

ARE FIRST IMPRESSIONS LASTING? SOME CONSEQUENCES OF SCHOOLING DELAY FOR IMMIGRANTS' DESCENDANTS IN ITALY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is an important factor for immigrants' children, one through which they may aspire to better working opportunities than those of their parents, thus realising the social mobility that is necessary to prevent the descendants of immigrants from remaining segregated in the lowest levels of the professional ladder (Borjas, 1992; Aparicio, 2007; Checchi and Flabbi, 2007). It is a precondition for immigrants' children to have similar performances on the labour market and aspire to jobs and life conditions comparable to those of the rest of the population. In European countries with a longer history of immigration special emphasis has been placed on the analysis of success in school and on the labour market of second generations (Phalet and Swyngedouw, 2003; Simon, 2003; Timmerman *et al.*, 2003). The debate is open on the possible solutions to remove hindrances and guarantee full inclusion in the school system to the children of immigrants, a necessary precondition for their later integration in the labour market (Crul and Vermeulen, 2003; Heckmann, 2008; Eurydice, 2009). Language problems, less favourable economic conditions and a less solid or large family network are some of the elements making the educational pathways of immigrants' children less linear and more uneven (Heckmann, 2008). It should also be considered that the children born in their country of origin – especially when they arrived in schooling age (Rumbaut, 2004) – are also affected by problems due to their inclusion and adaptation to a different educational and life context from that in which they had their first socialisation experiences. There is general agreement in favour of a rapid learning of the language of the host country at a level which makes it possible to take active part in educational activities; at the same time, however, there is no such agreement in what could be the most suitable strategy regarding possible alternative pathways. Is it more advisable to leave freedom for choice in any educational pathway, including the longer ones that naturally lead to graduate and post-graduate studies regardless of the actual chances of success? Or is it more realistic, in the light of achievements in compulsory school, to orient students – and immigrants' children in particular – towards shorter pathways which can find

immediate application on the labour market? While the former option is the preferred one, there is no doubt that a risk of more frequent failures and unfinished educational pathways is certainly higher among immigrants' children. This raises further discussions on a crucial aspect in the construction of multiethnic societies in the years to come.

This issue has become dramatically important also in Italy, which has been a receiving country for the last thirty years and in recent years has recorded major immigration flows with an increasing number of arrivals for family reunions and a constant increase in the number of births from at least one foreign parent (Strozza, 2008). In the last few years great attention has been placed on the analysis of the modalities of inclusion of immigrants' children in the school system (Favaro, 2007). Official data clearly show a major delay in the educational pathway among foreign students as compared to Italian students (Ministry of Education, 2009). National studies based on special surveys have shown evidence that young generations of immigrants, also those who arrive in preschool age, are disadvantaged in educational pathways compared to their Italian peers (de Filippo *et al.*, 2010). This drawback persists also when socio-economic characteristics are taken into account (Dalla Zuanna *et al.*, 2009; Mussino and Strozza, 2011). While a survey carried out by Censis (2008) shows that three out of four teachers view placing students of immigrant origin in classes with students of the same age as one of the four main criteria, in actual fact the Italian system seems to tend towards a "strategy" that aims at solving the initial linguistic disadvantage placing the children of immigrants in a lower grade compared to their age at the time of inclusion in the Italian school system. This widespread situation of delayed schooling progress in the Italian school system increases as the level of education increases. In lower secondary school the risk to be delayed is higher among immigrants' children, and grows remarkably in the passage from the second generation to fractional ones (those closed between first and second generation), it is higher for those who arrived at age 10 or older, also when all the other explanatory variables are considered in the regression model (Mussino and Strozza, 2011).

Based on the same data set – the one from the survey "Children of immigrants between social inclusion and social exclusion" (ITAGEN2) – in this paper we aim to estimate the effect of delayed schooling progress, assuming that this affects the perception of their school performance and, above all, their educational aspirations after completing the lower secondary school.

The following section (section 2) provides an overview of the inclusion problems experienced by foreign students in the Italian school system. The dataset used, the definition of the target variables and of the explanatory variables as well as the methods of analysis used are described in Section 3. The two following sections discuss the results of the multinomial logistic regressions concerning perceived school performance (section 4) and future educational aspirations (section 5) respectively. The conclusions (section 6) summarise the main results and highlight the need for appropriate actions also in the light of the relevant international recommendations.

2. EVIDENCES FROM OFFICIAL DATA: DELAYED SCHOOLING PROGRESS AND LOW EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION

According to the latest estimate (1st January 2010) the number of foreigners resident in Italy is over 4.2 million (ISTAT 2010), more than three times the number registered at the 2001 census and representing 7 per cent of the total resident population. The resident foreign population born in Italy has been estimated by ISTAT at about 570 thousand and the resident foreign population under 18 more than 930 thousand (precisely, 22 per cent of foreigners resident in Italy). The resident foreigners in schooling age (6-18 years old) have been enumerated in about 575 thousand¹, with an increase of 400 thousand in the last eight years. These are clearly important changes that affect the world of education, also because they have happened about in a relatively short lapse of time. Considering that the Italian law allows, or better requires, that foreign children of any legal status go to school, it is clear that the foreign population has a strong impact on the education system, even stronger than the one estimated by ISTAT in the data on the resident population.

