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Considerations for Studying Father Involvement in Early Childhood Among Latino Families

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Over the last three decades there has been a notable increase in interest about fathers and their role in the socioemotional, academic, and cognitive development of young children. Concurrently, there has been a shift in this nation's ethnic minority demography, where Latinos are now the nation's largest minority group. The father-involvement literature in early childhood is scarce, particularly the scholarship focused on Latino fathers. Furthermore, several conceptual and methodological shortcomings in the exploration of Latino fathers exist. This review explores the following questions: To what extent has the literature explored father involvement in early childhood among Latino fathers? What is the quality of the conceptual and methodological rigor of these studies? What are the salient themes of the literature? Finally, the review will present considerations for studying fathers of young children within Latino communities.

Keywords: *father involvement; fatherhood; early childhood; Latino; parenting*

Importance of Father Involvement as a Concept

Interest in the exploration of contemporary father involvement within developmental research can be traced back to the 1970s. The title of Lamb's (1975) article "Fathers: Forgotten Contributors to Child Development," highlights the zeitgeist of research in this area at that time. This article also served to spur interest in the father's role in child development (Bozett & Hanson, 1991). Since then, the concept of father involvement has been influenced by a plethora of scholarly work (Marsiglio, 1993; Marsiglio,

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Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000) and has been informed by multidisciplinary perspectives (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002).

Although past research on fathers utilized maternal models of parenting, especially in early childhood (Roggman, Fitzgerald, Bradley, & Raikes, 2002), thinking related to father involvement has undergone dramatic transformations. For instance, the often-used model of measuring involvement by the father's presence or absence significantly limited what could be understood about fathers (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). However, recent thinking about involvement has been concerned more with the quality of involvement over time, direct and indirect influences of the father on child development, and the multifaceted nature of involvement (Downer, 2007; Lamb, 2004; Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004; Palkovitz, 1997). In addressing father involvement, researchers have been primarily concerned with its determinants (Downer, Campos, McWayne, & Gartner, in press; Marsiglio et al., 2000), social-historical factors (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000; Pleck, 2004), influences on father, mother, and child outcomes (Amato, 1998; Amato & Rivera, 1999; Mezulis, Hyde, & Clark, 2004; Roggman, Boyce, Cook, Christensen, & Jones, 2004; Shannon, Tamis-LeMonda, London, & Cabrera, 2002), and issues related to father absence and nonresidential fathers (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Greene & Moore, 2000; Stone & McKenry, 1998).

Shortcomings of this literature include the atheoretical manner in which studies of fathering are approached and the dearth of rigorous and appropriate tools used to measure involvement (Cabrera & García-Coll, 2004; Downer et al., in press; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Palkovitz, 1997; Roggman et al., 2004). Furthermore, on the whole, research has failed to place proper import to the impact ethnicity, culture, and context has when addressing questions about fathering (Mirandé, 1991; Toth & Xu, 1999). Although recent studies have begun considering cultural and ethnic variations in fathering, emerging views of today's U.S. fathers still largely describe mainstream White fathers (Cabrera & García-Coll, 2004), leaving notable gaps in this literature.

Guiding Questions

Beginning with a brief discussion of parent- and father-involvement literatures, this review will culminate with an exploration of father-involvement research among Latino populations in early childhood, resulting in a set of recommendations for future study. Specifically, this review will ask:

To what extent has the literature explored father involvement in early childhood among Latino fathers? What is the quality of the conceptual and methodological rigor of the studies investigating this population? What are the salient themes of the literature? Critical analysis of these studies will be guided by developmental/ecological (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) and ecocultural frameworks (Weisner, 2002). These frameworks recognize the importance of multiple contexts and their dynamic, bidirectional interactions, and the importance of both family and cultural contexts in which development occurs.

Parent Involvement

For decades, the exploration of “parent involvement” has been an important topic in the areas of education and child development (Epstein, 1987). Research has shown that parent involvement, increasingly conceptualized in various forms (Epstein, 1996; García-Coll et al., 2002; Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000), has been positively associated with children’s social, emotional, and academic outcomes during and beyond the ages of schooling (Connors & Epstein, 1995; Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004; Griffith, 1996; Pianta, Smith, & Reeve, 1991; Shannon et al., 2002). These positive associations have been corroborated by recent meta-analyses, with results that cut across cultures, age groups, and socioeconomic status (SES; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005, 2007). Furthermore, research suggests that parent involvement acts as a key protective factor for low-income, ethnic minority children and youth (Jeynes, 2003; Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004).

Defining “parent involvement” has been identified as one of the challenges for this literature (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). Studies have often failed to use theoretically sound formulations of involvement to ground their study (Fantuzzo et al., 2004). Researchers have also used inadequate measures of involvement, in some cases using two- or three-item surveys in an attempt to capture this multifaceted construct (Fantuzzo et al., 2004). Nonetheless, several models of parent involvement have been posited and are widely used in the research literature (Epstein, 1995; Fantuzzo et al., 2000).

