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Claudia V. Ruiz Esparza E.
A Cross-cultural Comparison of
Mexican Americans and non-Latino
white Americans: Does Culture
Influence Family Cohesion & Father
Involvement?

ABSTRACT

This quantitative research study is a preliminary assessment of family cohesion and father involvement in two cultural groups: Mexican American and non-Latino white American families with children between the ages of one to seven years old and of low to medium socioeconomic status. The line of inquiry is whether or not culture influences family cohesion and father involvement in this sample.

The variables of family cohesion and father involvement were measured along with an examination of the effects of culture and acculturation on Mexican American families. The Family Circles instrument is a pictorial assessment tool used in this study to measure parents' individual perceptions of family cohesion and father involvement in their family-of-origin and current nuclear family.

The population studied was a subset of the California-based longitudinal Supporting Father Involvement study's total sample. This study's sample consisted of 86 mothers and 99 fathers who in total were 45.6% non-Latino white American (English monolingual) and 54.4% Mexican American (English or Spanish monolingual, and Bilingual). The findings of this study demonstrated that family cohesion and father involvement in depictions of family-of-origin and current nuclear family were more predominant in one of our study cross-cultural groups than the other.

A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF
MEXICAN AMERICANS AND NON-LATINO WHITE AMERICANS:
DOES CULTURE INFLUENCE FAMILY COHESION & FATHER INVOLVEMENT?

A project based upon an independent investigation, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	5
II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
III METHODOLOGY.....	28
IV FINDINGS	37
V DISCUSSION.....	44
REFERENCES	56
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Family Circles Instrument.....	64
Appendix B: Coding Form.....	66

List of Tables

Table

1.	Educational Attainment	30
2.	Family Cohesion and Father Involvement Correlation	34
3.	Language Used to Respond to Family Circles Instrument	36
4.	Family Structure in the Family-of-Origin	38
5.	Family Structure in the Current Nuclear Family	39

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Globalization connects the world, broadens our focus of interests, and brings cultures together. For some, it also limits abilities to deeply connect to immediate environment such as family. In a diverse society and a globalized economy, researchers are turning their attention to parenting styles and parental involvement. In fact, father involvement has received significant attention during the last decades. Marsiglio, Amato, Day, Lamb (2000) found that father involvement (father's active participation in the rearing of their children) or the lack of it strongly affects children's physical, psychological, emotional, and economical well-being. Researchers who focused their research interventions on the family as a unit that was inclusive but not limited to father's participation have been successful in raising the levels of father involvement (e.g. Cowan, Cowan, Cohen, Pruett, Pruett, & Wong, 2009).

More recently, a growing number of researchers who study father involvement across races and ethnicities are considering important influences other than attitudes and/or cultural values alone. Those influences include but are not limited to socioeconomic status (SES), neighborhood environments, educational attainment, physical and mental health stressors, and family structure (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Coltrane, Parke & Adams, 2004; Balter & Tamis-LeMonda, 2006).

How cultural values influence father involvement is one variable of interest in the present research project. Likewise, the present research focuses on overall family structure defined as the

specific configuration of family members, which includes relative closeness between family members or groupings of family members. Several researchers have found that families who share a high level of family unity have interdependence among family members, high social support and a higher degree of family cohesion—one of the variables in this research project—(Gaines, Rios, & Buriel, 1997 as cited in Marsiglia, Parsai, & Kulis, 2009).

Family cohesion has been studied extensively in minority communities and immigrant families from a cultural perspective, especially among Mexican Americans. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), the total population is at 308.7 million people. The racial and ethnic divide is 64% non-Hispanic/Latino white, 16% Latino/Hispanics, 13% black or African American, 5% Asian, 0.9% American Indian and Alaska Native, and 0.2% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. The U.S. Census Bureau also noted there are increasing percentages of biracial, multiracial, or multiethnic populations that were not included (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 report). The Pew Hispanic Center suggests that the number of Latino/Hispanic population will triple in size and will account for most of the nation's population growth from 2005 through 2050 (Project 2.11.2008, 2010).

In a study of Mexican American families, Behnke, MacDermid, Coltrane, Parke, Duffy, & Widaman (2008) found that family cohesion strongly mediated most of the relations between stress and parenting behaviors. Therefore, cultural values and family cohesion are promissory variables to consider along with father involvement in this research project.

Family systems theories—including Structural Family Theory from Salvador Minuchin—are inclusive of all family influences mentioned above and see the family as a system in which “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and has properties that cannot be understood simply from the combined characteristics of each part” (Cox & Paley, 2003, p. 193) and the

family is seen as having: a) wholeness and order, b) hierarchical structure, and c) adaptive self-organization (Cox & Paley, 2003). Hence, researchers have been influenced by family systems theories and moved toward viewing individuals within the context of their larger family systems and considering the mutual influences among family subsystems, such as the interdependence of the marital relationship and the parent-child relationship (Cox, Paley, 2003). This change of emphasis has given rise to new lines of research like the Supporting Father Involvement (SFI) project in which researchers look beyond the mother-child relationship and consider fathers and their relationships in the family such as “problems in the parent-child relationship associated with marital distress among other influences” (Cox & Paley, 2003 p 193) in order to better understand children’s development and support father involvement.

The present research paper will examine a) cultural differences in regard to levels of family cohesion and father involvement in personal pictorial representations of family structure in Mexican American families compared to non-Latino white American families and how those cultural differences may vary according to participants’ level of acculturation among Mexican Americans, and b) if there is a positive relation between family cohesion and father involvement for each ethnic group.

This study will use a subsample derived from the SFI study, which is directed by Dr Phillip A. Cowan, Dr. Carolyn Pape Cowan, Dr. Marsha Kline Pruett, and Dr. Kyle Pruett. The SFI project is the first father intervention study using a randomized clinical trial “to measure the effectiveness of an intervention to facilitate father involvement by strengthening men’s relationships with their children’s mothers” (Cowan et al., 2006, p. 109). SFI is a collaborative effort among University of California Berkeley, Yale Child Study Center, and Smith College School for Social Work and is funded by the California Department of Social Services, Office of

Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP). Embedded within family resource centers in five counties in California (Yuba, Contra Costa, Tulare, Santa Cruz, and San Luis Obispo), the SFI project has been underway for nearly seven years as of this writing.

Since much of the recent literature in this area of family cohesion or father involvement has focused on studying either family cohesion or father involvement in an individual fashion, there seems to be a gap in the literature that suggests that there is not any study that established a relation between family cohesion and father involvement. However, Resnick (2000) found that family cohesion in Mexican Americans coexisted with Mexican American cultural values, such as familismo and respect, which together worked as protective factors against acculturation stressors and behavior problems in Mexican American adolescents.

Therefore, it is the intent of this study to identify cultural differences in regard to levels of family cohesion and father involvement in personal pictorial representations of family structure in Mexican American families compared to non-Latino white Americans and to expand the knowledge base for family cohesion and father involvement, and the influence of acculturation on family cohesion. In this research paper, level of acculturation will be indicated by language used to complete the research instrument—Spanish vs. English. Furthermore, this study aims to find out if family cohesion and father involvement relate and have common sustaining cultural values, then future research might elucidate new ways to promote father involvement in Mexican Americans.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter will address a) background and cultural values of Mexican American families in relation to family cohesion, b) scientific research conducted on family cohesion and father involvement in Mexican Americans, c) a framework to explore cultural characteristics in regard to levels of family cohesion and father involvement in two different cultural groups, and d) how those cultural characteristics might be affected by the acculturation process. The purpose of this study is to compare Mexican American fathers with children 0-7 years old and non-Latino white American families with children 0-7 years old in terms of family cohesion and father involvement.

This literature review provides a rich array of details pertaining to Mexican American culture in relation to the cross-cultural comparison with non-Latino white American families in terms of family cohesion and father involvement given that these two populations differ—in addition to culture—in race, socioeconomic status (SES), language, political background, and immigration history. This literature review also addresses how these factors play a role within the Mexican American group alone. Therefore, in order not to overlook important affecting factors, I just emphasized their crucial highlights; however, I acknowledge that due to the specific focus of this cross-cultural comparison between Mexican Americans and non-Latino white Americans in terms of family cohesion and father involvement there might be facets that relate to Mexican Americans that were not covered. Those include but are not limited to cultural

stereotypes about fathers, experienced racism, type of romantic relationship in couples, size of family, and immigration status.

The first section of this literature review provides a definition and demographics on the population of interest, Mexican Americans who are frequently studied within their Latino/Hispanic ethnic umbrella. The second section of the review focuses on Latino/Hispanic and Mexican American cultural background and acculturation process. In the third section of this review, the author addresses the study's variables of family cohesion and father involvement and how culture for Mexican Americans and non-Latino white Americans may affect these variables. The final section, section four, includes the theoretical underpinnings to study family structure from a personal pictorial representation perspective. The Family Circles pictorial assessment tool which was utilized to measure father involvement and family cohesion in the present research sample is also described.

Latino/Hispanic & Mexican American

Latino/Hispanic. The word Latino is used to indicate geographical origin of Spanish-speaking or Portuguese-speaking natives of the Latin American continent (South America, Central America, and North America). The word Hispanic has been used since the 1970s by the U.S. Census Bureau to define “any person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race” (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). To be inclusive of all Spanish-speaking groups—Latin-American and Caribbean populations—researchers, politicians, and community leaders often refer to them as Latino/Hispanic.

Mexican American. Mexican American refers to a U.S. - born person of Mexican ancestry. This person can be first, second-generation and so on. In addition, this term also refers to Mexican immigrants who are naturalized American citizens.

Demographics of Latino/Hispanics in the U.S.

Several predictions have been made with regard to the Latino/Hispanic population growth. According to the Pew Hispanic Center it "will triple in size and will account for most of the nation's population growth from 2005 through 2050. Hispanics will make up 29% of the U.S. population in 2050" (Project 2.11.2008, 2010 para. 5). At the same time, the non-Hispanic white American population will increase more slowly than any other racial/ethnic group and it will represent 47% of the total population by 2050. (Pew Hispanic Center -Project 2.11. 2005, 2008, 2010, para. 7).

