

Strangers in the Homeland?

The Academic Performance of Children of Return Migrants in Mexico

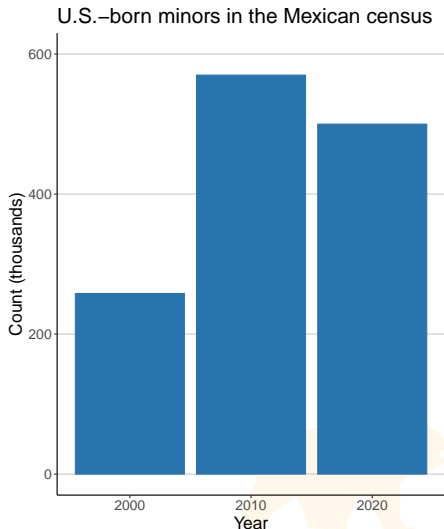
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Introduction

- Largest return migration flow in the world is from the U.S. to Mexico (Azose and Raftery 2019)
- About 500,000 American-born minors live in Mexico (~2 percent of school enrollment)
- *0.5 generation*: children of Mexican immigrants who are born in the U.S. and later migrate to Mexico (Zúñiga and Giorguli Saucedo 2018)



Introduction

- What does it mean to assimilate into a society where ethnic, cultural, and legal barriers are at a minimum?
- Previous, mainly qualitative studies present diverging findings
- Predominant narrative of struggles: difficulty with written language, invisibility to teachers, stigma and exclusion from other youths
- Bybee et al. (2020): teachers characterize them as “star students,” capitalizing on their binational and bicultural assets



Introduction

Research questions

- What is migrant success? Importance of comparison group
- ① How do the academic outcomes of U.S.-born children of return migrants compare to other youths in Mexico?
 - Descriptive assessment of Mexican educational context
- ② How do their academic outcomes compare to similar adolescents in the U.S.?
 - Counterfactual: what would have happened to these children had they not migrated to Mexico?
- ③ If disparities exist, are these due to selection on pre-migration characteristics?
- ④ Do post-migration individual characteristics mediate effects?



Empirical Expectations

Why might these adolescents be *disadvantaged*?

- Neoclassical economics: Parents return due to negative factors, such as unemployment, deportation
- Transnationalism: Alienation and exclusion in the “home” society
- Institutionalism: lack of infrastructure for investment (Hagan and Wassink 2020, 539).
- Cassarino (2004): deportation means that migrants not “ready and willing” to migrate
- Hernández-León, Zúñiga, and Lakhani (2020) suggest that “U.S. policies [...] effectively externalize downward assimilation to communities of origin.”



Empirical Expectations

Why might these adolescents be *advantaged*?

- NELM: return migration implies economic success, with parents accumulating sufficient resources to lead a comfortable life in Mexico
- Ready and willing to migrate (Cassarino 2004)
- Benefit from resources such as dual nationality, bicultural facility, and experience in better resourced schools (Gándara & Jensen 2021)
- Assimilation theory: absence of most social markers of difference
⇒ smooth integration (Alba & Nee 2003)



Institutional Explanations

- Recent work shows the importance of institutional features of national systems for immigrant educational outcomes (Thomson and Crul 2007; Crul and Vermeulen 2003; Schneider, Crul, and Pott 2022; Midtbøen and Nadim 2022; Platt, Polavieja, and Radl 2022)
- Supportive or unaccommodating academic environment may be decisive
- Mexican school system under-resourced: low per-student funding, over-extended teachers, short school day, few provisions for Spanish language learners



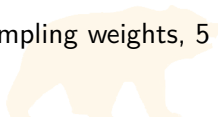
Data

- Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for 2012, 2015, and 2018
 - reading, math, and science
- Main sample: 465 children born to two Mexican parents in the U.S., now living in Mexico
- Mexico comparison: 40,710 children of non-immigrants in Mexico
- U.S. comparison: 926 Spanish-speaking children of two immigrants in the U.S.

