

Imagining the Future of Immigrant Fathers

Talk presented at

On New Shores:

Understanding Immigrant Fathers

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Economic stress, ethnicity, and children's adaptation

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Effects and meaning of fathers for adolescents: ASU & UCR

Collaborators

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Goal of this session

Distinguish between the (a) future status of immigrant fathers and (b) research directions that are necessary in order to understand future immigrant fathers.

Importance of the historical context of immigration

- Early 20th century

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- Early 21st century

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Demographic shifts

US Census Bureau (1930)

7.5% African American

1.6% other racial minorities

US Census Bureau (2003)

31% of total population

2030 – In some parts of US, Latino & Asian
will be in the majority

Implications of minority-to-majority shift?

Let's unpack!

No single portrait of immigrant fathers, only multiple ones.

From snapshots to video

Come seeking asylum

Refugee

Avoid political prosecution

Avoid religious persecution

Documented

Undocumented

Motivation to acculturate

Rates of assimilation

Sojourner experiences

Ethnic composition of community

Dynamic longitudinal approaches required to track acculturation as it unfolds

Imagining the Future Status of Immigrant Fathers

- Work and immigrant fathers
 - - Exhaustion and reduced patience

What do you need to
change about your parenting?

*I get upset quickly, I get frustrated.
Maybe it's because I'm so tired, I
don't know, but I get upset, I get
frustrated.*

Mi caracter. Si, me molesto rapido, me desespero. Tal vez sea por el cansancio, no lo se, pero si me molesto, me desespero.

What do you need to
change about your parenting?

*because of work, or financial
worries, I'm a bit demanding.*

- 30-year-old first generation Mexican immigrant father

preocupaciones del dinero entonces soy un poco character exigente.

Imagining the Future Status of Immigrant Fathers

- Work and immigrant fathers

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(Suarez –Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001)

- Educational disparity

What do you need to change about your parenting?

What I would change, I wouldn't change much, actually. I would try to help more in her school work because I really have not been able to help them in that because of the English barrier and because I'm not good at school.

- 33-year-old first generation Mexican immigrant father

Lo que yo, no cambiaria casi, mas bien trataria de poder ayudarlas mas en sus cuestiones de escuela, porque casi no he podido yo ayudarlas en eso, por la barrera del Ingles y porque no soy muy bueno para la escuela

What do you need to
change about your parenting?

I would say, try to help on her homework when she says she doesn't understand. I do all I can although sometimes it's difficult because of the language. She will help me understand what it says in English.

- 48-year-old first generation Mexican immigrant father

Yo diria, tratar de ayudarle en las tareas cuando dice que no entiende. Yo hago todo lo posible por ayudar. Por ayudar aunque aveces se me hace dificil por el idioma. De que ella me ayude en que dice en ingles

Imagining the Future Status of Immigrant Fathers

- Work and immigrant fathers

-

(Parke et al., 2004)

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(Suarez -Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001)

- Educational disparity

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Do you think it is harder for kids whose parents did not go to school here as opposed to the kids whose parents did go to school here?

we can't. We can't even help in the language. Unfortunately, we can't even explain it to her in our language, no we can't. Well sometimes one does feel bad. That wants to help but can't.

- First generation Mexican immigrant father

Yo pienso que si. Porque quiere que avaces uno le ayude y sinceramente no podemos. Ni siquiera el idioma podemos. Desgraciadamente ni nuestro idioma podemos explicarle no nosotros no. Pues si aveces se siente uno mal. Que quiere ayudarle y no puede.

Do you think it is harder for kids whose parents did not go to school here as opposed to the kids whose parents did go to school here?

Well I think so. Well for example the guys at least speak the language and they have studied. For example that I am still doing high school here like it is, I am missing to give her explanations to her. There are homework's that they get now and I see that she is complaining. If I could well I would help her but unfortunately I don't have an idea to help her. Yes, that is the hardest.

