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Chicano Fathers: Response and Adaptation  
To Emergent Roles

Working Paper Series No. 13

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February, 1986

The purpose of the SCCR Working Paper Series is to publish works that significantly advance our knowledge about Chicanos and other Latinos. We invite your comments and critique. Please address your remarks directly to the author.

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## CHICANO FATHERS: RESPONSE AND ADAPTATION

### Te EMERGENT ROLES

#### INTRODUCTION

One of the most **significant** consequences of the Women's Movement of the 1970's and 1980 s was an increased awareness of and **sensitivity to changing and emergent gender roles**. While there has been **considerable interest on the part of social scientists in the way women respond and adapt to change**, only recently has attention turned to the response and adaptation of **men to alterations- in traditional gender roles** (see, Pleck and Brannon, 1978; Lewis and Pleck, 1979; Pleck 1981). Ethnic and sociocultural factors have in some cases been taken into account; **the topic of Black male roles and masculinity, for example, has received considerable scholarly attention** (Wilkinson and Taylor. 1977; Staples, 1978; Taylor, 1977; Turner. 1977; and Coles 1977), **On the other hand, the role of the male within the Chicano family has been virtually ignored,**

That **Chicano male roles have not been studied empirically is surprising**, given that **social scientists have had a long-standing interest in and concern with Chicano masculinity or *machismo*** (see, Baca Zinn, 1982; **Miranda**", 1985), **Generalizations concerning the male role in the Chicano family abound but tend, unfortunately, to be based on meager or non-existent evidence. Much of this literature depicts an authoritarian, patriarchal unit where the *macho* (i.e., male) is lord and master of the household and the woman is a *quiet, submissive,***

**servile figure**, Although the **traditional view has begun** to be called into **question** by recent **findings, which** suggest the! Chicano **males** may be less dominant and **Chicano** females less **submissive than** was **previously believed**, such studies have typically been concerned with the female role or with conjugal **decision-making** rather than **with** the **male** role per se. Especially neglected has been **the role** of the father **within the Chicano** family, A **systematic** analysis of changing male **roles and masculinity**, and **specifically of the father role** among **Chicanos**, is therefore long overdue.

This paper is unique in that it constitutes not only **one of the** first **critical** analyses **of the** male role **within the Chicano** family but also the first **comprehensive** assessment of **the literature on Chicano fathers**. **Specifically, two** conflicting **theoretical** models of the **Chicano family** are examined and **critically evaluated**. The **traditional** model portrays the **Chicano family** as a rigid, authoritarian, male-dominated unit where the father is not only lord and master but a cold and distant figure. He is the provider and the instrumental leader of the family whereas the wife-mother is the socioemotional leader and the source of warmth, affection, and succor, especially to her children. This traditional conception of the **Chicano family** has been called into question by an emerging **perspective which** depicts */a fami/ia* as less rigid and authoritarian and more child-centered than was **previously believed**. The **second** model not only sees the **Chicano family** as warm, nurturing, and supportive but the father as assuming a significant role **within that unit**.

## THE CHICANO FATHER ROLE: CONFLICTING MODELS

### The Traditional Model

While there has been little research **on the role of the father** in the Chicano **family**, there is **an extensive** literature characterizing **both** the **Mexican** and **Chicano family** as a rigid, **authoritarian**, patriarchal unit which is **dominated by** the so-called **cult of *machismo***. Such studies **have had a** heavy **psychoanalytic** focus and **have attempted to isolate** a modal Mexican personality. **The traditional model has infused** the **works** of many **scholars** such as **Maríe Bermúdez (1955)**, Rogeito Díez-Guerrero (1975), and G. M. **Gilbert (1959)**, yet perhaps its most **noteworthy** proponents are **two prominent Mexican scholars**, Samuel Ramos and **Octavio Paz**. The renowned Chicano folklorist **Americo Paredes (1967, p. 65)** has identified Ramos as the founder of this **movement** and Paz as its most **eloquent defender**,

**The Mexican male**, according to this view, is driven by a pervasive feeling of **inferiority** and by the rejection of authority. **According** to Ramos,

**One must presuppose the existence of an inferiority complex** in all those people who show an excessive concern with affirming their personality, who take vital interest in all things and situations that signify power, and who demonstrate an immoderate eagerness to excel, to be first in everything (Ramos, 1961. p, 81).

