

Fathering Latina Sexualities: Mexican Men and the Virginity of Their Daughters

Mexican men have been traditionally misrepresented in or omitted from fatherhood scholarship, sexuality and reproductive health-related research, and immigration studies. Based on in-depth tape-recorded interviews with 20 immigrant men living in Los Angeles, this study examined Mexican fathers' views of virginity as they educate their daughters in the United States. Results indicate that fathers' perceptions of a daughter's virginity are shaped by regional expressions of patriarchy and masculinity, and the socioeconomic segregation of inner-city barrios. Protecting their daughters from a sexually dangerous society and improving their socioeconomic future is of greater concern to these men than preserving virginity per se. These men's narratives challenge stereotypical images and archetypes of the Latino macho father.

A dominant perspective in the literature on Mexican families and fatherhood has projected an inaccurate characterization of men and masculinity. Mexican fathers are frequently portrayed as rigid and authoritative macho men controlling their families (e.g., Barkley & Salazar-Mosher, 1995; Lewis, 1961; Madsen, 1964; Peñalosa, 1968). For instance, being jealous and possessive of “their women” has

been identified as a cultural trait of Mexican men in some publications. On one hand, ethnographic research with fathers from the United States (Secunda, 1992), Europe (Sharpe, 1994), and South America (Olavarría, 2001) has similarly reported some men's feelings of possessiveness and difficulty in acknowledging their children—daughters in particular—as sexualized individuals. On the other hand, family and adolescence studies have challenged monolithic and static ideas of fathers of Mexican origin living in both Mexico and the United States (Bronstein, 1984; Cromwell & Ruiz, 1979; Falicov, 1982; Mirandé, 1991).

Mexican men and fathers also have been excluded from the traditionally woman-centered models of reproductive health-related research in Mexico (Figueroa Perea, 1999) and the United States. Sexuality and reproductive health research with populations of Mexican origin began to examine youth sexuality after the mid-1980s. And in the last decade, the parent-child relationship has received special attention with regard to sex education, information, and knowledge (Baird, 1993), the first sexual experience (Upchurch, Aneshensel, Mudgal, & Sucoff McNeely, 2001), the absence of sexual activity (Liebowitz, Calderón Castellano, & Cuellar, 1999), and pregnancy out of wedlock (Erickson, 1994). However, these studies focus more frequently on the maternal figure (e.g., Villarruel, 1998), including large-scale quantitative research on Latino adolescents' sexual behavior (e.g., Hovell et al., 1994).

Immigration research with families of Mexican origin also has ignored fatherhood, focusing instead

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on how and why migration and settlement may restructure gender relations (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994), motherhood (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997), young couples' redefinitions of marital quality and sexuality across borders and between generations (Hirsch, 2003), and the sex lives of both homosexual (Cantú, 1999) and heterosexual Mexican immigrants (González-López, 2000, 2003). Culturally defined traits such as familismo, personalismo, machismo, marianismo, the madonna/whore dichotomy, and Catholic religion have long been the dominant theoretical categories that researchers have used in the extensive scholarship on Latino family values and beliefs, and Latina/o sexuality and gender studies across disciplines.

Using ethnographic data from in-depth interviews with 20 Mexican immigrant fathers, this article proposes a bridge between fatherhood, gender and sexuality, and immigration studies in order to examine Mexican fathers' views of sexuality as they educate their daughters with regard to virginity in the United States. Inspired by qualitative Latino family research conducted by Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) and Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997), I propose an alternative paradigm in which migration experiences, fatherhood, sexuality, and gender relations are mutually interdependent and interconnected processes. My central thesis is that Mexican immigrant men express greater concern about their daughters' socioeconomic futures and life opportunities than a rigidly ideological concern for maintenance of their daughters' premarital virginity. This is explained by two central factors: regional patriarchies and immigration experiences.

Regional Patriarchies

I suggest that Mexican fathers decide whether to advocate for the premarital virginity of their daughters based on the gender inequalities they were exposed to as young men educated in specific socioeconomic contexts before they migrated. I introduce the concept of *regional patriarchies* to examine these dynamics—that is, the distinctive types of patriarchies that women and men construct in diverse geographical regions of Mexican society. I introduce this concept and identify two of its modalities: *urban patriarchies* and *rural patriarchies*. Urban and rural refer to specific socioeconomic contexts and do not attempt to

essentialize or polarize them in oppositional categories. Each of these patriarchies promotes multiple forms and various levels of gender inequality, which shape the ways that Mexican families construct their values and beliefs with regard to sexuality and sexual morality. The concept of regional patriarchies is based on Belinda Bozzoli's (1983) examinations of South African regions, and R. W. Connell's (1987, 1995) analyses of gender and multiple masculinities as social constructions. Gender relations and diverse representations of masculinity are not the same across historical, social, and cultural contexts. They are fluid and reproduced in social interaction, through social practice, and in particular, in social and geographical situations (Connell, 1987).