- First generation Mexican immigrant father

A pues yo creo que si. Pues por ejemplo los senores por lo menos hablan el idioma y tienen estudio. Por ejemplo que yo todavía estoy haciendo aquí mi high school aquí como sea, me falta para darle explicación a ella. Hay tareas que se le dan ahorita y veo que está renegando. Si yo pudiera pues la ayudaría pero desgraciadamente no tengo la idea para ayudarla. Si eso es lo duro.

Imagining the Future Status of Immigrant Fathers

Imagining the Future Status of Immigrant Fathers

- Work and immigrant fathers

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(Parke et al., 2004)

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(Suarez –Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001)

- Educational disparity

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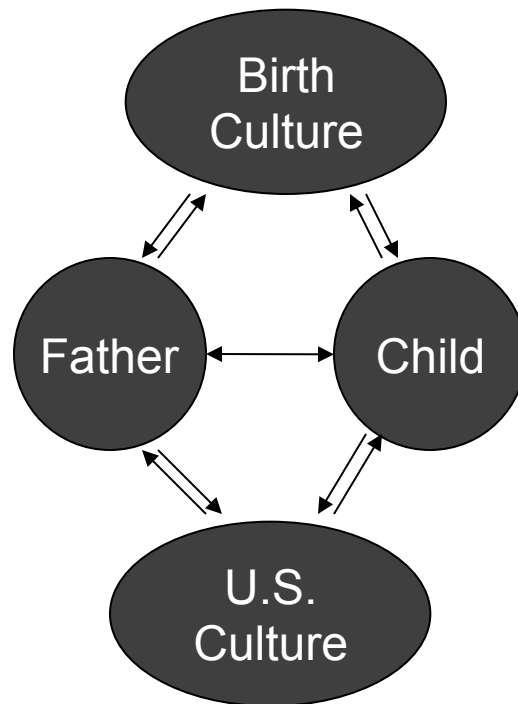
- Dynamic interplay

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Dynamic Interplay

Immigrant

- 1) Age at time of entry
- 2) Type of economic opportunities
- 3) Commitment to host country
- 4) Identification with country of origin
- 5) Type of immigration status
- 6) Cultural context in US



Host country fathers

1) Experiences

- immigrant fathers and families

2) Attitudes

- About immigrant families
- Perception of economic threat
- Beliefs about the educational impact
- Ideas about how medical and social services will be affected

Acculturation: Who, How, and When

- Differential rates of acculturation
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 -
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- Cultural brokering
 - Parent-child role reversal
 - Stressful for children

How have you handled problems that your child has had at school?

Well to plan all the time to try to be, if we go to school that there is someone that talks to me in Spanish. Yes, yes because...I normally understand a little, a little English but not a lot. No his...to speak it I don't know how to speak it, darn. Like sometimes him sometimes I tell him, I mean that they are talking to me in English I tell him to tell me what he is saying, I mean he doesn't know how to tell me, like I know...how you say...he gets, he gets embarrassed and at the end he doesn't know how to say what it is that they are saying in English.

- First generation Mexican immigrant father

Pos planear todo el tiempo tratando de que hayga, si vamos a la escuela que hayga alguien quienme hable espanol. Si, si porque...yo normalmente si entiendo poco, poco ingles pero no mucho. No su...hablando no lo se hablar, caray. Como a veces el a veces le digo que, osea que me estan hablando ingles digo que me diga que me estan diciendo, osea no me sabe decir, como que se...como se dice...le da, le da verguenza y al ultimo no sabe decir es lo que estan diciendo en ingles.

Similarities are just as revealing as differences

- Educational aspirations of parents for their children are similar across ethnicities
- PAYS parent narratives
 - No surface differences between immigrant and native-born dads on what they do well
 - Spend time
 - Affection for children
 - Provide for family

A word of caution

“Time holds its mysteries and the future resists our easy grasp, however anxious we be to assert it conclusively.”

