

Latino Fathers' Experiences of Parenting in the Context of Immigration

Cindy Hernandez

Mentors: Kevin Roy, Colleen Vesely, Megan Fitzgerald
Department of Family Science, School of Public Health
University of Maryland, College Park

Abstract

This is a qualitative study that explores how the immigration experiences of Latino fathers shape their parenting practices. For the purpose of this study, 19 life long story interviews of Mexican, Mexican American, Puerto Rican fathers were collected by a case manager researcher. The interviews were analyzed using three waves of coding: open, axial, and selective. Four narrative themes gave meaning to the fathers' immigration experiences and involvement with their children: turning point, immigration, role models, and partnering and parenting practices.

Introduction

Latinos are the largest minority in the United States and they are growing rapidly. As of July 1, 2006, there were a total of about 44.3 million Latinos equal to 14.8% of the total population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002). Even though the Latino community is growing at a fast pace, there has not been much research done in the areas of fathering. The research shows that there is not enough literature showing father involvement, particularly Latino fathers' involvement (Campos, 2008). In order to understand the experiences of Latino fathers living in the United States and to become more cultural competent when implementing programs, it is important to investigate more about this group of the Latino population.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the research that has been already done on Latino fathers and concentrate on how immigration has shaped their parenting experiences. This is an exploratory study and its main focus is to analyze how their immigration experience has affected the lives of fathers from three different generations. The three generations that were present in the study are: first generation (G1), generation 1.5 (G1.5), and second generation (G2). The research question that was used to guide this research was: How does timing of immigration shape Latino fathers' parenting experiences?

Significance of the Study

The importance in this study is that it tries to understand the process of Latino fathers and how their parenting is affected by their immigration experience. There is some understanding on the demography of Latino fathers but lack of father experiences. This study aims to explore different generations of Latino fathers and understand how their unique experiences have influenced their lives in respect to their fatherhood and towards their children and family beliefs.

Delimitations of the Proposed Study

The study is not about Latino families and their immigration experience and it is not about Latino fathers and mental health either. The focus of this study is not on Latino parent involvement and it does not try to understand the process of Latino parenting in general. The study does not include all groups of fathers from Latin America; it only studies two groups of Latino fathers from Mexican, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican descent.

Literature Review

Latino Families

To understand who Latino families are, it is important to know that Latinos have come to the United States from many countries of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. All the people that are called Latinos come from different cultural and historic backgrounds, and even if they come from the same country they have different demographic factors that make them unique (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002).

Parenting Values and Beliefs

Latino families are often portrayed to have strong cohesiveness which leads to the beliefs that they have strong sense of support (Miranda & Matheny, 2000). This cohesiveness is known as familismo, which is the importance of family closeness and support from extended family (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002) such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc. Familismo can be one of the reasons why Latino families show resiliency because they tend to rely on each other when they have problems. Traditionally, it is believed that Latino that in Latino families, the man is the main provider and the one that shows discipline and rules at home. This is known as machismo (Becerra, 1998).

Migration and Immigration Experience

Latinos are the largest and fastest growing population in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002). Many Latino families move to the United States for different reasons. Everyone as a different experience either on moving to a different country or state. In his study, Parra-Cardona et al., (2006) shows that migrant families face different challenges such as discrimination, lack of services,

but they also show resiliency due to their cultural values of familismo. When looking at different generations, experiences of discrimination are different as well. Research shows that first generation and second generation face different types of discrimination, and the even though second generation are born in the U.S. and do not have the language barrier as the first generation do, they still face some challenges because of where their parents come from (Parra-Cardona, Cordova et al., 2008). Regardless of the generational status, Latinos can face discrimination. Also there is the belief that first generation immigrants fare better than second generation despite their struggles. This is known as the “immigrant paradox” (Zehr, 2009). This means that first generation fares better than second generation even though they have to adapt to a new culture and learn a new language. In regards to Latino fathers, immigration can affect fathers moving to a new country; however their fathering does not change significantly upon crossing the border (Taylor and Behnke, 2005). When fathers cross the border and have children here, it can create conflicts with their generation experience because fathers are from one generation and children from another (Garcia-Coll and Magnuson, 1997). That means that they have different experiences in the way they socialize but still live in the household.