Overturf, Johnson, Kominski, Smith, and Tillman (2005) stated that young children under age six in immigrant families were the fastest-growing sector of the child population. Hernandez, Denton, and Macartney (2007) reported that approximately two-thirds of the Latino/Hispanic population is of Mexican descent and 40% of children with immigrant parents had Mexican family origins. These children account for 50% to 81% of children in immigrant families in twelve states including Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, and New Mexico, Alaska, Oklahoma, Texas, Illinois, Kansas, and Nebraska (as cited in Children Living in Stressful Environment – A Resource Kit – Vermont Department of Health, 2010 p.7).

Cultural Background of Latino/Hispanic Families

Families with "Latin American backgrounds often have been described as possessing a collectivistic orientation that emphasizes family members' responsibilities and obligations to one another" (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999, pp. 1030). Most of them to a lesser or greater degree identify with the following cultural values: *familismo*, *personalismo*, *simpatía*, *machismo*, and *marianismo*. Traditional definitions of these values are evolving as contemporaneous researchers

are able to elucidate the complexity of positive attitudes, expectations, and behaviors they embody and which past research did not acknowledge (Saracho & Spodek, 2007).

Familismo. It refers to the sense of duty and responsibility toward one's family (Updegraff, McHale, & Whiteman, 2005). It emphasizes family closeness/cohesion, interdependence, loyalty, and responsibility to care for one another (Behnke et al. 2008). To many Latinos/Hispanics, familismo means placing the family before one's personal needs and assuring that all family members are emotionally supported (Sarkisian, Gerena, & Gerstel, 2006, 2007). In fact, Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal and Perez-Stable (1987) asserted that family support is the most constant and fundamental dimension of this cultural value. Familismo is expressed in daily living by sharing the home with extended family, celebrating family gatherings, celebrating cultural traditions or caring for elder parents at home until they die.

Personalismo. It “refers to the preference of many traditional Latinos for a dignified approach when you associate with them, such as by using formal language and formal greetings that convey respect” (Alvidrez, Azocar, & Miranda in 1996 cited in Rubin & Babbie, 2007 p 61).

Simpatía. It refers to the worth given to cordiality as part of their behavioral communication style (harmonious interpersonal relationships that promote group integration and unity) in addition to respect expressed in formal language (respect for authority, adult or elder figures in the way one behaviorally and verbally addresses to them), (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Yu, Lucero-Liu, Gamble, Taylor, Christensen, & Modry-Mandell, 2008).

Machismo. From a traditional point of view, it refers to the power of authority and superiority attributed to the masculine figure in relation to the female figure, commonly expressed in any decision making process in regard to the family's physical, emotional/psychological, moral, and financial well-being. Likewise, the male figure has sole

responsibility to provide financial sustention and protection to the family against any external danger (Alvidrez et al. cited in Rubin & Babbie, 2007 p. 61, 1996; Taylor & Behnke, 2005). Alvidrez et al., 1996 stated that the father is recognized for such merits and excluded from childrearing chores (cited in Rubin & Babbie, 2007 p. 61). The most contemporary definition of machismo includes attributions of respect, honesty, loyalty, fairness, responsibility, trust worthiness (Coltrane et al., 2004), egalitarianism, warmth, caring, courage, stoicism, heroism, ferocity, and honorability (Mirandé 1991, 1997) in regard to his family's well-being and the way he behaves within his community (as cited in Saracho & Spodek, 2007).

Marianismo. It is a complementary value of machismo that in its traditional description consists on the attribution of purity, martyr, and indulgency to the female figure as mothers and wives. Women are considered of superior spirituality to self-sacrifice for the well-being of their children and husband (Alvidrez et al., 1996 as cited in Rubin & Babbie, 2007). It is important to emphasize that the author of this research project, by personal and work experience in the Mexican American community and other Latino/Hispanic communities, presumes Mexican American families experience these cultural values at higher intensity than any other Latino/Hispanic group.

Cultural Background of Mexican American Families in the U.S.

As Waters and Reed (2007) said, it is important to mention “an obvious historical benchmark to begin any discussion about Mexican Americans” (p 505) that “is the U.S.-Mexico war of 1846–1848, which was settled by treaty and resulted in the annexation of a vast territory and its people by the U.S. Both Mexican settlers and indigenous tribal societies were encompassed within the ‘new’ Southwest after 1848 (p 505). After this U.S. official inclusion of Mexican American families and their lands, it took just a generation for Mexican Americans to

become a disenfranchised, poverty-stricken minority. But despite their persistent disadvantaged SES and the passing of time, Mexican American families today retain most of their ethnic cultural values, especially their value of familismo (Garcia, 2002; Tienda & Mitchell, 2006).

Mexican Americans' familismo includes the practice of *el compadrazgo*; *compadres* are children's godparents who are comparable to co-parents. They are expected to substitute as parents—provide food, shelter, monetary, and emotional support—if parents become permanently unavailable. Anthropologists Susan Keefe and Amado Padilla (1987) examined the cultural value of *el compadrazgo* in Mexican Americans who belonged to three different generations living in the U.S. They found that 90% of their sample (independently to the generation they belonged to) reported to have *compadres*. From those, 50% had their *compadres* in the same town.

However, Coltrane et al. (2004), in a research study of 167 Mexican American families of low-to-moderate income, found that some Mexican American families had an extended family, kin, neighbor, and/or social network committed to the common good of their children while other Mexican American families did not.

These two salient studies show that Mexican American families tend to naturally build their social resources through their ethnic cultural values but that they are also limited by their SES in which they frequently don't fit pre-established social networks. Consequently, they build their own ethnic social network or become isolated. Also, since Mexican immigration is a chain phenomenon, it is possible that Mexican Americans of any generation may continuously feel a sense of cultural security as their ethnic cultural values are constantly refreshed by recent Mexican immigrants (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). Therefore, the level of cultural

differences and family implications in Mexican American families as a single ethnic group will always vary.

Acculturation of Mexican American Families to U.S. Mainstream Culture

Cross-cultural psychology classifies Mexican American culture as a collectivist culture along with two-thirds of the world's cultures. Such cultures have a tendency toward the family value of interdependence, co-existence, caring for their family group, and the social group they belong to (as explained in previous sections). The non-Latino white American culture in the United States is an individualistic culture along with one-third of the world's cultures prioritizing self-sufficiency, autonomy, and freedom to pursue self-interest (Arends-Togh & Van de Vijver, 2008). Since the Mexican American population is formed by U.S.-born families and Mexican-immigrant families, it is expected that acculturation will be a constant process in this ethnic group.

Martinez-Schallmoser, Tellen, and MacMullen (2003) defined acculturation as a cultural adjustment process whereby a person either adjusts or fails to adjust to customs, values, language, and ethnicity of the host country, while trying to maintain one's own cultural values. At present, over 78% of Mexican immigrants speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau 2004, & U.S. Census Bureau 2007). This information does not include U.S.-born Mexican American families who prefer to speak another language (most commonly Spanish) rather than English at home; however, a body of researchers found that later generations of Latinos/Hispanics are more likely than the first generation to be English speakers, to identify with American mainstream values, and to compare themselves to Americans in terms of SES (Guarnaccia, Pincay, Alegría, Shrout, Lewis-Fernández, & Canino, 2007; Portes & Rumbaut, 2005). Therefore, it is possible to infer that when Mexican Americans start to perceive their SES

as of significant family social character and identity — it serves as a point of self-comparison against, as well as a means of integration into the mainstream culture. Consequently, their values of *familismo*, *machismo*, and *marianismo* decrease. It is presumable that this happens when family members start to work extended hours to improve their SES and so they form social networks outside of their family, maintaining constant contact with U.S. mainstream culture. This social dynamic may reduce their emotional and social dependency on each other as a family and start to disregard their ability to recognize each other's needs within the family as a family value.

Several researchers who focused on acculturation found that families' adjustment to U.S. main stream culture was associated with less family cohesion, less support, and more family conflict (e.g. Brooks, Stuewig, & Lecroy, 1998 as cited in Arends-Tóth & Van, 2008). Studies on acculturation of Latino/Hispanic families demonstrated that the second-generation and younger immigrants adjust more to the mainstream culture and display weaker family norms than the first-generation and older immigrants do (e.g. Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, VanOss Marín, & Perez-Stable, 1987). On the other hand, Keefe & Padilla, (1987) reported that family relationships were strengthened during the process of acculturation. For example, Mexican Americans who were considered *more adapted* reported more contacts and support among family members. Finally, Fuligni, (1998) did not find significant relations (as cited in Arends-Togh & Van de Vijver, 2008).

Family Cohesion

According to Mintz (2007), during the nineteenth-century in the U.S., the stresses produced by work and financial marginality—frequency of premature death, irregular employment, disabling accidents, wages below the subsistence line, and the inadequacy of public

welfare mechanisms—on working-class families made the families' natural ties to the immediate family and wider kin network stronger as a result of the need for assistance and support.

Olson (2000) described cohesion as “the emotional bonding that family members have toward one another” (p.145). Families that share a higher degree of cohesion are distinguished by high family unity, interdependence among family members, and high social support (Gaines, Rios, & Buriel, 1997, as cited in Marsiglia, Parsai, & Kulis, 2009). Families who are not overly dependent on each other for emotional support are considered to have a healthy level of family cohesion (Minuchin, 1974).

Olson (2000) referred to four levels of family cohesion that range from *disengaged* (very low) to *separated* (low to moderate), to *connected* (moderate to high) to *enmeshed* (very high). They state that the middle range separate-connected is ideal for family formation and adaptability to its environment. Either extreme disengaged or enmeshed may cause problems in family functioning.

Family Cohesion in Latino/Hispanic Families Living in the U.S.

There is much research on family cohesion and familismo among Latino/Hispanic families that pertains to the developmental stage of adolescence. Familismo and family cohesion have been used interchangeably in studies with Latino/Hispanic families but both are separate constructs as respectively defined in previous sections of this literature review.

