools of our country and thus also in the INVALSI dataset. And yet, my analyses revealed that they are the most likely to equal native peers' educational ambitions across social classes and are even slightly more ambitious than natives when coming from the working class. My guess is that in a few years' time, with a more significant presence of immigrant students born in Italy in high school, the phenomenon will assume the same characteristics it has now in other European countries: a widespread ambition advantage of immigrant students over same-background natives, paradoxically more pronounced for low-backgrounds.

Distinguishing between ambition to brief and to long university paths in the INVALSI data made also clear that the widespread ambition advantage of native high school students over their same-background immigrant peers is mainly pointed toward long university paths. This detailed analysis further defines the features of the paradoxical phenomenon characterizing the educational ambitions of high school immigrant students in Italy: even if they are usually less ambitious than same-background natives, and especially toward long university paths, the university ambitions of those among them coming from the working class represent an exception because they are similar to those of the same-class native peers especially on brief university paths but also on longer ones.

Moving on to the results of the analyses on the ISTAT immigrant children, first I made an attempt to gain some confidence that here too is in place the same trend emerged in the INVALSI dataset concerning the immigrant ambition advantage over natives. The ISTAT survey lacking a reference group of natives, I used the rate of university ambition of native-born immigrant children (generation 2.0) to approximate the one of natives. It proved to be a fruitful strategy: the paradoxical relationship between low background and relatively high (i.e. similar to natives) university ambition found among the INVALSI immigrant subjects seems to exist also among the ISTAT immigrant subjects. What is different is the specific disadvantaged background where the phenomenon occurs, identified in the ISTAT dataset with the specific category of immigrant blue collars having low education.

The results of the stepwise regression analysis on immigrant children's university ambition performed to understand if and how the inclusion of the new immigrant background component I proposed, which is immigrant parents' subjective social status, influenced the effects of the two



traditional components of parents' education and social class, went in the expected direction. The estimated effect of subjective social status on immigrant children's university ambition was null and not significant. And yet, on the basis of the high correlation of parents' subjective social status found in another dataset (CILS4EU) on the university ambition of born abroad children, which in the ISTAT dataset represent the majority of the subjects, this result was counterintuitive. From the analyses emerged in fact another peculiarity of the Italian data source, since all the socioeconomic background components displayed a very weak correlation with children's university ambition both among native-born and born-abroad children of immigrants.

# Conclusions

## 6.1 Important phenomena but inappropriate data sources

This thesis is about two counter-intuitive phenomena concerning the educational ambitions of both second-generation students and their parents, on which studies generally converge. The main phenomenon of interest is the so-called “immigrant ambition advantage”: immigrant children usually report higher educational ambitions than their native peers sharing the same family background, and their advantage is paradoxically more pronounced when the support of family resources is lacking more. The second phenomenon of interest is best known as the “ambition-performance paradox”: immigrant children with a low school performance usually report higher educational ambitions than their native peers, especially for lower backgrounds. The literature about these two paradoxical phenomena is mainly US centered, while in Europe and especially in the relatively new immigration countries of Southern Europe research on the topic is still in its infancy. I hope this work will contribute to the knowledge about these issues.

In the thesis I basically followed a two-step strategy. The first step was to conduct exploratory analyses searching for evidence in European countries to support the existence of the two phenomena of interest. Apart from aspiring to add some information to the related literature, exploratory analyses were essential in the architecture of the thesis because the occurrence of the two paradoxical phenomena of interest highlights the inadequacy of the traditional measures of social background applied to the immigrant second generations and thus they justifies the purpose of the second step of my strategy, which is to improve the explanation of immigrants' educational ambitions with a new immigrant background component. Important scholars have questioned the appropriateness of the measures commonly used to investigate socioeconomic background, and even if this has not yet raised a proper debate in the specific field of migration studies, I believed it is a very crucial point for the discipline. Of all the components of second generations' family background, parents' social status is the one more disrupted by migration, since this event is very

likely to produce inconsistencies both between the components of parents' social position in the new country of residence and between the two parents' social positions, before and after migration. Therefore, my proposal was to substitute immigrant parents' social status in the actual country of residence with their social status in the country of origin, which I believe is maintained after migration as subjective and it is likely to be the main driving factor behind immigrant parents' high educational ambitions toward their children (which, in turn, are an important factor behind children's educational ambitions for themselves).

Theoretically, the reasons for questioning the consideration of only post-migration family characteristics to index second generations' social background are important, but they collide with the scarcity of adequate data sources to examine pre-migration factors: surveys on migrant subjects are often conveniently administered in the destination countries<sup>103</sup>, many years after migration and by means of only children's interviews, making the reconstruction of immigrant parents' past experiences in the countries of origin very difficult. Therefore, I decided to measure immigrant parents' subjective social status through parents' education relative to their country of origin, but still I needed very reliable information about (at least) parents' level of education, their country of birth and their age at the moment of migration to match each immigrant parent with information about the educational distribution in their country of origin. Plus, in order to investigate the relationship between immigrant parents' subjective social status and children's educational ambitions, ideally I needed also highly reliable information on both immigrant parents' and their children's educational ambitions. This meant that information had to be directly reported by the concerned subjects: thus, both children and their parents had to be interviewed in the surveys. And yet, as already cited, surveys on migrant subjects are often conveniently administered by means of only children's interviews, making the reliability of information about their parents questionable. Immigrant children in particular are more likely than natives to have inaccurate knowledge of their parents' school credentials<sup>104</sup>, probably because parents often

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<sup>103</sup> Few notable exceptions are the so-called "ethnosurveys", which sample population in sending countries and 'follow' both emigrants and residents through time (see for instance Mexican Migration Project, Health and Migration Study).

<sup>104</sup> Just to give an idea, in CILS4EU data parents' maximum level of education was asked both to parents themselves and to their children. Overall, immigrant children show lower rates of right answers than natives and especially when asked about fathers' education: parents' and children's answers about mother's education display a correlation of 0.69 and 0.72 respectively among immigrants and among natives, while about father's education the correlation is respectively 0.59 and 0.69. The higher the titles, the higher the rate of correct answers given both by immigrant and native children, probably due to their desirability: another common trait between origin

acquired them in their countries of origin so within educational systems that are different from the one children experienced. Lastly, I needed also data including a reference group of native subjects because this would allow me to investigate the occurrence of the phenomena of interest, which required a comparison between immigrants and natives. In sum, data sources meeting all these requirements are not very common in Europe and particularly rare in Italy. Therefore, the data sources I decided to use in this thesis are not all entirely fit for my purposes but nevertheless I tried to make the best of them.

In this thesis I analyzed four data sources: three are national based, respectively two about Italy and one about France; the other is an international dataset about four different European countries: Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and England. The international dataset CILS4EU<sup>105</sup> is my richest source, because it has information not only on immigrant children's educational ambitions but also on their parents', and comprises also a large sample of natives for comparison. The other three datasets I worked on have information only on the educational ambitions of immigrant children and one (the Italian ISTAT dataset<sup>106</sup>) lacks a reference group of native subjects. For this reason I had to complement the analyses on the ISTAT dataset with the analyses on another contemporary Italian source (the INVALSI dataset<sup>107</sup>) allowing me the comparison between immigrants' and natives' aspirations. The third national-based data source I worked on is the French TeO dataset<sup>108</sup>: my interest in it is also due to the fact that most of the thesis' explanatory hypotheses are built on the conclusions of Mathieu Ichou's work (2014), who suggested the key role of educational ambition in producing the effect of immigrant parents' education relative to their country of origin on their children' educational attainment precisely analyzing TeO dataset. The four datasets are the results of four surveys conducted not only on different national contexts but also in different times: TeO survey dates back to 2008, CILS4EU first wave took place in 2010/11, ISTAT and INVALSI surveys in 2011/12. The datasets allow the identification of different populations of students eligible for my purposes: 14 year-old students in the CILS4EU international dataset, secondary students in the French TeO dataset and in the Italian ISTAT dataset, second year high school students in the Italian INVALSI dataset. This diversity of

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groups is the tendency to overestimate parents' education. Native children always omitted to report the rare condition of parents not having any school title, while immigrant children do it more often (20-25%).

<sup>105</sup> Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European Countries, first wave.

<sup>106</sup> Survey on Foreign citizens' social condition and integration (ISTAT, 2011-12)

<sup>107</sup> Survey on second year high school students' learning assessment (INVALSI, 2011-12)

<sup>108</sup> Trajectoires et Origines' survey (INED and INSEE, 2008).

time, national context and subjects' characteristics has to be taken in mind in the following discussion about the results of my analyses. I believe it represents more of an enrichment than a limitation, because I had the opportunity to verify if the phenomena of interest were in place in different school systems at different times and affected the student population at different ages, even if when analyses pointed out peculiarities of the phenomena (like specific disadvantaged backgrounds behind the maximum ambition gap) or differences in their entity (as in the Italian case) it was harder to hypothesize what factors lie behind them. When possible, in my analyses I tried to use the same categories for the same variables, in order to minimize other sources of variability between the datasets.