Fathering and Father Involvement

There are few studies on Latino fathers (Campos, 2008). The studies that have been done on fathers in general show that Latino fathers compared to other ethnicities are more involved with their children (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004). Also Latino fathers have strong family values that influence their involvement with their family (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004). This is due to the familismo belief in Latino families. One way fathers are involved with their children, is by providing. In one study of Mexican origin fathers (Behnke, Taylor, & Parra-Cardona, 2008), one of the main findings was that being the provider was the most important role of the father. In this particular study, fathers who identified themselves with more traditional gender beliefs showed to be less involved with their children, but fathers who identified themselves as more egalitarian, showed to be more involved with their children in different ways such as emotional and social support. Co-parenting is also an understudy area in the Latino population, but one study shows that when non-resident fathers remain friends or in a romantic relationship with the mother of the child, they tend to be more involved with their children (Cabrera, Ryan, Mitchell, Shannon, & Tamis-Lemonda, 2008).

As mentioned before, there is not much research on Latino fathers, and this qualitative research aims to contribute to the body of literature analyzing Latino men’s timing of immigration and how it shapes their fathering experiences.

Theoretical Framework

This research utilizes two theories to understand the experiences of the fathers that were interviewed. The theories are the ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and the symbolic interaction theory (Winton, 1995). The ecological theory studies the role of different environments and how they shape the individual. The

four basic systems are microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. This system helps to have a good understand of the individual's development in relation to their environment (Indoldsby, Smith, & Miller, 2004). In this study, the microsystem is the relationship the fathers have with their children. The mesosystem is the role models for fathering and their family beliefs. The macrosystem is their immigration experience, or their experience crossing the borders for better opportunities for their children. Symbolic interaction focuses on the "acquisition and generation of meaning" (White and Klein, 2002). In this study, symbolic interaction relates to the idea of fathers having a role model, in other words being a father based on their interaction with role models. This means that fathers act according to the way they were thought by the role model but according to symbolic interactionism, there could be deviance from the norm (White and Klein, 2002). Therefore if fathers had bad role models when they were growing, they can choose not to be like them by looking at their example. For the purpose of this study, ecological theory and symbolic theory help us understand the experiences of Latino fathers.

Methods

Site and Sample

For the collection of the data, a Head Start and community center in the South Side of Chicago was chosen. The center is called El Valor, it has different programs such as the Early Head Start and Head Start programs, S.T.A.R.S. which is a mentoring/tutoring program, and a program that helps strengthening families by having support groups, father's initiative, parenting classes. The fathers that were chosen to participate in this study were recruited from El Valor and lived around the Pilsen area in Chicago. Pilsen is Chicago's largest Latino community. In the late 1990's about 93.5% was Latino mostly of Mexican heritage. The sample consists of 17 Mexican American men and 2 Puerto Rican men. (21% 18-25 yrs; 37% 26-34 yrs; 42% 35 yrs and older). In the sample, there were different generations, almost half of the sample (47%; n=9) was first generation, less than a quarter (21%; n=4) were 1.5, that means people who entered the United States before the age of 12, and 32% (n=6) were second generation. The average children the sample had were two and 95% of them had biological children only.

Data Collection

The data were gathered by a case manager researcher. He utilized semi-qualitative structured long life history interviews collected in Pilsen, Chicago. Each interview lasted 90 minutes and were taped and transcribed. The interviews were conducted in either English or Spanish depending on the language the fathers felt more comfortable speaking. These interviews were conducted by three researchers focusing in five main areas of father involvement: father, child and co-parent interaction; experiences with family of origin; residential changes; employment; and education.

Data Analyses

To analyze the 19 semi-structured, qualitative life history interview transcriptions, grounded theory was used. Grounded theory is an approach to qualitative research and it is useful when analyzing interview transcriptions (LaRossa, 2005). To give meaning to the data and findings I used the three waves of coding: open, axial, and selective. With open coding, I named different concepts for all the interviews. Some of the concepts found in open coding were involvement, first born experience, education, and best age to become a father. After open coding, I used axial coding to go back to the transcriptions and give meaning to the concepts that I found during open coding. During axial coding I was able to see that some concepts such as first born reactions and the best time to have a child were similar across all the interviews while there were many differences on other concepts such as immigration experiences given there were three different generations of fathers and their experiences were unique. Finally the last step of the analysis was selective coding. With selective coding, I was able to get four themes to the findings that emerged from the data and make sense of the interviews. The four themes relate to fathers' experiences of turning points in their lives and crossing various borders for reasons of health, safety and opportunity, as well as role models in their lives, and beliefs about partnering and parenting.

