

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: MEANING MAKING FOR IMMIGRANT LATINO FATHERS
IN DYNAMIC FAMILY CONTEXTS

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Existing research on fathers has historically focused on fatherhood involvement with children as a cornerstone of paternity. These studies have primarily used White-male fathers as the exemplary demographic (Campos, 2008). However, less has been said about immigrant Latino father's parenting and even less about their process of fatherhood meaning making. The present study used a qualitative approach to better understand immigrant Latino men's accounts of their fathering in dynamic contexts. The data used consisted of transcribed life history interviews conducted with 19 immigrant Latino fathers who were recruited from a HEAD START program and lived in neighborhoods of Chicago, Illinois. In using this method, insights of their experiences and perspectives on fathering were discerned into three chapters. The findings suggest that the fatherhood meaning making for this sample was fluid and influenced by relationships and context. The analysis provides four major contributions to Latino fatherhood literature: immigrant Latino fathers exemplify a different kind of machismo that is multidimensional; protection was important to fathers and embedded in context; fathers were active agents that conveyed *familismo* through practicing and teaching family values; and the cultural value of *familismo* looks into the future and enriches efforts to create a family legacy.

MEANING MAKING FOR IMMIGRANT LATINO FATHERS IN DYNAMIC
FAMILY CONTEXTS

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Slayton (2012) describes fatherhood as always being “one of the cornerstones of civilizations”, suggesting the importance of fathers to societies and family life (p. 24). Latino fathers in particular have become a recent group of interest to fatherhood literature (Campos, 2008). Compared to other fathers studied, Latino fathers are part of an increasing ethnic population in the United States, face certain economic difficulties, and are exposed to situational and relational risk factors (Campos, 2008; Saracho, 2003; Saracho & Spodek, 2008). Latino families and men have largely and disproportionately been portrayed in the literature as a population characterized by low-income socioeconomic status (SES), high risk factors, and generalizations about immigration experience. However, Latinos are very diverse especially among its immigrant populations in the United States and the literature does not necessarily address within group differences or account for personal experiences of immigrant Latino fathers. Thus far, labor status has been the main factor used to differentiate between Latino groups (Zinn & Wells, 2008, p. 225), but there is an absence of insight on family experiences and contexts that shape Latino men as fathers.

Latino fathers have often been conceptualized as a homogeneous ethnic group, when in fact, their parenting and identities as fathers are dynamic and complex. Latino fathers resemble a variety of distinct cultural values and behaviors that distinguish them from each other, and from other ethno-cultural groups of fathers. In particular, Mexican American men have become the focus of fatherhood research for their unique collectivist kinship structure and distinct life experiences (Zinn & Wells, 2000, p. 254). Generally, *Mexican American* has been used as a blanket term to represent Latinos of different nationalities in the United States despite large intergroup differences within these populations (Saracho, 2003; Zinn & Wells, 2000, p. 254).

When studying fathers, the concept of fatherhood involvement has dominated fatherhood literature. It has mainly been illustrated quantitatively through measurable behaviors based on descriptions from partners and children (Palkovitz, 2002, p. 66), but has lacked a culturally sensitive approach of accounts from personal experiences of Latino fathers themselves. Indirectly, fatherhood involvement has been conceptualized as acts that require intention and when accomplished, equate to good fathering. To further elaborate on the idea of intentionality, Slayton (2012) said that “good dads are made, not born” and states that having good father figures is not necessary for being a good father (p.14). The literature has suggested that the determinants of fatherhood involvement are contingent on motivation, skill set, and work related influences when in the “breadwinner” role (Lamb, 1987, p. 21).

For Latino fathers, involvement has been described as influenced by family values, financial stability, and context (Parra-Cardona, Wampler, & Sharp, 2006). Specifically regarding Latino men, a shift in the literature has highlighted that they are presenting a “hybrid fathering style” that exhibits a balance between traditional and modern perspectives of parenting (Cabrera & Bradley, 2012, p. 233). However, fatherhood literature and especially that describing Latino fathers has focused on behavioral aspects of this role, while neglecting to provide sufficient information on fatherhood meaning making for this population. Also, although advances have been made in fatherhood literature as a whole, the standard of comparison and information present is largely representative of Caucasian fathers in the United States (Campos, 2008). Expanding knowledge on immigrant Latino fathers is an essential part of establishing growth and providing depth to fatherhood literature as a whole. This population of interest brings forth a plethora of experiences and perspectives that have not been fully exposed. The interest of this

study is to explore immigrant Latino fathers' perspectives on fathering and how they make sense of fatherhood.

Literature Review

Latino Families and Men in Changing Cultural Contexts

It is important to discuss historical information about Latino immigration in order to better understand immigrant Latino family dynamics and one of its main members, the father. Latino men and women became the fastest growing minority population in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century. According to the US Census Bureau, they are expected to increase to become about 30% of the national population by the year 2050 (Bergad & Klein, 2010, p. 1). In particular, immigrants of Mexican descent are the "largest and most diverse" group of Latinos, and 36% of immigrant fathers in Latino families are Mexican natives (Zambrana, 1995, p. 22; Chuang & Moreno, 2008, p. 49). The term Hispanic was created in the United States to define Latinos as a person of no specific race who is of "Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture" (Idler, 2007, p. 125). By 2005, 65% of all Hispanics in the US were of Mexican descent (Bergad & Klein, 2010, p. 67).

Most of the earliest immigration of Mexican families to the United States emerged in the Southwest region of the United States, stretching back as early as the 1850s. Although Southwest United States had the largest concentration of Latinos for many decades, as of 2010, their residency in different areas of the United States became more evenly distributed (Bergad & Klein, 2010, p. 2). For example, by the 1950s, a greater quantity of Mexican families had moved to Chicago (Skop, Gratton, & Guttman, 2006), and by 2005, approximately 60-70% of the Latinos in various regions of Illinois were of Mexican descent. Prior to that, in the 1980s, Florida

had become as a state with a large concentration for this specific population of Latinos (Bergad & Klein, 2010, p. 69-71).

The most pronounced growth of Mexican families occurred with the rise of immigration between the years 1980 and 2005, impacting the overall local and national Latino population in the United States (Bergad & Klein, 2005, p.74). The Mexican American Latino population in the United States has grown rapidly due to immigration, but it also increased as a result of high fertility rates. Mexican families have an average fertility rate of three children; this is one of the highest rates of childbirth among Latino immigrant families (Bergad & Klein, 2005, p. 99). Consequently, second-generation racial identities in the United States, Mexican Americans the highest number of children and adolescents (Portes et al., 2009, p. 637).

Initial waves of Latino immigration consisted of families entering the United States together, but beginning in the 1920s there was a shift to adults immigrating individually (Bergad & Klein, 2010, p.19). Individual migrations occurred among Latinos of various nationalities, but were Mexican and Puerto Rican men who were among the ones brought to the United States to fulfill labor necessities during and after World War I (Portes et al., 2009, p. 639). Although such individualized immigration for working adults may have facilitated entrance into the United States and attainment of a job, physical separation from family members created a disruption in Latino family structure and for the individual in the new country.

Despite this rapid expansion of the Latino population in the United States, families still struggle with assimilation and resist relinquishment of their native Spanish language (Bergad & Klein, 2010, p. 3). This limited linguistic acculturation resistant to Westernized standards may put at risk Latinos who seek to earn a more financially stable future for their families. Moreover, beyond language barriers, structural factors such as economic and social marginalization also

strongly affect Latino families (Zinn & Wells, 2008). For instance, limited skill development and lower social class backgrounds are examples of macrostructural factors that hinder Latino families from acquiring essential resources and from achieving upward mobility (Portes, Fernandez-Kelley, & Haller, 2009, p. 644).

Striving for the American dream with hopes of attaining a more prosperous lifestyle has often required that Latinos endure a number of sacrifices and challenges (Portes et al., 2009, p. 636). First generation Latinos for instance, were marginalized and confined to “structural conditions” that limited upward mobility in the United States (Portes et al., 2009, p. 639; Zinn & Wells, 2008, p. 226). Despite great efforts to acculturate or assimilate, this process is often accompanied by unstable job salaries, separation from family when seeking employment in a different location, possible dangerous and/or unhealthy job conditions, and concern over child-care and racial prejudice from non-Latinos (Zambrana, 1995, p.13). Although acculturating may provide a degree of legal and financial success in the United States, there are risks involved. Latinos who choose to abnegate the traditions and expectations learned in their country of origin may sacrifice their native values and customs that do not align with Westernized society, and thereby may face difficulties in their Latino family relationships. Intergenerational challenges arise when Westernized norms violate Latino country of origin values. For example, according to Zambrana (1995) elderly first generation Mexican Americans may have expected more attention and support from their children, but they were less likely to receive it due to their greater sense of acculturation (p. 8). Hence, suggesting how these intergenerational acculturation processes influence how family values and communication patterns change (Zambrana, 1995, p. 11).

Other varied reasons for the Latino immigration to the United States exist. Some Latinos leave their country of origin to escape violence (Portes et al., 2009, p. 644). For example, a high

number of Cubans immigrated to the US to escape Fidel Castro's communist regime in the early 1960s (Bergad & Klein, 2010, p. 68). Others leave to obtain a better education and financial future. However, in the United States, first and second generation Latinos may face challenges involving low levels of English speaking proficiency. Specifically, Latino men may thrive or struggle to acquire a stable financial living in the United States depending on the extent of their language skills. Hence, settling in the United States places many specific obstacles for Latino men and fathers such as financial difficulties, language barriers, legal issues, and strain on traditional family endeavors.

At face value, the demographics of immigration of Latinos to the United States mainly address numerical categorization of the influx of this population. Yet, in looking deeper, these groups represent countless experiences involving immigration to a new country with a different language, values, and norms. For an ethnic group such as immigrant Latinos, a drastic change such as leaving their country of origin is especially difficult because of their emphasis on family life and ritualistic cultural values (Welland & Ribner, 2008, p.53-56; Zinn & Wells, 2000, p. 254). Information about Mexican American immigration was of interest to the discussion above because it is related to majority of the sample population for this study considering the participants were mainly of Mexican descent that ranged from first to second generation immigrants. Considering terminology used for this study, the term *Latino father(s)* will be used to represent the sample population explored which includes fathers primarily of Mexican descent and one Puerto Rican father. Further discussions of immigration go beyond the scope of the purpose of this study.

Cultural Values for Latino Families and Men

Familismo. Despite differing cultural contexts, Latino families often emphasize cultural values that create continuity across contexts. Existing literature on Latino concur that “cultural behaviors of Latinos are strongly familistic” (Zambrana, 1995, p. 13). *Familismo* is a Latino cultural value that can be described as a sense of loyalty to the nuclear and extended family in which members are expected to provide “emotional and material support” for the well-being of the family (Saracho & Spodek, 2008; Welland & Ribner, 2008, p. 54). *Familismo* is a Latino cultural value that is accompanied by specific behaviors that exemplify honor for the family (Calzada, Tamis-LeMonda, & Yoshikawa, 2012). This strong sense of family can be regarded as a driving force for Latinos in which they reciprocally interact with family members in a wide range of arenas. It is also a means of expressing "strong emotional and value commitments" to family members (Zambrana, 1995, p.7). Specifically, men’s involvement as fathers in Latino families seems to be heavily influenced by *familismo*, gender philosophy, and education than time availability (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004). With *familismo* comes the belief that “family comes before the individual” and as such, the individual is expected to sacrifice personal interests and endeavors in order to care for the family needs (Calzada et al., 2012). Calzada et al. (2012), described the cultural value of *familismo* as a belief that is demonstrated through financial support, shared living and daily activities, immigration support, and childrearing. However, the study cautions that although *familismo* can serve as a benefit to Latinos, it can also incur risks as it limits the scope individuality.

Familismo is accompanied by other values such as *respeto*, *personalismo*, and *simpatia* (Welland & Ribner, 2008, p. 54-56). These values are passed down and enforced by various family members, but have unique connotations for Latino men in family and societal settings.

For instance, *respeto* means giving respect to another as contingent on their “age, social position, economic status, and sex” (Comas-Diaz & Duncan, 1985, p. 464, in Welland & Ribner, 2008, p. 55). For men and fathers in the Latino culture *respeto* delineates hierarchical expectations for respecting authority figures of the family. For example, some men may learn about becoming a father through socialization around the *respeto* they are given and taught by other men in their family. Expressing *respeto* implies having “good social graces” with others, and Latinos with a lower power status learn to show “conformity and obedience” to those of greater power.

Personalismo is about the importance Latinos place in interacting with others by creating a personal relationship. It is related to the value of *simpatia*, which is regarded as having good people skills and interacting with others in a way that make a person likable (Welland & Ribner, 2008, p. 55). Due to their interactive nature, these different dimensions of *familismo* are components that further enrich interactions among Latino fathers and their fathers that can inform fatherhood meaning making.

Familismo plays an influential role in the relationships of Latinos, and as such accounts for the fact that family is a primary support system sought by Latino men (Welland & Ribner, 2008, p.54). Unfortunately, first generation Latino immigrants in the United States have less extended family than other generations of Latinos who have established families of their own or brought members over from their country of origin (Welland & Ribner, 2008, p. 54). Thus, although *familismo* can be considered a great strength of the Latino culture, there is also a concern that Mexican American fathers without it do not seek external support from sources such as social services suggesting that fathers seek support in members they personally know and can trust. (Saracho & Spodek, 2008).

Also, *familismo* is perceived as manifesting on a continuum that can provide costs and benefits to Latinos (Calzada et al., 2012). Ayon, Marsiglia, and Bermudez-Parsai (2010) found that similar to other studies, *familismo* served as a protective factor “against negative mental health outcomes.” Thus, although the cultural value of *familismo* serves different functions for Latinos, it unanimously maintains a sense of cohesion among them due to reinforcement from family members. Essentially, *familismo* is a complex concept that has heavily influenced the way in which Latinos socialize and enact roles within their family and society.

Extended kin. To aid in many of the adversities encountered during the process of immigrating to the United States, Latinos capitalize on their social networks to manage parenting and labor responsibilities. A lack of proper involvement with social support and *familismo* places Latinos at risk for gang involvement and drug use (Zambrana, 1995, p.14-15). Another study of Mexican American adolescents stated that “holding a strong sense of *familismo*” and spending time with their family after-school, served as a protective factor from community violence experiences (Kennedy & Ceballo, 2013, p. 677). These studies suggest that appropriate family involvement provides support and protection to Latinos. However, not all Latinos have their family physically nearby to aid in guidance and protection. To compensate for a lack of extended family members present in the United States, community support can serve as a protective factor against the aforementioned issues by increasing the possibilities for a successful adaptation (Portes et al., 2009, p. 644).

With the efforts of various family members, Latinos learn values and customs specific to their culture that later influence their interactions with others and their environment. Latinos experience socialization through extended family members from an early age and can later be reinforced by partner support. Scholarship on extended family for Latino men shares influences

of partner support in the marital unit (Coltrane et al., 2004), and often refers to the extended kin as a group in general terminology. For example, a wife's education level and both partners' beliefs about sharing parenting and household tasks have been found to influence involvement from men (Coltrane et al., 2004).

Generally, kin relationships are regarded as a resource in which reciprocity is expressed. For instance, this is evident when individuals experiencing a lack of financial resources seek financial support from kin and who later provide it to others (Gerstel, 2011). Family organization often included relationships with extended family that were influenced by social class. Gerstel (2011) found that the meaning of extended kin varied among poor and middle class individuals, such that those in the lower social class sought more support and interaction with kinship networks than individuals in a higher social class. However, an earlier study from Sarkisian et al. (2006) found that Latino men and women were more likely to provide kin support through instrumental and childcare help as opposed to financial aid. Although there are varying social classes and kinship structures among Latinos in the United States, this study aims to focus on low-income working class immigrant Latino men and their experiences with family and context as influences on how they make meaning of fatherhood.

Machismo. For many years, Latino fathers were negatively depicted in the literature as being demanding, cold, and chauvinist which exemplified the old definition of *machismo* (Saracho & Spodek, 2008). In this description, men are assumed to think of themselves superior to women, displaying “hyper-masculine behaviors”, and withholding emotion because it would signify “weakness” and being “less of a man” (Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002, p. 166). In relation to fatherhood involvement, a study by Coltrane et al. (2004) concluded that influences of familismo such as “family cohesion, cooperation, and reciprocity” could account for Mexican

American fathers exhibiting more intimate interactions with their children that displayed a concern for their “health and well-being.” These characteristics challenge the aforementioned historical scholarship depictions of Latino fathers. Machismo can be understood as a value-based term that holds both positive and negative connotations (Taylor & Behnke, 2005).

Within the last 25 years, myths about Mexican American families being “deviant, deficient, and disorganized” have started to be challenged in the literature (Zinn & Wells, 2000). Recent research has explicitly fought to demythologize negative perspectives of Latino men in the literature. Specifically to Latino men, a new definition of *machismo* was introduced in order to highlight positive cultural characteristics related to their strong character and unique cultural views. This definition encompasses characteristics of “respect, honesty, loyalty, fairness, responsibility, and trustworthiness” (Coltrane et al., 2004; Saracho & Spodek, 2008). A Latino father being referred to as a *macho* is thought to be “affectionate, hardworking, and amiable” (Saracho & Spodek, 2008).

Continued support of Latino men exhibit other more positive traits related to their masculinity that have often been overlooked in popular literature. Torres et al. (2002) suggested that *machismo* is linked to gender role identity and concluded that machismo was a multifaceted concept of masculinity comprised of five different groups: “contemporary masculinity, machismo, traditional machismo, conflicted/compassionate machismo, and contemporary machismo” (p.171). Across all Latino groups in this study, the men exemplified behaviors that demonstrated a high priority for family relationships and varying degrees of emotional expression. Markedly, the five groups were not influenced by acculturation factors, which may suggest that overarching traits of *machismo* can be seen in a variety of Mexican American men.

