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Theme: Health, Wellbeing and Morbidity: Aïda Solé Auró (Pompeu Fabra University, Spain)

Title: Life Satisfaction Development in the Transition to Adulthood:

Differences between Boys and Girls and Children of Immigrants and Non-immigrants

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Extended abstract

Introduction

The transition into adulthood is a developmentally dense period, in which young people are often experiencing major life events in multiple life domains, from physical maturation and identity development to leaving the parental home and entering the labor market (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011). Finding your way in this jungle of changes can be stressful, causing confusion, disappointment, and lower well-being (Arnett, 2000). However, successfully navigating through the transition, reaching the new developmental stage of adulthood (e.g., becoming independent, overcoming the major developmental tasks of the transition to adulthood) may increase life satisfaction (Arnett, 2007; Schulenberg, Bryant, & O'Malley, 2004). The developmental tasks and expectations in the transition to adulthood are constructed in a socio-cultural context (Arnett, 2000; Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011) and may therefore differ between genders and between cultures. Although life satisfaction is important for positive development from adolescence into adulthood, it is poorly understood how life satisfaction unfolds when entering adulthood, and whether and when this development differs between boys and girls and children of immigrants and non-immigrants. First, based on developmental theory and empirical research, a U-shaped development of life satisfaction was expected, with decreasing life satisfaction over the course of adolescence, followed by an increase in emerging adulthood. Second, due to gender differences in development, gendered life satisfaction trajectories were expected. Specifically, it was hypothesized that girls have lower starting levels of life satisfaction in adolescence, but that gender differences decrease into emerging adulthood. Third, driven by a cultural mismatch perspective (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993; Lui, 2015), it was hypothesized that children of immigrants have a steeper decrease and a different timing of life satisfaction development. Finally, based on the double disadvantage perspective (King, 1988), it was expected that girls

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with immigrant backgrounds would have the lowest trajectories of life satisfaction. Because children of immigrants form a heterogeneous group, this study examines trajectories for the five largest immigrant groups in Germany separately (i.e., from Turkey, Poland, Former Soviet Union, Former Yugoslavia, and Italy).

Methods

We used seven waves (2010-2018) of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey conducted in Germany (CILS-4EU-DE; Kalter, Kogan, & Dollmann, 2019, $N^2 = 3757$, $M_{age} = 14.7$, 54% girl, 22% immigrant background at wave 1). CILS-4EU's longitudinal design and diverse sample of young people (aged 14 to 23) enabled us to study the transition from adolescence into young adulthood for young people with and without an immigrant background. To answer our research questions, multi-level random effect models were performed.

Findings

Our analyses revealed that life satisfaction development is non-linear (Figure 1); We found fluctuations over the transition into adulthood (M-shaped), with overall decreases between age 17 and 18 and between age 20 and 23. In addition, we found lower and less stable trajectories for girls than for boys. For boys, there were no differences between boys with and without immigrant backgrounds. For girls there were differences, with adolescent girls with immigrant backgrounds representing the lowest trajectories of life satisfaction. Finally, differences in life satisfaction among groups were prominent in adolescence, but disappeared in young adulthood. Our explorative analyses showed that these results were robust over different children of immigrant groups, although these latter results should be interpreted with caution due to small immigrant sub-group sizes.

In all, our study shows that although levels of life satisfaction fluctuate over the transition, it remained high on average, suggesting that young people growing up in Germany are overall satisfied with life. However, girls reported lower levels of life satisfaction in adolescence than boys, with lowest levels and a remarkable dip at age 18 for girls with immigrants backgrounds.

² Weighted sample statistics of analyzed sample, after exclusion of age outliers, first generation immigrants, and missing data on gender and life satisfaction.

The gender differences in life satisfaction development calls for further studies on why and how this difference sets off and persists.

²redictive margins of life satisfaction by gender and migrant background
Model 3c

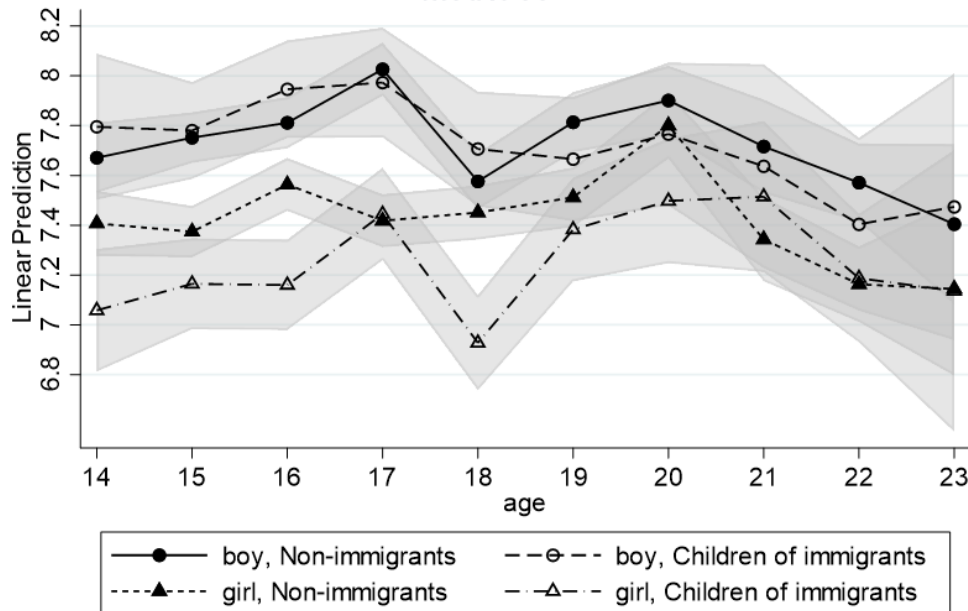


Figure 1. *Life satisfaction trajectories for boys and girls with and without immigrant backgrounds separately.*

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