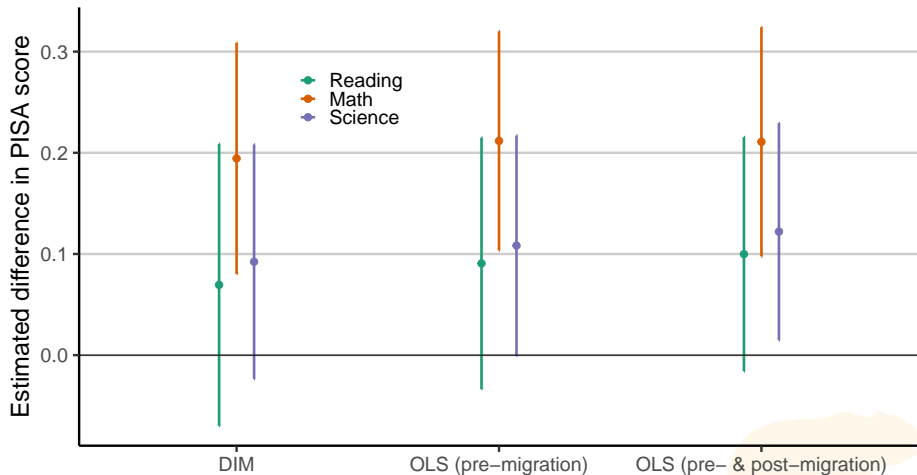


Methods

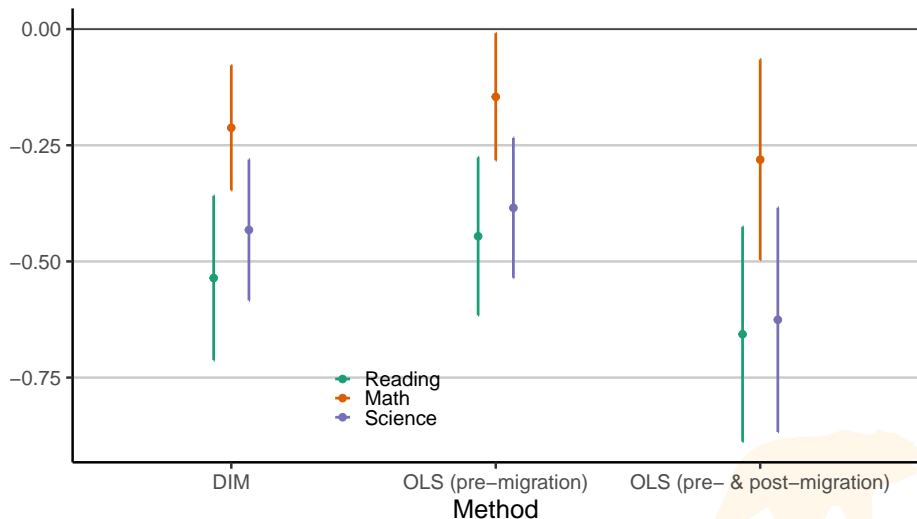
- Difference-in-means and OLS regression estimates
- Adjusting for pre-migration variables: role of selection?
 - Mother's and father's education (6-category ISCED), cultural possessions, home educational resources, age (15 for most respondents), early childhood education and care (ECEC), two-category gender
- Adjusting for post-migration variables: do individual/family characteristics mediate the effect of migration?
 - Household wealth, home possessions, home information and communication technology (ICT) resources, and an index of economic, social and cultural status, highest parental occupational status measured (ISEI), urban locality
- Analysis of moderators
- HC1 clustered standard errors at the school level, sampling weights, 5 plausible values
- Sensitivity analysis with other estimation methods



Mexico Comparisons



U.S. Comparisons



Moderators

- How are results moderated by gender, age at migration, and rural vs. urban locality?
- For within-Mexico comparisons, results do not vary
 - even when excluding 1/3 of the main sample migrated before the age of 1
- For U.S. comparisons, greater disparities for villages (-1 sd)



Conclusion

- Previous studies have mixed findings, with negative outcomes predominating
- slight advantage compared to Mexican youths
- stark disadvantage compared to similar U.S. adolescents
- Controlling for pre- or post-migration characteristics does not change conclusions
- Little variation by moderators