Thus, **Ironically**, the male's, or ***macho's***, overly-masculine response

is but a futile attempt to mask pervasive feelings of inferiority and ineptitude (Montiel, 1970; Baca Zinn, 1975). This pathological force is said to permeate and color all aspects of life, especially relations between the sexes.

In his treatise on Mexican national character, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, Paz similarly depicts the *macho* as the *gran chingón*. The verb *chingar* has numerous and diverse meanings but it always connotes some form of violence, or "an emergence from oneself to penetrate another by force" (Paz 1961, p. 76). The *gran chingón* is aggressive, insensitive, unpredictable, and invulnerable, but what most clearly identifies him is power in that "He opens the world; in doing so, he rips and tears it, and this violence provokes a great, sinister laugh" (Paz 1961, p. 81). By contrast, women are believed to be passive and inert. Both the "bad woman" as represented by the violated mother (*La Chingada*) and the "good woman" as represented by the virgin Mary (Guadalupe-Tonantzin) are passive symbols, according to Paz.

Guadalupe is pure receptivity, and the benefits she bestows are of the same order; she consoles, quiets, dries tears, calms passions. The *Chingada* is even more passive. Her passivity is abject: she does not resist violence, but is an inert heap of bones, blood and dust. Her taint is constitutional and resides, as we said earlier, in her sex (1961, p. 85).

While *La Chingada* was clearly a victim of the Conquest, symbolizing the thousands of Indian women who were raped or otherwise sexually assaulted by the Spanish, she is chastized in Mexican folklore for

somehow "opening herself up" TO the conqueror, According to this *machista*, all women, even those who willingly enter a sexual liason, are believed to be "torn open" by the man,

Othe social scientists have similarly described the Mexican family as a patriarchal unit where the married man is permitted to pursue the same life style he maintained as a bachelor, Women. on the other hand, are described as protected and Isolated before marriage, and severely restricted after marriage, A very strong element of *machismo*, according to this view, is that a woman be respectful of her husband.

One of the foremost proponents of this model of the Mexican family Is cultural anthropologist Oscar Lewis who has carried out ethnographic field work in both urban (1961) and rural settings (1960). After three years of field work in Tepoztlan, a village located south of Mexico City, Lewis (1960) concluded that the ideal Mexican cultural pattern, which may not always be observed, is for the husband to be "master of the household" and to make all major decisions. The father supposedly avoids intimacy with other family members in order to maintain their respect, and his sense of security is said to be often gauged by the extent to which he is able to control and instill fear in his wife and children (Lewis 1960, p. 56),

Wife beating, more common in the past then now but still widespread, is resorted to for offenses that range from not having a good meal ready on time to suspicion of adultery, A jealous wife or a wife who objects to her husbands activities or judgment may also receive a beating (Lewís, 1960, p, 56).

Despite the power vested in the father role, family life, according to Lewis, revolves primarily around the mother who is seen as having more ways of demonstrating affection toward children (1960, p. 59). The father, on the other hand, is depicted as being severely limited in his ability to show affection toward children. Rather than being directly affectionate, he may demonstrate his affection by buying them small gifts, giving them pennies, or taking them to a *fiesta*. Severe punishment is common and, although mothers punish more often, fathers are said to administer more extreme punishment. The father, accordingly, does not assume an important role in the lives of male children until they are old enough to work in the fields. But "regardless of age or marital status a son is subject to his father's authority as long as he lives with his father" (1960, p.61).

Social scientists have often assumed that this rigid, authoritarian model of the Mexican family and of the father role is also applicable to Mexicans living in the United States. Despite the absence of empirical evidence to support this view, until very recently the Chicano family and the Mexican family were considered to be isomorphic.

