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Emerging Bicultural Views of Fatherhood: Perspectives of Puerto Rican Fathers

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Abstract: Puerto Rican fathers remain an understudied population despite the growing Latino community in the U.S. Understanding how Puerto Rican fathers perceive their roles as fathers can inform our conceptualization of their engagement with children as well as the development of culturally-specific parenting interventions. In this qualitative study, focus groups were conducted with Puerto Rican men to identify their perceptions of their role as a father and how individual, child, and cultural influences may relate to these roles. Parenting roles identified by fathers in the study were: being there, maintaining open communication, building confidence, preparing for adulthood, teaching culture/values, and providing a role model for their children. The study also explored father and child characteristics, history with their own father, and a hybrid cultural perspective as influences on Puerto Rican fathers' perceptions of their parenting roles. Due to the increasing population of Puerto Rican and other Latino sub-groups, providers and social workers working with Puerto Rican families should understanding the perceived parenting roles within families to better engage and support fathers and families within this growing population.

Keywords: Parenting, fatherhood, parent-child relationships, Latinos; Puerto Rico

There is a large body of research linking father's engagement with their children to positive child outcomes (Boyd, Ashcraft, & Belgrave, 2006; Byrd-Craven, Auer, Granger, & Massey, 2012; Coley, 2003; Webster, Low, Siller, & Hackett, 2013). However, fatherhood research has been critiqued for the relative inattention to differences in parenting for fathers based on race/ethnicity (Cabrera, West, Shannon, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006). This is particularly the case for Latino subgroups as research looking at parenting within specific Latino subgroups is even more scarce.

Latinos continue to be one of the fastest growing minority populations in the U.S. (Passel & Cohn, 2008). Puerto Ricans are the second largest Latino subgroup in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017), with the population growing in the U.S. from 5.4 million in 2016 to 5.5 million in 2017 (Center for Puerto Rican Studies, 2018). Despite this rapid growth, little is known about the unique experiences of Puerto Rican fathers. Research that captures the diversity of racial and/or ethnic minority subgroups is an important part of developing culturally-informed interventions to support ethnic minority fathers who have been traditionally underserved. As this population continues to grow, research that can inform policies and practices surrounding family and child wellness is even more needed.

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The Parenting Role and Fatherhood Involvement

Father's engagement with children is tied to a range of positive outcomes for children, such as their psychosocial functioning (Byrd-Craven et al., 2012; Coley, 2003; Webster et al., 2013) and adolescent substance use (Boyd et al., 2006). Father engagement has been found to vary based on the father's race/ethnicity. In a recent study of fathers of infants, African American and Latino fathers were found to be more engaged in caregiving and physical play with their infant children compared to White fathers (Cabrera, Hofferth, & Chae, 2011). African American fathers have been found in some studies to be more involved than Latino fathers (Bronte-Tinkew, Carrano, & Guzman, 2006; Fagan, 2000), but in other studies this difference was found to be non-significant when taking into account father's education level (Leavell, Tamis-LeMonda, Ruble, Zosuls, & Cabrera, 2012). Of note, few studies explore how fatherhood differs among Latino subgroups.

Some literature on fatherhood suggests that fathers' engagement with their children is child gender-dependent, with gender-related patterns of father engagement with children evident as early as 2 years old. In a study of African American, White, and Latino fathers, all fathers were found to use more rough, physical play with sons and more literacy activities with daughters (Leavell, et al., 2012). In this study, the impact of the child's gender was also found to be dependent on the father's ethnicity; Latino and African American fathers of sons were found to engage in more visiting than White fathers of sons. However, in other studies of diverse groups of fathers, no relationship was found between the child's gender and father involvement (Roopnarine, Fouts, Lamb, & Lewis-Elligan, 2005).

Father engagement has been associated with their perceptions of their roles as fathers, with fathers who hold more positive perceptions being more involved in caregiving, warmth, nurturing, physical care, and cognitively stimulating activities (Bronte-Tinkew, et al., 2006). A clearer understanding of how specific racial and ethnic subgroups of fathers perceive their role as fathers can help to build a conceptualization of fatherhood engagement to support the development of culturally-appropriate fatherhood interventions. This may be particularly important for Latino fathers, especially subgroups such as Puerto Rican fathers, who are often aggregated in fatherhood research. Understanding more qualitatively the parenting roles of Puerto Rican fathers can also help to inform the development of accurate assessment tools relevant to fatherhood (Parke et al., 2004).

