Problem Behaviors Among Immigrant Youth in Spain

Tyler Baldor (SUMR Scholar), Grace Kao, PhD (Mentor)
Why immigration?

- A global demographic phenomenon
  - Increasingly prevalent in the modern world

- A diverse and unequal movement of people
  - The archetypal “poor immigrant” does not hold true for many
  - Diverse population of varying races, places-of-origins, ethnicities, and socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds

- Some migrants have better outcomes (related to health, education, etc.) than others
The Spanish Context

- Second highest immigration rate in the European Union

- Rapid increase in immigration over the past two decades:

- 400,000 foreign-born in 1990

- 5.1 million foreign-born today, or about 14% of Spain’s total population
Catalonia, Spain

- Most popular destination in Spain for immigrants
- Spain’s industrial center; highest regional GDP
- Catalan, a language distinct from Castilian Spanish, is an official language of Catalonia
- Catalan is the language of instruction for primary education
Immigration in the U.S.

- Immigration in the US extensively studied by sociologists

- A long history of immigration into the United States

- Among immigrants, health outcomes vary by race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.
What we know from US literature: health of immigrants

- **Segmented assimilation**
  - Assimilation = the process of immigrants joining mainstream society
  - Acculturation = socialization into new culture
  - Not all immigrants experience upward mobility

- **Immigrant paradox**
  - Immigrants disadvantaged in many ways
    - Higher stress, language barriers, etc.
  - Immigrants tend to have better health outcomes
    - More resilient with stronger community and cultural ties
    - Mental health, nutrition, obesity, smoking among adults, etc.

- **Healthy immigrant effect**
  - Health advantage diminishes over time
    - Can differ for men and women migrants
  - A result of selection of immigrants into a country
    - Wealthier and healthier individuals more likely to migrate

- “Risky” or problem behavior is an indicator of health
What we know from US literature:
Factors associated with risky/problem behaviors

- **Individual factors**
  - Academic achievement
    - Grades in coursework, GPA
  - Engagement in other risky behaviors
    - Sexual activity

- **Friends**
  - Pressures to participate in unhealthy behaviors

- **Family**
  - Familial strictness
    - Immigrant parents tend to be more strict than native parents

(Umberson et. al 2010; Crosnoe & Johnson 2011)
Literature limitations

A focus on adult immigrants and health indicators, and adolescent risky behavior in general


Some research on immigrant adolescents and problem behaviors (alcohol, tobacco, and drug use)

O’Loughlin et al. 2009; Spence & Brewster 2010; Epstein 1998; Brindis et al. 1995

We know little about Spain and its immigrants

Gibson & Carrasco, 2009; Leyendecker 2011
Research Questions

1. Do adolescent immigrants in Spain engage less in problem behaviors than their native counterparts?

2. Do generational patterns vary by gender?

3. Are patterns across generations associated with individual, family and friend factors?
Research Questions: Summary of findings

1. Do adolescent immigrants in Spain engage less in problem behaviors than their native counterparts?
   - Yes.

2. Do generational patterns vary by gender?
   - Yes.

3. Are patterns across generations associated with individual, family and friend factors?
   - Yes.
Defining generational / immigrant status

- **First Generation**
  - Foreign-born individual

- **Second Generation**
  - Native-born individual with foreign-born parents

- **Third Generation (and beyond)**
  - Native-born with native-born parents

- First and second generation considered immigrants
Research Sample

- *Longitudinal Study of Families and Childhood (Pànel de Famílies I Infància)*
  - Representative and probabilistic sample of approx. 3,000 adolescents in Catalonia
  - Students recruited from 80 schools in Catalonia
  - Grades 7 to 10 completed questionnaires between April and June of 2006 (N=3,004)
  - Re-interviewed in 2007 and 2008
  - Waves 2 and 3 include new cohorts of approx. 500 seventh-graders each
Methods

- Dependent variables / outcomes
  - Problem behavior factor
    - Have you ever drunk alcohol? (Yes/No)
    - Do you binge drink? (Yes/No)
    - Have you smoked tobacco? (Yes/No)
    - Have you smoked marijuana? (Yes/No)

- Factor analysis to create a single, underlying, dependent variable from many
  - Problem behavior factor
    - Four separate variables
    - Cronbach’s alpha = 0.80

- Descriptive analyses using means and tests of significance

- Multivariate linear regression
Control variables

- Age (mean = 13.9 years)
- SES (Total household income and mother’s education)
- GPA = 0-4 (Math, Catalan and Spanish grades)
- Do you look for a hook up on weekends? (Never to often)
- Parental strictness factor
  - You have a weekend curfew (yes/no)
  - It’s prohibited to go out in certain clothes (yes/no)
  - You decide what TV programs you want to watch (yes/no)
  - You decide what you want to eat (yes/no)
  - You decide which friends you want to spent time with (yes/no)
  - You decide how much time you study (yes/no)
  - You go to bed when you want (yes/no)

- Friends pressure you to…
  - Smoke cigarettes, smoke marijuana and drink alcohol?
Most respondents 3rd+ gen, female

**Figure 1**

Distribution of Sample by Generation Status and Gender, Wave I (N=3,004)
Latin America most common region-of-origin

Figure 2

Distribution of Sample by Region-of-origin, Wave I (N=3,004)
Half of respondents had tried alcohol; one-third had smoked cigarettes

Figure 3

Mean percentages of problem behaviors, Wave I (N=3,004)
Research Questions

1. Do adolescent immigrants in Spain engage less in problem behaviors than their native counterparts?

2. Do generational patterns vary by gender?

3. Are patterns across generations associated with individual, family and friend factors?
1st gen engage in fewest problem behaviors

Figure 4

Means of problem behavior factor by generation status, Wave 1 (N=3,004)

19 Research Question 1
This difference persists with controls

Figure 5

Coefficients of problem behavior factor by generation status, controlling for gender, age and SES, Wave I (N=3,004)

R-squared=0.27

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.01

20 Research Question 1
Research Questions

1. Do adolescent immigrants in Spain engage less in problem behaviors than their native counterparts?

2. Do generational patterns vary by gender?

3. Are patterns across generations associated with individual, family and friend factors?
Generational differences vary the most for girls

Figure 6

Descriptive variation of problem behaviors by generation status and gender, Wave I (N=3,004)

Factor measurement:
min. -0.86, max 1.98

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.01 compared to 3^{rd}+ male
1st gen females have lowest probability of engaging in problem behaviors; 2nd and 3rd+ gen females have highest

Figure 7

Coefficients of problem behaviors by generation status and gender, controlling for age and SES, Wave I (N=3,004)

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.01

R-squared=0.27
Research Questions

1. Do adolescent immigrants in Spain engage less in problem behaviors than their native counterparts?

2. Do generational patterns stay the same by gender?

3. Are patterns across generations associated with individual, family and friend factors?
Gender and generational differences persist despite individual, parental and friend controls

**Figure 8**

Coefficients of problem behaviors, controlling for age, SES, GPA, hook-up, parental strictness and friend pressures, Wave I (N=3,004)

R-squared=0.39

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.01
Conclusion

- Summary

- Implications
Summary – Do immigrants engage in unhealthy, problem behaviors less?

- A healthy immigrant effect for first-generation youth.
- Second-generation youth engage in behaviors less, but the difference is not statistically significant.
Summary – Does gender matter?

- Matters most for girls.
- Second- and third-generation girls had highest probabilities of engaging in problem behaviors.
- Differences among boys not statistically significant.
Summary – Do individual, family or friend factors matter?

- All individual, family and friend measures were associated with problem behaviors in the expected direction.

- However, these variables do not account for gender and generational differences.
Conclusion

- Summary

- Implications
Implications

- Relevance of immigrant paradox and healthy immigrant effect for understanding immigrants outside the U.S. Despite different contexts, immigrant narrative not necessarily different.

- More research in understanding the patterns of females across generations.

- More research in determining why these generational and gender gaps exist.
Next steps

- Better utilize the diversity of the sample
  - Do these behaviors vary by first language?
  - Does national origin matter?

- Better explore the notions of assimilation and acculturation and their effects on problem behavior rates
  - Analyze not only Wave I, but also Waves II and III
  - Do individuals’ behaviors worsen over time?
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- tbaldor@sas.upenn.edu
Appendices
Linear regression for RQ1

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*SES control not shown, but in models

**Standard errors in parentheses**

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.01**
### Linear Regression for RQ2 and RQ3

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*SES control not shown, but in models