William Madsen's (1973) ethnographic study of Mexican Americans in South Texas and his description of the Mexican-American family, for example, is very similar to Lewis' depiction of the Mexican family and Mexican cultural values. Field work was carried out in four communities in Hidalgo County, ranging from a rural-folk society to an urban center. According to Madsen, *machismo* ranks second in importance among *La Raza* cultural values only to devotion to family. Men are, thus, driven by the cult of *machismo* and an

incessant preoccupation with sex. The *macho is* likened to rooster so that the better man is the one who can have the most girl friends or, if married, the most extramarital affairs. A real man is "proud, self-reliant, and virile" (p, 22). Women, on the other hand, are expected to honor and respect their husbands, despite their infidelity or abuse. The cult of *machismo*, as seen by Madsen, also dictates that Mexican-American men prove themselves stronger, smarter, and superior to women in every respect, "Where he is strong, she is weak. Where he is aggressive, she is submissive, While he is condescending toward her, she is respectful toward him" (p, 22), Not only are wives who are not compliant subjected to physical punishment and abuse. but they are expected to accept this punishment as being somehow deserved. Some wives are even "grateful for punishment at the hands of their husbands for such concern with shortcomings indicates profound love" (p. 22).

Madsen further maintains that the mother is seen as a bridge between children and the father, and children learn that the mother can influence the father in strange and subtle ways. Although the father may be affectionate with very small children, his authoritarian role is clearly established by the time children enter puberty. Whereas the mother is loved and adored, the father is feared and obeyed (p. 54). His role is one of policing family members, to assure that they stay in line and do not dishonor the family. The position of the father is such that "Ideally the Latin male acknowledges only the authority of his father and God. In case of conflict between these two source of authority, he should side with his father" (1973. p. 20).

Although not based on empirical research. Robert G Haydens

(1973) description of the Hispanic family in the Southwest closely parallel's that of Madsen. The family, according to Hayden, is under the firm control of the father, Whereas the woman is quiet and subservient, defining her role primarily in terms of bearing and rearing children and as homemaker, the man sees his role as dictated by the values of *machismo* or *hombria*. The male stresses attributes such as male dominance, assertiveness, pride, and sexual prowess (p. 20). Hadyen contends, moreover, that large families are taken as a sign of virility and *machismo* so that "Physical punishment of a wife by a husband is accepted as customary; her use of contraceptive devices would probably be regarded as ample justification for punitiveness" (p. 20).

Joseph C. Carrol, in his comparison of violence in Mexican American and Jewish families, takes the argument a step further by suggesting that the authoritarian Chicano family structure produces a very high level of family violence, After reviewing literature which supports the traditional view of the Mexican/Chicano family, Carrol concludes that values and norms which are an accepted part of Chicano culture engender family violence and hypothesizes that

The higher level of violence in Mexican-American families was proposed to be associated with the values of severe male dominance, strict discipline, and submission to the father.... Perpetuation of this subculture is accomplished through the desire of boys to be like their fathers even though they fear them, and because a child turned adult treats his wife, and children the same way his father treated his family (Carroll, 1980, p. 80).

In short, the authoritarian role of the older male within the Mexican-American family is proposed to lead to distant and severe relations between fathers and children, especially male children, and to the acceptance of violence as a legitimate mechanism for resolving family conflicts.

In another ethnographic study in a Texas community, *Across the Tracks*; Arthur Rubel argues that respect for elders and male dominance are the two most basic organizing principles of the Mexican-American family so that ideally 'the older order the younger, and the men the women' (1966, p. 59). The belief that a man's home is his castle is widely accepted and the husband/ father is expected to dominate over the nuclear family. Respect for the father is such that children, even as adults, according to Rubel, often do not drink or smoke in his presence. They may even be reluctant to laugh or tell jokes in front of him, as illustrated by the following account given by one of Rubel's respondents.

My mother is quiet and seldom laughs or tells jokes, I never tell jokes to my mother because I have respect for her; but my younger sister is the clown of the family. ... Sometimes I, too, will tell jokes to my mother, when we're with my younger sister. I *never* tell jokes to my father! We the [children] don't even talk with him! If we are laughing in his presence, he right away wants to know what we are laughing about. He thinks that maybe we are laughing about something that he did (1966, p. 61).

As *jefe de la casa* (head of the household), the father represents the family to the outside world. The conduct of each member of the

family, thus, ultimately, reflects on him. One of the worst things that a person can do is to bring shame or dishonor to *la familia*. Although, fathers are respected, they tend to be perceived as distant, stern, and domineering. Consequently, according to Rubel grown children, especially young men, often appear resentful of their fathers (p.66). When the father is deceased or absent, the oldest son assumes his place.

