

Men's Participation as Fathers in the Latin American and Caribbean Region:

A Critical Literature Review with Policy
Considerations

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview and analysis of men's participation as fathers in the Latin American and Caribbean region. This literature review contains theoretical and empirical considerations on: the role of men in families and on the role of men in child development and well-being; policy and program experiences influencing men's participation as fathers; existing data on men's participation as fathers in the region; and some economic implications of men's participation and non-participation as fathers. The paper concludes with program, policy and research considerations for the region.

Increasing rates of marital dissolution, growing participation of women in labor markets in the region (compared to men's stable or declining participation) and increased attention to men's roles in sexual and reproductive health have all contributed to a growing interest in men's roles in families and their participation as fathers in developing countries. At the international level, the Cairo (1994) and Beijing (1995) conferences served to call attention to the roles of men in families and established international platforms for engaging men in the promotion of gender equity, including more involvement by men in their roles as fathers. In Western Europe, North America and Australia, policy and program initiatives to influence men's participation as fathers in some way have existed for more than 20 years. Policies and programs in these countries have been informed in part at least by a large and growing body of research on men's roles as fathers, and on the impact of fathers' participation in families and on child development and well-being. In this paper, we will summarize some of the salient findings from this research in Western Europe, Australia and North America, although the paper's primary focus will be on research emerging from Latin America and the Caribbean.

If the issue of men's roles as fathers has gained some attention in recent years in North America and Western Europe, the amount of research and the number of program and policy initiatives in developing regions of the world, including Latin America and the Caribbean, have been relatively scant (Lyra, 1997). In some cases, in the international development literature, men's roles and participation in the lives of their children has even been inadvertently or deliberately excluded or remain largely invisible. The implications of this are that gender inequities in childcare and domestic tasks endure and that the roles of men in children's health, development and well-being are largely overlooked or dismissed. As a Population Council document cogently states:

"Though development may alter the classic portrait of marketplace gender inequality, such as wage discrimination and occupational segregation, a powerful form of discrimination persists when women must carry the major, and sometimes exclusive, social and economic costs of dependents, especially children" (2001).

Data suggest that worldwide, fathers contribute far less time to direct children care, although there is tremendous variation across countries and among men. Studies from diverse settings find that fathers contribute about one-third to one-fourth of the time that mothers do to direct children care (Population Council, 2001). However, even if not as involved in childcare, fathers make decisions about use of household income for children's well-being, education and health care, in addition to direct income contributions.

There has been growing attention to men's roles as fathers in the Latin American and Caribbean region and a slowly emerging research base, but this accumulated research pales in comparison to the amount of research on men's roles in sexual and reproductive health in the region. Most of this recent research on fathers and fatherhood in Latin America and the Caribbean, as we will see, provides ethnographic and qualitative descriptions of men, offering useful insights on men's identity formation and socialization and their reactions to changes in the labor market and family formation. These studies provide a tremendous base on which to build and offer implications for programs and policies. Some of these studies, which we highlight here, also suggest pathways to change or factors that seem to influence changes in how men view their roles as fathers. These types of studies offer powerful insights on how some men apparently have changed and can change or react in positive ways to changes in household and gender norms.

There has, however, been less quantitative research and only a handful of representative sample surveys of men's participation as fathers and the impact of father involvement in Latin America and the Caribbean. There is tremendous data on fertility patterns, labor market participation and family formation in the region, including national household surveys, but these offer only limited data on men's participation as fathers. Nor have there been any longitudinal studies on fathers in the region, with the exception of one or two studies in the Caribbean. Similarly there have been few studies in Latin America and the Caribbean on the impact of father participation on child development, which has been the focus of much of the research on fathers in Western Europe and North America.

At the program level, as we will see, a few promising programs have emerged to promote father involvement or call attention to men's roles as fathers. These include mass media campaigns, programs to enhance men's skills for caring for children and fathers' education or support groups, among others. However, due to a lack of funding for work related to fathers, there has been little systematic evaluation of these efforts and only limited dissemination of their approaches and results.

At the start, it is important to affirm that there are various social, symbolic and normative meanings attached to fatherhood and these various meanings may filter personal, programmatic and policy views on what it means to be a father. Many of the policy and program initiatives that have emerged in the region have been framed around idealized, normative or moralistic views of what being a father means — notions that may not be conducive to promoting family, child well-being or gender equity. For example, some of the fathers' rights groups (generally divorced or separated fathers seeking greater visitation or cohabitation rights) - while comprised of men with valid personal arguments and personal dilemmas - sometimes seek to return to a traditional notion of an "intact" biological family or traditional, patriarchal notions of fatherhood and are more fueled by anger at ex-partners than gender equity. Examples of such groups also exist in North America and Australia (Flood, 2004). Other fathers' groups in the region have emerged out of men's genuine and laudable self-interest in wanting closer relationships with their children. Only a handful of these initiatives, however, have grown out of a concern for gender equity, that is, of engaging men in sharing childcare, child support and domestic chores with women. Fewer still are initiatives that have sought to promote cooperation between co-parents, regardless of their marital or relationship status.

Indeed, engaging men in such programs and discussing men's roles as fathers has been hindered by numerous assumptions. Program staff and policymakers often assume that fathers

are not interested in their children, or in any case less interested than women, and that they are incompetent or inferior to mothers as caregivers, when research in diverse settings has confirmed that fathers are able to interpret and be sensitive to children's needs as well as mothers (Davis & Perkins, 1995; Lewis & Lamb, 2003). Researchers have sometimes assumed that men as fathers are hard to reach, or that women's reports of men's behaviors were sufficient to understand what men believe and do.

All of these assumptions about men make it difficult for us to study and understand what men really do and believe as fathers, and to design feasible programs and policies to encourage father participation. Partly as a result of these challenges, in recent years many researchers and program staff have begun to separate the function of "social father" from "biological father." The term social father refers to the man who is not the biological father of the child, but takes on caregiving and other fathering roles in relation to him or her (e.g. a step-father, uncle, close family friend). Historically, much of the research on fatherhood in the LAC region and elsewhere focused on intact families with biological fathers present, sometimes casting in a deficit light those men and families who did not follow this pattern. By using the term social fathers, we are beginning to realize that some men take on important roles in the family, regardless of their biological or legal connections to children. Other researchers have used the term "fatherwork" instead of fatherhood to focus on what men actually do in their parenting roles over the course of their lives, rather than on the normative, idealized notions of what being a father means and to highlight that fatherhood is a set of skills and behaviors that can be learned (NCOFF, 2002; Brown, 2004).

The analysis provided in this document of men's roles as fathers is framed within the field of and concept of "masculinities", which seeks to understand how men are socialized, how men's roles are socially constructed and how these roles change over the lifecycle and in different social contexts. By using the plural concept of masculinities, this theoretical framework argues that there are multiple ways of being socially recognized as men, often with hegemonic, subordinate and competing versions of what it means to be a man existing in the same setting (Connell, 1994). Within the concept of multiple masculinities, researchers in the LAC region have described the social "mandates" or gender scripts that many men feel obliged to live up to and implications of this on the behavior, health and well-being of men and their families (Olavarría, 2000). This construct of multiple masculinities also enjoins us to examine the diversity of men, the pressures they may perceive to adhere to specific norms and to understand how men's roles change in time and context.

There is a growing affirmation – though not yet a consensus — in the field of gender studies and gender programming that studying and targeting women is not enough to redress gender inequities and that traditional gender programming, whether in the area of income generation or sexual and reproductive health, is limited if it does not also include men (Chant & Gutmann, 2002). Furthermore, much of the research from both industrialized and developing countries on men's and women's roles in families, including their roles as parents, has offered simplistic comparisons of men's and women's time or resource use. As Cornwall points out: "This crude and simplistic form of analysis offers little in the way of understanding the dynamics of difference in communities. It tells us nothing of relationships among women and men, nor of the interaction of gender with other differences such as age, status and wealth" (Cornwall, 1997). Similarly, as White suggests: "In the gender and development literature, men appear very little, often as hazy background figures. 'Good girl/bad boy' stereotypes present women as resourceful and caring mothers, with men as relatively autonomous individualists, putting their own desires for drink or cigarettes before the family's needs" (Cornwall, 1997). In addition, while

there is significant research on the impact of fathers on child development from Western Europe, North America, and Australia, this research offers fewer insights on fathers and men themselves.

In short, men are frequently portrayed incompletely or as deficient in family life. It is possible, of course, to make a list of men's commonly perceived "deficiencies" in relation to their families, ranging from not providing child support, to limited involvement in domestic chores, to the use of violence against women and children. As the research included here will attest, however, these deficiencies are only one part of the story, usually told by women. In recent years, researchers have also begun to include men's own perspectives of their roles in families. Increasingly though, researchers from North America and the LAC region are affirming that men participate in caregiving, in their own ways, more than is commonly thought (NCOFF, 2002; Brown & Chevannes, 1998).

The question that has driven much of the research on men's roles in families is whether men as fathers matter. Specifically, many advocates in the LAC region (and elsewhere) have asked: why devote resources, research and programs, to men's roles as fathers, if after all it is women who provide most of the childcare? In the area of child development, many researchers have asked whether in fact children need fathers to develop well. Taken as a whole, the research discussed here, and the emerging consensus in the fields of child development and health, affirm that men's participation as fathers, as co-parents and as partners with women in domestic chores and childcare and childrearing, do matter, for the following reasons:

■ *Father presence, depending on the quality of that presence, is generally positive for children.*

The consensus from research from Western European and North America, as we will see here, is that when men (as social fathers or biological fathers) are involved in the lives of children, children benefit in terms of social and emotional development, often perform better in school and have healthier relationships as adults. However, this research also affirms that it appears that having multiple caregivers, or having a second caregiver to support a primary caregiver, is more important than the sex of the caregiver per se. Indeed, research from the U.S. and other settings— particularly those which are stressed and resource-poor – confirms that having multiple, supportive caregivers, regardless of their sex, is probably the most important protective factor for child well-being (NCOFF, 2002; Lewis & Lamb, 2003).

■ *Father or male presence, other things being equal, is positive for household income.*

In diverse settings throughout the region, research confirms that having a man or father present in the household or providing child support even when he does not reside with the children, generally provides a higher family income, even if the man on aggregate provides a smaller percentage of his wages to the household than the woman.

■ *Men's greater participation in childcare and domestic tasks is generally good for women.*

Men's participation in domestic chores, including childcare, and their positive participation in child and maternal health is generally positive for women, freeing up time for them to work outside the home, to study or to pursue activities that are generally positive for themselves and their households. While probably still a minority, some men in the region are increasing their participation in such tasks.

■ *Positive engagement as caregivers and fathers is generally good for men themselves.*

Some research suggests that engaged fatherhood is good for men. Men who are involved in meaningful ways with their children report this relationship to be one of their most important sources of well-being and happiness. Various qualitative studies and descriptions of men from the LAC region and elsewhere suggest that men who are engaged in caring and caregiving relationships, including fatherhood, may be less likely to engage in certain risk behaviors (such as criminal activity). A longitudinal study pointed to an association between engaged fathering and lower mortality for men (Weitoft, 2003). This offers a powerful, potential motivation for men to want to become more involved as fathers.

If men's involvement as fathers is generally positive – for children, women and men themselves – can we promote it through policies and programs? Can project interventions lead to measurable changes in men's participation in families and in the lives of their children? Are they cost-effective? Is there financial payoff in investing in men as fathers? As we will see, these are questions that have not for the most part been adequately answered. Our cautious answer is that we think so, but we need more research. As previously mentioned, a number of programs have emerged in the last 15 to 20 years in the LAC region, mostly small in scale and generally with limited funding. We will present some qualitative findings from these existing programs which suggest the potential impact of such programs, however, the question as to what impact such programs have still remains largely unanswered. Finally, although we still do not know the impact of program and policy initiatives in the lives of men, we can affirm that these issues are likely to become even more salient as more women enter the workplace in the region and more children are born outside formal unions. Furthermore, evaluation considerations apart, applying a complete gender and human rights (including children's rights) perspective on the family means that we must include fathers in our research, program development and policy considerations.

II. Men in families: Trends, Factors and Impact

A. Trends in Family Formation and Employment

The last 25 years have brought tremendous changes in family formation and employment in the LAC region, with widespread implications for men's and women's roles in the families, the largest being declining fertility rates and women's increasing participation in formal and informal workplaces outside the home. These changes have been the subject of numerous documents and analyses. In this section, we will highlight the implications of these trends for men's roles in families and their roles as fathers. We have not tried to provide an exhaustive analysis of data on family and marital trends in the region; rather we use data to highlight major trends.

In nearly all the LAC region, over the last few decades, the proportion of female-headed households has increased and women's participation in the formal labor market has increased, while men's has either declined or remained about the same. Overall, men's economic activity has declined in Latin America from 85 to 82 percent while female participation has increased from 40% to 46% (in Engle, 1997; Buvinic, 2002). These trends in turn have led to shifts in arrangements for childcare and have called into question the status quo of men's limited involvement in domestic tasks, including childcare. In much of the region, researchers report that men and women in lower income groups face economic instability and declining wages (in some sectors, but clearly not all), and that some men and women are working longer hours, when they can find stable work.

One of the responses of families to economic uncertainty and the search for employment is labor migration. In Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean, in particular, migration of men is partly the explanation for high rates of female-headed households. In Honduras, for example, in 2001, an estimated 600,000 persons were working outside the country, 75 percent of whom were men. Their income remittances are said to represent up to one quarter of the Honduran GNP (Rodriguez, 2001, in Alatorre, 2002). In total, there were about 6.6 million migrants from Latin America to all other countries in 2005, a little under half of which were men, due to the increase in the number of female migrants over the last decades (International Organization on Migration, 2005).

To these trends, we must add that throughout the region, more marriages and unions are ending in divorce or separation, that ages of marriage have increased and that more children are born outside of formal unions. This in turn means that there is a larger proportion of children who spend time away from or live apart from their fathers than in the past.

As a result of these trends, some men, as we will see, are devoting more time to domestic tasks and childcare, responding to the new demands on women's time and providing more childcare. To a lesser extent than in industrialized countries, men in Latin America and the Caribbean are also beginning to question the trends that pull them away from their families and are reflecting about their roles as fathers. Though in general this may appear to be a minority of men, there are some indications that this is a growing trend in different countries and populations in the region. Olavarría summarizes the recent changes in parenting and fatherhood among young men in Chile, "Demands on fathers to participate more actively in the rearing and social-

ization of their children have existed for some decades. These demands, nonetheless, have intensified in recent years across all social sectors. Now, according to their accounts, young fathers generally help mothers with child rearing, particularly during the first months and years.” (Olavarría, 2003 in Lewis & Lamb, 2007). As we will see, a significant proportion, though not a majority, of men may be beginning to question traditional views of parenting and fatherhood, even if these changes have been spurred by new economic realities and increased labor participation by women. Even more men are being forced to react to these trends. In this section, we will examine each of these trends.

Women-Headed Households and Marital Dissolution

Currently between 15 and 45 percent of households in Latin America and Caribbean are self-identified, in official data, as female-headed, these potentially being two-parent or single-parent households though in general female-headed households are often single-parent households (Sociometro, ND). The country with the highest proportion of female-headed households in Latin America is Brazil with 33.81 percent (Ibid). In Mexico, 25 percent of households are headed by a single adult, the vast majority of those women (Cunningham, 2001). Similarly, about a fourth of households in Central America were headed by women: 28.24 percent in Nicaragua, 18.4 percent in Guatemala, 26 percent in Honduras, and 33.56 percent in El Salvador (Sociometro, ND). In the English-speaking Caribbean — characterized by a high rate of migration of men and by a matrifocal family structure — the proportion of female-headed households is even higher, ranging from 37-49 percent (Alatorre, 2002).

