

Current demographics show that the Latino population is the largest and fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002). By 2050, the Latino population is predicted to account for more than 30 percent of the U.S. population. Once regarded as an "invisible" minority, Latinos are becoming more and more visible. Until recently, fathers were also "invisible" in the family studies literature. However, recently a good deal of research has begun to show that effective father involvement promotes healthy child development and later life outcomes (e.g., Amato & Rivera, 1999; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Lamb, 2004). Nevertheless, Latino fathers have slipped under the radar screen (Cabrera & Garcia-Coll, 2004).

At the cusp of a new century, two divergent trends appear to be emerging regarding fatherhood in the U.S. (Coley, 2001; Coltrane, 1995; Furstenberg, 1988, 1995). The first trend is that fathering is becoming more optional and sometimes nonexistent (as is the case of some single parent homes; King, Harris, & Heard, 2004). Some researchers argue that many of the ills of society can be traced to "fatherlessness" or the lack of paternal involvement in some households (Blankenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1996). Countering this development of uninvolved fathers is a second trend of "progressive fathering." This trend is characterized by an increase in the active participation of fathers in their families (Abalos, 2002; LaRossa, 1997). These two trends, "new fathering" and "uninvolved fathers," remain relatively uncharted territory in the study of Latino men (Cabrera & Garcia-Coll, 2004; Mirande, 1997) and deserve our further attention. We have attempted to understand Latino fathers' parenting styles and values on both sides of the Mexican/U.S. border to shed light on the trend of "new fathering" in both countries.

Cabrera and Garcia-Coll (2004) have expressed that little is known about what Latino fathers do as fathers. These authors have shown that Latino fathers continue to be studied from Anglo-American perspectives, which omit language, beliefs, expectations, roles, culture, and aspirations. In this study we have explicitly tried to address the issues of fathers' roles, beliefs, and culture by giving voice to Latino fathers in three distinct geographic and cultural contexts: Ensenada (urban), Baja California, Mexico; San Diego (urban), California, U.S.; and Hyrum (rural), Utah, U.S.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Our study is informed by both the symbolic interactionist perspective (Mead, 1934) and ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Symbolic interactionism refers to giving meaning to the apparent language-based (or symbolic) interactions that occur between individuals (Blumer, 1969). According to symbolic interactionism, social roles, such as being a father, are linked to societal expectations that influence the behaviors and actions conducted by the individual in a prescribed role (Stryker & Statham, 1985). As men act out the role of father, their behaviors either remain constant or change depending on how others react to this role. Over time, playing out the role of father leads to the construction of a "father role identity," which gives meaning to what it is to be a father (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993).

Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, we conceptualize fathers in the terms of three dynamic conditions, the microsystem (i.e., parent-child relationship), the mesosystem (i.e., work and family), and the macrosystem (i.e., cultural beliefs and geographic location). A father is individually influenced by his relationship with his child(ren), his work environment, and the cultural milieu of which he is a part (Bulboz & Sontag, 1993). From the family system perspective of "circular causality," he in turn influences his child(ren), his work relationship, and his culture (Bulboz & Sontag, 1996). This comparative study focuses primarily on the macrosystem, paying particular attention to the influence of cultural and geographic differences on fathering behaviors and beliefs.

This study was also guided by the ecological understanding of transitions as both the consequences and originators of developmental change in adults (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this case, immigrating and finding oneself in a new environment may have an influence on the way a father parents his children. Another important ecological theorist, Hawley (1986), posited, "corporate units tend to replicate the structural properties of the parent ecosystem" (p. 86). In terms of this study, this implies that parents tend to follow the same organizational principles their parents did when they were raised. This principle guides our understanding of whether Latino fathers on either side of the border parent in a fashion similar to that of their own fathers.

## CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON LATINO FATHERS

Much of what is understood about the roles of Latino fathers was constructed by the influential writings of etic researchers (objective, behavioral) who approached research on families from the outside of the families' culture using their own theoretical frameworks (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). Early researchers like Madsen (1973) and Rubel (1966) were often unaware of the cultural biases that were common in their writing (Mirande, 1988). From these early authors Latino fathers were depicted as fighting roosters with terms like "macho," "borracho" (drunk), and "bien gallo" (fighter; Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004). Recent studies have instead portrayed Latino and Latin American men as complex individuals with a multiplicity of attitudes that call into question stereotypical roles related to machismo (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004; Fuller, 1998; Gutmann, 1996; Mirande, 1988). Machismo is a term often used to emphasize Latino men's role as head of household in place of their roles as father and husband. It has generally been defined with negative connotations, such as "exaggerated masculinity, physical prowess, and male chauvinism" (Baca Zinn, 1994, p.74). However, others have come to think of it in a more positive light, defining it with terms like "true bravery or valor, courage, generosity, stoicism, heroism, and ferocity" (Mirande, 1997, pp. 78-79). Traditional roles associated with machismo are presently giving way to new, more progressive roles such as loving husband, the consumed father, and the family man (Coltrane, 2001; Gutmann, 2003; Mirande, 1997).