### An Emergent Model

The traditional view of the Mexican/Chicano family has been called into question by a more recent perspective which proposes that the Chicano family is more egalitarian and the power of the male less absolute than was previously believed. This new model is buttressed by empirical studies of conjugal decision-making and action-taking which, while not focusing on the father roles per se, suggest that decisions are typically shared by Chicano husbands and wives.

Hawkes and Taylor (1975), for example, hypothesized that male dominance would prevail among their sample of migrant farm families in California but found, instead, that the dominant pattern of decision-making and action-taking was essentially egalitarian. Findings from the Mexican-American Study Project (Grebler, Moore and Guzman 1970), a massive study of Chicanos in Los Angeles and San Antonio carried out in the 1960's, also did not support the patriarchal pattern. In fact, the authors concluded that income, age, and gender differences were insubstantial so that "the most striking finding relates not to internal variations in the departure from traditional sex specialization, but rather to the conspicuous presence of a basically

*egalitarian division of household tasks*" (pp.362-363).

While male dominance may have been the ideal pattern of decision-making among Mexican Americans, Grebler, et al. argue that it has probably never been the behavioral norm either in Mexico or the United States, Although most respondents said that the father "ran things," it was the mother who was seen as making the day-to-day decisions. Decisions relative to large purchases and the like, moreover, were made jointly, by husband and wife (1970, p, 360). Significantly, respondents were more likely to identify the mother, rather than the father, as having had "greater influence on them"(1970, op, 360-361). Thus, according to the authors, patriarchy and *machismo* are rooted in the rural past and while the value of male dominance persists as a cultural ideal, it is a value often

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Leonarda Ybarra (1977 and 1982) also did not find patriarchy to be the prevailing pattern. Conjugal roles ranged from a patriarchal to an egalitarian pattern, but by far the most prevalent one was shared decision-making (1977, p. 2). The factor which appeared to have the greatest impact on the type of conjugal role structure exhibited was whether the wife worked outside the home. If the wife was employed, couples were more likely to share household chores and child care and to have an egalitarian role structure. Yet,"whether or not a wife was employed outside the home, the majority of husbands and wives in both groups shared decision-making" (1982. p. 173).

Others have suggested that while the prevailing cultural ideology is one of male dominance, the Chicano family is, in actuality, mother-

**centered.** Maxine Baca Zinn has done much to resolve what appear to be contradictory tendencies in the literature by suggesting that *la familia* is both patriarchal and mother-centered. Men traditionally represent the family in matters outside the home, while women are responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the family. Thus, ". . . **Chicanos'** control of household and family matters is the source from which their power is denied" (p. 27). She, however, disagrees with Grebler et. al's contention that patriarchal values are somehow more ideal than real, arguing that "What appears more likely is that patriarchal values continue to provide the basic organizing principle for Chicano interaction, and that while women do have power in the domestic sphere, generalized male authority legitimates males to exercise power when and if Chicano males choose to exert their will" (p.27).

Ruth Tuck's (1946) ethnographic study of *Descanso* (San Bernardino, California) also challenges the traditional model of the Mexican/Chicano family. She observed that despite the alleged lowly status of women in Latin American society, women are honored and revered within the family. Legally, women have very little power or status.

But the "good" woman, entrenched with her children in the circle of the great family, has some peculiar and wide-reaching powers. As the *mádrequita*, entitled to respect and homage, she may actually dominate in all matters that affect her children. Hers may be the deciding voice in every important decision (p. 123).

Most **children acknowledge that it is** the mother who generally makes the **critical** decisions such as **whether children will get new** clothing or continué in school and **even if the father would move** from one job to another. "'My father did the talking,' said a young Mexican-American; 'but it was rny mother who really decided things'" (Tuck, 1946, p,115),

#### *MACHISMO, MASCULINITY, AND THE FATHER ROLE*

While the traditional view of the Mexican/Chicano family as patriarchal and authoritarian has been challenged in recent years, available research, unfortunately, has tended to focus either on the female role or on the process of conjugal decision-making, rather than on the male role as such. As a result, there is very little actual data on important topics such as the role of the father in the family, the relationship between fathers and children, changing conceptions of masculinity, or the way Chicano men have responded to alterations in traditional gender roles and conceptions of masculinity.