Resnick (2000) identified the values of familismo and respect in addition to family cohesion as family attributes that function as protective factors against stresses related to both adolescent development and acculturation. More specifically, other researchers have shown that family cohesion mediates relations between a) environmental stressors such as violence, neighborhood problems, and delinquency and b) adolescent outcomes/externalizing behaviors

like less aggressive behaviors and better conflict management skills, less suicidal ideation, problem drinking, and substance use (Deng, Lopez, Roosa, Ryu, Burrell, Tein, & Crowder, 2006; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2008; Updegraff et al., 2005).

There is no research on how cohesion may directly affect father involvement in Latino/Hispanic fathers. There is great need to focus on Latino/Hispanic families with children ages 0-7 years old because they are a growing population in a disadvantaged SES with likely detrimental effects on early childhood development including school success and risk for substance abuse (Barnett, 2008; Mistry, Vandewater, Huston, & McLoyd, 2002). Many researchers have provided “ample research evidence that poverty creates conditions that exacerbate marital and parent-child conflict and increase family instability (Carlson & McLanahan, 2002; Conger, Elder, Lorenz, Simons, & Whitbeck, 1994; McLoyd, 1990 as cited in Cowan et al., 2006 p.110). Immigrant families are more likely to experience financial hardships while being ineligible for public benefits such as food, health assistance or housing. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in its 2000 report, six in every ten children of a foreign-born parent live in crowded housing in the U.S. So if we consider Mexican American families poor SES and the collectivist strategies they use to tackle poverty based on their cultural value of familismo, we may infer that their physical proximity—due to crowded housing—helps them to express their family cohesion and more engaged parenting.

Behnke et al. (2008) compared relations between stress and parenting behaviors across 509 Mexican American and non-Latino white American parents in Southern California. He found that family cohesion strongly mediated most of the relations between stress and parenting behaviors. Also, he identified important ethnic and gender differences in which Mexican American fathers reported higher levels of family cohesion when faced with economic pressures.

In another study, Baker, Perilla, and Norris, (2001) stated that Mexican American fathers may see their families as a resource for help through economically stressful situations, which pull them close or at least were perceived as closer than for non-Latino white American.

Miranda, Estrada, and Firpo-Jimenez (2000) found that acculturation seems to have an effect on family cohesion. They suggested that low-acculturated families tend to be highly cohesive with a rigid hierarchical power structure held by the parents or adults in the family if no parents were available (as cited in Marsiglia et al., 2009). However, a family with a middle-range of family cohesion would most likely acculturate easier than families with lower or higher levels of family cohesion (Bray, Adams, Getz, & Baer, 2001).

Father Involvement

Since 1970, fathers living alone with their children have risen from 393,000 to 2.3 million in 2005. At that time, these fathers represented the 18% of single parents living with their children. Among those single-parent fathers, 42% were divorced; 38% have never married; 15% were separated; and 5% were widowed. There were 154,000 “stay-at-home” fathers in 2010. These were married fathers with children under 15 years old who remained out of the labor force for at least one year to care for the family while their wives worked outside the home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

From about the 1960's to 1990's, most researchers focused on fathers who mostly were employed and had a middle class status; researchers relied on mothers' reports to formulate information about fathers, considered fathers' roles at only one particular point in time, and did not consider cultural differences (Shears, Summer, Boller, & Barclay-McLaughlin, 2006).

Before the mid-1970s, fathers were thought of as irrelevant to the psychosocial development of their young children (Strug & Wilmore-Schaeffer, 2003). Nowadays, research

supports the notion that low father involvement is detrimental for children in a number of ways, including putting children at risk for disruptive behavior disorders, substance abuse, increased delinquency, low academic achievement, and persistent poverty for the mother and her children (Coltrane et al., 2004; Fagan et al., 2003; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 2010; Lundahl, Tollefson, Risser, & Lovejoy, 2008).

Although there are no specific activities or behaviors that define what competent and supportive parenting is for all men (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000), Lamb et al., (2010) encouraged researchers to be mindful of the following aspects of fathering: accessibility, engagement, and responsibility from the father's part. They defined accessibility as strictly fathers' presence and availability to the child, engagement as the quality of interactions between father and child, and responsibility as fathers' involvement in helping with the everyday and systematic things that need to be done for their children.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) found that fathering patterns may vary by race/ethnicity due to intersectional-socioeconomic reasons such as SES, formal education, and neighborhood environments. Bronfenbrenner also found that differential paternal involvement can be attributed to attitudes and values of cultural origin, given that parenting occurs in a social context. Coltrane et al. (2004) found that children of involved fathers are better adjusted than those with less-involved fathers. Also, children have less depression and better social relationships with their peers.

Mexican American Fathering in the U.S.

For Mexican-immigrant fathers, values such as familismo might lead them into more involved fathering (Parke et al., 2004; Mirande 1991) than what past research has shown.

According to Coltrane et al., (2004) in their study of 167 Mexican American families of low-to-

moderate-income, he found that Mexican Immigrant families give significance to the differentiation of gender roles in childrearing activities, probably motivated by their cultural values of *machismo* and *marianismo*. Lamb (2004) and Schofield, Coltrane, and Parke (2007) stated this gender role differentiation in Mexican American fathering has been slowly modified by the global economic exigencies of the 21st century within their country of origin; both husband and wife have to work outside the home to sustain their family expenses. In another study, Schofield et al., (2007) stated that despite Mexican immigrant fathers continue to be seen in popular culture as macho and less involved in family; his research showed that Mexican immigrant fathers exhibited higher levels of commitment to family and spent more time interacting with their children in nurturing and emotional ways compared to non-Latino white American fathers and more acculturated Mexican American fathers. They tended to interact in traditional masculine activities such as coaching soccer or playing games, routine activities like supervising/babysitting, transporting children, or attending school meetings.

Therefore, these findings on Latino/Hispanic families suggest that the qualifier *macho*—withdrawn, aggressive, and tyrannical rulers of the household—is more a stereotype than an accurate depiction of the Hispanic male (Mayo 1997 and Mirandé 1991). Daly (1995) and Taylor and Behnke (2005) found that Mexican American spouses presented egalitarian attitudes of power and rights as much as they also valued the differentiation of gender roles, such as the traditional father role of being the head of the household. Luzod and Arce (1979) found no significant sex-differences in three parenting scales applied to Mexican American spouses and noted that Mexican American fathers play a much more important role in parenting than it has been generally believed (as cited in Saracho & Spodek, 2007 p. 226).

Does Family Cohesion Relate to Father Involvement in Mexican American Families?

This literature review suggests that differences in parenting among diverse cultures and races/ethnicities is strongly influenced by their SES since minority populations tend to have lower salaries, have fewer employment opportunities, less access to education, and longer work days. For example, Mexican American fathers with low SES who are the sole financial sustainment of their families may enjoy of less available time and energy to participate in family activities that promote family cohesion and father involvement. Also, it is possible they might feel they do not need to contribute in any other way. In contrast, when fathers have a higher SES and enjoy more leisure time to share with their families, they may become more involved in the rearing of their children. Likewise, fathers who do not meet the family's financial needs commonly attempt to make up for their lack of sufficient financial support by also becoming more involved in the childrearing of their children and in performing housekeeping activities (Blau, Ferber, & Winkler, 1998).

Coltrane (2004) found similar results with the addition of finding that fathers' level of *familismo* or family loyalty and mothers' level of education increased father involvement and father house-work participation. It may be that the mother, due to her level of education, had more opportunities for employment and therefore the father would stay at home (as addressed on previous sections).

Behnke et al. (2008) found that family cohesion was most strongly related to positive parenting practices such as active listening, warmth, and responsiveness (modalities of nurturing acceptance) from both mothers and fathers.

Family Structure

Since Salvador Minuchin (1974) in his Structural Family Theory stated that all families have organized patterns in which family members interact —also called by him family structure or family configuration— it is presumable that family cohesion and father involvement will be shaped by the type of interactions family members engage in within the family group. Therefore, depending on the type of family interactions/organized patterns, Minuchin conceptualized the family structure as a continuum ranging from close cohesive to distant divided.

In addition to Minuchin's structural family theory, the author of this research paper considers Kantor's and Lehr's (1975) recognition of space in addition to time and energy as one of the major components impacting family functioning. Therefore, Minuchin's and Kehr's constructs have been selected as the basis for measuring personal pictorial representations of family cohesion and family father involvement in this study.

Family Circles - Spatial Pictorial Assessment Tool

The Family Circles instrument used within SFI research project and for the writing of this paper is an adaptation of the original Family Circles instrument developed by Cooper, Holman, and Braithwaite (1983). The Family Circles instrument was designed to assess multiple aspects of family representation.

The Family Circles instrument is a pictorial assessment tool that depicts the spatial distance among family members in family-of-origin and current nuclear-family as perceived by the respondent. It asks participants to pictorially represent their perceived personal relationships with family members in both their family-of-origin and current nuclear family. This assessment instrument measures eleven variables on each family circle (family-of-origin and current nuclear family). However, this research paper will focus only on the variables of (a) overall family

structure cohesive vs. divided to measure our first study variable of “family cohesion” and (b) fathers’ centrality in the family, and father-child distance closeness vs. distance to measure our second study variable “father involvement.”

Esquivel, Oades-Sese, and Littman Olitzky (2008) affirmed that it is important to consider that drawing assessments in general require that clinicians be keenly aware of nuances in drawings when working with children from diverse backgrounds: racially, culturally, and linguistically speaking. If clinicians fail to evaluate drawings in a culturally sensitive way, the result will be inaccurate interpretations and skewed research knowledge. Likewise, we should consider the same cultural influence on family self-reported pictorial representations of adults—mothers and fathers—of different racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds like our sample of Mexican Americans (immigrant-Mexican Americans and U.S.-born-Mexican Americans) and our comparison group of non-Latino white Americans.

Summary

This literature review discussed Latino/Hispanic and Mexican American cultural values, attitudes and/or behaviors that best define them. The most salient cultural values in relation to family cohesion and family father involvement were *familismo* and *machismo* (Alvidrez et al., 1996; Arends-Togh & Van de Vijver, 2008; Coltrane et al., 2004; Gaines, Rios, & Buriel, 1997; Garcia, 2002; Keefe & Amado-Padilla, 1987; Mirandé, 1991, 1997; Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987; Sarkisian, Gerena, & Gerstel, 2006, 2007; Taylor and Behnke 2005; Tienda & Mitchell 2006). These cultural values have been discussed with awareness that past research focused more on stereotypical-dull attributes rather than on the positives and uniqueness of Mexican American values (Saracho & Spodek, 2007).