To enhance the quality of the data, triangulation was used where a three person team evaluated each finding. During triangulation and peer debriefing, the three person team talked about the findings from the transcribed interviews and discussed different codes.

Reflexivity

My background as a Salvadoran female who now lives independently in the U. S. and who was raised by a mother, who served the role of mother and father, and a step father, influenced my research question and analyses. Also because I am from the 1.5 generation I understood some of the experiences while reading the interviews and coding the data, I could relate to some of the beliefs and influences the individuals in the sample mentioned, while learning about the different ways they interact and get involved with their children. My immigration experience and the way I grew up with my mother taking charge of both roles helped me see the fathers' experiences in a different way and understand that everyone has their own immigration experience. Because I lived in a Latin American country, I understand some of the struggles some of the fathers talked about like facing poverty and not getting a good education in their native country. At the same time analyzing their parenting beliefs gave me a sense of what fathers feel towards their children and their families and how they act according to those beliefs. I was not able to listen to the interviews though I am bilingual, I think it would have been interesting to hear the fathers tone of voice and the way they told their stories to have a better sense of their experiences but in a way I think that just reading the interviews was good because as I have my own immigration experience I could have bias towards it.

Findings

For all the men in this study, becoming a father was a turning point in their lives, whether they were involved in the life of the child's mother during the pregnancy or not. Most fathers agreed in that their lives changed from the moment they knew their child was born and their partner was safe. Fathers remarked on the experience of their first child's birth in varied ways. Some fathers only said they were happy when their child was born and did not discuss too much emotion, while other fathers expressed their happiness by celebrating and showing a lot of emotion. Javier, a G1 father remarked in the following way regarding his experience when his son was born:

When they told me that my wife had already given birth, and that it was a little boy, I remember I started jumping and running in the hospital, and my nephew hugged me while I would say to him: A boy, a boy and they are okay!! [the wife and the son]...and I tell you this because it was a beautiful situation when I was going to be a father...it felt good, I don't have the words to say what else, but it felt good, it was a very nice experience)

A second common experience among the fathers in this study was possessing ideas regarding provision for their children and timing of fatherhood. All of the fathers thought that providing for their children was a priority in their lives. Most of them said that it was important to have enough money to provide the necessary things such as food, shoes, and clothing, but at the same time mentioned that it was not everything they had to give to their children. They said that children need to feel safe, loved, supported, and needed time. Even though the fathers in this study thought that providing material things was important, they also mentioned that emotional provision such as helping their children feel safe was important as well. Fathers also related their ability to provide to the best time to have children. When they were asked what age was the best time to have a children, regardless of their generation, most of them said that when the father is ready. Martin (G1) describes this as "when they are emotionally stable because when they want to have girlfriends and be all in their friends, they are not ready. To be a father is a big responsibility". For most fathers age was not necessarily considered important in relation to preparedness for fatherhood in terms of maturity; however some remarked that in terms of physical health later in life age mattered. For example some fathers commented that it was good to have children at a younger age so that one has strength to play with their children and their grandchildren while others specifically mentioned it was good to have them after 25, like Rodrigo, who said "I think some younger men are very well prepared. But I think financially and in terms of your emotions, in terms of what you want out of life...it's a lot easier if you wait". Overall fathers in this study agreed that beyond age, it was fathers' readiness to provide and support their children that is most important.

Crossing Borders for Health, Safety, and Opportunity

Immigration played a role in the lives of all the fathers that were interviewed for the present study. For first generation (G1) fathers or men who were born outside of the United States and migrated after 12 coming to the United States enabled them to provide better resources for their family finances and health. The difficulty of migrating to the U.S. varied for fathers. Miguel a Mexican father who has been in the U.S. for 18 years tells the reason why he came to the United States:

I am here [in the U.S.] because of economic reasons. I say, well, here, as an immigrant person, here you can achieve dreams that if I were in Mexico I would not have been able to accomplish.

