

**Latino Fathers' childbearing intentions:
The view from mother-proxy vs. father-self reports**

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Overview: This paper will explore Latino fathers' childbearing intentions and how the picture differs when male vs. female reports are considered. More specifically, using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal-Birth Cohort (ECSL-B) this paper will examine patterns in Latino father childbearing intentions across relationship type and how these vary by source of report. In addition, we will explore factors associated with Latino couple agreement/disagreement about fathers' childbearing intentions, and how these agreements/disagreements may be associated with prenatal behaviors and relationship expectations. To complement the quantitative analyses, data collected through semi-structured qualitative interviews with Latino couples who have recently become parents will further shed light on the process that shapes Latino males' childbearing intentions, their partners' perceptions of their intentions, how intentions are communicated, and more generally the decision making process that characterizes the transition to parenthood.

Context: Hispanics have the highest rates of fertility and nonmarital childbearing of any racial or ethnic group in the U.S. (Martin et al., 2002; Terry-Human, Manlove, & Moore, 2001; Child Trends Data Bank 2007). High fertility rates coupled with immigration have resulted in Hispanics surpassing African-Americans as the largest minority group in the U.S. Given these demographic trends, as well as the focus of public policies on reducing nonmarital childbearing and strengthening the institution of marriage, with the goal of enhancing child well-being, it is important to better understand Latino male fertility intentions.

Data: The study will be based on the data from the 9-month wave of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort and qualitative interviews with Latino fathers and their partners.

The ECLS-B offers a unique opportunity to examine the context (i.e., marital, cohabiting or neither) and circumstances (intendedness) of births across racial and ethnic groups. The ECLS-B is designed to follow focal children born in 2001 and their biological parents over time, and provide information on the relationship between biological parents, including interviews of residential fathers and nonresidential fathers who are in contact with the mother or child. (It is important to note that while the ECLS-B includes non-residential fathers, the non-residential fathers included in the study may not be representative of the broader non-residential father population. Non-residential fathers were only included in the study if they were in contact with the child or the child's mother.) The ECLS-B is nationally representative with a large sample of African American and Hispanics and includes multiple measures of intendedness, including whether the pregnancy was wanted or mistimed. Moreover, it is one of the few data sets to collect data on childbearing intentions from both parents, as well as partner perceptions

of the other parent's childbearing intentions. This ECLS-B is unique in this respect. Historically there has been a dearth of information on father childbearing intentions, and more generally males' fertility behaviors. This study will contribute to the small but growing body of research that has recognized the importance of the role that men play in the family formation process.

For the purposes of this study, a pregnancy will be considered *wanted* if the respondent (or respondent's partner) stopped taking birth control in order to get pregnant or reported having wanted the baby when they discovered they were pregnant. A birth will be considered *mistimed* if the respondent became pregnant (or their partner became pregnant) sooner or later than they wanted. Respondents who reported not wanting a(nother) baby when they or their partner became pregnant are coded as having had an *unwanted* pregnancy. Also coded as having an unwanted pregnancy were those respondents who reported being unsure about wanting a(nother) baby and in a follow-up question ("It is sometimes difficult to recall things but, just before that pregnancy began, would you say you probably wanted a(nother) baby at some point or probably not?") responded "probably no" or "didn't care".

The sample for this study is drawn from 10,105 children who resided with their biological or adoptive mother, whose biological or adoptive mother responded to the parent questionnaire, and who had valid sample weights. Two samples were constructed—a mother-only sample and a mother-father sample. Our mother-only sample is comprised of 1,563 Latina mothers who: 1) resided with their biological child at the 9-month baseline assessment; 2) participated in the parent interview; and 3) for whom valid sample weights were available. To examine father reports and couple agreement of father's childbearing intentions, a second subsample was constructed by limiting the mother-only sample to cases for which complete father self-report data on intendedness and valid weights were available (n=925). Father intendedness reports were drawn from both the residential and non-residential questionnaire.

Analyses using ECLS-B data will proceed in three steps. First, we will create a profile of Latino father childbearing intentions by relationship type (marital; cohabiting, nonmarital; and neither cohabiting or married). This profile will be constructed using mother-proxy reports, father-self reports and couple agreements/disagreements of father's childbearing intentions. We will then conduct multinomial regressions to identify key factors associated with mother-based and father-based reports of father childbearing intentions and couple agreement/disagreements. Critical independent variables of interest will include: age at birth; family composition growing up; education and work status; country of origin and dominant language; and marital/cohabitation status. In the last stage, we will explore how father childbearing intentions are associated with involvement in prenatal activities, parenting disagreements or conflict over parenting styles and involvement, and relationship expectations.

As noted above, to explore in greater depth Latino father childbearing intentions, the meaning and significance attached to their intentions, and to assess the adequacy of current measures, semi-structured qualitative interviews will be conducted with Latinos

couples who had a birth in their current union and are living in the Washington DC metropolitan area and in Queens, New York during the fall of 2006. Participants will be recruited through flyers posted in the community, local weekly papers and advertisements on Craigslist.com—a local community based website. To facilitate recruitment, prospective respondents will receive \$25-50 dollars at the end of a 60- to 90-minute interview. Prospective respondents will be screened to ensure that they met the study requirements. Though couples will be encouraged to participate, individual partners will be eligible to be interviewed.

Preliminary Findings: Table 1 provides the distribution of reports of Latino father childbearing intentions across relationship type and by source of report.

The picture that emerges of Latino's father childbearing intention is dependent on the source of the report. For example, if we use mother reports of childbearing intentions we find that two-thirds of Latino fathers wanted the pregnancy, whereas father self-reports suggest that the proportion of Latino males having a wanted pregnancy is closer to one-half.

In general, comparisons of mother-proxy reports and father-based reports suggest that women overestimate the extent to which Latino fathers have a wanted pregnancy and underestimate the extent to which a pregnancy is unwanted by men. This pattern is more pronounced for some relationship types and within relationship type for some categories of childbearing intentions. For example, among cohabitators a very similar picture emerges on wantedness when either male (53%) or female (56%) reports of father wantedness are considered. In contrast, among those who are married the percentage reporting that the father wanted the pregnancy declines from 72% when mother-proxy reports are used to 59% when father self-reports are considered.

Table 1. Mother and father reports of father's childbearing intentions by relationship type (ECLS-B baseline data)

	Total	Married	Cohabiting	Neither
Mother report of father's intentions				
n	1,563	734	452	377
Wanted	61.1%	72.0%	55.6%	45.5%
Mistimed	24.5%	18.5%	29.0%	31.0%
Unwanted	14.5%	9.6%	15.3%	23.5%
Father self report of own intentions				
n	925	503	267	155
Wanted	53.0%	58.7%	53.3%	34.7%
Mistimed	21.0%	20.7%	18.4%	26.3%
Unwanted	26.1%	20.7%	28.2%	39.1%