Robert Coles
author and child psychiatrist
1999

Research Directions: Multiple Disciplines

Historians

Demographers

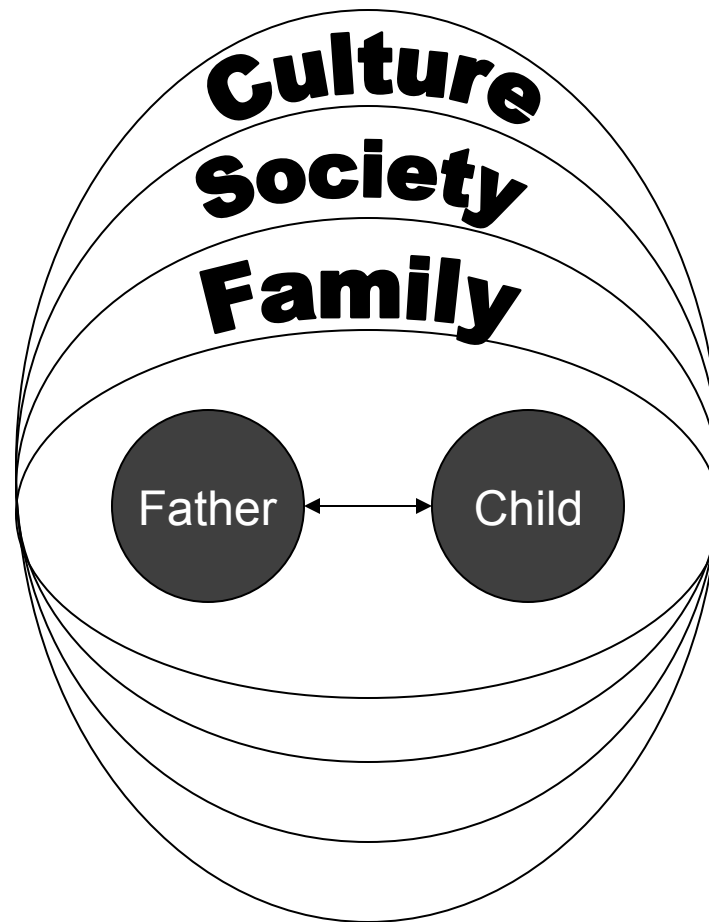
Anthropologists

Sociologists

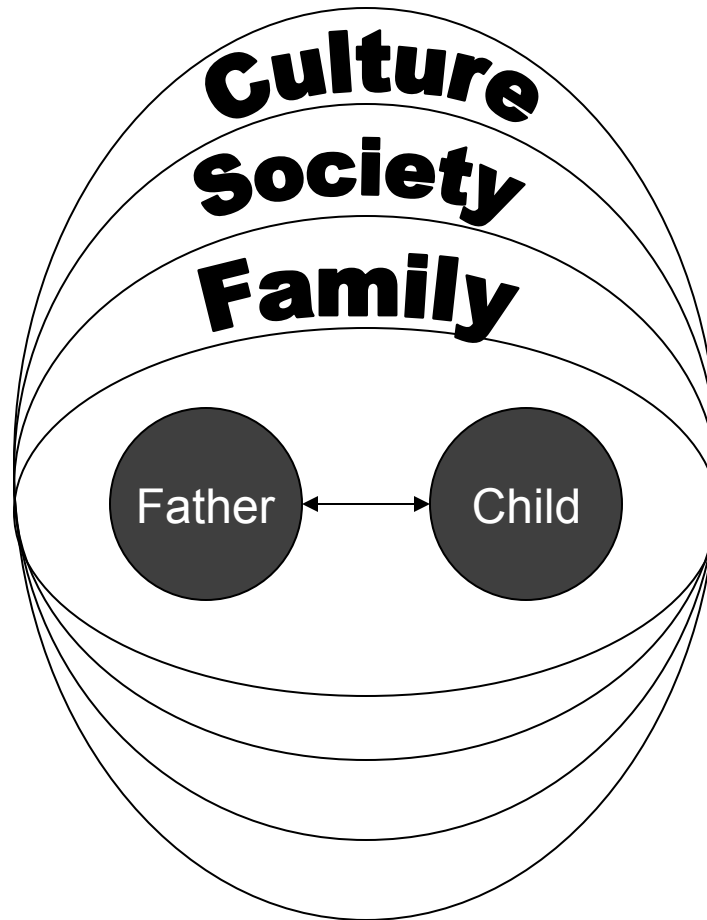
Political scientists

Psychologists

Research Directions: Multilevel Framework



Historians
Demographers
Anthropologists
Sociologists
Political scientists
Psychologists



Multilevel Framework: Individual Level

Men's relationship with family of origin

Socialization of boys into fathering role



Attitudes

Motivation

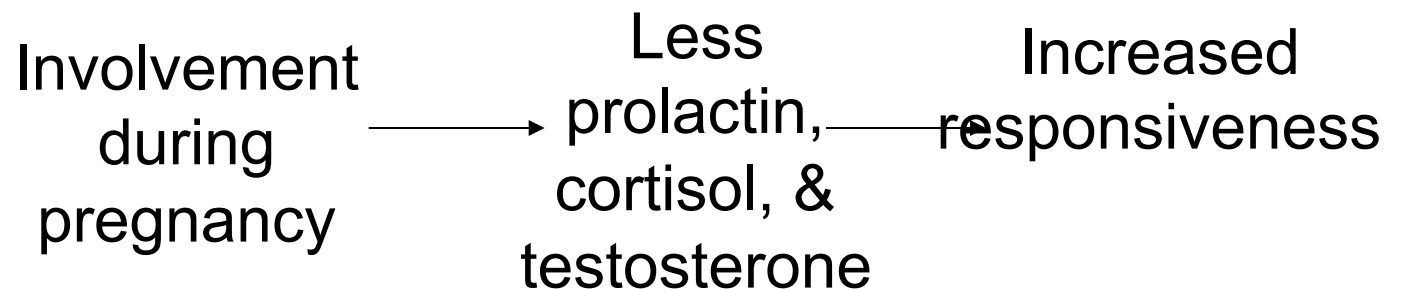
Caregiving skills

Multilevel Framework: Individual Level

Individual level changes experienced by fathers