The importance of fathers as role models has been discussed within the literature as a growing sense of paternal responsibility, in which fathers are aware of how children see them. The focus on paternal responsibility has led to a shift in behavior during the transition to fatherhood, in which fathers change negative patterns of behavior as a result of becoming fathers (Foster, 2004). The way we conceptualize and assess fathers' involvement, particularly for minority fathers, is crucial in moving social work research forward (Finley & Schwartz, 2006). Over time the idea of a father being "present" or not has changed into a more multidimensional construct (Lamb, Pleck, & Levine, 1987). However, much of the fatherhood research simply looks at hours spent with a child. To continue thinking about father involvement only in terms of quantity of time limits the possibilities and impact both

on the child and father and does not capture the social, psychological, and emotional components of parenting (Finley & Schwartz, 2006; Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999).

Research on fathers has found that generally father's involvement in their families and child's lives is growing (Lamb, 2010) and there are a variety of roles that fathers play. Some studies have identified the importance of "being there" and sharing time with their children as an important part of fatherhood (Foster, 2004; Lemay, Cashman, Elfenbein, & Felice, 2010). Other identified roles within the fatherhood literature include providing financial and emotional support, serving as a role model, and teaching skills and values (Lemay et al., 2010).

Parenting in Latino Families

Traditional gender roles in Latino families have been hypothesized to influence how fathers perceive their roles as well as their engagement with their children (Leavell et al., 2012). Often in traditional Latino families, cultural characteristics such as *familismo*, or the central role of the family, *respeto,* obedience of children to adults and authority figures, and traditional *machismo,* or high masculinity, is also emphasized in parenting practices (Mogro-Wilson, 2013; Mogro-Wilson, Rojas, & Haynes; Cruz et al., 2011). For example, negative aspects of *machismo* known as *macho,* representing hostility and dominance, were found in one study to be negatively linked to paternal involvement in Latino fathers (Glass & Owen, 2010). However, there are positive components of *machismo*, also known as *caballerismo*, which have been positively associated with an increased participation, monitoring, and love shown to children in Latino and Puerto Rican families (Cruz et al., 2011; Mogro-Wilson et al., 2016). Latino fathers had a strongly held belief in *familismo*, and that Puerto Rican fathers use bidirectional respect (respect of the child and of the child to the parent) to monitor their children (Mogro-Wilson, 2013; Mogro-Wilson et al., 2016).

Research specific to Latino families has found that gendered socialization occurs more intensely in homes with a more traditional division of labor, especially in families in which there are opposite sex siblings, which allows for a gendered, parent-child "pairing off" (Crouter, Manke, & Mchale, 1995; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004), which has been found to contribute to fathers identifying more with same-sex children (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 2001). Research regarding the role of Latino fathers identified an "emerging, hybrid fathering style that blends traditional with more modern views of parenting" (Cabrera & Bradley, 2012, p. 233). This may be conceptualized as acculturation to U.S. cultural values while retaining traditional cultural values.

Intergenerational influences also affect fathers' approach to parenting. As men become fathers and learn how to parent, they often integrate the way they were raised into how they parent their own child. As intergenerational family systems theory posits, parenting styles are often passed down through generations. Parenting the way their fathers did can lead men to either maladaptive or positive ways of fathering (Brotherson, Dollahite, & Hawkins, 2005). Understanding these intergenerational influences within Latino culture is important, as the value of familismo and respeto for their elders are cornerstones of the cultural values of Latino men. The influence of intergenerational fathering has not been explored for Puerto Rican fathers. This study sought to use focus groups to qualitatively explore the

parenting roles identified by Puerto Rican fathers and how child, individual, and cultural factors might relate to those roles.