The number of foreign students enrolled in the school year 2008-09 is about 629 thousand (7 per cent of the total students), 3.5 times the size of seven school years before (Minister of Education, 2009). Looking at the increase in individual school levels, non-Italian children enrolled in nursery schools have recorded more than threefold increase (between school years 2001-02 and 2008-09), growing from less than 37 thousand to almost 125 thousand. Similarly, pupils in primary school were near 77 thousand in the school year 2001-02 and became 234 thousand in 2008-09, with the greatest net absolute increase (more than 150 thousand enrolments). It is among children attending primary school that the impact of the foreign component was and is most remarkable: 8.3 per cent of the pupils are not Italian citizens, that is 1.3 percentage points more than the overall average at all levels of education. Of particular interest was the absolute growth – and even more the relative growth – in the foreign presence in lower and upper secondary school. The non-Italian component has become remarkable in numbers not only among younger students (enrolled in nursery and primary school), but also among those attending secondary school. In particular, the almost 140 thousand foreign students in lower secondary school account for 8 per cent of the total number of students – a figure which is very close to the one recorded in primary school. Although foreign students are only 4.8 per cent in upper secondary school, their absolute number has reached 130 thousand with a 5.4 fold growth as compared to school year 2001-2002. In synthesis, in the last seven years the number of foreign students in the Italian school system has increased quickly and, as we shall see, their inclusion problems have virtually remained unchanged.

The difficulties experienced by foreign students in the integration and in their educational path often result into the placement in classes at lower grades com-

¹ This figure underestimates the actual size of the phenomena because does not consider the sons of mixed couples (with one Italian partner), the young people had acquired the Italian citizenship and all the other young people that live in Italy but are not resident.

pared to their age and into a lower rate of passes compared to their native counterparts. In the last years this situation appears more evident than in the past for the increase of absolute differences between potential and actual foreign pupils in the different levels of school. In the school year 2008-09, the foreign children registered in primary school (about 234 thousand) are almost 10 thousand more than the residents in Italy at the end of 2008 (225 thousand according to ISTAT estimates) and the number of those registered in lower secondary school (140 thousand) is 25 thousand greater than the actual 11-13 year-old residents (less than 115 thousand). In upper secondary school, instead, foreign students are only 130 thousand, considering that ISTAT estimates count about 192 thousand residents among 14-18 year-olds. This means a deficit of 62 thousand registered students (slightly less than one third of the residents), which is partly due to school dropout and partly to the presence, at the lower levels of education, of children who, because of their age, should be attending upper secondary school. In particular, there are over 34 thousand foreigners attending lower secondary school (that is, one quarter of registered students) who are at least 14 and, if they had not been lagging behind, would have been enrolled in upper secondary school. At the same time it should be remarked that among non-Italians attending upper secondary school, more than 25 thousand are older than 18 and thus should have already obtained their upper secondary school leaving qualification (*“maturità”*). The balance between the children who are lagging behind their peers in education and older students who are still at school brings down to 53 thousand the number of 14-18 years old who do not attend upper secondary school – a figure which is definitely greater if non-residents are also considered. This gap between young residents and the actual pupils is depending both on dropout and the arrival of young workers from outside Italy, but also on many teenagers who did not complete the previous education cycles, lagging behind their peers in the educational path (Strozza, 2008; Dalla Zuanna *et al.*, 2009, Mussino and Strozza, 2011).

To complete the picture, the foreigners registered in upper secondary schools are distributed in a different way among different types of schools as compared to Italians, showing a clear preference for professional schools (41 per cent versus 19 per cent among Italians in school year 2008-09). Greater drop-out, fewer achievements, very frequent educational delay and concentration in less demanding educational paths with more focus on an early introduction in the labour market are elements that clearly indicate the integration problems experienced by immigrants' children in the Italian school system – elements which are closely interconnected.

Official sources have clearly shown that children of immigrants in Italy have a high propensity to dropping out, choosing a lower upper school profile and have lower outcomes, therefore we want to investigate which roles the school delay plays in this decision also when we control the migratory generation. In this article we investigate whether and to what extent delayed schooling progress affects the perception of their school performance and, above all, their educational aspirations after the completion of lower secondary school. Considering that schooling delay is so frequent among the children of immigrants especially if they arrived in Italy in their preadolescence. Then we want to test if these aspects are closely interconnected.

3. HYPOTHESIS, DATA AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The hypothesis is that schooling delays (in general, not just the one derived from placing the child in a lower grade), especially when it is more than one year, can be one of the main factors leading pupils to drop out of school or choose less demanding and job-oriented educational pathways (to enrol in a technical or vocational school). This hypothesis is supported by two factors: a) having to relate to younger children, whose interests are often quite different due to the rapid changes that occur in the transition from childhood to adolescence, makes it more difficult and less stimulating for these pupils to socialise with their classmates, and in turn this results in a poor integration in the school context; b) lagging behind in the educational pathway can cause children to have a false perception of their study skills or their educational possibilities, leading them (and their families) to choose options that seem to be better suited to their characteristics (i.e. less demanding educational pathways) or that can make them catch up with the lost time (shorter educational pathways). If this hypothesis were confirmed, it would have obvious consequences on the actual possibilities to enter into the labour market, and for the second generations there would be the same situation of low-profile jobs as it was for first-generation immigrants. It remains unclear whether there is a connection between the level of education and the type of employment, but it is clear that it plays a key role in the social position (Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993) and earning (Borjas, 1992). It is therefore clear that delayed schooling progress can play a negative role on the child's future.

