The Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model and Latino Adolescent Fathers*

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Latino Adolescents

• High rates of economic vulnerability
• May also struggle with acculturation mismatch with their partners
• Protected by the cultural value of *familismo*
  • Centers family
  • Family members provide emotional and material support

(Calzada, Tamis-LeMonda, & Yoshikawa, 2012; Murphy, Guzman, & Torres, 2014; Williams & Rueda, 2016)
Latino Adolescent Fatherhood

• Almost a quarter of all babies in the US are of Latino origin
• In 2015, approximately 230,000 children were born to adolescent parents
• Latinos adolescents had two times the birth rate of non-Hispanic Whites

(CDC, 2017; Murphy et al., 2014)
Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation

- Model for understanding relationship stability
  - Vulnerability
    Enduring personal characteristics
  - Stress
    An acute event that causes strains in a relationship
  - Adaptation
    Actions and decisions at both the individual and the couple level undertaken to cope and move forward from stressful events

(Karney & Bradbury, 1995)
Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation

• The present study
  • Vulnerability
    Low socioeconomic status
  • Stress
    Unplanned adolescent pregnancy
  • Adaptation
    Financial and educational goals

Method

Procedures

• Part of a larger study on the relationship experiences of adolescent fathers
• Recruited from relationship education program from 5 high schools
• Approached individually by program facilitators
• Individual interviews
  • Length: $M = 43$ min; $Range= 13-95$ min

(Bermea & Toews, 2018)
Method

Sample

• \( N = 11 \)
• Race: Latino = 10; Biracial = 1
• Age: \( M = 17.73 \) years; \( Range = 16-18 \) years
• Relationship Status: Together = 8; Separated = 3
• Child’s Age: \( M = 6.8 \) months; \( Range = 1.5-13 \) months
  • 1 Partner’s Pregnant
• All received government benefits

(Bermea & Toews, 2018)
Method

Analysis

• Thematic Analysis
  • Inductive preliminary coding
  • Deductive secondary coding based on VSA
  • Categorization of broad codes into smaller themes
  • Mapped themes along the original model

(Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2014; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006)
Current Study

Research Question

How do economic vulnerabilities and stress in the form of fatherhood for Latino adolescents influence partner relationships and their families?
Findings
Findings

“I Need to Get a Job”: Economic Vulnerability

Low income conditions during childhood

“I’m gonna make some money so I can put some, help my mom put some dinner on the table. And basically that’s what I did. Like, I made the money for dinner; my mom paid the bills.” - Beto

Continuing low-income conditions that made parenting stressful

“I need to get a job. And I’ve been trying to get a job. I’d take any job.” - Efrain
Findings

“I Got Out of Football, Started Working More”: Adapting

Developing financial goals to provide for their children

“[My dad] was like, ‘well I told you to wrap your shit up.’ He was like, ‘you didn’t do it... so you gotta be a man.’ And I was already working so it was just, I had to put more hours in.” - Jacob

“I supported her for so long and even when she moved out of the house [after breaking up].” - Beto
Findings

“Giving Our Child a Family”: Relationships Quality

Facilitating Adaptation

“We found out she was pregnant... a couple months into her pregnancy and we worked things out. We talked a lot [about] being a family.”- Luis

Hindering Adaptation

“She’ll tell me that she’ll leave and take my daughter... I just shut up because I don’t want that. Yeah. I don’t react.”- Santiago
Findings

“I Know She’s There for Me”: Family-of-Origin Support

Emotional Support

“The person I talk to [is] my aunt [the] most; [she’s] kinda like the mom role model. Even before she had kids, when she was like, eighteen, she graduated.” - David

Parental Support

“I’m leaving during 7th period to go get [my daughter], then I have to drop her off to my mom and then go to work. And then I’m a get her that morning” - Nico
Discussion

Model Development

• Qualitative adaptation
  • Accounts for contextual factors
  • Able to better understand internalized processes

• Population
  • Model tends to have studied adult relationships
  • Has not generally recognized adolescent parents

(Gilgun, 2012; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Williams & Rueda, 2016)
Discussion

Adaptation

• To adapt, fathers engaged in work to provide
  • Adolescent fathers who work are less likely to complete their education
  • Family may be a source of support to help them to do both (e.g., parental support)
  • Seeking work may be a source of stress within the dyad, hindering adaptation

(Futris et al., 2012; Mollborn, 2010)
Discussion

Interfamily Adaptation

• Adaptation is a bidirectional process the VSA model with a partner

• We saw both adaptation and hindrance within couples

• Our model extends dyadic adaptive processes through extended family inclusion

• May be due to the influence of familismo

• Two forms: emotional support, parental support

• Can help to establish stability when the parental dyad is struggling

(Calzada et al., 2012; Karney & Bradbury, 1995)
Discussion

Familismo

• Extended family has not been acknowledged within this model
• Adding external individuals may help to provide a more thorough understanding of family stability
• Important when working with Latino families
• Family is an important source of support for adolescent parents
  • Extended family should be incorporated into the VSA model with adolescent fathers of other ethnic identities

(Calzada et al., 2012; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Saleh & Hilton, 2011)
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References