Other studies suggest that although gender is a primal influence over Latino family structures (Zinn & Wells, 2000, p. 256), Latino fathers have challenged their stereotypical descriptions in the media and literature by displaying more egalitarian roles within their families (Saracho & Spodek, 2008). Zambrana (1995) suggests that gender roles and their expectations have become flexible and reactive to “changing circumstances” (p.14). Considering intergroup differences is important when exploring and acknowledging diversity among Latino fathers to suggest that there is no *one* kind of Latino father. Intergroup differences among fathers vary due to factors such as "country of origin, education, acculturation, age of father, employment pressures, immigration status, and generation status" (Campos, 2008, p.146). Of this group of influential factors, nationalities are regarded as an anchor to the diverse sense of identities among Hispanics (Idler, 2007, p.169).

Locating Latino Fathers in Fatherhood Research

Scholarship on immigration experiences of Latinos has been conceptualized through the family unit and rarely based on individual accounts. Fatherhood research does not give insight into how Latino men create meaning as a father. Focus on Latino fathers has been limited to “childrearing practices and extended family bonds” (Saracho & Spodek, 2008, p.83). Fatherhood literature is focused on involvement, but not meaning and it does not address the diversity or contexts of Latino fathering.

Models of father involvement. In father research, fatherhood involvement has been the key indicator of men’s parenting. This particular aspect of fatherhood has been conceptualized mainly through measurable behaviors. Often, these interactions have been delineated by time spent with the child, but have not always addressed the quality of the interactions or meaning the father has derived from them. For example, Saracho and Spodek (2008) discussed findings of a

study that suggest that fathers participate more with childcare and housework when their partners worked more hours.

Traditionally, fatherhood involvement has been explained by a three-part model of fathering introduced by Lamb, Pleck, and colleagues' (Lamb et al., 1985, 1987; Pleck et al., 1986) consisting of "interaction, accessibility, and responsibility." *Interaction* was defined as the father engaging in activities with the child such as "playing, feeding, bathing, disciplining..." *Accessibility* was about the father's availability to the child both physically and psychologically. Finally, *responsibility* was depicted by the father's efforts to look after the well-being of the child, but did not require direct involvement with the child (Rane & McBride, 2000).

Further, through several qualitative studies and observations, Palkovitz (1997) elaborated on the aforementioned tripartite model and introduced three domains of fatherhood involvement: "cognitive, affective, and behavioral" (p. 211). With subgroups included, these three domains consist of categories such as, "communication, teaching, monitoring, thought process, errands, caregiving, child-related maintenance, shared interests, availability, planning, shared activities, providing, affection, protection, and supporting emotionally" (p. 209). These examples of involvement are better thought of as a part of a continuum, rather than as a dichotomy between presence and absence (Palkovitz, 1997, p. 212).

Lamb (1987, p.17-22) also discussed that a father's motivation, support, skill and confidence, and institutional practice are determinants of their involvement with their children. For example, if a father is confident in his ability to change his daughter's diaper and his partner supports that he can complete this task adequately and encourages this behavior, the father is more likely to continue doing it. Thus, feeling competent and supported in their efforts to father,

influences a father's motivation for involvement and may explain involvement past mere physical presence (Bouchard, Lee, Asgary, & Pelletier, 2007).

Although fatherhood involvement is not a one-dimensional construct, it is often described as contingent on certain fathering behaviors. However, other perspectives of involved fathering include the concept of a father 'being there' for their child. This concept surpasses the realm of involvement as understood by physical spaces that involve behaviors such as changing a child's diaper or taking them to school; rather, 'being there' consists of "bonding, stability, consistency, love, and instincts" (Miller, 2011, p. 84). In other studies, differing parenting styles have been drawn upon to understand how certain fathers engage their children and in what circumstances (Cabrera & Bradley, 2012). A fathering style may reflect certain behaviors that are representative of a particular time and context and can also be fluid in its enactment (Palkovitz, 2002, p. 36). For example, a nurturing style of fathering tends to involve "responsivity" and allows father to feel a "sense of 'weness' with their children" (Marsiglio & Roy, 2012, p. 353). This involvement through nurturance can be better understood when examined in context, like in a physical family setting (Marsiglio, Roy, & Fox, 2005, in Marsiglio & Roy, 2012, p. 356).

Father involvement and effects on child development. Fatherhood involvement can begin before a child is born and varies as the child grows (Dudley & Stone, 2004, p. 64). Palkovitz (1997) discusses that a father's manifestation of involvement can have many "interindividual differences", meaning that even when one father claims to be highly involved with his child(ren), his kind of high involvement may look very different than other fathers who claims the same high involvement. Some of these differences are contingent on the father's perspective of what it means to be an involved father (p. 214). For instance, some fathers may work overtime to assure provisions for their family, while another may pass up a promotion to

spend more time with their child, yet both claim that being involved fathers is of their highest priority (Palkovitz, 1997, p. 214).

Research shows that fathers engage their children in different ways, sometimes depending on the age and gender of the child and also that of the father. During the pre-fathering stage, when the child has not been born yet, research has found that fathers are more likely to maximize their participation and involvement when they have received education and structure related to the birth environment (Dudley & Stone, 2004, p. 64; Marsiglio & Roy, 2012, p. 358). During this stage fathers are able to create a sense of attachment to the unborn child with a better understanding of their upcoming responsibilities. Fathers may also begin to realize that there is a greater purpose to their lives and that their actions have implications on their children and family. Research suggests that mothers and fathers interact differently with their children in play and communication styles, where fathers in a one particular study demonstrated more "directness" and assertiveness in their communication than mothers. In the same study, later, as children reach school age, a 26-year longitudinal study found that "the single most important childhood factor for developing empathy is paternal involvement" (Dudley & Stone, 2004, p. 64-69).

Emerging research continues to support the idea that fathers have unique and influential roles in the development of their children. Lamb (1987) states that father involvement as a whole does "appear to influence their children's behavior" and this can be attributed to direct and indirect interactions (p. 15). Dudley and Stone (2004) expand on Lamb's work by supporting literature topics that highlight impacts of father presence, rather than the historical focus of father absence (p. 61). There is literature that proposes that the involvement or absence of fathering can be either beneficial or detrimental (Cabrera et al., 2000; Rohner & Veneciano, 2001). For

instance, consistent father presence was found to have "significant positive effects" for children, and for boys in particular (Dudley & Stone, 2004, p. 69). In addition, Parra-Cardona et al., (2006) discuss findings from a study by Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb (2000) that claim that Latino "fathers' emotional investment in, attachment to, and provision of resources" for children is related to their "well-being, cognitive development, and social competence of young children" (p. 216). In addition, when examining play settings, Cabrera et al. (2011) found that a child whose father was less responsive during playtime was more likely to be under a normal range of cognitive measures than those with fathers who were more responsive.

Conversely, research proposes that the absence of fathers is associated with children's future life complications such as decreased academic achievements, lower rates of involvement in the work force, early childbearing, and increased engagement of dangerous behaviors such as addiction to drugs, mental illnesses, and early death due to violence (Cabrera, et al., 2000; Slayton, 2012 p. 24). The risks for children associated with father absence are magnified when there is a lack of social and family support to make up for the absence (Cabrera et al., 2000). Hence, although fatherhood involvement has been associated with better outcomes for children and is important in unique ways, there may also be considerable implications for children when fathers are not present.

Studying fatherhood involvement in context for Latino fathers. Coltrane et al. (2004) states that in order to fully understand fathering, factors such as economic and family context should be taken into account (Coltrane et al., 2004; Palkovitz, 2002). Latino fathers in particular exhibited more parenting behaviors around family rituals, suggesting that they should be studied in consideration of the family context (Coltrane et. al., 2004). Latino fathers in comparison to

fathers of other ethnicities have been found to display high prenatal involvement, and engage more with sons than daughters (Cabrera et al., 2011). Also, first generation Mexican parents found it greatly important for their children to "remain Mexican" as a means of "maintaining the old country values of respect, family togetherness, and hard work" (Monsivais, 2004, p. 6). Thus, given the importance of values and family for Latinos, it seems essential to examine these areas in order to better understand Latino men and the meaning they assign to their fathering.

Some fatherhood research has described fathers as positive or negatively based on their paternal behaviors (Roy, 2014). For instance, a study by Palkovitz (2002) described "good fathering" based on three aspects: relational components which involved a father 'being there', role components such as being a provider, and personality components such as being understanding of their children (p. 58-59). Fathers have often been described this way on their performance in areas of involvement and in the financial provision for their family and children. Studying Latino fathers in context and considering their first-hand perspectives would provide insight into their experiences as fathers.

In addition, Latino fatherhood involvement cannot be singularly defined by mere presence or absence in a child's life. It needs to be studied dimensionally considering contextual and relational influences that motivate fathering behaviors of involvement and shed light on the meaning fathers attribute to them, as well as the experiences with their children as a whole. Marsiglio & Roy (2012) suggest that fathers are better understood when examined in contextual settings (p. 3). Notably, Latino men in comparison to other groups of fathers face specific contextual and relational challenges to their fathering. Considering work limitations due to immigration status and/or partner and family support often presents very real challenges for these men to parent, and when present may look different from fathering other men may do.

Unfortunately, research on Latinos is not abundant enough to make precise conclusions on fatherhood involvement cause and effect circumstances because contexts of other studies have used different populations that do not account for cultural norms and expectations of Latino men (Cabrera & Bradley, 2012; Saracho & Spodek, 2008). In order to derive a better understanding of Latino men's fatherhood involvement research should go beyond measuring behaviors; it should consider cultural influences on parenting (Palkovitz, 1997, p. 207), fatherhood readiness and personal experiences (Marsiglio & Roy, 2012), and the age of the child (Miller, 2011). Palkovitz (1997) argues that fatherhood involvement can be understood in different ways, but unfortunately has markedly been depicted through a "deficit model" that highlights a father's shortcomings in childrearing and housework, and in turn, ignores other means by which fathers engage their children and contribute to their development (p. 200).

Meaning making. Fatherhood involvement literature provides many insights into historical behaviors that fathers have displayed, but there is little research about men's first-hand reports of their experiences as fathers and how they make sense of their relationships and contexts in which they parent. This process by which fathers make meaning of their paternal roles and identities is influenced in different ways. One example includes Marsiglio and Roy's (2012) suggestion that a man's vision of himself will advise his own development over the years (p. 32). In an effort to further explore such visions, men are encouraged to think about their "self-knowledge, relationships, and various facets of fathering" (p. 36). Also, messages from family members about men being capable of effective care giving is an example of influences on the meaning a man can give to his own parenting (p. 131).

Although identity and meaning making are unique to the self, their construction does not occur in a vacuum. As such, Adamson and Pasley (2013) describe fathering as a "co-constructed

phenomenon” that influences individual meaning making. Their study discussed the influence of partner support and opinions on fathering behavior, such that, “relationships that support the identity of a ‘bad father’ would promote negative fathering behaviors.” Thus, they suggest a link between context and theory by which receiving support from “important others” influences the association of identity and behavior so that identities are more or less likely to be enacted. Burke and Reitzes (1991) discuss the relationship between feedback and behavior noting that people seek feedback that supports their behavior, suggesting that feedback that is compatible with certain behaviors serve as reinforcement; but when feedback opposes the behavior, it may cause distress. On the same token, Stryker (1980) further supports this concept by stating that, identities can influence and be influenced by exchanges with others.

The process of constructing paternal identities is comprised of personal and contextual contributions. It seems as though a collaborative approach between a father and important individuals in this lives serve as a guide to identify parental roles and set the premise for identity meaning making. In addition, Dudley & Stone (2004) expand on the idea that fathering roles and expectations are influenced by external factors such as “culture, friends, colleagues at work, and the child’s mother” (p. 65). Coltrane et al. (2000) supports this claim by stating that men whose fathers were more involved with them, were found to be more involved with their own children. However, according to Coltrane et al. (2000) and Dudley and Stone (2004), the way in which a man was parented by his father influences his own fathering more so than how they are parented by their mother (p. 65). The literature has a tendency to describe fathers as homogenous given their shared universal characteristics, when in fact fathers are “varied and dynamic” (Palkovitz, 2002, p. 36). While some literature may have independently addressed influences on Latino men’s fathering regarding noted observable, measurable, or theorized fathering behaviors, it has

failed to address Latino men's personal perspectives on fathering and the meaning they assign to it.

Theoretical Assumptions

A study of the meaning of fatherhood draws on tools from the theoretical framework of Symbolic Interactionism. The Symbolic Interactionism framework (SI) is grounded on the concept that humans (i.e., the actor) are motivated to create meanings in order to better understand their surrounding world (White & Klein, 2008, p. 97). Using the SI framework would enrich Latino fathering literature because of its focus on meaning making as related to perceptions acquired from different forms of socialization and its influence over identity. Meaning making is an interactive process that unfolds within relationships.

One of the SI tools involves the process of meaning making which can be conceptualized as interactions with others that influence an individual (Smith & Hamon, 2012, p. 20). This occurs to create meaning of a symbolic world (Sotomayor-Peterson et al., 2012). It enables learning about one's cultural symbols, beliefs, and attitudes (Smith, & Hamon, 2012, p. 17; White & Klein, 2008, p. 101). As such, the interaction between the individual and society can help reinforce cultural beliefs, symbols, and attitudes. Specifically, interactions between individuals of the same culture will help teach social norms about that culture (Smith & Hamon, 2012, p. 49). For example, Latinos that hold attitudes about working hard to attain the American dream would feel validated about acting on this attitude when community and extended family support such as childcare are provided, in order to facilitate such pursuits. The context may influence the way in which various behaviors are exhibited by a particular group (i.e., Latinos working), but this also reflects and supports a common cultural attitude about working hard to achieve a goal.

Moreover, meaning may also be impacted by generational differences and context. For instance, first generation Latino men in the United States may have far less support and other influential men in their life teaching them about becoming a father as opposed to men living in Mexico surrounded by family and elder males to exemplify the cultural norms and values of being a father. As such, interactions may look very different and affect fatherhood identity meaning making depending on the location and support provided, whether it comes directly from family members or not. Context due to varying immigration experiences, affects the ways in which cultural values such as *familismo* may be enacted. Thus, what *familismo* may look like in Mexico may not be the same for Mexican American fathers in the United States. Reenacting those cultural values will require many adjustments and reshaping for the Latino fathers.

It is important to note that meanings for symbols can be subjective and contingent on the actor's perspectives, but are generally agreed upon conservatively by society. For instance, although the word "dad" can hold different meanings for people, there is a general understanding that this word represents a paternal figure in someone's life (White & Klein, 2008, p.97). However, although there are overarching understandings and agreements on meanings of symbols, the personal meaning given to said symbol would guide the behavior related to it (Smith & Hamon, 2012, p. 18). Thus, if a man believes that spending time with his children is an integral aspect of being a good father, then he will devote efforts to fulfilling that concept accordingly.

As a variation within the broader framework, Identity Theory expands on the process of meaning making by proposing that people engage in certain behaviors based on expectations and feedback held and received about fulfilling fatherhood roles (Adamsons & Pasley, 2013). Identities are defined as being "internalized role expectations" which are organized by a

“salience hierarchy” that designates the importance of an identity and the probability by which it will be acted upon (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Adamsons & Pasley, 2013). Identities are “cognitive schemas” that guide behavior, but are not “situation specific” (Troyer, 2005). The work of Stryker and Burke (2000) suggest that people can hold many identities, which are influenced by varying relationships, and settings in which the actor can hold and act out different roles. Nevertheless, when expectations for roles are not clear, the actor may have difficulty performing the role related to a particular identity (White & Klein, 2008, p.102).

Thus, if a man occupies a social status like that of being a father, he then examines the roles related to this status (i.e., being a protector and/or nurturer), and then creates an identity that specifies to him what it means to be a father (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Recent work from Adamsons and Pasley (2013) on Identity theory and fathers discuss links in factors that influence identity enactment based on meaning and behaviors. These include the construct of *salience* which reflects the probability by which an identity will be endorsed; *centrality* requires conscious awareness and represents the importance of an identity; and *commitment* is about the relationships affected based on the enactment of an identity or lack thereof (Adamsons & Pasley, 2013). In essence, creating an identity associated to a role is an interactive process between the actor and society. Society introduces the foundation for role fulfillment associated with certain statuses, but how this role is accomplished is ultimately based on the meaning given by the actor (White & Klein, 2008, p.103).

For instance, a Latino father continuously interacts with in his neighborhood, which may include extended kin and/or community members. These family members clearly communicate a variety of role expectations he is to fulfill as the father of three young children. Some of these expectations include: teaching his children about the cultural value of *respeto* when speaking to

adults, helping them do their homework in order to excel in school, and making sure they arrive on time to church on Sundays. If the father (i.e., the actor) were to internalize these societal expectations, he will most likely act on them accordingly. However, each expectation placed by others may hold a particular meaning to him and some may be more central than others.

According to White & Klein (2008) based on the clear expectations, the father should be better able to fulfill them; however, the difference in importance and unique meaning given by the father, will heavily impact the enactment of those role expectations (p. 102). This illustrates personal meaning making and influences in defining fatherhood identity as influenced by interactions with society.

Expanding on the importance of interaction between actor and society, daily interactions in a “symbolic world” are governed by cognitions such as values (Sotomayor-Peterson et al., 2012). In their study, Sotomayor-Peterson et al. (2012) concluded that couples influence each other based on shared meaning. To further support the cultural value of *familismo* as an essential contributor in the functioning of Latino men’s role in society and family, Adamsons and Pasley (2013) suggest that through support from important members, identities are more likely to be endorsed. For example, a man may perceive himself as a good father by providing for his children, but his partner may challenge this by attributing good fathering to his presence at their children’s school activities rather than solely by monetary provisions.