Parent Involvement During Early Childhood

Empirical evidence indicates that early childhood, a period of transition for young children, is critical for a child’s overall development (Entwisle &

Alexander, 1998; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). Research demonstrates that parent involvement during early childhood is a robust predictor of a child's academic and social-emotional development during the school years, and beyond (Barnard, 2004; Epstein, 1991, 1994; Fagan & Iglesias, 1999; Marcon, 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999).

Although most research on involvement has been informed by work with school-age children, parental involvement within an early childhood context presents a unique set of considerations (Zellman & Perlman, 2006). For parents of very young children who rely on Pre-K settings for basic child care, volunteering at educational programs (Castro, Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, & Skinner, 2004), communicating with the program (Fantuzzo et al., 2000; Fantuzzo, Perry, & Childs, 2006), and involving oneself within the home (i.e., literacy; Dever & Burts, 2002; Dodici, Draper, & Peterson, 2003; Marsh & Thompson, 2001) gain primary importance.

Conceptualizing Father Involvement

Father involvement (as distinguished from "parental" involvement) has also seen its share of exponential growth, along with conceptual transformations over the last three decades (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004; Marsiglio et al., 2000). In 2003, a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal called *Fathering* dedicated itself to promoting the exploration of topics related to fatherhood. Furthermore, well-recognized edited volumes devoted to fathering issues continue to be published (e.g., *The Role of the Father in Child Development* [Lamb, 2004], *Conceptualizing and Measuring Father Involvement* [Day & Lamb, 2004]). In a systematic review of more than 291 published manuscripts from 1990 to 2005, Downer and colleagues (in press) found a significant increase in the number of articles addressing father involvement in early childhood.

Several recent reviews served to consolidate and organize the extant literature and provided direction for further research (Cabrera et al., 2000; Coley, 2001; Downer et al., in press; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Nelson, 2004). Cabrera and her colleagues (2000) communicate an emerging appreciation for diversity of culture and social context in the study of fathers. Marsiglio and colleagues (2000) also promote the incorporation of broader social and ecological factors when conceptualizing fatherhood, and acknowledge the complex nature of father involvement as coconstructed within the family unit and the community at large. In her review of low-income and minority fathers, Coley (2001) addresses methodological shortcomings such as the

use of samples of convenience, lack of generalizability, and limitations due to the overreliance of correlational studies.

Conceptualizations of father involvement have changed from the oversimplified dichotomy of “present” versus “not present” fathers to the notion of father involvement as a multidimensional construct (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987; Palkovitz, 1997). Hawkins and Palkovitz (1999) warn that past thinking has been constrained by temporal and observable facets of involvement, overlooking relevant emotional or psychological factors. Early conceptualizations and subsequent measures of the father’s role in child development were born from traditional maternal models of childrearing and lacked empirical sensitivity to fathering behaviors (Cabrera et al., 1990; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Roggman et al., 2002). Theorists point out that employing a maternal framework of involvement to understand paternal behaviors may fit as a general theory of parental involvement but misses the unique ways in which fathers interact and contribute to child development (Paquette, 2004).

Conceptualizations and measures of father involvement continue to lag behind the rate at which the literature grows (Finley & Schwartz, 2004). For example, measures that incorporate Lamb et al. (1987) model continue to be time-based (Pleck, 1997; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Current thinking around father measures hold that time-based measures are poor proxies for the impact a father may have on a child (Finley & Schwartz, 2004). Recent thinking about father involvement addresses questions on quality versus quantity, and direct and indirect roles fathers take in the lives of their children (Downer, 2007; Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004).

Father Involvement in Early Childhood

It is critical to consider the child’s developmental context when conceptualizing paternal involvement. For example, research suggests higher levels of father involvement during early childhood than at later points of their children’s academic careers (McLanahan & Carlson, 2002; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001). Studies reveal that fathers in early childhood attend school-based meetings at a higher rate and engage more often in behaviors such as reading to their child and spend more time in companionship activities with their young children. When measuring father involvement in early childhood, researchers use constructs that embody a wide array of behaviors. Play and companionship are types of involvement that are often examined (Fagan, 1996, 2000a; Kerns & Barth, 1995; Lindsey & Mize, 2001; Lindsey, Mize, & Pettit, 1997; Paquette,

2004) and frequently cited as taking up most of fathers' time with their children (McBride & Mills, 1993; Yeung et al., 2001). Other frequently cited activities are "child care," "caregiving," or "physical care" (Aldous, Mulligan, & Bjarnason, 1998; Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999; Culp, Schadle, Robinson, & Culp, 2000; Grbich, 1995; McBride, 1990; Page & Bretherton, 2001, 2003; Young & Roopnarine, 1994). Other researchers specify behaviors, such as "formal child support" or "financial support" (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1997; Greene & Moore, 2000). Specific academic involvement behaviors such as supporting literacy or other educational activities are also studied (Downer, 2007; Fagan, 1998; Karther, 2002; Ortiz, Stile, & Brown, 1999). Other early childhood-specific behaviors include disciplinary practices (DeKlyen, Biernbaum, Speltz, & Greenberg, 1998; Page & Bretherton, 2003; Volling & Elins, 1998; Winsler, 2005) or involvement in programmatic activities such as attendance at school events (Raikes, Summers, & Roggman, 2005).

