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"Not helping out": classed strategies of the (non) contribution of children in immigrant family businesses

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ABSTRACT
This article analyses the role of immigrant entrepreneurs' class positions in understanding the participation of children in business activities. Immigrant entrepreneurship scholarship has highlighted how the participation of children depends on relations of reciprocity as well as on the lack of opportunities in paid employment. I argue that the (non) contribution of children has to do with the social mobility strategies that migrant families put in place. Drawing on the narratives of fifty-five Latin American entrepreneurs and family members in Spain, I explain (i) the role of the small firm in trajectories of social mobility, (ii) how class positions explain the (non) participation of children, and (iii) the mechanisms by which downward mobility is cushioned through practices of distinction for middle-class entrepreneurs. The article contributes to nuance our understanding of the role of family ties in migrant firms by integrating the impact of class on the lives of migrants' children.

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Introduction

The relationship between family dynamics and business activity has been a central element of the origin and proliferation of small firms run by migrants (Phizacklea 1988; Ram 1992; Ram et al. 2002). Immigrant entrepreneurship scholarship suggests that small businesses run by migrant families are generally of a small size, in the service sector, and based on labour-intensive activities (Kloosterman, Van Der Leun, and Rath 1999; Kloosterman 2010). These characteristics lead to the search for a flexible and cheap labour force, in which family ties prove key to the survival of these small firms (Ram 1992; Sanders and Nee

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1996; Raijiman and Tienda 2003). Family relations are not shaped solely by monetary exchanges; reciprocity, moral obligation, and trust are some of the underpinning drivers contributing to the business endeavour (Stewart 2003), which help to cushion the lack of financial capital, periods of low income, or fluctuations in the market (Ram and Jones 2001). The role and nature of the involvement of children of migrants in family businesses have been understood as driven by the embeddedness in moral family obligations to help out (Song 1997, 1999; Stewart 2003), as well as conditioned by the limited opportunities in the labour market or educational choices (Sanghera 2002).

Ethnicity and cultural affiliation are seen as integral in understanding the participation of children in immigrant firms. However, the role of class in intra-group differences has not been accorded equal significance. This marginalization of the class factor is a shortcoming not only in the immigrant entrepreneurship literature. Broader migration scholarship has also paid limited attention to social class processes, with exceptions such as Castles and Kosack (1973), Kelly and Lusis (2006), and Van Hear (2014) (for an extended discussion on the role of class in international migration, see Van Hear 2014, or on the conceptualization of class in the study of ethnic relations, see Bin and Liu 2014). Analyses of immigrant entrepreneurship have looked at class in the following ways: as part of the drivers for setting up small firms such as access to financial capital (Mars and Ward 1984), the ways in which class positions in the countries of origin structure the entry into different sectors (Nowikowski 1984; Light and Bonacich 1991), or understanding entrepreneurship as a step up in the social mobility ladder (Wilson and Portes 1980; Ladbury 1984; Wingfield 2009). The impact of class, when it intersects with other axis of difference, has not been exhaustively developed. The work of Anthias (1992) and Valdez (2011, 2016) goes some way in enhancing our understanding of the influence of class. For example, Anthias (1992) shows how class can outweigh ethnic and gender positions in the ethnic economy for Cypriot migrants when looking at how the kinship loyalties prevent women joining organized structures to demand better working conditions. Valdez (2011) explores the interaction of race, gender, and class to recreate different social positions for Latino entrepreneurs in the US; and looks in particular at the household economies of Mexican middle-class entrepreneurs (Valdez 2016).

This article seeks to add nuance to understandings of the role of class positions in the (non) participation of children in business activities. The article draws on fifty-five in-depth interviews, focusing on the strategies of Latin American migrant entrepreneurs in Spain. I argue that class positions and the social mobility strategies on which the migrant family embarks by opening a small firm underpin the (non) participation of children. My argument unfolds by explaining (i) how opening a small firm is placed within the occupational trajectory of the parents' aspirations; (ii) how the processes of de-skilling in the labour market explain the differential uses of children's

work; and (iii) how the experiences of downward social mobility for middle-class Latin American entrepreneurs are mitigated by distinction practices (Bourdieu 1984; Oliver and O'Reilly 2010). The findings contribute to the literature on the intersection of family and business dynamics (Aldrich and Cliff 2003; Mulholland 2003) by shedding light on the role of children and accounting for strategies of social mobility. The article also contributes to the body of work related to the role of family ties in migrant firms (Ram 1992; Song 1995, 1997, 1999) by integrating, more centrally, the influential role of class and the impact of family aspirations on the lives of migrants' children.