Research Questions

In sum, past literature on fatherhood has mainly focused on quantifiable behaviors of involvement to conceptualize fatherhood. However, there are many other dimensions to fatherhood and immigrant Latino fathers have introduced new fathering styles influenced by cultural values. Immigrant Latino men have begun to challenge their stereotypical

representations in the research by asserting their behaviors as different. Current fatherhood research on Latino men is also heavily focused on fatherhood involvement, but less is known about context, meaning, and strengths and adaptability of their parenting. This study aimed to address some of the complexities in men's fathering, based on their past immigration experience, unique importance placed on family, and individual personal perspectives on fathering.

The present study intended to examine fathering accounts of 19 Latino men and explored the following research questions:

How do immigrant Latino men give meaning to being a father?

- How do personal experiences shape ideal visions of father identities?
- How do everyday contexts and routine family interactions with children and partners shape their identities?
- How do cultural values that stress family and extended families shape the personal meaning that they give to fathering?

Chapter 2

Methods

A qualitative approach provides understanding for contexts of immigrant Latino fathering. This approach allows participants to explain to the interviewer how they create expectations and meaning around their lived experiences in various settings. This study presents a secondary analysis of the data collected with men who participated in fatherhood programs in the Midwest and on the East coast of the United States in the late early 2000s. The participants of the original study answered questions for life history interviews that focused on the fathering and family experiences of low-income fathers.

Sample

The present study draws information from two larger life history studies in four communities from fatherhood programs held between 1998 and 2004 (Roy, 2006). The subsample used was of Latino fathers between the ages of 19 and 48. The 19 men were recruited from one specific HEAD START program on the west side of the Chicago Pilsen neighborhood. The participants were told that the interviewer was interested in gathering information about their lives as related to family, work, and their fathering experience. The participants were given a \$20 stipend as reimbursement for their participation in the two-hour long interviews. According to Roy et al. (2008), participants of the study, in comparison to those that did not, were men that expressed interest and actively participated in taking their children to the HEAD START program where they met with other fathers and their children. The sample used from the larger study consists of 19 first to second generation Latino fathers in the United States comprised of 18 native or of familial descent from the country of Mexico, and only one father whose birthplace was Puerto Rico. For this sample as indicated by information shared in the interviews, the men's generation was categorized based on their age of arrival to the United

States. First generation fathers were men who were born outside of the United States and arrived after the age of 15; 1.5-generation fathers were men who came to the United States before the age of 15; and second generation fathers were men who were born in the United States. The average age of the fathers was 32.6 years old. More than half of the men attended college (57.8%; $n = 11$) and (68.4%; $n=13$) immigrated to the United States from their country of origin.

Table 1 demonstrates the demographic characteristics of the aforementioned sample.

Pseudonyms were assigned to protect the identifying information.

Table 1

<i>Latino Father's Demographic Information</i>							
<u>ID</u>	<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u># Child</u>	<u>Child Age(s)</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Birth Place</u>	<u>Immigration Generation</u>
1	Diego	35	6	3,6,8,11,14,16	Married	Puerto Rico	1.5
2	Gonzalo	24	1	2	Trans	Chicago, IL	2
3	Pablo	31	3	2, 4, 5	Married	Chicago, IL	2
4	David	27	2	1, 2	Married	US	2
5	Esteban	40	2	12, 16	Married	Mexico	1
6	Luis	37	3	4, 16, 18	Married	Mexico	1
7	Alfonso	33	1	5	Co-residential	Mexico	1.5
8	Elias	48	2	1, 3	Co-residential	Mexico	1
9	Jose	30	1	3	Married	Mexico	1
10	Henry	41	2	2, 5	Married	Mexico	1
11	Rodrigo	34	1	4	Married	Mexico	1
12	Andres	36	2	4, 11	Married	Mexico	1
13	Antonio	19	1	1	Co-residential	Mexico	1.5
14	Daniel	31	1	3	Married	Mexico	1
15	Pedro	31	2	3, 6	Co-residential	US	2
16	Ricardo	35	2	1, 4	Co-residential	Mexico	1.5
17	Pascal	21	2	3, 5	Married	Chicago, IL	2
18	Fernando	42	3	4, 9, 14	Co-residential	Unidentified	Unidentified
19	Carlos	25	1	3	Co-residential	Mexico	1

*Aggregate Categories in Table2 include: age, children, residence, and education for the sample Latino fathers interviewed.

Table 2		Number of Men	
<i>Latino Father's Demographics Categories</i>			
Ages in Years	18-25	21% (N=4)	
	26-35	47% (N=9)	
	35+	32% (N=6)	
Children	Number	Age Range in Years	
	1-2	1-6	79% (N=15) 73% (N=28)
	3-4	7-12	16% (N=3) 11% (N=4)
	4+	13-18	5% (N=1) 16% (N=6)
Residence	Married	58% (N=11)	
	Transient	5% (N=1)	
	Co-residential	37% (N=7)	
Education (College)	Some Classes	79% (N=15)	
	Completed Associates to BA	16% (N=3)	
	Unidentified	5% (N=1)	
Work	Unemployed	16% (N=3)	
	Part-Time	11% (N=2)	
	Full-Time	68% (N=13)	
	Unidentified	5% (N=1)	
Immigration Generation	1 st	47% (N=9)	
	1.5	22% (N=4)	
	2 nd	26% (N=5)	
	Unidentified	5% (N=1)	

Data Collection

The participants answered a variety of questions to a two-hour long Life History Interview centered on the concept of their experience as fathers and other aspects of their family life. These questions centered around 11 areas of interest: demographics, current living situation, father involvement, socialization to providing and care giving roles, kin work and social capital

ties for children, contextual factors, family history, work history, education history, gaps in timelines, and future outlook. A detailed list of the interview protocol is included in the appendix.

The researchers conducting the interviews worked with the men who were part of the fatherhood program, as case managers and program facilitators. The interview format was semi-structured and inquired about living areas, educational and work experiences, and personal ambitions, and fathering experiences. This format permitted the researcher to gather thorough information on different topics, and allowed the fathers' story to be understood for its distinctive characteristics, but still be conceptualized through overarching themes present in all the histories.

The interview protocol used in this study (see Appendix A) was organized based on an original set of interviews through which information about neighborhoods and opinions of them were gathered. The interview questions also inquired about the father's relationship with the child's mother, the process of finding out she was pregnant, and their personal perceptions on being a "good father." The interviews concluded by assessing what were the men's personal aspirations for the future and for their family. Relevant questions from the interview included:

- How did you feel when you found out that your partner was pregnant?
- What makes somebody a good father?
- Do you keep your children connected to other family members? How?
- Who taught you to be a good father?
- What is the best age to become a father?
- How is your relationship with the mother(s) of your children?
- What does it mean to be a responsible father?

- What is the most important aspect of being a father?
- Do you have other family in the area?
- What are some areas that you need to improve or change as a father?

The semi-structured format of the interviews often generated casual themes that carried between questions. Interviews were conducted in English (Roy) and Spanish (Spanish speakers). Transcriptions from Spanish into English were conducted by Spanish speaking graduate assistants. The complete protocol used for the interviews is included in Appendix A. In this study, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. The original data was already transcribed when I began the study; the interviews were then imported into ATLAS ti Software for data management and coding.

Data Analysis

Grounded theory helped guide the qualitative analysis of this study to better understand immigrant Latino men's fatherhood meaning making (LaRossa, 2005). Subsequent to grounded theory, the qualitative analysis took place in three chronological phases of coding: open, axial, and selective (Daly, 2007, p. 230-235). During the open coding phase, I read through each line of the interviews and developed a set of codes, which reflected general themes amongst the interviews. These codes served as guidelines for further examination. The codes were both deductive and inductive. Deductive codes were input from the researcher's prior knowledge. Some of the deductive codes I began my coding with included: *familismo*, good father, safety in neighborhood, among others. Many of these were derived from popular descriptions in the literature about Latino families, and others were attained from the interview questions.

Conversely, emergent inductive codes arose during the coding process based on the participants' descriptions. These codes were not necessarily prior knowledge to the researcher,

but instead may depict a notable recurring activity or thought. These unpredicted codes can further support and highlight distinctions and patterns within the human experience. Despite any unique differences among the sample there is also a degree of commonality among them (Daly, 2007, p. 212). A group of common codes are developed to reflect similarities among the interviews, but it is up to the researcher to make adjustments in order to better reflect the interviewees' experience. Some of the inductive codes I created included: provider, protector, extended kin relationships, family of origin experiences, family lessons, among many more. In order to create the long list of codes (i.e., 113, see Appendix B) I conducted three separate waves of open coding. In each, new concepts emerged that I had not noticed the first time, and consequently the list grew. Some codes overlapped, and there were also quotes that were labeled as "free quotation" because the categorization was unclear initially.

The second phase of coding occurred when the researcher compared and contrasted codes across cases. In the axial coding procedures, categories are distinguished amongst each other, but also overlapping similarities were acknowledged (Daly, 2007, p. 234). The refinement of codes was then grouped to reflect concepts that laid the foundation for theory development. While the process of creating various categories to reflect the participants' accounts characterized axial coding, the final step in grounded theory was selective coding. This aimed to develop theory based on the existing codes. In order to capture and adequately explain the experiences noted in the interviews, I chose the most prevalent categories of codes in to further analyze their relationships; doing so helped set a theoretical basis for the fathers' narratives.

Following the tedious and time-consuming nature of the waves of coding, some codes were discarded. In the beginning all the narratives in each of the codes seemed relevant and fascinating to me, but I did not know how to make sense of all that information. In order to better

conceptualize all of the messages emerging from this list of 113 codes, the codes were narrowed down and rearranged in order to find a better fit. Dr. Kevin Roy, my advisor, was an active part of this process, as we continuously discussed my insights on the codes and began to formulate a more structured approach to their organization. After thorough coding waves and discussions with my advisor, I clustered the codes to reflect cohesive concepts that emerged within the narratives that spoke to the father's meaning making process. In speaking about their past and current experiences as a man and a father, their voices reflected an articulation of their identities as fathers and hopes for the future.

Data Quality

Sets of procedures were taken to guarantee the quality of the data including the accuracy of its interpretation. The interviews petitioned personal information about participants' life histories and experiences that may want to be kept private due to their sensitivity and not be shared with unknown individuals. In order to encourage participants to discuss these intimate subjects, researchers established relationships with the men months prior to conducting the interviews. In the months prior to conducting the interviews, the researchers interacted with the participants as case workers and class leaders in the program (Roy, Buckmiller, & McDowell, 2008; Roy, 2006). Gaining the men's trust facilitated and encouraged more open responses, hence improving the validity of the data. The interviews were conducted only after the researcher had become familiar with the men and were sufficiently integrated into the fatherhood programs.

Researchers also sought to increase the convergent validity of the data through triangulation of the data. Daly (2007) discusses triangulation as the process of "collecting accounts from participants who may be at different stages in their experiences of a phenomenon,

be across different kinds of settings, or who bring different backgrounds and experiences to the research” (p. 257). Participants were part of the one of the four separate fatherhood programs in various Midwestern cities. Finally, the original data’s quality was conserved during the primary analysis. After transcribing the interviews and entering them into ATLAS ti Software, initial coding involved two research assistants who coded the interviews independently. Coders crosschecked their ratings and there was high consistency between their ratings. When the ratings differed, coders consulted the text and came to a consensus about an appropriate score.

Reflexivity

As a Couple and Family Therapist graduate student currently conducting therapy at the Center for Healthy Families (CHF) at the University of Maryland, I have had the opportunity to work with many individuals, couples, and families experiencing a plethora of personal life issues. As a fluent bilingual English and Spanish speaker, my therapy services have expanded to attend to the needs of the Latino population in the area surrounding the University of Maryland. Many of the Latinos I have conducted therapy with have been first and second generation Latinos from El Salvador, Mexico, and Guatemala. Among this Latino population that has attended the CHF and other agencies where I have conducted therapy, there have been a number of men who shared their experiences and challenges as fathers in the United States. There was no overarching and generalizable fathering experience particular to these men. Some have their children with them here in the States and faced parenting issues with spouses because of differing gender roles, others were the custodial single parent balancing various responsibilities, and still others had to leave their families behind in their country of origin with the hopes of finding financial stability in this country.

As a second-generation Latina with first generation parents from the country of Colombia, I understood and identified with many of the issues these Latino families faced and was constantly reminded of the struggles my father experienced when establishing a future for himself and our family here in the States. Working with this population that has such limited resources in the mental health area due to financial and language barriers, I noticed a need for support and understanding of their concerns and experiences. The interviews conducted for the sample being used resemble the conversational style of information gathering during the assessment and joining phase of therapy. Because there was not a large enough sample of Latino fathers presently attending the Center for Healthy Families, and their personal narratives are not permitted for liberal use, a similar sample population of Latino father may help expand on fatherhood literature based on the many experiences Latino fathers face in living in the United States.

Chapter 3

Ideal Father Identities through

Presence, Providing, and Being a Good Father

Literature on Latino fathers has often used accounts of family, community members, and partners to derive conclusions about their fathering, but has rarely showcased the perspectives of the actual fathers on themselves and relationships with others. The use of a deficit model and third party accounts in the literature mutes the personal voices and perspectives of the fathers. Creating a sense of self is an integral part of becoming a father; it is an active process that is constructed, not given. For fathers, meaning making is important because it influences motivation and behaviors in their parenting and sense of self as a father. While reading through the interviews I noticed several themes echoing through the stories. Although these themes shared similar concepts, each spoke to the father's unique experience of the given situation, thus depicting "interindividual differences" (Palkovitz, 1997, p. 214). These accounts were from the voices of fathers of Mexican origin and/or background, and one Puerto Rican father. The perspectives these fathers shared in their interviews both confirmed some and challenged other preconceived notions about Latino fathers.

Past literature often applied a deficit model in studying fathers, especially those of color; often highlighting father absence and portraying Latino fathers as overbearing machos that exert their power over women and control the family (Palkovitz, 1997, p. 200). Conceptualizing fathers through this narrow lens has overshadowed other more positive perspectives about Latino fathers that showcase their strengths and resilience in the United States. Thus, below are selected quotes from the interviews that showcase the voices of Latino fathers and their perspectives on their own fatherhood identities.

In this first chapter I examine how these Latino men conceptualized experiences of their youth and creating ideal father perspectives. The accounts spoke to their identities because the questions in the life history interviews inquired about family history and fatherhood experiences, and the data was only from the men's perspective. As the fathers processed experiences in their youth, and with their own fathers, they discussed what it meant to be a good father and how they perceived themselves. As Symbolic Interactionism would suggest, the individuals sought to make meaning of their experiences to better understand the context in which they lived (White & Klein, 2008, p. 97).

Early Experiences of Father Absence or Presence

In one way, these men self-constructed meaning of their fatherhood identities based on impactful experiences of their youth and the judgment they derived from them. Through these experiences, fathers created ideal father identities that involved their conceptualization of what it meant to be a good father. Interestingly, more than half of the fathers interviewed attributed the meaning of a good father to negative experiences and memories with their own fathers. They also displayed a desire to act differently and compensate for what they would have wanted their fathers to do when they were young. Being there for their children was about a quality experience and a characteristic these men valued as children and wanted to possess as fathers to their own children. In the quotes below, the fathers shared memories of their own fathers that influenced their own parenting values and behaviors, and their opinion of what it means to be a good father.

Pablo is a 31 year-old second-generation Chicago-born Mexican American father. He lived with his wife and two young sons, ages four and two; but he also had a five year-old daughter by a different partner whom he saw bi-weekly. Pablo recalled his parents separating at

the age of two, and he and his siblings living in separate households. He, his twin sister, and eldest brother lived with their mother, and two older brothers stayed with their father. As a young boy, Pablo witnessed many arguments and remembers his father's lack of involvement in his life. Pablo describes what he likes to do as a father based on some experiences in his youth. He stated:

What I like to do is I am in contact with their teachers and I want to know what they are doing in the classroom and reinforce that when they get home. That was never done when I was growing. I did my own thing and they didn't ask if I had homework and if I did my homework right. I am trying to use my experiences and try to change that, as far as how much that a father figure is huge.

Being in contact with school staff was a means by which Pablo assured his children's progress, and proved his dedication to them and their education. Despite his father's lack of support in his schoolwork, Pablo went on to attain a college degree in marketing. However, as stated in the quote above, Pablo believed that a father figure is "huge" in regards to school support, and thus displays a conscious effort to provide his children with a different experience.

Along with his father's lack of involvement in his schooling, Pablo discussed their relationship as a distant one in which communication was plagued with quarrels. He stated, "I said to myself I would not scream and yell at my kids because my dad would do that, he would yell and I would be afraid to talk to him." He acknowledged how this type of communication hindered his ability to gain any closeness with his father when he may have needed it. Such experiences laid the groundwork for Pablo to take a different path from his father, and provide his children with active participation. Thus, instead of modeling after his father, these experiences encouraged Pablo to consciously address his children with more fondness and

prioritize giving them the opportunity to communicate with him more effectively. Pablo put forth effort to parent differently from his father, consequently compensating for his father's lack of quantity and quality interactions related to school involvement and communication.

Early experiences like those in childhood and adolescence not only imprinted indelible memories for these men, but also guided the way they would see themselves as fathers. For 27 year-old second generation Mexican-American father David, early gang involvement with his older brother reminded him that their father was not a present support system teaching them right from wrong. David's older brother served as a role model during his adolescent years when their father was too busy working and did not provide the guidance he expected. David described his father's presence as an occasionally physical one, but lacking emotional involvement and nurturance. He stated:

So it was me and him always together always getting into trouble and my dad wasn't there. He was there, but he wasn't there. He wasn't there for us. I always told myself I am never going to do this to my kids, I can't. And that is the way I learned. I have always been good with kids.