Conclusion

- Corrective to narrative on children of Mexican return migrants: advantaged compared to Mexican students
- Importance of comparison group and institutions: focus on only one country fails to capture the importance of institutional context
 - Mexican schools under-resourced
- Smooth assimilation, but to relatively low educational average
- Another way U.S.-citizen children of undocumented immigrants are harmed by punitive immigration policy



Conclusion

Thank You

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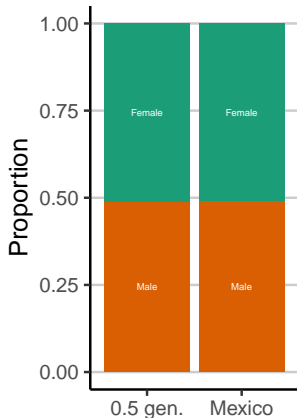
Variables

- Pre-migration variables: mother's and father's education (6-category ISCED), cultural possessions, home educational resources, age (15 for most respondents), early childhood education and care (ECEC), two-category gender
- Post-migration variables: composite variables for household wealth, home possessions, home information and communication technology (ICT) resources, and an index of economic, social and cultural status; highest parental occupational status measured (ISEI), urban locality

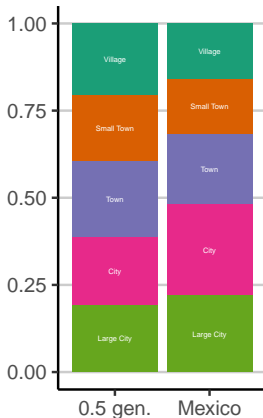


Mexico Comparisons

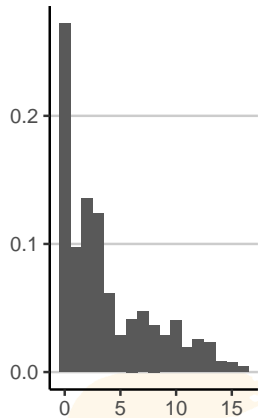
Gender



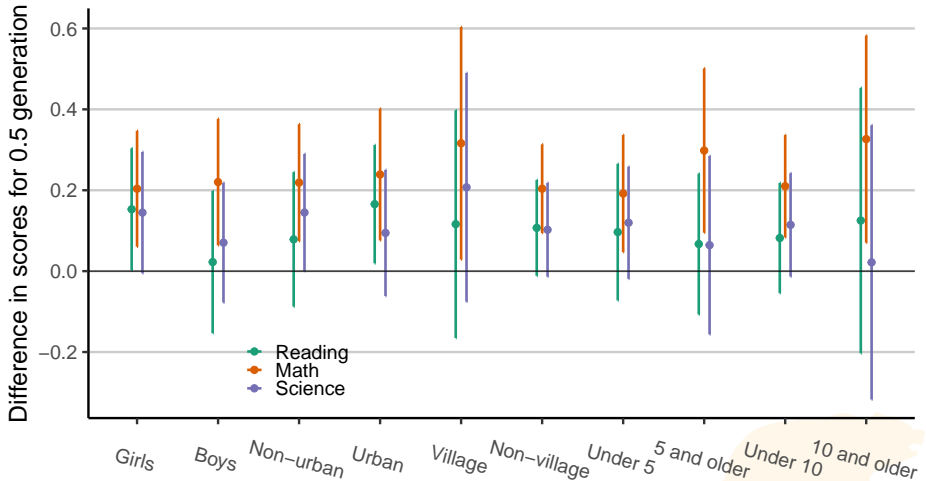
School Location



Age at Arrival

