



American Indian income and father involvement with children in urban cities



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Scholars believe that father involvement plays a significant role in a child's development (Carlson & Magnuson, 2011; Hofferth, 2003; Slade, 2013; Waldfogel, Craigie, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). While current research sheds greater light on the positive contributors of fathers on child wellbeing, it also raises concerns regarding the increasing numbers of children being raised either in the absence of, or with limited access to fathers. According to the National Vital Statistics Report, data for 2014 indicates that 40.2% of children in the U.S. were born to unmarried mothers (Hamilton, Martin, Osterman, Curtin, & Mathews, 2015). Hofferth (2003) and Slade (2013) suggest that father absence impacts these unmarried births and that race/ethnic variations in fathering patterns might be due to different economic circumstances, neighborhood environments, and as attitudes and values originating from the cultural social context. This is especially pertinent for American Indian children as 65.7% were born to unmarried parents (Hamilton et al., 2015).

Additionally, some scholars have found that fathers with low levels of income were less involved with their children than were fathers with higher income (Cabrera, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2007; Carlson & Magnuson, 2011; Kotila & Dush, 2013). The few studies addressing this finding have limitations in culturally diverse samples. We do know that American Indians are among the poorest groups in the U.S. (Sarche & Spicer, 2008) and the scarcity in studies that have investigated the impact of income on unmarried father involvement on American Indian families creates a knowledge gap. Therefore, using the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS), this study examined the relationship between income and father involvement among American Indians and the general FFCWS population. The next section reviews resource theory as a lens by which we can better understand this issue.

1. Literature review

1.1. Theoretical perspective

There is a need for increased knowledge on variants of the effects of income on father involvement in different cultural contexts. Much of

the current research on father involvement is limited to either Black, White, or Hispanic populations (Cabrera, Ryan, Mitchell, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2008; Karberg & Cabrera, 2016; King, Harris, & Heard, 2004). Resource theory of social exchange proposes that negative social performance results from a deficit in personal resources. Foa and Foa (1974) defined resources as, "anything that can be transmitted from one person to another" (p. 16) and grouped resources into six categories: love, status, information, money, goods, and service. The theory suggests that fathers with insufficient economic and social-psychological resources would have greater likelihood of negative personal and interpersonal outcomes such as decreased involvement in the lives of their child. Furthermore, time in resource theory is viewed not as a resource but a prerequisite for giving and taking resources (Foa & Foa, 1974).

A number of studies have found that parents with greater resources, like education and income, invest more money and time in their children than do parents with fewer resources (Haveman & Wolfe, 1994; Park, Fertig, & Metraux, 2014; Rettig, 2001). Thus, the general societal notion of a father's role as a provider could influence fathers who struggle to meet this role, due to low income and unemployment, leading them to be less involved in their children's lives (Cabrera et al., 2008; Carlson & Magnuson, 2011; Carlson & McLanahan, 2010).

Additionally, different levels of income among non-resident low-income fathers may contribute to variations in father involvement. However, there have been mixed results in the literature about the role of socioeconomic resources on father involvement. Some studies have found income, higher education and/or employment to be associated with increased parental involvement (Cabrera et al., 2007; Carlson & McLanahan, 2002b; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Johnson, 2001) while others have found no association between socioeconomic resources and involvement (Carlson & McLanahan, 2002a; Coley, 2001; Johnson, 2001; Kalil, Ziol-Guest, & Coley, 2005).

Additionally, resource theory posits that individuals who possess a greater amount of resources have greater likelihood of giving resources such as service or respect, and less likelihood of taking resources (e.g. dislike, insults) from others (Foa & Foa, 1974). This implies that fathers with more resources would have increased positive co-parental inter-

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actions (giving resources) and less negative parenting interactions (taking resources) with the other parent that would subsequently influence father involvement outcomes, especially for non-resident fathers.

Therefore, within this framework, the quality of mother-father relationships can be a barrier to fathers' involvement with their children. Harmonious and supportive couple relationships have been associated with greater father involvement (Carlson & McLanahan, 2002b; Padilla, Ward, & Limb, 2013).

Hence, parental relationship quality may have an important impact on outcome measures of father involvement though the effects may differ due to race and ethnic variations of family subsystems. Some studies conducted on Blacks and Hispanics, have proposed that non-resident minority fathers are more involved with their children when their relationship with the child's mother is positive (Cabrera et al., 2008; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). One study, conducted on American Indian fathers, found that compared to other racial groups, parental relationship quality played a more significant role on American Indian fathers' involvement (Padilla et al., 2013).

Therefore, deriving from resource theory, an inability to financially support a child due to limited financial resources could serve as an area of conflict between the father and the child's mother, which in turn may create hostility in that relationship that could negatively affect father involvement (Cutrona, Hessling, Bacon, & Russell, 1998; Edin, 2000; Rettig, 2001; Slade, 2013). On the other hand, fathers who have sufficient income to support their child may feel more confident in their role as a father (McLanahan, 2004), have reduced conflict with the child's mother, and consequently be more involved in the child's life.