There are several researchers who have focused on Latino/Hispanic and Mexican American family cohesion (e.g. Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, VanOss Marín, & Perez-Stable, 1987; Guarnaccia et al., 2007), and several of them used cohesion as an equivalent for *familismo*. Some of them studied the protective factors of family cohesion against stressors in adolescence and outcomes (e.g. Deng et al., 2006; Resnick, 2000; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2008; Updegraff et al., 2005). Behnke et al., (2008) found that family cohesion was associated with positive parenting practices such as active listening, warmth, and responsiveness (modalities of nurturing acceptance) from both mothers and fathers.

Consequently, throughout the literature search, the author of this research paper did not find any study that solely focused on how family cohesion may directly influence father involvement; however, there are several research studies that examined father involvement among minority populations—including Mexican Americans—in comparison with non-Latino white Americans but only a few of them explained cultural influences.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that in order to make a cross-cultural comparison on father involvement one should consider structural factors —such as available family social networks, residential or non-residential dads, family size, educational level, immigration history, race, segregation/isolation, etc.—which affect the reality of the population studied. Most studies on family father involvement have measured this variable in a present time assessing their current nuclear-family relationship through fathers' self-reported level of involvement with their children or relying on partner reports only.

The author of this literature review could not find a single study that measured either family cohesion or father involvement using personal pictorial representations of family-of-origin and current nuclear-family simultaneously. Likewise, this author could not find any study

that researched either a) how family cohesion may affect father involvement in Mexican American families or b) if family cohesion is necessary for father involvement to take place in Mexican American families. The same type of study focus is lacking for non-Latino white American families who are the comparison group in this research study. In addition, the author of this research paper could not find scientific literature on how family cohesion may relate to father involvement in fathers of children 0 - 7 years old in any cultural group.

This literature review provides evidence that Mexican American families present high levels of family cohesion (Benhke et al., 2008; Coltrane et al., 2004; Marsiglia et al., 2009; Miranda, Estrada, & Firpo-Jimenez, 2000; Schofield et al., 2007). Also, that Mexican American fathers are found to achieve higher father involvement than what past researchers have reported (Saracho & Spodek, 2007). This is encouraging evidence to examine possible differences and peculiarities in the level of father involvement and family cohesion in pictorial representations of family-of-origin and current nuclear-family between Mexican Americans and non-Latino white Americans.

Moreover, this literature review provides a good foundation to explore how much the process of constant acculturation in Mexican Americans—compounded by U.S.-born Mexican-descendants and recent Mexican immigrants, both with singular intersectional qualifiers—affects their level of family cohesion and father involvement in their current nuclear-family and family-of-origin.

To examine the present study's variables of family cohesion and father involvement, this author chose the Structural Family Theory from Salvador Minuchin because he conceptualized family structure in a continuum ranging from close (cohesive) to distant (divided). Also, this author selected Kantor's and Lehr's construct of spatial distance between family members as

indicators of family cohesion because the assessment instrument in this study—The Family Circles—is a personal pictorial representation of perceived family cohesion and father involvement in family-of-origin and current nuclear-family.

This literature review provides a framework for this author's investigation into identifying cultural differences in regard to levels of family cohesion and father involvement in personal pictorial representations of family structure in Mexican American families compared to non-Latino white American families. Likewise, it provides a framework to understand how those cultural differences may vary according to participants' level of acculturation among Mexican Americans. Last, it provides a framework to study if there is a positive relation between family cohesion and father involvement in any of the ethnic groups.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this quantitative study is to compare Mexican American families with non-Latino white families of low to medium socioeconomic level with young children (1-7 years old) in Northern California, U.S. to determine possible relationships between culture, family cohesion, and father involvement in pictorial representations of family-of-origin and current nuclear family made by both parents. The primary two research questions addressed the role of culture in relation to family cohesion and father involvement in both racial/ethnic groups. They also addressed how acculturation in Mexican Americans influences their family cohesion and father involvement. Specific research questions follow below:

1.-Does the level of family cohesion (overall cohesive family structure) and father involvement (father's centrality in the family and father-child closeness) in pictorial representations of family vary between Mexican American and non-Latino white participants?
Hypothesis 1) Mexican American participants will depict equal (A) family cohesion and equal (B) father involvement in their family-of-origin as non-Latino white participants.

Hypothesis 2) Mexican American participants will depict greater (A) family cohesion but equal levels of (B) father involvement in their current nuclear family compared to non-Latino white participants.

2.-Within the group of Mexican American participants, does the level of family cohesion (overall cohesive family structure) and father involvement (father's centrality in the family and father-child closeness) in pictorial representations of family vary according to participants' level

of acculturation as indicated by usage of family's native language "Spanish" when responding to the Family Circles instrument?

Hypothesis 3) Mexican American participants who showed greater acculturation by responding to the Family Circles instrument in English will depict lower levels of (A) family cohesion and lower (B) father involvement in their family-of-origin.

Hypothesis 4) Among Mexican Americans who showed lower acculturation by responding to the Family Circles instrument in Spanish will depict greater (A) family cohesiveness and greater (B) father involvement in their current nuclear family.

Research Design

The current research study is a derived sub-set of the SFI research project's total sample which is a randomized clinical trial comparing two variations of a preventive intervention focused on the importance of fathers to their children's development and well-being. A sample of predominantly low-income families (two thirds Mexican American and one third non-Latino white American) were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: a 16-week intervention group for fathers, a 16-week intervention group for couples or a low-dose comparison condition in which both parents attended one 3-hour group session.

The SFI research project and staff were located within Family Resource Centers in four California counties (San Luis Obispo, Santa Cruz, Tulare, and Yuba) which are predominantly Mexican American communities, mostly agricultural, and low-income. At each site, some participants were recruited by project staff through direct referrals from within the Family Resource Centers, while most participants were recruited "from other county service agencies, talks at community organizational meetings, ads in the local media, local family fun days, and

information tables placed strategically at sports events, malls and other community public events where fathers were in attendance” (Cowan et al., 2009, p. 666).

Sample

The current sample (as mentioned before) is a subset of the SFI project’s complete sample. The present sample includes 86 mothers and 99 fathers; 75 of the mothers and fathers were in a couple relationship with one another, sharing at least one child together. The sample was 45.6% non-Latino white and 54.4% Mexican American. At the first SFI assessment (i.e., baseline), the couple status of the sample was as follows: 58.2% married; 2.7% separated; 1.8% divorced; 28.2% partners, not married; 8.2% neither partners nor married; .9% other.

The mothers’ mean age was 32 (SD = 7.4; range = 17-54); the fathers’ mean age was 34 (SD = 8.4; range = 18-56). Frequencies for the parents’ highest level of education were:

Table 1

Educational Attainment

	Mexican American		Non-Latino White American	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
Level 0 to some High School	54%	71.4%	9.3%	10%
High School diploma or GED diploma	16%	14.2%	23.3%	32.5%
Some College to Technical degree	26%	14.2%	53.5%	40%
Bachelor degree to Graduate School	4%	0%	13.9%	17.5%

For the Mexican American group, the median combined family income was \$21,200 (mean = \$29,725, SD = 2.26; range = \$0 – 112,500). For the non-Latino white American group, the median combined family income was \$45,500 (mean = \$53,016, SD = 3.94; range = \$4064 – 132,500).

Data Collection

The project researchers sought to enlist parents who were expecting a child or had a shared biological child who was one to seven years old. Case managers administered a short screening interview which assessed if parents met four additional criteria: (a) both partners agreed to participate; (b) regardless of whether they were married, cohabitating or living separately, the partners were biological parents of their youngest child and raising the child together; (c) neither the mother nor the father struggled with a mental illness or drug or alcohol abuse problem that thwarted their daily functioning at work or caring for their child(ren); (d) no current open cases with Child Protective Services, including both child and spousal cases and no instance of spousal violence or child abuse within the last year. The purpose of this last criterion was designed to bar participants who may amplify the risks for child abuse or neglect should they increase participation in daily family life.

Screening interviews were administered to 550 couples; 496 (90.2%) of these couples met the criteria for eligibility. Of these eligible couples, 371 completed the initial interview, agreed to accept random assignment to one of the three conditions, and completed the baseline assessments. The single meetings of the low-dose comparison group and the 16-week fathers' and couples' groups began after baseline assessments were finished. The fathers' and couples' groups met for 2 hours each week for 16 weeks and involved both a fixed curriculum of exercises, discussions, and short presentations and an unrestricted time in which participants

discussed with one another real-life issues and concerns that they faced. The curriculum was adapted by Marsha Kline Pruett and Rachel Ebling from an earlier curriculum developed by Phil and Carolyn Cowan (Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Cowan, Cowan, & Heming, 2005).

All participants completed questionnaires at multiple SFI assessments that covered demographic questions about their age, ethnicity/race, couple status, highest level of education, income, etc.

The Family Circles instrument was administered during a group meeting that focused on intergenerational patterns of parenting/fathering. Administering the Family Circles instrument was optional—it was left to the discretion of the group leaders whether or not to use the instrument as a participatory exercise related to the group discussion. This method of obtaining participants most closely resembles that of convenience sampling.

Measures

The Family Circles instrument was adapted from the Family Cohesion Index—an instrument developed by Cooper, Holman, and Braithwaite (1983) for a study that explored the connection between children’s self-esteem and their perception of family cohesion. The adapted Family Circles instrument for this study (Appendix A) consists of two pictorial representations of family structure: first, participants complete a pictorial representation of their family-of-origin (using circles of different sizes), and second, they do the same for their current nuclear family. Instructions explain that: “In any family, there may be some family members who are especially close to one another while other family members are more distant or separate from each other. The circles represent the members of the family group and the space among the circles represents the closeness of the relationships among them; the same that determines the type of family configuration in regard to family cohesion and father involvement.