The data used in this article come from the survey "Children of immigrants between social inclusion and social exclusion" (ITAGEN2) – a quantitative sampling survey on pupils from 48 Italian provinces enrolled in lower secondary schools in school year 2005-06 (Barban and Dalla Zuanna, 2010; Dalla Zuanna *et al.*, 2009). About 20,700 pupils were interviewed of which 10,503 with at least one of the parents born outside of Italy. The interview included seven different sections: linguistic skills, academic performance, future educational aspirations, social capital, system of values, leisure activities, and the socio-economic family status.

The two dependent variables that we consider in the analysis are: perceived school performance and educational expectations. The first is measured by means of the question: "Are you good at school?". The five possible answers included in the questionnaire were grouped into the following three classes: very good (I'm one of the best pupils in my class), good (I'm pretty good at school) and medium-low (I'm neither good nor bad at school, I'm not very good, I don't know) performance. This indicator, which is very subjective, mediates between the actual performance, the pupil's self-esteem and his/her feeling of adequacy² (Paterno

² The form contains also the question on the actual schooling attainment in the previous school year. This information is not used in this article because it refers only to the last year, otherwise the schooling pathway is another objective variable that summarizes all the previous schooling experience. Our specific objective is to test the links between the schooling pathway and the perception of the school performance and the educational aspirations.

and Terzera, 2008). To study the determining factors of the perceived school performance an intermediate evaluation of one's perceived school performance (good performance) versus two opposed judgments (very good and medium-low) has been considered as reference modality of the dependent variable.

The second dependent variable aims at exploring the future and is measured through the choice of the educational pathway after the completion of lower secondary school. At this point it seems appropriate to provide a brief description of the Italian school system. After eight years of single-cycle school – five years of primary school and three years of lower secondary school – at the age of fourteen Italian youngsters and their families must choose the upper secondary school, that is admission to which is free and at no charge. Attending upper secondary school is mandatory until sixteen years of age. The schools, mostly managed directly by the State, are of four types. In lyceums the five-year school pathway is oriented towards following university studies: school attendance is limited to morning hours but a lot of homework is given. In technical schools, instead, where the courses also last five years, there are more hours of attendance and some practical subjects are taught, while fewer hours of self-study are requested. Technical schools stand halfway between lyceums and vocational institutes, the latter being strongly oriented towards the labour market, with long hours of school attendance and little homework assigned, and the possibility to leave school earlier, getting a diploma after three years. Ultimately, there are local vocational courses – financed by the Regional Governments and by no-profit organizations – that are exclusively oriented towards the labour market, which give a diploma after 2 or 3 years and require no homework³. In the light of these alternative educational pathways it has been determined that a pupil who decides to enrol in a lyceum has high expectations, those who want to leave school early or enrol in a technical school or in a vocational institute have medium-low expectations, while those who have not expressed an opinion because they are still undecided about their future have pretty vague expectations. We infer what variables have a relevant impact on the choice to enrol in a high educational aspirations school (lyceum), to drop out of school or to enrol in a technical or a vocational school (low educational aspirations), considered as reference modality the inability to provide an answer to the question.

Among explanatory variables a major role is played by the migratory generation that has been constructed combining Rumbaut's theoretical scheme (1997; 2004) and the information in the questionnaire (place of birth and age at arrival). We define the migratory generation as follows: Italians, children of immigrants born in Italy (second generation); children of immigrants arrived before age five; children of immigrants arrived between age five and nine; children of immigrants arrived at age ten or older. Following our hypothesis another variable whose importance we wish to test is the regularity of the educational pathway that was divided into the following modalities: early or regular; one-year delay; two or more

³ After the lyceum, the technical school and five years of vocational institutes students can enroll in any university, while this is not possible after the local vocational schools.

years' delay. Table 1 shows the absolute figures on respondents falling within the various categories of the two explicative variables just introduced and their distribution in percentage as compared to the two target variables (perceived educational performance and educational aspirations).

TABLE 1

Perception of one's performance and future educational aspirations of lower secondary school pupils, distinguished into Italians and children of immigrants according to age at arrival in Italy and distinguished by Educational pathway. Percentages

	No. of sampled units (a)	Perceived educational performance			Educational aspirations		
		very good	good	medium low (b)	high	medium low (c)	don't know
Total	20,706	20.0	48.2	31.8	47.8	29.1	23.1
Migratory generation							
Italians	10,203	21.3	48.8	29.9	50.0	28.5	21.5
Children of immigrants born in Italy	2,784	14.4	45.7	39.9	44.5	27.1	28.4
Children of immigrants arrived at < age 5	1,133	10.4	41.1	48.5	31.9	38.6	29.5
Children of immigrants arrived at age 5-9	2,765	11.9	42.7	45.4	32.8	31.4	35.8
Children of immigrants arrived at age 10+	3,821	8.6	44.7	46.7	24.9	37.6	37.5
Educational pathway							
regular	15,198	21.5	49.6	29.0	51.0	27.1	22.0
one-year retardation	4,021	8.6	37.8	53.7	26.2	43.0	30.8
two or more years' retardation	1,487	9.9	39.6	50.5	18.8	48.6	32.6

Notes: (a) Figures refer to the interviews conducted without taking into account the post-stratification based on which the percentages of this or other tables were proposed in order to guarantee the representativeness of the data. (b) The medium-low modality gathers the respondents who affirmed that their performance was neither good nor bad, that they did poorly at school or that they just did not know (c) The medium-low modality aggregates those who want to drop out of school or enrol in a technical school.