Another important component of machismo is being a provider for the family, which is indeed influenced by economic factors and work conditions. Latino fathers often work in high-risk conditions that are dangerous and physically demanding, such as meat-packing plants, construction, agriculture, and low paying factory labor (del Pinal & Singer, 1997;

Guzman & McConnell, 2002; Stull, Broadway, & Griffith, 1995). These workplaces are often known for their long hours and odd shift work (Guzman & McConnell, 2002), which may make parent/child interaction less likely. Unemployment and underemployment are serious ecological barriers to success in the traditional provider role, and, in turn, have deleterious consequences for Latino men's abilities to father (McLoyd, 1990; Taylor, Leashore, & Toliver, 1988). The combination of financial need and unique circumstances in the U.S. labor market has increased the labor force participation of women in Latino families (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994), which has now shifted the gender dynamics within some families, often increasing women's power (Pesquera, 1993; Williams, 1988). Surrounded by these new and still-emerging job influences, many Latino fathers are making adjustments in terms of the traditional role of provider, which remains prevalent in Mexico and other parts of Latin America (Gutmann, 2003). To our knowledge, little more than anecdotal evidence has been postulated in describing the fathering roles of Latino men (Cabrera & Garcia-Coll, 2004). Since these men's shifting sociocultural contexts may greatly influence the father roles they enact in their homes and the ability they have to be involved with their children, we decided to explore these interactions.

#### IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION ON PARENTING

The family processes of everyday life are dramatically affected when immigrating to a new country. The cultural clash of traditional values existing in the country of origin intertwined with the egalitarian values of the U.S. can create internal and interpersonal struggles. Research suggests that immigration from Mexico is a selective process; adult immigrants often are either very well educated or more or less uneducated but displaying unique motivational and personality characteristics (Buriel, 1993). The sending context, which refers to the conditions of the country of origin and reasons for leaving, greatly influence the expectations, experiences, and acculturation process of immigrants living in the U.S. (Bankston & Zhou, 1997). Few investigations specifically explore the influences of the sending context and the acculturation process on immigrant fathering practices. These influences are examined in this study as part of our ecological approach to understanding Latino fathers.

Acculturation has been defined as a social and psychological process that is characterized by immigrants' acceptance of a new mainstream culture (Berry, 1997). A study examining the relationship between acculturation and fathering practices amidst Indian immigrant families discovered that the least acculturated families were the least involved with their children (Jain & Belsky, 1997). Another study showed that acculturated Latino fathers were more active in socializing their children through emotional support and the setting of behavioral expectations, while less acculturated parents expected more autonomy and were more strict and permissive (Buriel, 1993). Other research, however, has found just the opposite. Coltrane, Parke, and Adams (2004) demonstrated less acculturated Mexican-American fathers were more likely to supervise their children and to engage with their children in more feminine-typed activities than more acculturated fathers. Researchers have also found that acculturation among Latinos is related to higher

parental stress, which in turn may be related to harsher and more punitive parenting behaviors (Dumka, Prost, & Barrera, 1999).

## INTERGENERATIONAL INFLUENCES ON PARENTING

Arguably, the most powerful influence on parenting practices is one's personal experiences in family life while growing up (Hawley, 1986). Adult development and fathering styles are influenced by the legacies of fatherhood passed down through the generations, as has been well documented (Pittman, 1993; Popenoe, 1996; Snarey, 1993). In the four-decade study of father-child intergenerational relationships, Snarey (1993) found that patterns of paternity related to men's status during midlife. During the past couple of decades, life-span psychologists and family scholars have noted the importance of parenting not only on children's development but on adult development as well (Daniels & Weingarten, 1988, Palkovitz, 2002; Parke, 1981). This process of intergenerational transmission of values has been referred to as generative fathering, where fathers care for their children and find meaning and identity as fathers (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). Though the intergenerational transmission of fathering values among Latinos has not received previous notice, we feel that this lens can help us to better understand the roots of Latino fathering behavior.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This article fills an important gap in the literature by comparing the conceptualizations of Latino fathers in two diverse regions of the U.S. and their counterparts in Mexico. No studies could be identified that examined Latino fathers on both sides of the Mexican/U.S. border. We note that one study explored the paternal practices of Latino fathers in Mexico compared to Caucasian fathers in the U.S. (Fox & Solis-Camara, 1997). Using quantitative techniques, this etic (objective, behavioral) study found no significant differences in the fathering interactions of these two groups of fathers. We contend that, if they had used an emic approach (subjective, phenomenological), numerous differences in fathering would likely emerge.

Our paper contributes to emerging research on fathering (von der Lippe, Fuhrer, & Meyer-Probst, 2002) and begins to address the need to understand the complexity of Latino fathering (Cabrera et al., 2000; Coley, 2001 ; Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004). To accomplish this, we give voice to Latino fathers' perceptions of their roles and values in family life and identify the similarities and differences in fathering among Latino men in Mexico and the U.S. Our study is guided by two main research questions: How do Latino fathers residing in Mexico and the U.S. describe paternal involvement? What influences their ideas about fathering practices?