Methodology for Early Childhood Literature Review

A comprehensive systematic review of the father involvement literature in early childhood was undertaken by Downer et al. (in press). The database, a subset of articles and coding protocol used in the Downer et al. manuscript was used in this more in-depth critique of studies with Latino families. The following description highlights the methodology of the original literature review. Please refer to the original manuscript for a complete description. The original literature review commenced with a comprehensive search for peer-reviewed journal articles on father involvement with an early childhood population. The selection criteria at the commencement of the search were intentionally broad. Peer-reviewed journal articles focusing on father involvement and early childhood (infant to second grade), with publication years between 1990 and 2005, were sought. The following nine online databases were used in the search: *Education: A SAGE Full-Text Collection*; *ERIC*; *IBBS: International Bibliography of the Social Sciences*; *Linguistics & Language Behavior Abstract*; *Psychology: A SAGE Full-Text Collection*; *Psych Info*; *Social Services Abstracts*; *Sociological Abstracts*; and *Sociology: A SAGE Full-Text Collection*. All the following keywords were searched both independently and in combinations, as appropriate: father, male, father involvement, Head Start, early childhood, and preschool. All articles (1,125 entries) were initially imported into a Web-based bibliographic management software program. The next phase involved sifting through abstracts in order to eliminate irrelevant articles

and chapters, namely, those that did not concern father involvement despite containing keywords (e.g., studies examining the dearth of male teachers in early grades). Studies of fathers with children beyond second grade were also removed. The articles were coded along nine characteristics such as emphasis of the article (e.g., theoretical, conceptual, and empirical), content focus (e.g., child outcomes, intervention, or determinants of father involvement), and methods used (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods), or several sampling characteristics of the empirical articles (e.g., age, SES, and sample size; see Table 1). Independent coders were the authors listed in the original publication, inclusive of two associate professors, a doctoral student, and an advanced undergraduate student. Independent coders established reliability at 95% on 15% of the articles gathered. Intercoder reliability was assessed on 25% of the remaining articles, and reliability continued to be at or above 95%. Among the nine coding categories was a category that identified ethnicity of the sample used in empirical studies (e.g., minority, nonminority, mixed, or NA). In all, Downer and his colleagues retained 291 peer-reviewed articles for analysis of their review, 220 of which were empirical studies.

Thus, for the purposes of this review, a subset of articles from the Downer et al. (in press) manuscript was chosen. Of the 220 father-involvement empirical studies, 16 articles (7% of the empirical articles) reported that at least 25% of their samples comprised Latinos. Of these 16 articles, 8 reported having samples of at least 50% Latino participants. Table 2 provides a listing and a brief summary of these 16 articles.

Cultural Perspectives

Although the early childhood father-involvement literature has matured in respect to certain areas of study (e.g., the exploration of determinants of father involvement and investigation of outcomes associated with paternal involvement; Downer et al., in press), other areas remain relatively unexamined. Leading scholars have emphasized the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors in the fatherhood studies (Cabrera & García-Coll, 2004; Marsiglio et al., 2000) and the use of theoretical models to ground empirical research (Roggman et al., 2004); yet, this review has found that these recommendations, as a whole, have not been addressed.

Examining approaches to father involvement research with African American families may provide clues to researchers interested in Latino father populations. Research with African American fathers has tended to perpetuate the stereotype of a familial structure where the father is either absent or

Table 1
Coding Categories for Father Involvement Articles

-
1. Emphasis
 - a—Theoretical/conceptual
 - b—Empirical
 - c—Literature review or meta-analyses
 - d—Other (position/policy/interview)
 2. Content focus
 - a—Determinants of father involvement
 - b—Intervention
 - c—Child outcomes
 - e—Well-being and identity
 - f—Descriptive
 - g—Perceptions
 - h—Other
 3. Methods
 - a—Qualitative
 - b—Quantitative
 - c—Mixed methods
 - d—NA
 4. Age (Code *a*, *b*, *c*, or *d* only if study reports 90% or more of that variable)
 - a—Infant (younger than 3 years)
 - b—Preschool (age 3-5 years)
 - c—Kindergarten
 - d—First
 - e—Mix of early childhood
 - f—NA
-

Note: Adapted from Downer et al. (in press). Other coding categories included father's relationship to child, residential status, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and the study's sample size. NA = not applicable.

uninvolved (McAdoo, 1993; Smith, Krohn, Chu, & Best, 2005). Terms like “dysfunctional,” “deviant,” and “invisible” were often used to describe young African American fathers (Gibbs, 1988; Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999). Researchers frequently compared low-income African American fathering behaviors to that of White middle- or high-income fathers, holding the White fathers as the benchmark for measuring fathering behaviors and considering behaviors that do not reach this benchmark or fall outside the spectrum of acceptable behaviors as deviant (Mirandé, 1991). The bulk of the research on African American fathers tended to be based on men who were young, poorly educated, unwed, and living in poverty (Roopnarine, 2004).