In addition to men’s migration for work, most of the LAC region has experienced increasing rates of marital dissolution. In Panama, divorce rates nearly doubled from 3.8/1000 in 1986 to 6.2/1000 in 1996 (Alatorre, 2002). In Nicaragua 16% of women were divorced in 1998 and the divorce rate in Costa Rica in 1999 was 29%, up significantly from previous years (Alatorre, 2002). Studies have found that in the case of separation or divorce, men are more likely than women to remarry or form new relationships and thus are more likely to have children with more than one partner. It follows then that many of these men live apart from at least some of their children for a significant portion of their children’s lives. In a sample survey in Nicaragua, 49 percent of men ages 15-40 had separated or divorced and formed new relationships compared to 32 percent of women (Montoya, 2001, in Alatorre, 2002). And as previously mentioned, the combination of higher rates of marital dissolution and later average ages at first marriage have led to a higher proportion of children who are born outside formal unions, in fact many couples are opting for informal unions in the region. For example, in Chile, 18.6 percent of children were born outside formal unions in 1970, compared to 45.8 percent in 1998 (Olavarría, 2002a).

These data in and of themselves suggest tremendous changes in family and household structure, but they do not provide a complete picture. Data consistently shows that single-parent female-headed households are poorer than two-parent homes, however, these data are limited in that they often do not tell us about connections and networks of social support that families may have beyond the household nor about individual differences in households (Bruce, et al, 1995; Budowski, 2002 & 2006). Moreover, some research shows that having a man in the household (or being a male-headed household) can increase a woman’s burden rather than decrease it. A study in Nicaragua of mothers of children 12-18 months of age found that women spent more time in household production when a father was present than when he was absent (Bruce, et al, 1995). Men’s use of alcohol or violence may mean that women effectively head households even when men are present, or that the higher income men bring may be offset by

the social costs of men's presence. Also, the contributions of migrated fathers to female-headed households may be rendered invisible.

The Caribbean offers us yet another caveat related to household headship trends. In Jamaica, only 16 percent of women in their childbearing years are married. The majority of first children are born into visiting unions of young, unmarried partners. Later in life many women and men move to common-law unions and may eventually marry. Women and men may have multiple unions and have children who may or may not live with them. On aggregate, men give more income to the children they live with, but diverse patterns make generalizations difficult (Brown & Chevannes, 1998). Qualitative data on household formation in the Caribbean describe a common pattern among the majority lower-income families, in which young mothers and their children live with the extended family, or pass children to other members of the extended family to care for, while fathers maintain a visiting, non-resident relationship with their children which may or may not imply migration for work. Common is the young man who fathers children as a symbol of his manhood before he has the means to support them. This same man, later in life, may subsequently form a more permanent union and devote considerable resources to his "inside children" — those with whom he currently lives. He may or may not have maintained contact with his earlier offspring. While the literature has often described such family formation in deficit or dysfunctional terms, many Caribbean researchers argue that this is a functional and historically-based pattern to ensure family survival in the face of post-slavery poverty and lingering social exclusion (Brown & Chevannes, 1998). In fact, research confirms that women-headed households are sometimes preferred by women because they cherish their independence, not necessarily because men use violence against them or because men are negligent in their roles as providers (Barrow, 1998 & 2001). And, another study in Jamaica found that women preferred visiting unions because this gave them greater freedom from control by a spouse, while still allowing the fathers to spend time with their children (which was reported to be 14-15 hours on average per week) (Chevannes, 2001).

Studies in other parts of the region offer additional caveats to making simplistic assumptions about female- or male-headed households. An analysis of labor trends in Mexico found that gender did affect labor supply decisions (whether women worked) but was filtered through household structure. Unmarried women and women without children behaved more like men than like married women in their labor participation decisions. The conclusion is that being head of household, rather than gender, was the key in determining labor market decisions (Cunningham, 2001). These two examples suggest caution when making generalizations about household behavior when men or fathers are absent.

Fewer Fathers Living with Their Children

If the mere counting of female-headed households is insufficient for understanding men's and women's roles in households, one undisputable result of the higher proportion of female-headed households is that a growing proportion of children spend more years living away from their biological fathers than in the past. Table 1 provides illustrative data from the region on the percentage of childhood years on aggregate that children do not spend with their fathers.

However, as previously mentioned, we must keep in mind that being a non-resident father does not mean that a father is absent from the child's life. Furthermore, as various studies have found (which we will cite later), the quality of a man's relationships with his children has consistently been confirmed to be more important than time spent with children, and that even when fathers are not present, in many cases there are other men in the family setting who take on

some of the roles traditionally associated with fathers. Various studies from the Caribbean suggest that many families with non-resident fathers make arrangements to provide for visits or for informal encounters between fathers and their children. In some cases, these non-resident fathers may see their children several times a week or more. However, these arrangements and interactions are seldom addressed in research on fatherhood.

TABLE 1: Percent of childhood years spent without a father (but with mother)

Brazil	9%
Colombia	13%
Dom. Rep.	14%
Ecuador	7%
Peru	9%
Trinidad and Tobago	17%

(Source: Bruce, et al, 1995)

Men's Work and Their Contributions of Household Income

One of the major themes in gender analyses of household dynamics in the LAC region and elsewhere has been the lower proportion of income that men dedicate to their families when compared to women. Various studies suggest that as a proportion of their earnings, men devote less of their income to the household and therefore investing in women's income generation generally offers better returns for family well-being. For example, a study in Guatemala found that a relatively small increase in the mother's income was necessary to improve child nutrition, while an increase nearly 15 times as large was required in the father's income to produce the same benefit for children's health (Bruce, et al, 1995). Similarly, a study in Jamaica found that households without men devote a higher percentage of their income to child-specific goods (Wyss, 1995).

In addition, if it is true that men on aggregate contribute a lower percentage of their income to the household and to children than women, this finding may create its own reality and reinforce gender stereotypes. By focusing on women's income, which to be sure is positive, some programs and policies may also reinforce the stereotype that women should and will provide for their households (and not necessarily for themselves) and that men are presumed derelict in supporting the household. The question remains whether it is possible to promote women's income generation and at the same time to work with men to reconsider their responsibilities to their households. The other relevant question is how to promote income and employment generation with specific groups of low-income or socially excluded men and how to encourage them to contribute more of their earnings to the household. Data from U.S. and Costa Rica suggest that social policies that focus on women as heads of households may actually drive men away from assuming family responsibilities, serving in effect to create self-fulfilling prophecies (Chant & Gutmann, 2002; NCOFF, 2002).

When considering men's financial contributions to the household, existing research would suggest caution when making broad conclusions or generalizations. In addition, if men's economic participation has fallen some in Latin America, there are unanswered questions about

what this means. Some authors find no evidence of a general trend of male economic marginalization, but rather report increased bouts and duration of unemployment for some of the most marginalized men – including younger men, less educated men, and men working in the informal sector (Lyra & Medrado, 2002). An analysis of employment and income trends among men in Argentina, Brazil and Costa Rica from 1988-97 found that some groups of men faced declining income but not all men, and not even all men in the lowest income groups. Qualitative and quantitative research suggests that some men face greater job instability than in the past, but the implications of this instability for their income and well-being are relatively unexplored (Nascimento, 1999). This analysis highlights the uneven nature of men's economic marginalization (Arias, 2001). This analysis also suggests the need to target specific groups of low-income men with employment and income generation initiatives, for example low-income, unemployed fathers (as some programs in Western Europe and North America have done).

Even though men may experience greater economic difficulty today, they still retain significant benefits from the gender distribution of household work and caring for children which are reinforced by employment policies and practices around the world and in the region. Research from United States and Europe has shown that women's caring for children and domestic work, and conversely men's lack of caregiving, directly contribute to the gender pay gap and to employment opportunities for women, for example with women opting for more part-time work than men in order to have more time to care for children (Burgess, 2007). As one study from Brazil mentions: the woman's "remunerated work can be suspended, abandoned or reduced at the end of pregnancy" to an extent that does not occur for men (Brasileiro, et al, 2002).

If the evidence is unclear or mixed regarding men's economic marginalization, what is clear in research throughout the region (and most of the world) is that work is a central component of men's identities. While our considerations of men and their work has often been instrumental – focusing on the impact of this income on family well-being – employment and income are much more than instrumental for men. Work gives men their main social identities and provides them with a socially recognized function. For many men in Latin America and the Caribbean, having stable employment is often a requisite for marriage, or family formation (Lyra & Medrado, 2002; Chevannes, 2006). Similarly, a low-income young man interviewed in Rio de Janeiro said: "Work isn't everything, but it's almost everything" (Barker, 2001). Women and children generally view fathers in these ways as well. In a sample of rural-based children in Peru, 50 percent said that their father's principal role was to work, followed by 20 percent who said their principal role was to buy them things, followed lastly by 13 percent who said it was to help in the home (Garcia-Hjarles, 2001). At the same time, data from some Latin America countries suggests, for example, that upper and middle income men have difficulty being more involved as fathers because their jobs consume tremendous time and energy. One study in Brazil showed that men desired to be available to their children up to 17 hours more per week than they could (Prado, et al, 2007).

The conclusion that emerges is that unemployment and underemployment for men must be understood and examined beyond their economic implications. However, such considerations are rarely taken into account in social policy. For example, child support enforcement – while fundamental for women's rights and children's well-being – often takes a punitive view that men are derelict in paying child support (and in some countries, including Brazil, makes non-payment a crime), while in many cases men may be out of work for reasons beyond their control.

Men as Fathers and Violence against Women

While not the focus of this paper, it is important to include a brief analysis on men's use of violence in the home, precisely because this use of violence is so pervasive. There is no evidence to suggest that men's use of physical violence against women is increasing in the LAC region in recent years, but there is clearly more data on the issue in the last 15 years. More than 30 well-designed studies from around the world, including several from the LAC region, show that between one-fifth and one half of women interviewed have been subject to physical violence by a male partner (Heise, 1994). A national study in Nicaragua, found that 29 percent of women said they had been physically or sexually abused by a male partner; in 36 percent of cases, the violence happened when the woman was pregnant (Montoya, 2001, in Alatorre, 2002). A recent sample survey of men in various social classes in Rio de Janeiro found that 25.4 percent said they had used physical violence against a partner at least once (Promundo & NOOS, 2003). According to the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence, in Peru, 69 percent of ever-partnered women in rural areas and 51 percent in urban areas had experienced either physical or sexual violence. In Brazil, the numbers were 37 percent and 29 percent respectively (WHO, 2005).

The causes and factors associated with men's use of violence against women are multiple, complex and interwoven. Clearly, the reasons or underlying factors related to male violence against women are deeply rooted in the social construction of masculinity. Keijzer (1995) suggests that male violence against women is an attempt to re-establish "normal" or traditional gender relations, or trying to keep a woman in her traditional role. Kaufman (1993) and Nolasco (1993) suggest that men's violence against women is frequently seen as a valid form of expression for men, who may not be socially allowed or encouraged to express emotions in other ways. Qualitative research from the Caribbean and from Brazil has found that domestic violence is often seen as part of the social contract. If the man sustains the household, the woman is expected to take care of the house and be sexually faithful to him. Violation of this contract on the part of the woman is seen by many men and some women as grounds or justification for male violence. Research in Jamaica and Brazil suggests that when the roles are reversed and women sustain the household, some women may become physically violent toward men (Brown, Newland, et al, 1995; Barker & Loewenstein, 1997). Research from the U.S. has found that domestic violence is correlated with economic stress, low self-esteem (on the part of the victim and the perpetrator) and traditional ideas about gender norms (Tauchen, et al, 1991). Research in Brazil found that self-reported use of physical violence by men against women was related to low educational attainment, traditional views about masculinity and having witnessed or experienced physical violence in home of origin (Promundo & NOOS, 2003).

Research is fairly consistent in confirming that men's use of violence against women is learned, and passed from one generation to the next. Various studies have found that having witnessed or been a victim of violence in the home is associated with using violence against an intimate partner. It is also clear that children are frequently present when men use violence against women and are victims of men's violence. The Nicaraguan study previously cited found that children were present in 57 percent of incidents of domestic violence (Montoya, 2001, in Alatorre, 2002). Similarly, in a study in Rio de Janeiro, children were present in more than half of the most recent incidents of men's use of violence against women (Promundo & NOOS, 2003). In the same study, 40 percent of men said they had witnessed violence by a man against a woman in their home of origin and 45.5 percent reported having been victims of physical violence in their homes. Clearly not all men who use violence against a female partner also use violence

against children, but the issues are interwoven. Although there is limited data on the issue in Latin America, one study in the U.S. compared the fathering traits of men who had used violence against women to those who had not. In terms of time spent with children, there were few differences, but men who were violent against women were more likely to report arguments with their children, more frequent yelling and more negative perceptions of their children (Fox & Benson, 2001). A review of literature, mainly from Europe and North America, highlighted studies that pointed out the connection between domestic violence against women and child abuse, including studies which show that men who are violent against women are two to five times more likely to also use violence against their children than men who do not use violence against women. (Burgess, 2007). The same review demonstrated a link between domestic abuse during pregnancy and obstetrical complications, including perinatal mortality (Burgess, 2007). Also, parental conflict (different from domestic violence, though potentially including it) has been shown in a number of studies to lead to distress on the part of the children and to antisocial behavior and psychopathology in adulthood (Cummings, et al, 2004).

In sum, existing research would suggest that in up to a quarter of households in the region, men's presence brings with it physical violence, with clear implications for women and children. Of course, women can also be violent towards men and children— psychologically, and to a lesser extent physically (Swan, 2008). When examining men's violence, we must be careful not to over generalize from the violent behavior of some men to all men. Indeed, there is a common assumption in some settings in the region that all or a majority of men are physically violent, and sometimes that men's interaction with children, particularly girls, is inherently or potentially violent, in sexual and physical ways. The challenge is to carry out additional research on this issue and to understand how it interacts with fatherhood. For example, existing research would suggest, but has not confirmed, that involved, nurturing fatherhood reduces the likelihood that boys in such households will later use violence against female partners. If this were confirmed through additional research, this would provide a powerful impetus for program and policy initiatives to encourage involved fatherhood.