## METHODS

### DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

This study consisted of a convenience sample of 32 men in three cities (see Table 1). Thirteen of the fathers resided in urban Mexico, 10 resided in urban southern California, and nine resided in rural Utah. The sample in Mexico was collected in Ensenada, Mexico. The city lies 100 miles south of the U.S. border in Baja, California. The population, according to the 2000 Mexican National Census, is nearly 4,000,000, and more than 11% are migrants that come from numerous regions in Mexico. No prior study has explored Latino father experiences in three diverse regions, including urban and rural regions. This study examines social location to explore the impact it may or may not have on fathering styles. The men in the sample were biological fathers to at least one child between the ages of three and 18 years of age. All but two fathers responded to the interview in their first language, Spanish. Seventeen of the families interviewed in the U.S. were composed of first-generation immigrants from Mexico and their children, one family was made up of first-generation immigrants from Central America, and one was a second-generation Mexican-American family. All of the families interviewed in Mexico were residents of Ensenada, where they were interviewed. The median number of children in the household in Mexico and California was three. In Utah, the median number of children was four (for differences, see Table 1). We attribute this difference to the higher fertility rates common to rural families (all of the fathers immigrated from rural sending contexts) and the religious cultural context (two of the nine fathers were Latter-Day Saints).

Thirty of the fathers were employed full time, working an average of 51 hours per week. The fathers in both the Mexican and U.S. samples tended to be from lower to lower-middle class, yet approximately 30% of each of our samples were men from the middle to upper-middle class. Married parents headed 24 of the 32 households, and six of the fathers had been married previously. The parents in four families were cohabiting, and stepfathers headed seven families. The fathers' educations were often limited; 11 of the fathers had not completed elementary school, and another nine had never finished high school. However, the Mexico sample included four fathers with professional training, one who had completed a master's degree, and one who had completed a doctorate. The U.S. sample was less educated; only one participant had attended college, and one had earned a master's degree. Five of the fathers in the sample had no writing or reading abilities.

## PROCEDURES

We recruited fathers through a variety of means including word of mouth and advertisements posted in community centers, local churches, and neighborhoods. Through phone calls to parents, we arranged to visit each household while simultaneously establishing language preferences and degrees of interest in participation. Interviews were face-to-face and open-ended, lasting approximately one to two hours. All participants provided informed consent in their language of choice. A semi-structured interview instrument, containing some close-ended and mostly open-ended questions, allowed for in-depth interviewing that addressed the meaning and experience of the participants (Patton, 1990). The focused interview questionnaire consisted of questions about the roles and involvement of fathers in their families. Questions included how fathers perceive their fathering role, what influences their fathering, how involved they are with their children, and what perceptions they have of fathers in Mexico and the U.S.

Brief demographic data were also collected. All questions were translated into Spanish and then translated back into English following accepted methods described by Herrera, DelCampo, and Ames (1993) and Prieto (1992).

In addition to the two co-principal investigators, three research assistants of Mexican descent conducted the interviews. All interviewers were fluent in Spanish. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed in Spanish. They were then translated into English using the previously noted methods and analyzed in both Spanish and English. We recognize that at times words do not carry the same meaning when translating from Spanish to English. For example, one father mentioned a rhyme in Spanish that doesn't make sense when translated verbatim to English. While there were several Latinos working on translations, all of the transcripts were checked by one person, a native of Mexico, to ensure the meanings were translated as accurately as possible. The final translation captured the intent of the subject beyond a word-for-word translation. While we feel confident that these results are accurate, we do recognize that the tone and inflection of subtle meanings may be diluted in the Spanish-to-English translation.

A grounded theory approach guided the analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), aided by the qualitative software package entitled QSR NUD\*IST 5 (N5, 2000). Responses were coded focusing on the general themes and meanings related to these men's fathering styles and behaviors. Throughout the coding process, the first author reviewed codes with either the second author or a bilingual research assistant, working until consensus was obtained for the codes. Following the suggestions of Guba and Lincoln (1982), we used a reflexive journal, persistent observation, peer debriefing with the research team members, and independent reading and discussion of the preliminary coding scheme between the two authors. Based on their answers, fathers were then placed in categories that best fit their descriptions of fathering.

## RESEARCHERS' FRAME OF REFERENCE

The co-principal investigators in this study are both Anglo-American natives of two different regions of the U.S. (the Midwest and Southwest) who are fluent in Spanish. We realize our observations are tainted by our life experiences; however, we hope that our outsider stance will enhance the analysis of the data. Peled (1998) pointed out that researchers' nonnative status among a group of subjects can encourage honesty and additional inquiry due to the researchers' relative ignorance, legitimizing questioning and probing that may not be appropriate for native researchers. Nonetheless, we realize that native participants may have felt a power difference during their conversations with White interviewers. Being aware of White privilege (McIntosh, 1998), we believe that we made a concerted effort to make the participants feel comfortable and upon equal ground as much as possible prior to and during these interviews. Research assistants, all of whom were of Latino heritage, also conducted interviews. Debriefing did not reveal major differences in the participants' responses based on whether or not they were interviewed by someone of similar ethnicity or gender.