Research, however, is beginning to break from the traditional deficit stance of exploring African American fathers. Increasingly, research shows that regardless of age and SES, African American fathers show interest in their children, and are nurturing and sensitive to the needs of their children (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992; Hossain & Roopnarine, 1994; McAdoo, 1981). Studies also indicate that even in the face of economic barriers to direct involvement, the overwhelming majority of African

Table 2
Latino Father Involvement Articles (n = 16)

Author(s) and Year ^a	Percentage of Latino ^b (N)	Methodology	Focus/Foci of Study
Coley and Morris (2002)	53% (228)	Maternal and paternal interviews	Determinants of involvement, rating scales, and maternal and paternal interrater congruence
Fagan (1998)	29% (85)	Paternal interviews	Psychological and social determinants of involvement
Fagan (2000a)	29% (73)	Maternal and paternal rating scales	Association between parental styles, child care involvement and child outcomes
Fagan (2000b)	35% (37)	Paternal time-diary and rating scales	Impact of daily stressors on time spent with children
Fagan and Fantuzzo (1999)	28% (134)	Teacher, maternal, and paternal rating scales	Multirater congruence of child competency between mothers, fathers, and teachers
Fagan and Iglesias (1999)	29% (146)	Quasi-experimental design	Intervention study on fathers show positive association between intervention and involvement
Isley et al. (1996)	40% (116)	Maternal and paternal observation during play	Associations of parental interactions during play and child social acceptance among teachers and peers
Landale and Oropesa (2001)	100% (53)	Maternal interviews	Determinants of involvement for nonresidential and residential fathers

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Author(s) and Year ^a	Percentage of Latino ^b (N)	Methodology	Focus/Foci of Study
Mincy et al. (2005)	28% (3,254)	Three single-item measures of paternal involvement	Paternity identification associated with levels of father involvement
Raikes et al. (2005)	26% (326)	Paternal interviews and rating scales	Determinants of father involvement in home- and center-based activities
Roopnarine and Ahmeduzzaman (1993)	100% (40)	Paternal rating scale	Associations between father involvement, functional style within the family, and caregiving investment
Sangi-Haghpeykar, Mehta, Posner, and Poindexter (2005)	100% (300)	Maternal rating scale	Determinants of father care during mother pregnancy
Shannon et al. (2002)	63% (65)	Paternal observations; cognitive measures; paternal rating scales	Outcome study of father-child interactions & child outcomes
Shears et al. (2002)	59% (87)	Paternal interviews	Intergenerational transmission of fathering and association with father outcomes
Stantz and Smith (1994)	100% (60)	Maternal and paternal interview; teacher reports	Parental styles and perceived social supports associated with child outcomes
Taylor and Behnke (2005)	100% (32)	Semistructured paternal interviews; qualitative coding methods	Determinants of father involvement; cultural, immigration, and intergenerational influences

Note: For ease of presentation, percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

a. Complete citations can be found in reference section.

b. Includes mother and father reporters of father involvement.

American fathers wish they could spend more time with their children (Hyde & Texidor, 1994). Additionally, studies suggest that when compared to White fathers, African American fathers are as involved in terms of time spent in direct activities with their child (Hossain & Roopnarine, 1994) and are more involved in Early Head Start-related activities and in monitoring their children's activities (Raikes et al., 2005; Toth & Xu, 1999). Others, however, have found inconsistent results (Yeung et al., 2001). Although the prevailing view of African American fathers has been of a homogeneous group (Mirandé, 1991), the literature is beginning to consider the diversity within which African American fathers are raising their children (e.g., regional, economic, family structure; Coley, 2001; Roopnarine, 2004; Smith et al., 2005). Researchers are also cautioned about the tendency to approach African American or other ethnic minority groups as a deviation from the White norm (Allen, 1981; Mirandé, 1991, 1997). Mirandé states that, "The African-American family should be viewed as a distinct cultural form that has been shaped by unique social, historical, economic, and political forces rather than as a deficient White family" (Mirandé, 1991, p. 56).