In David's retrospective account, he recognized the dangers he encountered as an adolescent participating in gang activity, and also, the impact his father's involvement could have had in preventing him from getting in "trouble." Unlike his older brother, David decided to disassociate from gang membership and instead, provide his daughter and son with a safer environment and a present father. David stated, "...I am never going to do this to my kids, I can't." This phrase suggests that being present and involved is a choice that his father did not make, but he will. Based on what he learned from those experiences, David decided he would be different and "be good" with children. Thus, David perceived himself as a good and/or better

father because he acting differently from his father by compensating for his absence and being more emotionally involved in his children's lives. David experienced a violation of expectations from his father, remembered it, and chose to act differently.

Absence of a father can occur in various forms; for some men interviewed their father's absence was purely physical or emotional, or a combination of both. Another father of the group, 30 year-old Jose, recalled his father leaving the marriage and abandoning his six children, when he was only five years old. Despite the absence of his father, Jose described being raised with "*mano dura*" (i.e., tough love) by his mother who played the role of mother and father after the separation. Along with her tough love, Jose's mother taught him about the values of honesty and hard work. He was grateful for his mother being an instrumental role model, but stated it was difficult growing up without his father while knowing of his existence and his disregard for their family.

After years of separation, at the age of 19, Jose and his father crossed paths during Jose's attempt at establishing a relationship with him. Although Jose was able to express his feelings about the impact of his absence during childhood, the conversation did not lead to the creation of a close relationship. Instead, this formidable encounter solidified for Jose what it truly meant to be a father. He described that experience by saying:

And again he said: Forgive me, I am sorry. And I was like: What forgiveness are you talking about. I am not somebody to be forgiving people, forgiveness is in heaven, God forgives, not me. And he said that he was going to come back to see us and stuff. He made up this whole story saying that he always sent money for us, but that my mom never picked up that money. And I remember telling him: a five year old boy doesn't want money, a five year old son wants affection.

For Jose, being a good father was not about having a provider, his mother was fulfilling that role just fine; it was about having a present father to share experiences with and look up to for affection and security. This powerful quote captured an unforgettable experience reflecting an interaction in which his father had the opportunity to impact Jose's life in a different way by acknowledging a fault and rebuilding a relationship, but did not. Instead, the conversation highlights his father's oblivious remark alluding to financial provisions as a sufficient means of paternal involvement, and Jose's deep hurt due to the abandonment. As a first generation Mexican father of one son, Jose described the importance of showing him love and affection at all times, attesting to the fact that his existence as a father and involvement was something that would have a lasting and memorable impact on his son. His own experience was internalized and influenced the way Jose made meaning of his identity as a father.

Fathers discussed areas of involvement in which their own fathers failed to participate in (i.e., school performance, gang activity guidance, and affection). Lack of involvement was attributed to things such as increased work participation, an authoritarian and intimidating parenting style of communication, and mere physical absence with expectations of financial provisions sufficing. However, for Luis, a 37 year-old first generation Mexican father of three daughters, his father's absence also impacted him despite not having an explanation for the absence. In his account about illegally crossing the border of the United States, a reference to his father's absence is made as related to the difficulty experienced during his journey. He shared:

It was six hours without getting out. Me and another guy, six hours...that is why I am telling you, you do see results from these actions, but that is why I don't want the same for my daughters. Because I went through so much pain, I mean, I didn't have a father...I mean, you suffer, you know, but I have seen good results, so I say: Okay, everything in

this life has a sacrifice to it, and I thank God that I am alive. But yeah, it's tough. Getting through the border to the US, and finding your way...

Thankfully, Luis prevailed in his quest to cross the border in hopes of achieving the American dream and providing a better financial future for his family. However, this success did not come without a cost. Luis came to the United States first alone and lived here for eight years before bringing his family over. Luis is a father of three daughters; the two eldest were born in Mexico and the youngest was born in Chicago. He discussed the process of coming alone first and getting established before bringing his family over as a process that is very common when coming illegally to the United States. Nevertheless, Luis alluded to the idea that if his father would have been there for him it may have avoided the pain he experienced in coming to the United States. Even though he technically did have a father, the statement about his father's absence during this time, "I didn't have a father" makes Luis sound like he identified as being fatherless. Whether it was protection, comfort, and/or guidance he sought from father, his brief statement in the mist of greater chaotic memories led me to assume that his father was a key figure he expected and needed during this time.

Despite the high number of interviewees who discussed their absent fathers in many varied forms, there were other fathers that provided more positive experiences that also influenced the study samples' parenting and sense of self as fathers. Thus, not all fathers in this sample compensated for their father's shortcomings; others followed in their footsteps. One father went as far as to generalize his experience as one that determined the positive or negative outcomes in families. Esteban, a 40 year-old first generation Mexican father of two teenage sons shared some of his fond childhood memories with his family and father by saying:

Mhhhh...my childhood, from what I can remember with a fresh mind, was a very beautiful childhood. I grew up where there was no evilness, there were no mean people. I come from a family of seven brothers and sisters. My father provided for all of us, he met all our education needs. We always had food on the table, I never lived with physical violence around me, I never saw family violence in my home. Like any family, generally speaking, we all turned out okay. There were no drug addicts or alcoholics, none of my siblings were involved with that. They all have college level education, including myself.

In comparison to other fathers in the sample, Esteban's childhood experiences with his father were generally positive. He admired his father's role as a provider and his ability to provide a successful education for him and his siblings. Esteban also highlighted other positive experiences such as not witnessing violence or substance use and being a highly educated man. He acknowledged that these positive experiences with his family and father influenced who he became. Esteban was an involved father, who prioritized participating in the Catholic Church, monitoring his children, and making sure they were actively participating in school and the community. He also believed that these positive qualities in a father and family of origin experience enrich and determine other's outcomes as well. He stated, "Because if you have been raised in a healthy family, you will be healthy. But if you come from a family where the conflicts are alcoholism, drug addiction, domestic violence, all of that will end up causing you not to have values."

Thus, memorable events in these fathers' youth represent examples of influences their fathers had on their parenting and perception of themselves. Fathers built their ideal identities based on their own fathers' many faults, and in one case, an achievement. They discussed lack of participation in schoolwork and communication; lack of guidance and safety during gang

involvement; lack of affection; and lack of support and guidance during immigration to the United States. Interestingly, instead of following the footsteps of their fathers, the interviewees actively sought to be different from their fathers. Only one father highlighted his father's positive behaviors and active presence and participation in his youth, which highlighted a parallel process in which strived to do the same with his own children. Essentially, the majority of the fathers created ideal good father perspectives based on negative childhood experiences with their father and consequently compensating for them.

Providing and New Visions of Machismo

As these fathers shared experiences in their youth that shaped their current parenting and sense of self, an emphasis on being a provider emerged. In particular, assuring financial stability was the cornerstone component of substantiating this role as a provider. However, aside from money per se, providing was a means by which these fathers showed their children that they cared and were concerned for their wellbeing and future. In order to do this, they effectively managed their present situations and also implemented grounds for a successful future for the family.

The traditional definition of *machismo* depicts Latino men as very one-sided, as cold and uninvolved fathers aside from their economic provisions to the household (Saracho & Spodek, 2008). However, a more contemporary perspective on machismo suggests that although providing financial stability for their family is a means by which men ensure their masculinity, machismo is also comprised of other dimensions. It seems as though the manifestation of machismo is more complex and multifaceted (Torres et al., 2002). The findings of this study suggest that fathering identities are linked to aspects of machismo and being a provider. Yet, these may be driven and influenced by context rather than pure cultural perspectives. Machismo

may look different for these fathers living in the United States than it did in their country of origin with greater involvement from extended family. The following fathers exemplify different means of being a provider, which shed light on a new vision of *machismo*.

Pedro, for instance, is a 31 year-old Mexican born father who arrived to Chicago as a young adolescent. Once in the states Pedro did his best to excel in school, especially in math and science, and as an adult he managed to establish and own a construction company. He lived with his wife, her 12 year-old daughter from her previous marriage, and their own three year-old daughter. Pedro has worked hard to attain his existing financial stability, and hopes that with it he can establish a better future for his daughters.

Pedro said, “My thing is to buy houses and try to leave my kids something that is not left to me. Something that they don’t have to have the problems I did when I grew up.” Here Pedro speaks about owning a house as a means of avoiding problems later in life. Thus, being able to provide his daughters with this base—a house—is a way in which Pedro felt he was fulfilling his role as a provider. Purchasing a home for his daughter was more than just materialistic provision; it is a form of providing security for them and preventing them from encountering difficulties similar to those he experienced in his youth. When asked about the importance of being a provider for his family Pedro shared the following:

It is very important because you have to look at it like you have a house and it is your job as a man and a father to make sure your family has the best you can offer them. To be a good example of your family and your community to follow.

Being a financial provider is a great part of how Pedro saw himself as a good father. In terms of the traditional display of *machismo*, Pedro exemplified the traditional cultural value given his strong position about being the main provider for his family. However, despite this being a

defining role for him as a man and father, being a provider, also included being a role model for others around him.

Similar to Pedro, 41-year-old Henry was the primary provider for his family. Henry was a first generation Mexican father of two daughters' ages four years and six months. He immigrated to and has been living in Chicago since his late 30s. When asked about his perspective on being a provider, Henry said the following:

For me, it's obvious, it's not like a choice. For me it's like I NEED to. I HAVE to. Yes, absolutely. Right now I'm the only provider in my family, the only one, she was pregnant, and she wants to be with Lisa, my second daughter. Yeah, absolutely, if you have a better job, earn more money, support them.

Evidently, being the provider for his family is a non-negotiable expectation Henry had for himself. Being a financial provider for his family was so important to Henry that it also involved the possibility of sacrificing physical proximity to them. If the opportunity presented itself, Henry would be willing to move away from his family to attain a higher paying job and be able to provide them with a more stable financial status. In that regard Henry said, "I'm at a point right now that if I would need to make a change, a drastic change, for a better income, I would do it." Regarding machismo, here it is exemplified as being a defining aspect of Henry as a father and a man of the house; it involves providing support, stability, and security to his family even if it may require physical distance from them.

Accordingly, links between machismo and being a provider is more than just giving economic support to maintain security of the household; it seems to also be about closeness and presence. For 24 year-old Gonzalo, a Chicago-born Mexican American father of one son, being a provider was characterized by being involved in his child's upbringing and finding

opportunities to stimulate his son's intellectual growth. He did this by seeking a daycare that provided intellectually stimulating and engaging activities for children instead of "sitting them in front of a TV." Although Gonzalo's son was only two years old, he constantly thought about what he could do to benefit and pave the way for a bright future for him. Gonzalo shared:

I wanna be financially educated. I want to provide for him with insurance. I want to put money aside for him when he grows up. I definitely don't want him to work while he's in school. I think it's absolutely pointless. I hated getting out of school and going to work from 3-11, get out and I still had to study for finals. For what? I thought it was absolutely pointless and I want him to... when he goes to school and says 'I want to go to school, I want to play football', I can say 'go ahead, you know, go ahead, I got you covered.

Gonzalo saw financial education and saving money as a precursor and essential component of becoming a good provider for his son. Providing is about knowing how to use money wisely in order to benefit other family members accordingly. In daycare, Gonzalo wanted his son to be intellectually stimulated, and have the opportunity to later participate in extracurricular activities. Through financial stability, Gonzalo wanted to ensure that his son can focus on his schoolwork and also enjoy other opportunities for growth, such as enrolling in a team sport. For this father, providing was a way of communicating to his son that he cared about his future and also supported him in any interests he may have when he is older.

More, in knowing how to properly allocate spending, Gonzalo discussed the importance that his partner to not misuse the money when it is meant for their son. As a financial provider for his son, Gonzalo believed it was his responsibility to safeguard the funds going to him. He accomplished this by giving his child the items he needs instead of money to his mother. For

Gonzalo, directly providing in this manner was comparable, if not, better than child support because it assured his son gets exactly what he needed. He explained his decision for managing money this way by stating,

To me that's just the same thing as child support. I don't see it fair for me to give her X amount of dollars out of my check when the child only needs this amount of money, so she can go shopping and buy a new pair of shoes. I don't think that is fair. Because I found out that's what she was doing. She was paying her cable bill and buying some clothes with that I was giving her cuz Sam really needed a coat and I was giving her \$200-250 every two weeks. I just thought that wasn't fair so I said, just tell me what you need and I'll go get it.

Despite his partner's misuse of financial provisions, Gonzalo guaranteed that his son did not go without what he needed. Being a provider was more than just giving a bi-weekly monetary amount, it involved being aware of the items money could buy his child. More so, providing was also an investment into the relationship with his son that would also one day assure him his efforts as a father were worthwhile. Gonzalo described this by articulating:

My greatest accomplishment will be to grow up and to have my son acknowledge that I was a good father. You know, for him to grow up and say 'I'm proud of my father. He did a good job with me' and to see my efforts rewarded for my son to be a member of society, and a success.

Thus, these men heavily identified with being a financial provider as a crucial part of their fathering. For some, there seemed to be an inherent ownership of the responsibility of providing, but it also was manifestation of care and of power and authority, and a position use in the father's view. The expectation of being the main provider for the household was part of the

cultural value of *machismo*. Although these fathers may have displayed some aspects of the more traditional financial expectations of *machismo*, different components also emerged. For some, providing was about ensuring financial stability, while for others it was a means of displaying love and care for their family. Providing also involved making sure resources were allocated appropriately and made available to their children, such as affording them proper educational opportunities and daily necessities such as food and clothing. Lastly, being a provider was not only a way of asserting a dominant position in the family, but about giving nurturance, displaying active participation, distributing household responsibilities, and giving their children an experience different from their own.

Assumptions and Ideals about Being a Good Father

Although being a provider was a key component of these Latino father's sense of self, there were also other aspects of their parenting that rang true as part of their identities. In the interview there was a specific question that asked the fathers to share what they thought made someone a good father. This question was important not just because it provided insight to a specific aspect of fathering, but because what the fathers shared represented an ideal to live up to. The fathers derived their definition of a good father from examples and experiences of their youth and even the desire to fulfill some cultural expectations, like that of being a provider. In essence, being a good father was a combination of behaviors and a reflection of values for these fathers.

Some of these behaviors and beliefs may have been influenced by the process of socialization that can often teach Latinos about cultural values and expectations based on interactions with family members (Smith & Hamon, 2012, p. 49). However, being a good father was not simply about following in other's footsteps or abiding by clear-cut cultural expectations

of fathering. Not all of these fathers had extended family present or thoroughly involved fathers to provide support in the process of their own socialization as a father. Thus, based on these fathers' accounts, they displayed different perspectives and behaviors than that of their absent fathers, and they have also challenged traditional machismo perspectives about being a provider. This suggests that fathers shifted their behaviors and perspectives and conceptualizing their ideas about good fathering as they experienced being a father. Below, some fathers shared experiences in becoming a father, their parenting perspectives, and how they described as being a good father to their children all of which shed light on their ideals of good fathering.

Diego was a 35 year-old Puerto Rican father of six children. He came from a large and complex family of 13 children. His mother and older siblings moved to Chicago separately when he was a child and he later joined them when he was 10 years old. Diego has had a fair share of life challenges including separation from his family at a young age, his father's death when he was 11 years old, learning difficulties and barely starting high school, and being diagnosed with Schizophrenia. His mental illness placed significant challenges on his ability to attain and maintain a job. As a result of this diagnosis he was placed on disability and received government assistance. When asked about what it meant to him to be a good father, Diego said:

You give them as much as you can and have a good job. They can talk about you and say my daddy is a good worker, he works, you know, he's not collecting from the government. It would make a good father - having a good job, supporting the family as much as you can, you know. (Anything else?) Show them love. Take them to the doctor when they need to, that's showing them that you love them and all that.

Despite his limitations and current unemployed status, Diego assumed that having a "good job" was an important part of being a good father to his children. Throughout the

interview he mentioned memorable job successes and wished he could do that again. Diego expressed a sense of shame for not being able to earn through a job the money he provided his family. For Diego there was a sense of honor as a man and a father that came from working; and not having a job robbed him of that honor. He preferred to work than to receive government assistance. However, even though he was not financially providing for his family through a job, when asked about what it meant to be a good father, Diego did not think any less of himself. He emphasized the aspect of being a good father as also involving affection and nurturance. He later elaborated that he used his time at home with the children as opportunities to share activities and help out around the house.

However, not all fathers had a negative experience in their youth with their father. Another father had a positive upbringing that may have socialized and influenced his perspectives on being a good father. Esteban, considered teaching values as an integral part of good fathering. He attributed his parenting accomplishments to his “healthy” upbringing and efforts to teach his children right from wrong through instilling values. Esteban was taught the importance of self-improvement and hard work in his family of origin. He also held very conservative perspectives about family structure and a proper way of raising children. He prioritized having effective communication with his wife and children in order to avoid conflict and make sure his children were “on the right track.” His involvement with the Catholic Church during his adulthood served as a reinforcement of parenting and life values he was taught by his family of origin, all of which he hope to pass on to his children. To Esteban, being a good father involved ones value system and upbringing; he shared:

There are many other things, it's like a tree, you need values, family, personal and moral values. Where does he come from? [the father] How is he? And most importantly, what

was he taught, how was he educated. All of that. Especially education and where he comes from.

Therefore, for Esteban, a man's background is the backbone of their outcome as a father. This backbone is comprised of values and education. Esteban identified as a good father based on the structure he was given in his youth. However, not all fathers attributed their perspectives on good fathering as a parallel to their family of origin experience. For Ricardo a 35 year-old first generation Mexican father of two young daughters below the age of 5, being a good father was summed up in two words, "being there." He discussed being there for his daughter since they were in utero and even more so after they were born. His involvement during the pregnancies was something Ricardo took pride in; he attended doctors' appointments with his partner and provided her with anything she needed. Unfortunately, prior to the birth of their two daughters, Ricardo's partner had suffered a miscarriage of twins due to a car accident. This was a difficult experience for both, and it motivated Ricardo's desire to be thoroughly present when he was to become a father again.

