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The Impact of "Neighboring" Behaviors During Adolescence on Adult Community Participation

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Background

- Neighboring behaviors, such as knowing and talking with your neighbors, help to create a sense of community. Numerous studies have explored the importance of a sense of community on community participation.^{1, 2, 3}
- Few empirical studies have explored the longitudinal impact of the neighboring behaviors during adolescence on community participation in adulthood, and no previous research uses the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health (Add Health) literature to explore these topics.
- This research study explores whether or not neighboring behaviors in adolescence impact community participation in adulthood and assesses its impact as measured by civic participation, political participation, and trust in government.

Hypotheses

1. A positive association exists between “neighboring” behaviors in adolescence and community participation as adults.
2. “Neighboring” behaviors among racial/ethnic minorities and immigrants adolescents are more important in predicting adult community participation than amongst the general population.

Methods

Add Health data from Wave I (1994-1995) and Wave III (2001-2002) public use dataset were used resulting in 6,504 total respondents for Wave I and 4,882 for Wave III. The average age at Wave 1 was 15.75 years old (SD=1.78) and 21.86 years old at Wave 3 (SD=1.80).

- 48.4% Male
- 66.0% White
- 24.9% Black
- 3.6% American Indian
- 4.2% Asian
- 5.3% Immigrant

Measures

Predictor Variables: Neighboring behavior (Wave I) measured by knowing one’s neighbors, stopping on the street to talk with someone who lives in the neighborhood, and a feeling that people in the neighborhood look out for one another.

Dependent Variables: Community participation (Wave III) measured through three distinct constructs: (1) civic participation; (2) political participation; and (3) trust in government.

- Civic participation: Volunteering for any unpaid work or community service work within the last 12 months.
- Political participation: Being registered to vote, voting in the last presidential election, and identifying with a political party.
- Trust in government: A scale of trust in local government, state government, and federal government.

Covariates: Race/ethnicity and immigration status (Wave III)

Analytic Procedures

Reliability tests were conducted to ensure validity of each of the scales created using the Cronbach’s Alpha. Bivariate and multivariate regression analyses were conducted to model the relationship between neighboring behaviors, community participation, race/ethnicity, and immigration status. Moderational analyses were conducted to determine if minority and immigrant status interacted with neighboring behaviors to predict community participation.

Results

Neighboring behaviors from Wave I were correlated with all three measures of community participation in Wave III. (Table 1)

Table 1
Bivariate Correlation between Community Participation Variables and Neighboring Behaviors

| | Community Participation | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | Political Participation | Civic Participation | Trust in Government | Neighboring Behaviors |
| Political Participation | 1.00 | | | |
| Civic Participation | 0.208** | 1.00 | | |
| Trust in Government | .086** | .063** | 1.00 | |
| Neighboring Behaviors | .057** | .034* | .035* | 1.00 |

** Correlation is significant p < 0.01
* Correlation is significant p < 0.05

Minorities were significantly less likely than their counterparts to have participated in civic/volunteer work (crude odds ratio [COR], .81, 95% confidence intervals [CI].71-.92). Immigrants were also significantly less likely to have participated in civic/volunteer work (COR .75, 95% CI .56-1.01). (Table 2)

Table 2
Bivariate and Multivariate Logistic Regression Predicting Civic Participation

| Predictor | Model 1 | | | | Model 2 | | | | Model 3 | | | |
|--|---------|------|--------|------------|---------|------|--------|------------|---------|------|--------|------------|
| | b | SE | COR | 95% CI | b | SE | AOR | 95% CI | b | SE | AOR | 95% CI |
| Neighboring Behaviors | 0.08 | 0.03 | 1.09 | 1.01, 1.15 | 0.07 | 0.04 | 1.08* | 1.01, 1.15 | .07 | 0.04 | 1.08* | 1.00, 1.15 |
| Minority Status | -0.22 | 0.07 | 0.81** | .71, .92 | -0.19 | 0.07 | 0.82** | .72, .94 | -.19 | 0.07 | 0.83** | .73, .94 |
| Immigrant Status | -0.29 | 0.15 | 0.75* | .56, 1.01 | -0.19 | 0.16 | 0.82 | .61, 1.12 | -0.13 | 0.16 | 0.88 | .64, 1.20 |
| Neighboring Behaviors X Minority Status | | | | | 0.02 | 0.07 | 1.02 | .88, 1.17 | | | | |
| Neighboring Behaviors X Immigrant Status | | | | | | | | | 0.28 | 0.15 | 1.13* | .98, 1.78 |