Latino Parent Involvement

The literature on Latino parental involvement is just beginning to emerge. In order to fully consider Latino fathers, we must first explore Latino families in the United States. The term Latino encompasses a highly heterogeneous group of individuals. The term has come to include persons who can trace their origins to Latin American and Caribbean nations. More than 20 countries and territories, several languages, and the gamut of racial groupings (African, Asian, White, and Native peoples) are included here. Among the Latinos in the United States, great heterogeneity also exists in levels of education, SES, generational status, legal status, and cultural beliefs and practices. Migration experiences also account for differences in how Latinos begin to incorporate themselves into U.S. society. Although the term Latino describes a highly heterogeneous population, the term Latino also describes shared values that cut across this varied group, including language, religion, music, and perceptions around family value configurations (Cabrera & García-Coll, 2004; Suárez-Orozco & Paéz, 2002).

Although Latinos are currently the largest minority group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), a lack of cross-cultural awareness, understanding, and communication continues to pervade program practice and policy decisions that tend to present structural/institutional barriers to

immigrant parents (Chapa, 2001; Gandara, 2001; Orfield, 2001). Latino immigrants continue to be underrepresented in the very research that might serve to remedy the state of the literature (Ceballo, 2004).

Typically, perceptions of Latino parents' involvement have taken a negative tone (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). This includes the society at large, which perceives some Latinos as lazy and a drain on social services, to school administrators, teachers, and policymakers who have commonly claimed that Latino parents are not involved in their child's academic endeavors and, therefore, do not care about their child's academic success (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Goldenberg, 1987; Torres-Guzmán, 1991). Teachers and administrators have also asserted that inherent cultural factors exist which preclude the academic success of this population (Goldenberg, 1987; Valenzuela, 1999). Other allegations were based on superficial observation of parental behaviors, such as low turnout at parent-teacher conferences and PTA meetings. Researchers who call attention to the cultural mismatch between home and school environments emphasize the need to understand and incorporate conceptualizations of parent involvement within different cultures (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Lee, 2005; Slaughter-Defoe, 1995; Torres-Guzmán, 1991). These claims also ignore barriers to involvement in ways that mainstream White families may be involved (e.g., volunteering in the classroom and attending PTA meetings). Researchers have found that logistical barriers, such as multiple jobs, long work hours, cultural and linguistic impediments, such as inability to speak English or being unaware of school expectations, and perceptions of and actual discriminatory practices precluded parental involvement in the schools for Latino families (Bermúdez & Márquez, 1996; Martinez et al., 2004; Sosa, 1997). Contrary to prior negative assumptions about certain immigrant groups not valuing education (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995), the importance of education to immigrant Latino families is readily evident (Ceballo, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Lopéz, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

The parenting and family involvement literature show that Latino family involvement practices do exist and manifest in culturally specific manners (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Toth & Xu, 1999). For instance, ethnographic studies reveal that immigrant parents often place particular emphasis on a strong work ethic and achievement as a means for upward mobility in U.S. society (Lopéz, 2001). Ceballo (2004) found that even when parents did not feel equipped to help their children with specific schoolwork, they provided for their children's education in other ways, such as autonomy-granting, emotional support, and having role models outside the immediate family context. Other qualitative work has revealed that Latino families support

their children by transmitting encouragement, advice, and inspiration through narratives about their past and present hardships (Villanueva, 1996). However, involvement behaviors such as providing emotional and moral encouragement, and support in other forms (e.g., the creation of informal parenting networks) typically go unrecognized by the school personnel (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Torres-Guzmán, 1991; Valenzuela, 1999).

Further, Latinos have been recognized to value the notion of *educacion*—a concept that broadens education to one that incorporates a sense of morality and of being a good and respectful person (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995; Reese, Gallimore, Balzano, & Goldenberg, 1991). Researchers argue that strong cultural, familial, and community ties act as protective factors against numerous challenges met by recent immigrants and promote children's educational achievement (Portés & Rumbaut, 2001). Parental involvement, more specifically, has been found to be a protective factor against barriers to success, such as linguistic differences, low SES and discrimination (Martinez et al., 2004; Villanueva, 1996).

Torres-Guzmán (1991) asserts that current thinking about parent involvement by researchers, administrators and teachers is done in a de-contextualized manner, divorced from the reality faced on a daily basis by Latino (often immigrant) parents. She contends that administrators should take into account the cultural aspects of the minority populations and reframe the way they conceptualize parent involvement in their schools by creating “cultural congruence” in home-school relationships. Villanueva (1996) points out existing similarities in involvement between mainstream and Latino cultures and suggests that schools focus on these areas of congruence in order to promote students' academic success. Other studies assert that in order to understand Latino family involvement practices, researchers and educators must partner with the members of the home culture on initiatives that promote involvement and the empowerment of the community (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Goldenberg, 1987).

Latino Fathers

Although interest in Latino and expanding U.S. immigrant Latino population families has grown over the past 30 years (Suárez-Orozco & Paéz, 2002), a review of father involvement within the Latino population reveals scant research in this area (Cabrera & García-Coll, 2004; Mirandé, 1991; Parke et al., 2004). It is important to reinforce that when describing Latino fathers, practitioners and researchers should consider the enormous amount

of variability that exists within this group. Latino fathers will differ as a function of differences in country of origin, education, acculturation, age of father, employment pressures, immigration status, and generation status, among other factors. The information presented below is useful due to its degree of generalizability; however, individual and within-group differences should always be considered.