In Mexico, regional patriarchies possess the following characteristics: (a) they are fluid and contestable, depending on socioeconomic and political contexts in which women and men live (i.e., the fewer opportunities women and men have to obtain equal education and paid employment, the greater the gender inequalities [Amuchástegui, 2001] and the more emphasized the regional patriarchies); (b) women as well as men actively participate in the social reproduction of different expressions of multiple masculinities in contemporary urban (Gutmann, 1996) and preindustrialized colonial societies (see Stern, 1995); and (c) these dynamics have their historical roots, in part, in the formation of the Mexican state, which has been constructed through and within local hegemonies promoting and reproducing regionally specific constructions of social and political power and control since the early 1930s (Rubin, 1996), and through the regional expressions of bourgeoisie and proletariat shaped by international capital and free-market economies in contemporary society (Besserer, 1999).

Thus, men who are exposed to disguised or de-emphasized expressions of gender inequalities (i.e., urban patriarchies) are more likely to develop more liberal attitudes toward premarital sex for their daughters. This process is prompted by men's exposure to urban settings, which offers women and men multiple possibilities for education, paid employment, well-informed sex education and training, and women's rights organizations (Amuchástegui, 2001; Figueroa Perea, 1997). In contrast, men raised in small provincial locations, or *pueblos*, are exposed to deeply ingrained gender inequalities (i.e., rural

patriarchies), and thus, they are less likely to embrace progressive values with regard to the virginity of their daughters. Lack of education and paid employment opportunities characterizes the lives of women living in rural and semi-industrialized contexts (Canak & Swanson, 1998), which has reinforced the lack of equality between women and men, and between fathers and their daughters.

Immigration Experiences

I argue that Mexican working-class fathers' migration and settlement journeys shape their views of their daughters' sex lives. The men I interviewed perceive the cities they migrate to and the immigrant barrios where they settle as sexually dangerous for their daughters. Fear is at the core of the sex education that these fathers offer their daughters: fear of pregnancy out of wedlock and its negative consequences (e.g., fear of a daughter not attending and completing college); fear of sexual violence; fear of sexually transmitted diseases; fear of being in an abusive relationship; and fear of crime, gangs, drugs, and violence. While promoting an ethic of sexual moderation and personal care, these fathers protect daughters who are vulnerable to these high-risk living conditions in the neighborhood. Safeguarding a daughter from these dangers becomes a priority after migration. For these fathers, virginity becomes secondary.

Fear, the universal emotion shared by these men, reveals the existence of a socially constructed and individually experienced *culture of sexual fear* in the Mexican immigrant communities where these fathers live. This culture of sexual fear is fluid and dynamic, and it is shaped by premigration ideologies and patriarchal processes, and by postmigration socioeconomic segregation. Both shape these fathers' views of women and sexuality as they figure out how to protect their daughters within alternatively more restrictive or more permissive sexual discourses.

The notion of a culture of sexual fear is inspired by Barry Glassner's conceptualization. Glassner (1999) examines the hidden dynamics responsible for the social fears permeating the daily lives of North American mainstream society (i.e., fear of crime, drugs, diseases, and other dangers). He reveals how these fears are used, manipulated, and reproduced by the political establishment and other social institutions, gen-

erating high costs in money, energy, and time paid by frightened White middle-class North Americans. Mexican immigrants may not escape these fears. In addition, they also must fear police brutality, racism, and anti-immigrant sentiments.

Sexual fears are confirmed by current Latino demographics on sexual health-related issues and concerns. The 2000 Census indicated that 35.3 million residents in the United States were of Latino origin, 35% of whom were under the age of 18 (Guzmán, 2001). Teenagers represent the most vulnerable age group in the nation to be infected with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs; Center for Disease Control, 2000). Also in 2000, Latinas had the highest fertility rates among all ethnic groups, and gave birth to 30% of the children born out of wedlock (Bachu & O'Connell, 2001). Residents of Mexican origin represent 58.5% of the Latino population (Guzmán, 2001). Within this group, immigrants represent most of the 4.1 million laborers and seasonal farmworkers living in the United States (Organista, Organista, Garcia de Alba, Castillo Moran, & Ureta Carrillo, 1997). These immigrants tend to settle in California, the state ranked second in AIDS cases (Center for Disease Control, 1998). California is the destination of immigrants from Jalisco, the state that sends the highest number of immigrant workers to the United States, and the state with the highest incidence of AIDS cases related to migration (Salgado de Snyder, Díaz-Pérez, & Maldonado, 1996).

METHOD

The present study is part of a larger qualitative research project that examines the individual sex life histories of 60 adult Mexican immigrants living in Los Angeles (40 women and 20 men). I conducted in-depth tape-recorded open-ended individual interviews in Spanish, lasting an average of 3 hours.

