

## **Nonresident Father Involvement in Immigrant Families**

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Immigration to the US has tripled over the last 35 years, as has the proportion of children in the US with at least one immigrant parent, rising from 6% in 1970 to 20% today (Capps and Fortuny 2006). At the same time, half of all children in the US will spend some time in a single parent family (Kennedy and Bumpass 2008). Even though children of immigrants are more likely to be living in a two-parent family than are children of native-born parents (82% vs. 70%, respectively) (U.S. Census Bureau 2010), they are much more likely to experience poverty and a number of material hardships (Hernandez 2004; Capps and Fortuny 2006). Because all children in single-parent families, particularly single-mother families, are much more likely to be poor than children in two-parent families (44% vs. 11%) (U.S. Census Bureau 2010), children living with an immigrant single-parent are doubly at risk.

Three-quarters of children of immigrants are Hispanic or Asian, and many of these parents, particularly the mothers, have substantial language barriers and often arrive with little formal education (Hernandez 2004). Estimates reveal that while approximately 30% of immigrant parents are legal permanent residents (but not citizens) and another 30% may be undocumented, 75% of children of immigrants are US-born citizens (Capps and Fortuny 2006). And while these children are eligible for all government safety net programs, evidence suggests that they are much less likely to participate in any of these programs including Medicaid, SCHIP, food stamps, or TANF (Capps and Fortuny 2006; Hernandez 2004). Given these circumstances of children in single-parent immigrant families – increased risk of poverty and hardship and reduced access to safety net programs – involvement of nonresident fathers in these children's

lives should be particularly important. Unfortunately, very little is known about the role of nonresident fathers in these families.

A number of empirical studies have looked at patterns and predictors of father involvement among specific groups of immigrant fathers (Formoso et al. 2007; Jain and Belsky 1997; Tamis-LeMonda, Kahana-Kalman, and Yoshikawa 2009; Bronte-Tinkew et al. 2006; Coltrane, Parke, and Adams 2004; Parke et al. 2004; Qin 2009; Lamb 2008; Este and Tachble 2009). But, most of this work has focused on resident fathers. Another group of studies has examined racial/ethnic differences in patterns of nonresident father involvement, with a specific focus on Hispanic and Asian (only one study) families, most of whom are likely immigrants (King, Harris, and Heard 2004; Cabrera et al. 2008; Hofferth, Forry, and Peters 2010; Mincy and Nepomnyaschy 2005; Edin, Tach, and Mincy 2009; Pouncy et al. 2003). In a few quantitative studies focusing on nonresident fathers' financial and social involvement with children, family nativity status has been included as a control (Nepomnyaschy 2007; Nepomnyaschy and Garfinkel 2010). Generalizing across these last two types of studies, evidence suggests that both Hispanic and foreign-born nonresident fathers are less likely to have child support orders and to pay formal support than white and US-born fathers; however, compliance rates (proportion of order paid) for those foreign-born and Hispanic fathers who do have orders are no different than those of white and US-born fathers. The most in-depth quantitative study of racial/ethnic differences in nonresident fathers' social involvement with children found that Hispanic fathers had less contact with their children than did white fathers, but Asian fathers were no different (King, Harris, and Heard 2004). Within the Hispanic group, Cuban fathers were the most involved and within the Asian group, Filipino fathers were the most involved. This study did not

look specifically at nativity status; however, it is likely that many of these parents were foreign-born.

No study has focused specifically on understanding the patterns and determinants of nonresident fathers' involvement (both financial and social) with their children among immigrant families. This is mainly due to the lack of data with adequate sample sizes. While a number of datasets have excellent measures of fathers' involvement with children and others have large samples of nonresident parents, few have both of these with a large enough sample of foreign-born parents.

The current study will use five waves of pooled data (2000 to 2008) from the Current Population Survey – Child Support Supplement (CPS-CSS), to address this gap in knowledge. The CPS-CSS, a nationally representative survey of child support-eligible households in the US, is the only available dataset that has adequate sample sizes to compare patterns and determinants of nonresident fathers' involvement between children with US- and foreign-born mothers and to examine differences within the foreign-born group, by race/ethnicity, by sending regions of the world, by naturalization status, by mother's education, by years of residence in the US, and by areas of residence in the US.

Fathers' involvement entails both financial contributions and time spent with their children. Further, fathers can contribute financially in a number of ways: (1) by paying on a legal obligation through the formal child support enforcement system (formal support); (2) by giving cash directly to the mother or child (informal cash support); and (3) by providing non-cash items, such as gifts, clothes, and food directly to the mother or child (in-kind support). Fathers' social involvement with children involves the frequency of contact and the types of activities that they do together. Prior research has identified a number of mother, father, and child characteristics

which are associated with nonresident fathers' financial and social involvement with their children. The characteristics that are salient for father involvement may be different for immigrant families than for native-born families.

The analyses in this paper will first describe and compare the prevalence of each type of father involvement between native-born and foreign-born families and across different groups within the foreign-born group (by race/ethnicity, education, geographic area of origin, citizenships status in the US, and years and region of residence within the US). Next, the analyses will identify how fathers package these types of involvement and will characterize fathers into classes based on their patterns of involvement using latent class analysis. Finally, the analyses will examine the determinants of the different patterns of involvement identified above. Patterns and determinants of fathers' involvement will be compared between US and foreign-born families as well as across more refined groups of immigrant mothers (as above).

Findings from this study will provide the first evidence of the role of nonresident fathers in the lives of children in immigrant families. This group of children is particularly at risk for poor health and developmental outcomes because they are much more likely to be poor (than children in native-born single-parent families and children in two-parent immigrant families) and are much less likely to participate in safety net programs (than any other families in the US). This combination of factors suggests that nonresident fathers' financial and social involvement may be crucial to the health and well-being of children in these families.

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