The article is structured as follows: it first explores the main contributions in the literature on the use of children in migrant businesses. Secondly, it presents the methods and data used to sustain the findings. This section is followed by an exposé of the specificities of the Spanish migration context. It then analyses the different narratives related to the (non) contribution of children, followed by the strategies put in place to cushion the downward-mobility strategies, particularly for middle-class migrant entrepreneurs. The last section discusses the main findings and concludes the article.

The role of children in immigrant family businesses

There has been renewed interest in the link between family and business dynamics since Aldrich and Cliff's (2003) publication on revisiting the "family embeddedness perspective", in which they argue that family dynamics influence the venture creation decision and the resources mobilized. Despite the acknowledged importance of family and kinship ties for the survival of immigrant firms (Ram 1992; Ram and Holliday 1993; Anthias and Mehta 2003; Estrada 2016), the nature of this family support has been under-researched, although there are some notable exceptions, such as Song (1995, 1997, 1999) or Marger (2001). Given that migrant enterprises are generally in a position of higher vulnerability in the market than non-migrant firms, they are more likely to rely on the informal and cheap labour of family members (Ram 1992; Sanders and Nee 1996), accompanied by an emphasis on collective orientation of goals for migrant families (Valdez 2016).

Studies on the participation of children in immigrant-run businesses have highlighted how *helping out* is part of survival/success strategies (Song 1999; Ram and Jones 2001). The participation of children depends on the intersection of relations of reciprocity and obligation (Stewart 2003), as well as on the lack of opportunities in paid employment (Marger 2001). Thus, scholarship has shown that relationships between children and parents are shaped by "moral" obligation and "gift and counter-gift" logics, instead of self-interest calculations (Stewart 2003). The involvement of children in the business does not seem to be a product of consensus in decision-making processes but is embedded in a broader social system in which family dynamics and the

characteristics of the country of destination hold sway (Villares-Varela 2012). Even though parents might harbour aspirations for their children to work outside the firm, business dynamics seem to draw children into working in the family business (Ram and Jones 2001).

Song's (1997) article in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* discusses in great detail the contribution of children in Chinese family take-away businesses in Britain. She presents the ways in which most of the sample of children helped out in business activities at a young age. Song argues that children's work in the ethnic economy helps to reduce the support from employees, while also contributing to tasks that involve the utilization of their language skills (Song 1997). This research proves the vital contribution of children in the ethnic economy and illuminates how their work is negotiated in the framework of a "family work contract" (Song 1997, 710). Nonetheless, Song (1997) also reflects on cases where she found that the participation of children was limited because parents relied on employees and preferred to liberate the children from participation in business work. These rare cases illustrate different strategies behind the parents' aspirations and understandings of the involvement of children in business activities.

This article is particularly concerned with cases of family firms that do not utilize children's support. I argue that perceptions of downward mobility play a key role in the aspirations they place regarding the educational mobility of their offspring. This aspect relates to other accounts that explain the role of social class in migrant parents' aspirations for their children (Louie 2001), children's educational levels (Kao and Tienda 1998), and the role of socio-economic status and aspirations in children's ambitions (Portes et al. 2013). For example, Louie (2001) studies the role of social class in parents' aspirations and educational experiences of Chinese Americans, showing the importance of class background in the messages parents transmit to their children regarding education, and in particular their schooling choices and involvement. Portes et al. (2013) highlight the effects of parental characteristics on the determinants of educational and occupational aspirations among children of immigrants in Spain. Parental socio-economic status and aspirations are singled out as key sources of children's ambition and might have repercussions for their educational attainment (Portes et al. 2013). Despite the importance of class aspirations for the children of migrants showcased in these studies, immigrant entrepreneurship scholarship has paid limited attention to their role in the participation in the firm.