Sample

The focus here is on data obtained from interviews with the 20 men, who are from a wide range of educational, socioeconomic, and marital status backgrounds. Men eligible for participation were between the ages of 25 and 45, who migrated from either Jalisco or Mexico City at the age of 20 or older, and who had lived in the Los Angeles area for at least 5 years.

I asked interviewees to identify their sexual orientation during the formal interview; all identified themselves as heterosexual.

Socioeconomic differences between Jalisco and Mexico City offer contrasting social scenarios influencing men's views of female sexuality in distinctive ways. Mexico City is the capital and the largest city of the nation. The urban sophistication of Mexico City has been associated with increased employment and educational opportunities for women, which in turn may promote more egalitarian views between women and men with regard to sexuality (Amuchástegui, 2001; Figueroa Perea, 1997). Jalisco encompasses the city of Guadalajara (the second largest city in Mexico and the state capital), but also includes pre- and semi-industrialized rural areas or *pueblos* (towns) and *ranchos* (ranches). Jalisco is also the birthplace of *tequila*, *mariachi* music, and a *charro* culture, all dominant folklore images frequently associated with the creation of national masculinist identities. Based on my clinical experience with Mexican immigrant women and men, 5 years of permanent residence in the United States offers a minimum period of time to establish a relatively stable personal life.

I identified and interviewed the male informants in the 2000–2001 academic year. To identify my sample, I visited and contacted professionals in four community-based agencies and three elementary schools. In addition, I attended meetings at the consulate of Mexico in Los Angeles and established contact with representatives of hometown associations, community organizations, and employment centers for day laborers. Many of these leaders invited me to attend meetings at their centers and organizations after I described my larger research project with the women, and my desire to expand the project by interviewing men. A snowball sampling technique helped me recruit my final sample of 20 men. They were neither related to nor acquainted with the women I interviewed in the larger study. I personally conducted all of the interviews mainly at the agencies, schools, employment centers, or their homes. I use pseudonyms here to protect participants' confidentiality.

On average, study participants were 38 years old. Half of the sample (10) was born and raised in the state of Jalisco; the other half (10) was born and raised in Mexico City. All participants have lived permanently in the United States for between 5 and 20 years. On average, men from Jalisco had lived longer in the United States

(13.5 years) than the Mexico City group (10.1 years). Most (18) identified themselves as Catholic.

More than half (12) were married, 2 were cohabiting, 3 were never married, 2 were separated, and 1 was divorced. With the exception of never-married men, all had children ($M = 2$ children); 15 had daughters and 13 had sons, all of whom were being raised in the United States. Only 2 men had children living in Mexico.

The lowest level of formal education for men from both locations was second grade of *secundaria*, equivalent to eighth grade; the highest level was a Master's degree. The average level of education was 12 years, relatively high for Mexico (Canak & Swanson, 1998). Men from Mexico City were more likely to have attended college than their Jalisco counterparts, but no man from Mexico City completed a college education.

Participants held a wide variety of occupations, including construction and maintenance work, truck driving, equipment operation, supervision, and technician work. A minority were employed as administrative assistants, small business owners, or schoolteachers. Study informants reported an average annual income that fluctuated between \$12,000 and \$24,000.

As part of a larger interview, the men were asked, "Would you like your daughter(s) to have sex before they get married? Why?" This article offers in-depth examinations of the narratives they offered in response. I also studied each informant's interview transcript to identify and examine men's significant reactions and recurrent themes linked to virginity and premarital sex within the context of the father-daughter relationship.

Analysis

This study followed the model for analyzing qualitative data recommended by sociologist Kathy Charmaz (1983). After first collecting the data, I typed verbatim transcripts of my interviews. Second, I conducted *selective* or *focused coding* by sorting out and identifying categories of analysis. Third, I analyzed and worked on informants' interpretations of these categories by creating *memos*—that is, "written elaborations of ideas about the data and the coded categories" (Charmaz, p. 120). I also reviewed fieldwork notes (my personal observations and informants' comments and reactions) that I had

written during and immediately after each interview to identify relevant themes. As I typed the interview, I studied these notes while listening carefully to examine the informant's reactions and actual words as he talked about specific themes (e.g., views of sex education of girls in Los Angeles, perceptions of family life after migration, and opinions of young women and sex in contemporary society). I created separate computer files for each theme in order to classify information offered by each informant. I assigned a specific code or category of analysis for each theme. By creating theme files as a technique of data classification and coding, I was able to accomplish a crucial methodological goal: to pay close attention and explore specific research areas in more depth in subsequent interviews (Charmaz). For example, as I discovered that a father's views of his daughter's virginity were associated with his socioeconomic and urban versus rural backgrounds, I created additional questions while investigating men's views of their daughters' sex lives.

Finally, I established analytical interpretations and regional comparisons (i.e., Jalisco vs. Mexico City) with regard to the recurrent themes based on empirical research and theory on Mexican families, fatherhood, gender and sexuality, and migration.