* Significant at p < 0.05 level
** Significant at p < 0.01 level
* p value < .10

Notes:
Model 1: Bivariate associations between predictors and civic participation; Model 2 and 3: Multivariate associations of 3 main predictors and 1 interaction term; COR = crude odds ratio; AOR = adjusted odds ratio; 95% CI = 95% confidence intervals

There was a significant relationship between political participation and immigrant status as well as between trust in government and immigrant status even after controlling for the interaction between neighboring behaviors and immigrant status. (Table 3-4)

Table 3
Bivariate and Multivariate Linear Regression Model Predicting Political Participation

| Predictor | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | |
|--|---------|------|----------|---------|------|--------|---------|------|--------|
| | b | SE | F | b | SE | F | b | SE | F |
| Neighboring Behaviors | 0.07 | 0.04 | 20.85** | 0.01 | 0.02 | 0.08 | 0.01 | 0.02 | 0.13 |
| Minority Status | -0.07 | 0.03 | 5.56* | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.89 | 0.03 | 0.03 | 1.08 |
| Immigrant Status | -0.69 | 0.07 | 100.44** | -0.68 | 0.07 | 89.09* | -0.65 | 0.08 | 73.29* |
| Neighboring Behaviors X Minority Status | | | | 0.05 | 0.03 | 1.87 | | | |
| Neighboring Behaviors X Immigrant Status | | | | | | | 0.12 | 0.07 | 3.46 |

* Significant at p < 0.05 level
** Significant at p < 0.01 level

Model 1: Bivariate associations between predictors and civic participation; Model 2 and 3: Multivariate associations of 3 main predictors and 1 interaction term

Table 4
Bivariate and Multivariate Linear Regression Model Predicting Trust in Government

| Predictor | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | |
|--|---------|------|---------|---------|------|---------|---------|------|---------|
| | b | SE | F | b | SE | F | b | SE | F |
| Neighboring Behaviors | 0.03 | 0.01 | 6.07* | 0.04 | 0.01 | 9.25** | 0.04 | 0.01 | 8.86** |
| Minority Status | -0.14 | 0.03 | 28.37 | -0.16 | 0.03 | 37.09** | -0.17 | 0.03 | 38.81** |
| Immigrant Status | 0.20 | 0.06 | 11.55** | 0.28 | 0.06 | 22.69** | 0.24 | 0.06 | 15.03** |
| Neighboring Behaviors X Minority Status | | | | -0.05 | 0.03 | 3.56 | | | |
| Neighboring Behaviors X Immigrant Status | | | | | | | -0.14 | 0.05 | 7.26* |

* Significant at p < 0.05 level
** Significant at p < 0.01 level

Model 1: Bivariate associations between predictors and civic participation; Model 2 and 3: Multivariate associations of 3 main predictors and 1 interaction term

Conclusions

- Better understanding the association between neighboring behaviors during adolescence and community participation in adulthood can improve positive youth development initiatives and increase participation across the United States and the globe.
- Immigrant communities have traditionally been isolated from mainstream communities thereby limiting many of the residents’ ability to access information about opportunities to participate in the community. Additional efforts to integrate and incorporate immigrants into the fabric of communities is necessary. Simple gestures of friendliness can go long way in promoting a sense of community among residents, which can have long-lasting effects.
- Interventions and programs can increase or promote neighboring behaviors such as talking to neighbors, being involved in neighborhood activities, and fostering positive interactions amongst individuals.
- More research into neighboring behaviors and their impact on health, happiness, and participation should be further explored.

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