Source: our elaborations on national data from ITAGEN2.

The pupils' self-evaluations show that Italians have a greater positive opinion of their academic performance compared to foreigners (immigrants' children), but a distinction must be made among the latter based on the migratory generation. Half of the Italian pupils would like to enrol in a lyceum. Among the children of immigrants a smaller percentage shows high educational expectations, in particular if they were born abroad (only 25 per cent for those who arrived at age 10 or older). However, an overall 23 per cent are undecided, and this percentage is in inverse proportion to the immigrants' children's length of stay in Italy. Of course, the percentage of undecided pupils decreases as the time to make a decision approaches. It is in pupils in the third grade of lower secondary school that the migratory differences are more evident: the older age at arrival corresponds to a higher percentage of indecision, while no significant differences can be detected in the percentage of pupils who claim to have high educational expectations (about 25 per cent, i.e. 20 percentage points less than Italian pupils). There is no doubt that the perception of one's academic performance and the future educational aspirations are closely connected with the pupil's educational pathway. More than half of the pupils with delayed schooling progress considers their performance as medium-low; moreover, 48.6 per cent of pupils with more than two years' delay and 43 per cent of pupils with only one year of delay has medium-low educational aspirations. What needs to be verified is whether the academic per-

formance still affects perceptions and above all future expectations, being equal a series of other characteristics.

Summarizing, we want to assess the role played by the educational pathway on perceived school performance (relative-risk ratio of very good and medium-low school performance compared to a good performance) and on future educational expectations (relative-risk ratio of having high or low educational aspirations in relation to the uncertainty about one's future educational pathway), other explanatory variables included in the pattern being equal. Then we use a multinomial logistic regression model (Hosmer and Lemeshow 1999). Considering that school performance depends on a series of factors connected with the subject's background (Besozzi, 2002; Glick and White, 2003), in our analysis we consider as control variables:

- *Demographic characteristics* (gender, the province of residence⁴ and the mother's country/area of birth⁵, the latter variable being considered as a proxy of the educational and/or cultural context of origin of the pupil);

- *Resources and school engagement* (knowledge of the Italian language⁶, the number of hours spent studying every day and the help the pupil gets to do his/her homework);

- *Socio-economic characteristics of the family* (highest level of education of the adult of reference, the job of the adult man of reference⁷, the type of tenure and the level of crowding of the house⁸, the number of brothers and sisters);

- *Relationships and the social capital* (typology of friends: more Italians or more foreigners, or both in equal number; and the participation or not in a team sport).

Previous studies, in fact, showed that country of origin (Bauer and Riphahn, 2007; Borjas, 1992), family structure (Checchi and Flabbi, 2007) and socioeconomic status (Goldorpe *et al.*, 1987) may influence not only the outcome but also aspirations of educational achievement. Some studies have focused on determinants of adolescent aspirations highlighting the role played by parental educational levels (Kao and Tienda, 1998; Feliciano, 2006) and gender differences (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Fernández-Kelly and Konczal, 2005; Feliciano and Rumbaut, 2005).

We use a stepwise approach to evaluate the change of importance of migratory generation and educational pathway with the introduction of the other explicative variables. The first basic model considers only three explanatory variables: the migratory generation, educational pathway and the province of residence/survey.

⁴ These results will not be projected but they allow to consider the different characteristics of the territory that could affect school performance and future aspirations. Specific articles on the ITAGEN2 survey's results in the Italian regions are collected in a volume edited by Casacchia *et al.* (2008).

⁵ Assuming the mother is the reference parent in the education and/or cultural background of children.

⁶ A synthetic indicator of the four dimensions of linguistic knowledge has been developed using pupils' self-evaluation on listening, speaking, reading and writing.

⁷ Assuming the professional condition of the father as the best proxy of the economic situation of the family.

⁸ Ratio between the people cohabiting and the number of rooms available.

The intermediate model (model 2) includes details on gender and the mother's country of birth, and the final model contains all the explanatory variables (model 3). The final model of logistic regression has also been applied to the children of immigrants' subset (model 4).

4. WHAT ARE THE DETERMINING FACTORS FOR PERCEIVED SCHOOL PERFORMANCE?

At first sight the perceived school performance seems to be strictly connected with the migratory generation and the educational pathway. The first model of logistic regression (Model 1) shows that – controlling by the province of residence and educational pathway – compared to Italian pupils the children of immigrants show a lower risk of having a very good performance and a higher risk of having a medium-low performance (Table 2). Moreover, the older the age at the arrival, the lower is the opportunity of very good performances and the higher the probability of having low-profile school performances. Compared to Italian pupils the children of immigrants born in Italy have a 16 per cent lower risk of being good at school, which becomes 45 per cent lower for those who arrived in Italy at the age of ten or older. The probability of having a poor performance instead is 67 per cent higher among second-generation pupils and almost 4 times higher for those who arrived in Italy in their preadolescence. If we consider the gender and the mother's country of birth (Model 2) the differences are dramatically reduced and some even disappear. In the final model (Model 3), the one considering all the explanatory variables, only the children of immigrants who arrived in their preadolescence have a 30 per cent lower risk of perceiving their school performance as very good compared to Italian pupils (being equal all other conditions). At the same time, however, they have a 25 per cent lower probability of perceiving their performance as medium-low compared to their Italian peers. These elements lead us to think that, all other conditions being equal, most frequently these children express intermediate evaluations maybe because in redefining rules and criteria, as a consequence of the new reality they live in, they do not believe they can give more clear-cut judgments as they have not completely figured out the new situation yet.