## FINDINGS

Our results illustrate how 32 Latino fathers living in two countries conceptualize the roles of fatherhood, interpret how fathers should behave, and perceive how men relate to their children. Three dominant themes depicting the influences that impact paternal involvement in these men's lives emerged from the data: (a) cultural influences, particularly gender role ideology; (b) immigration influences; and (c) intergenerational influences. The text that follows examines in depth each of these constructs by highlighting the voices of Latino fathers through their actual words from the interviews.

### CULTURAL INFLUENCES: GENDER ESSENTIALIST VERSUS GENDER PROGRESSIVE IDEOLOGIES

The results of this study illustrate the intricacies of culture interwoven throughout the patterns of paternal involvement. This section further explores the influence of cultural values, particularly regarding gender roles, on fathers' role identity. We identified two divergent gender roles Latino fathers play in their families' lives. First, an expected finding of gender essentialism was found depicting males and females as playing unique roles with the father often regarded as the head of the household. Enrique, (1) a father in California, illustrates the essential nature of his traditional gender role: "I think that the father's role is very important. I'm not saying it's more important than the mother's, but because of my experience, if the father is absent, a void is felt. Although sometimes the mother fills the role of father, it's not the same." Another father stated, "Without the continued support of a father, children have a hard time amounting to anything in their lives." These statements view fathering as necessary in children's lives, an area that is contested in the literature regarding the importance of fathers in families. A similar essentialist perspective was shared by Marcos, stating "the mother is the complement [but not a replacement] to what one does as a [father]."

Though traditional notions of gender roles were found among the U.S. sample, they were twice as prevalent among the sample of fathers from Mexico. Angelo, a father who resides in Mexico, delineated the roles of men and women by remarking: "Well, [a father] should build a small house for his children, where they can live, where they can have a roof, and all that. The rest, the mother is the one that runs the house." These fathers described gender roles as rigid and tightly defined. For example, Santiago, a father in Mexico, stated succinctly:

The boys--I want them to learn how to be men, to know how to work, to be responsible. The girl--I would teach my daughter to study, that if one day she marries a lazy, good-for-nothing man, she can sustain him; that she would be a good mother that loves her children well; that she would be a housewife.

Supporting these views, Juan, who resides in rural Utah, stated the following: "In Mexico, mothers are 100% homemakers; they do nothing but dedicate themselves to the

care of their children, tending the home, cooking, taking care of you when you're sick. They don't have the ability to work outside the home."

A large number of fathers in the U.S. and a somewhat smaller number of fathers in Mexico displayed gender progressive attitudes, where both domestic and occupational labors were viewed to be divided equally. For example, Miguel, a father in California, shared: "Well, when the father and mother are mutual about things, it's easier to raise a family." These fathers recognized that parents create opportunities for their children when they work together. Gilberto, a well-educated father from Mexico, suggested the mother "should be the other support, the other rail of the ladder so the children may keep on climbing." Other fathers in the U.S. made similar statements: "It should also be a role of collaboration and guidance, not only of provider," and "The father is supposed to be the caretaker, set good examples, and always have [the children] close." Fathers in Mexico, who were more educated, generally displayed more progressive attitudes about gender.

Machismo is a construct that represents the intersection of cultural values and gender expectations. Supporting contemporary perspectives on the complexities of machismo, our participants conceptualized this construct in very different ways. Clearly, machismo is a value-laden term to which men concomitantly attributed both positive and negative meanings. For example, Luis said, "Machismo means taking care of your family and protecting them. Yes, alcohol and women are often equated with a man's masculinity, but it is also important to provide for your family." Machismo symbolizes negative things such as the previously noted constructs of the "borracho" (drunk) or "peleador" (fighter). Most fathers viewed drinking alcohol as appropriate expressions of their manhood. However, they did not approve of fighting or being drunk in front of their children.

On the other hand, being "macho" was also viewed positively as a way to protect and provide for their families. Fathers took great pride in fixing up their homes/apartments for their wives and children. This sometimes meant remodeling or simply buying nice things for their homes. Machismo was more often associated with traditional beliefs. For example, one father living in the U.S. stated, "It means a woman isn't equal to a man." This perspective expressed by several fathers has the potential to be used to subjugate women in a variety of forms.

We also explored how gender of the child impacted father roles and father's behaviors. We were interested in finding out if men father their sons in different ways than their daughters. Fathers in Mexico tended to have a gender gap in terms of expectations of their sons and daughters, whereas in the U.S. gender made no real difference. Luis, from Mexico, stated, "With the girl I demand what is normal for a girl; I don't make her carry stones or have her get a shovel--instead she should go clean and help out around the house." Tomas shared the same perspective: "With sons the relationship is geared more towards hard activities [e.g., sports]." With daughters, fathers' activities were more caring, more about the interchange of perspectives about their "everyday lives." The fathers in Mexico tended to essentialize gender as expressed by the following remark:

"The girl is different; she's a little woman--you can't just play anywhere with her. With the boys, the little ones, you still can."

Rather than essentializing gender, many fathers in the U.S. depicted age as the critical factor in forming relationships with their children. These fathers described feeling closer to younger children than to older children. We hypothesize this is due to the strong emphasis on children's development and a growth toward autonomy and independence that occurs in adolescence in the U.S.