In summary, immigrant entrepreneurship scholarship has studied the participation of children as the result of relationships of mutual obligation within the family, the nature of work in migrant firms, and the consequent need to rely on cheap and flexible labour force. Examining the social mobility, aspirations of migrant entrepreneurs can help us to disentangle whether children

take part or not in the business activity, and the mechanisms by which social mobility strategies are enacted.

Methods and data

This article draws on information from seventeen businesses and a total of fifty-five in-depth interviews with Latin American migrant entrepreneurs and their family members. Interviews were carried out with business owners, spouses, and children over sixteen years old, irrespective of whether they were involved in business activities. The interviewees were mainly from Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay, and Colombia. They all arrived to Spain between the years 1998 and 2006 and opened small firms in the formal service sector (particularly catering and retail), with fewer than five employees and a simple organizational structure. Interviewees were contacted initially through multiple sources, including migrant entrepreneur associations, council services to businesses, and informal contacts, in order to diversify the profile of interviewees. From these initial contacts, chain sampling (Penrod et al. 2003) was employed, through which each interview placed the interviewer in touch with other entrepreneurs. The nationalities included in the sample have relatively higher rates of self-employment compared to other larger nationalities of Latin American migrants in Spain (such as Ecuadorians or Peruvians) (Villares-Varela 2012). This propensity is likely to be related to having a higher access to resources or due to a longer length of stay than migrants who have not become entrepreneurs. This selection affects most studies on immigrant entrepreneurship, since opening a small business requires a certain level of financial resources, social capital, and, in particular, length of stay. Despite this potential selection bias, the group of interviewees is diverse in terms of the types of business opened, the family structure (nuclear and mono parental), length of stay, and class positions. Moreover, the data show how intra-group differences based on class positions account for the differential use of children regardless of nationality.

An interview guide enabled a structured conversation, which allowed for cross-comparison across the different cases while giving enough freedom for the interviewee to elaborate about other topics. Interviews were carried out with individual family members, with only two of the interviews carried out with two members of the same family simultaneously. Interviews lasted between 40 and 120 minutes, were fully transcribed, and were carried out in Spanish. The selected fragments were translated into English by the author. The narratives analysed belong to those entrepreneurs with children living in Spain at the time of the interview. Three of the families contacted were one-parent families (see Table A1 in the appendix for a summary of the profiles of the interviewees). Some of the themes touched upon during the interviews included the migration trajectory, professional trajectories in

the countries of origin and destination, motivations, barriers, and constraints in setting up the business; financial resources; knowledge required and activated for the business; family relations, involvement of partners, children, and other family members; and aspirations for the future.

Narratives about class positions and social mobility were provided by most of the interviewees (particularly parents) through recurrent comparisons between their career development in their countries of origin and in Spain, the upwards and downwards social mobility trajectories, the role that opening a small firm plays in these trajectories, and their social mobility aspirations for the future. To conceptualize the class positions of entrepreneurs and their families, information was collected on the basis of different indicators that reflected their financial and educational resources (Valdez 2016), as well as self-identification (Bottero 2004). Data collected, particularly through interviews with parents, provided information regarding the (a) sources of accumulation of financial capital with which to set up the business (either through years of savings in Spain in paid employment for lower class entrepreneurs or through savings from the country of origin for middle-class entrepreneurs); (b) the level of education acquired by the migrant entrepreneurs (primary–secondary education for lower class entrepreneurs and higher education for middle-class entrepreneurs); (c) occupation in the country of origin (skilled/manual); and (d) self-reported class position in the country of origin. These indicators are meant to produce a broad classification of class positions for analytical purposes. However, the aim of this distribution is not elaborating a fixed categorization of class positions, since migrants interviewed come from different countries of origin and have varying income distributions and social class structures. These proxies for class positions are understood in relation to how interviewees define, re-interpret, and re-enact their social mobility strategies when narrating their situations in the countries of origin and the different strategies of social mobility deployed in the country of destination.