Early research on Latino fathers subscribed to a traditional view of fathering, which held that Latino fathers were often distant and behaved according to stereotyped roles typified by “machismo” (Mirandé, 1997). These behaviors include violent manners of disciplining children and being the unilateral “lord and master” of the home (Mirandé, 1988). Although machismo is a core cultural concept for many Latinos, anthropologists have often focused on the negative aspects of this notion, misrepresenting the construct and ignoring positive behaviors such as protection and providing for the family. Indeed, ethnographic work shows that Latino fathers often appear to be warm, nurturing, and companionable, especially with young children (Mirandé, 1991). Quantitative work has also begun to question the traditionalist views of Latino fathers. For example, Toth and Xu (1999) found that Latino fathers spend more time in direct interactions with their children than their White and African American counterparts. Other studies found that Mexican American fathers spend the same amount of time in child monitoring and housework as their White counterparts (Adams, Coltrane, & Parke, 2004). Toth and Xu (1999) also find that although Latino fathers may be more “traditional” in their ideology of fathering, their behaviors lean more towards an egalitarian practice of fathering (also see Sanchez, 1997).

Several researchers have looked to redefine the term “machismo” given the new context in which Latino fathers find themselves. For example, ethnographic studies reveal that for many Mexicans and Mexican Americans, this term has come to encompass notions of protection, providing for the family, respect for the family, and a heightened awareness of the need for formal education (Mirandé 1991, 1997; Taylor & Behnke, 2005). In their qualitative work, Auerbach, Silverstein, Wolderberg, Peguero, and Tacher (in press) posit the notion of “creolization” to represent how three groups of Latin American men (Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Mexican) living in the United States are redefining their traditional identities by blending traditional and progressive views within their new context.

As in research with African American fathers, leading researchers in this literature also note that most social science research with Latino fathers hold White, middle-income families as the standard to which these minorities are

compared, and any departure from this norm is seen as maladaptive (Mirandé, 1991; Parke et al., 2004; Roopnarine & Ahmeduzzaman, 1993). Mirandé (1991) concludes that “The most persistent theme in the traditional social science literature on racial/ethnic families is that such families are somehow deviant or defective Anglo-American families” (p. 75). Using this deficit-based traditional model also assumes homogeneity within ethnic minority groups and discards strengths within different cultures such as positive effects of intergenerational transmission of fatherhood and familial ideals (Taylor & Behnke, 2005; Villanueva, 1996). This type of research also misses the notion that traditional values are ever-changing and are shaped by social, immigration, and economic factors (Auerbach et al., in press; Mirandé, 1991).

Latino Father Involvement in Early Childhood

Still, fewer studies have been conducted focusing on Latino fathers during early childhood. Most research of father involvement with Latino families has been conducted mainly with school-age children and adolescents. Given these limitations, and in order to broaden the scope of this review, the studies included below have reported samples of at least 25% Latino fathers and/or children during the period of early childhood.

Overall, this literature still shoulders the burden of dispelling prior negative stereotypes of Latino fathers. Typically, statements such as “findings do not support the stereotype that Latino fathers . . .” are made. Other studies encourage future researchers to move away from deficit models when exploring Latino father involvement and challenge old stereotypic notions of “machismo” in favor of a new notion of this old construct (Hossain, Field, Pickens, Malphurs, & Del Valle, 1997; Mirandé 1991; Roopnarine & Ahmeduzzaman, 1993; Taylor & Behnke, 2005).

Authors have mostly concerned themselves with questions on involvement and child outcomes with this population (Fagan, 2000a; Fagan & Iglesias, 2000; Isley, O’Neil, & Parke, 1996; Siantz & Smith, 1994). These studies in general find positive correlations between paternal involvement behaviors such as parenting style, communication between fathers and the child’s school, and child care responsibilities (e.g., preparing meals, getting children dressed or bathing children), and child social and academic outcomes. These findings are consistent with findings within the broader parent and father involvement literatures (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Barnard, 2004; Epstein, 1991, 1994; Fagan & Iglesias, 1999, 2000; Shannon et al., 2002; Sobolewski & King, 2005).

Also consistent with the broader involvement literatures, studies comparing time of involvement between mothers and fathers find that mothers are still engaged in the vast majority of parenting behaviors, compared to fathers (Roopnarine & Ahmeduzzaman, 1993). However, compared to similar studies conducted with White fathers (Toth & Xu, 1999), findings suggest that Latino fathers spend about as much or more time engaged in child care activities as do White fathers, in proportion to mothers.

Few studies with Latino populations have considered determinants of paternal involvement. Fagan (1998) found that higher levels of involvement (accessibility and direct interactions such as reading) were positively related to mothers' employment, income, and paternal nurturance. Landale and Oropesa (2001) found that the father's employment status was a significant predictor in their involvement with child care activities and in meeting financial responsibilities.