- Involvement in pregnancy associated with hormones in early life

(Berg & Wynne-Edwards, 2001; Storey et al., 2000)



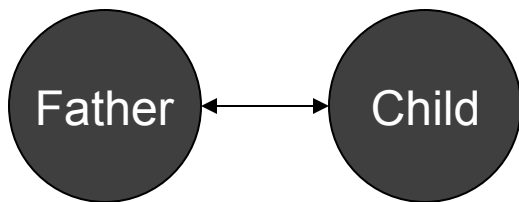
Implications for sojourner fathers

- Might patterns of involvement lead to lower connectedness?

Multilevel Framework: Dyadic Level

Dyadic level processes

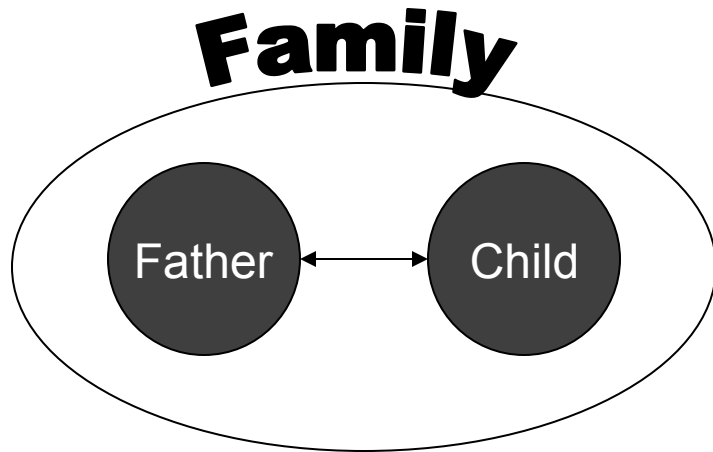
- State-of-the-art methods for evaluating actor, partner, and dyad level contributions (Kenny, Mohr, & Levesque, 2001)



Research questions

- Change over time in dyadic processes?
- Associated with acculturation?
 - Whose acculturation?
- Do individual level components matter more as acculturation proceeds?