The following sections present three aspects of the (non) participation of children: the role of business ownership in the different paths of social mobility for migrant entrepreneurs, its implications for the (non) involvement of the children, and the mechanisms by which downward mobility is cushioned through distinction practices for middle-class entrepreneurs.

Situating business ownership in the social mobility paths of Latin American migrants

Spain forms part of the Southern European migration system (King and Zontini 2000), which has been characterized by rapid development since transition to democracy was established in 1975, contributing to the demand for a foreign labour force (Ribas-Mateos 2004). Post-colonial relations between

Spain and Latin American countries have shaped the migration flows from the region towards Spain. The closure of US borders and the financial and political instability have driven the acceleration of Latin American flows towards Spain (Izquierdo-Escribano 2006). Latin American migrants are favoured by the migration policies (greater openness in visa regimes and favourable treatment for access to citizenship), which are influenced by the consideration of post-colonial links and financial interests in the region. Moreover, this openness in the migration policy is accompanied by the higher acceptance of these flows by Spanish population, due to the ongoing migration corridors to and from Latin America, and to the similarities in language, religion, and ethnicity to Spanish population (Izquierdo-Escribano and Martínez-Buján 2014).

This favourable treatment does not, however, insulate Latin American immigrants from the difficulties of accessing quality employment in Spain. The structure of the Spanish labour market reflects a bias towards the service sector, along with agriculture and construction. Migrants have generally been incorporated in occupations that require low qualifications and they earn lower wages and have an inferior status (Artiles, López-Roldán, and Molina 2011) compared to Spanish nationals. Migrants tend to occupy labour niches such as domestic and care work (mostly by migrant women) (Parella 2003; Martínez Buján 2010) and the construction or service sectors for men. On the whole, Latin American migrants mainly occupy the service sector, owing to the lack of language barriers. Their level of qualifications also reflects a rather selective flow, given that they hold higher qualifications than Spaniards (22.5 per cent for Latin American migrants with higher education degrees in comparison to 16 per cent for Spaniards) (Censos de Población y Viviendas, Spain 2011). The qualifications and occupational trajectory of Latin American migrants do not match the occupations demanded from foreigners in the Spanish labour market. Therefore, opening a small firm becomes a means to avoid falling into low-status occupations or to escape them (Beltrán, Oso, and Ribas 2006; Solé and Parella 2007; Villares-Varela 2012).

The qualitative data analysed show that opening up a business has to do with the experiences of de-skilling in the Spanish labour market. One example of the function of the business activity in strategies of upward mobility is the case of Lidia and Carlos, who were born in Argentina and arrived to Spain in the year 2002 with their two children. Lidia worked as a personal assistant in a printing company in Argentina before emigration to Spain, while Carlos worked as a driver. Lidia completed several administration and secretarial courses and Carlos achieved primary education. They both identify themselves as coming from a working-class background in Argentina. They moved to Spain in search of better work opportunities and quality of life. Carlos began working as a waiter, while Lidia found employment as a caregiver. After eight years in Spain, they managed to save enough money to

open up a small bakery and café. The motivations behind opening this small business were to gain higher income and to escape long working hours and profoundly lopsided power relations with Spanish employers. They perceived this opportunity as a key step in ascending the Spanish social mobility ladder after years of low-entry employment. Carlos explained the situation as follows:

> We started thinking of the possibility of opening a small business when we saw that the opportunities to find a good job were limited. You do improve with time, but it is difficult to leave specific sectors, especially if you are a foreigner. It is difficult enough for Spaniards to find good employment, so you have to take the plunge at some point. We have been consistent in saving money, and we accessed small micro-credit from a government programme. That helped too. It was a long, hard road, but the business is going well, so we see it now as a major step forward. (Carlos, Argentine owner of a bakery-café)