Despite his desire to spend quantity and quality time with his daughters, being there was sometimes easier said than done. There was a time in which he worked so many hours that when he napped after work and woke up to play with his daughters, they were already asleep and his opportunity was missed. Though the pay was good, Ricardo realized his long hours at work were compromising crucial opportunities for participating in developmental milestones with his daughters and assuring they were safe and felt loved. He said:

I think it's better to be there in person cause in terms of providing, you can always find the means, but if you're not there somewhere down the road when you're child grows and

they take the wrong path, somewhere down the road you're going to feel that you've neglected them for not being there from day one.

Being a good father for Ricardo was about physical presence that was active and an influential part of the children's growth and memories. For Ricardo it was also important to affirm that his daughters would remember the times as significant moments they shared. Ricardo has fixed memories of a rewarding relationship with his mother and extended family in which "being there" was a positive quality he valued; he shared,

But the child needs to know and feel that they can count on their father to be with them, go out and play, to read a book, to listen, to um...give them advice... Like when they're graduating, whether it's from kindergarten or 8th grade...they want their father or their mother there. If for some reason they're (unintelligible) receiving a diploma then turn around and there's nobody there to share that moment, it's just going to not feel good...it's going to stay there forever.

Being there was beyond presence, it was about emotional security as well. This father wanted his children to know they could share a variety of experiences with him, especially significant life moments like a graduation. Through his words, Ricardo sent the message that a good father is one that cares to be involved and provides emotional security, because a father is a crucial part of development and their presence, or lack thereof, is a memorable part of a child's life.

Finally, being a good father was also described as giving support and allocating resources adequately for the benefit of the children and family as a whole. Accomplishing such as task was sometimes accompanied by many challenges to low-income Latino fathers as providers. Given that being a provider is so strongly linked to Latino men's identities as fathers and machos, a violation of their ability to provide can affect how a he perceives himself as a good father.

Gonzalo, a 24 year-old father of a two-year old son remembered his parent's positive example uses it as a guideline for his fathering. He stated:

I looked at my parents - they came from Mexico with absolutely nothing. My parents have bought 2 brand new cars within their life, they own a home, 2 homes. They put me through final school and all this with under \$30,000 a year, so, to me they're inspiration. I thought as long as I finish school I know I got their support, it's not going to be impossible. I didn't want to have an abortion, she didn't either. So... all I had to do was man-up, basically, take responsibility for my actions.

For Gonzalo, being a good father was characterized by applying things he saw his parents do when he was young that provided him with a fruitful future. As stated in the quote above, Gonzalo admired how his parents were able to allocate their finances and provide him with an education. This also exemplified for Gonzalo that managing a household was a shared task. Providing was more than just getting a job, it was a value as a parent; it involved sacrifice, to make something out of nothing. Gonzalo learned from both parents that one can become a good man and father through a relationship versus alone.

In this chapter I discussed how these men derived a sense of self as a father based on impactful experiences of their youth that influenced their perspectives on fathering. Through processing these memories and their meaning, the fathers were able to further solidify perspectives about what an ideal father would be like and insights about themselves. Interestingly, despite different situations these men encountered growing up such as, difficulties in school, gang activity, and immigration to the United States, many were greatly related to their relationship with their father. Based on actions they witnessed from their fathers and/or expected to have shared with them, many interviewees concluded how they saw themselves as fathers. For

most, it was a matter of rewriting the script by compensating for their father's mistakes and shortcomings; and in a rare occasion, it meant to follow their father's footsteps in parenting values and behaviors.

In another regard, economically providing was an avenue by which these fathers derived a sense of self. Being a provider was mainly about providing financial stability for their family, but at another level it was an expression of the cultural value of *machismo*. Their perspectives and acts as providers contributed to an enriched understanding of *machismo*. For one father it was about providing security and being a community role model, for another it was an inherent expectation of the self that defined him as the man of the house, and for another it was about knowing how to allocate resources. Finally, perspectives on being a good father were comprised of a combination of qualities about presence and providing. Active involvement and "being there" was about showing care because children would remember. Being a provider was related to an obligation as a man and father, showing love, practicing family values, and having integrity about allocation of resources and partnership in raising a household.

Chapter 4

Everyday Father Identities through Protection, Expressing Love, and Parenting Negotiations

Considering further dimensions by which these Latino men created meaning of their fatherhood identities, their sense of self was constructed through interactions with others, and in particular, their children and partner. The first chapter focused on an ideal of fathering, a general image, or set of expectations, but did not necessarily discuss extended family relationships. This chapter concentrated on everyday parenting and how fathers construct their sense of self through daily interactions with others. In certain ways their present everyday behaviors confirm or deny their ideal perspective of parenting. Specifically, these daily interactions are characterized by providing protection, expressing love, and negotiating decisions about parenting.

Protecting Children in Daily Family Contexts

The concept of being a protector transcended various topics discussed in the interviews; it also demonstrated an active part of their fathering. Implementing protection in their family's lives required daily interactions with their children and even making sense of past experiences. Through these interactive experiences different types of values about protection surfaced. For instance, despite the danger of prior involvement with gangs, being a protector was not always a matter of reacting to situations or setting limitations. For some, protection required proactivity and the daily engagement of their children. This was a way in which fathers could remain informed of their family's safety status and take any precautions when necessary.

Factors related to daily acts of protection were also heavily influenced by unsafe neighborhood contexts in which many of these fathers resided in. Forty-two year-old Fernando, was a father of three children ages four, nine, and 14. He and his wife took turns in assigning

household tasks between each other and the care of their children. The block in which Fernando and his family lived was “better than the rest,” but there was still danger to be mindful of. This required Fernando to constantly keep a close eye on his family and remain aware of his surroundings. He worried about his children’s safety because gangs were interested in recruiting young boys and his children were at a vulnerable age. Fernando was cognizant of the problematic environment his children could be exposed to, and thus developed a propitious way of handling his concerns and efforts to protect them. He shared:

Well, but that is why you have to know where they are, who they are hanging out with, where they are going. And then you can see if you can give them some freedom if you know where they are going, and whether it is true that they are going where they say they are going, as well... (Do you trust them?) If you don’t trust them, they will never tell you anything, and then you don’t know what they do, where they go, nothing.

Fernando implemented his protection through an interactive process with his children. For him, it was essential to know where and with whom his children were at all times. However, achieving this was not about demanding a constant check-in from his children, but rather, it was a conversation that involved trust and following-up in order to modify boundaries when necessary. By having a trusting relationship with his children, Fernando hoped they would go to him, and that he would be the one to provide safety. Fernando was a protector by instilling trust in his children and monitoring their behavior, not by controlling it.

Another father also implemented monitoring of his children as part of being a protector. Esteban, the 40 year-old first generation Mexican father of two teenagers, believed that to look after his sons he had to be thoroughly informed of their activities and whereabouts. When

inquiring about how his relationship with his oldest son has changed over the years, Esteban shared,

I mean, the relationship is still the same, I am the same with him, I ask a lot of things. I am always looking after him. He doesn't think I am looking over him, but I paying attention to what he's doing. I investigate who his friends are, I find out what they do, what he's doing. I even try to, like I told you before, I try to know what he's doing at school.

Although the word “trust” was not used by Esteban, it seemed as though he rather take matters into his own hands and “investigate” his children’s activities and relationships. Asking questions and engaging his sons in conversation is the means by which Esteban remains involved and informed. He also mentioned that his children do not know he is observing their behaviors closely. Perhaps Esteban worried that keeping his intentions at bay would hinder his ability to be fully informed of his children’s whereabouts. In the end, it is safe to assume that Esteban was a father that was actively securing his children’s wellbeing through constant monitoring and preventing negative influences; ultimately assuring they stayed “on the right track.” Compared to Fernando, it seems as though Esteban’s daily interactions were not necessarily reciprocal conversations with his children that considered their input on protection. Esteban addressed his identity as a protector from an authority position in which he used his judgments about his children’s behaviors to conclude what is best for them.

Communication, trust, and monitoring seem to be central components to a father’s sense of self as a protector. Notably, these particular behaviors are mainly proactive, rather than reactive. As shared in the examples above, by preventing their children from engaging in dangerous activities and environments, the fathers were being preemptive about ensuring their

safety and welfare. Analogous to accounts from the first chapter, here, fathers referred to past challenging experiences they hoped to avert their children from facing. In more ways than not, these fathers were doing what they could to protect their children from present dangers and prevent history from repeating itself. Fernando and Esteban exemplified ways in which fathers were proactive about their protection and highly valued preventing their children from being exposed to and engaging in dangerous activities.

However, not all fathers were proactive about their protection. It is important to note that this was not necessarily because they did not want to, but rather, because the situation was out of their control to prevent. A prime example of this is Diego, the Puerto Rican father of six children who lived in a gang saturated neighborhood. Although always vigilant and aware of impending risk, Diego recalled an unexpected and unsettling encounter with a gang shootout that forced him to react quickly in order to protect his family from being killed. He shared,

You know, I told him you don't want to hurt like I did. And my wife was there too holding my son and I had to push her out the way or she would have got hit with my son, you know. I seen them coming and I just pushed her out of the way, it was a quick reflex. My brother he was hit too, he got skinned in the head. He fainted... I don't want them to come out growing up like I did. Nobody can explain to a kid how this is if they never went through it. Right? (But you can.) I can, yeah. I can.

This breach of safety demanded immediate attention and action; so at the sight of danger, Diego acted instinctively and pushed his wife and son out of way during the drive-by shooting. Even though Diego did not have any direct ties to the gangs of his neighborhood, he and his family were constantly exposed to their violent activity throughout the streets. Notably, unlike the aforementioned means of protections espoused by other fathers, communication, trust, and

monitoring could not have prevented this particular situation for Diego, his wife, and one of his children. This encounter was due to being at the wrong place, at the wrong time. Thankfully, Diego was able to get himself and his family out of harm's way that time. Nevertheless, such an unpredictable event threatened the physical safety of Diego and his family. For this father, being a protector required more than implementing boundaries with his children and constant monitoring; because there was no guarantee when a similar event would reoccur, his confidence as a protector could be affected.

Another father had a similar gang related event like that of Diego's. David, the 27 year-old father of two, recalled his early involvement with gangs in the Southside of the Chicago neighborhood where he lived. David participated in gang activity for many years before becoming a father, and he continued for a short time afterward. He discussed how difficult it was to walk away from those ties, despite his desire to do so. When his daughter was two years old David was still an active member of his gang, but was in the process of distancing himself from this group in order to progressively cease all gang activity. In remembering this process David stressed a significant event that heightened his already clear decision to stop involvement with this dangerous crowd. He stated:

Across the street and the next thing I know two guys come up on me and shooting and I got shot in my foot. And at that point it really opened my eyes about what was going on. My daughter, my family comes first, that is the only thing I was thinking about. If anything was to happen to me what would happen to my family?

For many years, his priorities revolved around the gangs' interests, but after having his daughter, David's priorities changed. It was difficult to completely absolve all gang relations, and consequently, there was clear backlash in his attempts to do so. Given this poignant

experience, David realized that his relationship to the gang was not only putting his life in danger, but also that of his family. Ultimately, he concluded that he could not be a father to his daughter if he was not around. So, even though it was an arduous and punishable process, David recognized that one of the main ways he could be a protector to his family was by removing his personal ties to the source of danger. For David, being a protector was about making significant life changes that would give his family a safer life in the future.

Being a protector was exemplified by preventative and interactive measures, interfering in certain situations, and changing personal behavior that threatened safe family life. In addition to those is a unique situation described by Luis, the 37 year-old father of three daughters who crossed the United States border illegally while hiding in a truck for six hours. Unlike other fathers, Luis had to make a difficult decision regarding the safety of his two eldest daughters. As they approached adolescence and showed increased interest in socializing outside their home, Luis worried about their safety; consequently, he implemented many restrictions to their activities. The isolation that came with these hard boundaries upset and saddened his daughters. Considering many factors, Luis made the tough decision to send his daughters back to Mexico to live with their extended family. When asked to elaborate on the matter, Luis said:

I do miss them because I was used to living with them, but more than anything, I no longer go to work thinking about what they are doing, worrying about them...I don't have to be on their case all the time. Kids at that age need more attention than my youngest daughter, they need to be watched more, because there are a lot of young kids that are supposed to be their friends, and later they might influence them in a bad way, instead of a good one. There are a lot of drugs around here, and as a father I felt nervous about them [daughters] getting involved with things like that.

Luis realized that despite his harrying immigration experience paid off in a financially stable future in the United States, not all aspects of living in the United States were benefitting his family. This father soon noticed the dangers in his neighborhood and realized that because of work he could not constantly monitor the safety of his eldest daughters. Perhaps if his family lived nearby, he would have abstained from making the difficult decision of sending them away. Luis believed it was in his daughters' best interest to be with family members that could monitor their behavior more closely and constantly engage them in order to prevent their involvement with gangs or early pregnancy. Hence, for this father protection of his children involved sacrificing physical proximity and using family as a resource to guarantee their safety.

Despite unsafe neighborhoods, a lot of fathers also focused on the future and spoke about the importance of raising their children differently. These accounts delineated fathers' efforts to take control of a situation by some times changing their own behaviors, conducting routine monitoring and effective communication with their children, and physically interfering with harm when necessary. In spite of contextual limitations such as neighborhood gang activity, these fathers did right by their children and family any way they could and knew how in order to protect them and provide safety. Most fathers were proactive and set appropriate parameters for safety, while others' reactions still prioritized their family's well-being. Therefore, through interactions with their children and society these fathers negotiated ways in which they could provide a safer environment for their family, thereby co-constructing their identities as protectors.

Expressing Love as a Way of Strengthening Relationships

Other forms of interactions among the parent and child revealed that these fathers valued the expression of love. Love was expressed in different ways, but it depicted the fathers' interest

in assuring that their child was aware that they were loved. Doing this was more evident in daily interactions of parenting. Through different interactions, expressing love exemplified warmth and closeness from the fathers. It also appeared to be an essential basis for a regular relationship and communication. Expressing love occurred in various forms; for some fathers it was more than saying “I love you”; it was tied to reassuring the wellbeing of their child and instilling values. Expressing love was an important component of parenting because it reflected the connection the father had to his children, aside from fulfilling certain tasks. Expressing love was also a reciprocal interaction between the father and child that influenced their bond and the father’s perspective of him. Expressing love was not just about fulfilling an expectation often placed on fathers; it was about understanding what it meant to them.

At first, Luis’s way of showing love to his three daughters was about teaching and providing them with tools that would enrich their future based on areas of his life he was not able to accomplish himself. In his time in Mexico with his family of origin, Luis learned the importance of discipline and hard work in order to earn a living. However, becoming a father brought along financial demands he was not equipped to fully take care of at the age of 19. In light of this, Luis decided to immigrate to the United States alone in order to establish himself before uprooting his family from Mexico.

As briefly described in the previous section, Luis had an arduous journey into the United States. His immigration experience and eight year separation from his family was a hardship, which he dealt with alone. Yet, it was a process he considered necessary in order to provide his family with a financially stable life. During this difficult time apart, Luis kept in contact with his family and daughters via occasional phone calls, but could not see them. Luis shared that he does not want his daughters to go through the challenges he underwent while settling in Chicago. Not

only was Luis interested in providing a more stable financial status for his family, but also he wanted to assure his daughters' futures were a more positive and successful experience than his.

When asked about how he expressed love to his children, Luis said, "In what ways I show them that I love them?... Well, the way I have showed them is by giving them good education, and by raising them with good manners." In this first statement Luis listed education and good manners as something he can provide, and a way he expresses love to his daughters. Later he elaborated on ways of expressing love and discusses how discipline is related. He remembered that as a child, he interpreted discipline as a form of punishment and not love. However, when becoming a father he truly understood that discipline and preventing children from doing certain things was a way to express love. To that matter he said:

But now that I am a father, I recognize that when a mother or a father loves his/her children, he/she will try to make them avoid what is wrong or bad. But unfortunately, sometimes we, as children, think that because our parents call on our attention on certain things that they think are not good for us, is because they don't love us... And because of that specific reason, I tell them, forgive me, but if I see that you are doing something bad or wrong, I will call on your attention, and you can ask anybody if I'm wrong. So that is the way I show them that I love them.

Thus, Luis' exemplified a father who dearly loves his children and realized different ways in which he expresses his love to them. Early in his fathering years he believed expressing love consistent on providing education and teaching his daughters good manners. As his daughters grew and circumstances around their development changed, Luis made adjustments to his parenting as well. On the surface it may seem that enforcing rules and disciplining is merely about teaching children right from wrong, but for this father it is a way of showing his children

that he loves them. Expressing love for Luis evolved over the years, but generally it meant having his children's best interest at heart and doing what was necessary, even if they did not perceive it as love.

Similar to Luis, Jose, defined his way of expressing love as a form of caring for his son. Jose was the father who tried to build a relationship with his father at the age of 19 after not seeing him since he was five years old. This father was interested in showing his son he was present and affectionate. However, compared to Luis, Jose had a more direct way of articulating his love to his son; he described it by saying:

I am the kind of person that will say: son, I love you, and then I will hug him and kiss him. I show him that I love him by educating him the best possible way I can. I show him that I love him by taking him out and paying attention on everything, taking him out to play...by putting as much effort into it as I can.

For Jose, verbally saying, "I love you" to his son in an expression as who he is as a person. Based on particular behaviors he engages in with his son, Jose not only expressed his love but also responded to his son's wants and needs. Jose later discussed noticing his son's development because he now asked Jose for kisses before he went to bed. Jose recalled the damaging impact of his father's physical and emotional absence, and realized that his contrary and positive behavior with his son would also be memorable. Due to such formidable experience, Jose promised himself that he would make sure his son knew that he was loved and cared for in every way. As the quote above states, Jose expressed his love continuously and did so by devoting as much effort as he could.