Gay Fatherhood

As same-sex civil unions and marriages have gained greater legal and societal acceptance in many western countries, the roles that gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transvestites and transsexuals play as fathers and mothers have become more evident and a subject of research. Gay and lesbian couples or individuals often have children from a previous marriage or through adoption or artificial insemination as a couple or individual. Either way, the number of children living with gay or lesbian parents has increased, especially among lesbian couples that have begun to turn to assisted reproduction to establish families. For male same-sex couples the tendency is to opt for adoption though there are increasing numbers seeking assisted reproduction in the United States and Europe. In the United States, the 2000 census showed that 33 percent of female same-sex couples and 22 percent of male same-sex couples had a child under 18 living with them. Estimates of the number of children living with gay or lesbian parent(s) in the USA range from approximately 6 to 12 million (Greenfeld, 2005). As a result of the increasing visibility of gay fatherhood, support groups and networks for gay fathers have also sprung up in the US and Canada.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are few statistics regarding the prevalence of same-sex parenthood, but it is evident that gay fathers and lesbian mothers have always existed, through previous heterosexual relationships, and are becoming more and more common as gay couples or individuals seek adoption services and other methods to establish families of

their own. For gay and bisexual men in parts of Latin America, official and informal adoption is the preferred pathway to having children. For example, men in Brazil adopt children as single-parents, not couples, in order to avoid bringing their sexual orientation to light since their sexual orientation can be considered (often as a negative factor) when evaluating their adoption application (Zambrano, 2006). Even so, due to perceptions about male and female roles, single males are often viewed with a certain amount of suspicion compared to single females, as caregiving and raising a child are assumed to be “natural” feelings for a woman though not for a man (Uziel, 2006). For most transsexuals or transvestites, informal adoption is often the only recourse due to the even harsher discrimination they face (Zambrano, 2006). Clearly, in spite of the social barriers they may encounter, fatherhood remains an important goal for many gay, bisexual, transsexual and transvestite men. In an online poll among gay, transsexual and bisexual men in Brazil, 74% percent of the men reported that fatherhood was part of their life plan (Diniz & Borges, 2007).

Along with prejudice, the risk to the children’s development and adaptation are often the main reasons cited for opposition to gay adoption or parenthood. But, there is no reason why same-sex parents cannot raise healthy and well-adjusted children. In fact, a number of studies have confirmed that children of same-sex parents have similar developmental outcomes as children of heterosexual parents. A review of 23 studies from 1978 to 2000, mostly from the United States and Europe, showed that there was no significant difference in psychological and developmental outcomes for children of heterosexual versus same-sex couples as did another two reviews of studies from the USA and UK (Anderssen, et al 2002; Greenfeld, 2005; Tasker, 2005). As a result of the overwhelming evidence from most of the studies conducted on the subject, the American Psychological Association stated in its *Resolution on Sexual Orientation, Parents, and Children* of July 2004 that “research has shown that the adjustment, development, and psychological well-being of children is unrelated to parental sexual orientation and that the children of lesbian and gay parents are as likely as those of heterosexual parents to flourish (APA 2004).”

In one study, persons working in the justice system in Brazil cited the discrimination that youth may face as a result of their parents sexual orientation when considering a family or individual for adoption of a child (Uziel, 2006). Though no studies have been conducted in the LAC and though we cannot generalize from industrialized countries to the LAC, one study in the USA looking at adolescent adjustment and peer relations demonstrated that peer relations of adolescent children from same-sex couples were as healthy as those of children of heterosexual unions meaning that the family type did not predict adolescent peer relations (Wainwright & Patterson, 2008).

Even so, there remains a great deal of prejudice regarding same-sex parenting and homosexuality in Latin America and the Caribbean. In fact, homosexuality is criminalized in several countries in the Caribbean¹ (including Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago) reflecting deep-seated prejudice that at times leads to violence against gay and lesbians. In Central America, 88.2 percent of 4,790 men in a four-country survey reported that they disagreed with the statement, “Sexual relationships between people of the same sex are acceptable” (Hegg, et al, 2005). A study with 108 mothers of public school children in Brazil found that only 10 percent and 6 percent completely agreed that same-sex couples of women and men, respectively, can raise a child by themselves (Filho, et al, 2007). These attitudes towards same-sex couples and parenting are also reflected in the lack of legislation permitting same-sex adoption in Latin America and Caribbean. An exception in the region is Uruguay, which is currently considering legislation to legalize same-sex adoption.

Another area that is of interest is the second-parent in a same-sex couple. Where it is legally feasible, many gay couples seek second-parent adoption when the child is from a previous relationship in order to recognize the status of the partner as parent. In most places in Latin America, the second-parent's status is not recognized by law. There have been cases, however, of the same-sex couples receiving custody of a child, as in the case of a gay couple where both partners registered as the parents of their adopted daughter in the state of São Paulo in Brazil. In this case, one partner adopted the child as a single father and then registered the other partner as father as well. This was the first case of a gay couple adopting a child successfully in Brazil and the third case of a same-sex couple, the previous two being lesbian couples (Terra Noticias, 2005). A study on second-mothers in Chile raised several practical and legal questions including what role the second-parent plays in a same-sex couple, if a child can legally have two mothers (or in that case two fathers) and if the child should necessarily remain with the biological parent if the couple separates (Herrera 2007). These same questions could also apply to gay couples and fathers.

Even though there is growing research around gay fatherhood, it still generally centers on measuring child outcomes in comparison to heterosexual fathers or parents. Also, much of the research around gay and lesbian parents is focused on lesbian parents due to greater numbers of lesbian couples seeking assisted reproduction (Greenfeld, 2005). Some authors have even referred to a "lesbian baby boom" to describe this increase in assisted reproduction. More research in the region is needed on issues involving gay and lesbian parenthood including what fatherhood means to gay parents, second-parents in same-sex couples and cooperative parenting.

As we seek to draw conclusions from all these trends, we must be careful not to fall into simplistic or nostalgia-filled or heterosexist ideas of family structure. The discussion around same-sex couples highlights that fathers have many other issues that cannot be addressed by focusing simply on traditional heterosexual nuclear families. Also, many of the changes in family structure may be functional and rational reactions to changes in the workplace and to women's new social roles.

B. The Importance of Men's Participation as Fathers

There are several major reasons for focusing on men's participation as fathers. One is the issue of gender equity; women continue to provide a disproportionate amount of childcare, even as they have entered the workplace outside the home in rates approaching those of men. Also, as has been stated before, when men do not participate as much in childcare (either because they cannot or choose not to), gender inequity in pay and employment opportunities are reinforced. Promoting men's greater and more equitable participation as fathers can therefore help to broaden women's economic and employment opportunities. Furthermore, there is an emerging base of literature mainly from North America and Western Europe that men's positive involvement as fathers is good for children and for men themselves. There have been numerous literature reviews and studies in Europe and North America asserting that father involve-

ment, or involvement of other men in the lives of children, is positive based on several indicators of child well-being, including child health, social and emotional development, school completion rates and having more flexible gender norms, among others (see for example, NCOFF, 2002; Johnson, 1995; Day, 1998; Bernard Van Leer Foundation, 2000; Lewis & Lamb, 2003.) Little research of this kind has been carried out in the LAC region, with the exception of one or two studies from the Caribbean. Nonetheless, there are several qualitative studies, and a handful of quantitative studies, from the LAC region that suggest similar benefits to positive father involvement (for children and for fathers) as those found in North America and Western Europe. In this section we will briefly review these.³

In discussing the impact of father involvement⁴, it is also important to introduce some caveats. The international child development literature suggests that father involvement is positive, but not inherently necessary for healthy and positive child development. The consensus from this literature is that having two or more caregivers, regardless of the sex of the caregiver, is generally better than one, and that the quality of interaction with the caregiver (regardless of sex) is more important than time per se. Research suggests that multiple caregivers serve as a kind of safety net or backup for children, as well as providing support for each other as caregivers. For example, studies on child-parent attachment have confirmed that a father (or another adult caregiver) can offset problems with poor attachment with mothers (in cases of mothers with serious mental health needs, for example).

Do fathers provide some unique contribution to child development? Some researchers have argued that they do. For example, studies in the U.S. have found that a child's secure attachment with a father is associated with emotional development and the development of empathy; some of these studies suggest that a father's attachment with children is as important as the mother's (Pruett & Pruett, 1998). Other researchers have said that among some men in some settings, there are specific ways that men often care for and interact with children that seem to be important for child development. For boys, in particular, men's interaction with them as caregivers may help them to develop more gender-equitable views or more flexible views about gender. But the body of research does not affirm that two-parent households with a mother and father (or a man and a woman) inherently lead to better child development outcomes. There are a multiplicity of caregiving relationships and family structures that can yield positive child development outcomes. Qualitative research in diverse settings has found, for example, that single mothers can also raise more gender-equitable sons.

A second caveat is that of focusing on fathers as autonomous individuals. While it is important to consider the needs and realities of men on their own, and to consider that men have separate or different relationships with their children, one of the most important roles of fathers and men in a household is that of supporting mothers or women (or other men) in their caregiving

3 - We should avoid simplistic application of Western European and North American data to the LAC region, but the proposed positive benefits of father participation probably do apply to the LAC region. For the moment, if we have limited research confirming that they apply, there is no compelling research arguing that such findings would not apply to the LAC region. There is also an interesting body of literature on fathers in non-industrial societies that provides useful insights on the range of human fathering behavior and the benefits of father presence in diverse settings. This includes anthropological research with some indigenous groups in Latin America (see Hewlett, 2004).

4 - There is also a considerable body of literature on father absence and the supposed negative consequences, but we have opted not to include this. First, such research has generally taken for granted a nuclear family model that does not apply in much of the LAC region (and much of the rest of the world for that matter). Second, measures of father participation in such research have often been one-dimensional. And finally, such research has generally not taken into account the variations in and variety of caregiving patterns found in the LAC region.

and parenting roles, and thus serving as co-parents. In short, while the father-child dyad or relationship in itself is an important force for child development, fathers are also important in supporting mothers and other caregivers in their roles. Longitudinal research in the U.S. has found that mothers with support social networks (of friends and non-resident relatives) fare better in raising their children than mothers who do not have this support. This support did not always come from fathers, but among those families who fared best (on a variety of indicators related to mental health and child development), it was the father who provided this support (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Again, most of this research has focused on nuclear families. In various parts of the LAC region, extended family and kinship arrangements may produce different dynamics; men's roles in such settings have seldom been explored.

Income Generation and Income Support

As we have previously mentioned, it is important to consider the income that men and fathers provide to their households. A study of two-parent households in Guatemala found a significant positive association between child nutritional status and the percentage of a father's income contributed to the household. The authors suggest that the percentage of income that fathers contribute to the household may be a proxy for measuring commitment to his family (Bruce, et al, 1995). Studies in the U.S. have found that the father's income has significant positive effects on children's verbal abilities, education and future wages (NCOFF, 2002). But, other studies that have controlled for mothers income have showed that the impact on child outcomes is less clear (Burgess, 2007). While we should not reduce men's and fathers' roles to being merely financial providers, the income they provide and the proportion of income they devote to their families is an important positive outcome of their involvement. Nonetheless, there has been relatively little research in the LAC region on men's decision-making related to income allocation, and little policy and program development that has sought to promote men's contributions to household income, with the exception of child support enforcement.

Gender Socialization and the Generational Power of Involved Fathering

There is some empirical evidence from Western Europe and North America that positive father involvement increases the chance that sons will be more gender-equitable, and more nurturing as fathers, and that daughters will have more flexible views about gender as well (Levine, 1993; Russell & Radojevic, 1992). On the other hand, fathers can often be more rigid about gender norms of both sons and daughters than mothers. One study comparing children in father-present homes with fatherless homes (lesbian and single-parent versus heterosexual couples) found that boys in fatherless homes had no difference in terms of sexual orientation or gender identity but were more equitable in attitudes towards gender than boys in father-present households (MacCallum & Golombok, 2004). Even so, various other researchers in North America have concluded that the warmth or proximity of a child's relationship with his or her father is correlated with non-traditional (more gender-equitable) definitions of masculinity in sons and in more progressive versions of femininity in daughters. Furstenberg (1991) found that urban African-American men who had a positive father or father figure who cared for and sacrificed for them were more likely to be involved in positive ways as fathers (in Bruce, et al, 1995). In Latin America, qualitative studies have suggested similar associations (Almeras, 1997; Barker, 2001; Lyra, 2002). A qualitative study with low-income young men in Brazil found that young men who were more gender-equitable were generally able to identify a father or other male figure in their lives who modeled or demonstrated more gender-equitable roles (Barker, 2001).

Father Contributions to Child Development and School Achievement

While research is relatively scarce on the role and impact of fathers on child development in the LAC region and though we will focus on mostly publications from industrialized countries, there are some studies from the Caribbean that echo findings from Western Europe and North America. In brief, various studies from the U.S. have found that having an involved father or a father present is related to enhanced cognitive development and school achievement, through these results are partially differentiated by child gender. It should also be noted that the quality of father participation is more important than simply the quantity of contact. Indeed, various studies suggest that a father's communication skills, his own cognitive abilities (and educational attainment) and his ability to offer positive affection are more important than time spent with children as measured in child development indicators (NCOFF, 2002). Also, the age of the child may also determine the impact of the father's participation. In a longitudinal study in Germany, father's involvement was seen to have a greater contribution to child development beginning in the toddler years while father's involvement during infancy did not appear significant (Grossman, et al, 2002).

North American studies have shown definite links between a father's level of involvement and his children's academic achievement (King, 2006; Lee, et al, 2007; Parker, 1981). King (2006) found that adolescent girls and boys who had close ties to either a father or stepfather were less likely to receive failing grades in school than those without a strong paternal connection. Similarly, in Barbados, a cohort study of 8-year-olds found that those children who performed better in school had more involved fathers than their lower achieving peers (Bruce, et al, 1995). Though clearly instrumental for both boys and girls, these positive effects may be mediated by the child's sex. A study from Jamaica found that when fathers resided with children, boys fared better in school, although this did not hold for girls (Ramikissoon, 2001). On the other hand, one large-scale survey in the UK showed that father's involvement predicted better educational achievement for girls only and not for boys (Flouri 2006). Similarly, in analyzing test scores of high school students living in single-parent households, (Lee, et al 2007) found that daughters who lived with highly involved single-fathers did better than any other group identified in the study. At the same time the same study did not find *significant* difference between children and same-gender or cross-gender parents, meaning that father and mothers could be role models for either their daughters or sons irrespective of gender.

Several recent studies from North America have also suggested that fathers exert a significant influence over their children's decisions regarding substance use, and that fathers are in fact more influential in this area than mothers are (Boyd, et al, 2006; Kosterman, 2004). Kosterman (2004) found that fathers' behavior had a stronger influence than mothers on how likely daughters were to engage in "anti-social behavior," defined as substance use, sexual activity, and criminal acts. Mandara & Murray (2006) found no difference in drug use between adolescent girls whose fathers were present versus absent; they did, however, find a significant difference in usage rates among father-present versus father-absent boys.

In terms of psychosocial development, both boys and girls are clearly affected by fathers' level of presence and involvement, though these effects are again mediated by child gender. One study of Mexican adolescents from rural north-central Mexico that used both quantitative

and qualitative methodologies (the only of its kind that we found in Latin America) found that boys experienced greater psychological distress than girls as a result of father absence due to migration (Aguilera-Guzman, et al, 2004). Another study from the UK measured father involvement and its impact on criminality of youth and concluded that early father involvement in childhood resulted in boys having less contact with the police, or delinquency, in adolescence (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002). A review of 24 studies, from North America and Europe, on the longitudinal effect of father involvement and engagement in outcomes for children revealed that 22 of the 24 studies showed that father involvement has a positive impact, with boys of more involved fathers demonstrating fewer behavioral problems and girls demonstrating fewer psychological problems and positively impacting cognitive development in both boys and girls (Sakardi, et al, 2007). Studies on the differential effects of parental conflict on sons and daughters also show divergent results, with some suggesting that parental conflict exerts a greater negative impact on father-son relationships, especially in terms of authority and the sons' reactions to the fathers' authority, while others demonstrate stronger effects on the father-daughter relationship, with fathers being more negative and authoritarian to their daughters than their sons after marital conflict (Cummings, et al, 2004). These studies show that the relationship of father's involvement on outcomes for daughters and sons is complex and the evidence at times contradictory. More research is needed, however, that takes into account the various complexities including the potential that father involvement affects boys and girls differently at different ages, how father involvement is mediated by the mother, and whether father involvement leads to different outcomes for sons and daughters respectively (educational achievement, anti-social behavior, psychosocial adaptation). What is clear though is that father involvement is, depending on the nature of father involvement, important for the lives, development and well-being of both daughters and sons. That said, it is important to affirm that families without a father present can raise healthy and well-adjusted children, just as families without a mother present can raise healthy and well-adjusted children.