RESULTS

Regional Patriarchies

In the name of my daughter. Virginity in a daughter's life is not a priority for any of the fathers born and raised in Mexico City. About half of the men from Jalisco (rural and urban) offered similar views. Some of these rural men migrated to urban areas to attend college. Although they do not expect premarital sexual abstinence in a young woman's life, men from Mexico City and Jalisco demand sexual moderation from their daughters. These fathers described their concerns for a new generation of young women being raised in urban settings. They perceived their social surroundings as sexually dangerous for various reasons: high rates of pregnancy out of wedlock, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, casual sex and promiscuity, and sexual harassment and violence against women.

As these men expressed an interest in helping their daughters postpone premarital sex, sexual

protection and care became crucial. For these fathers, delaying sex becomes strategic in their single daughters' lives. It protects their daughters from becoming pregnant while promoting the intellectual and emotional maturity necessary to improve their opportunities to attend and to graduate from college. Although the overwhelming majority of these fathers identified this goal as "the dream" they have for their daughters, men raised in urban areas more frequently articulated these views. With regard to their daughters engaging in premarital sex, first Jacobo (35, from Guadalajara, administrative assistant, married, father of a 15-year-old daughter) expressed,

I would try to see it objectively. I had sexual relations before I became married. I would talk with her about it but openly and without intending to punish her, or anything like that. Nor would I get into any details with her. Simply to clarify and to motivate her to take care of herself, so she can take care of herself in all respects. But, above all, that she would not stop attending school. That is my main concern. I do not want her, for any reason, to stop attending college. She is doing so well, and I want her to continue doing the same. That's about it.

Ernesto (43, from Guadalajara, technician, married, father of a 10-year-old girl) similarly commented,

I am worried about her having a child, that she would not be able to take care of herself and leave the family home. I would not like it. I would love her to have a formal life, that is, that she goes to school, and that she is studying. Because for me... my preoccupation is that she makes it all the way to a university and graduates from college. That is my preoccupation and I will always fight for it.

In Mexico, "taking care of herself" or *cuidarse*, has more than one meaning. For women of reproductive age, "taking care" also indicates successfully using a contraceptive method in a healthy and safe manner to prevent pregnancy. Jacobo, Ernesto, and many of the men in this study used this expression while addressing pregnancy before marriage and its negative consequences as risks of being sexually active. Consequences included not completing high school or attending college, becoming poor, being abandoned, and encountering social stigma and sexism as a single mother. Thus, some fathers promote sexual abstinence as the best strategy a daughter can use to take care of herself and increase her chances of obtaining

a college degree. Two fathers from Mexico City exemplify this dynamic. Alejandro (37, small business owner, married, father of a 6-year-old girl) elaborated,

I would like her, before she has sexual relations, to focus on establishing a goal with regard to her studies. I want her to study. In other words, when the day comes that she becomes someone who is self-confident in this country, or in Mexico, wherever, then she may look for a partner. And then she may have sexual relations. Before or after getting married, in other words, it does not affect me. It would affect me, let's say, that she is going to school, she has sex, and then she gets pregnant. That would affect me, right? because that would completely cut her off as a person, and at the academic level.

And Alfredo (36, construction worker, cohabiting, father of a 13-year-old girl) similarly described,

I tell my daughter, "The day you are going to have sexual relations, do it. Not now, of course, when you get older. No problem, but use your brain, because you have a brain. If you do not want to get married, no problem, but think about it very well. Complete your education. Figure out how you are going to survive, and then do it when you know how to survive and have a job."

Fathers such as Jacobo, Ernesto, Alejandro, and Alfredo want to prevent what one father regretted that he was unable to accomplish. Emiliano (43, born and raised in Mexico City, technician, married, father of two young adult women and a 9-year-old girl), talked with sadness about the out-of-wedlock pregnancy of one of his daughters. He stated,

She got married because of the same, she became pregnant and then she left. We [my wife and I] told her to stay here with us so she could continue studying. And at some point, I talked with her about having an abortion, because I told her "Consider it, eh... I will give you my support in whatever you want, whatever decision you make."

As he continued, I asked him how he felt that she had sexual relations before marriage. He replied,

It was not the fact that she was having sexual relations. In fact, I always talked to her, because I used to drive my daughters to school, and when we saw a young girl in our way to school, a young girl who was pregnant, I used to tell her, "My daughter, if you, young girls, want to do it and you have such a great need, how come you don't use a contraceptive method? What's the deal

about making your life complicated." That was for me, the worst thing that ever happened to me, that she was not able to take care of herself."

He emphasized,

I used to tell her, "You have to study, you have to educate yourself." So that was the worst thing that ever happened to me. I told her, "You destroyed your life, you could have become someone in your life, but not anymore." I felt sad.