More studies have examined differing styles, behaviors, and time spent in involvement between distinct minority groups (Fagan, 1998, 2000b). Inconsistent findings have often been found where one group of fathers "outperforms" another group (Toth & Xu, 1999) in involvement behaviors such as preparing meals, buying children's clothing, and taking their child to the doctor (Fagan, 1998, 2000b). Raikes et al. (2005) examined Early Head Start fathers' center-specific activities, such as participating in meetings, dropping the child off at the center and participating in home visits. Their findings suggest that minority parents, including Latinos, were more involved with these activities than their White counterparts. Qualitative findings indicate that Latino fathers placed a high value on their role as a teacher and role model for their children and also saw themselves as educators (Raikes et al., 2005).

Finally, few studies have examined the intergenerational transmission of fathering behaviors. Shears and colleagues found positive associations between a man's reported relationship with his own father and his present relationship with his child (Shears, Robinson, & Emde, 2002). Taylor and Behnke (2005) also identify intergenerational influences as a determinant of father involvement (e.g., having high aspirations for their children, meeting financial responsibilities, caretaker, playing with their children) during early childhood (along with gender ideology and immigration influences).

Conclusion and Future Research

Broadly speaking, in this literature, as in the general fathering literature, authors are failing to ground their studies in either a theory of father

involvement, or a theory which takes into account cultural and contextual factors (Cabrera & García-Coll, 2004; Roggman et al., 2004). Most studies that espouse a specific theory limit their conceptual discussions to specific paternal involvement constructs and rarely account for broader ecological factors. Several of these studies examine specific parenting styles or isolated involvement behaviors such as changing diapers, bathing, or attending meetings, without providing a rationale for including such variables within a cultural context. These studies also tend to use partial models of involvement, such as only employing the “engagement” piece of Lamb’s (1987) tripartite model (Toth & Xu, 1999). Other studies that do examine broader ecological factors, such as the adverse effects of poverty, still fail to ground their study in theory. Without couching these variables within a culture context, researchers lose the “structure and meaning” of their inquiry (Roggman et al., 2002). These variables simply become bases for comparisons, which provide us with information, but fail to help us truly understand the unique contribution of fathers within different cultural contexts.

Of course, exceptions exist. In his study of low-income African American and Puerto Rican parenting styles, Fagan (2000a) uses a cultural ecology model to frame his study, finding significant associations between parenting styles and ethnicity. In an earlier study, Fagan (1998) used Lamb’s tripartite model to examine determinants of father involvement in Head Start. Other studies also use a cultural ecology model to examine the involvement of Latino fathers (Roopnarine & Ahmeduzzaman, 1993) or use an “adaptive-resilient” perspective, highlighting family strengths and cultural contexts (Hossain et al., 1997). Taylor and Behnke (2005) conducted qualitative research on Mexican fathers on both sides of the U.S. border. In their study, these authors used both ecological theories, focusing primarily on the macrosystem (e.g., cultural beliefs and geographic location), and family systems theories to guide their research on fathering beliefs and practices. The ecological model allows researchers to better understand and account for the variability and complexity within one group of Latinos in the United States (Cabrera & García-Coll, 2004). This conceptual framework also helps distinguish between determinants of involvement attributed to Latino culture that may be secondary to determinants attributed to factors of acculturation or socioeconomic forces.

Another way to advance our understanding of Latino fathers is to address the methodological shortcomings within the literature. One of the most glaring issues is the paucity of adequate measures used in these studies. Several studies continue to use inadequate involvement measures, such as one- or two-item measures of involvement (Mincy, Garfinkel, &

Nepomnyaschy, 2005), overrelied-on mothers as primary informers for father involvement (Landale & Oropesa, 2001), or used measures developed for use with either White middle class samples or mothers. Few studies did use measures validated with populations other than White middle class samples (Fagan & Fantuzzo, 1999; Roopnarine & Ahmeduzzaman, 1993). The use of instruments not developed in a culturally sensitive manner provides minimal relevant information about the target population (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). Other studies which use these culturally unsubstantiated measures fail to report construct and content validity statistics in their studies. Studies that provided some information on their measures provided vague statistics such as "moderately good internal consistency," with a few reporting reliability coefficients above .70 (Fagan & Fantuzzo, 1999; Raikes et al., 2005; Roopnarine & Ahmeduzzaman, 1993).