Fathers and Daughters

Very little research exists in Latin America and the Caribbean around the role of fathers in the development of daughters specifically. There is, nonetheless, research from North America and elsewhere that focuses exclusively on father-daughter relationships and outcomes that are worth highlighting. Generally, "good" fathering – loosely defined as present, warm, supportive, and not overly controlling – leads to good outcomes for children; girls with fathers who fit this description are in general less likely to fail in school, use drugs, develop eating disorders, have sex at a young age, and suffer from depression and low self-esteem.

A recurring theme in father-daughter literature is the lack of meaningful, intimate communication between fathers and daughters, even in relationships characterized by mutual affection (Way & Gillman, 2000; Roiter-Eash, 1997). In interviews with girls of Latino and African-American descent aged 11-13 in the US, Way & Gillman (2000) found that when asked about their relationship with their father, most girls focused on shared activities and interests, rather than on an emotional intimacy that they more frequently felt with their mothers. Daughters and fathers often feel that there are limits on what is appropriate to discuss; in particular, sexuality-related conversations are often seen as inappropriate between daughters and dads (Collins, et al, 2008; Way & Gillman, 2000).

Many studies, from North America, have demonstrated a positive correlation between supportive, involved fathering and daughters' self-esteem (Scheffler & Naus, 1999; Kubit, 1999). Brook, et al (1988) found that fathers who were more anxious, depressed and/or socially disconnected

themselves were more likely to have daughters who exhibited these same characteristics; they also found a clear correlation between fathers who were less affectionate and/or involved in their daughters' lives, and daughters' likelihood of feeling depressed. Daughters whose fathers are caring and supportive also tend to feel more comfortable being in intimate relationships and exercising their own sexuality in fulfilling ways (Scheffler & Naus, 1999).

Various North American studies have demonstrated that daughters of supportive, warm and not overly controlling fathers tend to delay sex longer than daughters of absent, cold, and/or controlling fathers (Molen, 2000; Genuchi, 1997; O'Byrne, 1997). Similarly, Guijarro, et al (1999) found that pregnant adolescents in Quito, Ecuador more often came from families where there was a lack of both communication and balanced or democratic authority, suggesting the importance of the parental relationship as a key factor. The mere presence of a father in the household may impact girls' sexual behavior: a long-term study of involving 762 girls from the United States and New Zealand found father absence to be an "overriding risk factor" for early sexual activity and teen pregnancy, and father presence a "major protective factor" against these same outcomes (Ellis, et al, 2003).

Finally, studies have consistently shown that girls with eating disorders have troubled relationships with their parents, especially with their fathers. Women with eating disorders tend to portray their fathers negatively compared with other women – most commonly, as uncaring, unsupportive and/or over-protective (Brill, 2001; Jones, et al, 2006, Botta & Dumlao, 2002). Women who develop eating disorders have often experienced a significant, negative change in their relationship with their fathers during the transition from childhood to adolescence (Brill, 2001; Elliot, 2005). Again these studies reflect that father's involvement can have a significant impact on a variety of outcomes for daughters. Nonetheless, it is important to reinforce – yet again – that the father-daughter relationship is mediated by and affected by numerous factors and that these associations should not be considered static or inherent.

Men in Other Roles in the Families

Much of the research on men in families stresses the role and participation of biological fathers. In spite of numerous rejoinders of the need to consider new family arrangements, research from around the LAC region as in much of the world, tends to focus on men in nuclear families. While the positive impact of men as social fathers is clear, it is important that we not ignore the other caregiving and role-modeling that men do in families (however we define families). Some research for example, in other parts of the world, has examined gay or homosexual men and their caregiving for partners in their families, including caregiving for partners living with HIV/AIDS (Rivers & Aggleton, 1998). From qualitative research, we know that men have numerous important interactions with children, including as teachers, coaches, friends and peers. While it is useful to focus on men in households or men's contributions to households, we too often ignore the other men who influence and socialize children in particular. In qualitative research with low-income young men in Brazil, research found that young men found important role models in uncles, fathers of friends, grandfathers and brothers who – regardless of whether a father figure was present in the home – sent powerful signals about gender norms (Barker, 2001; Lyra & Nascimento, 2002). As Barrow (1998), reflecting about fatherhood in the Caribbean, states: "Perhaps in their anxiety to disassociate themselves from the theme of matrilineal African origin, functionalists searched for men as fathers and husbands and ignored their insertions into the kinship system as brothers and uncles."

C. Defining Father Participation, Measuring Participation

The previous conclusion about the distinction between the quality or kind of father involvement and the amount of time that fathers spend with children, or in other household labor, lead us to an important question: How should men's involvement as fathers be measured? There has been only preliminary discussion and methodological work on this question in the LAC region, which provide some possible definitions of men's participation. There is also considerable methodological reflection from other parts of the world that can inform the debate in the LAC region.⁵

A recent review of literature on father involvement in the U.S. suggests several indicative measures of father participation. These are: (1) father presence/access, referring to whether the father is present with the child and/or available to interact with him/her; (2) caregiving, referring to the amount and quality of time that fathers offer in caring for children; (3) material and financial contributions; (4) cooperative parenting indicators, referring to the degree to which the father and mother cooperate to provide care and support for children; (5) achievement and social competence indicators, referring to actively engaging with children to promote social competence and school performance (NCOFF, 2002). The authors of the study emphasize the importance of viewing father involvement in a variety of realms. The authors also suggest that fathers should be considered, and their involvement assessed, both as individuals, and in the context of their relationship with the mother or other caregivers.

In addition, Engle & Breaux (1998) in an international review of anthropological research on fatherhood suggest three common definitions or markers of involved fatherhood in developing regions of the world: (1) father interaction with the child, (2) being available for the child and (3) assuming responsibility for the child, including the provision of financial support. These seem reasonable measures for applying to the LAC region, particularly because they combine both gender equity (that is the need for fathers to assume caregiving and financial responsibility) and the role of fathers in promoting child development and child well-being.

Fathers as Providers, Child Support and Legal Definitions of Father Involvement

As we have previously discussed, the amount and percentage of a father's income dedicated to children or the household is one indicator of father involvement, and has been used in some studies in the LAC region. Some authors have suggested (with relatively little empirical data to support it) that the inability of men to earn adequate incomes has led to an increase in family abandonment in some low-income areas and a decline in the authority of working-class or low-income fathers. One Jamaican survey of 700 men (Brown, et al, 1993) showed that unemployed and low-income fathers had more "outside" children and more visiting relationships than higher income fathers. Overall, however, there is considerable research on this issue in

5 - Various research centers and NGOs in the LAC region have carried out research on fathers and fatherhood, including the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, FLACSO in Chile, the National Autonomous University in Mexico, Instituto PAPAI in Brazil, and Instituto Promundo, also in Brazil. This base of research provides some ideas on the measuring or assessing father involvement, but there is not a common set of measures used in the region.

parts of Western Europe and North America, but little in the LAC region.

Recognizing the importance of men's income to families and to children, much of the policy development in the region around men's roles in families has been related to enacting and enforcing child support legislation, which is now universal in the LAC region. Indeed, with the growing rates of divorce and separation cited previously, and with the enactment of this legislation, there has been an increase in the number and proportion of households seeking or receiving child support payments by men. To give one example, in 1998, 7 percent of all households in Costa Rica were receiving child support from a non-resident father (or had filed suit seeking child support) (Rodriguez, 2001, in Alatorre, 2002).

There is relatively little research on men's views of child support (voluntary or court-ordered), or factors that encourage non-resident fathers to provide financial support. In one study from four countries in Central America, 97.4% of the men surveyed said that it is important that the man see to his child's need even if he no longer has a relationship with the mother (Hegg, et al, 2005). Also, a survey of Costa Rican men showed that 90% of the respondents believed the recently enacted Responsible Paternity Law, which requires men who deny paternity to take DNA tests as proof, to be very fair (Rivera & Ceciliano, 2004).

Of course, simply having child support legislation does not mean that gender inequities in child support have been resolved. In a few countries, it continues to be difficult to force men to pay child support for children born outside a legally recognized union. Nonetheless, the majority of countries in the region now guarantee the same rights to children born outside of formal unions as those born in formal unions (Almeras, 1997). While in the case of Costa Rica the father is responsible for his own DNA test, in some countries (Honduras and El Salvador, for example), the burden of paying for DNA testing to establish paternity and enforce child support falls on the mother or whoever presents the case, which can be costly for low-income women (Alatorre, 2002). Other distortions or inequities also continue. In Honduras, for example, a father can be obligated to pay up to 50 percent of his income in child support but does not have to pay any child support if the mother of the child remarries. In some Caribbean countries, a co-resident male can be taken to court to support children of his partner with whom he lives which are not his biological children.

In the LAC region, one important indicator of father involvement is the legal registration of children or paternity establishment. In some countries in the region, a relatively large proportion of children are not legally recognized by their fathers. In Central America, for example, about a quarter of births or children are not legally recognized by their fathers. In Costa Rica in 1990, 21.1 percent of births did not have a father declared, increasing to 30.4 percent in 2000. In Honduras, about 25 percent of births have no registered father, as do about the same proportion in El Salvador (Alatorre, 2002). National level data from Brazil finds that 30% of births have no recognized paternity (Mori, 2007). Apart from the symbolic importance and legal bond that paternity establishment implies, it also has concrete ramifications in some countries in terms of access to state-funded services and benefits. In Honduras, for example, only those children who are legally recognized by the father can receive pension benefits and request child support.

Yet another legal-oriented indicator of father involvement is the percentage of households headed by a single father, or separated or divorced fathers who opt to have custody of their children or win custody of their children. Throughout the region, this percentage (both of households headed by single fathers, and fathers who win custody battles) is minimal. Even in coun-

tries, where child custody laws have become relatively gender-neutral, such as Norway, children stay with mothers in 88 percent of cases of divorce or separation (Cohen, 2000).

Men's Time Devoted to Caring for Children

As mentioned in the introduction, various studies confirm that worldwide, men (whether in the household, or in other childcare arrangements) provide only a relatively limited proportion of the time spent in caring for their children. In Guatemala, for example, research finds that men spend about a third of the time that women do and in Nicaragua, men are said to provide such care mainly in exceptional cases, such as when the mother is ill (Alatorre, 2002). In addition, various studies in Latin America confirm that fathers are more likely to be involved with recreation and play activities than in caregiving or in the education of children (Rendon, 2000).

Another study in Chile found that low-income men spent less time with children than middle-income men, and that the difference between men and women in terms of hours dedicated to childcare was greater among lowest-income men. Lower-income women dedicated six to seven times more time to childcare than low-income men, while among middle income groups, women spent about four times more time in childcare (SERNAM, 1998). For men and women overall in the sample, women dedicated about 2.7 hours per day to childcare compared to 0.5 hours for men.

Even when men participate in childcare, they typically define this care as "helping", not a task they chose to participate in, or for which they are responsible. And even when they take on these tasks, men often continue to see themselves as being able to opt out of certain aspects of domestic tasks or chores (Vivas, 1993; Hernandez, 1996). Data in the United States suggests that fathers' availability for their children has increased from about one-half of that of mothers in 1980s to nearly two-thirds that of mothers in the 1990s (NCOFF, 2002). Also, longitudinal studies in the United States, Netherlands and Canada have pointed to an increase in involvement by men in parenting over the last decades (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Still, this does not mean that fathers commit as much time to raising children or participate in the same way as mother. A review of studies showed men in the United Kingdom spending approximately three hours per day with children compared to four and a half by women, a great deal more than before but still significantly behind women (Lewis & Lamb, 2007). Lack of data on the issue from Latin America and the Caribbean means that we do not know if this change is happening at equal rates there – although at least some research would suggest that men's participation is increasing, albeit slowly.

Overall, some researchers have suggested that, as in Europe and North America, the amount of time men devote to childcare has increased. One study in Brazil showed that men in two-parent families had spent almost the same amount of time as their partners on several areas of child interaction including playing, taking children to school and helping with homework. In the end they spent 77% of the amount of time as mothers in direct care for children, a greater amount than studies in other countries, though the small sample size of the study and other factors make it hard to generalize to men in Brazil and Latin America (Benetti & Roopnarine, 2006). Another study of 30 couples with at least one child attending a health post in the city of Florianópolis in southern Brazil asked both mothers and fathers specifically about the father's participation. Men and women both agreed that the amount of time that men were available to their children was about 44-46 hours per week, and men also said that they ideally wanted to be available for an average of 61 hours and a half per week (Prado, et al, 2007). Another study in

Central America of 4,790 men showed that almost 39% of men's views and attitudes about fatherhood were categorized as non-traditional or modern, which meant they valued their fatherhood and disagreed that caring for the child was more the mother's responsibility than the fathers and that caring and playing with children undermined their authority (Hegg, et al, 2005). Even if this shows that some men have changed, a large percentage still have not. In the same survey, 58.2% disagreed that caring for the children is more the woman's responsibility than the man's, which means that on the other hand 39.3% agreed (Hegg, et al, 2005). Also, a study from Brazil of women's assessment of their partner's participation in childcare showed that 42% of women described their partner as participatory, and another 42% as not participatory (Crepaldi, et al, 2006). Unfortunately these studies are not longitudinal and do not assess change over time. Obviously, though there may be change, it is not occurring among all men or on all levels within men. Men may be changing some of their behaviors while refusing to let go of other traditional behaviors.

With the exception perhaps of the Caribbean, research on the issue in the LAC region has tended to focus on fathers who live with their children; we know relatively little about non-residential fathers and their patterns of providing childcare. A study in Jamaica, for example, found that contrary to previous studies suggesting limited involvement, non-resident fathers visited their children 3.5 times per week, and often discussed the child's needs with the mothers. It is not known, however, how much of this time is spent in direct care of the children (Barrow, 2001).

In addition to caring for their children, there are relatively few men in the LAC region who are in professions in which they provide care for younger children, such as in day centers or primary schools. Some researchers in the region have called attention to the lack of men's presence in important spaces where children are socialized or spend time (day care centers, health centers and primary schools). Indeed, the vast majority of childcare outside the home in the LAC region (and in most of the world) is provided by women, and the vast majority of teachers at primary level in the region are women. One study from the Caribbean argued that boys rarely see a man in a teaching or caring profession until the secondary level. In some settings in the region, there is a widespread belief that men do not know how to care for children, or that if men have more contact with children, there will be a greater risk for physical and sexual abuse of children (Medrado, 1998). Also, the relatively low status given to the care of young children, and that fact that it is normally women who carry it out, means that salaries in those professions are low.