In addition, expressing love was also an endeavor that involved reciprocity. This interactive process was something fathers felt was rewarding; it informed them that their

parenting was acknowledged and appreciated by their child. It was important for the fathers that the child responded; it gave meaning to their fathering because of the connection it entailed. For example, Carlos was a 25 year-old father of one son who was born and raised in a rural area of Mexico. There, alongside his 12 siblings, Carlos helped farm croplands his family owned. He completed the equivalent of a 6th grade education and then was forced to drop out of school to work and support his family. He then came to the United States when he was 16 years-old. The majority of his family stayed in Mexico except for two of his brothers who were also married with children and live in Chicago.

When Carlos was not working as a chef he was at home with his wife and son, or visiting his brothers on the weekend so his son could interact with extended family members. Carlos expressed having a close relationship to all his family members, even with those still in Mexico. Expressing love verbally and physically was a commonly done between Carlos and his family, and it was a practice he continued with his son. When asked about his relationship with his four year-old son and his expression of love, Carlos said:

My relationship with him is, first of all, I am a calm father, I don't like to hit him or anything like that. I like to be affectionate, hug him, and that they do the same with me...Having time to hang out with them, talk to them [children], play, joke around, healthy things, you know. It isn't only about keeping them from doing bad things, you have to make them feel that you love them.

In this quote, Carlos suggested several dimensions to expressing love. The first is, Carlos identified as a “calm father”, perhaps alluding to the idea that in this way he is more approachable to his children. He also favored a reciprocal communication of affection with his son. Showing love was not only about protecting children, but he also engaged them in playful

ways that let them know he was present. For Carlos, expressing love was associated with time and effort. Given his busy work schedule, Carlos invested effort into arranging his chef work schedule in a manner that allowed him to spend time with his son, and still continue being the main provider for his nuclear family. Generally, Carlos encompassed a multi-faceted approach at expressing love; he did so by displaying affectionate behaviors such as hugging, making time to play with his son, and ultimately making his son feel loved.

Lastly, like David's example in the prior section, expressing love was also about making sacrifices and changing personal behavior to promote the best interest of the family. For Diego, the father of six children, his battle with schizophrenia and occasional heavy drinking affected the family dynamics. About two years prior to the interview, Diego was drinking constantly and stopped taking his antipsychotics. His mental disorder quickly spiraled and he later attempted suicide and was hospitalized for several days. In the wake of this tumultuous experience for him and his family, Diego realized that he had to make certain changes to improve his life and be there for his family. He shared that it was difficult to be a provider for his family due to his disability and limitations on finding and holding a job. However, this father deeply cared for his children and wife and acknowledged that it was his responsibility to show them that. Diego stated:

I listen to what they gotta say. If they want me to change or do something, that's like me showing them that I love them. I do what they tell me to do. If it makes them happy then, I'll do that.

Diego learned the importance of listening to his children as an avenue to express his love. His hospitalization was a great turning point for Diego and upon speaking with his children he realized they wanted him to stop drinking. Diego's children were happy seeing his father healthy

and available. In order for him to achieve that it required him to quit drinking and take his medication as prescribed. For Diego, showing love to his children involved listening to their concerns and altering his behaviors when necessary in order to accommodate to their wishes and benefit the family welfare.

In the quotes above, we learned that some fathers expressed their love differently as their children grew. While others believed at first that expressing love was about providing a good education and teaching values, but later affirmed that it also involved disciplining his children even if they did not see it as love. For Jose, expressing love was about verbalizing it to his son and making sure his son knew he was loved. Similarly, Carlos expressed his love by being approachable and affectionate with his children. Lastly, Diego showed his children he loved them very much by quitting his drinking and getting on track with his mental health medication. Expressing love to their children was an example of daily parenting interactions which enabled fathers to make sense of their parenting experience. Compared to ideal good fathering perspectives shared in the first chapter, many fathers confirmed their ideal parenting by engaging their children in ways that proved they were present and loving fathers.

Parenting Negotiations and Decision Making

Although many of these fathers prided themselves in their ability to spearhead many responsibilities for their children, they also created meaning of their paternity through interactions and negotiations with significant others. Given the importance of being a father that can be present, provide, and protect, resources became important components in father's ability to live up to all these expectations. However, resources were not always readily available or abundant for these fathers, whether they were financial or in parenting. As exemplified through their quotes, most fathers had to learn how to make decisions and take responsibility of their

fathering. Many managed to do this through their relationships with others in their lives. These interactions became critical components of their fatherhood identities as they heavily influenced the allocation of resources, and partner gender role values and expectations regarding the division of responsibilities and discipline of children. In the accounts below, fathers exemplified how interactions and negotiations with important others influenced their parenting and sense of self.

As previously discussed, Jose was a father who valued his ability to provide for his son financially and emotionally. He was keen on expressing his love verbally and acknowledging his developmental milestones. In juggling many responsibilities as a father, Jose discussed how he and his wife negotiated the allocation of resources for their family. For this father, his son's needs took precedence over everything else, even if it involved several sacrifices on his behalf. Jose explained this compromise by stating:

Yes, well my wife and I have to think of my son first. What he needs is first. If we only have 30 dollars, 40, 50 dollars, whatever we have goes to him first. First, we pay the Day Care, then his milk, and his food. I can go on a day without eating, or having only one meal, but he can't go on without having all his meals in one day. So you have to know where to spend the money.

Jose and his wife agreed that the distribution of the income will go to his son's needs first. Their income was not abundant and misusing even a small portion of it could mean not having enough to feed their son. Thus, for Jose it was essential to spend every dollar wisely and when necessary he was willing to relinquish his own meals in order to make sure his son did not miss any of his. Jose learned from an early age how to manage finances. He had positive examples from some siblings that exemplified the benefits to properly handling finances, while

others misused it and caused a lot of problems for the family as a whole. Seeing his single mother work several jobs to make ends meet inspired Jose to also work hard and give back to his family. Now, with a family of his own, Jose applied lessons of his youth and agreements with his wife about the allocation of finances to guarantee his son was taken care of.

Negotiating parenting responsibilities was more complex than modeling after family of origin examples. Sometimes it required fathers to make adjustments to parenting and household responsibilities because contextual obstacles made it difficult to live by preexisting notions of whom responsibilities belonged to. For the youngest father in the group interviewed, Antonio, a 19 year-old father of an infant daughter, division of parenting responsibilities was conceptualized through a cultural lens. He was raised with a traditional perspective of *machismo* that echoed that in a relationship the man was expected to be the sole provider and the woman was to stay home with the children. However, financial and contextual circumstances influenced Antonio to moderately deviate from his strict traditional view of gender roles in the household. When inquiring about how responsibilities around the household were distributed, Antonio said,

I grew up, I'm Mexican, I think everything in Mexican where the dad got to go to work and the mom has to stay home and cook, clean, what-not. [Traditional?] Traditional. But, that's me. It ain't going to hurt to help out around the house. It's been easy to wash dishes, vacuum, ain't nothing hard in that. Cook, I cook for my girl. When she home, she cooks for me. But I want her to work because man, two incomes are better than one.

His traditional perspectives on gender role expectations would suggest Antonio as displaying *machismo*. However, there was more to his *machismo* than mere desire to be the provider and his partner the homemaker. Given circumstances of his living situation both financially and contextually, Antonio realized it was in his family's best interest that he also

share responsibilities around the house and that a two-partner income was preferable to one. Antonio also understood that engaging in tasks around the house (which he considered to be the responsibility of the woman) did not threaten his sense of masculinity and fatherhood. Based on his account, it seemed unlikely that Antonio had a problem in willingly washing dishes, vacuuming, and cooking for his girlfriend despite cultural messages that had taught him differently.

Antonio was born in Mexico, but moved with his mother to Chicago at an early age after she left his abusive father. Since his arrival to the United States, Antonio participated in gang activity and encountered trouble with the law on several occasions. Despite these run-ins and some jail time, his mother was always a supportive and present figure in his life. It was unclear whether or not he was still an active gang member, but his participation decreased when his daughter was born. Soon after her birth, Antonio decided to move in with his girlfriend and look for a job so he could stay out of trouble and provide for his family. Antonio was a father that greatly identified with his Mexican background even though he spent most of his life in Chicago after moving from Mexico with his mother.

Antonio's behaviors as a partner and father were different from messages he had internalized about gender roles in a relationship. Some of that discrepancy in his perspectives and actual every day behaviors as a father and partner, may be due to the consequences of having restricted finances and/or because there was no other way in which he could assert his contribution to the household at the time. Antonio was perhaps the only father that clearly stated this discrepancy in beliefs about expectations of gender roles and actual behaviors as a parent and partner. The majority of other fathers discussed a more egalitarian perspective and congruent behaviors on parenting.

For many fathers, parenting responsibilities were seen as a shared matter with partners. For 35 year-old Ricardo, being a father was also about sharing parenting decisions and responsibilities with his wife. Ricardo's extended family lived near Chicago and on the weekends he, his wife, and daughters routinely visited his mother and other family members. Ricardo was laid off at the time of the interview and shared that it was difficult to know he could not financially provide for his daughters. Due to his unemployment, he was at home more often and spent more time with his children. When Ricardo became a father, he realized his extended family was very willing to help him parent, but were also somewhat intrusive to his nuclear family life. From those interactions, Ricardo concluded that to be a father he would have to listen to what others would suggest, but would eventually use his own judgment and collaborated with his wife in order make decisions for their family. He discussed this perspective by saying,

It's the responsibility of the mother and father. Everybody outside that circle they can come in and say their opinion, as far as trying to (unintelligible) their thinking it's not going to be (unintelligible) cause it's up to the mom and dad.

Through experiences and interactions with his extended family and wife, Ricardo determined that it is the responsibility of the mother and father of the children to make decisions about their wellbeing and provide for them. Interestingly, Ricardo considered input from this family and continuously engages them for feedback during family visits, despite preferring to make decisions for the family with his wife. Thus, although Ricardo mainly credited parenting responsibilities to a team effort with his wife, the task was actually a collaborative dynamic that involved extended family and judgment about past experiences.

Finally, David was a father who believes he and his partner were active participants in their children's discipline, but approached it differently. He valued communicating with his

children and teaching them right from wrong. As mentioned in the first chapter, David recalled his father's absence being related to many problems he encountered in his youth, especially his involvement with gangs. With his children, David strived to be different from his father and serve as an active participant in their growth, especially their discipline. Although both parents disciplined their children, David stated,

She is more like the tough one on them. She does not take time to explain the situation.

So there are time she gets mad at my daughter and says go to your room and I go over there and explain to her why she is going to her room. You done this, and this, and that is why you're here.

Elaborating on the quote above, David considered it was important to explain to his daughter the reason why she was sent to her room. By doing this he accomplished two tasks: indirectly supporting his wife's decision to reprimand their daughter and helping his daughter formulate an understanding of the situation. In the gang related difficulties he encountered, David stated his desire to have had his father's guidance, and through situations such as this one he was able to implement the more positive parenting techniques that he did not experience.

To conclude, daily interaction was an avenue by which fathers could exemplify their perspectives as fathers and their actual fathering behaviors. Ways in which fathers described their everyday identities included having interactions with their children, extended family, and partners. Through these interactions certain fatherhood identities and concepts became more salient and evident throughout the interviews than others: being a protector, expressing love, and co-parenting factors. For Jose, co-parenting involved being on the same page with his wife about allocating their financial resources to attend to their son's needs. For Antonio, there was a dissonance between his opinion on which partner was expected to fulfill certain task, while his

behavior was different. Then Ricardo explained parenting and decision making in the household as a task that should be shared with his wife. Fathers in this sample have shared different dimensions of their parenting relationships and their participation as fathers that prioritized connectedness and family wellbeing.

Chapter 5

Father Identities in

Complex Extended Kin Networks

As extended kin are a supportive component of survival and family life for Latinos family support is a main resource sought by Latino men (Wellband & Ribner, 2008). In this last chapter of findings, I explore how fathers' meaning making is influenced by relationships in complex extended kin networks. Their extended kin networks are considered complex, not by the number of members, but by the careful consideration given to their selection. Many fathers did not have their entire family living in the states with them, and instead of seeking community support to create connections and belonging, they relied only on a few key members of their present family with whom they engaged in quality and enriching fatherhood interactions. These relationships are characterized by practicing family lessons, using extended kin resources, and creating a family legacy.

Fathers as Purveyors of Family Communication and Togetherness

The majority of the fathers were of Mexican origin or background. The fathers highly valued “family” no matter if they were in Chicago with them or still in their native of Mexico. This importance placed on family which is referred to as *familismo* in the lineages of Latino values, has been a broad concept relating to other aspects of fatherhood meaning making. Through different aspects of *familismo* fathers have demonstrated their beliefs about parenting practices and perception of themselves as men and fathers.

Rodrigo was a 34 year-old, first generation Mexican father of a four year-old son. This father stood out from the rest because none of his family members were in the States with him, while other fathers had one or two members living nearby at the very least. Rodrigo commented

that he had no friends and mainly associates with his wife and son. With time, Rodrigo began to spend time with extended kin from his wife's side of the family because he wanted his son to have a bigger support system and "know that he is loved." Rodrigo's parents divorced when he was young; his mother, his uncle, and grandmother mainly raised him. These key role models in his upbringing, especially his mother, taught Rodrigo about the cultural value of *respeto* which means to respect those that are older than you, especially the elderly because they are wise and knowledgeable individuals one can learn from. To this matter, Rodrigo stated:

Because my mama told me many things, 'You must show respect for the old people.' She told me every day. That's why when I see old people I try to make nice to the old people. Because everybody is going to be old people.

Through his mother's teaching Rodrigo applied this value in his every day interactions and spoke about teaching it to his son while at family gatherings. Rodrigo understood that someday he would be old too and would like to receive similar treatment. Rodrigo also spoke highly of his grandmother as someone who not only taught him other lessons, but also cared for him and was an active participant in his upbringing. When his mother was at work, his grandmother made sure Rodrigo got home from school safely and she also cooked for him and his siblings. As a father, Rodrigo demonstrated his dedication to his son's upbringing and wellbeing. When his son was very young he became very sick (type of illness was not stated in this interview) and Rodrigo did everything in his power to provide the care necessary for his son. On another occasion, Rodrigo was offered a job position in a different location for a higher pay, but he turned it down because it would require him to leave his family, and he was not willing to sacrifice being away from his son. Although *respeto* is taught as something that is given to older individuals, it seems as though *respeto* is also something that older individuals earn by showing

care for the young. Rodrigo's grandmother earned *respeto* by caring for him as a young boy, and Rodrigo is investing in doing the same with his son, so that when he is old he would be treated with *respeto*.

However, respect was not just a value demonstrated to others, it was one that fathers wanted their children to apply toward themselves. For Luis, the father whose daughters moved back to Mexico, teaching them values was an integral part of being a good father. Luis taught his daughters about love and respect toward others and themselves. He affirmed:

For me, for example, the most basic ones are to teach them love, respect, respect to their parents and to people who are older than them, ummm. For me, those are the most important ones. And also that they respect themselves. Because that is another thing: respecting oneself.

Considering his concerns over his two eldest daughter's safety in the neighborhood, Luis feared they would become involved with gang members and/or get pregnant as adolescents. Although this father did not explicitly state the connection between self-respect and preventing gang involvement, it seems plausible that the two are in fact related to his concerns and effort to pacify them. Thus far, practicing the cultural value of *respeto* and respect seemed to have two functions: acknowledging the position and significance of an elder and safe guarding self-worth.

In addition, aside from teaching his daughters to respect themselves, Luis also thought it was essential that they understood and learned the value of hard work just like he did at a very young age. He shared:

Since I was a person that always had to work, since I was six or seven years old I had to work to help my mother, all I tell them [the daughters] is that not by giving them more things I will show them that I love them. You have to teach yourself to value life and to

know how to make a living. I tell them [the daughters], you can't be hoping that someone will give you what you need. That is why I am the way I am with them. I do provide them economic support, but not more than they need. I gave them only what is necessary.

Earning money through hard work was not just about attaining financial stability, but it was a way of valuing life. This quote also depicts another concept he taught his daughters: to be self-sufficient. It is interesting because in considering a gender perspective, traditional *machismo* would suggest that women are expected to be the homemaker and men the provider. However, Luis did not want his daughter to wait around for someone to give them what they needed. Instead, by placing the expectation that they should value hard work to earn a living, he was empowering them to lead their lives differently than culturally they may have been expected to. This is important because Luis was a first generation father who was raised in Mexico lending the stereotypical assumption that Mexican men are *machista* (i.e., display *machismo*). However, this father demonstrated a different perspective and behavior. Perhaps seeing his mother work hard to provide for their family and also moving to the United States during his 20s, explained Luis' egalitarian perspective about work expectations for women and the principle tied to it.

Other treasured lessons passed down to their children involved keeping their Latino culture alive. A great part of that for these fathers was to assure their children learned to speak Spanish. For Gonzalo, the Chicago born father of one son, his Mexican heritage was something he wanted to pass down to his young son. Gonzalo understood that his son was likely to learn English elsewhere, but worried the same would not occur with Spanish. In order to guarantee his son was constantly exposed to the Spanish language he has asked his mother to take care of him. He explained:

She's been the babysitter from the moment he was born cuz I didn't want to put him in a daycare because I want him to speak Spanish. My mom speaks nothing but Spanish to him and at daycare they're more likely to speak nothing but English to him.

Gonzalo's parents and siblings moved to Chicago briefly before he was born; thus, although he was born in the United States, he was raised around traditional Mexican values and customs. This challenges general assumptions that second generation immigrants are more likely to be acculturated and place their family of origin values behind (Portes et al., 2009, p. 639). Gonzalo described his family as very "tight knit" and discussed his pride about the closeness they shared and his Mexican heritage. By having his mother care for his son when he went to work, Gonzalo hoped his son would build a strong bond with his grandmother and learn Spanish.