Methods

Sample and Design

Using convenience sampling, participants were recruited from a community organization within a densely Puerto Rican neighborhood in a Northeastern city. The community agency provides behavioral health services to adults and children, substance abuse programs, parenting education, and elderly services. Participants were invited via flyers that were posted at the agency and through direct invitations from agency employees. To be eligible for the study, participants had to identify as Puerto Rican, male, 18years or older, and had to have at least one child (Mogro-Wilson et al., 2016). The participants completed a one-page survey that collected information about their age, place of birth, years in the U.S., as well as number and ages of children. Length of time in the US was used as a proxy measure of acculturation.

A semi-structured focus group approach was used to collect data. Focus groups are used in qualitative research to allow participants to explore how their culture influences their perceptions and experiences (Levers, 2006). Focus groups are a more practical means of qualitative data collection, and also allow for analysis of group interaction as participants interact and respond to each other (Kitzinger, 1995). Using focus group methodology with cultural groups has led to confirmation of previously identified cultural constructs as well as identification of new or shifting constructs (House, Stiffman, & Brown, 2006). This study sought to identify new and shifting constructs related to Puerto Rican fathers' perceptions of their parenting roles.

The 18 fathers recruited for the study were divided into four focus groups of 4-5 participants each. All focus groups were facilitated by a doctoral student with research training particular to qualitative methods and focus groups. In an effort to increase the comfort level and disclosure from participants, the facilitator was also a member of the community and a bilingual Puerto Rican father. The Focused Conversation Method (FCM) developed by Stanfield (2000) was used to enable conversation to move from surface-level ideas to more in-depth beliefs (Mogro-Wilson et al., 2016). All focus groups were conducted primarily in English, although due to the bilingual facilitator, some participants responded to questions in English and Spanish. The focus groups lasted for approximately one hour and concluded when the focus group reached theoretical saturation and little new information emerged from the listed questions (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). After the focus group participants were informed of the purpose of the study and its risks and benefits, they signed a consent form. To protect confidentiality, participants were assigned numeric ID codes to be used in lieu of their names. At the conclusion of the groups, participants were given a $20 gift card and were entered into a drawing for an iPad (Mogro-Wilson et al., 2016). All research was approved by university's Institutional Review Board.

Table 1. *Focus Group Questions*

Question	Follow-up probes
How has being a father influenced your life?	None
How do you show your child warmth and love?	None
How do you control or monitor your children's behavior?	How do you make sure what they are doing is correct and they are not getting into trouble?
	Do you negotiate rules? Or do you explain them? Or do you make decisions together?
	Is this different in public than at home?
What role does respect, or *respeto*, play when you are parenting?	None
How do you develop your relationship with your child?	Do you get along well with them?
	What activities do you do together?
	Do you feel like you can trust them? How do you increase trust?
How does being Puerto Rican influence your parenting?	How does this make you a different parent than being, say, not Puerto Rican?
Often there is an importance of the family and extended family (*familismo*). How does this play a role in you being a father?	Do you get a lot of family support in your role as a father?

The participants were asked seven primary open-ended questions in the focus groups, with seven sub-questions embedded within the primary questions (Table 1). The questions explored participants' perception of their role as parents and the intersection of parenting with their culture. The focus groups started with the fixed set of questions (see Table 1) and following the participants' lead as the discussions developed (Morgan & Krueger, 1998).

Data Analysis

The focus group discussions were recorded, transcribed by a research assistant into Microsoft Word, and formatted to delineate individual participant responses. Participant responses in Spanish were translated by a research-trained outside source to eliminate researcher bias in translation and then back-translated to ensure accuracy. The transcripts were then entered into NVivo software (QSR, 2011) for coding and analysis. Content analysis was used during the coding process (Krippendorf, 2012).

Two trained graduate research assistants were involved in the data analysis. A primary coder developed the codebook during the primary wave of coding and then recoded the transcripts using the codebook during a second coding wave. Intra-rater reliability was established between the first and second wave of coding to determine consistency associated with the identified codes. Discussion between the trained research assistants

occurred when confusion or issues in coding presented themselves, which led to good inter-rater reliability (at 80% reliability). Inter-rater reliability was determined through side-by-side coding comparison using visual coding functions within NVivo. Coders discussed differences in interpretation of coding nodes and how these differences reflected individual biases and beliefs. In this way, the interrater reliability process reflected a fluid process in which variations in interpretations of coding became a part of the analysis process and is reflected in the discussion of results.