## **6.2 Regularities and peculiarities of the phenomena of interest**

It was possible to conduct the comparison between immigrant and native students in three out of four datasets<sup>109</sup>. In order to contextualize the findings about the phenomena of interest that I will discuss later, it can be useful to sum up here the distribution of my key variables of analyses among the immigrant and native subjects selected for the analyses in each of the three datasets. The operation will reveal expected differences and similarities between the two origin-groups that are supported by evidence from all the three datasets, but also peculiarities that can be found in single datasets.

As expected, in all the three datasets immigrant children more often come from disadvantaged family backgrounds than their native peers, but the dimensions of their disadvantage are not always the same. Compared to natives in terms of family educational resources, immigrant students are severely disadvantaged in the French dataset while in the Italian one they are even advantaged (respectively +25% and -9% of parents with less than upper secondary education). In terms of financial resources, immigrant students are disadvantaged in all the three datasets but particularly in the Italian one (+30% of parents in the working class). As a consequence, family backgrounds characterized by under-rewarded inconsistency (overqualified parents doing manual jobs) are much more common among the parents of second generation Italian subjects than in the other data sources. Despite the lower amount of family resources, as expected immigrant students are overall similar to native ones when it comes to university ambitions in all but the

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<sup>109</sup> ISTAT Italian dataset lacks a reference group of native subjects.

Italian dataset (-16% aspire to tertiary education, the gap being all about long paths) and when it comes to perception of school performance in both the datasets having information on this<sup>110</sup>. This brief recap outlined the peculiarity of the Italian data context compared to the others. While the French and the International dataset describe a situation where immigrant parents are both less educated and with lower occupations than native parents and yet their children have equal university ambition and school performance than their native peers, the Italian dataset tells a different story: here immigrant parents are more educated but with much more lower occupations than native parents, and their children report lower ambition to go to university than their native peers.

In what follows I will summarize the findings of my analyses concerning the phenomena of interest in each of the analyzed data contexts. First I will sum up similarities and differences that emerged when searching for the immigrants' ambition advantage over same-background natives, which was expected to be especially pronounced for the lowest backgrounds. Then I will move on to the related phenomenon of the immigrants' ambition advantage over same-school performance natives, which again was expected to be especially pronounced for the worst performances.

When comparing the rate of university ambition between immigrant and native students of similar background, the common trait in all the three examined data sources is that - as expected - the maximum ambition advantage immigrant subjects have over natives is found in the most disadvantaged backgrounds. And yet, in every data context both the degree of the maximum ambition advantage and the definition of the most disadvantaged backgrounds are different. In the international CILS4EU dataset, which offers the most complete picture and the one closest to the expectations, both immigrant parents and their children are usually more likely to have university ambition than native parents and their children of the same social background, and the immigrant advantage is to its maximum among low educated blue collars when parents' ambitions are considered and among low educated and low skilled blue collars when the focus is instead on children's ambitions. In the picture drawn by the French data, immigrant children are generally slightly less likely than same-background natives to aspire to university, with the exception of the immigrant children coming from family backgrounds characterized by the combination of low education with low skilled jobs (not considering the distinction between blue and white collars) who are more likely to have university ambition than their same-background natives. The Italian

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<sup>110</sup> INVALSI questionnaire does not have items on perceived school performance but only results of cognitive tests.

data context is once again the most peculiar: immigrant students here are usually a lot less likely than their same-background native peers to have university ambition, except for the immigrant children of working class parents who paradoxically equal the university ambitions of natives from the same class.

In sum, I found evidence supporting the existence of a general immigrants' ambition advantage over same-background natives only in the international CILS4EU dataset, both concerning parents' and children's university ambition. The French data context is instead characterized by a general slight native children's ambition advantage over same-background immigrant peers, which becomes deeper in the Italian data. Given these differences between data sources, it can be said that a *relative* ambition advantage of immigrants over natives is always found in low socioeconomic backgrounds. The characteristics of the low socioeconomic background where immigrant students are relatively more ambitious than natives depend on the dimensions of the immigrant disadvantage in the analyzed data sources (see before).

Now I will move on to discuss the results of my analyses concerning the second phenomenon, which is the ambition-performance paradox, as documented by the two datasets where information about students' perceived school performance is available. In the French dataset, immigrant students rating themselves as having a bad school performance are overall a bit more likely than same-performance natives to have university ambition, but controlling for socioeconomic background I discovered that the only category where the phenomenon takes place is the same disadvantaged one (defined by low education and low skilled occupation) where immigrant children are unexpectedly more ambitious than their native peers. International CILS4EU data show the same picture, and also in this case the only socioeconomic category where low performance immigrant students are more ambitious than same-performance natives is the same disadvantaged one (defined in this case by low education and blue collar occupation) where both immigrant children's and their parents' ambition advantage over native counterparts is to its maximum. Thus the phenomenon of the ambition-performance paradox among immigrant children takes place only in the categories where immigrant children exhibit the most pronounced ambition advantage over their same-background native peers. In other words, higher university ambition than natives persists even when it is discouraged by a bad school performance only among immigrant students coming from the already most ambitious social backgrounds, that are the most disadvantaged where intuitively we would have expected very low university ambition

because they lack the support of family resources. Therefore, the ambition-performance paradox increases the already paradoxical nature of the immigrant children's ambition advantage over natives.

### **6.3 High and unsupported but realistically cautious university ambitions**

The French and the Italian datasets allow me to sharpen the analyses above, distinguishing between students' ambition to brief (three-year degrees) and to long (more than 3 years) university paths. Being immigrant students *relatively* more ambitious than natives when coming from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds and having a bad school performance, I expected that - overall but especially when these detrimental conditions hold - they are more likely to aspire to “less risky” brief university paths than to long ones.

As said in the previous paragraph, the French data context and even more the Italian one are characterized by a general native children's ambition advantage over same-background immigrant peers. Exceptions are immigrant children coming from specific low family backgrounds, who are respectively more likely in the French dataset and equally likely in the Italian one to aspire to university than their same-background natives. The distinction of university paths on the basis of their length supports my expectations. In both data contexts, the general advantage of native students concerning university ambition when compared to immigrants of the same background is mainly due to the fact that they are more likely to aspire to long tertiary paths, while their aspirations to acquire brief university titles are much more similar to immigrants. Conversely, in the specific low socioeconomic backgrounds where immigrants show a *relative* ambition advantage over natives – which in the Italian data context means they are equally ambitious - this is almost entirely due to their higher rate of ambition to brief university paths.

This evidence sheds some light on the paradox of immigrant children having university ambition unsupported both by family resources and by school performances. Aspiring to keep on studying for only a couple of years after the end of upper secondary school sounds more realistic, because it minimizes the risk of failures that is high without such support and encouragement. It may be the expression of a determined but cautious attitude immigrant children coming from these specific low socioeconomic backgrounds have toward their educational future.



## **6.4 A peculiar intergenerational trend of ambitions among immigrants**

The international CILS4EU dataset allows me to expand the analyses above looking at the educational ambitions of immigrants and native students from an intergenerational perspective. I already cited (see paragraph 6.1) that in this specific dataset I found evidence supporting the phenomenon of immigrants' ambition advantage over natives not only concerning children's university ambition for themselves but also parents' university ambition toward their children. Having information on both of them allows me also to look at their relationship. This operation proved fruitful because I found out that, as expected, immigrant's ambition advantage is regularly wider among parents than among children. My expectation was also that, among immigrants, parents' educational ambitions are regularly higher than their children's, because I supposed that the mechanism of relative risk aversion works with reference to immigrant parents' subjective social status, which their children are likely to have never experienced or experienced less than the actual social status. My expectation is supported by evidence because I found out that the intergenerational trends of ambitions in the two origin-groups are different: immigrant children are less ambitious than their parents in almost every social background, while native children are usually equally ambitious or slightly more ambitious than theirs. The specific low socioeconomic condition (low skilled blue collar parents with low education) where immigrant children's ambition advantage over natives was found to reach its maximum is the only one where immigrant children aspire to university slightly more often than their parents.