Instrument Instructions. The directions for the first drawing ask participants to draw a picture that they believe to be most similar to their family growing up and which includes all family members —themselves as a child, their parents, their siblings, and any extended family members if considered part of the family. Likewise, the directions for the second drawing ask participants to draw a picture that is the most similar to their current family and which includes all family members—themselves (now a parent), their partners, and their child/children. Both sets of directions explain that a circle should be added for each person represented in their family. Also, participants are asked to write each person’s name either inside or beside the designated circle.

Confidential Information. The families’ responses to this instrument are considered and safeguarded as confidential information. They have been assigned identification numbers instead of family names. There is a secured database that links family names with identification numbers. There is a separate list that includes identification numbers and responses. Both, family names with identifications numbers and identification numbers with Family Circles responses are secured separately by the three lock safety measure.

Data Analysis

Family Cohesion. Several variables related to family structure were derived using the Family Circles instrument, though not all were utilized in the present study. For the present study, family cohesiveness was measured by the overall family structure: cohesive (in which all family members were drawn as close or touching) versus non-cohesive (in which family members were drawn as divided in one of several ways).

Father Involvement. Two coded variables were used as a proxy for father involvement: (1) the centrality of the father in the family circle, and (2) the distance between the father and

child in the family circle. The centrality of the father was coded as: 1 = *Center*; 2 = *Inside the Circle, but neither in the center nor periphery*; 3 = *On/Near Periphery*; 4 = *Outside or Not Present*. The distance between father and child (i.e., the respondent for family-of-origin depictions and the SFI target child for current-family depictions) was determined by the shortest distance between their two individual circles, which was coded as: 1 = *Overlapping*; 2 = *Touching*; 3 = *Less than 2 cm apart*; 4 = *2-5 cm apart*; 5 = *Greater than 5 cm apart*. Indeterminable codes were treated as missing data. A set of coding guidelines was developed to ensure the reliability of the data coding.

The correlations between these two variables were as follows:

Table 2

Family Cohesion and Father Involvement Correlation

	Mothers	Fathers
Family-of-Origin	$r = .51^{***}$	$r = .56^{***}$
Current Nuclear Family	$r = .36^{**}$	$r = .55^{***}$

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Given these positive and significant correlations, a composite father involvement score was created by summing the z-scores for the two indicators. This composite score was used in all analyses. Using Pearson's chi-square test, distributions between family cohesion (cohesive versus non-cohesive) and father involvement (low versus high) were examined for independence. Distributions between these two variables were significantly different for depictions of the

current nuclear family (*mothers*; $\chi^2 = 4.97$; $p < .05$; *fathers*; $\chi^2 = 4.12$; $p < .05$), but not for depictions of family-of-origin.

Acculturation. The utilization of language (Spanish vs. English) that each Mexican American participant made for completing the Family Circles instrument was used as a proxy for level of acculturation. It is assumable that immigrants and immigrant descendants who are able to retain their native language are more likely also to be able to retain cultural practices that express their native cultural values such as the Mexican American cultural value of *familismo* — sharing a collective responsibility for the care of their children among nuclear and extended family members; caring for their elder parents at home until their death, and celebrating family gatherings inclusive of cultural traditions, to mention some of its characteristics— The cultural value of *familismo* reflects a communal-collective living. Within this communal-collective way of living, Mexican American family members accept a healthy and important codependent role within the nuclear family that in consequence, fosters family cohesion.

As is evident in the following Language frequencies chart of Mexican American participants, Spanish language was used more frequently, though English language was used by some.

Table 3

Language Used to Respond to Family Circles Instrument

	Spanish	English
Mexican American Mothers	25	15
Mexican American Fathers	30	17

To determine possible relationships between a) family cohesion and father involvement and b) culture in two different cultural groups Mexican American and Non-Latino white of low to medium socioeconomic level with young children (1-7 years old) in Northern California, their pictorial representations of family-of-origin and current nuclear family made by both parents (father and mother) were analyzed, considering within “culture” factors of acculturation and socioeconomic status (SES) (i.e. educational attainment and family income).

The methodology used in this study significantly influences the measurement of the possible relationships between the variables of family cohesion and father involvement in both cultural groups. As well as the measurement of the level of acculturation in the Mexican American subsample. This methodology also influences the data collected through the Family Circles instrument within the subgroup of Mexican American families given that this subgroup was diverse in the Language used to complete such instrument (Spanish or English). The following chapter will illustrate in detail these dynamics in all cultural groups and subgroups.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

The primary two research questions asked addressed the role of culture in relation to family cohesion and father involvement in both racial/ethnic groups and how acculturation in Mexican Americans influences their family cohesion and father involvement.

1.-Does the level of family cohesion (overall cohesive family structure) and father involvement (father's centrality in the family and father-child closeness) in pictorial representations of family vary between Mexican American and non-Latino white participants?

2.-Within the group of Mexican American participants, does the level of family cohesion (overall cohesive family structure) and father involvement (father's centrality in the family and father-child closeness) in pictorial representations of family vary according to participants' level of acculturation as indicated by usage of family's native language "Spanish vs. English" when responding to the Family Circles instrument?

Research question 1 will address hypotheses 1 and 2; research question 2 will address hypotheses 3 and 4.

Mexican American and non-Latino white Participants

Hypothesis 1) Mexican American participants will depict (A) equal family cohesion and (B) equal father involvement in their family-of-origin as non-Latino white participants.

(A) Based on Pearson's chi-square test, the distributions of cohesive versus non-cohesive families were equivalent in Mexican American and non-Latino white mothers' depictions of their family-of-origin. However, the culture-specific distributions of cohesive versus non-cohesive families were significantly different for fathers; $\chi^2(1, N=86) = 6.76; p < .01$. As is evident in

Table (4), although a greater number of fathers in both cultural groups depicted non-cohesive than cohesive families-of-origin, a greater proportion of Mexican-American fathers (16 out of 47, or 34%) depicted cohesive families than non-Latino white fathers (4 out of 39, or 10%). Thus Hypothesis 1A was confirmed for mothers, but not for fathers.

Table 4

Family Structure in the Family-of-Origin

	Cohesive	Non-Cohesive	
Mexican American Fathers' Depictions	16	31	47
Non-Latino White Fathers' Depictions	4	35	39
	20	66	86

(B) First, using independent-samples *t*-tests, differences were examined between Mexican American and non-Latino white participants in depicted levels of father involvement in the family-of-origin. There were no significant group differences according to either mothers or fathers. Thus, Hypothesis 1B was supported using this analytic approach.

Second, Hypothesis 1B was re-tested using ANCOVA, in which the effects of socioeconomic status (i.e., parents' education level and family income) were controlled. Once again, there were no significant group differences according to either mothers or fathers. Thus, even when effects of SES were controlled, Hypothesis 1B was supported.

Hypothesis 2) Mexican American participants will depict (A) greater family cohesion but (B) equal levels of father involvement in their current nuclear family compared to non-Latino white participants. (A) Based on Pearson's chi-square test, the distributions of cohesive versus non-cohesive families were equivalent in Mexican American and non-Latino white mothers' depictions of their current nuclear families. However, the culture-specific distributions of cohesive versus non-cohesive families were significantly different for fathers; $\chi^2(1, N=84) = 7.72; p < .01$. As shown in Table (5) greater proportion of Mexican-American fathers (32 out of 45, or 71%) depicted cohesive current nuclear families, whereas a greater proportion of non-Latino white fathers (23 out of 39, or 59%) depicted non-cohesive current nuclear families. This is a significant difference between Mexican American fathers and non-Latino white fathers with a family cohesion of 71% vs. 41% respectively. Thus Hypothesis 2A was confirmed for fathers, but not for mothers.

Table 5

Family Structure in the Current Nuclear Family

	Cohesive	Non-Cohesive	
Mexican American Fathers' Depictions	32	13	45
Non-Latino White Fathers' Depictions	16	23	39
	48	36	84

(B) First, using independent-samples *t*-tests, differences were examined between Mexican American and non-Latino white participants in depicted levels of father involvement in the current nuclear family. A significant difference between the two cultural groups was found in mothers' ($t = -3.37; p = .001$) and fathers' ($t = -2.59; p = .001$) depictions. Mexican Americans (mothers: mean = .50, SD = 1.6; fathers: mean = .59, SD = 1.8) depicted higher levels of father involvement in the current nuclear family than did non-Latino whites (mothers: mean = -.58, SD = 1.2; fathers: mean = -.38, SD = 1.5). Thus, Hypothesis 2B was not supported using this analytic approach.

Second, Hypothesis 2B was re-tested using ANCOVA, in which the effects of SES (i.e., parents' education level and family income) were controlled. With SES taken into account, there remained a significant group difference according to mothers ($F(1,70) = 7.55; p < .01$), but there was no significant group difference according to fathers. In the ANCOVA using mothers' data, neither mother's education level nor family income significantly predicted level of father involvement. But in the ANCOVA using fathers' data, fathers' education level (but not family income) was a significant predictor of level of father involvement ($F(1,73) = 4.16; p < .05$). With these effects of fathers' education level controlled, the previously detected difference between the cultural groups disappeared. Thus, using the second analytic approach, Hypothesis 2B was supported for fathers, but not for mothers.

Mexican American Participants

Hypothesis 3) Mexican American participants with greater acculturation (as indicated by the usage of "English" language when responding to the Family Circles will depict (A) less family cohesion, and (B) lower father involvement in their family-of-origin.

(A) Based on Pearson's chi-square test, the distributions of cohesive versus non-cohesive

families were equivalent in English and Spanish depictions of family-of-origin among Mexican Americans. Thus, Hypotheses 3A was not supported, with language used as a sole indicator of acculturation.

(B) Using independent samples *t*-tests, differences were examined between English and Spanish depictions of father involvement (in the family-of-origin) among Mexican Americans. The language group difference was not significant according to mothers, but it was approaching significance according to fathers ($t = -.19; p < .07$). Specifically, Mexican American fathers who used English (mean = .57, SD = 1.7) depicted higher levels of father involvement in the family-of-origin than did Mexican American fathers who used Spanish (mean = -.26, SD = 1.2). Thus, Hypothesis 3B was not supported.