After themes related to role perceptions and cultural influences were explored, the cross-coding matrix function in Nvivo was used to examine associations among identified themes and individual, child, and social influences. This function allowed the authors to identify constructs that overlapped frequently, by visualizing when themes related to role perception were mentioned at the same time as the themes related to child, father, or cultural influences. This approach added depth by highlighting factors (including father demographic variables) that may influence roles that fathers expressed within the focus group. Data from the demographic survey were included in the data analysis process to explore variations in participant responses. Functionality of the QSR Nvivo (2011) software allows for using case attributions to compare responses of demographic groups, such as country of birth and age of participant. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants for purposes of confidentiality.

Table 2. *Participant Demographics (n=18)*

Characteristics	Mean (Range) n (%)
Age	37.67 (25-59)
Born in PR	10 (56%)
Age moved from PR	13.90 (3-26)
Born in U.S.	8 (44%)
Lives with mother of children	15 (83%)
Number of children	2.39 (1-6)
Average age of first child (years)	11.31 (0.5-23)
Gender of first child	
Male	8 (44%)
Female	10 (56%)

Findings

Of the 18 fathers who participated in the focus groups, over half (n=10) were born in Puerto Rico. Fathers had an average of two children and their first child was on average 11 years old, with a range of 6 months to 23 years (see Table 2).

Six themes were identified by fathers as components of parenting: (1) being there; (2) building confidence; (3) preparing for adulthood; (4) maintaining open communication; (5) teaching culture/values; (6) providing a role model. Factors identified in prior research (individuality of the child, intergenerational influences, and father nativity) were also explored in relation to the themes identified by participants.

Themes: Parenting Role of Fathers

Being there. Puerto Rican fathers described "being there" as spending quality time with their children, being available to their children, and spending time together. For example, one father shared:

I think one of the biggest things regardless of gender is just spending time with them. And it's spending time with them not with things that you want to do...spending time with things that they want to do, things they like to do, things that they're interested in. (Miguel)

This theme was also discussed by another father, both in terms of physically "being there" and being there during good and bad points in the child's life. He shared:

It's just being there for them. Like, I get to their level...You know, my job is to make sure that she knows that if she looks to the side daddy's there playing with her. And that she knows that I'm going to be there in the good and in the bad. (Roberto)

Building confidence. Participants identified building confidence as an intentional process by which they foster and encourage confidence and self-esteem in their children. Fathers identified the use of their relationship with their children as an important strategy to build and ensure a foundation of confidence in their children. For example, Roberto shared:

I'll try to build her confidence. I'll take her to a park where there's nothing but boys playing and I'll be like yo, we got next. And I'll let her, you know, let her play so she doesn't feel like she can't have a confidence or have good self-esteem about herself.

Another father speaking about a daughter mentioned strategies for promoting confidence, including talking in a respectful tone:

I try to talk to her mother and her sister, her half-sister, in respectful ways around her. I'm trying to set the tone now, so that it kind of just becomes natural and she understands, you know, the value that I have of her, um, as a female. And the confidence and the feelings I want her to have about herself. (Tristan)

Preparing for adulthood. Fathers identified helping children to prepare for adulthood as part of their parenting role. Participants considered it important that their children--both daughters and sons-- were ready for adulthood, were good citizens, and could contribute positively to society. Some participants talked about preparing their daughters for adulthood by making sure they are independent and capable of contributing to society as illustrated in the following quote: "*I have to make sure she's strong, can take care of herself when I'm not around. That she is, you know, a productive member of society. A woman that respects herself*" (Tristan).

Other participants mentioned that preparing their sons for adulthood involved preparing them to take care of their current and future family and getting them ready to face the difficulties of life. Participants expressed their desire to help their sons build skills

to be family leaders in the future and face the challenges that being a father could present. For example, one participant noted:

> *I always let my son know that "this little girl right here [his sister] is your responsibility when I'm not around...you're going to grow up to be a man someday and you know, you need to learn to be in charge...how to take care of your family."* (Miguel)

Nuanced differences were observed around raising sons and daughters. Participants expressed a desire for their sons to be the traditional caretaker of their families, following the *caballerismo* cultural value. However, the fathers did not express a submissive role for their daughters, rather a desire for them to be independent and productive.