The role played by the educational pathway on the perception of their performance also changes dramatically when we shift from the first to the third model. In the first case children with delayed schooling progress have a 20 per cent lower probability of perceiving their performance as very good, and a 55-74 per cent higher probability of perceiving their performance as medium-low compared to pupils with a regular study pathway. All other conditions being equal, children with one-year delay have a 20 per cent lower risk of having a very good performance compared to children with a regular study pathway. But also these differences lose their relevance when the study is conducted on children of immigrants only. The probability of perceiving their performance as medium-low is about 40 per cent higher in children with delayed schooling progress than in children with a regular educational pathway. But when the attention is focused on

children of immigrants only, the value and the relevance of the coefficients change dramatically also in this case. Only children who lag at least two years behind have a significantly (18 per cent) higher probability of declaring a medium-low performance compared to children with a regular pathway. Then it is clear that the frequency of delayed schooling progress among the children of immigrants and, maybe, its being connected not so much with school failure as mostly with the placement of pupils in lower grades, are elements that reduce its influence on the evaluation on one's performance – such evaluation appearing mainly determined by other explanatory variables considered in the model (see Table A.1 in appendix).

TABLE 2

Relative risk of having a very good or a medium-low perceived school performance. Results from the multinomial logistic regression (reference modality = good)

Model	Migratory generation (ref. = Italians)				Ed. pathway (ref. = regular)	
	Children of immigrants born in Italy	Children of immigrants arrived at < age 5	Children of immigrants arrived at age 5-9	Children of immigrants arrived at age 10+	One-year of schooling delay	Two or more years of schooling delay
Perceived performance = Very Good						
1 (a)	0.84 **	0.61 ***	0.75 ***	0.54 ***	0.79 ***	0.80 *
2 (b)	0.93	0.68 *	0.80	0.56 ***	0.72 ***	0.82
3 (c)	0.95	0.74	0.92	0.72 *	0.81 **	0.93
4 (d)	<i>Ref.</i>	0.80	0.91	0.72 **	0.92	0.94
Perceived performance = Medium-Low						
1 (a)	1.67 ***	3.29 ***	2.23 ***	3.66 ***	1.55 ***	1.74 ***
2 (b)	1.18	1.45 ***	1.08	1.10	1.51 ***	1.65 ***
3 (c)	1.07	1.18	0.86	0.69 ***	1.38 ***	1.40 ***
4 (d)	<i>Ref.</i>	1.13	0.89	0.76 ***	1.10	1.18 *

Notes: (a) Only three explanatory variables: the migratory generation, educational pathway and the province of residence/survey. (b) The other variables included in the model are gender and the mother's country of birth. (c) The model contains all the information of Table A.1, plus the province of residence/survey and the mother's country of birth. (d) Like the previous model, but it only considers children of immigrants (see last two columns of table A.1).

Level of significance in relation to the reference modalities : ***<=0.001; **<=0.01; *<=0.05.

Source: our elaborations on national data from ITAGEN2.

Girls express intermediate judgments on their school performance more often than boys, and in fact, being all other conditions equal, they have significantly lower probabilities of having a very good or a medium-low performance. Within the limits of the children of immigrants' subset, the coefficient concerning gender is only significant with regards to the probability of having medium-low performances, which in girls is almost 40% lower than in boys. As the level of knowledge of the Italian language or the number of hours spent studying increase, the risk of having a medium-low school performance is dramatically reduced, while the lack of help doing homework increases by 40% the risk of having a very good performance. This latter result shows the different importance that this aspect can take depending on the target variable. In this case not getting help with homework, rather than signalling a lack of support on the part of family, friends or acquaintances, seems to be connected with the actual or alleged lack of any need to get help with homework. The parents' level of education plays a fundamental role on the perceived school performance of the pupils. The higher the level of education of the parents, the higher the risk of being very good at school and the lower

the risk of having a medium-low performance. In the children of immigrants' subset, those whose parents have a high level of education have a 40% higher probability of having a very good school performance and a 30% lower probability of perceiving their school performance as medium-low compared to children whose parents are uneducated. Children whose parents have an intellectual job show a 40% higher risk of having a very good performance compared to those whose father has a manual job, and this is also the case when the study is conducted on children of immigrants only. The increased number of brothers and sisters corresponds to a reduced probability of having a very good performance and to an increased probability of perceiving their school performance as medium-low. Owning the house they live in seems to favour a high school performance and to reduce the risk of medium-low results, although the "ownership of the house" variable does not seem relevant when attention is focused on the children of immigrants only, as it was the case with the study on school delay. Crowding, instead, as expected, has a negative effect on the risk of being very good at school and this is also true with the children of immigrants. As it has also been observed with regards to the educational pathway (Mussino and Strozza, 2011), the perceived performance seems to be strictly connected with the relationship with peers. Those who have more foreign friends have a lower probability than those who have more Italian friends to be very good at school and a higher probability of having a medium-low school performance. All this is confirmed in the study conducted on the children of immigrants subset only. Exclusive relationships between foreigners do not favour school performance as they prevent children from improving their linguistic knowledge and cut them off from the new context. Practising or not a team sport seems to affect school performance, but only when the study is conducted on all the pupils.