As illustrated, maintaining their daughters' virginity was not of the utmost importance for these five urban fathers. A similar pattern was evident in other men born and raised in or exposed to urban settings. This finding supports previous research with men from Mexico City who expressed more progressive views of female sexuality after experiencing higher education and college life. These men challenged some of the traditional values that they had learned within family, peer groups, and neighborhood contexts (Amuchástegui, 2001; Módena & Mendoza, 2001).

Men from urban contexts reported that they were not concerned about the moral, religious, and family values traditionally associated with virginity, such as a social perception of virginity as a virtue in women. Other sex research with Mexican populations has similarly found no association between religion and the actual sexual values and practices of Catholic women and men (Amaro, 1988; Carrillo, 2002; González-López, 2000).

Beyond the hymen. Urban fathers sometimes commented on a daughter's sex life beyond the topic of virginity. They believed in a daughter's sexual autonomy and her right to actively seek and experience desire and pleasure, prior to and after marriage. Diego and Alfonso, from Mexico City, elaborated. Diego (36, school teacher, separated, father of an 11-year-old girl) exclaimed,

Aha! I would tell my daughter to talk with her partner a lot about sex, that she should tell him what she wants, what she would like to do, how she would like to do it, about her fantasies and that she should have a lot of communication with him.

Alfonso (33, construction foreman, married, father of two daughters, 7 and 13 years old) similarly elaborated,

When I get to talk with them about it, I will simply tell them that their moment should feel

pleasurable to them, that they should feel comfortable with themselves, and that nothing should force them to do it, and that nobody has the right to make sex conditional and that depending on how they feel about it, they should proceed.

Thus, these fathers illustrate how and why regional patriarchies shape the way in which they perceive female sexuality. They embrace distinct social norms of sexual morality for their daughters based on the gender inequalities they experienced before migrating. Urban fathers were not concerned about the virginity of their daughters. It appears that sexually permissive expressions of urban patriarchies, masculinities, and gender equality, along with exposure to the complexities of survival in a competitive and industrialized society, are responsible for this dynamic. Fathers born and raised in rural patriarchies are exposed, in contrast, to more restrictive social norms with regard to women and sexuality.

Between tradition and modernity. Fathers from rural Jalisco were more likely to expect their daughters to refrain from premarital sexual activity. For these men, virginity assures the continuation of an ideal of family tradition and social symbolism, which also contributes to a conflict-free relationship with extended family members. These fathers had abstained from premarital sexual activity with their wives. Two fathers born and raised in small towns exemplify these dynamics. Fidel (37, technician, married, father of three daughters) used the expression, "I am the favorite son-in-law of my wife's parents" to explain that his mother- and father-in-law had always had deep respect for him because of the decision he and his wife made to refrain from premarital sex. Fidel hopes that his daughters will practice sexual abstinence and similarly benefit from this prescription. He exclaimed, "I don't want to know who, tell me who would not wish for his daughter to possess integrity while wearing white on her wedding day? Do you think that would not be my wish?" However, he explained why this may not happen:

I know it is difficult because my girls are going to get older and they will feel attraction toward men. And this is almost, this is a thing that none of us, neither me as a father nor her siblings can stop from happening.

Fidel was not the only man who reported that he may lose control over a coming-of-age daughter because of her "natural" heterosexual

desire. This pattern was reported by all fathers in this study. These fathers' view of heterosexual sexual attraction and love as something "normal" and expected in a daughter's personal life resonates with multidisciplinary scholarship examining heterosexuality as a socially constructed norm imposed upon women (and men) (Katz, 1995; Rich, 1980).

Felipe (44, truck driver, married, father of one young adult and two adolescent daughters) reported,

We [my wife and I] have taught [our daughters] that they have to respect and that they have to demand respect from others, and that you should not have sex... just like my wife and I did, that they should not have sexual relations until the day they get married. And that is what we learned and we try to transmit the same.

He emphasized why, beyond the family context, specific social institutions also shape a young woman's sexuality, "However, we are aware that these days, schools and television already show it, so they see all that more frequently."

Fidel and Felipe reported they were struggling emotionally but were willing to accept their daughters' sexual agency and desire. Both used the expression "*fracasar*" to explain that young women "morally fail" when they experience sex or become pregnant before marriage. In spite of the emotional discomfort they might experience, fathers reported that they would be supportive and loving if that was the unfortunate fate of any of their daughters. Both stated that they would explore the possibility of their daughters getting married as a way to cope with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, but never in a coercive manner. All informants were critical of coercive marriage—that is, the decision to force a daughter to marry as a way "to repair" the moral damage done by out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Many recalled stories of coercive marriages within their own immediate and extended families, and they expressed interest in helping their daughters become well-informed with regard to reproductive health and contraceptive use before becoming sexually active.