Maintaining open communication. Fathers in this study reported that maintaining open communication with their children was an important part of their parenting. Fathers mentioned interest in talking to their children, allowing them to ask questions and share things without fear of retribution, and valuing their children's thoughts and opinions. For example, participants highlighted the importance of having an open chain of communication in which both the father and the child's perspectives were valued. Study participants demonstrated a deep understanding about parent-child relationships, particularly when it comes to maintaining open communication and its connection to the healthy development of their children. This commitment to meaningful open communication and their belief that it matters is illustrated in the following quote: *"I think that's the key in everything. Talk to me, I listen. I talk to you, you listen" (John).*

Participants who talked about the importance of open communication with their children also talked about seeing children as individuals and displayed more hybrid modern cultural views. Some participants reported that open communication with children was not traditionally valued within the Puerto Rican culture, reflecting a cultural shift towards valuing children's communication. For example, one participant stated:

> *That has to be cultivated early, where you create an environment that communication is valued and that they have a voice. You know, and that goes against...how we were brought up. So, it's a conscious decision that you have to make that I'm holding on to my culture or taking the good things about how I was raised, but I have to incorporate some of these other values and modify to some extent.* (Tristan)

Teaching culture/values. Fathers reported that teaching children culture/values was part of their role as parents, particularly among those participants who endorsed more traditional cultural views. Participants reported teaching their children about traditional cultural aspects of *respeto* and *benidicon,* saying "*I'm trying to teach her an extra level of respect. As when you see an elder to ask for blessing. For me, that's the ultimate sign of respect."* (Luis)

Another father discussed intentionality around teaching their children cultural values, noting that these values may differ from other families but that they were central to expectations for family members. This father noted:

You know, I'm not going to tell them 'because I said so.' I'm going to explain to them the reason why. We hold certain values, maybe their [family] values are different, I'm not judging them. But this family has certain values and you're going to follow these values as long as you live in this house. (Adrian)

Being a role model. Fathers stated that acting as a role model was an important part of their parenting role. Fathers mentioned leading their children by example, teaching through action, modeling positive behavior for children, and showing the importance of the role of the father. According to participants, modeling behavior is important due to children's perception abilities and behavioral learning through observation*, for example:

And always lead by example. 'You're swearing. You ever see me swearing? I don't swear. You know, if you don't see me do it that means it's not appropriate. If you don't see me smoke you know, you shouldn't do it'. You know, you got to lead by example first. (Adrian)

Another father discussed how his perception of being a role model shapes his own behavior, noting *"...if I do something bad, I don't want them to get into anything bad in life, I gotta be a role model. I cannot do it. So I cannot go back to them and tell them no you cannot do this, then I go and do it"* (Luis). This father was reflecting on acting as a role model for how he wanted his children to act, and not setting a double standard through his own behaviors and actions.

Influences on Fathers' Perceptions of their Role as Parents

The following section describes how factors such as the individuality of the child, intergenerational influences, and father nativity related to the six themes. Understanding how these three influences interact with perceptions of parenting can help disentangle the layers of experiences of Puerto Rican fathers.

Individuality of the child. Individual child's personalities were mentioned as more influential than child's gender on fathers' approach to parenting. Fathers identified the importance of getting to know their children as distinct individuals, separate from the fathers themselves, with unique likes, dislikes, and interests. One father noted:

Your kids are individuals that you're raising and they're different than you. You know, and some of them might look a little more like you and they might have some of your habits, but they are still a different person. (Jose)

The importance of seeing children as individuals seemed to contribute to a more open or flexible style of parenting and allowed fathers to develop individual relationships with their child regardless of the child's gender.