In essence, delayed schooling progress is a mark of poor school performance more for Italian pupils and their families (among whom it is a lot less frequent) than for the children of immigrants and their families. These latter might just see it as the price to pay for having migrated to a different country and having to learn its language, rules and behavioural codes which are different from those of their country of origin. Of course this does not mean that delayed schooling progress cannot affect negatively also their future educational choices.

5. WHAT ARE THE DETERMINING FACTORS FOR FUTURE EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS?

First of all, as we have already pointed out (see section 3), children who are quick to make a decision have a clearer mind of their future educational choices. Pupils of the third grade of lower secondary school have a considerably higher probability of having made up their minds in favour of a lyceum or the technical or professional school than pupils of the first grade who still have two years ahead of them to make a decision (see Table A.2 in appendix). Girls have higher educational aspirations than boys, and this is also confirmed in the study conducted on the children of immigrants' subset. The level of knowledge of the Ital-

ian language and the number of hours spent studying are variables that affect the probability of having high aspirations positively. Also in this case the relevance of the coefficients is confirmed when the study is conducted on children of immigrants only. The higher the level of education of the parents, the higher the proportion of pupils (and their families) who have already faced the problem of choosing their future educational pathway and have made a decision, though it is not sure that they will not change their minds. For this reason, compared to children living in families with low educational levels, a higher level of education in the parents results in a higher risk of having either high educational aspirations or low aspirations. In other words, a higher cultural level corresponds to a greater probability of having already faced the problem of future choices. It must be noted, however, that there are greater differences between the various modalities in terms of the relative risks of aspiring to a lyceum education. The probability of having high aspirations is roughly doubled when the father has an intellectual job compared to the case in which the father has a manual job. This situation is also confirmed for the children of immigrants' subset. The number of brothers and sisters is confirmed to be a factor that limits the possibility to choose more demanding educational pathways. Instead, owning the house they live in, being a sign of stability, encourages children to make plans for the future. It must be said that in the case of immigrants' children, owning the house they live in could be seen as a sign of economic wellbeing and therefore as the possibility/willingness on the part of the family to invest more in the future of their children. On the contrary, pupils living in conditions of crowding hardly show high educational aspirations. The relationship with peers and participation in group sports activities seem to favour the exchange of information and the interaction between children. So, children who have more foreign friends or Italian and foreign friends in equal numbers have a lower probability of showing high aspirations, or low aspirations, compared to children who have more Italian friends. This situation of greater indecision also characterises children who do not play any team sports. These results do not change when the attention is focused on children of immigrants only. These latter find in the exchange with their peers an important source of information and the chance to develop rules and behavioural codes, as well as to form an idea about their own future, especially when their parents have fewer possibilities to interact with the outside world.

The greater indecision that characterises immigrants' children, which is in inverse proportion to the duration of their staying in Italy, appears to be connected to a series of disadvantages they have compared to their Italian peers (Table 3). When the analysis takes into account the variables of study effort, socio-economic situation of the family and social capital, the children of immigrants prove to be even more determined than their Italian peers, although the coefficient values are not statistically significant. The study conducted on the children of immigrants' subset shows that children who arrived in Italy in their preadolescence have a 22 per cent lower probability of aspiring to enrol in a lyceum than children born in Italy. The educational pathway has a dramatic impact on future choices (Aparicio, 2007). Also all other characteristics being considered, children

with one-year or two or more years' delay in schooling progress have respectively a 18 per cent and a 23 per cent lower probability of aspiring to a high-profile educational pathway compared to children who have a regular educational pathway. The probability of showing low-profile expectations, instead, is 23 per cent higher for children with a one-year delay and 40 per cent higher for children with at least two years' delay. The study conducted on the children of immigrants' subset shows that the educational pathway affects low-profile educational expectations but not high-profile expectations, which turn out to be more influenced by the student's perceived school performance (Table 3).

TABLE 3

Relative risk of having high or low future school aspirations. Results from the multinomial logistic regression (reference modality = I don't know)

Model	Migratory generation (ref. = Italians)				Educational pathway (ref. = regular)		Performance (ref. = very good)	
	Children of immigrants born in Italy	Children of immigrants arrived at < age 5	Children of immigrants arrived at age 5-9	Children of immigrants arrived at age 10+	One-year of schooling delay	Two or more years of schooling delay	Good	Medium-low
Future educational aspirations = high								
1 (a)	0.80 ***	0.62 ***	0.58 ***	0.47 ***	0.71 ***	0.54 ***	0.44 ***	0.20 ***
2 (b)	1.03	0.93	0.79 *	0.59 ***	0.76 ***	0.67 ***	0.44 ***	0.20 ***
3 (c)	1.23	1.24	1.18	1.01	0.82 ***	0.77 **	0.50 ***	0.26 ***
4 (d)	<i>ref</i>	0.99	0.92	0.78 **	0.92	0.83	0.56 ***	0.31 ***
Future educational aspirations = low								
1 (a)	0.77 ***	0.77 **	0.61 ***	0.62 ***	1.30 ***	1.45 ***	0.94	0.98
2 (b)	0.89	0.92	0.74 *	0.77 *	1.29 ***	1.49 ***	0.97	0.99
3 (c)	1.16	1.15	1.11	0.97	1.23 ***	1.40 ***	1.06	1.00
4 (d)	<i>ref</i>	1.02	0.97	0.85	1.21 **	1.36 ***	1.04	0.89