Hypothesis 4) Mexican Americans with lower acculturation (as indicated by usage of “Spanish” language when responding to the Family Circles instrument) will depict (A) greater family cohesion in their current nuclear family and (B) greater father involvement in their current nuclear family. (A) Based on Pearson’s chi-square test, the distributions of cohesive versus non-cohesive families were equivalent in English and Spanish depictions of current nuclear family among Mexican Americans. Thus, Hypotheses 4A was not supported, with language use as a sole indicator of acculturation.

(B) Using independent samples *t*-tests, differences were examined between English and Spanish depictions of father involvement (in the current nuclear family) among Mexican Americans. The language group difference was not significant according to mothers, but it was significant according to fathers ($t = 2.40; p < .05$). Specifically, Mexican American fathers who used Spanish (mean = 1.03, SD = 1.8) depicted higher levels of father involvement in the current

nuclear family than did Mexican American fathers who used English (mean = $-.30$, SD = 1.6). Thus, Hypothesis 3B was supported.

Within this cultural comparison between Mexican American parents and non-Latino white parents (mothers and fathers) in terms of family cohesion and father involvement in two points in time, family-of-origin and current nuclear family; the most significant findings were:

1. Mexican American parents tended to surpass the level of family cohesion (i.e. 1A-fathers) or family father involvement that non-Latino-white parents portrayed in their pictorial representations (i.e. 2B-fathers and mothers). When Mexican American parents did not surpass the non-Latino-white parents' levels of family cohesion (i.e. 2A-mothers) or father involvement (i.e. 2B-fathers), they equaled their level. There were observed patterns of Mexican American fathers leading with higher perceived levels of family cohesion or father involvement over Mexican American mothers (i.e. 1A, 2A, 3B, and 4B).

2. When considering "acculturation" and measuring it with the indicator of "language – Spanish vs. English," Mexican American parents who responded the research instrument in English displayed at least equal levels of family cohesion and father involvement than the ones who responded in Spanish (3A-mothers and fathers, 3B-mothers and 3B-fathers) or higher. Therefore, it's a significant finding that the use of language Spanish vs. English proved no significant difference in the level of family cohesion and father involvement, in their family-of-origin or current nuclear family, Mexican American parents have. In this acculturation/Language comparison among Mexican American parents, again, fathers showed a pattern of higher levels of perceived family cohesion and father involvement than Mexican American mothers (i.e. 3B and 4B).

The findings of this study show that in depictions of family-of-origin and current nuclear family, Mexican American parents demonstrated more family cohesion and more father involvement than the comparison group. These findings provide a valuable illustration of the Mexican American family's dynamics in regard to family cohesion and father involvement. This phenomenon, along with an exploration of how culture influences family cohesion and father involvement in Mexican American families, will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This chapter presents how this quantitative study's findings compared with the current literature on family cohesion and father involvement in Mexican Americans. The strengths and limitations inherent in the study and implications for social work practice and future research are also discussed.

The purpose of this study was to compare Mexican American families with non-Latino white families of low to medium socioeconomic level with young children (1-7 years old) in Northern California, U.S. to determine possible relationships between culture, family cohesion, and father involvement in personal pictorial representations of family-of-origin and current nuclear family made by both parents (mother and father individually). In this study, participants' pictorial representations were analyzed based on two research questions that addressed the role of culture in relation to family cohesion and father involvement in both racial/ethnic groups and subsequently how acculturation in Mexican Americans influences their family cohesion and father involvement.

Current Findings and Previous Literature

A general phenomena noted across all four hypotheses in this research study is a gender pattern perception for family cohesion and father involvement between Mexican American mothers and fathers. In synthesis, results for research Question One, hypothesis 1 and 2 showed that Mexican Americans obtained equal or higher levels of family cohesion than non-Latino white Americans in both families (higher level - 71% vs. 41% in current nuclear family). Also,

Mexican Americans obtained equal or higher levels of father involvement than non-Latino white participants (using T-tests). All predictions made for family cohesion (expecting equal levels) for Mexican Americans in comparison to non-Latino-white Americans were confirmed or exceeded in both family-of-origin and current nuclear family with the exception of mothers in current nuclear family who did not meet the prediction of higher levels of family cohesion and who only obtained equal levels to non-Latino-white Americans.

From an egalitarian gender role perspective in Mexican Americans—identified by Daly (1995) and Taylor and Behnke (2005) (as cited in Saracho & Spodek, 2007 p. 226)—gender differences in family cohesion and father involvement could be observed as a result of an economic and political globalization that increases living costs and reduces job opportunities. Therefore, these factors could be associated to a reduced household financial support provided by Mexican American males/fathers that is insufficient to sustain their family. Consequently, women/mothers took an active participation in the work force. Therefore, it can be deduced that in this way, Mexican American fathers were introduced to household chores and childrearing activities; thus a shift in parental gender roles took place. This phenomenon, in different ways, has reached most cultural groups around the globe, including the neighboring countries of The United States and Mexico.

Looking at these findings in terms of cultural differences, one could infer that several of the Mexican American cultural values provide Mexican Americans with emotional and behavioral tools which create relational ties that support family cohesion. For example: the value of *familismo* and *machismo* (often misunderstood as the tyrannous male in the house but better understood as the head of the household/family, provider and protector), are based in the family unity, loyalty, and social harmony within the family group (Saracho & Spodek, 2007).

Machismo (as described above) may frequently produce a nurturing effect on family cohesion. In this context, these significant findings showed Mexican American fathers had a pattern of perceived higher levels of family cohesion and/or father involvement compared to Mexican American mothers (i.e. hypotheses 1A, 2A, 3B, and 4B). Unfortunately, there are no articles within this study's literature review that explain those gender differences. However, in the same cultural context (Mexican cultural values and derived gender roles), one could infer fathers may feel involved with their family (perceive greater family cohesion and father involvement) if they feel successful in their role of head of family, family provider, and family protector. In contrast, while Mexican American mothers expect the same cultural role in their partners they may in addition expect greater collaboration in household chores and direct childrearing activities to consider major family cohesion. Barnett & Baruch, 1987 and Pleck, 1983 suggest that fathers' involvement is influenced not only by their own gender role attitudes, but gender role attitudes of their wives/partners as well.

It is interesting to note that both Mexican American and non-Latino white American mothers shared the same gender differences in their levels of family cohesion and father involvement perceptions compared to fathers,' in both family-of-origin and current nuclear family. Despite this pattern, the consistency of the overall Mexican Americans' family cohesion (mothers and fathers) results was higher than the overall non-Latino white American mothers and fathers results.

In regard to father involvement in both cultural groups in their current nuclear families, it was unexpected that Mexican Americans had a higher level than non-Latino white Americans. Therefore, results were retested using ANCOVA analysis (which controlled parents' level of

education); Mexican American fathers' results lost their significance. As a consequence, fathers' level of education became an important predictor for fathers' perceptions of father involvement.

Since Mexican Americans had a lower level of education than non-Latino white Americans, we could infer that "the lower level of education the higher the level of father involvement" which is a paradox to the anecdotic relation of "the higher the level of education parents achieve a) the more access to scientific research that supports father involvement or b) a higher family income possibly associated to less need for extra hours of work implies more leisure time with family that could promote more father involvement." Unfortunately, both presumptions are dependent on individual families' needs and preferences likely influenced by cultural factors. This writer could not find literature that directly addressed this paradoxical phenomenon. Therefore further analysis of these results would be required to confirm the presumed relationship.

In the context of father involvement and Mexican American cultural values as variables in this study, Saracho's approach of the nuances in '*machismo*' definitions come very handy. She stated that it forms out of family nurturing qualities fathers or men generally possess. On the other hand, we as researchers have to be aware of cultural stereotypes (colloquial or uninformed depictions) and be vigilant these do not obscure this specific Mexican value with the erroneous characteristics such as self-centered, authoritarian and non-family driven father or male. Cultural stereotypes portrayed in media, literature, and folkloric cultures are indirect ideological forces that may affect research objectivity. Researchers need to be exceptionally aware that culture is a difficult concept to study. Especially when using specific cultural values as a comparison variable in different ethnic/racial/cultural groups. If researchers are not culturally immersed in the cultural groups they study, it is very difficult that the data collected and its interpretation be

reliable, the trueness of cultural values and behaviors that represent them can be omitted due to lack of competent cultural knowledge. However, traditional definitions of these values in the scientific research realm are evolving as culturally competent contemporaneous researchers are able to elucidate the complexity of positive attitudes, expectations, and behaviors Mexican cultural values like ‘machismo’ embody—and which past research did not acknowledge (Saracho & Spodek, 2007).

A factor that also affects family cohesion and father involvement in Mexican Americans is their level of acculturation to the main stream culture in the U.S.; this research study measured it by considering the usage of family’s native language ‘Spanish’ when responding to the Family Circles instrument. A growing number of researchers such as Brooks, Stuewig, and Lecroy, (1998) (cited in Arends-Tóth & Van 2008) maintain that acculturation plays a role in family cohesion among Mexican Americans. They stated that the more acculturated Mexican American families are, the less they experience family cohesion (e.g. Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, VanOss Marín, & Perez-Stable, 1987).

Results for research Question 2 hypothesis 3 and 4 showed that the level of family cohesion in family-of-origin and current nuclear family between the expected to be “more acculturated” Mexican Americans (fathers and mothers) and the less acculturated ones was equal or higher; which is a contradiction to the current literature review on acculturation effects. Also, fathers who responded to the assessment instrument in English (understood as more acculturated) depicted equal or higher levels of father involvement in their family-of-origin but not in their current nuclear family than less acculturated fathers. All of these results contradict current literature review on acculturation effects. However, since the sole indicator of acculturation that this study used was “language used in responding to the assessment instrument” Spanish vs.

English, this writer acknowledges there is no substantial evidence of the level of acculturation of these respondents (limitation of this study that will be addressed in this research's limitations section). There could be different circumstances on why these results in family-of-origin's structure reflect an equal level of family cohesion; a frequent circumstance is that these respondents may be first generation American citizens and children of immigrant parents who Mexican cultural values were fresher and more solid than further future generations.