My previous work with the 40 mothers in the larger study showed that women follow a similar yet gendered pattern; mothers also decide whether to advocate for premarital virginity for their daughters based on the regional patriarchies that they were exposed to as young women (González-López, 2003). For these

mothers, motherhood becomes a developmental stage that they use to revisit and organize their beliefs and practices with regard to premarital sex learned before migrating. Mothering a daughter serves as an opportunity to resolve unfinished issues—such as the issue of protection from gender inequality that they experienced before migrating—that shape daughters' sex education. Rural women whose husbands reproached them for not being virgins at marriage advocate provirginity values before marriage to protect their daughters from similar experiences. Others, especially mothers from urban areas, advocate more egalitarian values for a new generation of women. Most want their daughters to climb the education ladder, develop a professional career, and obtain a well-paid job. As these mothers replace marriage goals with career goals for their daughters, their ideas about appropriate sexual behavior also change. Virginité depreciates as a form of social capital, or *capital femenino*, a concept that I introduce in the larger study with these mothers (González-López, 2003). To some extent, virginité is replaced by new forms of capital emerging in the United States: education and employment opportunities.

Many of these fathers (including men from urban areas) expressed a preference for not knowing whether their daughters become sexually active before marriage because of their admitted feelings of discomfort and jealousy as men, or what some identified as *el celo de hombre*. This subjective experience is not exclusive to Mexican men. Some fathers from the United States, Europe, and South America experience similar feelings with regard to the sex lives of their daughters (Secunda, 1992; Sharpe, 1994; Olavarría, 2001).

Immigration Experiences

Fathers in this study reported that they experienced a transformation of their views of female sexuality after migrating to and settling in the United States. All fathers perceived their Los Angeles immigrant barrios as sexually dangerous for their daughters. They were concerned about the high rates of adolescent pregnancy and single motherhood, violence against women, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS), and a daughter's romantic involvement with men who were drug dealers and addicts, gang members, unemployed, and high school dropouts—all perceived as undesirable.

For these fathers, protecting a daughter from these risks became a priority after migration; they perceived U.S. cities as dangerous. For them, then, virginité becomes secondary.

Urban fathers, especially those educated in poor and marginalized areas in Mexico City and Guadalajara, reported both their urban *colonias* and barrios in Mexico and their immigrant communities in Los Angeles to be equally dangerous for young women. However, they were more concerned about the safety of their daughters after migration. In contrast, rural fathers more frequently reflected on the remarkable difference between their small towns and their immigrant neighborhoods. Mainly for those promoting premarital abstinence, socioeconomic segregation became an important social force in shaping their views of female sexuality after migration. For example, Fidel expressed his reaction to my inquiry about any of his three daughters potentially engaging in premarital sex:

It is not so much that they are going to lose their virginité ... it would hurt me that any *cabrón* [asshole] would be the one with whom they would lose it! In other words, it is not that they are going to lose their virginité, because I know that they will lose it some day. But it will make me sad to see that they would lose it with just any *cabrón*. Imagine, how am I going to feel if my daughter gives it to a fucking marijuana user? *un pinche vato* [a damn homeboy] that you see all the time, lazy, selling drugs on the streets? ... It would hurt me, because as a father, I want the best for my daughters.

I probed to learn more about his concerns. He responded,

I am so afraid, yes, because I don't know, because of all the things that you find out there, things that happen, that happen these days. All these girls who get pregnant or those who are raped and then abandoned. To put it simply, the other day I was talking with a relative of mine, and I learned that a girl in my family who is 14 or 13, and she is already pregnant! Can you imagine? I am a father and when I listened to those stories, it gives me the chills!

Fidel illustrates the fear that many informants reported as they talked about their views of female sexuality in Los Angeles. Fear was the central emotion involved in the social construction of fathers' views of a daughter's sexuality. Regardless of their place of origin, many fathers reported feeling more apprehensive about the sex education of their children—their daughters in particular—after they migrated as compared

with before. They expressed their concern about the kidnapping and sexual abuse of children, gang and violence activity, and exposure to drugs. A few had thought about sending their daughters to live with family in Mexico.

Thus, for these fathers, maintaining virginity is secondary to fear of a daughter becoming pregnant out of wedlock and its potential negative consequences, such as not completing an education; fear of a daughter becoming a single mother and being abandoned, poor, or exposed to stigma; fear of a daughter becoming infected with a sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/AIDS; and fear of a daughter being involved with an undesirable partner who might be a high school dropout, gang member, or drug addict or dealer.

Men experienced these emotions of distress and apprehension individually and reproduced them collectively. Deciphering how to educate their daughters with regard to sex takes time, energy, and emotion work within the culture of sexual fear that permeates these men's segregated immigrant barrios. These fathers' views of female sexuality are also shaped by the sexual panic emerging from the postmigration socioeconomic contexts surrounding the dating experiences and the loving relationships of their daughters.