Juan a computer programmer from Mexico, also a first generation immigrant told his story about how important his decision to move to the United States was, given that his son had an illness and he needed better doctors to treat him. However for Juan it was not as difficult to come to the U.S. because his wife was born in Chicago, he says:

My life changed because my kid had a problem with his health and I paid to doctors over there. It was work because I owed money to everybody and I must sell everything...One day I remember I was told, "take your family to North America...we have good doctors over there. Maybe he will have a better opportunity to better health. That's why I moved here.

The experiences of these two Latino fathers, who were first generation immigrants illustrates that part of being a father is providing resources for one's family and thus a main motivations for immigrating the United States. These men want to be able to provide their children with a good future and some even sacrificed their own careers for the wellbeing of their children.

Second generation fathers also had unique experiences and reasons for immigrating. However in contrast to first generation fathers, because they were born in the U.S., these second generation fathers tended to migrate to Mexico at some point in their life which also affected their fathering experience. Most of the G2 fathers in this study grew up around violence and where involved in gangs. In turn, either their parents took them or they decided to go back to Mexico for a period of time in order to improve their lives. Hector, G2, tells his story about going to Mexico for two years to a very small town because Chicago was "too wild". He said they came back to the U.S. because the town where they stayed "Its calm and its nice but its too calm, to quiet." Also Sergio (G2) a 31 year old father with a stepdaughter and a daughter, tells his story of moving to Mexico to improve his life:

Right after high school before the marines I sidetracked. I had a run in with the police. The judge gave me the option of one year probation or go to jail. So I took a year off and went to Mexico...I ended up getting better and staying more than a year.

G2 fathers were born in the U.S., however they used their parent's immigration experience to their advantage because they were able to move between Mexico and Chicago for reasons of safety as well as opportunities to improve their own lives. Since most of them were involved in gangs and had their children very young, younger than the first generation immigrants in this study, once their children were born they changed for the better because their focus was to provide financially and emotionally for their children, became more responsible and were able to terminate their involvement in gangs.

Fathers who migrated to the U.S. as children under age 12, or 1.5 generation fathers, presented another type of experience. The movement of these fathers was characterized by limited experiences of crossing country borders, rather these fathers tended to move among the neighborhoods of Chicago and across various state borders in the U.S. However similar to other fathers in the study migration among G1.5 fathers happened because of violence and need to find quieter neighborhoods. Others moved across state in order to be able to provide financially for their families and so that their children could grow up in a safer neighborhood than the one they had when they were growing up like the case of Ignacio, who was laid off from his job and decided to go to Florida to work for a few weeks. He says, "I am the provider and I am the one that is working and that is why I went to FL to get some money..."

Even though the immigration experience of each father is unique, they share a common motive to move from one place to another, and that is the well being of their children. They moved from one country, state, or neighborhood to another in order to provide safety for their children and to find better jobs in order to provide their families financially.

"Recycling the good from the bad": Role Models for Fathering in the Context of Immigration

Most of the fathers in this study indicated that they learned how to father on their own, and that this is something that came naturally. However many fathers referred to the role model such as a family member including parents and older siblings, as well as friends who were like a father figure and mentored them in ways that influenced their fathering. The fathers in this study discussed learning to respect their elders, providing for their children, and being responsible from these role models or mentors. Similar to the immigration or migration process of these fathers, these man's experiences with mentors varied across generation in terms of who was the important figure in their lives related to fathering and how they are raising their own children now.

For the most part fathers who were first generation immigrants to the U.S. had a family members present in their lives who taught them values and skills, which these men are now using to teach and raise their children. For example Martin, who has two daughters eleven and four years old, says "I can say some part of my fathering comes from my grandfather," referring to his patience and willingness to be involved with his children. Juan also talks about his grandmother teaching him

how to read even when she did not know and being like the mother and the father for him because his parents were separated. Fathers who did not have parents or extended family members to act as role models mentioned other individuals who impacts on their lives. For example Miguel, who married when he was 19, tells of how he started working when he was eight with a farmer, he says, “He gave me a lot of love, he taught me respect, all of that. He would teach me a lot of things. A lot good things... values, respect, respecting other...” Now he says that the most important characteristics of him being a good father are “to teach them love, respect, respect to their parents and to people who are older than them.” Even though he is raising his children in a different country and different cultures, he is teaching them what he learned when he was young.