“acculturation levels are lowest for 1st-generation Mexican Americans and that they increase with each subsequent generation. The concept of considerable heterogeneity within the Mexican American population was supported, and the scale's reliability and validity were established.” (Cuellar, Harris, & Jasso, 1980).

It's important to note that first generation immigrants were affected by socio-economic challenges that forced immigrant families to shield together away from external dangers, therefore ensuring resiliency. Another option is that language alone is an inefficient indicator of acculturation and culture can transcend written language; there are many practical issues which would make anyone choose one language over another for the completion of a written document.

Significance of the Study in the Field of Social Work

The significance of this study to the Social Work field is its focus on a highly relevant though mostly ignored issue: a cross- cultural comparison of the largest U.S. minority population, 'Mexican-Americans,' with the U.S. main stream population, 'non-Latino white Americans,' and the studied variables of 'family cohesion and father involvement.'

As described in the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), “the primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and

empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (p. 1). That being said, studying the variables that affect Mexican American families’ levels of family cohesion and father involvement offers the opportunity to design and implement services that help preserve this population’s protective cultural values. Mexican Americans, as the largest minority in U.S. are paradoxically misrepresented in the U.S. economy and hold the lowest S.E.S. of all U.S. minorities after Native Americans.

Along with that, all social workers must be sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity; they must strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice. Therefore, this cross-cultural study allows new and season social workers to become more familiar with Mexican Americans’ cultural background. Latino/Hispanics, including Mexican Americans in the U.S. are an ethnic group that presents similarities and differences attributable to their country of origin and level of acculturation to U.S. As previously explained, the cultural group of Mexican American parents was divided in two subgroups on the basis of the language used to complete the assessment instrument ‘Spanish vs. English’; this action in the methodology indirectly reveals the need to identify their English proficiency, native language, and optimally their level of acculturation. The understanding of social and cultural factors of Mexican Americans is crucial for the accuracy in the implementation of scientific research that aims to improve social services including the work of social workers.

Service provision should always be based on current culturally sensitive research that has considered the biopsychosocial human areas in which the social work field bases its interventions. If scientific research is conducted this way, then the social work field and its professionals will be better equipped to serve not only Mexican Americans also non-Latino white Americans.

Strengths of the Study

Research Question One for this study obtained a 50% to 75% confirmation that the levels of family cohesion and father involvement vary between the two compared cultural groups, with Mexican American families leading these percentages. Research Question Two had a 25% confirmation that the level of acculturation influences the levels of family cohesion and father involvement in Mexican American families (this percentage will be addressed in the research's limitations section in reference to the acculturation indicator used). Therefore, the results obtained support the growing body of research that indicates high levels of family cohesion and rising levels of father involvement in Mexican American families.

The study population was representative of low to medium socioeconomic status (SES), Mexican American parents with children 1-7 years old and low to medium SES, non-Latino white American parents with children 1-7 years old (in among other inclusion and exclusion criteria) who lived in predominantly rural counties of Northern California, same that have a constant influx of Mexican immigrants and Mexican seasonal farm workers. Since this study includes a sample of 101 Mexican American participants (mothers and fathers individually) who are 54.4% of the total cross-cultural sample in this study and who represent well the SES dynamics of the majority of Mexican Americans in the U.S., it is feasible that these results can be generalized to other Mexican American populations in the U.S. which share the same selection criteria.

In regard to reliability, the family circles is an assessment instrument that measures the research subjects' perceptions of family cohesion and father involvement at a specific time in life. Despite the fact that research subjects' general perception of family cohesion and father involvement in their family-of-origin and current nuclear family can change from one point in

time to another, this research project's reliability is sustainable because the measurement of variables can be replicated multiple times in multiple controlled samples.

In regard to the validity of this study, I can say it simultaneously depends on the validity of our assessment instrument. Thus we can argue that a) the family circles instrument addresses the perception of family cohesion and father involvement of both parents (mother and father individually). This helps to provide a more real perception of the specific family's reality in regard to family cohesion and father involvement. b) The family circles instrument also gives the opportunity to measure an additional cultural generation "family-of-origin" that helps to broaden our cross-cultural analysis, expanding in a way our original sample or providing an extra layer of study. Unfortunately, there is only one other graduate level project outside and within the SFI research study that has used the family circles assessment instrument with a one-time application only. Therefore, subsequent applications after the current one within one research period will contribute to the validation of this assessment instrument.

Limitations of the Study

Results from Research questions One and Two showed a gender based pattern of response in both Mexican American and non-Latino white American mothers in terms of family cohesion and father involvement in comparison to fathers of both cultural groups. This research study cannot explain this gender based pattern since it was designed to study cultural influences.

When measuring family cohesion and father involvement in relation to level of acculturation in Mexican American participants, (due to lack of sustaining demographic information) this study did not consider U.S. born generation extent —level of acculturation increases as U.S. born generations advance.

In addition, Language use alone is not a reliable indicator of acculturation. This research study lacked demographic information that could better estimate level of acculturation. No formal acculturating rating scale for Mexican Americans was used.

Finally, the current study does not take into consideration other variables (i.e., third variables - mediating variables) to which depictions of father involvement might be correlated to. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that in order to make a cross-cultural comparison on father involvement one should consider structural factors such as available family social networks, residential or non-residential dads, family size, educational level, immigration history, race, segregation/isolation, etc.—which greatly affect the reality of the population studied.

In the context of this study's data collection implementation method, this writer is aware of its impact on the reliability of this study's assessment instrument "the family circles." A few of the Mexican American parents (mothers and fathers individually) from the whole sample who responded to the family circles assessment instrument in Spanish showed a pattern of response between family-of-origin and current nuclear family sections. The pattern was a confusing and almost identical structural depiction of their family-of-origin and current nuclear family. This pattern may raise a concern about the clarity of the instrument's instructions, the quality of the instrument's Spanish translation, and the consistency in the methodology used when administering the assessment instrument. To ensure the reliability of this assessment instrument, it is important that it is administered in a systematic way to all study groups and subgroups, and very importantly that its translation into another language is clear. If an assessment instrument is reliable the research results will have more validity.

In terms of the validity of this study, other studies have used varied acculturation scales to measure the level of acculturation of their research samples. Some examples are the

Acculturating Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARSMA) developed by Cuellar et al. (1980); ARSMA-II: A revision of the original ARSMA scale by Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado, (1995), Mexican American Acculturation Scale and the Comfort with Acculturation Status by Montgomery, (1992). All these acculturation scales were tested at different times and with different samples that included Mexican Americans who were either undergraduate/ graduate students, psychiatric inpatients, and/or hospital staff in different parts of the U.S. Most of them focused on an average of four to five factors: (1) comfort with Mexican traditions and the Spanish media; (2) English media and Anglo tradition; (3) preferred ethnic identity; (4) self-rated ethnic identity; and (5) comfort with speaking English or Spanish. All these acculturation scales proved to have reliability and validity (Cuéllar et al., 1995). Acculturation cannot be measured accurately by only one of these factors as a sole indicator. Therefore, this study's sole criteria to indicate its Mexican American subsample's level of acculturation with "language used to respond to the family circles assessment instrument" is an unreliable criteria by itself that affects the validity of the results for hypotheses 2 A and B of this study.

Conclusion

It's important to note that there are two patterns of response 1) Mexican American mothers depicted levels of family cohesion and father involvement equal to non-Latino white American mothers 87.5% of the time.

2) Mexican American fathers depicted higher levels of family cohesion and father involvement than Mexican American mothers and non-Latino white American fathers 50% of the time. Both patterns of response are visible in depictions of family-of-origin and current nuclear family. This pattern of equivalent family cohesion and father involvement in Mexican American mothers and non-Latino white American mothers is also maintained within the two Mexican American

“acculturation” subgroups —indicated by the use of Spanish vs. English when responding to the assessment instrument.

The analysis of these research findings elucidates that culture does influence the level of family cohesion and father involvement in families. The Mexican American cultural values (understood as the culture learned from Mexican ancestors in the U.S.) are paramount nuclear strengths in Mexican American families that differentiate them from their comparison group. If these strengths are explored, understood, and nurtured adequately by social sciences research, we would find a promising foundation to promote or enhance father involvement in Mexican American families in need of it. As well, we can use these Mexican American cultural values as a model to enrich family dynamics in other cultural groups who are interested in increasing their levels of family cohesion and father involvement.

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Appendix A

Family Circles Instrument

Name _____

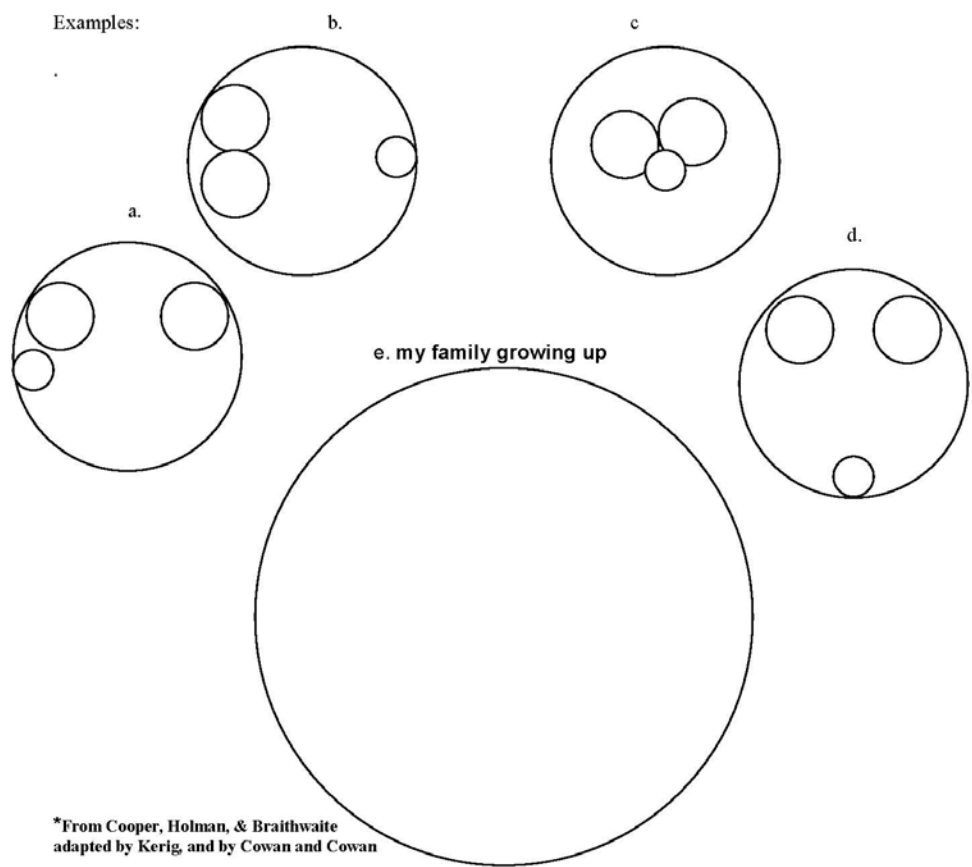
Today's date ___/___/___

FAMILY CIRCLES 1*

Each diagram below (a-d) represents different families. In any family, there may be some family members who are especially close to one another while other family members are more distant or separate from each other. The circles represent the people and the space between the circles represents the closeness or distance of the relationships between them. The large circles are the adults and the smaller circles are the children.