Intergenerational influences. Intergenerational influences in this study included fathers' perception of their own father's role in childhood, namely changing or maintaining patterns of behavior that they identified in their own fathers. Ten of the 18 fathers identified wanting to parent differently than their own father by changing behaviors they observed as they were growing up. Some fathers reported intentionally changing intergenerational

patterns, such as "being there" for children after recognizing that their own fathers were not present during their childhood. For example, Marcus shared:

> *I never grew up with my father...what my father did to me I don't want to do [to] my kids. So...I'm just waiting for 3 o'clock to come, to come pick them up...playing with them, riding bikes whatever I got to do just to be there for them.*

Another example of intergenerational change reported by participants was establishing enhanced emotional connections with their children after recognizing that their own father did not express or encourage the expression of emotions. For example, one father said**:**

> *I made a decision early in fatherhood that I was going to be a little different than my father...I think I made a decision early that I was going to be a little different, and show a lot more love to my kids.* (Miguel)

In addition, intergenerational cultural changes were identified, reflecting father's roles going from traditional cultural values toward a hybrid cultural perspective. For example*,* one father said:

> *I am very in touch with my culture and I do feel that's extremely important to really try to learn the values of the culture and what that means and try to give some of that to your own children. But for example, what I'm trying to say that is not every tradition in the culture I necessarily agree with.* (Carlos)

As the previous quote illustrates, several fathers noted that they felt a responsibility to instill in their children the same cultural tenants they grew up with. However, fathers also identified a desire to challenge some of the typical cultural norms while maintaining other traditional cultural values.

Father nativity. Fathers born in the U.S. more frequently identified open communication as an important part of their role as fathers, compared to fathers born in Puerto Rico, which may reflect the norms of U.S. society in which communication is valued within relationships. Contrary to what was expected, fathers who have spent less time in the U.S. were more likely to display a hybrid perspective of their role in parenting, and fathers born in the U.S. were more likely to value upholding traditional values. For instance, a father who lived in the U.S. for two years said:

> *...in Puerto Rico normally the mother is always the one going to the schools, the fathers always working. But we should change that, you know, whoever got the chance like us right now in here?* (Felix)

Discussion

Participants identified six components of their parenting roles: being there, building confidence, preparing for adulthood, maintaining open communication, teaching culture/values, and providing a role model. Fathers discussed their parenting roles in relation to influential factors identified by prior research, including the individuality of the child, intergenerational changes, and father nativity. There were a variety of ways in which the Puerto Rican fathers in this study were involved in their children's lives which may inform future social work research related to measuring the quality of the relationships

instead of solely counting hours and the various ways fathers influence their children both directly and indirectly.

Similar to other fatherhood literature (Lemay et al., 2010), "being there" emerged as a primary theme in the Puerto Rican fathers' discussion of their role perception. Other research involving Latino children and their fathers have connected fathers' ability to watch a child play and allow them to explore in a way that was less directive leading to fewer behavioral problems (Shears & Robinson, 2005) and less aggression in children (McDowell & Parke, 2009). In our study, fathers were highly engaged with their children in a developmentally appropriate way, by wanting to play ball with their son or playing dolls with their daughters. This is similar to findings reported by Ashbourne, Daly, and Brown (2011) and Finley and Schwartz (2006) who described nurturing fathering as when fathers were there "in the moment" when the child has a need or want.

The findings from this study suggest that these Puerto Rican fathers may be expressing the cultural construct of *familismo* by being there for their children in a nurturing manner. In addition, there was endorsement of the cultural construct of bidirectional *respeto* between the child and the father. The importance of respect for elders or older relatives in the family to support the child was also discussed, once again stressing the importance of *familismo*. The fathers supported their children without focusing solely on the gender of the child, and in doing so broke some of the traditional *machismo* values and aligned further with the *caballerismo* cultural values of fathers, where there is a more egalitarian respect for the opposite gender, along with a sense of commitment to the family (Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002). However, the importance of maintaining these cultural values in parenting was important for the fathers, particularly those born in the U.S. Further exploration of expanded cultural values such as *personalismo, simpatia*, and other common Latino cultural values is necessary to further explore their influence on parenting.

There were some contradictory findings, where fathers born in the U.S. (conceptualized in this study as more acculturated) wanted to maintain traditional cultural values and roles of fathers in relation to mothers. Those fathers born outside the U.S. (conceptualized as less acculturated) focused on changing the way things were in Puerto Rico and having more egalitarian roles between fathers and mothers. However, this difference did not hold up in communicating with the child, where U.S.-born fathers felt strongly about open communication between the child and themselves, compared to fathers born in Puerto Rico.