Notes: (a) Only four explanatory variables: the migratory generation, the educational pathway, the perceived school performance and the province of residence/survey. (b) The other variables included in the model are gender and the mother's country of birth. (c) The model contains all the information of Table A.2, plus the province of residence/survey and the mother's country of birth. (d) Like the previous model, but it only considers children of immigrants (see last two columns of table A.2).

Level of significance in relation to the reference modalities: ***<=0.001; **<=0.01; *<=0.05.

Source: our elaborations on national data from ITAGEN2.

In brief, the educational pathway, meant as a regular or irregular study pathway, seems to influence more the future educational choices of Italian families than those of foreign families. It could not be otherwise, since delayed schooling progress (mainly understood by Italians as school failure) concerns a very small segment of the Italian school population and accordingly it is an important warning signal that Italian families cannot neglect, having to make sound choices when guiding their children towards educational pathways that are most suited to their study skills. Even though foreign children and their families seem to attach less importance to the educational pathway, knowing that it is influenced by the migratory event and by the need to adapt to the new reality, nonetheless delayed schooling progress urges these pupils to choose job-oriented educational pathways, short school cycles aimed at favouring a rapid integration in the labour market. Since delayed schooling progress affects especially the children of immigrants who arrived in their school age, the Italian school system seems to guide them mainly towards technical or vocational schools. This implies getting a low- or medium-profile job. The probability for immigrants is to have a very poor int-

ergenerational social mobility, as their children, who today attend the Italian school, tomorrow will be relegated to the lowest layers of society and will occupy subordinate positions compared to their Italian peers. This risk must be avoided, taking all the necessary steps to guarantee equal opportunities of success in school and in life to these children, supporting their aspirations, which are not different from those of their Italian peers (Dalla Zuanna *et al.*, 2009). Otherwise in Italy we may have the same situation that occurred in other countries in the past: if these children do not reach better social positions than their parents', they will develop resentment and hostility towards the receiving society.

6. CONCLUSION

While a one-year schooling delay could be useful for a fuller participation in school activities, accumulating more years of delay produces a negative perception of one's skills and maybe even of the usefulness of school, and in any case it brings children to choose low-profile educational pathways. Also when all other conditions are considered, delayed schooling progress plays a statistically significant role in determining the perception of one's performance and the educational intentions of children. Several other factors come into play, but certainly being in a lower grade than the average age leads to the choice of dropping out of school and to opt for less demanding educational pathways. This choice – which has some rationality to it – involves the acquisition of a minor human capital (at least in terms of formal education) on the part of immigrants' children, who are affected by delayed schooling progress a lot more often than their Italian peers. But the results of the analyses proposed also confirm that when some individual and familiar characteristics are considered the disadvantage of foreign children is reduced. The choice of the future educational pathways, indeed, is no longer influenced by the migratory generation but by the perceptions of one's performance and the regularity of one's educational pathway. Especially for the children who arrived in their school age, it is of paramount importance that they are rapidly integrated in the school system, trying to avoid placing them in lower grades compared to their age. This is certainly a difficult task to fulfil, but it could bear its fruits by allowing these children to interact with their peers, which is perhaps a favourable condition to overcome linguistic and relational difficulties. Special attention must be paid to the children of immigrants who arrive in their preadolescence or in their adolescence, as they are more heavily affected by the loss of their points of reference after migration. Moreover, the interaction between Italian and foreign classmates should be facilitated, as this factor seems to have a positive impact on the pupils' educational pathway. This is in contrast with the hypothesis of having classes made up of foreign pupils only, which is hardly justifiable also in the light of our results.

In line with other studies in this field, it appears that 'school segregation hinders achievement and future integration' (Heckmann, 2008 p. 17). A quick learning of the language of the host country at a level enabling learning in the school

context is also confirmed as being an important factor, just like a greater enhancement of the language and culture of the immigrants and their descendants' country of origin (Eurydice, 2009) and of the positive interaction and joint choices involving all the actors of the educational pathway (the school, teachers, students and families), as recent surveys conducted on a European scale show.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A.1

*Relative risks of having a very good or medium-low perceived school performance.
Results from the multinomial logistic regressions^(a) (reference modality = good)*