Men and Domestic Chores in General

As in the case of childcare, various studies in the region have confirmed that men's participation in domestic chores in general is far less than women's, although their participation seems to have increased slightly in the last few years in some settings. For example, in Nicaragua, one study found that women devote 85 percent of the total time required for domestic chores, while men provide the remaining 15 percent (Alatorre, 2002). Other authors suggest that up to 90 percent of domestic work is carried out by women. A sample survey in Chile with 400 men and women in low- and middle-income settings found that women dedicated about twice as much time to domestic tasks per day as men, including a wide variety of tasks from childcare to food preparation. Looking at specific tasks, women on average dedicated five times more time per day to food preparation than men, eight times more time to housecleaning and five times more to childcare (SERNAM, 1998). As we would suspect, lower-income women dedicated more time overall to these tasks than middle-income women. But lower-income men, it is reported in the

Caribbean, share in domestic chores more than middle-income men, if not by choice then by necessity. From other studies we know that in some cases, rather than decreasing the domestic burden, men's presence can increase the amount of domestic work that women carry out. For example, in one case, the presence of a man in the household increased by eight hours per week the average time that women needed to devote to domestic chores (Alméras, 1997). In another study of cohabitating couples with at least one child, the father evaluated that the amount of domestic work he did was sufficient while the mother concluded that the father did less than he should, though when measuring childcare the mothers indicated the men did enough (Prado, et al, 2007). Similarly, national household data in Brazil (IBGE, 2007) finds that:

- ✓ **91% of women in Brazil do domestic chores** – an average of 21.8 hours per week.
- ✓ **51% of men do domestic chores** – an average of 9.1 hours per week.
- ✓ Adding domestic work with work outside of the home, **women work on average 11.5 hours per day while men work on average 10.6 hours.**
- ✓ A married woman with children under 14 years of age **works three times as much as a man** in the same situation (29 hours per week vs. 9.1 hours for the man).

And, as in the case of childcare, various studies confirm that men gain little or no identity or social recognition for carrying out domestic chores. Some men, as one study in Chile pointed out, try to carry out domestic work in clandestine ways so they do not “ruin their reputation” (Olavarría, 2000). Men may see their domestic work as a kind of gift to women, or as something to do on special occasions (if a spouse is ill or tired), but seldom as a question of justice. Some men, research has found, may take on significant portions of domestic labor, including childcare, when they are out of work, and may even report this to be positive. However, as soon as they return to work, they generally cease this activity (Olavarría, 2000). Other studies find a similar ambiguity and reluctance of men to take on domestic chores. For example, in the study mentioned above from Central America, 94.4% of men said that men should “help” their partner with domestic chores (without specifying which chores). But when the same men were asked about washing dishes and changing diapers, 65.6% agreed that this was the woman's duty not the man's (Hegg, et al, 2005).

In the Caribbean, research suggests that some men may contribute in more ways than has commonly been assessed in domestic tasks, particularly when older children are too young to help out with childcare. As in the case of the research from Chile, many men offer ambivalent messages about this work, and generally only do it when women cannot. As Brown & Chevannes (1998) state: “Such participation is rarely celebrated by men and not always by women, some of whom see a very domesticated man as ‘soft’ or as one who watches or criticizes everything the woman does in the home, thus intruding on her domain.”

Fathers in Cooperative Parenting

Up to this point, the data have confirmed fairly consistent patterns of gender inequity, of men contributing less time than women to childcare and other domestic chores and a lower proportion of their income to the family. What evidence do we have of cooperation? What might be the benefits of greater cooperation between men and women? For the most part existing research has measured what women do apart (or women's roles as mothers) and what men do apart (that is men's separate roles as fathers). There is relatively little research in the region on the things that men and women do together, or the ways they cooperate. While it is necessary to point out gender inequities and differences, research tends to obscure coopera-

tion between men and women.

However, a few studies have started to examine these issues. Some programs in North America and Western Europe have also begun to use terms like cooperative parenting, parenting alliance or team parenting, to emphasize cooperation between couples. Though there is in fact little research on how families or couples negotiate roles and how some succeed in cooperating, or obstacles to greater cooperation, we can, however, surmise that cooperation is positive. Some research from the reproductive health field in the LAC region (and other developing countries) has found that communication between couples is associated with more reported satisfaction by the couple (and the men and women individually) about their contraceptive choice, and that in many settings in the LAC region this communication takes place (Drennan, 1998). Data from the U.S. suggests that children benefit when their parents are mutually and positively engaged in their well-being (NCOFF, 2002). Anthropological studies of family structure and cooperation (including both industrialized and non-industrial cultures) find that when women and men cooperate in production or in labor outside the home, or have nearly equal roles in providing for the family (including in hunting or farming), there is more likely to be greater sharing in child caring roles (Engle & Breaux, 1998).

Male-female relationships are often characterized in research as being fraught with mistrust and conflict (and too often with violence); there are few examples of positive and trusting interchange. Data from the Caribbean suggests the variety of styles of interactions among couples. Brown & Chevannes (1998) conclude that while male-female relationships among low-income couples are often characterized by mistrust, others include sharing, equity, mutual respect and healthy doses of humor. Similarly, a qualitative study in Mexico with couples 20-65 years of age found that many urban-based, middle class, younger fathers discussed contraceptive use and family size with their partners and negotiated such issues (while older fathers and rural-based fathers generally did not) (Rojas, 1999). Again, as in the case of the Jamaica data, while these examples of cooperation and communication are not as common as we would hope, it is important to highlight them. In sum, while poverty and rigid gender norms often create conflict, tension and mistrust between couples – and while gender inequities often overshadow examples of greater equity — there are examples of cooperation which generally escape our research. In the forthcoming section on pathways to change later in this document, we will discuss possible factors that may lead to positive change.

Children's Assessments of Their Fathers' Involvement

In addition to other measures or definitions of father involvement, it is also important to consider the voices and opinions of children themselves. Most of the existing research on father involvement in the LAC region has focused on fathers of younger children, whose ability to express their opinions about their fathers is likely to be limited. Nonetheless, there are a few studies in the region which offer us some insights on what children (referring both to children and adolescents) think about their fathers and their participation in their lives. In Jamaica, Ramkissoon (2001) found that the majority of children stated they had generally good relationships with their fathers. For many children, their fathers were psychologically present in their lives, whether or not they lived with them. Other studies, however, have found negative feelings or negative assessments of their fathers on the part of children and youth. A representative sample of adolescents in public schools in Mexico City found that of those youth who had lived with their father (a total of 14 percent of youth had not lived with their father), 24 percent reported a problematic relationship. Of those, 25 percent said that communication with their

fathers was poor or limited, and 21 percent of girls and 35 percent of boys who reported a problematic relationship said they were hit by their fathers. Nearly 70 percent of all youth interviewed said they did not trust or feel trust in their fathers (Sanchez & Hernandez, 1992). Negative impressions of fathers have been found in various qualitative studies of young men in Brazil, as well (Barker & Loewenstein, 1997; Barker, 2001).

D. Factors Influencing Father Participation

In this section, we will review research on factors that influence whether men participate as fathers and caregivers. As we will see, men's participation as fathers is associated with numerous factors, chief among them, income, educational attainment, relationship with the mother, the father's own experience of being parented or fathered, age of the child, the father's age or developmental stage, the father's attitudes or beliefs about gender norms and policy issues. In many settings around the world, father participation in caring for children is most consistent among married men co-residing with the mother and the children, and least constant among younger, unwed fathers, although as we have seen in data from the Caribbean, this is not universal (Davis & Perkins, 1995).⁶

Social Expectations of Fathers

Qualitative research suggests that men's involvement in caregiving of children (and others) is limited because societies – mothers, family members, social institutions, policymakers and others — do not expect this of them. Gender norms in much of the world ascribe caregiving largely to women. Indeed, fathers' involvement as caregivers of children is still a relatively new phenomenon in much of Latin America and the Caribbean (and many other parts of the world for that matter). A review of ethnographic reports from 156 cultures concluded that in only 20 percent of cultures did men have close relationships with infants and only five percent with young children. In the vast majority of cultures, fathers are seen as providing discipline and passing on skills to children, but not as caregivers. Among the cultures studied, the authors note three "universal" contributions of men to children, which are: (1) building a caring relationship; (2) providing economic support; and (3) decreasing the chance of fathering outside the partnership with the child's mother (Engle & Breaux, 1998).

Qualitative and quantitative research with 700 Jamaican men confirmed that father's involvement in caregiving is quite limited. The researchers found low social expectations that fathers should have a role in the lives of their child beyond financial provision (Brown & Chevannes, 1998). In the Jamaica study, if the father resided with the family, and if he was financial provider, he was expected to provide discipline and moral guidance, but he was rarely expected to provide care for the child.

6- Quantitative research in Australia has found that involved fatherhood is associated with having been involved at the birth (and thus setting a pattern for father involvement), having more information about child development, having more progressive views about masculinity and having a job that is less demanding and having a spouse who supports father involvement (Russell, 1983, cited in Russell & Radojevic, 1992). This kind of quantitative research has for the most part not been carried out in the LAC region.

There are findings from Latin America that indicate a potential shift in expectations for many men in the region towards greater involvement in the raising of children. In some cases, shifts are reported in men's attitudes around discipline as men turn away from what may be perceived as the more authoritarian style of parenting of their fathers to a more democratic style of parenting. In a survey of Central American men, 98.2% of men agreed that a man should hold their children and provide emotional support, 94.4% believed men should help their partners with domestic chores and 60.2% disagreed with the statement that men should not be too caring or understanding as it may undermine their authority (Hegg, et al, 2005). Nonetheless, the same survey found evidence of traditional views regarding financial support with 78.4% of men agreeing that men should mainly give money for the care and upbringing of the child (Hegg, et al, 2005). In sum, in much of the LAC region, social norms have until fairly recently not encouraged men to participate extensively in their children's lives beyond the somewhat limited roles as financial providers, disciplinarians and sources of recreation, though there is some limited evidence that this scenario is changing and that men are being expected to become more involved in their children's' care.

Income, Educational Attainment and Employment

As we have previously hinted, income levels, employment status and educational attainment are associated to varying degrees with men's participation as fathers, as well as their participation in other domestic activities. Research from Chile, Jamaica and the U.S. finds that lower-income and unemployed fathers are less likely to support their children than fathers with more income and stable employment (Bruce, et al, 1995; Brown, et al, 1993). Educational attainment also seems to be associated. A recent study with men in major urban centers in Mexico found that higher educational attainment and being born in urban areas, as well as having positive attitudes toward men's participation in domestic chores, were associated with men's participation in domestic tasks. In this study, however, income level and employment status were not found to be associated with men's participation in domestic chores (Garcia & Oliveira, 2004). Another study in Mexico found that 79 percent of men with university education believed that domestic chores should be jointly shared between men and women compared to only 22 percent of men with no or low education (Salles & Tuirán, 1996).

Additional studies in Mexico have found that lower-income men were less likely to be affectionate toward their children and more likely to use physical discipline than were middle-income men (Fox & Sólis-Cámara, 1997). Another study in Mexico found that middle class men, with higher educational attainment and whose wives work, are more likely to participate in childcare tasks (Hernandez, 1996). Other authors, however, have found that low-income men are also taking on new tasks in the household including childcare (Gutmann, 1996).

In addition to these associations, men's employment, household income and women's employment interact to influence men's participation in childcare and other domestic tasks. Various studies have found that men react to temporary and long-term changes within their households. For example, research in the U.S. with two-parent households found that the father's participation in caregiving was related to the number of hours the mother works outside the home (and the number of children). When women worked and the family has more than one child, fathers are more likely to provide care for children (NCOFF, 2002; Davis & Perkins, 1995). As we will see in the following section on pathways to change, some men in the LAC region and elsewhere are apparently responding to new demands and providing more childcare. This should

not be construed as a spontaneous desire of men to be more gender-equitable, but it does offer some insights on how to promote change.

Finally, the quality of a father's employment, not merely the fact of being employed, is also important. A recent literature review from the UK showed negative outcomes in terms of time available for the child and knowledge of the child's day-time activities for fathers who worked "un-social" hours, that is working during normally social hours (night and/or weekends) (Burgess, 2007). Longitudinal data in the U.S. found that a father's satisfaction with his work was a factor in the kind of interaction he had with his children. Fathers, who worked in mundane tasks or in work sites where they had little autonomy, or work long hours, were more irritable and more likely to be authoritarian and conflictive in their relationships with their children (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). This association between quality of employment or work and the nature of the workplace, particularly the unstable nature of employment and men's stagnating participation in the labor market in the LAC region, is an area that requires additional attention.

Relationship with the Mother

Research consistently confirms that the father's relationship with the mother, whether separated or divorced from her, and resident or non-resident, is highly associated with the father's relationship with his child. In fact there are frequent references in the literature to mothers as gatekeepers, highlighting the role of the mother's relationship with the father as a mediator of father involvement (Lewis & Lamb, 2007). Indeed in most of the LAC region, the father-child bond and ongoing relationship is nearly always mediated or filtered through the father's relationship with the mother. As one example, various studies confirm low payment of child support and limited involvement by fathers after separation from the child's mother. In Argentina, 1993 data found that only 36 percent of divorced fathers pay child support (in Bruce, et al, 1995). In Chile, a 1992 study found that 42 percent of fathers of children born to adolescent mothers (the majority of whom were not residing with the mothers) were providing no child support six years after their child's birth (Buvinic, et al, 1992, in Bruce, et al, 1995). A recent study in El Salvador involving a sample of women seeking child support from fathers found that before separation 39 percent of mothers said the father provided some kind of care for the child and 24.5 percent provided regular financial support, compared to less than six percent after the separation who provided some childcare and 0.9 percent who provided regular financial support (Gonzalez, 2000, in Alatorre, 2002). Similarly, as previously mentioned, in Jamaica, qualitative and quantitative data confirm that fathers are more likely to provide financial support and interact with children they are living with than those from previous relationships (Brown & Chevannes, 1998).

Other studies have found, however, that even if divorce or separation in most cases brings decreased participation by fathers, there may be other ways that fathers remain involved. A study in Argentina in low-income areas found that even after divorce, mothers continued to turn to biological fathers for decision-making related to the child, particularly when discipline was necessary (Keijzer, 1998, in Schumuckler, 1995). Similar trends have been reported in Jamaica. In a study of 4,634 adolescents in Brazil, among adolescent fathers that do not enter into a cohabiting union with the mother, 22% of the fathers remain involved in caring for the child and 24% are the main financial providers for their child (Dias & Aquino, 2006). Research with migrant fathers in Mexico (fathers who migrate to the U.S. while their families remain in Mexico) finds similar patterns. In such cases, while fathers may be physically distant from their families and children, they are "semi-present" as fathers, as Keijzer (1998) says. They have contact with their children for only brief periods of time, but retain ties with the child's mother and partici-

pate indirectly in child-rearing and discipline. These studies suggest that merely measuring financial support for children, as well as time spent with children, are insufficient to understand the involvement of non-resident fathers in their children's lives.

Nonetheless, it is clear that separation and divorce frequently change the father's involvement with his children. Also, studies have shown that the relationship between the mother and non-resident father is a strong predictor of the relationship between the child and the non-resident father (Dunn, et al, 2004). Given this reality in the LAC region, this raises an important policy and program question. With increasing rates of separation and divorce, how can non-resident fathers be encouraged to support their children in multiple ways (and how can mothers be encouraged to cooperate with this)? This issue is made even more complicated by the tension that often surrounds divorce and separation, not to mention the relatively high rates of physical violence on the part of men against women that may have preceded the divorce or separation. The circumstances that lead to separation have an impact on the role fathers will play.