## **6.5 The influence of subjective social status on immigrants' university ambition**

In this section I will discuss the main results of my second step of analysis, which aimed at assessing the role of immigrant parents' social status before migration (maintained after migration as subjective social status) in the explanation of their children's paradoxically high ambitions. My general expectation was that adding this new component of socioeconomic background to the traditional ones of parental education and social class would help explain the occurrence of university ambition primarily among immigrant parents and secondarily among their children, and

especially for those in the most disadvantaged backgrounds where paradoxically high university ambitions were found.

Given this general expectation, the main data source for my analyses is the international CILS4EU dataset, because it is the only one including reliable information on parents' educational ambitions toward their children. Therefore, most of my explanatory hypotheses were tested on CILS4EU data on immigrant parents' university ambition and in this paragraph I will first sum up their results. Even if I expected a limited role of subjective social status in the explanation of immigrant children's university ambition, nevertheless I also estimated its effect on them in all the three datasets and I will conclude the paragraph highlighting similarities and differences I found on this point.

As already said, I was able to assess the role of immigrant parents' subjective social status in the explanation of their university ambition toward their children only using CIL4EU international data. I found out that this was indeed the socioeconomic component showing the highest correlation with immigrant parents' university ambition, higher as expected than the correlation of parental education with it. The correlation of the new immigrant family background component with parents' university ambition was particularly strong among low educated parents employed in blue collar jobs, which was precisely the socioeconomic category displaying the maximum immigrant parents' ambition advantage over native parents (see paragraph 6.2). In the regression analysis I performed, subjective social status emerged as the only component of immigrant parents' background displaying a significant and appreciable effect on their university ambition. The only category of the two traditional background components having a significant effect on parents' university ambition was their university education, but the effect disappeared when the new background component was considered.

Using again CILS4EU international data I was able to assess also the role of immigrant parents' subjective social status in the explanation of their children's university ambition for themselves and this means that I have also the unique occasion to look at its role from an intergenerational perspective. Similarly to what happened in the regression on parents' university ambition, in the same regression but on children's ambition subjective social status emerged again as the only component of immigrant background displaying a significant and appreciable effect even if its magnitude and significance decreased compared to the same regression on parents' ambition. Another expectation I had is that considering immigrant parents' university ambition in the

regression would decrease the effect of parents' subjective social status on children's ambition, because a considerable part of it is likely to pass through them: in this case regression results even surpassed my expectation, because the effect of parents' university ambition on their children's university ambition for themselves was so strong that made even parents' subjective social status no longer significant.

Looking from an intergenerational perspective, the analyses pointed out that among the three immigrant background components, parents' subjective social status is the one whose correlation with university ambition decreased the most moving from parents' to children's ambition. Parents' subjective social status still displays the highest correlation with children's university ambition, but followed closely by the other two traditional background components of parents' education and social class. Sharpening the analyses, I suspected that the reduced role of parents' subjective social status in shaping children's educational ambition might be due not only to the fact that the relative risk aversion mechanism works primarily on parents, which was the reason behind my expectation, but also to the fact that CILS4EU immigrant children are mainly born in their current countries of residence (the so-called generation 2.0). Members of generation 2.0 are very likely to have never experienced the life in their parents' countries of origin, which is the context of reference for subjective social status, while generations 1.75 and 1.5 lived there a part of their childhood. Testing this guess, I indeed found out that the correlation of immigrant parents' subjective social status with their children's university ambition follows precisely this criterion, being to its minimum in generation 2.0 and increasing its strength in generation 1.75 and even more in generation 1.5. I also observed that depending on the socioeconomic category considered, the association of parents' subjective social status passing from parents' to children's ambitions decreases following different trends. One of the reasons behind this different reduction may be that the more parents' subjective social status is different from the actual one children experienced during the most of their lives, the less it exerts a direct effect on children's university ambition (but still it exerts an effect through parents' ambition). I collected some very preliminary evidence pointing in this direction, but much more is needed to support this specific hypothesis.

As said before, even if I expected a limited role of parents' subjective social status in the explanation of immigrant children's university ambition, nevertheless I also estimated its effect in all the three datasets. I already cited above that regression analysis on children's university ambition in CILS4EU dataset confirmed my expectation on this point, because the effect of

subjective social status halved compared to the same regression on parents' university ambition and – again as expected - completely disappeared when parents' university ambition was included in the model. And yet, the regression results also positively surprised me, because parents' subjective social status was the background component still displaying the highest correlation with children's university ambition, even if followed closely by the other two traditional components, before the inclusion of parents' university ambition into the model. The same regression analysis performed on immigrant children's university ambition in the French and the Italian data sources did not give the same results, estimating in both cases a null and not significant effect of parents' subjective social status.

Intuitively, it seems that the more pronounced and widespread is the phenomenon of immigrant children's ambition advantage over natives in the data source, the higher is the effect of immigrant parents' subjective social status on the university ambition of their children in that same data source. In fact I found evidence of a general immigrants' ambition advantage over same-background natives only in the international CILS4EU dataset, both concerning parents' and children's university ambition, and this is precisely the only data source where immigrant parents' subjective social status was found to have the strongest and most significant effect of all the three background components on both parents' and children's university ambition. The French data context was instead characterized by a general slight native children's ambition advantage over same-background immigrant peers, which became deeper in the Italian data, and correspondingly the effect of parents' subjective social status on the immigrant children's university ambition in these datasets was found to be null and not significant.

In conclusion, I hope this thesis succeeded in its general purposes. The first one was undoubtedly to support the need for a revision of the concept of socioeconomic background in the field of migration studies. The need for such revision was highlighted, in this work, by the occurrence of paradoxes concerning to some extent the educational ambitions of the immigrant second generation in various European contexts. The second purpose was to test the potential of a different concept of social status, that I believe is more appropriate to the peculiar experience of migration, to explain such paradoxes. This latter purpose was only partially achieved mainly due to the scarcity of adequate data, which prevented me from testing in more than one occasion the mechanism I supposed is behind the effect of this new data component on immigrant children's ambitions. Nevertheless, in the data source I found having all the needed information, the results

of my analyses fully supported the role of immigrant parents' subjective social status in the explanation mainly of parents' own educational ambitions toward their second generation children but also of children's educational ambitions for themselves. And yet, I believe the potential of this new component of immigrants' social background goes far beyond this specific role, so ultimately I hope this work may be a source of inspiration for other scholars.

## Appendix

### Chapter 3

*Table 3.1- Children's university ambition by parental education and origin-groups, percentages*

	Parental education	Children's university ambition		Total
		less than university education	university education	
Immigrant children	less than upper secondary	13.6	86.4	100.0 (376)
	upper secondary	15.9	84.1	100.0 (220)
	tertiary	3.8	96.2	100.0 (156)
N: 752 Chi2:13.6 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.22				
Native children	less than upper secondary	24.3	75.7	100.0 (70)
	upper secondary	13.4	86.6	100.0 (142)
	tertiary	0.0	100.0	100.0 (85)
N: 297 Chi2: 21.7 (p 0.000) Gamma:0.67				

*Table 3.2 - Children's university ambition by parental social class and origin-groups, percentages.*

	Parental social class	Children's university ambition		Total
		less than university education	university education	
Immigrant children	low skilled blue collars	15.6	84.4	100.0 (230)
	high skilled blue collars	15.1	84.9	100.0 (146)
	low skilled white collars	12.0	88.0	100.0 (133)
	high skilled white collars	6.9	93.1	100.0 (173)
N: 682 Chi2: 7.8 (p 0.050) Gamma: 0.23				
Native children	low skilled blue collars	21.6	78.4	100.0 (51)
	high skilled blue collars	8.8	91.2	100.0 (34)
	low skilled white collars	18.6	81.4	100.0 (86)
	high skilled white collars	5.0	95.0	100.0 (121)
N: 292 Chi2: 13.6 (p 0.003) Gamma:0.4				

*Table 3.3 - Children's university ambition by the combination of parental social class' level of skills and parental education and by origin-groups, percentages*

	Combination of parental social class' level of skills & parental education	Children's university ambition		Total
		less than university education	university education	
Immigrant children	lows killed & less than upsec	14.4	85.6	100.0 (209)
	low skilled & upsec	18.1	81.9	100.0 (116)
	low skilled & university	2.6	97.4	100.0 (38)
	high skilled & less than upsec	13.9	86.1	100.0 (108)
	high skilled & upsec	14.4	85.6	100.0 (97)
	high skilled & university	4.4	95.6	100.0 (114)
		12.6	87.4	100.0 (682)
Native children	lows killed & less than upsec	29.4	70.6	100.0 (51)
	low skilled & upsec	15.6	84.4	100.0 (77)
	low skilled & university	0	100.0	100.0 (9)
	high skilled & less than upsec	11.1	88.9	100.0 (18)
	high skilled & upsec	11.3	88.7	100.0 (62)
	high skilled & university	0.0	100.0	100.0 (75)
		12.3	87.7	100.0 (292)

Table 3.4 – University ambition of low school performance\* **immigrant** children by parental education and social class, percentages.