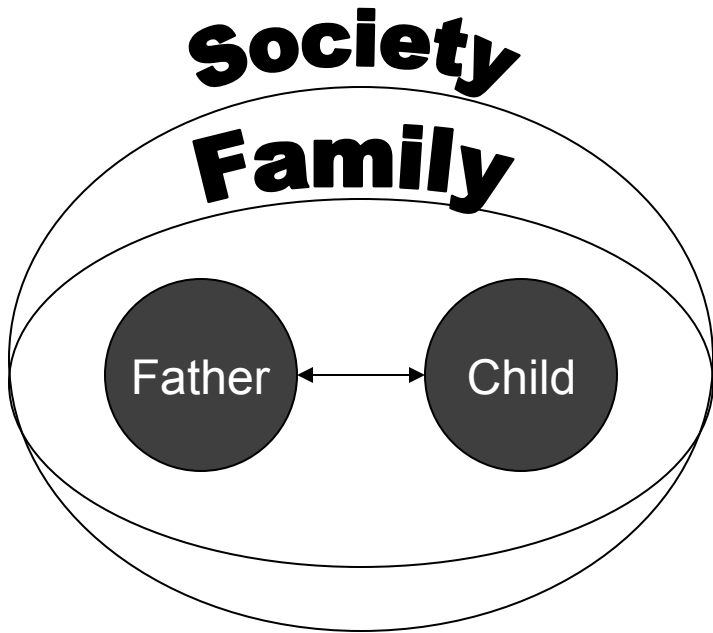
Multilevel Framework: Familial Level



Family level processes

- Assessment of family-level processes
 - Familism (Cook, 2004)
 - Routines & rituals (Fiese, 2006)
- Assessments needed
 - Acculturation as individual, dyadic, and family level process
- What's Cookin

Multilevel Framework: Community Level



Community level processes

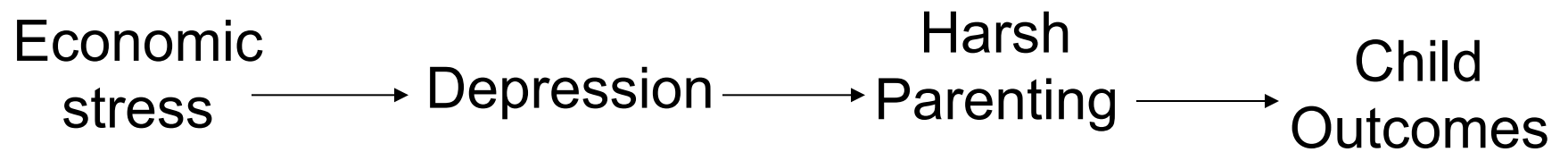
- Assessment of neighborhoods
 - Census tract measures
 - Community surveys
 - Systematic social observation
(Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Sampson, 2005)
- Global Information Systems
(Cadora, Swartz & Gordon, 2003)

Not by numbers alone

Both qualitative and
quantitative approaches
are needed at every
stage of the research
process

Beyond Description

- Toward process-models of fathering in immigrant families



(Parke et al., 2004)

Policy implications

Rights of native-born children and their
nondocumented parents

Assurance of insurance and health care

Promotion of biculturalism

Final message

By recognizing that fathering, including immigrant fathering, is a dynamic concept open to historical, cultural, and technological influences we will be better positioned to understand the inevitable changes that will take place for future immigrant fathers and be better able to design policies and programs for immigrant fathers in this new millennium.

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