Age of the Children

Various studies suggest that the age of the child is also an important factor associated with father involvement, and that fathers may be more involved and more likely to be physically present in the first years of a child's life. A study by Atkin & Alatorre (1991) found that among adolescent parents in Mexico, 90 percent of fathers were living with the mother at the time of the birth of the child, but only 75 percent of fathers were with the child four years later. In a Jamaican cohort study, 50% of fathers did not live with their children by age six (Brown, et al, 1993). Research from Chile suggests that among resident fathers, the vast majority married, fathers are more likely to provide care for their children when their children are younger (Olavarría, 2000). In contrast, a study in Mexico found that fathers were more likely to participate actively in the care of older children (six to 12 years of age) (Garcia & Oliveira, 2004). A multi-country study, that included Mexico, found that Mexican fathers were more likely to provide care for daughters when they were younger (under age four), while they were more likely to provide care for boys when they were older (Mackey & Day, 1979). While the patterns are mixed, what is clear is that father involvement may vary according to the age and sex of a child. In some cases father participation may increase with the age of the child; in other cases, the opposite may be true.

Age and Developmental Stage of the Father

The age of the father and his developmental stage when his children are born are also important factors in understanding father participation. For example, fatherhood during adolescence has specific challenges that have been discussed widely in the literature in the LAC region, particularly in Chile, Mexico and Brazil (see Olavarría, 2002b; Atkin & Alatorre, 1991; and Lyra, 1998). Research in adolescent parenting and fatherhood has grown extensively in Latin America and the Caribbean, outpacing research in other areas of fatherhood, including outcomes of father involvement, research with older fathers and factors associated with father participation.

This research suggests that in the LAC region, as in some other parts of the world, adolescent fathers, like adolescent mothers, face the complexity of providing for themselves and their child, pressures from their partner, pressures from their own parents and pressures from the parents of the mother of the child (Lyra, 1997; Lyra, 2002; Barker, 2000). Research suggests that

many young males may initially deny responsibility and paternity when faced with a possible pregnancy, in large part because of the financial burden associated with caring for a child (Olavarría, 2002b). Similarly, research in Mexico argues that an adolescent father's employment and financial situation were the important factors in determining how adolescent fathers reacted to pregnancy and fatherhood (Atkin & Alatorre, 1991).

Adolescent fathers frequently face numerous deep-rooted stereotypes on the parts of their parents, the parents of the child's mother, the mother of the child and service providers (Lyra, 1997). There are widespread beliefs that an adolescent father who does not marry the mother is being irresponsible, when in fact his motivations are often complex. In some cases, young fathers may want to be involved with their children but are not allowed to by the child's mother, or they feel constrained because they are unemployed and do not feel they have right to interact with the child if they are not financially providing for the child. Indeed, public perceptions in much of the LAC region hold that young fathers are self-centered, uncaring and only want sex, when in fact literature from Brazil, the U.S. and other countries exists to counter this image (Lyra, 1998). At the same time, for some young fathers, as young mothers, parenthood can be a time to organize their lives, and is sometimes a pathway to becoming a productive adult (Barker, 2001). Nonetheless, such nuances have for the most part not been studied and are often neglected in discussions about adolescent fathers (Lyra, 1997). Instituto PAPAI, an NGO based in Recife, Brazil, is the first kind of program providing services to adolescent fathers in Latin America, and has been central in raising some of these issues with policymakers in Brazil.

As previously noted, various studies in Latin America and Caribbean confirm that many young fathers (especially when unmarried) may be more involved with their children initially, but that such involvement often declines (or changes) over time, particularly if the relationship with the mother ends. A study in Barbados found that only 23 percent of children of unions between adolescent parents resided with their fathers by age four. In Chile 40 percent of children born to adolescent mothers are abandoned and unacknowledged by their fathers by age six (Bruce, et al, 1995). Although we must be careful not to generalize, some qualitative research in Chile (and other countries) has shown that adolescent pregnancy is not always feared and unwanted, but sometimes planned and anticipated by both the father and mother, again suggesting that the differences between adolescent fathers and adult fathers may not be as great as often assumed (Aguayo & Sadler, 2006). In fact, another qualitative study of adult and adolescent fathers found that there were few significant differences between both groups in their readiness and their expectations of fatherhood (Levandowski & Piccinini, 2006). As in the case of older fathers, participation by young, unmarried fathers in most of the LAC region is often a factor of the relationship with the mother, whether the father has a new partner and children with this new partner, whether he is legally registered as the child's father, and independent of his income or employment status. Nonetheless, few of these studies have been longitudinal. Qualitative accounts suggest that some fathers who were adolescents when their children were born are able to reconnect with them later or may find ways to be involved with them when the children are older.

Overall, for fathers of all ages, there is relatively little research in the LAC region on the meaning and challenges of the role transition that fatherhood generally implies for men. Brown & Chevannes' (1998) ethnographic research on fathers in the Caribbean finds that many low income men in the region start fatherhood within casual relationships in their adolescence, often as a way of affirming manhood. Many of these fathers support the young mother and child during the child's first year and beyond, but most of these first relationships do not last. Some early relationships are discouraged by the girl's family who hope for better marital prospects

later on, or simply reject the young man for his inability to provide for the mother and child. As the parents mature, they may move into common-law relationships (often with another partner), and for a smaller number, into marriage. Children from these early relationships may join the new family or remain outside of it. Whether fathers maintain regular contact with these “outside” children (children from previous relationships) depends on many factors, but particularly the relationship between the parents.

Much of the literature in the LAC region and elsewhere describes fatherhood as a role transition; in various studies in the region, fatherhood is seen as a requisite for defining oneself as a man (Olavarría, 2002b; Brown & Chevannes, 1998). For most fathers (and mothers), the birth of a child is described as both stressful and fulfilling, bringing with it increased tension in relationships. Several researchers in the LAC region and from North America suggest that fathers often feel ill-prepared for this transition, and receive little preparation for it. Whereas, women may have experience in caring for younger children as part of their socialization, boys may receive little of this (Medrado & Lyra, 2002).

The nature of the transition to fatherhood is also influenced by whether the child or pregnancy was planned. For many low income men and women in the region, reproduction and parenthood are not planned (which does not necessarily mean unwanted), as confirmed in qualitative research with low-income populations in Mexico and Brazil (Rojas, 1999; Promundo & NOOS, 2003; Jimenez, 2001). Some men react in positive ways to this unplanned act. For others, the role transition, particularly if it was unplanned, is more complicated and may be blamed on the woman, as it is seen as bringing with it a financial burden that many low-income men may see as onerous. For some middle class parents, on the other hand, pregnancy and childbirth are more likely to be discussed and their timing planned, as several studies have confirmed.

Fathering Children with Special Needs

Whether children are born healthy or have special needs is also a factor that influences father involvement. Research from the United States is somewhat conflicting, with some studies suggesting that fathers of children with special needs participate more, and other studies saying the opposite (NCOFF, 2002). Anecdotal evidence from the LAC region suggests that some fathers are able to be flexible and react to these special needs or circumstances in positive ways, while many others may be unable or unwilling to cope with extra demands. A study in Mexico with fathers of handicapped children found that men tended to see their participation in caring for their special needs children as support for the mother, rather than a moral duty of their own. A small number of the fathers showed more egalitarian attitudes in childcare roles; nonetheless, many of the men said they had trouble talking about or acknowledging their child’s special needs (Ortega, 2002).

Views about Gender Norms

It may seem obvious to state that men’s views about gender norms and sexuality are related to how they view and participate as fathers, but it is important to affirm the connection.

Some research from the United States has shown that men’s views about masculinity are unrelated to their involvement as fathers, though other studies around gender traits (how many masculine or feminine traits a man has) indicate that men who more involved are more likely to ascribe to traits traditionally defined as feminine; in other words they have a non-traditional view of gender norms (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Extensive research in the LAC region has

affirmed that young men frequently disassociate sexuality from reproduction, and often see their own sexual desire as spontaneous and uncontrollable (Barker, 2000). Qualitative research with young men ages 16-30 in the U.S. suggests limited awareness of themselves as procreative. In fact, in their desire for sex, some young men even seem to repress notions or concepts of themselves as procreative (Marsiglio, et al, 1999). For many young men, having sex – whatever the consequences – is part of how they define making the role transition to manhood (Yon, et al, 1998; Barker & Loewenstein, 1997). In much of the LAC region, the socially reinforced need of young men to affirm (hetero)sexual prowess (which often includes the collusion of parents or other family members) is a factor leading to early and frequently unprotected sexual activity by young men (Brown & Chevannes, 1998).

How men and women treat extramarital relationships, which may result in pregnancy, is also related to whether men deny or accept their paternity in such cases. Research suggests that in many countries in the region, men have more extramarital affairs than women, and thus are more likely to have a child with another partner other than their wife. Research in Mexico confirms that men who have children as a result of these outside relationships are likely not to provide any support to the mother or the child, particularly given the fact that such relationships are seen as being for sexual pleasure or adventure and not for procreation (Alatorre & Atkin, 1998).

Other Issues Affecting Father Involvement

Apart from the major factors we have already listed, there are others that deserve mention. As we have previously mentioned, the relationship that men had with their own fathers is also a factor in how they participate as fathers. Research in from Western Europe and the U.S. suggests that most persons base their parenting practices on how they were parented, which can include their own parents but also the extended family. Clearly, men can be involved as fathers in ways different than their own fathers and families of origin, but how they were fathered or parented is a factor. Ethnographic research with low-income young men in Brazil suggests that some of these young men, most of whom had been abandoned by their fathers or had limited contact with them, were able to avoid these patterns and be more involved in their children's lives (Barker, 2001). Most of the young men were able to purposefully achieve involved fatherhood by reflecting about the painful experience of not having their own fathers present, and finding support from their partners and families in assuming fatherhood.

Policies related to child support, divorce and children's rights may also influence father involvement. Clearly, child support laws and laws recognizing the rights of children born outside formal unions have had an impact on men and their participation as fathers, even if systematic research on the issue is scarce. Policies and practices in the public health system, for example, influence whether fathers are allowed or encouraged to be present at the birth of their children or whether fathers are encouraged to participate in children's health needs, but again these issues have seldom been studied (Population Council, 2001; Lyra, 2002).

In some parts of the region, many fathers are imprisoned. Limited data from youth in juvenile detention facilities in Brazil suggest that a large number of the young men are fathers. In the U.S., 1.7 million persons are imprisoned, of whom an estimated 500,000 are fathers (NCOFF, 2002). Clearly such circumstances limit the abilities of fathers to participate in the lives of their children; these special needs have mostly been ignored both from research and program development in the region (and around the world). Even so, there are a few projects that target incarcerated fathers in the United States and in the Caribbean.

E. Men's Participation in Reproductive Health and Maternal and Child Health

While the focus of this paper is on men's participation as fathers, various authors in the region affirm the connection between men's attitudes related to sexuality and reproductive health and their attitudes as fathers.⁷ Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that when men do not bear the cost of children, they may be more casual about their own reproduction and sexual activity. Research suggests increasing participation of men in sexual and reproductive health in the region, including higher rates of male condom use, more reported couple communication about contraceptive use, higher awareness and knowledge about sexual and reproductive health issues among men in the region and more favorable attitudes toward family planning and contraceptive use on the part of men (Drennan, 1998). Fertility rates have declined throughout the region, which means that families have more time and resources, on aggregate, to devote to a smaller number of children. While so far largely unproven and unstudied, this may bode well for men's participation as fathers and create positive pressure on men to be more involved in the lives of children in these smaller families.

Research in the U.S. and Western Europe has confirmed that father participation in childbirth has become routine and socially expected of fathers. One study affirmed that 27 percent of fathers in the U.S. were present in childbirth in the 1970s, compared to 85 percent in the 1990s (Parke, 1996, in NCOFF, 2002). There are tangible benefits to men participating in maternal and child health. For example, a literature review on fatherhood in the UK and North America, included several studies that demonstrated that participation of the father can lead to less distress for the woman during labor, shorter delivery and less pain reported during labor (Burgess, 2007).

If, however, men in the LAC region are becoming more involved in sexual and reproductive health issues, their involvement in maternal health and in childbirth still seems rather limited. For example, a study in Honduras found that in 95 percent of prenatal visits, women went alone or unaccompanied by a male partner (Alatorre, 2001). The implication of findings like this is that, as we might expect given prevailing gender norms in the region, pregnancy is still largely seen as a woman's issue. A qualitative study of low-income men in Brazil found that even though the Brazilian Ministry of Health and World Health Organization have affirmed the right of a woman to have the person of her choice accompany her in childbirth, women who give birth in public hospitals (low-income women) face tremendous barriers to having their partners present at birth. The main obstacle was hospital staff themselves, who said that men's presence was disruptive, that men complained too much and that the presence of men made other women uncomfortable because of the lack of privacy. There was also an element of class prejudice involved in the attitudes of public hospital staff, as one staff person was quoted as saying "We work with a social class that has very different values. The men sometimes don't know the

7- There is a tremendous body of research (qualitative and quantitative), policy analysis and program evaluations (as well as program descriptions) regarding men and sexual and reproductive health in the LAC region, and some research on men's participation in maternal health. We have not tried to summarize all of this research in this section. Instead, we provide just a few examples of research that highlights the connection between such issues and men's participation as fathers.rs.

woman's name. They have a very confused life" (Carvalho, 2003). In a study of 438 adolescent women in Brazil, only 35% of their partners accompanied them to a pre-natal visit (Costa, et al, 2005). A study (using a non-representative sample) of middle class fathers in Mexico found that 19 of 55 fathers interviewed were present for their child's birth; six out of 55 fathers said they wanted to be present at their child's birth, but were denied this opportunity, suggesting that middle class men in some settings also face barriers should they want to accompany their partners during childbirth (Nava, 1995). For the most part, policies and public health programs in the region have not made a concerted effort to engage men either in prenatal care, nor in childbirth, which is yet another barrier to men's later involvement with their children.

F. Men's Well-Being and Men's Subjective Experiences of Fatherhood

Up to now, we have discussed benefits of father involvement related to child well-being and development, and to women's well-being (in the name of gender equity). Only recently have researchers begun studying men's subjective experiences of fatherhood, and men's own desires regarding fatherhood and the possible well-being that men achieve through involved fatherhood. Indeed, in much of the literature on fatherhood worldwide, there has been an instrumental view of how men's involvement as fathers is positive for women and children. But there is some evidence, largely based on the subjective experiences of men, that involved fatherhood is good for men themselves. There are also recent studies coming out of Scandinavian countries regarding the correlation between fatherhood and even the utilization of paternal leave and mortality and morbidity among fathers. In one study of parental leave and mortality in Sweden, fathers who took paternity leave had a 16% reduced mortality risk (Månsdotter, 2007). In the longitudinal study, again from Sweden, single non-custodial fathers were 4 times more at risk for all causes of mortality than cohabitating fathers and 19 times more at risk of addiction (Weitoft, 2003). This fits in with other studies that point to the effect of fatherhood as reported by men on their lives. Researchers from throughout the LAC region (and some other parts of the world) are increasingly listening to the voices of men themselves and what they believe and experience and to their own reports of their involvement as fathers. In listening to men's voices, this research has confirmed that many men who are involved fathers report that fatherhood and their relationships with their children give their lives meaning, give them a sense of purpose, provide a socially recognized identity and are among the most meaningful social roles and relationships they experience in their lives (Lyra, 2002).

There are other benefits as well. In studies with young men in low-income settings in the U.S. and Brazil, various qualitative studies find that some young men describe having a child, and being meaningfully engaged with their children, as having been a motive for leaving gangs or ceasing involvement in various forms of delinquency. For low-income young men interviewed in the U.S., having a child can sometimes represent a life-organizing or positive developmental experience, in similar ways to young mothers (Achtaz & MacAllum, 1994; Barker, 1998).

