Neighborhood Disorder and Childcare Involvement of Nonresident and Resident Fathers

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Research Question Development

• Several reasons for concerns about father involvement
  – 1/3 children in families without a biological father
  – Lack of father involvement and child wellbeing
  – Social fathers’ replacement function controversial, and many such families do not have any father figure
  – Father involvement promotion and the need to understand influential factors
Research Question Development

• Identity theory (Fox & Bruce, 2001)
  – Father’s identity is associated with their perception of role and responsibility, which influences involvement
  – Nonresident fathers have ambiguous paternal identity, which may make them more sensitive to social contexts

• Package deal theory (Townsend, 2000)
  – Father-mother relationship as a dominating factor for involvement
Research Question Development

• Factors affecting father involvement
  – Factors within and cross-family contexts
    • Characteristics of mother, father, and child
    • Mother-father relationship
    • Family social networks

• How about community environment?
Ecological Perspective of Involvement

- Father involvement
- Family and cross-family contexts
- Community contexts
Limitations of Existing Research

• Few studies examined the influence of community environment on father involvement
• No studies examined whether community environment affect resident father and nonresident father involvement differently
Research Hypothesis

• Community environment affects childcare involvement of resident and nonresident father differently. Specifically, neighborhood disorder is
  – negatively associated with nonresident father involvement
  – not associated with resident father involvement
Data and Sample

• Data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCW)
  – Data introduction (surveyed 5000 newborn families across 20 cities; 4 waves)
  – 775 nonresident father families
  – 1407 resident father families
  – Definitions of resident and nonresident father families
  – Data from two time periods (wave 3 & 4)
Measures

• Dependent variable: father involvement
  Mothers’ report of father assistance and supportive involvement in childcare (12 items, 12-48). Example questions:
  
  How often does he look after child when you need to do things?”
  “How often does he take child places (he/she) needs to go, such as to daycare or the doctor?”
  “You and father talk about problems that come up with raising child.”
Measures

• Independent Variable: Neighborhood disorder
  Mothers’ perception of various neighborhood problems (8 items, 8-32), such as the prevalence of
  • drug dealers
  • drunks
  • gang activities
  • people loitering
  • and misbehaving children and adults
Measures

Control variables

– Demographic and health status of mothers, fathers, and children
– Income, household structure, and social support
– Drug/alcohol dependence
Analyses

• Missing data imputation
• Descriptive statistics
• Differences between resident and nonresident fathers (t-test and Chi-Square test)
• Ordinary Least Square regression
### Results (Multivariate Analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>NRF Families</th>
<th>RF Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. b</td>
<td>P value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood disorder</td>
<td>-0.103</td>
<td>0.009**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother &amp; father relationship</td>
<td>-0.416</td>
<td>&lt;0.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/cohabited with others</td>
<td>-0.123</td>
<td>&lt;.0001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father household income (ln)</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.006**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father alcohol/drug dependence</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Other control variables not shown; NRF=nonresident father families, RF=resident father families
Conclusions

• Mothers & Children of nonresident father families are likely to live in more disordered neighborhood

• Neighborhood disorder is negatively associated with nonresident fathers’ childcare involvement, but is not associated with that of resident fathers
Implications

Policy and service emphasizing father engagement can consider

– Screen the influence of community environment
– Distinguish between resident and nonresident father families
– Community environment improvement
– Relocation assistance to nonresident father families