Please look at examples a-d which describe some possible arrangements for a three-person family. Then, in circle e, draw a picture that you think is most like YOUR FAMILY GROWING UP with all the members (yourself as a child, your parents, your siblings, etc.), adding circles for the number of people in your family.

Last, please write each person's relationship to you (such as, mother, father, sister, brother, grandmother, stepfather, etc.) inside or beside the circle representing that person. Also indicate which circle represents you.



*From Cooper, Holman, & Braithwaite adapted by Kerig, and by Cowan and Cowan

Name _____

Today's date ___/___/___

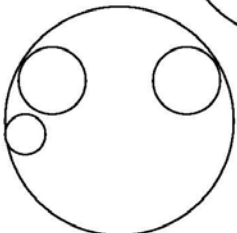
FAMILY CIRCLES 2*

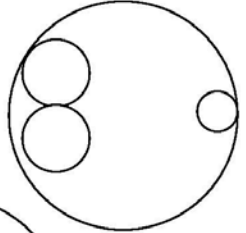
Each diagram below (a-d) represents different families. In any family, there may be some family members who are especially close to one another while other family members are more distant or separate from each other. The circles represent the people and the space between the circles represents the closeness or distance of the relationships between them. The large circles are the adults and the smaller circles are the children.

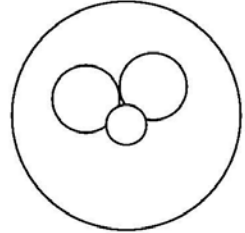
Please look at examples a-d which describe some possible arrangements for a three-person family. Then, in circle e, draw a picture that you think is most like YOUR FAMILY NOW with all the members (yourself, your partner, your child/children), adding circles for the number of people in your family.

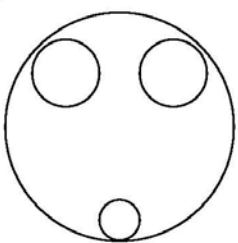
Last, please write each person's relationship to you (such as, wife, husband, son, daughter, etc.) inside or beside the circle representing that person. If you have more than one child, please add their first names. Also indicate which circle represents you.

Examples:

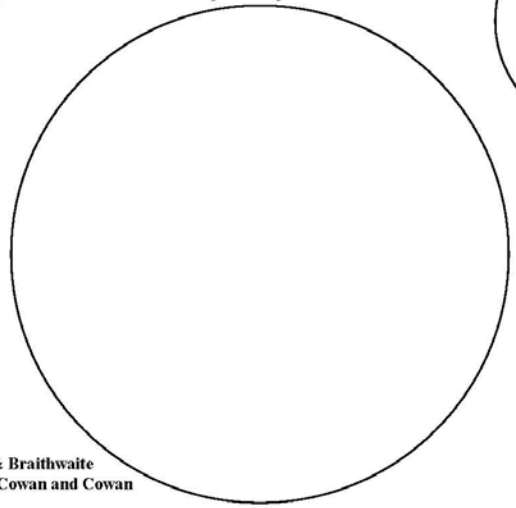
a. 

b. 

c. 

d. 

e. my family now



*From Cooper, Holman, & Braithwaite adapted by Kerig, and by Cowan and Cowan

Appendix B

Coding Form

Supporting Father Involvement FAMILY CIRCLES CODING SHEET

Family ID: _____ *Mother* OR *Father* (circle) Coder: _____

FAMILY CIRCLES 1: **“YOUR FAMILY GROWING UP”**

1. Check the number of parents (mother and father; *not* parental figures) inside the circle:

(1) Two Parents ____ (2) One Parent ____ (3) No Parents ____

2. Check one of the following family structures:

(1) Cohesive ____ (2) Divided ____ (3) Isolated Child ____
(4) Parent Coalition ____ (5) Triangulated ____

Descriptions:

Cohesive – family members close/touching;

Divided – family members separated from each other;

Isolated Child – parents together/allied, possibly with children, but one child is separate from both parents;

Parent Coalition – parents form a cohesive group, separate from the children

Triangulated – one child is allied with one parent, and other parent is separate from that parent-child relationship but included in the circle;

3. Check the placement of the mother in the circle:

(1) Center ____ (2) On/Near Periphery ____ (3) Outside or Not Present ____
(4) Inside the Circle, but neither center nor periphery ____

4. Check the placement of the father in the circle:

(1) Center ____ (2) On/Near Periphery ____ (3) Outside or Not Present ____
(4) Inside the Circle, but neither center nor periphery ____

5. Check the distance between mother and father:

(1) Overlapping ____ (2) Touching ____ (3) Less than 2 cm apart ____
(4) 2-5 cm apart ____ (5) Greater than 5 cm apart ____ (6) indeterminable/NA ____

6. Check the distance between respondent (“me”) and mother:

(1) Overlapping ____ (2) Touching ____ (3) Less than 2 cm apart ____
(4) 2-5 cm apart ____ (5) Greater than 5 cm apart ____ (6) indeterminable/NA ____

7. Check the distance between respondent ("me") and father:

- (1) Overlapping ___ (2) Touching ___ (3) Less than 2 cm apart ___
 (4) 2-5 cm apart ___ (5) Greater than 5 cm apart ___ (6) indeterminable/NA ___

8. Check the *shortest* distance between siblings:

- (1) Overlapping ___ (2) Touching ___ (3) Less than 2 cm apart ___
 (4) 2-5 cm apart ___ (5) Greater than 5 cm apart ___ (6) indeterminable/NA ___

9. Check the *longest* distance between siblings:

- (1) Overlapping ___ (2) Touching ___ (3) Less than 2 cm apart ___
 (4) 2-5 cm apart ___ (5) Greater than 5 cm apart ___ (6) indeterminable/NA ___

10. Is there a sibling coalition? (Two or more children close/touching, separate from parents)

- (1) Yes ___ (2) No ___

11. Check any extended family members included in the circle:

- (1) Grandparent(s) ___ (2) Aunt/Uncle(s) ___ (3) Cousin(s) ___ (4) Other(s) ___
 Please specify:

Supporting Father Involvement
FAMILY CIRCLES CODING SHEET

Family ID: _____ *Mother* OR *Father* (circle) Coder: _____

FAMILY CIRCLES 2: **“YOUR FAMILY NOW”**

12. Check the number of parents (mother and father; *not other parental figures*) inside the circle:

(1) Two Parents ___ (2) One Parent ___ (3) No Parents ___

13. Check one of the following family structures:

(1) Cohesive ___ (2) Divided ___ (3) Isolated Child ___
(4) Parent Coalition ___ (5) Triangulated ___

Descriptions:

Cohesive = family members close/touching;

Divided = family members separated from each other;

Isolated Child = parents together/allied, possibly with children, but one child is separate from both parents;

Parent Coalition = parents form a cohesive group, separate from the children

Triangulated = one child is allied with one parent, and other parent is separate from that parent-child relationship but included in the circle.

14. Check the placement of the mother in the circle:

(1) Center ___ (2) On/Near Periphery ___ (3) Outside or Not Present ___
(4) Inside the Circle, but neither center nor periphery ___

15. Check the placement of the father in the circle:

(1) Center ___ (2) On/Near Periphery ___ (3) Outside or Not Present ___
(4) Inside the Circle, but neither center nor periphery ___

16. Check the distance between mother and father:

(1) Overlapping ___ (2) Touching ___ (3) Less than 2 cm apart ___
(4) 2-5 cm apart ___ (5) Greater than 5 cm apart ___ (6) indeterminable/NA ___

17. Check the distance between target child and mother:

(1) Overlapping ___ (2) Touching ___ (3) Less than 2 cm apart ___
(4) 2-5 cm apart ___ (5) Greater than 5 cm apart ___ (6) indeterminable/NA ___

18. Check the distance between target child and father:

- (1) Overlapping ___ (2) Touching ___ (3) Less than 2 cm apart ___
 (4) 2-5 cm apart ___ (5) Greater than 5 cm apart ___ (6) indeterminable/NA ___

19. Check the *shortest* distance between siblings:

- (1) Overlapping ___ (2) Touching ___ (3) Less than 2 cm apart ___
 (4) 2-5 cm apart ___ (5) Greater than 5 cm apart ___ (6) indeterminable/NA ___

20. Check the *longest* distance between siblings:

- (1) Overlapping ___ (2) Touching ___ (3) Less than 2 cm apart ___
 (4) 2-5 cm apart ___ (5) Greater than 5 cm apart ___ (6) indeterminable/NA ___

21. Is there a sibling coalition? (Two or more children close/touching, separate from parents)

- (1) Yes ___ (2) No ___

22. Check any extended family members included in the circle:

- (1) Grandparent(s) ___ (2) Aunt/Uncle(s) ___ (3) Cousin(s) ___ (4) Other(s) ___
 Please specify:

