Mexican-Origin Young Adult’s Work Conditions and Health: The Role of Sociocultural Context

Lorey Wheeler & Matt Fritz
Early Adulthood

• Developmental Task Theory
  – Importance of transition to work context during early adulthood

• Paucity of Research on Work and Health
  – Evidence of an increase of psychosocial problems following the transition to early adulthood
  – Links with work context unclear

Masten et al., 2004
Roisman, Masten, Coatsworth, & Tellegen, 2004
Aseltine & Gore, 2005
Work Conditions and Health

• Work conditions have implications for individual health and well-being
  • Demanding work conditions are a risk factor
    • E.g., physical demands, hazards, pressure
  • Positive work conditions are a protective factor
    • E.g., self-direction, autonomy, leadership

• Little known about implications of young adults’ work conditions for health

Conger, Rueter, & Conger, 2000
Schaufeli & Taris, 2014
Wadsworth & Perry-Jenkins, 2015

Wheeler et al., 2011
Wheeler et al., 2015
Mexican American Population

• Young population (median age = 27)
  – 67% in labor force

• At risk for low educational attainment
  – 60% receive high school diploma; 19% receive bachelors

• Overrepresented in jobs requiring little formal education
  – 51% of agricultural workers, 49% of maintenance workers, 49% of housecleaning workers, 46% of construction laborers
  – Least likely to be in professional occupations compared to other ethnic groups

• At risk for adverse health outcomes and lifetime risk for mental health problems, coronary disease, cancer, and diabetes

U.S. Census Bureau, 2016; U.S. Department of Labor, 2016
Krieger et al., 2008; Slack & Jensen, 2006
CDC, 2012
Research Question: Goal 1

- Goal 1: Work Conditions
  - What work conditions relate to risk behavior for Mexican-origin youth during late adolescence/early adulthood?
Research Question: Goal 2

• Goal 2: Moderation by Sociocultural Context
  – Do aspects of youth’s sociocultural contexts moderate the relationship between work characteristics and risk behavior for Mexican-origin youth during late adolescence/early adulthood?

Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982
Schaufeli & Taris, 2014
García Coll et al., 1996
Add Health Study

• National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health: Nationally representative study that followed individuals from adolescence through adulthood

• Current Study: Secondary Data Analysis
  – Wave III data collected 2001-2002
  – Working youth of Mexican origin (n = 889)
    • 52% male
    • Ages 18-26; Mage = 22.91 years, SD = 1.79
    • Most were born in the U.S. (77%)
    • Over half primarily speak English at home (54%)

Harris et al., 2009
Current Study: Youths’ Work Contexts

• Study criteria: working at least 10 hours/week
  – 15% in first paid job
  – 29% currently in school

• Median income = $16,750; educational attainment = 12th grade ($D = 1.81$)

• Mean hours working/week: 38.01 ($D = 10.80$)
  – 68% work the day shift, 17% have rotating or irregular shifts/schedules; 15% work evening or night shifts

• The greatest percentage of youth work in sales or administrative support (31%)
  – construction, installation, production, repair (16%)
  – management, business or computer positions (10%); service (10%)
  – military (7%); education (7%)
# Measures: Predictors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Example Items/Attributes</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjective Measures</strong></td>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>How satisfied are you with this job, as a whole?</td>
<td>1 = extremely dissatisfied 5 = extremely satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work hours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>How many hours per week do you work at this job?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective Measures of Work</strong></td>
<td>Self-direction</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Making decisions, solving problems</td>
<td>0-100 Degree of importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics from O*Net Database (Crouter et al., 2006; Peterson et al., 2001)</td>
<td>Hazardous Conditions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Contaminants, extremes of noise or temperature</td>
<td>0-100 Degree of importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Activity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Running, standing</td>
<td>0-100 Degree of importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care Work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dealing with physically aggressive people; assist, care for others; exposed to disease or infections</td>
<td>0-100 Degree of importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Repeating same tasks, degree of automation</td>
<td>0-100 Degree of importance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Measures

## Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Example Item(s)</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Damage property, illicit drugs</td>
<td>0 = never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 = 5 or more times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol use problems</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>How many days did you drink five or more drinks in a row?</td>
<td>0 = none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 = every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarette Use</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Have you ever smoked at all in the past 30 days?</td>
<td>1 = yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 = no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Moderator

Nativity: US born (1) vs. Foreign born (0)

## Covariates

Language use: English-only (1) vs. Bilingual (0)
SES: educational attainment and income
Age
Analytic Strategy

• Path analysis in Mplus 7.4
  – Full information maximum likelihood – robust
  – Monte Carlo integration
  – Moderation tested by including interaction terms in models; Simple slopes tested
Goal 1 Results: Direct Effects

- Job Satisfaction
- Delinquency
Goal 2: Nativity

Work Hours

Cigarette Use Odds Ratio

Alcohol Use Problems

Low Work Hours (10)  High Work Hours (50)

Low Work Hours (10)  High Work Hours (50)

Foreign Born*  US Born*

Foreign Born*  US Born*
Goal 2: Nativity Care Work

Cigarette Use Odds Ratio

Low Care Work  High Care Work

Foreign Born*  US Born

*
Goal 2: Nativity Repetition

![Graph showing the relationship between nativity (US Born vs. Foreign Born) and delinquency across low and high repetition. The graph indicates a higher delinquency rate for Foreign Born individuals in both high and low repetition scenarios.]
Discussion

- Examining positive and negative aspects of work can provide key insights related to supporting health among a large and growing U.S. subpopulation
  - Job satisfaction related to fewer risk behaviors
    - Delinquency (-)
Discussion

• Moderation questions highlight the importance of examining variability within the Mexican-origin population
  – Foreign-Born Youth
    • Working more hours and care work - protective factors
    • Repetitious work – risk factor
  – US-Born Youth
    • High working hours – risk factor
Limitations and Future Directions

• Add Health Limitations
  – Measurement limitations of secondary data analysis
    • Few items used to measure health and well-being constructs
  – Survey administered in English only

• Future Research
  – Mechanisms linking work context to health among youth
  – Replications with diverse samples
Thank you!

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Goal 1 Results: Direct Effects

- Hazardous Conditions
  - Life Satisfaction
  - Physical Health
- Job Satisfaction
  - Delinquency
Goal 2: Gender Self-Direction

![Graph showing Delinquency and Cigarette Use Odds Ratio by gender and self-direction levels.](image-url)
Goal 2: Gender Job Satisfaction

![Graph showing the relationship between Depressive Symptoms and Job Satisfaction for Males and Females.](Graph.png)
Goal 2: Nativity
Job Satisfaction

Life Satisfaction

Foreign Born
US Born*

Low Job Satisfaction
High Job Satisfaction

*