Explanatory variables	All pupils		Only children of immigrants	
	Very good	Medium-low	Very good	Medium-low
Girl (ref. = boy)	0.88 **	0.63 ***	1.03	0.62 ***
Migratory generation (ref.= Italian)				
- children of immigrants born in Italy	0.95	1.07	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
- children of immigrants arrived at < age 5	0.74	1.18	0.80	1.13
- children of immigrants arrived at age 5-9	0.92	0.86	0.91	0.89
- children of immigrants arrived at age 10 or older	0.72 *	0.69 ***	0.72 **	0.76 ***
Level of knowledge of Italian language	1.12	0.72 ***	1.13	0.73 ***
No of hours spent studying	1.03 *	0.90 ***	1.03	0.92 ***
Doesn't get help doing homework	1.46 ***	0.95	1.42 ***	0.97
Parents' education (ref. = very low)				
- low	0.93	1.19 ***	0.86	1.10
- intermediate	1.29 ***	0.91 *	1.16	0.94
- high	1.63 ***	0.75 ***	1.43 ***	0.71 ***
- very high	1.59 ***	0.65 ***	1.45 **	0.66 ***
Father's job (ref. = manual)				
- intellectual	1.38 ***	0.79 ***	1.46 **	0.98
- none	1.12	1.15	1.28	1.17
No of brothers and sisters	0.94 **	1.12 ***	0.95	1.10 ***
In owned house (ref. = rental or else)	1.18 ***	0.82 ***	1.10	0.97
Crowding in the house	0.82 ***	1.04	0.84 *	1.03
Type of friends (ref. = more Italians)				
- more foreigners	0.70 **	1.25 ***	0.73 *	1.32 ***
- more or less the same number	1.00	1.14 **	0.88	1.17 **
Doesn't do any team sports	0.92	1.22 ***	0.89	1.09
Educational pathway (ref. = regular)				
- one year schooling delay	0.81 **	1.38 ***	0.92	1.10
- two or more years of schooling delay	0.93	1.40 ***	0.94	1.18 *

Notes: (a) The other variables included in the models are the province of residence/survey and the mother's country of birth.

Level of significance in relation to the reference modalities : ***<=0.001; **<=0.01; *<=0.05.

Source: our elaborations on national data from ITAGEN2.

TABLE A.2

Relative risk of having high or low future school aspirations. Results from the multinomial logistic regressions^(a)
(reference modality = I don't know)

Explanatory variables	All pupils		Only children of immigrants	
	High	Low	High	Low
Girl (ref. = boy)	1.71 ***	0.61 ***	1.65 ***	0.60 ***
Migratory generation (ref. = Italian)				
- children of immigrants born in Italy	1.23	1.16	ref	ref
- children of immigrants arrived at < age 5	1.24	1.15	0.99	1.02
- children of immigrants arrived at age 5-9	1.18	1.11	0.92	0.97
- children of immigrants arrived at age 10 or older	1.01	0.97	0.78 **	0.85
Level of knowledge of Italian language	1.39 ***	1.02	1.42 ***	1.04
No of hours spent studying	1.06 ***	0.95 *	1.06 *	0.98
Doesn't get help doing homework	1.01	1.02	1.03	0.98
Parents' education (ref. = very low)				
- low	1.36 ***	1.79 ***	1.43 ***	1.59 ***
- intermediate	2.14 ***	1.88 ***	1.89 ***	1.71 ***
- high	3.01 ***	1.78 ***	2.55 ***	1.83 ***
- very high	3.20 ***	1.97 ***	3.07 ***	2.19 ***
Father's job (ref. = manual)				
- intellectual	2.01 ***	0.95	1.81 ***	1.07
- none	1.16	1.15	1.13	1.13
No of brothers and sisters	0.94 ***	1.02	0.92 **	1.01
In owned house (ref. = rent or else)	1.15 **	1.04 ***	1.18 **	1.06
Crowding in the house	0.79 ***	0.94	0.85 ***	0.93
Type of friends (ref. = more Italians)				
- more foreigners	0.85 *	0.78 ***	0.83 **	0.81 **
- more or less the same number	0.82 ***	0.79 ***	0.81 ***	0.78 ***
Doesn't do any team sports	0.83 ***	0.9 ***	0.86 **	0.86 **
Grade (ref= first grade)				
- second	1.03	1.28 ***	1.08	1.33 ***
- third	2.46 ***	7.12 ***	2.00 ***	6.90 ***
Educational pathway (ref. = regular)				
- one year schooling delay	0.82 ***	1.23 ***	0.92	1.21 **
- two or more years of schooling delay	0.77 **	1.40 ***	0.83	1.36 ***
Performance (ref=excellent)				
- good	0.50 ***	1.06	0.56 ***	1.04
- medium-low	0.26 ***	1.00	0.31 ***	0.89

Notes: (a) The other variables included in the models are the province of residence/survey and the mother's country of birth.

Level of significance in relation to the reference modalities : ***<=0.001; **<=0.01; *<=0.05.

Source: our elaborations on national data from ITAGEN2.

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SUMMARY

Are first impressions lasting? Some consequences of schooling delay for immigrants' descendants in Italy

The presence of foreign students in the Italian system has increased rapidly in the last few years. Today, they account for 7 per cent of the total student population. The enrollment of foreign students is characterized by a widespread schooling delay that increases for higher educational levels. Here, we would like to investigate if this delay for foreign students is influencing the perception of their school performance and the concentration in less demanding educational paths. Data from a national survey (ITAGEN2) involving more than 20,000 lower secondary school students, half of whom foreigners, are used to explore the factors affecting the perception of one's performance and the level of future educational aspirations, evaluating the role of the migratory generation and the educational pathway. In particular, having more than one year's delay leads to a negative perception of one's abilities and possibly of schooling's usefulness itself, and to the choice of low-profile educational pathways.