It is only recently that researchers have considered the father role as a worthy area of study. The research, although limited and sometimes based on impressionistic findings, has brought into question the image of the Mexican/Chicano father as a cold and distant figure, Luzod and Arce (1979), in a study based on 88 interviews from an unstratified equal probability sample of Mexican ancestry households in two census tracts of Southwest Detroit, concluded that fathers play a much more important role in the family than is commonly thought and that "it therefore appears erroneous to focos only on maternal influence in the Chicano family since Chicano fathers are seen as

being important to their children, and moreover, may provide significant positive influences on the development of their children" (p. 19). The results showed that both husbands and wives define their role as parent as being very similar to that of their spouse and that there were no significant differences on any of the three parenting scales by sex. These findings are inconsistent with the traditional model of the Chicano family and support a more egalitarian view of *Mexicano/Chicano* family roles.

A study of 78 parent-child dyads in Mexican families carried out by Phyllis Bronstein (1984) found that fathers were much more playful and companionable with their children than one would expect from the traditional image of Mexican parental roles and that they actually spent a greater proportion of their spare time than mothers did engaged in playful, companionable interaction with their children. Bronstein concluded that fathers

... played a distinct and salient role of their own, different from mothers, and very different from the traditional view of the aloof Mexican patriarch. Although there is no measure of the hours per day each father in the present sample spent at home, most did seem to spend most of their non-working hours and their days off there or in recreational pursuits with their families. Furthermore, when they were with their children, many of the fathers seemed genuinely involved with them, in friendly, nonauthoritarian interaction (Bronstein, 1984, p. 1800).

Similar findings have been reported among Mexican Americans. In an ethnographic study of a Texas city, *Across the Tracks*, Arthur

Rubel (1966) noted that despite the fact that fathers were generally viewed as distant and aloof, especially by young men, they were observed to be very warm and affectionate in relating to very young children.

Without exception, direct observations note the warmth and affection exhibited by fathers with their young sons and daughters, children under ten years of age. In several instances the field notes comment that the father was, in fact, far more gentle with his children than was their mother (p.66),

in applying an Alderian perspective to the Mexican- American Family, Zapata and Jaramillo (1981) also raise a number of significant questions relative to the prevailing literature which depicts the *familia* as rigidly structured along sex and gender lines. Their findings, based on a sample of 32 Chicano families in a large South-western city, are not conclusive, but they fail to support the view that Chicano fathers are dominant and distant and mothers passive and dependent, or that children are socialized into rigid gender roles. The results indicate that children see females as being somehow 'socially more cooperative' and perceive alliances within the family as tending to be sex-based. Parents, on the other hand, appear to make choices irrespective of the sex of the family member (p. 275). Significantly, whereas children clearly differentiate sibling roles and alliances, "neither parents nor children clearly nominate either parent as responsible for 'managing' the household" (p. 286).

*Machismo Machismo* Male Chauvinism?

While these more recent findings indicate that Mexican/Chicano family roles are more egalitarian and fathers less dominant than was suggested by the traditional view, there is reason to believe that male dominance prevails, nonetheless, not only among *raza* but in the society at large. After presenting an extensive review of male-roles and masculinity, Baca Zinn (1982) concluded that "although male dominance may not typify marital decision making in Chicano families, it should not be assumed that it is nonexistent either in families or in other realms of interaction and organization" (pp. 33-34). She contends that the ideology of patriarchy can remain despite the presence of egalitarian decision making, it is thus essential to distinguish between male dominance as a cultural ideal and male dominance as a behavioral reality.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of Baca Zinn's analysis is that it seriously questions, "the assumption that male dominance among Chicanos is exclusively a cultural phenomenon" (p. 40). Although she believes that the concept of *machismo* has been stereotyped in traditional social-science research, she cautions that attempts to refute such stereotypical depictions have focused almost exclusively on cultural interpretations and neglected structural explanations. Baca Zinn proposes that "masculine roles and masculine identity may be shaped by a wide range of variables having less to do with culture than with common structural position" (p. 35). The class position of Chicanos has had a significant impact on normative and behavioral components of masculinity. Rather than viewing *machismo* in exclusively cultural terms, it is possible to see it as a response to the position of Chicanos in the stratification system and

their exclusion from public roles within the dominant society. While males, she argues, have generally had more roles open to them.