The experiences of 1.5 and second generation fathers are different to the experience of the first generation in that few had good relationship with their parents. For example Ignacio, a father who came to the U.S. when he was a child says,

“My parents both worked while I was growing up and my grandma would take care of us. We didn’t really know our parents. When she passed away... when my dad and mom got into the picture it was like uhhhhh”

This shows that many of the fathers who came to the United States when they were younger did not have their parents as role models because they came here to work and were never present in their lives, but had extended family as Ignacio stated with his grandmother. Luis, who arrived from Puerto Rico when he was nine, had similar experience “Oh I really didn’t have nobody important. I would just be with my friends all the time. I smoked weed when I was about 14 years old. I used to drink. But now I don’t do any of that.” Luis is now a father of six children, and because he has a disability spends a lot of time at home with them talking and listening to what they have to say as a way of being involved in their lives. These fathers want to give their children what they did not have. In many ways they want to do the opposite of what their parents did. Jessie’s comments illustrate this notion of compensating for what their parents were not able to provide to them,

I was looking and listening and seeing that my dad was just not setting a good example, through the years been a very irresponsible person... I was recycling the good from the bad in terms of using it for my own good and not

Second generation fathers’ experience were unique from first generation fathers because their parents had spent some time in the U.S. prior to giving birth to them; in turn their parenting was influenced by immigration as well as the U.S. cultural context. In other words second generation fathers’ parents were G1 so these fathers applied what they were taught as children growing up in the United States. Second generation fathers looked up to their parents more than the other fathers in the study even though these same fathers were more involved in gangs and got in more trouble than other fathers, Hector explains it like this, “my mom

was always pushing me, come on, she was always there. Any trouble and she was always there, incarcerated and what-not.” Antony mentioned that even though he is not with his partner, he has joint custody of his son, and he has been influenced by his parents because they worked hard to accomplish all the things that they have now and were involved in his life and he is working hard to provide for his child and to be there for him like his parents did for him. Even though second generation do not refer to their parents as role models they acknowledge their sacrifices to provide for them even when they were in trouble and they try to do the same with their own children.

The experiences that these fathers had growing up had influenced on their parenting practices. If they had good role models, they tried to implement and teach the same values to their children. However, if they did not have good role models or their parents were never present, they were “recycling” the good from the bad, or compensating for what they did not have and becoming more involved with their children.

It takes two to tango: Beliefs about Partnering and Parenting

To better understand this finding about partnering and parenting experiences differ as different generations were analyzed, table 1 is illustrated. In the table traditional partnering beliefs are defined as being married and nontraditional beliefs, as fathers who are cohabitating or have split families. The traditional parenting beliefs are defined as the father being solely the breadwinner and being involved with the children. For the nontraditional parenting beliefs, fathers are more egalitarian, take care of the children and help around the house.

Table 1

Partnering Beliefs		
Parenting Beliefs	Traditional	Nontraditional
Traditional	G1	G1.5 G2
Nontraditional	G1	G1.5 G2

Co-parenting is an understudied area in Mexican and Puerto Rican families. Some of what is discussed in the literature regarding these families’ traditional experiences is that men are the breadwinners and women are the house wives, and that familismo, or the extended family is extremely important to parents’ experiences of raising children. Also when talking about partnering, traditional beliefs are that in order to raise a family parents are married and are present in the house. However the experiences of the fathers in this study indicated that for them this was not necessarily the case. Again these experiences varied based on fathers’ experiences and timing of immigration. All the fathers’ who were first generation were married and some had been with their partners for as long as 20 years. Most

of the first generation fathers were fairly egalitarian and progressive in their beliefs regarding raising their children. Augusto who has two daughters says and also has a good relationship with his own parents says, “They [referring to his extended family] can give all the advice, but only me and my wife, we raise our kids.” This means that even though the extended family is important to him, when it comes to raising his daughters, he and his wife make the decisions.

Another way of raising the children was illustrated by Mario, a father of three adolescent boys. In order to keep his sons out of trouble he says “My wife, me, and my children...we do social work,” referring to how their involvement in the community helps him raise his children in a safer environment. Mario also talked about how he practices a tradition, a way to pass on his children, which are second generation, a family tradition and also a way of to communicate with them when he says,

I try to bring all my family together at lunch time. We, as Hispanic people, the majority of Mexicans have a tradition, for us, lunch time, sharing together is a ritual, is a way of asking each other: What have you been doing, how are you, what are you doing...