		Children's university ambition		Total
		less than university education	university education	
Parental education	less than upper secondary	12.9	87.1	100.0 (209)
	upper secondary	17.7	82.3	100.0 (124)
	university	5.3	94.7	100.0 (75)
N: 408 Chi2: 6.4 (p 0.04) Gamma: 0.1				
Parental social class	low skilled blue collars	18.9	81.1	100.0 (127)
	high skilled blue collars	12.4	87.6	100.0 (81)
	low skilled white collars	11.4	88.6	100.0 (70)
	high skilled white collars	10.1	89.9	100.0 (89)
N:367 Chi2:4.2 (p 0.24) Gamma:0.22				

\*less than the mean of the class or on the mean

Table 3.5 – University ambition of low school performance\* **native** children by parental education, percentages.

		Children's university ambition		Total
		less than university education	university education	
Parental education	less than upper secondary	30.8	69.2	100.0 (39)
	upper secondary	19.5	80.5	100.0 /77)
	university	0.0	100.0	100.0 (45)
N: 161 Chi2: 14.9 (p 0.001) Gamma: 0.7				
Parental social class	low skilled blue collars	34.6	65.4	100.0 (26)
	high skilled blue collars	10.0	90.0	100.0 (20)
	low skilled white collars	25.6	74.4	100.0 (43)
	high skilled white collars	7.1	92.9	100.0 (70)
N:159 Chi2:13.5 (p 0.004) Gamma:0.44				

\* less than the mean of the class or on the mean



*Table 3.6 - University ambition of low school performance\* children by the combination of parental social class' level of skills and parental education and by origin-groups, percentages*

	Combination of parental social class' level of skills & parental education	Children's university ambition		Total
		less than university education	university education	
Immigrant children	lows killed & less than upsec	16.1	83.9	100.0 (112)
	low skilled & upsec	20.3	79.7	100.0 (64)
	low skilled & university	4.8	95.2	100.0 (21)
	high skilled & less than upsec	11.3	88.7	100.0 (62)
	high skilled & upsec	16.1	83.9	100.0 (56)
	high skilled & university	5.8	94.2	100.0 (52)
		13.9	86.1	100.0 (367)
Native children	lows killed & less than upsec	42.3	57.7	100.0 (26)
	low skilled & upsec	23.1	76.9	100.0 (39)
	low skilled & university	0.0	100.0	100.0 (4)
	high skilled & less than upsec	8.3	91.7	100.0 (12)
	high skilled & upsec	16.2	83.8	100.0 (37)
	high skilled & university	0.0	100.0	100.0 (41)
		17.0	83.0	100.0 (159)

*Table 3.7 - Children's brief and long university ambition by the combination of parental social class' level of skills and parental education and by origin-groups, percentages*

	Combination of parental social class' level of skills & parental education	Children's university ambition			Total
		less than university education	brief* university paths	long** university paths	
Immigrant children	lows killed & less than upsec	16.7	57.0	26.3	100.0 (179)
	low skilled & upsec	22.1	44.2	33.7	100.0 (95)
	low skilled & university	3.6	50	46.4	100.0 (28)
	high skilled & less than upsec	17.0	50.0	33.0	100.0 (88)
	high skilled & upsec	18.1	52.0	29.9	100.0 (77)
	high skilled & university	6.9	23.3	69.8	100.0 (73)
		16.0	48.0	36.0	100.0 (540)
Native children	lows killed & less than upsec	35.0	35.0	30.0	100.0 (43)
	low skilled & upsec	19.4	53.2	27.4	100.0 (62)
	low skilled & university	0.0	40.0	60.0	100.0 (5)
	high skilled & less than upsec	20.0	80.0	0.0	100.0 (10)
	high skilled & upsec	17.5	47.5	35.0	100.0 (40)
	high skilled & university	0.0	23.6	76.4	100.0 (55)
		16.7	41.9	41.4	100.0 (215)

\*<=BAC+3 \*\*>BAC+3

Table 3.8 – Brief and long university ambition of low school performance\* children by the combination of parental social class' level of skills and parental education and by origin-groups, percentages

	Combination of parental social class' level of skills & parental education	Children's university ambition			Total
		less than university education	brief* university paths	long** university paths	
Immigrant children	lows killed & less than upsec	19.3	66.7	14.0	100.0 (93)
	low skilled & upsec	25.0	50.0	25.0	100.0 (52)
	low skilled & university	6.7	53.3	40.0	100.0 (15)
	high skilled & less than upsec	13.5	53.8	32.7	100.0 (52)
	high skilled & upsec	20.5	59.0	20.5	100.0 (44)
	high skilled & university	9.7	25.8	64.5	100.0 (31)
		17.8	55.0	27.2	100.0 (287)
Native children	lows killed & less than upsec	50.0	31.8	18.2	100.0 (22)
	low skilled & upsec	30.0	63.3	6.7	100.0 (30)
	low skilled & university	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0 (2)
	high skilled & less than upsec	16.7	83.3	0.0	100.0 (6)
	high skilled & upsec	24.0	48.0	28.0	100.0 (25)
	high skilled & university	0.0	23.1	76.9	100.0 (26)
		24.3	44.2	31.5	100.0 (111)

\*<=BAC+3 \*\*>BAC+3

## Chapter 4

Table 4.1 – Distribution of the main variables employed in the analyses within origin-groups (weighted percentages).

		Children			Parents		
		Of immigrants	Of natives	Total	Immigrants	Natives	Total
<b>Parental education</b>	less than upper sec.	37.7	27.1	29.0	46.6	30.6	33.1
	upper secondary	33.4	45.7	43.5	29.5	43.4	41.3
	university	28.9	27.2	27.5	23.9	26.0	25.6
	missing	935	902	1837	87	70	157
	total respondents	100.0 (3,953)	100.0 (7,857)	100.0 (11,792)	100.0 (2,419)	100.0 (6,197)	100.0 (8,616)
<b>Parental social class</b>	low skilled blue collars	18.4	3.9	6.4	19.5	3.3	5.8
	high skilled blue collars	11.7	7.2	8.0	14.1	6.5	7.7
	low skilled white collars	31.1	28.0	28.5	30.5	26.6	27.2
	high skilled white collars	38.8	60.9	57.1	35.9	63.6	59.3
	missing	566	246	812	179	72	251
	total respondents	100.0 (4,304)	100.0 (8,513)	100.0 (12,817)	100.0 (2,327)	100.0 (6,178)	100.0 (8,505)
<b>Parental social class and education together</b>	lowskil blue & <upsec	10.4	1.4	2.9	12.7	1.5	3.2
	lowskil blue & upsec	6.1	2.0	2.7	5.1	1.5	2.0
	lowskil blue & uni	1.6	0.3	0.5	1.8	0.2	0.4
	highskil blue & <upsec	8.0	2.8	3.7	10.4	3.3	4.3
	highskil blue & upsec	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.1	3.1
	highskil blue & uni	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.2
	lowskil white & <upsec	12.2	11.0	11.2	15.4	12.4	12.9
	lowskil white & upsec	12.1	14.1	13.7	10.3	12.8	12.4
	lowskil white & uni	5.8	1.8	2.5	4.0	1.4	1.8
	highskil white & <upsec	6.6	12.0	11.1	7.5	13.4	12.5

	highskil white & upsec	11.1	25.8	23.3	10.6	26.0	23.7
	highskil white & uni	21.8	24.6	24.3	18.5	24.2	23.5
	missing	1,264	1,031	2,295	243	117	360
	total of respondents	100.0 (3,606)	100.0 (7,728)	100.0 (11,334)	100.0 (2,263)	100.0 (6,133)	100.0 (8,396)

*Table 4.2 - Parents' educational ambition toward their children by parental education and origin-groups, weighted percentages*

	Parental education	Parents' educational ambition toward their children		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant parents	less than upper secondary	52.9	47.1	100.0 (916)
	upper secondary	47.5	52.5	100.0 (860)
	tertiary	16.0	84.0	100.0 (588)
	Total	42.4	57.6	100.0 (2,364)
Chi2: 219.1 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.53				
Native parents	less than upper secondary	75.0	25.0	100.0 (1,432)
	upper secondary	58.5	41.5	100.0 (2,800)
	tertiary	28.9	71.1	100.0 (1,751)
	Total	55.8	44.2	100.0 (5,983)
Chi2: 1.0e+03 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.66				

*Table 4.3 - Parents' educational ambition toward their children by parental social class and origin-groups, weighted percentages*