However, this has not been the case for Chicanos or other men of color. Perhaps manhood takes on greater importance for those who do not have access to socially valued roles. Being male is one sure way to acquire status when other roles are systematically denied by the workings of society . . . . To be "hombre" may be a reflection of both ethnic and gender components and may take on greater significance when other roles and sources of masculine identity are structurally blocked (p. 39).

Although Baca Zinn presents an intriguing perspective on Chicano masculinity, her emphasis on structural variables, specifically class, is such that it virtually negates any possible impact of culture. How, for example, would one explain the apparent pervasiveness of the ideology of *machismo* across social classes in Mexico and the United States? How would a class analysis account for the prevalence of male dominance among white males? An additional conceptual difficulty is her use of male dominance, masculinity, gender segregation and stratification, masculine roles, and *machismo* interchangeably without defining these terms. Her perspective appears to be based on a negative conception which equates *machismo* male dominance and the subordination and exploitation of women.

Some scholars have suggested that *machismo* entail much more than male dominance; that it is, in fact, a cultural value that transcends both gender and national boundaries. The *value* is said to



frequently, consoling himself by holding his genitals and exclaiming— *tengo muchos huevos!* ("I've got a lot of balls"). Another favorite expression, "I am your father" is also used to symbolize power and control. The success of any man is thus, ultimately attributed to his "balls". Despite these external trappings, the *pelado*, like the false *macho*, is neither strong nor brave, but weak and cowardly, for ultimately his aggressiveness and assertiveness are designed to conceal inferiority and impotence. Insecurity and anxiety, moreover, are said to engender a pervasive feeling of distrust, a quality which Ramos believes is the most distinguishing aspect of Mexican national character (p. 64).

While Baca Zinn (1982) categorically rejects the view that male dominance among Chicanos is essentially a cultural phenomenon, she does suggest that the patriarchal ideology, which she found manifested among both male dominant and egalitarian families, may be associated with family solidarity. She argues that perhaps

... the father's authority is strongly upheld because family solidarity is important in a society that excludes and subordinates Chicanos. The tenacity of patriarchy may be more than a holdover from past tradition. It may also represent a contemporary cultural adaptation to the minority condition of structural discrimination (p. 40).

If male dominance, aggressiveness, and a propensity toward violence are characteristic of false *machismo*, what then distinguishes true or genuine *machismo*? Abelardo Delgado contends

that a true *macho* does not pick fights or abuse drugs and alcohol. Rather than being irresponsible, he is extremely reliable and responsible (1974-75). A man's sense of accomplishment and self-worth is, in fact, determined largely by his ability to provide for and to protect his *wife* and children. One who is a drunkard, a troublemaker, or does not take care of his family, would hardly qualify as a *macho* in Mexican/Chicano culture, Sánchez (1979) also notes that the literature has emphasized the negative aspects of *machismo* and neglected its more positive implications such as "responsibility, being a good husband and father, providing for one's family, strength in adversity" (p. 55). Although maintaining honor and integrity within the family and in the community are very important elements of *machismo*, perhaps the most pervasive characteristic, according to Delgado, is a noncompromising or intransigent nature. "This does not mean that a macho does not change his mind or that he doesn't bargain on a trade or issue, but he does this before arriving at a noncompromising level from which he is immovable even if it costs his life" (p. 6).

Ramírez (1979) similarly observed that the negative aspects of *machismo* have been stressed to the point where it has become synonymous not only with Mexican-American males but with male chauvinism (p. 61). The problem with such a conceptualization is that it transforms male chauvinism, which is cross-cultural, into a culture specific trait. Ramírez argues that in order to gain a better understanding of Chicano culture and the role of the male within the family, it is necessary to redefine *machismo* and to recognize its

positive elements.

*Machismo's* new definition translates into such positive cultural characteristics as respect, honesty, loyalty, fairness, responsibility and trustworthiness. A *macho* is affectionate, hard working, amiable and family oriented. He can admit his mistakes and knows when to ask for help (1979, p 62).

#### Chicano Fathers Today: Emerging Roles

One of the few studies to focus on Hispanic fathers, and specifically on single fathers, was carried out by Daniel Nieto (1983), who notes that while the phenomenon of single fatherhood has received national attention, virtually no information is available on Hispanic single fathers. Nieto's conclusions are based on findings from a sample of 200 questionnaire responses and 50 personal interviews, as well as his clinical experience as a psychotherapist. While Hispanic single fathers are motivated to assume this role for many of the same reasons as other fathers (e.g. a conviction that the interests of the children will be better served if he has custody), a factor that appears especially significant for Hispanics is the relationship that the single father had with his own father.