Some fathers held on to traditional beliefs regarding mothers’ and fathers’ roles. For example, Edgar noted that when his son was born, his wife did not work so she could take care of their son. He says that he does not worry much about his son because his wife is there for him to feed him but when he is sick, he is there for his son. Fathers had different experiences about the way they share the parenting responsibilities with the mothers of their children, but most of them showed that they wanted to be equally involved in their children’s lives.

Among 1.5 and second generation fathers, there were more children born out wedlock, a fairly non-traditional practice among Mexican and Puerto Rican fathers. However these fathers’ beliefs regarding, parenting and gender roles were seemingly more traditional. These fathers have different ideas regarding co-parenting and their family beliefs from first generation fathers. For example, Ignacio, a G1.5 father says the following about his partner and children, “I don’t want her to work, I would rather have her with my kids. It’s a tough world I would rather have the mom with kids than anyone else.” He was a gangbanger before having his first daughter and his experience of growing up in violence makes him feel that it is better for his partner to be with the children. About disciplining the children he says “I am the enforcer in the house if mommy say something and kids doesn’t listen daddy got come in.” Co-parenting for split families is not an easy task either but mothers did not keep the fathers from being part of their lives. Orlando lives in New York and has 5 year-old daughter that lives in Chicago. He got separated from his “ex” and the only one that keeps their communication is their daughter. In order to see his little girl and be able to be part of her life, he works close to his mother’s house in Pilsen and spends three days of the weeks with her. He says that the mother of the girl has never discouraged him from seeing or spending time with his daughter and that he has even taken her on vacation to Mexico so that his family can meet her.

Similar to G1.5, the second generation was less traditional in regards to their beliefs about marriage because most of the fathers were cohabitating and one even had a step daughter, the only one out the 19 fathers that were interviewed. They showed to be more involved with the care of their children and the chores around the house. Antonio has joint custody of his son and after more than a year of separation with his girlfriend, they are back together, he says that his father is proud of him because he is a good dad. He says the following about his son, "He knows who his father is. You know he is happy that I'm his dad. I took initiative myself. I just heard him crying, get up to feed him, change his diaper, whatever needs to be done". Hector, a father of a five month old daughter, also tells how he helps his girlfriend around the house; he says "It ain't going to hurt to help around the house. It's been easy to wash the dishes, vacuum...Cook, I cook for my girl. When she is home she cooks for me".

Overall, fathers show some differences about the way they raise their children and their beliefs among generations. Even though they had unique experiences, it is clear that first generation fathers valued their beliefs about marriage but for most of them their beliefs about raising their children were fairly egalitarian. For the majority of G1.5 and second generation fathers, their beliefs about marriage were not strong, but some G1.5 fathers had more traditional beliefs towards raising their children than the other two generation. In contrast, second generation fathers had more egalitarian beliefs about raising their children and their gender roles.

Discussion

The fathers in this sample have unique experiences about immigration and parenting. Because there were three different generations involved (G1, G1.5, & G2), there were differences across generations. The conflict between generations that Garcia-Coll & Magnuson (1997) talked about, saying that there are conflicts between generations because the process of socialization is different was present in this study. Most fathers from G1 were more traditional in their beliefs and values while G1.5 and G2 differed at least in one that was analyzed (parenting or partnering).

Also the "immigrant paradox" that refers to the belief that first generation fair better than second generation was illustrated in this study, given that many of the G1.5 and G2 were more involved in gangs and violence when they were younger and that affected their parenting. Some G2 fathers had an immigration experience going between Chicago and Mexico to better themselves at some point because they were having problems. On the other hand most G1 fathers moved to the United States because they were looking to provide for their families. In this particular the reason of why G1 fathers moved to the U.S. could be the explanation of why they fair better, because they are crossing with the main purpose of providing for their families.