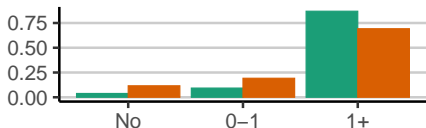


Mexico Comparisons

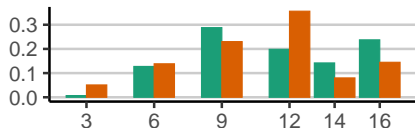


U.S. Comparisons

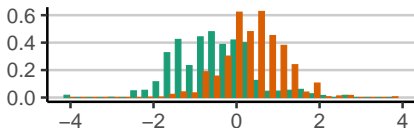
Early Childhood Education



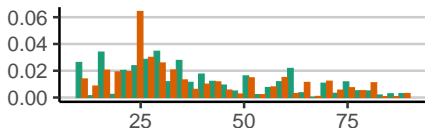
Parent's Years of Education



Wealth Composite



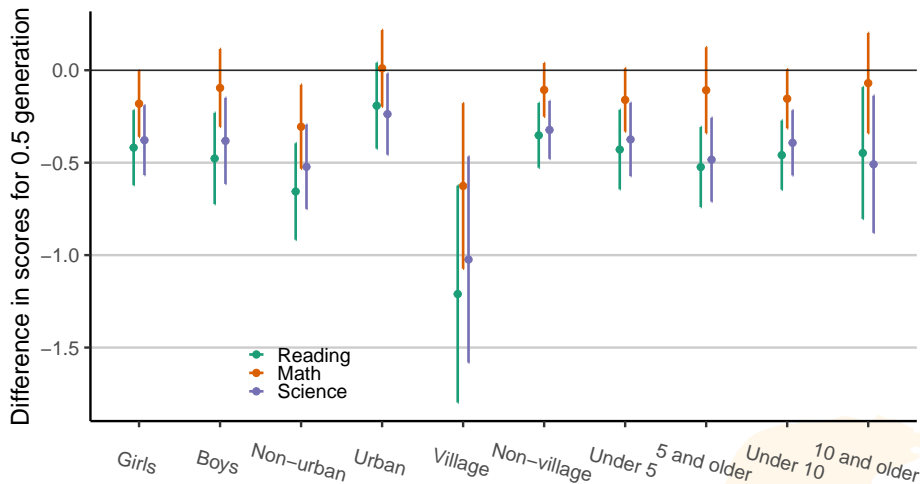
Parent's Occupation (ISEI)



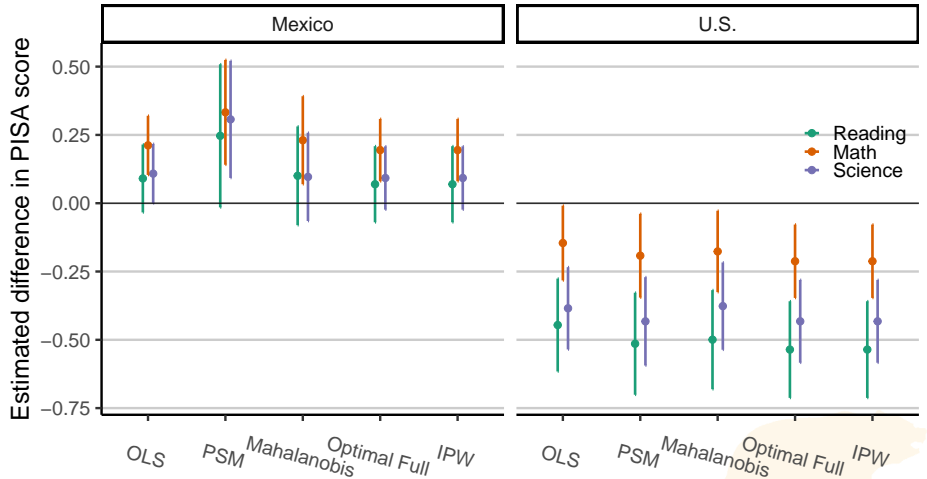
0.5 Generation U.S. Spanish-Speaking



U.S. Comparisons



Sensitivity Analysis



Conclusion

Why the slight advantage compared to Mexican students?

- Bicultural resources or prestige bestowed by experience in the U.S.
- Facility with standardized tests
- Parental resource advantage: benefits of migration
- Bureaucratic hurdles might prevent the most disadvantaged students from enrolling in school (Mateos 2019) or they have dropped out completely (Zúñiga and Carrillo Cantú 2020)



Conclusion

Why the disadvantage compared to U.S. students?

- In 2014, Mexico spent 2,000 USD per pupil, while the U.S. spent 18,000 USD (Santibañez 2021, 25)
- Short school day (4.5 hours in elementary and 7 hours in secondary school)
- Few extracurricular or enrichment programs exist
- Outside of school, social programs may be less well resourced



References

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