	Parental social class	Parents' educational ambition toward their children		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant parents	low skilled blue collars	50.6	49.4	100.0 (422)
	high skilled blue collars	52.7	47.3	100.0 (318)
	low skilled white collars	46.8	53.2	100.0 (672)
	high skilled white collars	28.9	71.1	100.0 (861)
	Total	41.9	58.1	100.0 (2,273)
Chi2: 86.5 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.3				
Native parents	low skilled blue collars	85.7	14.3	100.0 (159)
	high skilled blue collars	81.7	18.3	100.0 (266)
	low skilled white collars	70.6	29.4	100.0 (1,493)
	high skilled white collars	45.4	54.6	100.0 (4,045)
	Total	55.8	44.2	100.0 (5,963)
Chi2: 578.0 (p 0.000) Gamma:0.6				

Table 4.4 - Parents' educational ambition toward their children by the combination of detailed parental social class and parental education and by origin-groups, weighted percentages

	Combination of parental social class & parental education	Parents' educational ambition toward their children		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant parents	low skill blue coll. & less than upsec	50.5	49.5	100.0 (246)
	low skill blue coll. & upsec	66.1	33.9	100.0 (113)
	low skill blue coll. & university	8.2	91.8	100.0 (43)
	high skill blue coll. & less than upsec	52.6	47.4	100.0 (182)
	high skill blue coll. & upsec	56.7	43.3	100.0 (103)
	high skill blue coll. & university	10.1	89.9	100.0 (24)
	low skill white coll. & less than upsec	53.6	46.4	100.0 (256)
	low skill white coll. & upsec	42.0	58.0	100.0 (289)
	low skill white coll. & university	36.2	63.8	100.0 (106)
	high skill white coll. & less than upsec	54.6	45.4	100.0 (147)
	high skill white coll. & upsec	38.7	61.3	100.0 (310)
	high skill white coll. & university	13.0	87.0	100.0 (392)
	Total	41.8	58.2	100.0 (2,211)
Chi2: 236.3 (p.0.000) Gamma:0.3				
Native parents	low skill blue coll. & less than upsec	89.4	10.6	100.0 (69)
	low skill blue coll. & upsec	82.6	17.4	100.0 (75)
	low skill blue coll. & university	79.8	20.2	100.0 (8)
	high skill blue coll. & less than upsec	87.7	12.3	100.0 (112)
	high skill blue coll. & upsec	76.4	23.6	100.0 (142)
	high skill blue coll. & university	58.4	41.6	100.0 (9)
	low skill white coll. & less than upsec	75.2	24.8	100.0 (610)
	low skill white coll. & upsec	67.7	32.3	100.0 (781)
	low skill white coll. & university	53.3	46.7	100.0 (90)
	high skill white coll. & less than upsec	69.9	30.1	100.0 (621)
	high skill white coll. & upsec	50.5	49.5	100.0 (1,772)
	high skill white coll. & university	26.3	73.7	100.0 (1,632)
	Total	55.7	44.3	100.0 (5,921)
Chi2: 1.2e+03 (p.0.000) Gamma:0.6				

Table 4.5 - Children's educational ambition for themselves by parental education and origin-groups, weighted percentages

	Parental education	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant children	less than upper secondary	56.3	43.7	100.0 (1,210)
	upper secondary	51.6	48.4	100.0 (1,329)
	tertiary	24.0	76.0	100.0 (1,139)
	Total	45.4	54.6	100.0 (3,678)
Chi2: 254.0 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.4				
Native children	less than upper secondary	67.0	33.0	100.0 (1,534)
	upper secondary	56.2	43.8	100.0 (3,355)
	tertiary	28.3	71.7	100.0 (2,170)
	Total	51.4	48.6	100.0 (7,059)
Chi2: 739.8 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.5				

Table 4.6 - Children's educational ambition for themselves by parental social class and origin-groups, weighted percentages

	Parental social class	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant children	low skilled blue collars	52.4	47.6	100.0 (708)
	high skilled blue collars	64.4	35.6	100.0 (479)
	low skilled white collars	52.0	48.0	100.0 (1,240)
	high skilled white collars	28.3	71.7	100.0 (1,553)
	Total	44.4	55.6	100.0 (3,980)
Chi2: 206.9 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.35				
Native children	low skilled blue collars	69.5	30.5	100.0 (272)
	high skilled blue collars	72.6	27.4	100.0 (382)
	low skilled white collars	63.4	36.6	100.0 (2,019)
	high skilled white collars	43.3	56.7	100.0 (4,891)
	Total	51.9	48.1	100.0 (7,564)
Chi2: 435.1 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.4				



*Table 4.7 – Children's and their parents' university ambitions (respectively for themselves and toward their children), within parental education and origin-groups, weighted percentages*

	Parental education	Children's educational ambition for themselves			Parents' educational ambition toward their children		
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	Total	less than tertiary education	tertiary education	Total
Immigrants	less than upper secondary	59.7	40.3	100.0 (889)	52.9	47.1	100.0 (870)
	upper secondary	53.6	46.4	100.0 (814)	47.5	52.5	100.0 (797)
	tertiary	28.4	71.6	100.0 (551)	16.4	83.6	100.0 (543)
	Total	50.4	49.6	100.0 (2,254)	42.5	57.5	100.0 (2,210)
Natives	less than upper secondary	69.1	30.9	100.0 (1,344)	74.8	25.2	100.0 (1,311)
	upper secondary	54.9	45.1	100.0 (2,603)	59.3	40.7	100.0 (2,488)
	tertiary	30.2	69.8	100.0 (1,623)	29.2	70.8	100.0 (1,590)
	Total	52.7	47.3	100.0 (5,570)	56.0	44.0	100.0 (5,389)

Table 4.8 – Children's and their parents' university ambitions (respectively for themselves and toward their children), within parental occupation and origin-groups, weighted percentages

	Parental occupation	Children's educational ambition for themselves			Parents' educational ambition toward their children		
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	Total	less than tertiary education	tertiary education	Total
Immigrants	low skilled blue collars	56.3	43.7	100.0 (402)	50.7	49.3	100.0 (396)
	high skilled blue collars	64.5	31.5	100.0 (306)	52.6	47.4	100.0 (302)
	low skilled white collars	55.3	44.7	100.0 (657)	46.9	53.1	100.0 (639)
	high skilled white collars	34.5	65.5	100.0 (803)	29.2	70.8	100.0 (788)
	Total	49.9	50.1	100.0 (2,168)	42.1	57.9	100.0 (2,125)
Natives	low skilled blue collars	76.0	24.0	100.0 (157)	71.8	28.2	100.0 (149)
	high skilled blue collars	74.7	25.3	100.0 (248)	74.5	25.5	100.0 (231)
	low skilled white collars	66.0	34.0	100.0 (1,386)	64.7	35.3	100.0 (1,326)
	high skilled white collars	44.0	56.0	100.0 (3,768)	33.4	66.6	100.0 (3,672)
	Total	52.7	47.3	100.0 (5,559)	44.0	56.0	100.0 (5,378)

Table 4.9 - Children's educational ambition for themselves by the combination of parental social class and parental education and by origin-groups, weighted percentages

	Combination of parental social class & parental education	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant children	low skill blue coll. & less than upsec	48.8	51.2	100.0 (318)
	low skill blue coll. & upsec	64.5	35.5	100.0 (205)
	low skill blue coll. & university	37.3	62.7	100.0 (69)
	high skill blue coll. & less than upsec	67.0	33.0	100.0 (221)
	high skill blue coll. & upsec	65.4	34.6	100.0 (153)
	high skill blue coll. & university	55.6	44.4	100.0 (40)
	low skill white coll. & less than upsec	58.9	41.1	100.0 (333)
	low skill white coll. & upsec	52.2	47.8	100.0 (457)
	low skill white coll. & university	39.8	60.2	100.0 (225)
	high skill white coll. & less than upsec	46.6	53.4	100.0 (202)
	high skill white coll. & upsec	41.2	58.8	100.0 (415)
	high skill white coll. & university	17.4	82.6	100.0 (740)
	Total	45.0	55.0	100.0 (3,378)
Chi2: 333.2 (p.0.000) Gamma:0.4				
Native children	low skill blue coll. & less than upsec	84.3	15.7	100.0 (78)
	low skill blue coll. & upsec	59.9	40.1	100.0 (130)
	low skill blue coll. & university	63.3	36.7	100.0 (18)
	high skill blue coll. & less than upsec	80.4	19.6	100.0 (117)
	high skill blue coll. & upsec	74.1	25.9	100.0 (198)
	high skill blue coll. & university	28.4	71.6	100.0 (19)
	low skill white coll. & less than upsec	71.7	28.3	100.0 (640)
	low skill white coll. & upsec	59.5	40.5	100.0 (997)
	low skill white coll. & university	47.1	52.9	100.0 (148)
	high skill white coll. & less than upsec	57.8	42.2	100.0 (668)
	high skill white coll. & upsec	51.6	48.4	100.0 (1,976)
	high skill white coll. & university	26.3	73.7	100.0 (1,960)
	Total	51.2	48.8	100.0 (6,949)
Chi2: 872.7 (p.0.000) Gamma:0.5				