Cristina and Luis (from Venezuela, with two children) opened a small launderette, but their narratives on their occupational and social mobility trajectories are very different from those of the previous family. Both Cristina and Luis completed their higher education degrees in Venezuela (hers in engineering and his in architecture), and they both worked in their respective fields of speciality in Caracas. Cristina and Luis stated that they identified as part of the Venezuelan middle class. Concerns regarding personal safety and a rapid loss of quality of life drove their decision to emigrate. They arrived in Spain in 2005. They claimed to have known, prior emigration, about the limited employment opportunities in the Spanish labour market through friends and family members. Before arriving, they sold property (an apartment and a car) and, at a franchise fair in Venezuela, contacted a company of launderettes about how to operate one in Spain. Their aspiration was to hire one or two workers to run the business and to use the profits to sustain the family so they could invest time in the validation of their degrees, which can be a lengthy process for immigrants in Spain. Their arrival in Spain coincided with the firm's commencement of operations. However, the business was loss making and as a result they could not meet their two employees' salaries. Cristina resolved to start working in the launderette barely three months after her arrival. Therefore, the business was not perceived as a step up the social mobility ladder but rather as a refuge to avoid falling into the limited work opportunities in the Spanish labour market (i.e. care work and domestic work). Cristina described the situation along these lines:

> The idea was very different. I thought I would have to come here [the launderette] maybe once or twice a week, meet the accountant, sign invoices, and that was it. But the business was not providing enough money. Now, I have to learn how to actually wash the clothes, dry clean, iron, deal with customers. It has been a difficult period. The business gives enough money for the family, and the opportunities are very limited outside of here. This lifestyle has nothing to do with how we used to live back home. I miss having my job, developing my

> career. Now we are stuck here, cleaning the clothes and duvets of Spaniards, with long hours and working on weekends. (Cristina, Venezuelan owner of a launderette)

These two examples reflect how two similar occupations (small business owners) by migrant families are underpinned by different perceptions of social mobility trajectories and class positions. Most of the businesses in the sample require an extensive labour force with long hours; hence, reliance on the work of family members should suit the business strategy. However, reliance on the support of the children is very different between lower and middle-class Latin American entrepreneurs. I argue in the following section that the reliance or non-reliance on the work of children has to do with the role the business plays in social mobility aspirations.

The (non) contribution of children and social class positions

Scholarship has shown that the participation of children in immigrant businesses is a result of the intersection among reciprocity, obligation (Song 1999), collective orientation of family goals (Valdez 2016), and/or a lack of opportunities in paid employment (Marger 2001). An unexplored factor is the impact that opening a small firm plays in the strategies of social mobility for migrant families in the participation of children. In the data analysed, Latin American migrants of a lower class background who identified the business as the final stage of labour incorporation in Spain perceived "helping out" as part of a "gift–counter-gift" logic that shapes the reciprocal relations between parents and their children. This confirms a finding in the literature, by Ram (1992) and Song (1999), that reciprocity and moral obligation shape the participation of children, as evidenced in the ensuing narratives by Luis (Colombian) and Laura (Uruguayan):

> I think all my children should help out. For example, V [*daughter*] has worked a lot in the previous business we had. We had someone employed, and then, the three of us were working. At that time, my other children were working as part-time waiters and studying for their university degrees. They earned their money since they were little. Besides, I think it is good that they know how hard it is to earn money. You cannot let them take everything for granted. I see that Spanish kids take all for granted. (Luis, Colombian owner of a cafe)

> Although they do not tell you so, you know you have to take into account the rhythms of the business when you are planning to do something. For example, my friends went camping a few weeks ago. I need to think first about whether there is a bank holiday, whether I will be leaving on Friday. For example, I know that is not possible. Fridays, the restaurant is full, and I need to help out, so I leave on Saturday. Or any other activities, I avoid committing on Friday because they need me here. It is not that they tell you. You know you have to. (Laura, daughter in a Uruguayan family with a restaurant)

Latin American entrepreneurs from working-class backgrounds emphasize aspirations of educational attainment for their children. However, the values acquired in the framework of a family business are also perceived as positive for children's futures. Some of the skills perceived as beneficial include the acquisition of knowledge of strategies of saving, a sense of sacrifice, and the accumulation of experience in the business that can be activated when needed. Beyond these added skills, having a family business is perceived as a useful asset in case children fail to secure future employment in the country of destination. Hence, working in the family business is part of the social mobility strategy, as explicated in the subsequent accounts by Julia (Colombian), Luis (Uruguayan), and Sara (Argentine):