Two fathers' statements illustrate their desired equity across child gender. Eduardo remarked, "I want them all to reach the same heights and the same goals. I want all of them to have the same capacity--if they want to go to the university to get their masters' or something like that, if they want." Javier said, "I expect the same from both of them because I give them the same attention and affection." Echoing the work of Daly (1995), our results revealed that the majority of the men in this sample embody a "gender progressive" ideology, viewing women as equal to men and having equal aspirations for their sons and daughters. Fewer men were "gender traditional," perceiving women as not equal to men and defining inhibitive roles for men and women. This traditional perspective was much more common in the Mexico sample than in the U.S. sample, suggesting that men in the U.S., whether in a rural or urban setting, were influenced by contemporary North American social values. An alternative explanation is that these men were more progressive in Mexico, which perhaps influenced their decision to move to the U.S.

#### IMMIGRATION INFLUENCES: CONTINUITY VERSUS DIFFERENCE

The process of immigration greatly influences family life and often affects parenting styles. The sending contexts--the places of origin, circumstances, and lives they led prior to immigration--and the reasons for immigrating to the U.S. (e.g., economic) also played a critical role in how these men fathered. When these men crossed the border, their fathering style was either transformed by the new culture in the U.S. or it remained unchanged, from their perspective, despite being in a new country. We describe these two trends as sociocultural change and sociocultural continuity to highlight the macro-level influences on micro-level parent-child interactions.

The first trend, sociocultural change, was found in 40 percent of the U.S. sample. Parenting practices are greatly influenced by the broader social context (macrosystem). For example, some men felt constrained in their parenting role due to the laws in this country that were created to protect children (i.e., no physical abuse). These laws and social customs have influenced the interactions fathers have with their children. Eduardo, a Californian father, declared, "Well, to be in a foreign country, we need to respect the laws so we don't have problems with anybody." These fathers are protective of their paternal practices and engage in new types of discipline when afforded the opportunity to learn them. One father, Ruben, in California said: "The culture is different. Over there [meaning Mexico], the men are more machismo, they don't spend their time with the

family, they spend more time with their friends. Here it's more family oriented and about family unity."

In the U.S. sample, fathers were more likely to be aware of the possible ramifications of admitting to utilizing physical violence as a disciplinary measure, so none of the men admitted to hitting their children. However, an alternative explanation is that living in the U.S. for more than a decade has influenced their parenting styles, resulting in no use of physical discipline. When discussing discipline, fathers residing in the U.S. made comments like "no physical discipline; just verbally conveying to them, telling them the difference between right and wrong; just communicating to them."

Though some fathers changed their fathering style when coming to the U.S., most of the immigrant Latino fathers can be described by the sociocultural continuity perspective. Living in the U.S. or Mexico did not, according to their account, shift their fathering style. Fathers that did not change their parenting behaviors commonly had come with parenting styles that already conformed well to their new cultural environment, whereas those who changed commonly immigrated with parenting behaviors that were not as well suited for their new environment. A Utah father, Enrique, shared an example of this sociocultural continuity perspective: "It's the same education, and I feel that I instill that in them. It's the same education here and there. I instill in them that education is important in the same manner."

One father in California recognized the complexity of cultural influences on patterns of paternal guidance. Ruben recounted:

In moral principles, you show your children what's right and wrong. The only difference is that here, when children grow up, parents give them too much freedom regarding alcohol, sex, drugs than in Mexico. When their children were young, North American parents gave their children a lot of attention; they go on vacation and things. But as soon as they're teenagers, it's over--the parents go their way and the kids their way. In my country, it's not like that. In Mexico, children are 19 or 20 years old, and they live with their parents. It's not that they are always with them, but it's more

that they adhere to the culture and customs more. But for me, the education is the same. Here, children are given a good education regarding principles and in Mexico, the same. Except that here, they are given too much freedom ... every country has its customs, changing from generation to generation.

As we see here, the ramification of the collisions of two cultures is often witnessed in the conflicts between immigrant parents and their more acculturated children.

We were also interested in how fathers in Mexico perceived fathering in North America as compared to Mexico--39% thought that fathering differed in the U.S. compared to Mexico, and 39% thought that fathering was the same in both countries (the rest of the sample, 22%, stated that they didn't know). We first examined fathers who felt that

fathering differed between the two countries. Mateo said, "You get the impression that here in the interior of Mexico there's more unity, more nurturing. There's a better relationship between fathers and their own fathers. We try to be closer to them, try to stay in touch." Hector stated a similar sentiment: "Because there is more family closeness in Latin American countries, there is not as much coldness; we still care about the elderly." Samuel expressed a contrary opinion: "North Americans [meaning Mexican immigrants] are more different. Here some fathers have a strong arm for discipline, not all, just some. North Americans discipline by example."

The other group of men felt that fathering is not noticeably different in the two countries. Luis stated, "At a world level, there are good and bad parents." Pablo said: "Maybe the essence of fathering is the same, even in the levels that a foreigner can be compared to us, no? But I believe being a father is the same."