Various studies worldwide have described the positive aspects of fatherhood in men's lives, particularly the emotional investment that involved fatherhood brings, and the sense of contributing to and caring for future generations, a concept that Erikson (1982) referred to as "generativity". To offer some examples, a qualitative study with men in Mexico found that for many men, fatherhood was a "marvelous experience" that allowed them to mature, to experience a sense of transcendence and provided a powerful emotional bond that brought both

responsibility and pleasure (Guzman, 2001). In this same study, some men said that fatherhood led them to end or reduce their outside or extramarital relationships or accept and invest in relationships (with their partners) that they might consider less than ideal — all attributes that suggest maturity (Ibid).

Of course, not all men, upon having children, experience or seek this sense of connection or maturity. For example, a qualitative study with 55 middle class men in Mexico found that 16 of the 55 said that fatherhood had given their lives more meaning, while 17 said that having children had not changed their lives, with the rest being undecided (Nava, 1995). Fatherhood is not a panacea for men, nor does it automatically bring with it the sense of connection or meaning described in some studies, nor is something like “generativity” experienced universally by men when they become fathers (just as a close bond or attachment between a mother and child is not universal nor biologically driven). Nonetheless, these few examples suggest the potential untapped meaning of fatherhood in the lives of men, and the mental health benefits that men receive. These issues need to be better understood and researched in the LAC region, precisely because men’s self-interest in being connected and engaged fathers may be a powerful “hook” to engage more men in their roles as fathers and promote greater gender equity.

Listening to men’s voices has also confirmed the confusion that some men are experiencing in the face of changing gender norms and roles, particularly the increasing participation of women in work outside the home and new expectations this has implied for men’s roles in the home. In many settings, new, more gender-equitable messages about men’s roles co-exist with traditional views; various studies find that men show a disjointed or inconsistent discourse, saying they want to be more involved with their children, for example, but continuing to be reluctant to take on household tasks, including childcare (Almeras, 1997). Olavarría (2000) sums up this role confusion cogently, in writing about low-income men in Chile:

“The fusion between patriarchal fatherhood, as provider, authority figure and protector, and a modern version of fatherhood — democratic, intimate, affective and close — is bringing new demands for men/fathers in an emerging model of fatherhood that is impossible to live up to. To be a good father who is able to fulfill this range of demands or mandates is impossible. There are too many conflicting demands here for a mere mortal, which after all, is what men are.”

G. Pathways to More Involved Fatherhood and More Gender-Equitable Parenting: Learning from Men Who Are Changing

Whether we start from a perspective of gender equity, child well-being, or men’s self-interest in involved fatherhood, more engaged fatherhood and more participation by men in household tasks is likely to be positive. Some men in diverse settings in the LAC region have taken on these roles. Studies in Mexico find that middle class and younger men have changed how they view gender norms, including domestic tasks (Jimenez, 2001). Other men said they have changed how they interact with their children. In one study in Mexico, 45 percent of men interviewed considered themselves to be less authoritarian and closer to their children than their fathers were with them (Nava, 1995). In North America and parts of Western Europe, new social ideals of fatherhood have emerged, spurred by women’s increasing participation in the labor force and the women’s rights movement and perhaps secondarily by some men questioning their

relatively limited roles in the lives of their families. In short, change has occurred at both the societal and individual levels in terms of men's involvement as fathers in a number of parts of the world. What has made or makes change possible at both these levels, and how might positive change be promoted? In this section, we will briefly review some of the research in the LAC region looking at factors associated with changing attitudes and behavior of men.

In seeking to understand pathways or processes to change among men, we should not expect revolutionary or drastic change. Changes in gender norms and individual attitudes are often gradual, with old and new paradigms existing simultaneously. As previously mentioned, various studies in the region confirm a continuing gap between men's collective discourses about gender roles and their household roles, and their actual behavior (see Almeras, 1997; Kornblit, et al, 1998; Medrado, 1998). Leñero (1994), writing about gender change in Mexico, suggests that there is now a form of "neomachismo" or "machismo lite" that exists; men negotiate more with partners and accept some degree of equality with women while still maintaining some traditional references of machismo (for example, believing that men have the right to outside sexual partners while women do not). As in other parts of the worlds, both men and women in this study report changes in gender roles, even while they maintain a traditional gender discourse (Keijzer, 1998).

These and other studies suggest that many men are aware of and respond to changing social norms about fatherhood, but that the internalization of these new norms is not a straightforward process. Nor should we view all aspects of traditional versions of masculinity as negative. For example, caring for one's family, and working to support and protect them are all positive aspects of long-standing versions of what it means to be a man.

In reviewing the literature, various common factors seem to produce or lead to changes in men's changes in attitudes and behaviors. Almeras (1997) in an in-depth qualitative study of Chilean couples and their negotiation of domestic activities found that changes in men's attitudes and behavior were often short-term, or situational (for example, living temporarily in another country where alternative gender norms existed). In some cases, family factors were important. A few men who showed more gender-equitable patterns reported having fathers or mothers who carried out non-traditional gender roles or tasks. For some men, knowledge mattered; having some early experience in carrying for children or carrying out other domestic tasks was useful. Olavarría (2000), also writing about men in Chile, found changes in men's attitudes related to: (1) changes in the couple or intimate relationships; (2) generational factors, with younger men showing more flexible attitudes; and (3) situational factors, such as an illness on the part of the partner, a woman entering the workforce for the first time, temporarily being out of work, or having a first child. Life histories with more gender-equitable young men in a low-income setting in Brazil found similar factors associated with these attitudes: (1) being part of an alternative male peer group that supported more gender-equitable attitudes; (2) having personally reflected or experienced pain or negative consequences as a result of traditional aspects of manhood (for example a father who uses violence against the mother, or a father who abandoned the family); and (3) having a family member or meaningful male role models (or female role models) who showed alternative gender roles (Barker, 2001). Generally, for change to be lasting, more than one factor had to be present.

Studies on men who have sought vasectomies in parts of Latin America offer additional insights. Given the low rate of men in the region who seek vasectomies, these men can also be considered different and more gender-equitable than is the norm. A review of data on men who sought vasectomies in Colombia, Brazil and Mexico found that these men were generally

between the ages of 32-35 and had higher levels of educational attainment than the average in the country. When asked why they decided to get a vasectomy, the men cited their recognition of male responsibility for family planning, health problems of their spouses and the “love that he feels for her (his wife)” (Vernon, 1995). As has been found in condom use in the U.S., women play an important role in the decision-making process and are generally the most influential persons in helping men decide to seek a vasectomy. The woman’s support was found to be extremely important in validating the male’s decision to involve himself in family planning or contraceptive use in general (Vernon, 1995). This highlights the importance of partners, and women in general, in encouraging and hindering changing attitudes and behavior by men. In sum, these studies suggest that a combination of individual characteristics, situational factors, broader contextual factors (particularly changes in social norms), and relationships and role models, were all factors associated with change.

Various authors in writing about men have suggested taking a life-cycle approach to promoting change, recognizing that there are various moments in men’s lives when they may be more open to changing their attitudes and behaviors, such as the birth of a child or the end or beginning of an intimate relationship. Keijzer (1998) points out that some men who were emotionally distant from their own children are often affectionate in the lives of their grandchildren. This suggests that we should avoid simplistic notions that change among men is only possible when they are young, and recognize that change is possible across the life-cycle.

While the research on factors that promote change is still rather limited in the region, it is important to affirm that men can and have changed. Again, the field of reproductive and sexual health offers important affirmations of this. Various studies in the LAC region and elsewhere have affirmed that men have changed their behaviors and are becoming more involved in positive ways in sexual and reproductive health (Drennan, 1998). To highlight one important example, Hawkes (2001) carried out a meta-analysis of evaluation studies of HIV/STI interventions among heterosexual men in developing countries and confirmed that eight of 14 relevant studies showed a reduction in the number of young men’s sexual partners after interventions, and two out of three relevant studies showed a reduction in the incidence of unprotected sexual intercourse. Five out of nine relevant studies showed changes in intentions to use condoms when engaging in risky sexual behavior, and two out of six relevant studies showed improvements in attitudes related to condom use and risky sexual behavior.

A review of evaluated health programs that involved men found that interventions that included a questioning of traditional gender inequalities and a questioning of non-equitable views about manhood were more successful in leading to attitude and behavior change than programs that simply addressed the health issue without addressing gender norms and attitudes. In other words, the data from these 58 programs suggests that men do change behavior and attitudes (and such changes are often confirmed by female partners) when program interventions are able to suggest alternatives and pathways to more gender-equitable and caring relationship, whether related to maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment or fatherhood (Barker, et al, 2007).

The resounding affirmation from research and work with men in the fields of HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health is that individual attitude and behavior change on the part of men is difficult to achieve unless changes in social norms are also achieved. Other researchers have suggested that individual men may face barriers to change or be resistant to change if those around them do not also change their expectations of men and manhood. In some settings, as Keijzer (1998) reminds us, men who participate in domestic tasks may be seen as domi-

nated by their spouses, which may have a negative connotation among their peers. In some cases, for men to participate more in domestic chores may imply loss of social status rather than enhanced social status. In settings such as these, individual change will be difficult if social norms do not change. Indeed, few men change spontaneously, or alone; changes in attitudes and behaviors usually also require changes in the social meaning given to their actions. The lessons from historical changes in some parts of Western Europe, for example, confirm that men become involved as fathers when doing so is seen as positive by large parts of society, and when being an involved father is given a social status. Many men clearly also respond to short-term and immediate changes in their family structure or situation (an illness, the special need of a partner or a child), but lasting change seems to require pressure or impetus from within and without. Unfortunately, we still have relatively little research on pathways to change among men in the region, but this may be a promising area for additional research.

III. POLICY AND PROGRAM INTERVENTIONS: WHAT DO WE KNOW? WHAT HAS BEEN TRIED?

A. Program Interventions in the Region: A Framework and Description

With growing attention to men's roles as fathers and men and masculinities in general in the region, there has been a small but growing program and policy response to the issue. Many of these programs in the LAC region started in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which means that program development is still quite young. Furthermore, these programs continue to reach a small number of men, with relatively limited public sector involvement, and with little evaluation data. In fact, in a recent evidence review on "Engaging Men and Boys in Changing Gender-Base Inequity in Health" (Barker, et al, 2007), of the 16 programs that targeted fathers and that had received published evaluation not one was from Latin America or the Caribbean. Nonetheless, this does not prove that such programs are ineffective, rather that they have seldom if ever had sufficient resources to carry out evaluation. The programs included here are by no means exhaustive, but they are illustrative of the kinds of programs that have emerged in the region.

Health-Center or Hospital-Based Efforts to Engage Men as Fathers

Many of the sexual and reproductive health programs in the region that have sought to engage men have also included discussions about men's roles as fathers. Many affiliates of the International Planned Parenthood Federation and other NGOs have longstanding initiatives to engage men in accompanying their partners for sexual and reproductive health needs, including contraceptive use, as well as for men's own sexual health needs. Some of these initiatives have also engaged men in discussions or provided educational materials related to childbirth and child and maternal health. Initiatives within the health care sector, however, have not focused specifically on engaging men as fathers, with a few exceptions. In Brazil and elsewhere, a few public health facilities have started specific initiatives to encourage men to participate in childbirth (Carvalho, 2003). UNICEF has also promoted men's involvement or father involvement in various maternal and child health initiatives, but these efforts have often been small-scale. In three cities in Brazil, the non-governmental organization, Instituto PAPAI and partner organizations are working to engage health professionals and raise awareness among men and women about the Brazilian law that gives women the right to have someone (including their male partner) accompany them during childbirth. Few public hospitals (where the vast majority of births take place in Brazil) make this option available to women, often believing that men do not belong in the delivery room. The campaign, called "Pai Não É Visita" (translation: The Father is not a Visitor), seeks to encourage hospitals to guarantee that this option is available and encourage women to include the fathers of the child in the birthing process.

School-Based and Youth-Specific Programs

Some organizations in the region have begun to pay more attention to the socialization of younger and adolescent boys, implementing initiatives to expose boys to domestic tasks, including childcare, or to help boys question traditional, or prevailing gender norms. A 1998 review of programs working with young men in the promotion of health and gender equity, carried out by the World Health Organization, identified a number of interesting models from the LAC region for engaging young men in reflections about gender issues (Barker, 2000). Approaches to reaching boys ranged from health centers with special hours for boys to mentoring programs that connect boys with alternative male role models. Many if not most of the programs focus on sexual health, recognizing boys' unmet needs in this area, but also work in general health promotion, vocational training, counseling, educational support and violence and substance use prevention. The programs reached boys in schools, communities, workplaces, and in bars, taxi stands, military facilities and juvenile justice centers. Lessons learned include: the need to address homophobia; the need for high-energy activities that involve multiple themes; the need to work with boys on self-care and prevention, an area of frequent neglect by boys. The majority of programs work in boys-only groups for some themes, while bringing boys and girls together to discuss gender inequality.

A few programs have focused specifically on the issue of fatherhood and childcare. In Trinidad and Tobago, the NGO Servol provides vocational training for young people. As part of the training, all youth – young men and young women – are required to spend some time in day care centers, getting used to caring for young children. For young men, Servol staff report that this is often their first experience in caring for young children, or providing caregiving of any kind. In the Caribbean, a few countries have promoted “father-son” days at school, when girls stay at home, and fathers are encouraged to engage with their sons in the school settings. Many NGOs throughout Latin America often make use of an educational activity (sometimes called “Egg Baby”) in which young men (and young women) take care of an egg or other object as if it were a baby, taking it with them in the course of their daily routines and subsequently reflecting on this mock-parenting experience.

To offer another example, a coalition of four NGOs in Brazil and Mexico have developed a field-tested curriculum with group educational activities for young men designed to promote changes in attitudes related to gender, including a set of activities on fatherhood and caregiving. This manual series – Program H – also includes an impact evaluation study to measure quantitatively changes in attitudes and behaviors on the part of young men (Promundo, PAPA, ECOS & Salud y Genero, 2002). The evaluation process includes an attitude scale – called the Gender Equitable-Men, or GEM Scale – for assessing changes in attitudes (Pulerwitz et al, 2006). The evaluation study demonstrated that group educational activities and community media activities can significantly change attitudes among young males and promote more gender-equitable attitudes and behavior, including those around fatherhood, caregiving and domestic chores (Pulerwitz, et al, 2006). This is one of a few examples from the region that include systematic baseline research and evaluation.

Incarcerated Fathers

As mentioned before, the growing population of imprisoned men has a direct impact on fatherhood in the region as many incarcerated men have children on the outside. There are examples of projects in the United States and Caribbean that work with incarcerated men to

help them to be a father while on the inside and prepare to take up their role on the outside. In the USA, the InsideOut Fathers project of the National Fatherhood Initiative targets English and Spanish speaking inmates and another organization, the Family and Corrections Network, works with incarcerated parents and their children. In the Caribbean, Belize's National Organisation for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN) provides parenting courses for incarcerated men and Dominica's Social Centre, with the National Council on Parenting, also provides parenting courses for male inmates (Brown, 2004).