> One of my children is 10 years old, and being 10, she already knows what it means to have a business. She doesn't contribute because she is very young, but she is aware. I don't know whether this is going to influence her to set up her own business or not, but she has lived through it, the effort that we make every day, that we work on Saturdays and Sundays. I think she understands and it is positive. We will support her in anything she wants to do. (Julia, Colombian owner of a coffee shop)

> We had the opportunity to study. I studied business administration, and my current job is as an administrative assistant. But I also have experience in the catering sector from my parents' business. I have so much experience. I used to work every weekend until a year or so ago. I know I can always fall back on that or go to help out my parents if they need me to. They would give us some spare cash for the odd hours I would help out, and I know I can always go back if I need to. (Luis, son in Uruguayan family with a restaurant)

> I really don't want this job, but I know that if anything goes wrong, I always have something. It happened before, when I was between jobs. I come here, I make 500 euros a month, and I can pay the rent. It is flexible, so that is an advantage. (Sara, daughter in an Argentine family with a restaurant)

These narratives mirror accounts in the immigrant family business literature (Marger 2001), which explain that working in the business might help in acquiring academic qualifications but also facilitates the acquisition of other business-related skills, as well as providing a safety net. However, for middle-class Latin American migrants who perceive the business to be representative of strong downward social mobility in their trajectory, children are not expected nor encouraged to help out in the business. This finding diverges from the way immigrant entrepreneurship literature has conceptualized the work of children. As mentioned previously, most of the businesses opened by migrant entrepreneurs are not perceived as corresponding to a high status in the countries of destination (Kloosterman, Van Der Leun, and Rath 1999). When experiencing strong de-skilling and a loss of social status, the entrepreneurial strategy is understood as a platform for the children to acquire educational and social mobility *outside* the business. Within this

strategy, the entrepreneurs decide to lose the financial capital they could secure from their children's work in order to invest in their acquisition of human, but more importantly, cultural capital. The following narratives by Luis and Jesús reflected a very strong rejection of the children participating in the business:

> No, I don't want them [our children] around. They should be studying or spending time with their friends. It is tough enough that we both have to do this. We are here [in Spain] so they can get a good education, enjoy being in Europe, not serving food. They have their whole lives ahead of them to do that if they want to, but we will not ask them to do that. After school, they go to play sports, my eldest is learning to play the piano. I prefer that they use their time for that. (Luis, Uruguayan owner of a restaurant)

> It would be much easier for me to ask them [children] to help out instead of working longer hours or relying on some help from a temporary worker when needed. But I prefer to sacrifice myself. My kids know what their obligations are. We will support them independently of what they want to do but always through study. I don't want to see them here working. They should focus their energies on their education. (Jesús, Argentine owner of a bakery)

Evidently, the contribution of children seems to be shaped by the role, the business has in the strategy of social mobility for middle-class Latin American migrants in Spain. The perception of low status that these businesses have among overqualified migrants in Spain keeps the children focused on educational attainment outside the business. For lower class Latin American entrepreneurs who see the business as the step up on the mobility ladder, the business is seen as source of skills, resources and as a safety net in case of failure in education or employment.

Distinction practices: cushioning downward social mobility for middle-class migrant entrepreneurs

Whilst working-class Latin American entrepreneurs narrate the role of the participation in the business activities as a means to achieve social mobility, middle-class Latin American entrepreneurs prioritize the family's social mobility through the children's educational attainment at the expense of the individual sacrifice of the parents. Their narratives reflect the different mechanisms they put in place to cushion the downwards social mobility experienced by working in a small firm associated with a low status and digressing from their career development. Frequent references to their lives in the country of origin reflect yearning for a past when they worked at a level corresponding to their qualifications and when they were integrated in other forms of social activities that enacted their class positions, such as going to the theatre, to the gym, or being at the other side of the counter as a customer instead of a service provider in a café, restaurant, or launderette.