Regardless of their origins, all fathers talked about the fear that their daughters might become involved in abusive relationships or with objectionable partners living in their L.A. barrios. From a small town, Felipe described the emotional difficulties he experienced as he talked about the loving relationship of one of his daughters with a young Latino boyfriend who was sent to prison. From Mexico City, Sebastián (40, married, father of 8- and 15-year-old daughters) shared his fear:

Look, I have talked with my oldest daughter about it, and I have been telling her all the time, "¡Aguas! [Watch out!]" I tell her, "You have *un tesorito*, a little treasure." I tell her, "And I would like you to give it to the person that you love. The first time should be a wonderful experience, something that you long for, something that you desire. Besides that, what better than doing it with the person you love? Because what happens many times is that men just come, they use you, and then they leave."

For men like Sebastián, a daughter's first sexual experience becomes an initiation loaded with special emotional meaning; virginity is a symbol exchanged for an emotionally safe first sexual

experience. A man must "deserve" to be the first sexual partner of a virgin daughter. For fathers like them, teaching a daughter to perceive virginity as something of special value may help her in more than one way. She may use it as an expression of love and emotional intimacy; virginity also can be exchanged for formality and respect in a relationship. She may also use it to protect herself from a potentially abusive man.

Sebastián's fathering practices are shaped by the gender inequalities he learned with regard to sexuality and social interactions before migrating. For instance, many men used the expression "*El hombre llega hasta donde la mujer quiere* [The man goes as far as the woman wants it]" to explain how they are teaching their daughters to demand respect from men. A popular saying in Mexican society, both rural and urban men used it either to assert that women had enough power to stand up for their rights, demand respect, and challenge a man's sexual advances, or to argue that women were responsible for becoming pregnant out of wedlock and for provoking the inappropriate sexual behavior of men. Alfredo, for example, talked about his relationship with his 13-year-old daughter: "I make her strong, she has a very strong character because I have made her that way." As a way to protect his daughter, he explained that he is teaching her—more than his son—to be able to demand respect. He clarified, "With regard to sexuality... it might be that I am harder with her, by telling her, 'You are a woman and as a woman, you have to take care of yourself because some men may treat you like a whore.'" Alfredo's paradoxical parenting style (caring and protecting with "a tough hand") seems to be a response to his fear, and it may not coincide with the gentle treatment that some Mexican fathers may use to educate their daughters relative to their sons (Bronstein, 1984). It resonates, however, with the childrearing practices of some Mexican fathers (Buriel, 1993) and Mexican American families in Texas (Williams, 1990), promoting double standards and stricter norms for girls as compared with boys.

Alfredo's narrative also illustrates an ethic of *respeto a la mujer*, a social norm promoting respect for women in Mexican society (Módena & Mendoza, 2001). This also conveys a social message: A woman needs to learn (and practice) morally appropriate sexual behavior as

a way to protect herself from sexual harassment and other expressions of sexual violence. For Alfredo and the vast majority of these fathers, a daughter experiences her personal and sex life while being exposed to potential harm in a society perceived as sexually dangerous for young women. As illustrated by the same men (urban, in many cases), however, a daughter is entitled to explore avenues leading to pleasure, emancipation, and education—all of them, it is hoped, leading to social justice and change.

DISCUSSION

Immigrant men enter the United States with gendered ideologies and practices with regard to women and sexuality, virginity in particular. Men reconstruct these norms via fatherhood as they unpack their “sexuality luggage”—the regional patriarchies and masculinities alternatively promoting or challenging gender inequalities in the locations in which they were educated. The concept of regional patriarchies not only contests the idea that patriarchy is uniform or monolithic but it also explains how and why regionally defined masculinities and local socioeconomic forces may influence Mexican immigrant men’s ideas about the sex education of their daughters. After heading north, these multiple expressions of masculinity intertwine with the paradoxical challenges that immigrants face within contexts of socioeconomic segregation. The United States—what once was a promised land for these men—becomes a sexual threat as they reflect on the sex education of their daughters. A culture of sexual fear permeating the everyday lives of immigrants who settle in inner-city and marginalized barrios begins to shape their views of a daughter’s virginity and premarital sex. Virginity becomes secondary for these working-class men, who instead promote an ethic of protection and care that may safeguard a daughter from pregnancy out of wedlock, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual violence, casual sex and promiscuity, and sexual dangers associated with drugs, alcohol use, and gang violence, among other risks. In the process, fathers expect their daughters to practice sexual moderation and to delay premarital sex. For them, this is a strategy that their young daughters may use to attend and complete college, and thus improve their living conditions and socioeconomic future as they survive in an increasingly competitive society.