*Table 4.10 - Children's and their parents' educational ambition (respectively for themselves and toward their children) by the combination of parental social class and parental education and by origin-groups, weighted percentages*

	Combination of parental social class & parental education	Children's educational ambition for themselves			Parents' educational ambition toward their children		
		less than tertiary edu	tertiary edu	Total	less than tertiary edu	tertiary edu	Total
Immigrant children	LowSkill BlueColl & <Upsec	49.8	50.2	100.0 (236)	50.7	49.3	100.0 (231)
	LowSkill BlueColl & Upsec	76.5	23.5	100.0 (108)	65.5	34.5	100.0 (107)
	LowSkill BlueColl & Uni	41.5	58.5	100.0 (40)	8.5	91.5	100.0 (40)
	HighSkill BlueColl & <Upsec	69.5	30.5	100.0 (177)	52.4	47.6	100.0 (175)
	HighSkill BlueColl & Upsec	64.8	35.2	100.0 (99)	56.5	43.5	100.0 (97)
	HighSkill BlueColl & Uni	79.0	21.0	100.0 (21)	10.5	89.5	100.0 (21)
	LowSkill WhiteColl & <Upsec	59.5	40.5	100.0 (253)	54.0	46.0	100.0 (247)
	LowSkill WhiteColl & Upsec	49.6	50.4	100.0 (280)	41.3	58.7	100.0 (271)
	LowSkill WhiteColl & Uni	54.0	46.0	100.0 (104)	37.0	63.0	100.0 (101)
	HighSkill WhiteColl & <Upsec	57.3	42.7	100.0 (142)	54.3	45.7	100.0 (138)
	HighSkill WhiteColl & Upsec	43.6	56.4	100.0 (285)	39.4	60.6	100.0 (280)
HighSkill WhiteColl & Uni	20.0	80.0	100.0 (363)	13.4	86.6	100.0 (359)	
	Total	49.7	50.3	100.0 (2,108)	41.9	58.1	100.0 (2,067)

Native children	LowSkill BlueColl & <Upsec	86.8	13.2	100.0 (67)	88.7	11.3	100.0 (66)
	LowSkill BlueColl & Upsec	66.9	33.1	100.0 (76)	78.5	21.5	100.0 (69)
	LowSkill BlueColl & Uni	57.8	42.2	100.0 (8)	79.8	20.2	100.0 (8)
	HighSkill BlueColl & <Upsec	82.7	17.3	100.0 (102)	87.0	13.0	100.0 (99)
	HighSkill BlueColl & Upsec	68.5	31.5	100.0 (136)	79.3	20.7	100.0 (122)
	HighSkill BlueColl & Uni	39.1	60.9	100.0 (7)	58.0	42.0	100.0 (7)
	LowSkill WhiteColl & <Upsec	73.1	26.9	100.0 (563)	74.7	25.3	100.0 (553)
	LowSkill WhiteColl & Upsec	60.2	39.8	100.0 (732)	68.5	31.5	100.0 (690)
	LowSkill WhiteColl & Uni	52.9	47.1	100.0 (79)	51.9	48.1	100.0 (72)
	HighSkill WhiteColl & <Upsec	60.2	39.8	100.0 (594)	70.2	29.8	100.0 (577)
	HighSkill WhiteColl & Upsec	50.1	49.9	100.0 (1,635)	51.6	48.4	100.0 (1,583)
	HighSkill WhiteColl & Uni	28.4	71.6	100.0 (1,520)	26.7	73.3	100.0 (1,494)
	Total	52.6	47.4	100.0 (5,519)	55.9	44.1	100.0 (5,340)

*Table 4.11- Immigrant parents' educational ambition by levels of subjective social status, weighted percentages*

Parents' subjective social status	Parents' educational ambition toward their children		Total
	less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Very low (0-25% of the edu.distr. in the country of origin )	73.4	26.6	100.0 (242)
Low (25-50%)	49.2	50.8	100.0 (242)
High (50-75%)	39.2	60.8	100.0 (415)
Very high (75-100%)	23.9	76.1	100.0 (505)
	44.5	55.5	100.0 (1,404)

Chi2:195.2 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.55

Table 4.12 - Immigrant parents' university ambition toward their children by the combination of parental education and social class and by the level of their subjective social status (weighted percentages)

Combination of parental social class and parental education	Low* or high** level of parents' subjective social status	Immigrant parents' educational ambition toward their children		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Blue collars & less than upsec. edu	Low	65.0	35.0	100.0 (180)
	High	32.1	67.9	100.0 (135)
	Total	54.6	45.4	100.0 (315)
	Chi2: 35.5 (p. 0.000) Gamma: 0.6			
Blue collars & upsec. edu	Low	69.6	30.4	100.0 (38)
	High	58.3	41.7	100.0 (110)
	Total	61.3	38.7	100.0 (148)
	Chi2: 8.5 (p. 0.004) Gamma: 0.5			
White collars & less than upsec. edu	Low	57.5	42.5	100.0 (150)
	High	49.0	51.0	100.0 (91)
	Total	55.0	45.0	100.0 (241)
	Chi2: 2.2 (p. 0.140) Gamma: 0.2			
White collars & upsec. edu	Low	55.9	44.1	100.0 (57)
	High	33.5	66.5	100.0 (242)
	Total	39.9	60.1	100.0 (299)
	Chi2: 12.1 (p. 0.001) Gamma: 0.47			
White collars & university	Low	63.3	36.7	100.0 (13)
	High	15.0	85.0	100.0 (255)
	Total	17.3	82.7	100.0 (268)
	Chi2: 17.7 (p. 0.000) Gamma: 0.8			

\*education relative to their country of origin <50% \*\* education relative to their country of origin =>50%

Table 4.13 - Logistic regression on immigrant parents' university ambition toward their children (weighted odds ratios)

Variables	Categories	Model 1 or (std.err.)	Model 2 or (std.err.)
Combination of parental social class and parental education	Blue collars and less than Upper secondary		
	Blue collars and Upper secondary	0.76 (0.28)	0.38* (0.15)
	Blue collars and University*	10.67** (8.16)	4.31 (3.47)
	White collars and less than Upper secondary	0.98 (0.31)	0.95 (0.30)
	White collars and Upper secondary	1.82 (0.57)	0.94 (0.30)
	White collars and University	5.76*** (2.36)	2.08 (0.93)
Parental subjective social status <sup>111</sup> (from 0 to 100)			1.02*** (0.005)
	N	1,303	1,303

\*Warning! Only 32 subjects

<sup>111</sup> I tried also the four level (quartiles) version and it doesn't change practically anything but the magnitude of its effect, that becomes 1.80\*\*\*.



Table 4.14 – Logistic regression on immigrant children's university ambition for themselves (weighted odds ratios)

Variables	Category	Model	Model	Model
		1 or (std.err.)	2 or (std.err.)	3 or (std.err.)
Combination of parental education and parental social class	Blue collars and less than Upper secondary			
	Blue collars and Upper secondary	0.52 (0.19)	0.36**(0.13)	0.44* (0.16)
	Blue collars and University*	0.69 (0.45)	0.40 (0.29)	0.24* (0.17)
	White collars and less than Upper secondary	0.80 (0.27)	0.79 (0.26)	0.80 (0.27)
	White collars and Upper secondary	1.52 (0.48)	1.05 (0.35)	0.99 (0.36)
	White collars and University	3.50** (1.28)	1.97 (0.80)	1.59 (0.64)
Parental subjective social status <sup>112</sup> (from 0 to 100)			1.01**(0.004)	1.00 (0.005)
Parents' educational ambition toward their children	Less than university			
	University			6.57*** (1.61)
	N	1,256	1,256	1240

\*Warning! Only 32 subjects

<sup>112</sup>I tried also the four level (quartiles) version and the effect becomes 1.36\*\* (0.16) in model 2 and .1.11 (0.14) in model 3

*Table 4.15 – Children's university ambition for themselves by perceived school performance in Math and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)*