This loss of status experienced when opening their business in Spain is balanced through alternative mechanisms to recover their class positions outside of their working life. Similar patterns have been explored elsewhere using Bourdieu's concept of distinction (Bourdieu 1984). When looking at the articulation of class identities and migration, Oliver and O'Reilly (2010) explain how, for example, retired British migrants in Spain re-enact class through their leisure activities. These strategies activate symbolic capital that can no longer be mobilized through their positions in working life (Oliver and O'Reilly 2010).

This analysis also holds when looking at the distinction practices of Latin American migrant entrepreneurs from middle classes in their search for the lost social position they exercised in their countries of origin. The emphasis on the educational choices of their children is recurrent in their narratives, generally praising the efforts they have gone through in assessing the quality of the state-funded school system in Spain and the prioritization of education for their children. Juan (Uruguay) and Alberto (Venezuela) explained some of these decisions:

> We want them to make the most of the time here. State-funded education is good here, so they should try to do well and get into University. We will not have a say in what they want to study, but they know they have to get a degree. We did some research about where to find accommodation so the school they would go to was good. You don't want them to have more difficulties than the ones they already have for having joined later than their course mates (Juan, Uruguayan owner of a furniture and decoration shop)

> We wanted to search for a private school because, in Venezuela, state schools are not of good quality. Then, we were told that, actually, sending your children to a state school in Spain does not mean worse quality […] So we took into account the neighbourhood where we were going to live, so we knew it was maybe a better school than others […] That is really important for us. We want to know that they will have all the opportunities available to us. (Alberto, Venezuelan owner of a grocery shop)

Educational attainment through formal education is not the only feature at the core of the cushioning of downward social mobility; the acquisition of resources related to cultural and symbolic capital is another aspect. Latin American middle-class entrepreneurs emphasized the effort they exert when funding their children's extracurricular and leisure time activities. Joining these activities not only facilitates the acquisition of skills but also provides space for interaction and engagement in symbolic relations related to their past lives in the country of origin. Ana (Venezuelan) and Clara (Argentine) articulate some of these aspects:

> It is difficult enough for us to renounce the many things we used to do. While we are here, I want them [our children] to do well, so you they how important languages are. From 4 to 5, I have a Chinese teacher coming here to teach

> them. And on Thursdays, the little one goes to piano lessons, while the eldest one goes to the language centre. These are things that prepare you for the future, and we don't want them to feel that they are missing out because of our decision to leave […] And I do enjoy the time off from them, too, while they are doing these activities, and I go to my pilates class. (Ana, Venezuelan with a bookshop)

> The time of the day I enjoy is after 3 pm […] I close and go to play squash at the sports centre, and on Fridays, I take my girl to the activities centre, where she is doing drama. There, I meet other people I have things in common with. We have even met a couple there to travel with. We went to Rome together last Easter. These are things we enjoy doing, and we want our kids to experience Europe because we are here. At least this is one of the advantages of all this effort. (Laura, Argentinean with a café)

These narratives showcase how the perception of downward social mobility condition the aspirations of migrant parents towards the acquisition of education and symbolic capital through the different activities they engage with to compensate the loss of social status.

Discussion and conclusions

Immigrant entrepreneurship scholarship has revealed how parents utilize the support of children in the business as a means of production and reproduction of the family unit (Song 1997, 1999). The characteristics of small firms run by migrants make family support key to these firms' survival (Phizacklea 1988; Ram 1992; Ram et al. 2002). However, these studies have rarely looked at the role of class in understanding parents' aspirations and, in consequence, the (non) involvement of their children in work. This article reveals intra-group differences when accounting for how class positions explain why and how children of migrant entrepreneurs are encouraged to enter or remain outside the business. The findings also showcase the specificities of the Spanish context for Latin American migration characterized by strong post-colonial links, on-going migration flows in both directions, and a favourable treatment in entry, stay, and citizenship rights. The lack of language barriers together with similar religious and ethnic backgrounds makes this group of migrants the most likely to succeed in their labour incorporation. However, the structure of the Spanish labour market (low wages, low qualification, and low-status jobs available) does not provide adequate opportunities for career progression. Opening a small firm, therefore, becomes a means to either cushion downwards social mobility (for middle-class migrants) or to start an upward social mobility trajectory (working-class migrants). The narratives analysed demonstrate that, for those Latin American entrepreneurs who perceive the business as a step up on the labour and social mobility ladder, business participation is understood as a source of acquiring material and immaterial skills as well as a safety net in case of failure in