Fantuzzo and colleagues (2000) coconstructed a multidimensional measure of family involvement with parents, teachers, and administrators within an urban school context. In developing this measure, they used a developmental/ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1992) and Epstein's (1995) multidimensional parent involvement framework to guide their work. This measure was developed specifically for use with urban students (mostly children of African American descent) in prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade. Using a partnership-based model, Fantuzzo and his colleagues (2000) developed the measure in collaboration with the participant groups ensuring that cultural and content validity were fully considered. This study represents a step in the direction of not only conceptualizing involvement as a multidimensional construct but also setting a precedent for the use of theory and community partnerships in the development of methodologically and theoretically sound and responsible parental involvement measures. Even while considering contextual and cultural factors, Fantuzzo et al. (2000) found that further research is needed to better understand the cultural determinants of family involvement within this community.

Parke and his associates (2004) suggest that current empirical findings on Latino fathers are biased due to a paucity of adequate measures. They advocate the use of qualitative research to inform the empirical literature. In his research, Parke promotes the use of focus groups and a narrative approach that can tap into the meaning of fatherhood for Latino fathers and capture the breadth and uniqueness of fathering issues faced by Latino men (Parke et al., 2004).

As mentioned previously, most of the studies in this niche of research are continuing to draw information from low-income populations. This is a group in need of much attention; however, there is danger when differential

findings (in comparison to White middle class populations) are viewed from a deficit perspective, attributed to culture and generalized to the Latino population at large without properly separating and accounting for the effects of poverty (Downer et al., in press; Nelson, 2004; McAdoo, 1981).

The bulk of these studies, as with the Latino fatherhood literature in general, examine fathering among Mexican, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican populations (Fagan 1998, 2000a; Landale & Oropesa, 2001; Parke et al., 2004; Roopnarine & Ahmeduzzaman, 1993; Taylor & Behnke, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999; Villanueva, 1996). Several articles did not provide information on the country of origins for their Latino samples (Hossain et al., 1997; Raikes et al., 2005; Shannon et al., 2002). It is important for future researchers to consider that the composition of Latinos across the United States has changed dramatically. The so-called New Latinos are emigrating in large numbers from other countries, such as Ecuador, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic (Suro, 2002; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). These changes in population types bring with them additional variations in cultural practices and experiences from their home countries of origin (Cabrera & García-Coll, 2004; Parke et al., 2004; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

One glaring omission in this literature was the topic of immigration. Taylor and Behnke's (2005) study of Mexican fathers in Mexico and the United States was the only one reviewed in this early childhood literature that considered the impact of immigration and acculturation on parenting. Their qualitative research found that immigration influences were one of the three dominant themes depicting determinants of Latino father involvement (in addition to gender ideology and intergenerational influences). As mentioned earlier, immigration and the experiences that accompany this process have tremendous effects on the eventual psychological, physical, and educational well-being of families, and specifically children (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Studies of Latino fathers that neglect this life experience fail to paint a complete picture of involvement with their children. In Auerbach et al.'s (in press) qualitative work, they highlight how Latino and Latino immigrant fathers engage in a process of redefining their identities as fathers as a function of being in a new country.

Discussions about differences in fathering practices as a function of child's gender are also missing from this niche in the literature. The broader father-involvement literature also lacks unequivocal evidence regarding parenting differences as a function of child gender. However, some findings have been made. McWayne, Campos, and Owsianik (in press) found that in minority and immigrant families (Latino and Polish) fathers of boys reported having more communication with their son's Head Start program

than did fathers of girls. Other studies suggest that fathers of young children are more involved with their boys who “misbehave” than they are with their girls (Dobbs, Arnold, & Doctoroff, 2004). Given the positive impact of fathers’ involvement on child outcomes, it would be important to gain a fuller understanding of this specific determinant of father involvement.

Finally, missing from this and other studies has been the discussion of how father involvement differs during early childhood compared to other periods of a child’s life. Do father involvement levels decrease with the child’s age in the Latino population as it does with the population at large? Do father involvement behaviors contribute to academic and social-emotional outcomes? At this point only a few studies address this question (Fagan, 2000a; Fagan & Iglesias, 2000; Siantz & Smith, 1994), limiting the generalizability of these findings. Which involvement behaviors are unique to early childhood? What determinants of involvement are unique to Latino fathers of young children? These and a host of other questions within this literature remain unanswered.

The future of this nascent literature would benefit from (a) the development of theory embedded in cultural context and adherence theory to ground empirical studies, (b) greater qualitative work to inform theory, (c) empirical work which tests the usefulness of grounding theories and measures, and (d) the development and use of culturally sensitive measures informed and validated by qualitative studies. Researchers should seriously consider using variables that are beyond the traditional variables used in the literature at large (Parke et al., 2004). For example, what is the impact of generational status, acculturation, levels of education, country of origin, and nontraditional, family-identified father roles? What roles do structural or linguistic barriers play? How does this multidimensional construct differ among Latino fathers as a function of cultural practices?

Rather than flooding the literature with comparisons of fathers across ethnic lines, this literature should consider first fully exploring the meanings behind cultural constructs and practices. Without the benefit of qualitative information, and the use of culturally appropriate models and measures, researchers could risk missing the unique contributions that Latino fathers have made to the development of their young children.

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