	Perceived school performance in Math	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant children	Not well at all	69.1	31.0	100.0 (124)
	Not that well	57.7	42.3	100.0 (474)
	Ok	53.9	46.1	100.0 (1,383)
	Quite well	38.0	62.0	100.0 (1,596)
	Very well	22.9	77.1	100.0 (883)
	Total	44.5	55.5	100.0 (4,460)
Chi2: 278.3 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.39				
Native children	Not well at all	62.4	37.6	100.0 (266)
	Not that well	60.6	39.4	100.0 (891)
	Ok	60.8	39.2	100.0 (2,369)
	Quite well	50.1	49.9	100.0 (2,727)
	Very well	33.6	66.4	100.0 (1,503)
	Total	52.2	47.8	100.0 (7,756)
Chi2: 409.6 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.34				

Table 4.16 - University ambition for themselves of children having low self-evaluated school performance\*, by parental education and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)

	Parental education	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant children	less than upper secondary	74.1	25.9	100.0 (207)
	upper secondary	66.7	33.3	100.0 (203)
	tertiary	34.1	65.9	100.0 (97)
	Total	62.5	37.5	100.0 (507)
Chi2: 21.2 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.32				
Native children	less than upper secondary	76.5	23.5	100.0 (256)
	upper secondary	60.0	40.0	100.0 (577)
	tertiary	40.7	59.3	100.0 (227)
	Total	60.0	40.0	100.0 (1,060)
Chi2: 58.3 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.4				

\*less than 3 ("ok") on a scale going from 1 ("not well at all") to 5 ("very well") about Math performance

Table 4.17 - University ambition for themselves of children having low self-evaluated school performance\*, by parental social class and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)

	Parental social class	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant children	low skilled blue collars	62.1	37.9	100.0 (122)
	high skilled blue collars	78.1	21.9	100.0 (73)
	low skilled white collars	58.6	41.4	100.0 (161)
	high skilled white collars	56.6	43.4	100.0 (167)
	Total	61.1	38.9	100.0 (523)
Chi2: 15.8 (p 0.001) Gamma: 0.23				
Native children	low skilled blue collars	88.0	12.0	100.0 (52)
	high skilled blue collars	78.6	21.4	100.0 (67)
	low skilled white collars	66.5	33.5	100.0 (338)
	high skilled white collars	53.7	46.3	100.0 (674)
	Total	60.7	39.3	100.0 (1,131)
Chi2: 37.4 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.33				

\*less than 3 ("ok") on a scale going from 1 ("not well at all") to 5 ("very well") about Math performance

Table 4.18 - University ambition for themselves of children having low self-evaluated school performance\*, by the combination of parental education and social class and by origin-groups (weighted percentages)

	Combination of parental social class & parental education	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant children	blue collars & less than upsec	68.7	31.3	100.0 (107)
	blue collars & upsec	70.3	29.7	100.0 (55)
	blue collars & university	56.9	43.1	100.0 (9)
	white collars & less than upsec	80.6	19.4	100.0 (73)
	white collars & upsec	64.9	35.1	100.0 (135)
	white collars & university	34.0	66.0	100.0 (80)
	Total	62.3	37.7	100.0 (459)
Chi2: 29.3 (p.0.000) Gamma:0.3				
Native children	blue collars & less than upsec	96.1	3.9	100.0 (34)
	blue collars & upsec	76.4	23.6	100.0 (66)
	blue collars & university	23.5	76.5	100.0 (5)
	white collars & less than upsec	71.3	28.7	100.0 (217)
	white collars & upsec	58.4	41.6	100.0 (505)
	white collars & university	41.2	58.8	100.0 (219)
	Total	59.9	40.1	100.0 (1,046)
Chi2: 70.1 (p.0.000) Gamma:0.4				

less than 3 on a scale going from 1 ("not well at all") to 5 ("very well") about Math performance

*Table 4.19 - University ambition for themselves of immigrant children coming from a low consistent socioeconomic background (blue collar parents having less than upper secondary education), by their perceived school performance and by the level of their parents' subjective social status (weighted percentages)*

Level of parents' subjective social status	Perceived school performance in Math	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Low (0-50%)	Not well	84.5	15.5	100.0 (35)
	Ok	60.9	39.1	100.0 (83)
	Well	55.2	44.8	100.0 (58)
	Total	63.5	36.5	100.0 (176)
High (50-100%)	Not well	40.3	59.7	100.0 (32)
	Ok	47.0	53.0	100.0 (46)
	Well	52.0	48.0	100.0 (51)
	Total	47.3	52.7	100.0 (129)

Table 4.20 - University ambition for themselves of immigrant children with a low educated background (less than upper secondary educated parents), by their perceived school performance and by the level of their parents' subjective social status (weighted percentages)

Level of parents' subjective social status	Perceived school performance in Math	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Very low (0-25%)	Not well	81.4	18.6	100.0 (34)
	Ok	71.6	28.4	100.0 (89)
	Well	59.2	40.8	100.0 (57)
	Total	69.0	31.0	100.0 (180)
Chi2: 9.52 (p. 0.009) Gamma: 0.40				
Low (25-50%)	Not well	87.7	12.3	100.0 (32)
	Ok	57.1	42.9	100.0 (62)
	Well	43.1	56.9	100.0 (75)
	Total	58.9	41.1	100.0 (169)
Chi2: 4.13 (p.0.127) Gamma: 0.27				
High (50-75%)	Not well	55.1	44.9	100.0 (48)
	Ok	52.3	47.7	100.0 (82)
	Well	56.2	43.8	100.0 (80)
	Total	54.4	45.6	100.0 (210)
Chi2: 3.39 (p.0.183) Gamma: 0.19				
Very high (75-100%)	Not well	91.1	8.9	100.0 (4)
	Ok	53.1	46.9	100.0 (15)
	Well	42.3	57.7	100.0 (10)
	Total	58.0	42.0	100.0 (29*)
Chi2: 1.04 (p.0.595) Gamma: -0.33				

\*Too few subjects to be considered in the analysis

Table 4.21 - University ambition for themselves of immigrant children with a low social class background (blue collar parents), by their perceived school performance and by the level of their parents' subjective social status (weighted percentages)

Level of parents' subjective social status	Perceived school performance in Math	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Very low (0-25%)	Not well	88.1	11.9	100.0 (24)
	Ok	69.8	30.2	100.0 (58)
	Well	53.5	46.5	100.0 (36)
	Total	67.7	32.3	100.0 (118)
Chi2: 3.85 (p. 0.146) Gamma: 0.32				
Low (25-50%)	Not well	80.9	19.1	100.0 (19)
	Ok	48.9	51.1	100.0 (40)
	Well	74.0	26.0	100.0 (40)
	Total	64.2	35.8	100.0 (99)
Chi2: 0.30 (p.0.860) Gamma: -0.02				
High (50-75%)	Not well	49.8	50.2	100.0 (40)
	Ok	55.8	44.2	100.0 (57)
	Well	59.5	40.5	100.0 (70)
	Total	55.9	44.1	100.0 (167)
Chi2: 4.64 (p.0.098) Gamma: 0.21				
Very high (75-100%)	Not well	57.0	43.0	100.0 (12)
	Ok	65.2	34.8	100.0 (39)
	Well	64.7	35.3	100.0 (50)
	Total	64.6	35.4	100.0 (101)
Chi2: 0.07 (p.0.968) Gamma: 0.03				



## Chapter 5

Table 5.1- Children's educational ambition by parental education and origin-groups, percentages

	Parental education	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant children	less than upper secondary	71.7	28.3	100.0 (1,278)
	upper secondary	56.4	43.6	100.0 (5,523)
	tertiary	38.5	68.5	100.0 (2,872)
	Total	53.1	46.9	100.0 (9,673)
Chi2: 445.28 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.38				
Native children	less than upper secondary	63.5	36.5	100.0 (70,274)
	upper secondary	43.0	57.0	100.0 (154,858)
	tertiary	22.0	78.0	100.0 (87,290)
	Total	41.7	58.3	100.0 (312,422)
Chi2: 2.8e+04 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.49				

Source: 2011-12 survey on second year high school students' learning assessment, INVALSI

Table 5.2 - Children's educational ambition by parental social class and origin-groups, percentages.