Research also shows that Latino fathers have strong family values. In this study, almost all fathers were living with their partner and children even if they were cohabitating, which proves that they have strong sense of familismo or family cohesion. When talking about how the beliefs and values change from generation to generation, it is interesting to see the changes that happened across generations in this study. For the most part G1 fathers were traditional partnering (being married) and their parenting practices (breadwinner, involved with the children) but it was interesting to see a progressive shift towards more egalitarian beliefs in parenting, but their partnering beliefs remained because all of them were married. On the other hand, G1.5 and G2 fathers were different. Their views towards marriage and parenting was changing towards nontraditional meaning that more of them were cohabitation or co-parenting because they had divorced or just separated from their partner, and helped more around the house and with the children than G1 fathers. Behnke, Taylor & Parra-Cardona () talked about this in their study. Something that is different from their study is that even though G1 fathers were traditional or progressive egalitarian on their partnering and parenting beliefs, according to the interviews, they were very involved with their children as G1.5 and G2 were. Even though the fathers in this study had different immigration experiences, and had different generational status, important findings that can be applied to different ethnics can be utilized for future research.

Limitations

Two of the main limitations of this study were data collection and time constriction. The data was collected a few years ago and was used by a case manager researcher. The interviews were transcribed and translated to English if they were conducted in Spanish. I only had access to the transcriptions. When the interviews were translated from English to Spanish, there was some information lost but overall the transcriptions were complete and informative. Due to time constraint, I could not collect the data. The research summer program only lasted five weeks. It is not enough time gather data and analyze it to complete the research. Another limitation of this particular research is that it is not representative of all Latino fathers' culture and ethnicities. The only groups present in the study are Mexican, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican fathers. Despite of the limitations, there were relevant findings that helped answered the question that lead this research and provides information for future research on Latino fathers.

Implications for Research and Practice

Research

Most researchers that have worked with the Latino population agree that there needs to be more studies on different cultures and ethnicities. To have a better understanding of Latino fathers in general, fathers from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds need to participate in this type of research. In this study there were only Mexican, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican fathers. To get a better

representation of the Latino population, Central and South America fathers need to be included in this type of research. The immigration experience of each father is unique even if they are from the same country of origin or belong to different generations. Also there needs to be more studies on Latino fathers and different socioeconomic backgrounds within cultures because there is the possibility that the immigration experience shapes their parenting in a different way depending on the resources they have. Many of the studies on Latino fathers are of low-income fathers, but it is important to see the different levels of their socioeconomic status and see if they differ there could be different results on fathers living in the metropolitan D.C. area compare to the fathers that live in Pilsen, Chicago. Like it is mentioned before, the immigration experience of a person differs from one another depending on the time they enter the United States, how they came, and the reasons for coming. More studies exploring the immigration process of individuals are needed to better understand the growth of Latino population and become culturally competent towards them. One of the main findings in this study was the changes in partnering and parenting beliefs across generations. This means that co-parenting in the Latino culture needs to be explored because G1.5 and G2 are cohabitating or having more split families. Co-parenting in the Latino population is an area that has been understudied but there is a need for future research because more different generations of Latinos are practicing it more.

Practice

The findings in this research show that when creating or improving programs that provide services to the Latino fathers in the United States the following aspects need to be taken into consideration:

- Time of immigration needs to be considered
- Gender roles need to be considered
- Co-parenting needs to be considered

Time of immigration. The time of immigration is important because this study presents three different generations and each generation has different experiences depending on how long they have been in United States. Not all fathers need translation, and some fathers need more family support than others. Depending on the generation that they belong (G1, G1.5, G2) they have different experiences and changes in their values and beliefs.

Gender roles. The findings in this study showed that fathers are shifting from being just the breadwinner of the family to help around the house and to be more involved with their children. This is important to understand because the belief that Latino fathers are the main providers and the ones who discipline the children is changing. According to the sample in this study, as generations get more acculturated, fathers are becoming more egalitarian. Their traditional beliefs towards genders roles are changing to be more involved with their children and around the house.

Co-parenting. Co-parenting is an understudy area in the Latino population. In the sample for this research there were some fathers that were co-parenting because they had split families. For programs that serve Latino families, it is important to understand that there is a shift in this type of dynamics in this population and that it varies more according to generation and timing of immigration.