In this study, the individuality of the child appeared to play a role in the father's parenting more so than the child's gender. This is a construct that has been changing over time, with the importance of the child's gender being less influential in parenting today (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Findings from this study corroborate this point considering that participants discussed the influence of children's unique personalities more than they mentioned the influence of the child's gender on their parenting.

For the participants in this study, the fathers' relationships with their own fathers were identified as an important factor in their own parenting. Prior literature has found that well developed relationships with their own fathers tend to lead to positive relationships with their own children (Shears, Robinson, & Emde, 2002). In this study, participants identified

the ways in which they wanted to be different from their fathers. More than half of the fathers reported wanting to be a different type of father than their own father. Intergenerational relationships are influenced by many factors including beliefs of how a father should provide financial support, how often they play with children, as well as gender beliefs (Taylor & Behnke, 2005). Fathers in our study identified wanting to be different than their fathers by being there more often for their child, being more involved in their child' lives and schooling, and playing and spending time with their children on activities the child enjoyed. Further research could further explore these issues for Latino fathers and how acculturation plays a role.

The blending of traditional values and cultural pride with a call to adopt more modern values of parenting identified by fathers in this study reflects a potential shift in the dynamics of Puerto Rican families. The findings contrasted with U.S.-born fathers, who reported a greater adherence to traditional values, primarily referenced through larger family structures and experiences of their own childhood. This may reflect a reverse acculturation effect, in which fathers who were born in the U.S. may feel more strongly that they need to hold onto traditional cultural perspectives, while those who moved later in life to the U.S. may feel more compelled to adapt a hybrid style of parenting that combines U.S. and Puerto Rican values. As Latino generational status changes, so does acculturation level and these changes seem to impact parenting in different ways. How these changes manifest for Latino fathers, and Puerto Rican fathers in particular, has not yet been fully explored (Falicov, 2007).

As the Puerto Rican population grows in the U.S. over the next several decades, research should further explore the trajectory of this hybrid cultural shift, and the impact of this shift across generations of Puerto Rican families. This finding contradicts a previous study by Mogro-Wilson (2008), where more acculturated Latino families demonstrated decreased monitoring and control towards their child, which in turn lead to more negative adolescent outcomes such as alcohol use. However, Mogro-Wilson (2008) included a primarily Mexican American sample, and thus perhaps the differences seen in acculturation varied based on the Latino subgroup. In addition, these findings were for mothers and fathers, not fathers specifically. More research is needed to look at the important ways acculturation differs for Latino subgroups and for fathers specifically.

This study paralleled findings related to a hybrid cultural shift or biculturalism regarding parenting among Latino fathers highlighted previously (Cabrera & Bradley, 2012), and suggests the need to value both traditional and modern parenting practices when working with Puerto Rican fathers. Valuing both cultures and/or the recognition that dual cultures are important when raising children challenges the belief that one culture is emphasized over another within the Latino community (Cortés, Rogler, & Malgady, 1994). Findings suggest a reverse-acculturation effect, in which fathers born in the US were more likely to be influenced by traditional cultural views than fathers with less time in the U.S. Similarly, fathers who were born in the U.S. spoke more frequently about their role as a father in teaching culture and values than fathers born in Puerto Rico. Fathers born in the U.S. spoke about carrying traditions, teaching their language, sharing culture and heritage with children, and the importance of passing culture down through generations.

Social work research and thus practice, must be responsive to the changing demographics of fathers in the U.S. which include growing numbers of Latinos from Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). While the research on Latino fathers continues to grow, the primary knowledge base is built from the non-Latino white narrative and is devoid of cultural considerations and factors that influence Latino populations differently (Cabrera & García-Coll, 2004). In addition, finding ways to engage fathers in a culturally appropriate framework is important to supporting child wellness (Webster et al., 2013). To promote family and child success, future research may focus on the specific impact of father-child relationships on child-specific outcomes, as well as the development of father-specific programs that emphasize important roles noted by Puerto Rican fathers.