In sum, the impact of immigration on fathers varies by individual. Some fathers described changes in their parenting style when they moved to the U.S. due to the laws, customs, and culture of the society. Laws regarding domestic violence and child abuse serve as deterrents for some immigrant fathers and may be a catalyst to learning new ways to interact with their families. The emphasis on the social and emotional development of children, as well as equal opportunity for them in the U.S., affects paternal participation and practices. However, we must consider that many fathers cited no changes in their fathering style when migrating to the U.S. Perceptions of fathers living in Mexico revealed that some felt that fathers in the U.S. were better dads because they utilize less physical discipline and lead more by example. But an equal number of fathers thought that fathers in Mexico were better because there is more family unity and a greater respect for elders in their country as compared to the U.S.

#### INTERGENERATIONAL INFLUENCES: TRANSMISSION VERSUS TRANSFORMATION

Intergenerational influences seemed to impact the paternal practices of the men in this study. We examined generational bonds in both directions--in other words, how the relationships with their own fathers affected them and how they hope to influence their own children. We will first discuss how the legacies of their own fathers influence their paternal parenting.

In general, the Latino men in our study were profoundly affected by their relationships with their fathers, who ranged from involved dads to absent dads. Similar to Daly's (1995) findings, their own fathers' models of parenting, whether positive or negative, influenced how they interact with their children. Fathers in all three regions described how their experiences in childhood with their fathers influence their parenting today. In Mexico, only one father remarked that he would replicate his father's actions with his own children. The majority of the Mexican national sample stated that they would concomitantly replicate and reform the way they were fathered by doing some things the same and some things different with their own children. A smaller group of the fathers in

Mexico stated they wanted a completely different relationship with their children than they experienced with their father.

The U.S. sample revealed some differing findings. Approximately one-third of the U.S. fathers displayed generational transmission, stating that they are fathering similarly to their own fathers. Half of the fathers stated that they are parenting differently than their fathers, and one-sixth stated they are doing some things similar and some things different.

The majority of fathers in all three regions described at least some transformation in their fathering style compared to how they were fathered. Jorge, a Utah father, related his difficult relationship with his father:

Every time he was with us. he was drunk. He abandoned my mother and us on the ranch to fend for ourselves. He left us alone, and he worked in the village. He came home very drunk on Saturdays, slapping my mother. Sometimes I got really angry, and I wanted to hit him for the times he hit my mother.... I told him, "When I am grown dad, I am going to give you some good blows" ... but I never did.

This father veered from the model his father set for him, instead demonstrating compassion toward and closeness with his children. Another father, Enrique, articulated how he went about making this change by connecting with his children:

I missed relating more with my father in terms of communication, and I try with all my means to be friendlier with my children, spend time with them, share, show them everything from the simplest thing to an argument, a complicated process--try to give them everything that at one time I did not have.

Fueled by their negative childhood experiences, Jorge and Enrique were actively involved in creating positive childhood experiences for their offspring. One father, who resides in rural Utah, left his family of origin behind and immigrated to the U.S. because of his abusive father. By abandoning his abusive past, he was able to construct a new identity as a father and to interact positively with his children. On the other hand, a few fathers expressed neither positive nor negative relationships with their father but stated they want to be better fathers than their dads were with them.

A smaller proportion of fathers display the transmission of values and behaviors from their own fathers that they are passing on to their children. These fathers warmly described the bonds they shared with their fathers that helped make them into the men they are today, as illustrated in the following example:

When I was little my dad also worked in the countryside, out in the open. He taught me how to work and fend for myself. He would always bring me with him; we would be together at work, and we would talk. That I want to pass on to my kids: the trust, the

respect, and the caring that needs to be given by the father.

However, intergenerational transmission is not always generative. In the Mexican sample, we found fathers who were abused by their parents to be more likely to report being rough, intolerant, or abusive with their own children. Some illustrative statements include, "Now and then I hit them three times with a stick in the name of the Lord; other times I only tell them and that's that," or "Well, I utilize physical discipline whenever necessary, I mean spankings and whippings; I have a special rod for that event." Few fathers in the U.S. reported abusing or being rough with their children; however, it is possible that heightened awareness of legal action and/or social desirability could be influencing these fathers' responses.

We next examined the influence the fathers in our sample hope to have on their posterity. Regarding the values that Latino fathers want to transmit to the next generation, the most prominent value was the importance of a good education. Whether in Mexico or the U.S., education was perceived as the most prized achievement that their children could attain. So many responses clustered around fathers' desire to help their children get their education that it almost seemed like the fathers were reading a teleprompter. For example, Eduardo said simply, "You have to study because if you get a good education you will have a good career; you live well."

Instilling a strong work ethic in their children, similar to how they were raised, was also described as important to many fathers. They wanted to see their children in better jobs but at the same time didn't want them to lose the satisfaction of working hard. Manuel shared, "I want them to get ahead in the world; this is why we work to get them to study and really put their hearts into the work they will do, so they won't end up cutting meat in the factory, like their parents."