. . . *almost* without exception, this relationship has been characterized by the fathers in question as reliable but distant, aloof and lacking in warmth. It is as if the potential single father, contemplating the disruption of his relationship with his children considers that "while i could not control my own father's attitudes and behaviors towards me. I-

and only I- can and *will* control the quality of the relationship between my children and their father!"

(pp. 17-18).

Single Hispanic fathers face a paradoxical situation in the sense that the strong family orientation provides a great deal of impetus for the male to be family-oriented and to assume the single parent role, at the same time that he is socialized to assume an instrumental rather than an expressive parental role (p. 83). While the single Hispanic father deviates from the cultural norm, "it can be reasonably expected that once 'permission' for the family style is granted, the full resources of the Hispanic family will be mobilized in its support" (p. 19).

~~A study of the fatherhood of Anglo-Mexican (1975) and Mexican-~~  
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**American parents carried out by Daniel Mejia (1975) concluded that,**  
 despite the prevalence of the theoretical paradigm which depicts the groups as polar and the Mexican-American family as more rigid and authoritarian, cross-ethnic comparisons of parental roles were more similar than dissimilar (p. 179). "... Mexican Americans did not adhere to published conceptions of authoritarianism-traditionalism, extended family or the submissive wife concept as noted in the literature" (p. 179). In terms of self-ratings, Anglo-American mothers were most permissive in their treatment of children and Mexican-American mothers were most restrictive, but Anglo and Mexican-American fathers did not differ in their level of permissiveness (p. 96). Although both Anglo-American and Mexican-American fathers mentioned responsibility as an important component of the father role, Mexican-Americans stressed fulfilling paternal

responsibility" in the context of providing needs such as finances and basic necessities like food and shelter" (p. 115). One **Mexican-American** described his childhood view of his father.

A person **that** is responsible. One who supplies **the money to survive**. I saw my father as **the guy who was gone in the daytime and home at night**. He **supplied** severe **discipline**. Mother took **over the** less severe punishment (pp.115-116)

Although **the Chicano** respondents were middle class and on a par economically with **their Anglo** counterparts, their **experience with poverty in childhood** appeared to have **shaped** their **conception** of the father role as adults,

**Findings from a qualitative study of 22 Chicano househusbands in Southern California** carried out by Virginia Chavez suggest that **Hispanic males are able to** adjust to drastic **alterations in traditional gender roles**. **Although some of** the men were employed part-time outside **the home, in all instances the female was defined as the principle breadwinner** and the *man* as the **househusband**. **Despite the fact that the male's primary identity and work activities centered around the maintenance of the home and that husbands assumed more household and child-care responsibilities than they had in the past, women continued to perform most of the traditional female chores such as doing the laundry, cooking, paying the bills, and feeding and caring for children**. Some **men were teased** by friends, called *chavalas*, or said to be "pussy whipped," but most were able to **reconcile their new role** and retain their **masculine** identity, particularly since it was defined as a **temporary status necessitated** by economic contingencies **over which** they had little or no control.

The traditional ~~view~~ of the Mexican/Chicano family, thus, is being challenged not only by the presence of a growing number of Hispanic househusbands and single fathers, but by recent research which indicates that *la familia* may be more egalitarian and fathers less cold and aloof than was once thought. In retrospect, the traditional model appears to have been based on a view of *Mexicano/Chicano* culture deeply rooted in a romanticized, pristine rural past. The bulk of the support for this model was derived from field research carried out by outsiders who all too often lacked genuine knowledge and understanding of the cultural patterns they observed. Hence many of their conclusions simply served to reinforce prevailing stereotypes and misconceptions about our culture and family life. The problem with Anglo ethnographers like William Madsen and Arthur Rubel, according to Americo Paredes (1977), is not so much that they are racist, for most are "liberals," but that they are essentially ignorant of Chicano language and culture. They also often have an unconscious bias which forces data to fit "preconceived notions and stereotypes" (p. 2). There is, thus, a need for research that is not only free of such preconceived notions and stereotypes, but that captures the subtlety and complexity of the father role within *la familia* and enhances our understanding of *machismo* and masculinity.

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