Applying the findings from this study can help develop best practices to support Puerto Rican fathers, and promote their involvement and impact on their child's lives. The opportunity to involve fathers in clinical work and in therapy can help the family system and the home environment. This study provides practical ideas from fathers that can assist clinical social workers in their practice to help fathers become more involved in their children's lives. For example, fathers spoke about providing opportunities for developing the child-father relationship through developmentally appropriate activities, such as going to the movies, riding bikes, and playing with dolls. In addition, the amount of pride that Puerto Rican fathers have for their culture can be leveraged in interventions where clinical providers can help modify goals of the treatment to align with cultural values of the importance of the family. A better understanding of how culture plays a role in parenting will help interpret parenting roles, particularly in a child welfare system, and lead to a more nuanced understanding of Latino families.

Finally, given the current political climate, where Latino fathers are often not seen as contributors to our society and the fabric of our communities, there is a lot of future work to be done to integrate family policies to involve fathers from the prenatal stages into schools and community activities. There are few home visiting programs specifically for fathers, and fewer school outreach programs for fathers in particular. Programs aligned with cultural Latino values, that acknowledge the parenting role of the father, and also recognize the importance of the individuality of the child, father generational status and nativity can assist policy implementation within child welfare, health, and school systems.

Limitations

Despite maintenance of rigorous research methods, such as inclusion of a second coder, systematic coding using NVivo, and transparency within the research design, this study does have some limitations. A small sample size recruited within only one area of the U.S. limits our ability to generalize the study findings. While some of the findings suggested differences in role perceptions between US-born fathers and those born in Puerto Rico, these differences were not found for all themes which may reflect the small sample size rather than a true lack of differences. Further, selection bias may influence the generalizability of the findings as it is possible that only committed fathers elected to participate in the study or responded to the questions within the focus groups. Additionally, as this was a small sample the findings should be replicated with a larger sample. For

example, more research is needed to assist in explaining why fathers in our study seem to be involved with their boys and girls in a similar way, which is not characteristic of traditional Latino families.

In this study, the primary coder conducted two waves of coding to establish the codebook and develop depth around established codes. The use of memos and other tools were not used to help coders establish inter-rater reliability; future work should consider using this approach. To establish a level of concurrence between the first and second coder, many discussions were needed between the coders to establish good inter-rater reliability. This is hypothesized to be due to bias among the coders and was discussed to inform the further development of codes. Only one of the two coders was a parent, and the parent coder identified this as influential to exploring the constructs that influence role perception among fathers. This identification was explored in informing a deeper understanding of themes and contributed significantly and positively to the qualitative research process. It is also important to note that neither of the coders is a father, which may contribute to biased results related to the themes that were identified through coding. However, one of the co-authors, who was also the focus group facilitator, was a Puerto Rican father. It is virtually impossible to control for all researcher bias within qualitative research; however, this bias was managed by ongoing consultation with a fatherhood expert, who provided perspective on coding structures.

Conclusion

The findings in this study highlight the importance of better understanding how Latino fathers perceive their parenting roles. These findings can help inform social work practice with Puerto Rican fathers by placing emphasis on the importance of the role of the father when working with families and promoting understanding of the role culture plays in parenting. Social workers must continue to value the role fathers play in the development of children and families. In addition, practice with Puerto Rican fathers should involve work around the interaction with their child(ren) and focus on the development of the father-child relationship by emphasizing what the fathers in this study have identified as key components to fatherhood: being there, building confidence, preparing for adulthood, maintaining open communication, teaching culture/values and being a role model. The themes identified in this study begin to unpack how the relationship between a father and child develops and what sustains it. This focus goes beyond solely the hours spent in tasks of childcare, and creates space to continue the discussion around the direct and indirect ways fathers have an influence on their children.

Further research on how to integrate these findings into interventions and current evidence-based practices for Latino fathers and families is necessary. In addition, research that investigates similarities and differences of Latino subgroups on how men experience fatherhood will be informative. Finally, there is a need to continue our work in the classroom in social work education where we can prepare students to work with family units and parents. By continuing to work with fathers, we liberate the mother as the sole responsible adult to contribute to their child's development.

Research is needed to explore ways to support and engage fathers with implications that extend across a variety of settings, including schools, health settings, and social services. Due to the increasing population of Puerto Rican and other Latino sub-groups, providers and social workers working with Puerto Rican families should understanding the perceived parenting roles within families to better engage and support fathers and families within this growing population.

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