In addition to showing *respeto* to elders and respect for yourself, speaking Spanish and building togetherness, open communication was the bonding factor among *familismo* practices. For 48 year-old Elias, the eldest father of the interviewees, communication was essential to teaching his two and five year-old daughters values and building a resilient relationship with them. He stated,

There is also the sense we can be honest. They ask me a question, if it is not ridiculous; I give them an honest answer. So that way they can also learn to be honest with us. And we sit down and we share. They ask me how your work was today. And I tell them what happened. And I ask them how was yours? And then they tell me what they did. That's a good way to have that sense of you know, togetherness.

Elias became a father for the first time at the age of 41. He expressed in the interview that he was glad he waited to become a father later in life because at that point he felt ready and mature enough to completely focus on his children. As an adult, Elias learned that open and

honest communication allowed him to bond with others more closely, especially his family. As a new father he prioritized applying this lesson when raising his daughters. Even though his daughters were very young, telling them about his bad day at work was part of being honest and open with them. By instilling this value of open communication Elias hoped to build a strong bond with his daughters in which they could feel safe going to him to express themselves.

These fathers showed that through internalized cultural values and lessons, they had guiding principles that made their parenting unique and enriched their fatherhood identities. Some fathers expressed the importance of teaching their children *respeto* in order to also receive it someday. Another father believed it was crucial his daughters respected themselves and also learned the value of hard work, evidently challenging *machista* cultural expectations. Also, making sure their child spoke Spanish was a way of honoring a father's Mexican heritage; and finally, conversing about one's day opened the door for building a strong relationship with their children. Thus, through applying family lessons these fathers honored their culture and were able to nurture their relationships with their children.

Relationship with Extended Kin

To give meaning to fatherhood required men to practice and teach family values, but where values expressed, reinforced, and sometimes negated, was through the relationships with extended kin. Not all Latino fathers have all family members with them in the states (Welland & Ribner, 2008), and neither do they immediately latch onto community members for support in the absence of their family (Gretsel, 2011). As depicted by these men, extended kin mainly included only a few trusted family members. Extended kin for these men was comprised of mainly family of origin members and a few other close blood relatives.

For 27 year-old David, participation with extended family members was a central part of his adult and fatherhood life. As David reflected on his youth and trouble with gangs he realized that his family was always there for him. His grandmother in particular, was a key figure in his upbringing and gave him moral support when he found himself in trouble with gangs and as a first time father. While discussing family involvement David shared,

It goes down to the same thing basically I was raised with my family. It's good that way because you always have someone helping you out no matter what. I mean I always try to have my kids involved with my nephews their aunts my parents. To me it's important real important to have that family. Knowing that they have all that support. If anything should happen and they can't talk to me you have other family you can talk to. That is the way I was raised.

With time David learned the significance of having his family by his side and as a support system. The close relationship to extended family was a bond David appreciated in his youth and wanted his children to experience and benefit from. This bond is something David wants his children to share because through it he hoped they would always have comfort and guidance. David also mentioned the importance of his children having someone to go to in case they feel they cannot go to him.

Another father concurred with David's perspective about the benefits of extended kin as a resource for children's upbringing. Antonio, the youngest father of the interviewees, wanted his daughter to grow up with a close relationship to his mother and grandmother. Although this father was very young compared to the other fathers and had the highest gang participation at the time of the interview, it was clear he wanted to blaze a fruitful and safer future for his five month

old daughter. A part of accomplishing that was having the support of his mother and grandmother. He stated,

So hopefully they can get closer, like my mom or grandma or something. If she doesn't want to tell me something, maybe she'll feel more comfortable telling it to my mom. It makes my mom know, if something is wrong then she'll tell me. That's why having parents involved in their kids life is so important. You know they ain't never going to tell you everything.

For Antonio, this closeness was a means by which he could be informed of his daughter's wellbeing even if she would not directly telling him herself. Unlike Elias, who believed that directly and openly communicating with his daughters would encourage them to reach out to him; Antonio trusted his daughter would be more likely to communicate openly with his mother and grandmother instead. Regardless of how these fathers approached communication with their daughters, or in the case of Antonio's plan to, the common thread is that this father views extended family as an instrument to support his parenting. This did not mean Antonio was planning on being any less involved; instead it alluded to his expectation that through his relationship with his mother and grandmother, his daughter would have further support and safety. Viewing family as an active support to his parenting made sense for this father given his continuous exposure to danger on the streets and concern over a potentially unexpected death.

For another father, bonding with a family member was more about asking for help and sharing new experiences. Forty-one year-old Henry shared,

And so when I was a father for the first time, my sister, because my parents were in Mexico at that time, so the only closer person was my sister, so I asked her to be with me, [...delivery room... laughter] to teach me how to change a diaper, well, I did before

maybe with my youngest brother, changed diapers. So when Paula was born, I knew some things, like how to care for, the small things, like changing a diaper or feeding them...

Interestingly, instead of calling on a nurse to instruct him on how to do this task he asked his sister to be there with him and show him how to change the diaper. Even though Henry had previous practice with his little brother, he was nervous to do so as a first time father. Yet, learning how to change a diaper was not this father's main need, it was his desire for support. The quote suggests that asking for help involved trust. By reaching out to his sister, Henry not only solidified his diaper changing technique, but also felt confident about his first steps as a father. Once again, family and extended kin served as a resource for parenting.

Lastly, one father chiefly depicts how *familismo* was expressed in relationships with extended family. Ricardo stated,

By visiting regularly my mom's house or (unintelligible). My mom's house is like a visitation stop. It's like everybody goes there every day or on Saturdays or Sundays, the day for everybody to get together there...as far as away from her house and visiting my other sisters, my other family members, I try to (unintelligible). I try to maintain a family unit, try to stick together. (So not just on holidays but on...just on weekends?) No, on a regular basis. I try to always spend family time, no matter the situation.

Ricardo was the father that also stated that he preferred to make decisions about his children with his partner; but it was evident that family input was a part of the process. Spending time with family for Ricardo was a part of his daily routine. His mother, as the matriarch of the family, offered her home as the gathering place for family time. Gathering at his mother's house routinely, Ricardo hoped to facilitate and encourage his daughters' education about their

Mexican heritage and the importance of family. Ricardo stated, “I think in one way it helps them grow as a person. Helps them learn about giving to family unit, family values.”

Thus, spending time with family permitted the application of family values to be further reinforced with children, but also served as a support system for these fathers’ parenting. When given the opportunity to interact with close and trusted family members, fathers established routine interactions that involved their children and enhanced their parenting.

Family Togetherness and Creating a Legacy

Some fathering experiences emerged as integrated themes. These helped inform how fathers behaved and how they saw themselves as fathers. The majority of fathers had negative experiences with their fathers that motivated them to act differently with their own children, but on the same token, values taught and behaviors exemplified by mother figures were examples fathers followed as well. Thus, it seems as though the father’s identity meaning making was a complex combination of interactions, which involved compensating for paternal shortcomings, following maternal role models, and utilizing extended family resources. In grouping all of these influential components to their parenting and fatherhood identities, these fathers demonstrated something very special, a desire to create a legacy. Legacy included a combination of behaviors and practices, but more so for these fathers it was about an intention to keep their family connected and ensure that their children (who are mainly being raised in the United States) know about their Latino lineage. It was about implementing a sense of continuity through the sustainability of family relationships.

Alfonso was a 33 year-old father of a five year-old daughter. He was born in Mexico, but raised in New York City. Unlike other fathers, he is co-residential and only sees his daughters Thursdays through Sunday. Due to living in separate households, Alfonso traveled routinely to

pick up his daughter and spend “quality time” with her. When asked about what family means to him, Alfonso shared:

It is important. I grew up with a close family I seen my grandma and my grandpa both sides. In my family no one got divorced. Now everyone is getting divorced. I wanted my daughter to feel comfortable with her whole family. I want her know what is going to happen. I want to not just not know my whole family. She spends more time with my ex’s family then mine. I want her to grow up knowing my family too.

Alfonso described that his family was always close and did not have a history of divorces. As a father separated from the mother of his child, he noticed how it impacted his ability to have his daughter spend time with his family. Although Alfonso was raised in the United States, culturally there is an expectation that the children will create strong relationships with their extended family. Alfonso had a desire to provide this for his daughter, but acknowledged that his separation from her mother placed certain obstacles in that endeavor.

For another father, passing on family values and creating a legacy of lasting family bonds is something that begins at an early age. For 36 year-old Andres, his family not being physically around was not an impediment for securing their relationship with his daughter. He stated:

But I believe what I am doing is sending my eleven years old daughter to Mexico [are you] so she spends the summer with my parents. And she loves it. She loves Mexico, I want her to know about her culture. I show them pictures, they say that’s my uncle, that’s my uncle, so they know because we talk about it.

Sending children to spend time with family in their country of origin was an example of how this father showed his daughter how important their heritage was, and he hoped that someday his

daughter as an adult would pass on these same sentiments. In doing this, no matter the location of the family members Andres kept his family connected and their cultural practices alive.

Legacy was also about forgiveness and mending troubled relationships. For the second youngest father of the group, 21 year-old Pascal, family relationships were permanent lifelong ties. Pascal also realized that relationships with family members would sometimes be problematic and involve disagreements, but that at the end of the day they would require understanding and problem solving. He explained:

It's okay, if it changes through the years, then we'll just try to get along with them cause we're supposed to. We're family, we're going to be family for the rest of our lives so why keep fighting some things, (unintelligible), so if there's another chance then I'm not going to take them apart from the family.

In this quote, Pascal referred to the relationship with his in-laws and wife's side of the family. Early in their relationship Pascal had several disagreements with her family that resulted in limited interaction and time with extended family. When Pascal became a father, he acknowledged her family's desire for involvement and began making an effort to improve their broken relationship. Hence, because this father knows his extended family will be a part of his life forever, repairing past issues is a way of guaranteeing that his children will have more frequent interaction with family members, and he will have more resources for his parenting.

Lastly, another father expanded on this concept of lasting family relationships and establishing a legacy by emphasizing that one's family is unique. Daniel, a 31 year-old father of a three year-old son perceived family as the main sources of support, belonging, and connectedness. Daniel heavily relied on family moral support when his marriage and wife's health waned. At first, it took the couple almost four years to conceive their son, and during that

time Daniel and his wife argued a lot and their emotional intimacy declined. Later, when they were finally able to conceive and their son was born, Daniel's wife suffered from post-partum depression. During her illness she rejected their son and Daniel became significantly involved in his care. In his youth, Daniel developed a stronger bond with his mother than his father; and in his adult years, especially during the time his marriage was in turmoil; his mother was the main source of support and guidance. As his son grew, other family members became increasingly involved in his life and showed Daniel other forms of support. He elaborated on this idea of family support by stating:

In our, in my, when I was raised we usually had to you know be more connected to your family because that's the only family you'll have and they'll always be there for you when you need it, when you need them. And that's what I mostly teach my son, you know you got to stay connected with your family. Because you never know when you will need something from them or who you're going to go to. Family's more helpful in everything.

Given the importance of practicing the cultural value of *familismo* by making a commitment to and prioritizing family interests and wellbeing (Zambrana, 1995, p. 7), it is evident that family does have a great influence on fathering (Coltrane et al., 2004). As discussed in this chapter, fathers also created a sense of self through important family values and lessons, and being active purveyors of their practice. For instance, this involved teaching the value of *respeto*, which involves showing respect to a person of authority. Encouraging self-respect and learning about the value of hard work was a way of empowering young women in the family. Also, preserving the native Spanish language represented the importance that heritage played.

Open communication was the avenue by which connection was maintained and values passed down.

Fathers also created a sense of self through interactions with extended kin. Extended kin provided trustworthy and dependable resources for these fathers, mainly with childcare and protection. Some fathers utilized family relationships to reinforce family practices and gain support in their parenting. In addition, it seemed as though positive experience with family of origin members encouraged these fathers to seek support from extended kin. These strong and interactive relationships served as foundations for fathers to solidify their parenting and confidence as fathers. Lastly, through family saturated interactions and practices it became evident that fathers had a desire and placed effort into enriching family togetherness. Fathers were interested in creating a legacy by practicing and instilling existing family values onto their children, and engaging extended kin by including their input in their parenting, and consequently their identity meaning making.

Chapter 6

Discussion

The general objective of this study was to explore immigrant Latino fatherhood identities through the process of meaning making as influenced by relationships with family members and context. The data in the findings was organized into three main chapters, all of which included three thematic sections. It is important to note that the findings among the chapters are not mutually exclusive to their chapter. This was a challenge when organizing the data, because many of the concepts overlap and are very closely related to one another. In the following I will summarize the findings and note four major contributions of this thesis.

The findings from the “Ideal father identities through presence, providing, and being a good father” chapter provided insights onto the conceptual notion of what it was like to be a father based on life experiences and internalized perspectives of good fathering. Accounts from these fathers revealed that the majority had distinct negative experiences regarding the absence of their own father, and one other father conversely, discussed constructive impacts of his father’s presence. For the men whose fathers were absent, there was an emphasis on compensating for their own let downs of involvement expectations by being very active and nurturing with their own children.

This particular finding is interesting because it somewhat challenges a prominent academic scholarship concept that suggests that fathers are more likely to construct their view of fathering and learn how to father based on “how they were fathered”, rather than being influenced by parenting of their mothers (Dudley & Stone, 2004, p. 65; Palkovitz, 2002, p. 65). In part, men from the sample did learn how to father from their fathers in the respect that they went against their fathers’ deficiencies, while in other ways they followed examples of their

mothers and grandmothers involving values of hard work and honesty. This may suggest that prominent female figures in their lives provided a premise by which these men learned how to father because they emphasized providing and caring for children by different avenues.

However, in another regard, the absence of their fathers might have affected their perspectives of themselves as men. Given their perceived success at fathering compared to their own fathers the message sent is that being a good man does not equate to being a good father. The concept of “presence” played a very significant role in the way fathers judged and constructed good fathering ideals. Thus, interpretations of the process by which these men made sense of their interactions with their father shed light on their present endeavors as parents to their children.

Being a provider was also an aspect of ideal fathering. Providing has often been simplified to describe this concept as one that is either fulfilled or not (Campos; 2008), when in fact this aspect of fathering, especially for these men, is much more complex. The first major contribution of this analysis was the presentation of a different kind of machismo. At its simplest, providing involved making a financial contribution; but further, being a provider was also about establishing long-term stability and security for the family, being a role model of financial management, and having integrity about allocating resources. A common message these fathers sent was an internalized expectation of being the main provider of the household. Many fathers believed they were the designated provider for the family, and spoke of this expectation and responsibility very highly. Such perspectives were closely tied to displays of *machismo* because they emphasized the importance these fathers placed on appropriately using their monetary power and asserting their authority position in the family by knowing where the money was best spent. This suggests that fathers highly valued their ability to provide. As some encountering obstacles to achieving the provider role (i.e., being unemployed), affected their

sense of self as a provider and their personal assessment of their own failure at fathering if they were not able to contribute financially to the household.

Lastly, through processing experiences of their youth with their fathers and internalizing their identities as providers, fathers conceptualized ideal notions of being a good father. As stated in the quotes, being a good father was a combination of fulfilling their role as a provider, but also showing love. In showing love fathers were able to express values and educate, but ultimately show their children they were present. Good father ideals were formulated, but also practiced; they were about being present and active, and providing for the family's necessities and securing a future.

The second chapter of findings, "Everyday father identities through protection, expressing love, and decision making", focused on the everyday interactions that helped fathers construct and fulfill their meaning of fatherhood. Everyday parenting shaped their idealized father identities. Many of the quotes displayed the connection between the father's perspectives on ideal parenting and their actual behaviors. Through accounts of this chapter the impact of context on fathering became very evident. It seemed as though some fathers were not able to parent exactly how they expected and consequently were required to make adjustments that were not anticipated. A prominent contextual factor was neighborhood safety.

In the first section of the chapter, I discuss fathers' daily interactions revolving around protection. Protection has been considered a "traditional role" of fathers that can also be a means of establishing a "bond with their children" when effort is placed into fulfilling it (Marsiglio & Roy, 2012, p. 83). The second major finding of this study indicates the importance of protecting as influenced by contextual factors. Protecting was also about preventing children from going through similar negative experiences of the parent's youth. Being a protector to their children

was crucial for these fathers because of the recurring gang activity in their neighborhoods. Protection was presented proactively and reactively among these fathers. Those that were proactive about being protective engaged in daily conversations with their children that allowed them to monitor their children's behaviors and relationships with others, consequently informing the setting of boundaries. Some of these conversations involved trust and open communication, while others were more one-sided in which the father decided what was best for the child; and one father's proactive protective decisions went as far as to send his daughters back to Mexico where he believed they would be safe from the gang influences and activity of their US neighborhood.

Reactive protection was not necessarily a manifestation of the absence of proactive protection, but rather the presence of unexpected and uncontrollable outside violence in the neighborhood. Unfortunately, no amount of speaking with children daily about safety or monitoring their relationships could have prevented the drive-by shootings some men and their families experienced. One father was forced to push his wife and son out of the way to prevent them from getting shot. Another father also experienced gang related violence, mostly as retaliation for his efforts to cease gang membership. Although this father knew that continuing to distance himself was risky, he recognized that the long-term involvement with the gang would come at a higher cost for him and his family. Hence, although being a protector may have been a traditional expectation of these fathers, their contextual circumstances required them to think and act in very specific ways, perhaps altering the way they may have initially anticipated to fulfill that role.

Another form of daily interaction attesting to father's sense of self was expressing love to their children. Although this question was very directly asked in the interview and we may not

have heard mention of the topic otherwise, it brought to light the importance of connection and nurturance that these fathers placed in their parenting. Expressing love was a means of connecting to their children in a daily manner that informed them that they were present and caring fathers. It was also a reciprocal and rewarding engagement that allowed fathers to gauge the effectiveness of their parenting and perspectives of themselves as good fathers. Like in many other concepts discussed in the chapters, expressing love had many dimensions. It was not just about saying, “I love you”; it involved teaching values, giving education, disciplining, physically and verbally showing affections, and even changing parental behaviors for the benefit and wellbeing of the family. Considering the common fatherhood absence experiences of the interviewee’s childhoods, a connection can be made to their adamant expression of love. Expressing love for these fathers was complex, but intentional and direct. They wanted to guarantee that their children knew they were loved and cared for.