education or in the labour market. For those parents with a perception of strong downwards mobility, the entrepreneurial strategy is understood as a platform for children to acquire educational and labour mobility *outside* the business. Therefore, the article contributes to nuancing our understanding of the role of family ties in migrant family businesses by accounting for class positions (Anthias 1992; Valdez 2011, 2016). These findings unpack the role of parents' aspirations on the social mobility paths of their children (as in the diverging case in Song's (1997) sample); and moves beyond the focus on ethnic and cultural traits that motivate migrants to mobilize family ties.

This article also shows that, in order to understand the outcomes of the trajectories of the children of migrants, we ought to look at class positions and social mobility aspirations of their parents. These differential strategies might produce different outcomes for the adaptation of children: for example, parents' aspirations shape how children from middle-class origins have had accumulated cultural and symbolic capital, owing to the sacrifice of their parents of excluding them from the business activity. Educational attainment is also present in the discourses of working-class families. However, the pressing needs of the business together with aspirations of mobility linked to business ownership do not facilitate a full immersion in the symbolic activities of the middle classes. For middle-class entrepreneurs, the formal education aspirations are also paired with the investment in extracurricular activities that involve the acquisition of knowledge related to symbolic activities, such as playing instruments, learning second and third languages, or competing in sports. Participation in these activities also provides an alternative social environment to socialize with people bearing similar interests and class positions that might facilitate future social relations and routes to upward social mobility. This is not to say that working-class parents are preventing their children from attending extracurricular activities. It is, instead, an assertion that in their accounts extracurricular activities are not embedded in narratives of mitigating downwards social mobility. These findings also open new avenues for research, such as (i) unpacking the intersection of the business cycle, migration trajectory, type of business, and age/gender of the children (Song 1997; Stewart 2003); (ii) measuring the long-term implications of the children's work in their intergenerational social mobility (Kao and Tienda 1998; Louie 2001; Portes et al. 2013); and (iii) the impact of children's social mobility on transforming ethnic economies (Sanghera 2002; Jones, Mascarenhas-Keyes, and Ram 2012).

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Appendix

Table A1. Profile of businesses and interviewees.

Business	Country of origin	Family members interviewed	Whether children contribute	Class position in country of origin
Bakery	Argentina	m, f, c1 (19), c2 (17)	N	Middle class
Bookshop	Venezuela	m, f, c1 (18), c2 (13)	N	Middle class
Café 1	Colombia	m, f, c1 (21), c2 (19), c3 (13)	Y	Working class
Café 2	Colombia	m*, c1 (19), c2 (10)	Y – only c1 –	Working class
Café 3	Argentina	m, f, c1 (18), c2 (12)	N	Middle class
Café-bakery	Argentina	m, f, c1 (23), c2 (19)	Y	Working class
Furniture store	Uruguay	m, f, c1 (21) c2 (14)	N	Middle class
Grocery store	Venezuela	m, f, c1 (16)	N	Middle class
Hairdresser	Argentina	m*, c1 (16), c2 (12)	Y – only c1	Working class
Launderette	Venezuela	m, f, c1 (21), c2 (17)	N	Middle class
Launderette 2	Venezuela	m, f, c1 (17), c2 (12)	N	Middle class
Party decoration	Venezuela	m, f, c1 (22), c2 (15)	N	Middle class
Patisserie	Argentina	m, f, c1 (18), c2 (14)	N	Middle class
Restaurant 1	Uruguay	m* c1 (22), c2 (17)	Y	Working class
Restaurant 2	Uruguay	m, f, c1 (23), c2 (18), c3 (13)	Y	Working class
Restaurant 3	Argentina	m, f, c1 (20)	Y	Working class
Restaurant 4	Uruguay	m, f, c1 (19), c2 (16)	N	Middle class
Total interviews (55)		m (total 17), f (total 14), c (total 24)		

Annotation: Y: Yes; N: No; m: mother; f: father; c: child – age between brackets – only children over 16 were interviewed.

*One-parent family.