Fathers raising both girls and boys expressed more concern and spent more time talking about their daughters when the topic of sex education of children was first introduced in interviews. Fathers identified child sexual abuse, gang activity, violence, and drug use as risks threatening the safety of a young son, who at times was identified as someone “who sooner or later will learn about sex and to take care of himself, anyway.” Ernesto (father of a girl and a boy) best articulated what many fathers expressed:

You have to put much more emphasis on women, because the woman is more, she has the hardest job, the most difficult one with regard to sexuality, to have a child, and tolerate all that. That is why I say, poor women.

To what extent are regional patriarchies and immigration each responsible for the findings in this study? A mutually reinforcing and fluid interaction among these forces seems to be responsible for these fathers’ perceptions of a daughter’s sex life. In addition, fatherhood is a subjective and personal gender process (Chodorow, 1995). Men experienced and contested some of the gender inequalities that their own fathers, brothers, uncles, and male cousins have reproduced within a family context. Some men expressed anger or pain while describing incidents of sexual abuse, rape, and domestic violence that their own mothers and sisters had endured; some were critical of the ways in which their sisters had been raised by their own fathers. Thus, fatherhood may become a family emotional process (Nichols & Schwartz, 1991) through which men may begin to resolve and disrupt family patterns that promote gender inequality as they educate a new generation of Mexican American women with regard to sexuality.

The testimonies of the men I interviewed challenge stereotypical images of Mexican fathers as macho, dominant, and authoritative. They build on men and masculinities scholarship that is gradually disrupting the reproduction of these static images and archetypes of Mexican men and masculinity in both Mexico (Gutmann, 1996) and the United States (Baca Zinn, 2001; Coltrane, 1996; Mirandé, 1991). In addition, even though some of these fathers said that they lack the knowledge, self-confidence, or comfort to talk with their daughters about sex, others shared their actual conversations with their daughters about sex-related themes. This finding challenges the increasingly popular concept of

“sexual silence.” A notion frequently identified in HIV/AIDS studies with Latino populations, it argues that Latino families are silent with regard to sexuality (Carrillo, 2002; Díaz, 1998).

Finally, research in the social, behavioral, and reproductive health sciences continues to interpret Latino families’ beliefs and practices through culturally defined theoretical concepts such as machismo, marianismo, hembrismo, familismo, personalismo, and the madonna/whore dichotomy, among others, including a so-called “Latino culture.” Besides the need to recognize not one but many “Latino cultures,” an overemphasis on these categories of analysis may promote inaccurate images of Latinas and Latinos who live in the United States. Without compromising the importance of cultural forces, we need to explore alternative and comprehensive theoretical frameworks aimed at examining how and why socioeconomic structures shape parenting styles and fatherhood experiences, gender relations, and the sex education of a new generation of Latina and Latino children.

Implications and Future Research

Professionals working with Latino families and sexuality issues have been frequently reminded of the cultural sensitivity and competency required to effectively work with these families. Many times, however, this emphasis is placed on Spanish-speaking fluency and cultural familiarity—understood by many as Latino beliefs, customs, and traditions. Thus, such sensitivity and competency skills have the potential to be enhanced and expanded if we become social critics who also uncover and explore the structural forces influencing the sex lives of the members of these communities. As indicated in this study, some of these social factors shaping sexuality, fatherhood, and migration experiences include socioeconomic segregation, unemployment, poverty, racial discrimination, legal status, anti-immigrant laws, lack of access to education, language limitations, and other forces emerging from inequality and social injustice.

A comprehensive and critical examination of Latino men and their fatherhood experiences requires exploration within the context of their relationships with partners. Central topics include Latino fathers’ and their partners’ views and redefinitions of the sex education of their daughters and sons within contexts of social marginality, and these couples’ perceptions and

renegotiations of sexual health as part of the immigration experience. Research on the sex lives of young Latino men with regard to sexual initiation and early erotic experiences also has been neglected. Future research cannot offer comprehensive and accurate reflections of Latino communities if it excludes the sexual experiences of men of all ages. Finally, the most marginalized of all Latino family arrangements calls for equally sensitive examinations: same-sex parents of Latino origin and the sex education of their children.

Limitations and Strengths

Results from this qualitative study are not generalizable to the experiences of other self-identified heterosexual Mexican immigrant fathers. Additionally, I do not offer concrete linear analyses of men’s views before and after migration. I conceptualize sexuality as a malleable process in constant flux. I look at how and why pre- and postmigration social and economic complexities intertwine with and shape these men’s views of their daughters’ sexuality in Los Angeles. This project provides an examination of how and why fatherhood, masculinity, and sexuality are nuanced processes formulated and transformed by, through, and within social practice. It offers an alternative perspective to study the sexualities of young Mexican American girls as fluid and dynamic processes linking gender and migration, and socioeconomic forces of discrimination and inequality. These men’s narratives of fatherhood should help to “demythologize” Mexican fathers and their families (Vega, 1990). They invite us to place the latter at the center of our research with Latino populations, and put to rest misinterpretations and stereotypes of the families in the fastest growing minority group in the nation.

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