"Respeto" (respect) was another highly valued trait fathers want to pass on to their children. It is interesting that many fathers felt children learned this best through a reciprocal relationship of respect. In other words, when they showed respect toward their children, their children would be more likely to show them respect. "I think that being aggressive or mean doesn't quite work; you have to simply show respect to your children. In fact, I like to respect my children, and yes, I like for them to respect me," remarked Miguel. Particularly in the U.S., fathers want their children to be honest, avoid gangs, and resist crime. One California father elaborated on this subject pretending he was speaking to his daughter:

I hope you will get friends that have high moral standards, who are honest and truthful, and don't expect you to lie ... ever lie for them or do anything deceitful in any way. That they encourage you to be truthful and have high moral standards and be modest and to be an honorable person.

As the above quotes illustrate, fathers in both countries acknowledged the need for intergenerational bonds to support their culture and their families.

Conflicting intergenerational values add to the stress that many immigrant families encounter as they navigate their lives in the U.S. Dominant cultural values in the U.S. can create conflicts between family members when the parental subsystem holds to traditional Latino values while the children adopt new values. For example, immigrant parents with strong religious values will be more likely to take on family customs related to their culture such as quinceneras (celebrations of a girl's womanhood). However, these cultural expectations may not be uniformly accepted by the various generations within a household.

Despite these differences, our sample shows that intergenerational bonds remain strong in families. Fathers frequently described a transformation of fatherhood; doing things differently with their own children than what they experienced in their childhood. Overall, the fathers in this sample reported they were less abusive with their children than their fathers were with them. The main values they hope to give to their children are the importance of an education, a strong work ethic, and having respect.

## DISCUSSION

This study examines two main research questions: How do Latino men on both sides of the border describe paternal involvement, and what influences their ideas about fathering practices? Most of these fathers' comments echoed the descriptions of various authors' new typologies of generative Latino fatherhood such as the loving husband, the consumed father, and the family man (Coltrane, 2001; Gutmann, 2003; Mirande, 1997). Each of these authors has a somewhat different perspective on fathering. Some of their descriptions of fathers may be more idealistic than others, yet all share a nondeficit perspective. Our findings contribute to a more conclusive and unified approach to representing the strengths of Latino men in research, the media, and other venues, without ignoring the reality that there are fathers who behave in detrimental ways toward their children.

The findings based on Latino fathers' reports of the influences on their parenting are best understood through an ecological perspective. Three distinct areas influence paternal patterns: namely, cultural ideologies, experiences of immigration, and intergenerational relationships. Our results support Toth and Xu's (1999) finding that fathers' involvement and father roles are influenced by cultural ideologies. Regarding cultural influences, both "gender traditional" and "gender progressive" fathering roles were found in the sample. The fathers residing in the U.S. were more likely to have gender progressive roles than the fathers in Mexico. It is possible that immigrants may develop more gender progressive attitudes as they come in contact with the more gender progressive cultures common in the U.S. (Leaper & Valin, 1996), or it simply may be that more gender progressive fathers are more likely to immigrate. However, lacking longitudinal data measuring the acculturation and progressive attitudes of these fathers makes it difficult for us to establish why these men are more progressive. It should be noted that the results revealed that a number of the more educated fathers in Mexico saw the role of the mother as being equal to the father and had equal aspirations for both their sons and daughters. This finding along with the fathers' comments about machismo suggests that traditional

models do not accurately reflect the complex conceptualizations of father roles as expressed by these men. Another interesting finding is that the fathers in our sample were not cognizant of or at least did not mention the influence of their wives on their relationships with their children, a connection commonly found among Caucasian samples (e.g., Fagan & Barnett, 2003).

Regarding immigration influences, some fathers were greatly affected by moving to a new country and felt the constraints of the laws of the U.S. However, more fathers showed cultural continuity--their fathering did not change in notable ways upon crossing the border. An equal number of fathers in Mexico perceived fathers in the U.S. as both worse and better compared to fathers in Mexico. It is interesting that fathers residing in rural and urban settings in the U.S. were more critical of the fathering practices and values of fathers in Mexico. This related particularly to issues of gender inequality and physical punishment. This finding suggests fathers have differing perceptions of effective fathers based on their social contexts and the effects of mainstream cultural ideas as portrayed in the media and by influential others.

Fathers in this sample reflected both a transmission of fathering values and a transformation of fathering behaviors. Consistent with Hawley's (1986) ecological proposition, these men's relationships with their own fathers appeared to impact the way they fathered their children. The memory of their father's role in their family of origin served as a reference point in how they father their children (Daly, 1995). The majority of men in both the U.S. and Mexico desired a different relationship with their own children than they had with their fathers when they were young. Fathers were also keenly aware of the impact they hope to have on the next generation, as other researchers have discovered (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997; Snarey, 1993). The primary values that fathers residing in all three regions hope to instill in their children include obtaining a good education, exhibiting a good work ethic, and showing respect for others.

#### TOWARD A MORE INCLUSIVE VISION OF FATHERING

Until recently, fathers of color have been largely ignored in the fatherhood debate and research. The emerging diverse trends of "new fathering" and "uninvolved father" models have been widely debated regarding White, middle-class fathers. This study lends support to the growing evidence that deficit models for minority fathers do not adequately capture their care and concern for their children (Fitzpatrick et al., 1999; Toth & Xu, 1999).