Conclusion

This research is important because it contributes to the research of Latino fathers and will help understand the process the experiences they face due to immigration. One conclusion from the findings in this study is that father readiness is an important factor in becoming a father and providing for the family. Fathers cross country and state borders for many different reasons but the main reason is to provide better opportunities for their children and for safety. Also the timing of the immigration influences of the beliefs and values of Latino fathers across generations. There is a shift from the father being solely the breadwinner of the house to being more egalitarian and help with the children and with the chores around the house. Hopefully there can be more representative studies of fathers in the Latino population to see the differences and similarities across cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds so that the programs that help them can understand better this group and implement strategies to effectively assist them.

References

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Becerra, R. M. (1998). The Mexican-American family. In Mindel, C. H., Habenstein, R. W., & Wright Jr., R. (Eds.), *Ethnic families in America: Patterns and variations* (4th ed). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Behnke, A. O., Taylor, B. A., & Parra-Cardona, J. R. (2008) "I hardly understand English, but...": Mexican origin fathers describe their commitment as fathers despite the challenges of immigration. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 39(2), 187-205.
- Cabrera, N., Ryan, R., Mitchell, S., Shannon, J., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. (2008). Low-income, nonresident father involvement with their toddlers: Variation by fathers' race and ethnicity. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(4), 643-647.
- Cauce, A. M., & Domenech-Rodriguez, M. (2002). Latino families: Myths and realities. In Contreras, J. M., Kerns, K. A., & Neal-Barnett, A. M. (Eds.), *Latino children and families in the United States: Current research and future directions*. Connecticut: Praeger.
- Campos, R. (2008). Considerations for studying father involvement in early childhood among Latino families. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 22(4), 643-647.

- Coltrane, S., Parke, R., & Adams, M. (2004). Complexity of father involvement in low-income Mexican American families. *Family Relations*, 53(2), 179-189.
- Garcia-Coll, C., & Magnuson, K. (1997). The psychological experience of immigration: A developmental perspective. In Booth, A., Crouter, A.C., Landale, N. (Eds.), *Immigration and the family: Research and policy on U.S. Immigrants*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ingoldsby, B. B., Smith, S. R., Miller, J. E. (2003) *Family Systems Theory*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.
- LaRossa, R. (2005). Grounded theory methods and qualitative family research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 837-857.
- Parra-Cardona, J., Bullock, L., Imig, D., Villarruel, F., & Gold, S. (2006). "Trabajando duro todos los días": Learning from the life experiences of Mexican-origin migrant families. *Family Relations*, 55(3), 361-375.
- Parra-Cardona, J., Cordova, D., Holtrop, K., Villarruel, F., & Wieling, E. (2008). Shared ancestry, evolving stories: Similar and contrasting life experiences described by foreign born and U.S. born Latino parents. *Family Process*, 47(2), 157-172.
- Rodríguez, M., Davis, M., Rodríguez, J., & Bates, S. (2006). Observed parenting practices of first-generation Latino families. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 34(2), 133-148.
- Taylor, B., & Behnke, A. (2005). Fathering across the border: Latino fathers in Mexico and the U.S. *Fathering*, 3(2), 99-120.
- Van Hook, J., & Stamper Balistreri, K. (2007). Immigrant generation, socioeconomic status, and economic development of countries of origin: A longitudinal study of body mass index among children. *Social Science & Medicine*, 65(5), 976-989.
- White and Klein, (Eds.). (2002). *Family theories*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Winton, C. A. (1995). *Frameworks for studying families*. Guilford, CT: Dushkin.
- Zehr, M. A. (2009). Scholars mull the 'paradox' of immigrants. *Education Week*. 28(25), 1-12.

Appendix A

Code book

- Involvement:
 - School: doing homework, making sure they are doing well in school.
 - Sports: taking them to their sport activities
 - Talking: talking to the children, daily interaction
 - Playing: after work, during weekend, type of games.
 - Listening: to what they have to say
 - Taking care: feeding them, changing diapers.
 - Providing: being able to provide food, shelter, clothes, and security.
- Pregnancy: first reaction (surprised, happy)
- First born: delivery room (in or out), emotional reaction (magical, very happy, words cannot express)

Immigration/Values:

- Family connections: connecting children with family members, family that live around their area or their native countries (visiting, talking about them, talking on the phone)
- Role models: people that impacted their lives to be good fathers
- Learning to be a father: how they became good fathers

Father Education:

- College degree
 - High School
 - Drop Out
 - GED
- Best time to have children:
 - When they fathers are older... 30's
 - When fathers are ready, mature enough to have a family.

