Father Involvement and Youth Transition into Risky Behaviors in Immigrant and Native Born Families: Preliminary Evidence

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Research Objectives

- To examine the effects of father involvement on adolescent’s transition to risky behaviors in immigrant and native born families.

- To examine whether the effects of father involvement on youth transition to risky behaviors vary with generational status.

- To examine whether the effects of father involvement interacts with generational status to predict risky behaviors.
Why do Fathers Matter?

**The Father-Child Relationship:**

- Various dimensions of paternal behavior important:
  - Spending time with children
  - Providing emotional support
  - Giving everyday assistance
  - Non-coercive discipline

- Associated with higher self-esteem, life satisfaction, academic success, reduced delinquency, fewer behavioral problems at school, social integration, positive social behaviors, and decreases in internalizing problems
Father Involvement and Outcomes for Immigrant Youth

- Father involvement and outcomes for immigrant youth ignored in previous research

- Present study will explore how father involvement is related to adolescent risk behaviors among a wider classification of youth than previously examined

- Previous studies focus exclusively on father involvement and outcomes for U.S born adolescents from white middle class populations
Adolescents in Immigrant Families

- At risk of both negative and positive outcomes as a result of both risk and protective factors in their environments:

  **Protective Factors:**
  - Generation (First-generation protected from negative risk taking; advantage declines over time)
  - Two-parent families—Fathers present
  - Ingrained sense of being rooted in families
  - Extended family—provides familial support

  **Risk Factors:**
  - Poverty
  - Large family size
  - Racial and ethnic minority (peer networks)
  - Language and cultural barriers
  - Acculturative stress; fitting in between a dominant culture and a foreign culture
  - Physical and social changes during adolescence; making decisions about high-risk behaviors
Research Questions

- **Question 1:** Net of other individual and contextual factors, does father involvement predict delinquency and substance use among adolescents?

- **Question 2:** Net of other individual and contextual factors, is youth immigration status associated with delinquency and substance use among adolescents?

- **Question 3:** Net of other individual and contextual factors, does father involvement interact with adolescent generational differences to predict delinquent activity and substance use among adolescents?
Hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1:**
  - High levels of father involvement will be associated with a reduced likelihood of risk behaviors among youth.

- **Hypothesis 2:**
  - Being a 1\textsuperscript{st} generation or 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation youth will be associated with a reduced likelihood of involvement in risky behaviors.

- **Hypothesis 3:**
  - At different levels of father involvement, delinquency, and substance use outcomes for 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation adolescents will differ.
Data

- **National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97)**
  - Rounds One through Three (1997-1999)
  - Nationally representative survey
  - Documents the transition of youth into adulthood
  - Large samples of adolescents
  - Longitudinal design

- **Analytical Sample:**
  - Youth age 12-14 in Round One
  - Youth who live continuously with both parents during all three waves
  - Sample Size = 5,345
Event Histories

- **Life Histories:**
  - Created for 5,345 adolescents
  - One record for each year that child observed
  - Time intervals measured in years
  - Censoring occurs with attrition from sample or end of period of observation in 1999
Dependent Variables

- **First Substance Use:**
  - Substance use index (10 items)
    - (e.g., smoked cigarette; drink alcohol; used marijuana)
  - Range: 0-10
  - Dummy coded 0 or 1

- **First Delinquent Activity:**
  - Delinquency index (3 items)
    - (e.g., run away, carried gun, belonged to gang, stole from store)
  - Range: 0-3
  - Dummy coded 0 or 1
Independent Variables

- **Father Involvement:**
  - Six-item scale
    - (e.g. think highly of him; person I want to be like; enjoy spending time with him; helps do important things, praises for doing well)
  - Range: 0-30
  - Alpha coefficient= .82
  - Time-varying covariate
  - Higher scores indicate higher levels of father involvement

- **Immigration and Citizenship Status:**
  - **First Generation**: Foreign born and emigrated from country of birth to US
  - **Second Generation**: U.S. born children who have at least one foreign born parent
  - **Native-Born**: U.S. born of U.S parents
Control Variables

- **Parenting Styles (for fathers and mothers):**
  - Permissive, uninvolved, authoritarian, authoritative

- **Parental Monitoring (for fathers and mothers):**
  - Four-item scale; Range: 0-16; Alpha coefficient = .71 for mothers and .81 for fathers

- **Father’s-Individual Characteristics:**
  - Employment status, educational attainment

- **Mother’s Individual Characteristics:**
  - Mother-involvement, maternal education

- **Mother- Father Relationship:**
  - Six-item scale; Range: 0-24; Alpha coefficient = .83

- **Household-Level Covariates:**
  - Poverty level (received AFDC), household composition (co-resident children)

- **Child-Level Covariates:**
  - Age, ethnic origin, sex
Analyses

- **Event History Analysis:**
  - Discrete-Time Logistic Regression models
  - Hierarchical regression for main effect models
  - Huber correction for clustering

- **Interaction Effect Models:**
  - 2-way interaction terms
  - Log-likelihood tests between models of direct effect and interaction effect models
Sample Description

- **Immigration/Citizenship Status:**
  - Native-Born (77.4%);
  - First-Generation (12.8%)
  - Second Generation (8.8%)

- **Mean Age:** 15.25

- **Delinquent Activity:** 37% of youth

- **Substance Use:** 50% of youth
Figure 1: Substance Use and Delinquency Outcomes by Generational Status, NLSY97-99

- 1st Generation: 44% Sub. Use, 34% Del.
- 2nd Generation: 45% Sub. Use, 37% Del.
- Native-Born: 51% Sub. Use, 38% Del.

Percentage
Figure 2: Odds Ratios for Baseline Discrete Time Logistic Regression Analysis of the Effects of Father Involvement on Youth First Delinquent Activity

***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05
Figure 3: Odds Ratios for Baseline Discrete Time Logistic Regression Analysis of the Effects of Father Involvement on Youth First Substance Use

**Father Involvement**

- U.S. Born (Ref) 1.00
- 1st Generation 0.79***
- 2nd Generation 0.81

***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05
Results

- **Does father involvement predict youth transition into substance use and delinquent activity?**
  - Higher levels of father involvement associated with reduced likelihood of substance use and delinquent activity for adolescents controlling for other covariates.
  - Effects accord with hypotheses derived from prior research

- **Is youth immigration status associated with delinquency and substance use among adolescents?**
  - Being a 1<sup>st</sup> generation youth associated with a decreased likelihood of both substance use and delinquent activity.
  - Effects not significant for second generation youth
  - Effects accord with hypotheses derived from prior research

- **Does father involvement interact with adolescent generational differences to predict involvement in substance use and delinquent activity?**
  - Interaction terms not significant
Study Limitations

- Sample size limitations (sub-group analysis)
- Rudimentary measures of immigration status; county of origin data may capture variations in outcomes
- Measurement of father involvement—may not capture all components of father involvement for all cultural groups
- Sample selective of intact families; youth may not be representative of sample likely to engage in risky behaviors
- Sample restrictive to those with co-resident fathers, generational differences in behaviors may be minimized because single parenthood strongly associated with risk behaviors and generation
- Under-reporting of substance use and delinquent activity
Future Directions

- Improving the measurement and conceptualization of father involvement
- Collection of data on diverse group of fathers (e.g. immigrant fathers)
- Larger sample sizes of immigrant fathers would allow us to explore relationships in more detail