1.2. Fathering behaviors among American Indians

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicated that in 2009, 23.6% of children under 18 in the general population lived in "mother only" households (Kreider & Ellis, 2011). Fatherlessness in low-income American Indian families however was among the highest in the nation with 47% of mother only households (with children under 18) in 2009 (Mather, 2010). Extensive research has indicated increased behavioral issues in children when fathers are absent in the home (Carlson, 2006). Forced relocations and assimilation in American Indian history have contributed to the loss of family and social roles, thereby undermining the role of the father as protector, warrior, hunter and teacher (Abbott & Slater, 2000). Continued effects of historical trauma have impacted the likelihood of decreased father involvement or father absences in Native American homes (Brave Heart, Chase, Elkins, & Altschul, 2011; White, Godfrey, & Moccasin, 2006).

Some of the difficulties American Indian families continue to face include high rates of child abuse (Cross, Earle, & Simmons, 2000), substance abuse (Green, Eitle, & Eitle, 2014; Kawamoto, 2001), and suicide rates of American Indian youth that are one and a half times those of the national average (Center for Disease Control, 2015). Efforts to improve parenting patterns including fathering behaviors among American Indian families have been initiated by American Indian tribes in response to the loss of many parenting role models (Kawamoto, 2001; Shears, Bubar, & Hall, 2011).

1.3. Income and American Indian father involvement

There is paucity in literature examining the association of income and American Indian father involvement. The diversity in American Indian culture stemming from the over 500 American Indian tribes, each with a unique history and heritage, calls for caution in generalizing American Indian culture (Coggins, Williams, & Radin, 1997; Martin & Yurkovich, 2014). Furthermore, the differences between traditional American Indians in rural settings and those in urban settings contribute to the diversity in American Indian culture as the latter group may have adopted more Eurocentric world view (Coggins et al.,

1997). However, research suggests that certain elements of American Indian culture are common across tribes (Coggins et al., 1997; Martin & Yurkovich, 2014) and help us understand the link between father involvement and socioeconomic factors. Two of these elements include a broad view of the family and the impact of historical trauma on American Indians.

1.3.1. Broadened view of family life

A structurally open family inclusive of extended family members is prominent in American Indian culture (Coggins et al., 1997; Red Horse, 1997). The community, tribe, and clan are also viewed as part of the family circle (Padilla et al., 2013; Red Horse, 1997). Parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and other significant relatives form a collective family system that shares the responsibility of child rearing, parenting and instilling cultural beliefs and values (Martin & Yurkovich, 2014; Red Horse, 1997). This broadened parenting role that extends to more than just the parents can provide children extra support that may not be present in other cultures (Limb, Shafer, & Sandoval, 2014; Red Horse, 1997). However, the collectivist nature of American Indian culture could also contribute to decreased father involvement for American Indian fathers as the parenting role is shared among extended family members. On the other hand, this extra support system could positively influence father involvement even when father's income is limited if the child has access to the extended family's resources as well.

1.3.2. Impact of historical trauma

From approximately 1800 to 1970, US government efforts to assimilate American Indians into mainstream culture by relocating tribal children into boarding schools by force have resulted in numerous challenges for American Indians (Brave Heart et al., 2011). Having American Indian children cut off from parental and kinship support systems left these children in boarding schools without role models from which to develop healthy parenting practices (Cross et al., 2000; Lawrence, 2013). This led to a number of negative outcomes as American Indian children grew up. In light of the difficulties faced by American Indian families, a lack of positive parenting background due to historical trauma may have impacted the reduced involvement for American Indian fathers.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between income and father involvement with children among American Indians and the general FFCWS population. Based on the literature and assumptions of resource theory, the current study noted three hypotheses: (1) fathers who have more economic, social, and psychological resources, measured as income (money resources), education, employment and relationship status (status resources), would have greater involvement with their child, (2) fathers who reported a more positive relationship with the child's mother (giving resources) would be more involved in their child's life, and (3) there would be significant differences in father involvement outcomes between American Indian fathers and fathers of the general population in the sample.

2. Methods

2.1. Sample

This study utilized secondary data collected from fathers who participated in the first two waves of the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS). This is a national longitudinal study beginning between 1998 and 2000 that followed roughly 5000 children born in 20 large U.S. urban cities. Parents were interviewed when the child was born, and again when the child was 1, 3, 5 and 9 years old. The data collection is ongoing. Using stratified random sampling design, the study oversampled for unmarried births (about 3700). Therefore, the data are suitable for examining the effects of income on father involvement among married and unmarried parents. The sampling design allows for the data to be representative of all U.S. births in large

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