	Parental social class	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant children	working class	56.6	43.4	100.0 (4,976)
	middle class	51.8	48.2	100.0 (3,964)
	upper class	48.7	51.3	100.0 (807)
	Total	54.0	46.0	100.0 (9,747)
Chi2:30.23 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.1				
Native children	working class	56.4	43.6	100.0 (63,890)
	middle class	37.9	62.1	100.0 (192,285)
	upper class	35.9	64.1	100.0 (50,290)
	Total	41.4	58.6	100.0 (306,465)
Chi2:7-5e+03 (p 0.000) Gamma:0.25				

Source: 2011-12 survey on second year high school students' learning assessment, INVALSI

Table 5.3 - Children's university ambition for themselves by the combination of parental social class and parental education and by origin-groups, percentages

	Combination of parental social class & parental education	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant children	working class & less than upsec	68.8	31.2	100.0 (586)
	working class & upsec	56.5	43.5	100.0 (2,844)
	working class & university	42.6	57.4	100.0 (1,022)
	middle class & less than upsec	72.1	27.9	100.0 (355)
	middle class & upsec	55.5	44.5	100.0 (1,863)
	hmiddle class & university	36.6	63.4	100.0 (1,359)
	upper class & less than upsec	74.5	25.5	100.0 (98)
	upper class. & upsec	54.5	45.5	100.0 (354)
	upper class & university	30.0	70.0	100.0 (290)
	Total	52.3	47.7	100.0 (8,771)
Chi2: 398.6 (p.0.000) Gamma: 0.17				
Native children	working class & less than upsec	64.9	35.1	100.0 (25,338)
	working class & upsec	50.8	49.2	100.0 (30,612)
	working class & university	41.0	59.0	100.0 (4,747)
	middle class & less than upsec	61.1	38.9	100.0 (29,165)
	middle class & upsec	40.4	59.6	100.0 (94,460)
	hmiddle class & university	20.8	79.2	100.0 (60,730)
	upper class & less than upsec	61.9	38.1	100.0 (7,371)
	upper class. & upsec	40.5	59.5	100.0 (22,054)
	upper class & university	19.1	80.9	100.0 (18,991)
	Total	40.8	59.2	100.0 (293,468)
Chi2: 2.7e+04 (p.0.000) Gamma:0.32				

Source: 2011-12 survey on second year high school students' learning assessment, INVALSI

Table 5.4 - Children's university ambition by ESCS quartiles and origin-groups, percentages.

	ESCS quartiles	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Immigrant children	Very low	66.2	33.8	100.0 (3,669)
	Low	57.2	42.8	100.0 (3,355)
	High	47.3	52.7	100.0 (2,443)
	Very high	33.4	66.6	100.0 (1,382)
	Total	55.0	45.0	100.0 (10,829)
Chi2: 514.13 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.32				
Native children	Very low	63.0	37.0	100.0 (77,431)
	Low	49.0	51.0	100.0 (82,184)
	High	37.5	62.5	100.0 (84,570)
	Very high	21.6	78.4	100.0 (82,703)
	Total	42.4	57.6	100.0 (326,888)
Chi2: 3.1e+04 (p 0.000) Gamma:0.45				

Source: 2011-12 survey on second year high school students' learning assessment, INVALSI

Table 5.5 - Children's university ambition for themselves, by parental social class and by type of second generation (percentages)

	Parental social class	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Native children	working class	56.4	43.6	100.0 (63,890)
	middle class	37.9	62.1	100.0 (192,285)
	upper class	35.9	64.1	100.0 (50,290)
	Total	41.4	58.6	100.0 (306,465)
Chi2:7-5e+03 (p 0.000) Gamma:0.25				
Generation 2.0	working class	50.9	49.1	100.0 (1,020)
	middle class	46.7	53.3	100.0 (1,124)
	upper class	46.1	53.9	100.0 (297)
	Total	48.4	51.6	100.0 (2,441)
Chi2: 4.42 (p 0.110) Gamma: 0.07				
Generation 1.75	working class	57.1	42.9	100.0 (1,700)
	middle class	51.3	48.7	100.0 (1,228)
	upper class	45.7	54.3	100.0 (243)
	Total	54.0	46.1	100.0 (3,171)
Chi2: 17.0 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.13				
Generation 1.5	working class	58.9	41.1	100.0 (2,228)
	middle class	55.9	44.1	100.0 (1,599)
	upper class	54.0	46.0	100.0 (261)
	Total	57.4	42.6	100.0 (4,088)
Chi2: 4.8 (p 0.090) Gamma: 0.06				

Source: 2011-12 survey on second year high school students' learning assessment, INVALSI

Table 5.6 - Children's brief\* and long\*\* university ambition by the combination of parental social class' and parental education and by origin-groups (percentages)

	upper class. & upsec	54.5	17.8	27.7	100.0 (354)
	upper class & university	30.0	22.4	47.6	100.0 (290)
	Total	52.3	20.8	26.9	100.0 (8,771)
Chi2: 474.9 (p. 0.000) Gamma: 0.17					
Native children	working class & less than upsec	64.9	17.4	17.7	100.0 (25,338)
	working class & upsec	50.8	22.6	26.6	100.0 (30,612)
	working class & university	41.1	23.5	35.4	100.0 (4,747)
	middle class & less than upsec	61.0	18.7	20.3	100.0 (29,165)
	middle class & upsec	40.4	24.4	35.2	100.0 (94,460)
	middle class & university	20.9	22.4	56.7	100.0 (60,730)
	upper class & less than upsec	61.9	17.3	20.8	100.0 (7,371)
	upper class. & upsec	40.4	23.2	36.4	100.0 (22,054)
	upper class & university	19.1	21.3	59.6	100.0 (18,991)
	Total	40.8	22.1	37.1	100.0 (293,468)
Chi2: 3.2e+04 (p.0.000) Gamma: 0.29					

\*3-years degrees \*\*5-years degrees

Source: 2011-12 survey on second year high school students' learning assessment, INVALSI

Table 5.7 - Children's university ambition for themselves, by parental social class and by type of second generation (weighted percentages)

	Parental social class	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Generation 2.0	low skilled blue collars	28.3	71.7	100.0 (112)
	high skilled blue collars	22.8	77.2	100.0 (67)
	low skilled white collars	12.0	88.0	100.0 (53)
	high skilled white collars	2.5	97.5	100.0 (23)
	Total	20.1	79.9	100.0 (255)
Chi2: 6.3 (p 0.10) Gamma:0.31				
Generation 1.75 and 1.5	low skilled blue collars	35.3	64.7	100.0 (236)
	high skilled blue collars	35.8	64.2	100.0 (228)
	low skilled white collars	25.0	75.0	100.0 (161)
	high skilled white collars	12.0	88.0	100.0 (50)
	Total	31.0	69.0	100.0 (675)
Chi2: 7.6 (p 0.055) Gamma: 0.12				

Source: ISTAT survey on Foreign citizens' social condition and integration (2011-12)

Table 5.8 - Children's university ambition for themselves, by parental education and by type of second generation (weighted percentages)

	Parental education	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Generation 2.0	less than upper secondary	41.6	58.4	100.0 93()
	upper secondary	16.2	83.8	100.0 (144)
	tertiary	2.6	97.4	100.0 (39)
	Total	22.6	77.4	100.0 (276)
Chi2: 15.8 (p 0.000) Gamma:0.49				
Generation 1.75 and 1.5	less than upper secondary	46.9	53.1	100.0 (262)
	upper secondary	21.6	78.4	100.0 (374)
	tertiary	20.6	79.4	100.0 (84)
	Total	31.0	69.0	100.0 (720)
Chi2: 40.7 (p 0.000) Gamma: 0.45				

Source: ISTAT survey on Foreign citizens' social condition and integration (2011-12)

Table 5.9 - Children's university ambition for themselves by the combination of parental social class and parental education and by type of second generation (weighted percentages)

	Combination of parental social class & parental education	Children's educational ambition for themselves		Total
		less than tertiary education	tertiary education	
Generation 2.0	blue collars & less than upsec	43.6	56.4	100.0 (69)
	blue collars & upsec	16.2	83.8	100.0 (91)
	blue collars & university	5.5	94.5	100.0 (19)
	white collars & less than upsec	15.4	84.6	100.0 (12)
	white collars & upsec	10.8	89.2	100.0 (44)
	white collars & university	0.7	99.3	100.0 (20)
	Total	20.1	79.9	100.0 (255)
Chi2: 13.77 (p.0.017) Gamma: 0.38				
Generation 1.75 and 1.5	blue collars & less than upsec	47.8	52.2	100.0 (183)
	blue collars & upsec	24.7	75.3	100.0 (247)
	blue collars & university	42.9	57.1	100.0 (34)
	white collars & less than upsec	46.4	53.6	100.0 (57)
	white collars & upsec	14.7	85.3	100.0 (107)
	white collars & university	8.2	91.8	100.0 (47)
	Total	31.0	69.0	100.0 (675)
Chi2: 43.95 (p.0.000) Gamma:0.30				

Source: ISTAT survey on Foreign citizens' social condition and integration (2011-12)

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