Latino fathers in our study show that a transformation is taking place among Latino fathers on both sides of the border. Many fathers exhibit contemporary views and feelings that reflect the trend of "new fathering." They are redefining machismo through their attitudes and fathering practices. Though many fathers on both sides of the border are involved and aware of their children's needs and aspirations, to those on the outside these fathers may still show signs of traditionality. Indeed, certain aspects, such as the important provider role, may overshadow the progressive and egalitarian ideals and behaviors that are becoming so prevalent. Certainly Latino fathers are complex

individuals with strong family values that facilitate their involvement in the lives of their families (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004).

These interviews have led us to side with Coley's (2001) call for a "re-envisioning" of fatherhood; including the need for more research on minority men and moving beyond the deficit-based models that have prevailed for so long. Our study suggests that many Latino fathers participate in "generative fathering" (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). We support the need for further theory development with emphasis on the ecological context of fathers. Admittedly, many Latino fathers find themselves in contexts of poverty and hardship, but they have certain common characteristics that strengthen their resiliency to various outside forces, such as strong family values and tight-knit communities (Vega et al., 1986). We invite researchers to continue to move beyond simplistic analyses of father involvement to more comprehensive studies of the complex, fluid, and cultural variations associated with fathers' multifaceted connections to particular communities, households, other families, and individuals.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The study's sample size and the selectivity of the sample necessitate caution when interpreting its results. Our findings reveal an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward paternity that could be the product of self-selection bias, since the research was voluntary. Fathers not as engaged or interested in family life might be less likely to participate in this type of study. This study was also limited by the fact the majority of these families were Mexican residents or had immigrated to their current residence from rural Mexico, making it difficult for this study to apply to the greater Latino population abroad and within the U.S. The inclusion of families of all types (i.e., single-parent fathers, fathers whose spouse remains in a different country, non-custodial fathers, etc.) would broaden our understanding of the differences and similarities of fathering relationships in these families. Future research using a larger sample that is more diverse in socioeconomic status, family makeup, and sending context is suggested for several reasons.

It should be noted that the patterns observed in this study may be unique to the sample due to their sending context, history, and current socioeconomic status. Interviewing the participants' wives and children to examine the similarities and differences in perceptions of fathering would also enhance this research. Because Latino fathers' perceptions of their family roles and parenting styles are likely to vary greatly according to their current and previous socioeconomic status as well as their acculturation to the U.S. (or lack thereof), it is important to replicate this study with the inclusion of more diverse socioeconomic groups with differing socioeconomic histories from different sending contexts.

The findings revealed in this study provide a beginning foundation upon which to build future research. We recommend that future researchers develop greater depth in understanding Latino fatherhood by (1) examining the cultural nature of fatherhood constructions, (2) exploring the patterns of change and continuity in cultural perceptions of fatherhood, (3) elucidating on the effects of immigration on paternal processes, and (4)

expanding on the importance of intergenerational influences in the formation of fatherhood perceptions. Studies with larger samples can provide us with a more comprehensive sense of the influences that various contexts play in determining the fathering beliefs and practices of Latino men.

## CONCLUSION

The patterns of paternity revealed in this study show men's commitment to their children on both sides of the border. We hope to move the dialogue beyond deficit-based models and embrace the strengths that men bring to their families and the important role of fathering in these men's lives. The implication of the role of Latino fathers in the lives of their children affects a growing segment of our future population. In future years, policy and programmatic work will need to be guided by these growing implications. We conclude with the admonition of Pedro, one of the fathers.

We need to be conscious of our responsibility to our children. I generally believe that we are the basis of society, and if we, as fathers of young children, don't instill the best habits that we can, in general, then we will see the decline of children, family, community, and our country. If we want Mexico [or the U.S.] to be great, we have to start with our children.

These words apply not only to Mexico, but to every nation. Passionate fathers who are committed to their children will create a promising tomorrow. This article has shown how outdated models of traditional patriarchy do not adequately describe the complex conceptualizations that Latino fathers display in describing their experiences of fatherhood.

Table 1  
Demographic Characteristics of Fathers in Mexico, California, and Utah

Demographic variables	Mexico (n = 13)	California (n = 10)	Utah (n = 9)
Average age	41	37	38
Average household income	\$14,000	\$31,000	\$22,000
Education			
None	2	2	1
Elementary	1	2	3
High School	4	5	4
Professional training or college	4	1	1
Graduate school	2	1	0
Speak conversational English	9	7	6
Read and write	12	8	8
Years in the U.S.	-	16	14
Sending context			
Rural Mexico	-	6	7
Urban Mexico	-	4	0
Rural Guatemala	-	0	1

Marital status			
Married	9	9	4
Cohabiting	2	0	2
Remarried	2	1	3
Children			
Median number	3	3	4
Average age	11	9	10

Note. Dashes indicate values that are not applicable. Ages are in years.

## NOTE

(1.) Names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

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