Finally, the last section of this chapter discussed negotiations and decisions around parenting. These codes expressed different topics, but centered on interactions that impacted fathering decisions and behaviors. Attaining input and support from other was a form of creating connection and ultimately, gaining confidence in their fathering. Some fathers discussed and negotiated the allocation of resources in order to prioritize their child’s needs with their partner. Also, although another father mainly credited his family’s decision making to discussions with his wife, there was a sense that family input was part of the process as well.

For another father, perspectives on parenting and household responsibilities were initially informed by very traditional values of *machismo* indicating the male as the breadwinner and the female in the relationship as the homemaker. However, given contextual influences related to a shortage in finances due to the father’s unemployment, there was a discrepancy displayed in the

gender role expectations and the actual behavior of the father. Principally, fathers constructed their sense of fathering through everyday interactions with important others. These interactions with important others helped them to protect their family and children from current threats of danger, or to prevent children from going through similar hurtful experiences; create connections and bonds by expressing love; and negotiate parenting decisions.

In the last chapter of findings, “Father Identities in complex extended kin networks”, I discerned concepts that further enriched these men’s perspectives of themselves as fathers and set a platform for current parenting accomplishments and hopes for the future. In conceptualizing these fathers’ sense of family and interactions, it became apparent that they expressed a dynamic approach to the cultural value of *familismo*. Although it was obvious family was important to these fathers, what made this cultural value unique to them was how perspectives about it modified and were expressed in context.

The first section discusses fathers as purveyors of family communications and togetherness. The third major contribution of this thesis suggests that fathers are active agents in conveying familismo. It is indicated though the family values and lessons were not just addressed as important to these fathers; they lived routine activities that defined their parenting. One father alluded to the cultural value of *respeto*, which he practiced as a child with his grandmother and continued to practice, and also taught his son. Another father emphasized to his daughters the value of self-respect and hard work as a means of encouraging them to be self-sufficient just like he had to be at a very young age. For another, there was a value in preserving his heritage and did so by guaranteeing his son learned to speak Spanish. Also, another father exemplified the concept echoed through the quotes of this section, connection and togetherness; he enjoyed speaking to his two young daughters about his day and hearing about theirs as a way

to nurture growing father-daughter relationships. These fathers were not just an authority figure delegating tasks to their children and emptying a quintessential phrase such as, *family is important*. Fathers were intentional and active participants of practicing the family values they taught.

The second section focused on active relationships with extended kin. These interactions reflect that the fathers perceived kin as a resource and instrumental support system to their parenting. Extended kin were the avenue by which fathers were able to express their family values and practices. Nearly all fathers in this section mentioned routine family gatherings, which they played an active role in socializing their children with other family members, perhaps how they were socialized as well. In doing this, they hoped to strengthen the family relationships and set the foundation for their children to create lasting bonds with their relatives. Similar to the concept of expressing love, fathers wanted to assure that their children not only knew their family and heritage, but that they were a lasting support system for them. Extended kin were an instrumental and intentional support to the fathers in their parenting. For one father, his sister provided moral and physical support at the birth of his first child by being present and willing to show him how to change a diaper. Ultimately, fathers and their families engaged in interactions that guided and supported their parenting and family values.

In the last section of this chapter, family togetherness resembled another dimension of these fathers' identities, their desire and efforts at creating a legacy. Striving to do this was perhaps the fathers' most unique manifestation of embracing and implementing the cultural value of *familismo*. The fourth and last major contribution of this study concludes that familismo looks to the future and informs the creation of legacy. Through this cultural value, fathers were able to make connections with family members and pave a future for their family. Creating a legacy was

about continuity among practices and values, actively nurturing relationships, and instilling family togetherness within the nuclear and extended family. Given the narratives, it seems as though fathers wanted their children to be involved with extended family because they would provide quality support and also serve as role models. Legacy was also created through forgiveness and problem resolution where essential components in maintaining family peace and togetherness. Finally, legacy was created with the realization that family is long lasting and that those relationships require intention and care. *Familismo* was not just about making sacrifices for the family or showing care for them. Sacrifices and care were aspects embedded in the importance of practicing family values and lessons, using extended kin as a primordial resources in parenting, and ultimately, creating a legacy by maintaining family togetherness.

Limitations of the Study

Although the study's findings help expand on and challenge existing notions about Latino families and fathers, certain aspects of this study limit its ability to be generalized to greater populations of immigrant Latino fathers and families. Firstly, the sample size was only comprised of 19 fathers, 18 of whom were from or had a Mexican background; the other father was from Puerto Rico. About half of the men were first generation Latino fathers, and the rest were a combination of second generation, and what I referred to as 1.5 generation (i.e., born in Mexico, but came to the United States at a young age, usually before age 15). One father's interview did not provide his birth location or description of time lived in Chicago, inevitably making it difficult to know or infer his generation. Also, as the findings suggest, there were no clear discrepancies between fathers of different generations in regards to cultural perspectives, expectations of gender roles, nor was there thorough elaborate mention of immigration experience for each father. Considering these points, the findings cannot be generalized to a

greater population of immigrant Latino fathers because the sample size was too small, and their characteristics are specific to their experiences.

Secondly, the questions and the way in which they were asked were not consistent across all interviews. Some interviews were conducted in Spanish and some questions, as stated by the interviewer, were not thoroughly understood by the interviewee. Also, I did not personally collect the data, nor did I ever meet these fathers; instead, I read the transcribed interviews, some of which were translated from English to Spanish. This posed a limitation during the data coding and analysis phases because some interviews were incomplete due to not all questions in the protocol being asked, and some were difficult to understand because of misspelling or unintelligible words during the transcriptions.

Thirdly, only father reports were gathered. For the purpose of this study it was crucial that the data be provided in that manner because it gave insight to what fathers' experiences and personal perspectives. However, this approach also presented concerns about the extent of the validity of what they shared. I did not have accounts from family members to certify or discount their claims to fathering. It seemed as though fathers responded in a way that highlighted their strength, perhaps because they want to see themselves in a positive light, or simply because those strengths did exist and they acknowledged them. In the end, their voices were all I had in order to learn about them and derive any interpretations and conclusions.

Also, these interviews were conducted over a decade ago. Considering the prominent influence their neighborhood context had over their parenting perspectives, such as protection and provisions, it cannot be assumed that their parenting is the same if that context changed. If it did not, I am also not aware of the long-term effects of the circumstances they shared during the interviews. It would be interesting if follow-up interviews were conducted and long-term effects

were considered in order to identify similarities and differences between the meanings fathers derived from their parenting in the initial interviews versus years later. Personally, after reading their stories multiple times a part of me feels like I know them, and I would care to know about where they are now.

Lastly, I noticed certain personal biases as I conducted the literature review and read through the interviews several times. I discerned from the literature that there were existing stereotypes and when there was mention of the need to expand literature on these generalizations, little to none was made. Thus, I shifted from a problem-focused deficit model lens, to a family strength perspective when reading the interviews. In the second and third phases of coding I searched for exceptions in which these fathers stood out and challenged Latino stereotypes. In doing this, I hope to have given them a voice I did not hear from the third party examiners of previous studies.

Implications of the Study

This study's findings have several implications for research and practice. The study's qualitative approach facilitated pursuing the research questions from the Latino fathers' firsthand accounts, consequently providing insight into their fatherhood meaning making. Given the findings, Latino fathers of this sample articulated several experiences that communicated the different dimensions by which they approach fathering. Implications for research would suggest conducting a follow-up study to see the long-term outcomes of these fathers and their families. It would be interesting to explore the possible links to the fathering meanings they employed during the initial interviews and perspectives they hold now. The follow-up interviews may also assess for changing neighborhood safety, considering that that context heavily influenced these men's fathering perspectives and behaviors. Another research suggestion may include analyzing

partner and children's perspectives of these fathers' parenting. Given that the conclusions drawn for this study are solely grounded on the fathers' reports, it is difficult to assess for possible discrepancies in their accounts, and actual interactions with their family. Attaining different perspectives on these fathers may provide further insight onto their existing claims and/or other contextual influences that may not have been previously considered.

Program implications may involve developing culturally sensitive resources for Latino fathers that consider using extended kin networks to first encourage participation, and then maintain the delivery of resources. Fathers from the sample were part of a parenting program, but aside from that did not mention involvement in other community resources. They mainly attributed parenting help to their partners and selected family members. Given the high prevalence of neighborhood gang activity it makes sense why many fathers had few community interactions outside dependable family members. Thus, it would be beneficial to establish a program that considers the importance placed on family, and would use fathers' key positions in their family as a resource to facilitate parenting endeavors that would otherwise have neighborhood contextual limitations. To further encourage community participation with the consideration of family participation, another program idea for development is that in which fathers can have a safe place in which they can gather routinely with other families and share cultural practices. This coming together in a safe and structured environment will allow fathers to expand their network of resources with other Latino families and encourage exposure and participation in existing community programs. Lastly, many of the fathers in the sample expressed difficulties in attaining a job. It would be helpful to consider establishing English speaking programs that also help enhance job skills, such as resume building and interviewing

guidelines and suggestions. This would help fathers to be better equipped in order to strive for jobs of their choice with more confidence and preparation.

Clinical implications of this study involve utilizing the findings to better understand Latino fathers. For all clinicians, especially non-Latino clinicians, it is important to be skeptical of general claims made about minorities. Many times they are one-side stereotypical depictions, which can bias a clinician to interpret a Latino client's perspective and behaviors incorrectly. It is important to be aware of existing data about Latino fathers, but it is even more important to truly listen to the perspectives of their experiences. As a clinician myself, I like to approach my clients accounts by understanding that what they share is their truth, and that needs to be honored and respected. Also, considering cultural values such as *personalismo* and *simpatia*, building connections through conversation and openness is a way in which Latinos create trusting relationships. This is especially important in a clinical setting in which sharing difficult experiences may require a trusting relationship that reflects care from the clinician. An existing practice of this approach was in the original Three City Study that required the interviewers to have built relationships with the Latino fathers before conducting the life history interviews.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Demographics

How old are you now?

Current Situation

Let's start with where you're living now. Tell me about the neighborhood where you live currently.

How long have you lived there?

Neighbors

Safety

Businesses/jobs in community

Resources?

Who do you live with?

How long have you lived there with them?

Are there any other places where you stay?

How many children do you have?

Where do they live?

Are these your biological children?

Father Involvement (ask for each "set" of children)

Tell me about your relationships with your children now.

How much time do you spend with them in a typical week?

Can you give me some examples of what you do with them?

The birth of your first child is a powerful moment in fathers' lives. Tell me how you felt when you found that the mother of your child was pregnant.

Let's start with your oldest child.

How were you involved when they were young?

Has that involvement changed over time?

Can you give me some examples of how it may have changed?

How did your relationship with the mother of this/these children change?

Did the mother of your children discourage you from being involved with your children? If so, how?

Did she encourage you to be involved with your children? If so, how?

Did you work out an arrangement for your involvement? Tell me about that arrangement.

Did that arrangement change over time?

Was there ever any tension or disagreement over this arrangement?

Were you involved with children who are not yours by birth? Tell me about these relationships.

If you don't interact with some of your children, how do you stay in contact with them?

What is the best age for a man to become a father?

What makes someone a good father?

Socialization to Providing and Caregiving Roles

Who taught you to be a father?

Think about how you pictured you'd be as a father, before you had children.

What did you expect of yourself in terms of providing as a father?

What did you expect of yourself in terms of caring for your children?

Now think about what you have done and what you do now as a father.

How important is providing in being a father?

What are some other important things you do as a father?

Is providing more important than these things?

Kin Work and Social Capital Ties for Children

Some families believe different things about caring for children. Some believe that both parents should care for each child, or that mothers should care for each child, or that many family members should care for all children in a big family. Think about all the people in your larger family, not just your household. What does your family believe about caring for children?

We've talked a bit about how you're involved with caring for your children.

How did you first get involved in caring for your children?

Who got you involved?

Have family members helped to keep you involved with your kids?

Some fathers think it is important to keep his children connected to his family. For example, a father may go to his own mother's house for Sunday dinner, and he may bring his children with different mothers together at that meal.

Do you keep your children connected to other family members? How?

How do you think these connections help your children?

Do you keep your children connected to friends (non-family)? How?

How do you think these connections help your children?

We've talked about being involved with different children in many households among a large group of family and friends.

What are the barriers to being more involved than you are?

What are the supports that help you to be more involved?

Contextual Factors

Finally, I want to move beyond family and friends and children in different households. Think about your neighborhood, the larger community, even the city and government policies.

How do conditions in your neighborhood affect your relationship with your children?

Safety

Mobility

Crime and violence

How do opportunities for work affect relations with your children?

Training

Job availability

Access to jobs

How do social policies and systems affect your relationship with your children?

Have you established paternity for your children?

Have you paid child support for them?

Tell me about your experiences with paternity and child support.

Are there ways that organizations or groups could help you to be more involved with your children? How?

Family History

I'd like to talk a bit about your larger family now, like your parents, brothers and sisters. How would you describe your relationships with family members?

Let's spend a bit of time talking about growing up.

Where did you live in grade school?

Tell me about these neighborhoods.

Who was in your family then?

Who was the most important adult to you as a young boy?

What was your relationship with your father like when you were young?

What was your relationship with your mother like when you were young?

Where did you live during high school?

Tell me about the neighborhoods where you grew up.

Who was in your family then?

Who was the most important adult to you as a teen?

How old were you when you moved out of your parents' house for the first time?

Work History

Where did your parents work when you were young?

Did they do things in addition to make ends meet?

How was work for your father when he was your age?

What do you think has changed in the world of work if you compared his experience to yours?

Did you work during high school?

What was your first job?

After high school, where did you work?

Did you receive any training or certification?

Are you working now?

Where? For how long?

Full time/part time, hourly or salary, benefits

Is this job enough to make ends meet? If not, what else do you do?

Did you ever receive food stamps or public aid for your children?

Have you ever felt left out of the work world?

What does having a job mean to you?

Do you have any long term goals for a career?

Education History

Where did you go to grade school?

What was your experience of grade school?

Best memories, worst memories?

Where did you go to high school?

What was your experience of high school?

Were you involved in activities?

Were you a good student?

Did you graduate from high school?

What were your plans upon leaving/graduating?

How have those plans played out?

Do you have any long terms goals for education?

Other

Find gaps in timelines and fill in with descriptions...

Finish

Where do you see yourself five years from now?

What is your greatest personal fear?

What is your greatest personal hope?

What are some areas that you need to improve or change as a father?

What are some of your greatest accomplishments as a father?

Appendix B

List of Codes

1. "Good father" perspectives
2. Accomplishments as a father
3. Acculturation
4. Alcohol use
5. Aspirations/hopes
6. Becoming a father
7. Being resourceful/ seeking resources
8. Being self-reliant/independent
9. Being separated from child(ren)
10. Being there for child- "presence"
11. Best age/time to become a father
12. Challenges in finding/attaining a job
13. Challenges in school
14. Challenges while parenting
15. Challenges with involvement
16. Challenges with wife/mother of children
17. Changes in parenting
18. Changes when becoming a father
19. Child support
20. Child(ren) demographics
21. Childhood experiences

22. Community concerns
23. Community involvement
24. Community members
25. Community resources
26. Community/friend support
27. Concern about finances
28. Cost of living concerns
29. Country of origin
30. Cultural Values/Beliefs
31. Custody arrangement
32. Desire for financial stability
33. Desire to be involved
34. Desire to return to country of origin
35. Desire/effort to improve
36. Discipline
37. Domestic violence
38. Education level
39. Encouraging of child
40. Expectation on how to raise children
41. Exposure to arguments
42. Expressing Love
43. Extended family
44. Familismo

45. Family of origin- Parental immigration experience
46. Family of origin- Parental influences on fathering
47. Family of origin- Parental involvement in youth
48. Father figures
49. Fears
50. Future improvements as a father
51. Gang involvement experience
52. Gang/dangerous activity in neighborhood
53. Gender role expectations/values
54. Generation: Second
55. Generation: 1.5
56. Generation: First
57. Government assistance
58. Helping others
59. Immigration Experience
60. Impact of separation
61. Importance of child(ren) spending time with extended family
62. Involvement with child(ren)
63. Jail time/experience
64. Kids learning from parents
65. Learning to be a father
66. Leaving school
67. Legal Status

68. Listening to child's feedback
69. Living status
70. Machismo
71. Marital/Relationship status with mother of children
72. Medical concerns
73. Mental Health issues
74. Mistrust of government system/assistance
75. Monitoring child(ren) behavior/activities
76. Mother's involvement/roles
77. Moving around
78. Negotiating parenting
79. Not fitting in
80. Open communication
81. Parenting based on child's age and/or gender
82. Parenting from experience
83. Parenting values/perspectives
84. Partner support
85. Passing down values
86. Personalismo
87. Perspective on how marriage/relationships should be Physical health issues
88. Providing/exposing children to opportunities for growth
89. Reaction to pregnancy
90. Reasons for coming to US

91. Relationship with wife's family
92. Relationship with wife/mother of children
93. Religion/Spiritual Beliefs
94. Respeto
95. Role Models
96. Disciplinarian/Rule enforcer
97. Listener
98. Nurturer
99. Role: protector
100. Role: provider
101. Role: Role model
102. Role: Supporter
103. Role: Teacher
104. Substance use
105. Taking initiative
106. Taking medication
107. Taking responsibility
108. Teaching Spanish
109. Things father appreciates about interaction with child(ren)
110. Time spent with children
111. Total children
112. Work and family balance
113. Work experience

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