Group Education and Support for Fathers

A handful of non-governmental organizations in the region (in Chile, Jamaica and Brazil) have started educational sessions, group discussions or support groups for fathers, including both adult and adolescent fathers. Among these is the NGO Instituto PAPAI, which offers a variety of support services, including group discussion sessions, health education and advocacy, for young fathers – the first of its kind in the region. In Chile, the NGO CIDE, has developed a curriculum with group educational sessions for engaging men and social service professionals in discussions about the roles of fathers. The curriculum, called "Paternidad Activa" (or Active Fatherhood) has the objective of promoting the rights and responsibilities of fathers in providing care for and raising their children. The group educational activities promote, among other things, a reflection about the participants' own relationships with their fathers, recognizing that both social service staff and men themselves generally need to think about their own attitudes about fatherhood before they can engage others on the issue, or consider their own roles as fathers. While the training sessions were initially directed to men, in practice the majority of participants (staff from NGO and governmental social service agencies) have been women. Rather than seeing this as a failure, CIDE staff have seen the importance of engaging women on the issue of fatherhood, recognizing their important roles as gatekeepers to men's participation as fathers, whether as mothers, partners of men, teachers, childcare providers or social service staff.

The Fundación Rodelillo, also in Chile, has carried out similar workshops called "Solo para hombres" (Only for Men), offering group spaces for men to reflect about their experiences as fathers. These workshops are in parallel to their work with women in personal development. The group learned in its experience in working with women that if it excluded or did not make men visible in interventions with families, not only was the process slower, but in some cases men would boycott the intervention or efforts.

In various parts of the Caribbean, parent-training activities have included fathers, sometimes in male-only sessions, other times in mixed-sex groups. Fathers Inc. in Jamaica is one of the oldest of such programs, having worked more than 12 years to question negative views about fathers. The group carries out awareness-raising events to promote positive images of fathers and fatherhood development. They have produced a training module that focuses on parenting skills for low-income men.⁸ And, in rural Haiti the Haitian Health Foundation has supported the creation of about 40 father's clubs that focus on helping fathers care for child health problems such as diarrhea. The reported participation of father's is quite high, about 700 fathers participate, but no evaluation has been done to ascertain why the involvement is high and what the impact of the fathers clubs has been (Sloand & Gebrian, 2006).

8 - Some religious groups in Central America provide pre-marital classes and father education, but there is some question as to whether the content of such material sometimes reinforce gender stereotypes.

Apart from anecdotal or a few qualitative reports, these group sessions with fathers have not been evaluated. Limited evaluation of father education and father support groups in the U.S. suggest some positive effects in the short-term, but other researchers have questioned whether such programs actually help fathers with their new roles (Jordan, 1995; Furstenberg, 1991). However other research, from relatively short-term group educational activities with fathers, argues that such programs can have positive effects. Evaluation of a 10-week intervention program showed improvements in child-father relationships using self-reports from fathers (Engle, 1997). Another study of such activities in the U.S. found some short-term effects in a control group study. In that study, fathers in the program had higher perceived paternal competence (i.e. they felt more secure about their ability to be fathers) and increased their non-working interaction time with their children, their non-working accessibility for their children and reported an increased sense of responsibility for their children. This evaluation also demonstrated some of the challenges in engaging men. None of the participating men were able to increase their accessibility and time for their children within their working hours (McBride, 1991).

Mass Media, Campaigns, and Community-Based Education Strategies

A few organizations in the region, mainly NGOs, have started media-based or community educational campaigns to promote more involved fatherhood. In Mexico, the NGOs Salud y Genero and CORIAC, for example, carry out essay contests and have produced educational materials (posters, calendars, etc.) to promote reflections about men's roles as fathers. Costa Rica is one of the few examples where such efforts have receiving strong support from the government; there, national campaigns have included messages about the need for fathers to participate in childcare and other domestic chores (Alatorre, 2002). In the Caribbean, there have been radio messages and television talk shows on men's issues and men's roles as fathers. In Brazil, Instituto PAPAI has carried out various awareness-raising events in the media and via popular culture (using a large puppet of a father carrying a child during *Carnaval*, for example), and also analyzed images of fathers in the media (Medrado, 1997). Another potential media for promoting more involved fatherhood is the internet. Though it has been utilized and evaluated mostly in industrialized countries, it could be relevant in Latin America and Caribbean as internet accessibility and computer literacy have increased. One of the few scientific studies of an internet-based intervention was the New Father's Network for first-time fathers. This study showed that new fathers' self-efficacy and satisfaction increased significantly in the intervention group that used the site in comparison to the control group during the first 8 weeks after birth (Hudson, et al, 2003).

In Brazil, Instituto Promundo has started a campaign in the workplace to engage male and female employees (including senior management) in thinking about work-life balance issues and ways to offer and utilize more flexible working hours so that men can engage to a greater extent in their home lives and with their children. Called *Que Homem*, or "What kind of man are you?", the campaign uses the slogan: "At home and at work, what kind of a man are you?"

Income Support and Employment Generation Projects

As we have reported here, many of the challenges and obstacles to men's greater participation as fathers in the LAC region (and elsewhere) are related to their ability to provide financially for their children. In the U.S. and Western Europe a few programs have been created to provide job-skills training or provide vocational counseling to low-income and un- or under-employed men. Some of these programs have been motivated by the goal of assisting (or obligating) fathers to pay child support rather than encouraging increased father-child interaction. Other programs for low-income fathers have offered a mix of job training with counseling and fatherhood development. Limited evaluation of these programs in the U.S. found some positive impact on men's income and employment after participating in such programs and some increases in paternity establishment (Watson, 1992). While there are numerous job-training, vocational training and income generation projects for low-income youth and adults in the LAC region, we found no examples of programs that specifically targeted fathers.

The area of conditional cash transfers – now used in many countries in Latin America – is another area where involved fatherhood could be promoted. These programs offer income supports to families who meet certain criteria. In the Brazil, one of the region's largest programs of this kind – “Bolsa Familia” or Family Stipend – reaches 11 million families offering between 10 and 105 US dollars per month to families, conditional on families with children up to age 17 making sure that the children are enrolled and attending school (between 75 percent and 85 percent of the time) and making sure that children up to 7 years of age are receiving their scheduled vaccinations and health post visits. The program can also require mothers to attend pre and post-natal visits and to attend health talks about motherhood. If families do not meet these conditions, they risk losing their benefits. In the case of “Bolsa Familia”, the payment is preferentially made to the mother, with the understanding that mothers are more likely than fathers to spend the money on children. Nonetheless, this program may inadvertently be reinforcing the notion that men do not need to care for children – that such a function is a woman's responsibility. Policymakers could consider ways to encourage men's involvement in fatherhood by making additional payments or benefits conditional on the man's participation. In Mexico, a conditional cash transfer program is giving a monthly payment to adolescents who do not become pregnant. Again such programs might also consider ways to support or offering conditional payments to adolescent fathers who show an active involvement or support of their child.

B. Policy Initiatives Related to Fatherhood in the Region

Along with some interesting program development to engage fathers in the LAC region, there has been some initial policy development related to fatherhood, but much remains to be done. All countries in the region currently offer some kind of maternity leave, and recently 16 countries in the region increased this maternity leave in keeping with conventions supported by the International Labour Organization. However, as of 2003, only eight countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Paraguay and Uruguay) offered paid paternity leave, and leave ranged from only 2 to 8 days in duration (ILO, Conditions of Work and Employment Database). The Bahamas also offered one week of family-related leave that could be used for paternal leave.

As mentioned previously, in addition to paternity leave, nearly all countries in the region have passed or strengthened laws that offer women recourses for establishing paternity and seeking child support from fathers, although in most countries the burden of proving paternity

(and many times the costs associated with DNA testing to confirm it) continues to fall on women. In contrast to the rest of the region, Costa Rica and Chile's Paternal Responsibility Laws places the burden of taking a DNA test on the father. In other words, if the presumed father does not take the test, he is considered the father and in fact registered as such. As mentioned before, in the case of Costa Rica, a large sample of men found the law to be needed and evaluated the law and its implementation positively (Rivera & Ceciliano, 2004).

Chile stands out as one of the few countries in the region where various national governmental organizations have carried out policy analyses and research on the different roles of mothers and fathers and sought to bring these nuances into public policy. For example, the national drug control agency in Chile has carried out research on the different roles of mothers and fathers in reducing substance use among youth, particularly on the role of male and female parenting styles. They concluded that the passive reactions of parents in the face of youth substance use was a risk factor for substance use, and that in many cases mothers were left to deal with parenting issues and thus that fathers needed to be more engaged in direct (but non-authoritarian) ways as active partners of mothers. These implications have been included in program efforts supported by the agency.

In addition, as previously mentioned, Brazil and some other countries in the region have also enacted policies or policy statements allowing women to be accompanied by the person of their choice during childbirth, which can also include the father. Nonetheless, with the exception of middle class men who have access to private hospitals, men's participation in childbirth seems to be more the exception than the rule in the region.

With these few exceptions, little has been done at the policy level to engage men in their roles as fathers. Some governmental organizations in the region – either at the national, or local or state levels – have supported media-oriented campaigns about the importance of men's participation as fathers. However, beyond such symbolic legislative action or policy pronouncements by ministries of health, men's roles as fathers are largely missing from the public sector throughout the region.

Clearly such issues are complex and deserve separate reviews and analyses in and of themselves. For example, for many years, legislation related to paternity establishment and child support favored men, or placed the burden of proof on women; in some countries this is still the case. Furthermore, the mere establishment of maternity leave or paternity leave is inadequate in many countries, given that such legislation generally applies to only men and women who have stable formal employment, and thus is meaningless for millions of families in the informal sector, for example. Similarly, custody laws in the region have long favored mothers in cases of divorce and separation, generally with good reason. In recent years, some middle class men in several countries have formed "fathers' rights" groups to question this trend. Understandingly, women's rights groups have often confronted these groups and countered that in most cases, mothers have been more intimately and directly involved in the care and raising of children. Some fathers, clearly, are as fit and committed to caring for and raising their children as mothers, but for numerous historical and cultural reasons, few men have been interested and willing to take custody of children in cases of divorce and separation. Women's rights groups have questioned the reasoning behind changing legislation for the cause of a relatively small number of middle class men. Still, laws around shared custody such as the Joint Custody Law in Brazil seek to keep men involved in the parenting of their child even after the divorce. The law in Brazil made Joint Custody the default when the couple does not have a plan for custody of the child.

Regarding laws around parenting for same-sex couples, most of Latin America and the Caribbean have yet to recognize the right of homosexual males and females to marry or form civil unions, an extremely important issue for same-sex parenting (as was mentioned previously, some countries in the Caribbean still criminalize homosexuality). Internationally, several countries recognize gay marriages including Spain, Holland, Canada, and South Africa, and an even larger number of countries recognize same-sex civil unions (which give many but not necessarily all of the same rights of marriage), including 13 countries in Europe, and Uruguay and Colombia in the LAC. Mexico City in Mexico and some parts of Brazil, including the state of Rio Grande do Sul, also permit civil unions. In Argentina, several cities including Buenos Aires (the first ever in Latin America) have passed ordinances establishing equal rights regarding civil unions whereby a person's sex or sexual orientation is not a factor in establishing a civil union. Still, no country in Latin America or the Caribbean has legalized same-sex marriage.

Adoption by gay or lesbian couples is legally allowed in Canada, South Africa, parts of the United States and in a number of European countries, though the European Court of Human Rights ruled in January 2008 that same-sex households have the right to adopt which may push other countries to adopt adequate legislation. In Latin America, Uruguay is currently attempting to pass a law that would make adoption by same-sex couples legal, which would be the first such law in the region. Still, in most of Latin America adoption by same-sex couples is difficult and often extra-legal. While in some countries there may be nothing that explicitly prohibits same-sex or gay adoption, neither does anything prohibit the applicants' sexual orientation from being considered as a factor in approving or not the adoption.

If there are few experiences and limited analyses of policies related to fatherhood in the LAC region, there has been some interesting policy development in Scandinavian countries. Norway and Sweden have had progressive parental leave policies for nearly 20 years. In Norway, working parents are offered 42 weeks of paid Parental Leave. Until 1993, this parental leave could be shared on voluntary basis by either parent, but fathers on average used less than 5 percent of the time. In 1993, the law was changed to say that the father had to use 4 weeks of this leave or the family lost it altogether. As a result, use of parental leave by fathers is now between 70 and 80 percent (Cohen, 2000). Similarly, in Sweden, working parents have a right to 12 months of paid parental leave (paid at 80 percent of their salary) to share between them. Prior to 1995, only 9 percent of total leave was used by fathers. The law was changed in 1995, to make one month non-transferable for each parent. Currently 70 percent of fathers in Sweden use this month, with 12 percent of fathers using leave beyond one month. Use of the parental leave by fathers is higher among fathers with higher education and higher income; lower-income fathers say they cannot afford to lose 20 percent of their salary (Cohen, 2000). Various other countries in Western Europe that have offered generous parental leave have had low use of the leave by fathers, except when the father's part is mandatory and when it is paid at same rate as the father's salary (Cohen, 2000). These policies and policy experiences in Western Europe provide useful reflections for reconsidering relevant paternal leave policies in Latin America and the Caribbean.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The body of research analyzed here provides ample evidence for greater inclusion of men as fathers – at the program, policy and research level – in a number of realms, including the public health sector, the education sector and employment policy, among others. Encouraging or understanding father involvement is, as ample research confirms, important for the well-being of children, women and men themselves. Barriers or challenges to discussing the issue and including men as fathers to a greater extent in these program and policy issues are, like many social issues, not purely rational. Discussion of the issue at the policy or research level is often clouded by assumptions or longstanding beliefs about men and their roles in the family, particularly by deficit views of men. Even when men are included in such issues, they are frequently included for instrumental ends – that is to improve the well-being of children and women. While these are laudable and necessary goals, we must also pay attention to the developmental and personal needs of fathers and their subject realities. This is not to ignore the rights and needs of women and children, but it does require focusing on fathers as subjects with rights, needs and realities that should be taken into consideration in program and policy. With this preamble, we offer the following initial recommendations related to program development, policy and research.

A. Program Recommendations

Engage fathers on the issue of children’s rights and reducing violence against children.

The Convention of the Rights of the Child cites the right of children to know and have contact with their fathers, and the responsibilities of both parents to care for their children. A few initiatives supported by UNICEF and other organizations have used this approach to promote a discussion on the roles of fathers. In some countries in North America and Western Europe, a focus on the child and child well-being has been a strategy to diffuse or reduce actual or potential conflicts between women’s rights groups and groups promoting father involvement. In addition, as many countries in the region are starting national campaigns (and in some cases national laws) to end corporal punishment of children, men could be involved to a greater extent in these initiatives.

Engage men in multiple places where they “hang out” and during moments when they are reachable.

Various NGOs working directly with fathers in the region have found the importance of reaching men at moments when they are open to change, for example during the birth of a first child. Many of these programs have also found it useful to reach men in multiple places where they normally hang out, via the community and schools (for younger men) and via sports or community groups. These examples provide useful insights for national-level and public sector initiatives to engage men as fathers.

Include the special needs of fathers or a focus on young fathers in job training and vocational training initiatives in the region.

As noted several times during this document, fathers' participation is effected in large part by their employment status and income level. In some countries, job training programs have focused on or taken into account the special needs of low-income, and often younger fathers. This is an area which should be explored to a greater extent in the LAC region.

Scale up fatherhood preparation courses and information campaigns.

From many anecdotal reports in the region, we know that many fathers report feeling unprepared or informed about caring for children. Preparation for fathering via training or information campaigns, or incorporating fathers in existing maternal and child health information campaigns would be a strategic ways to engage men. Such information and training courses are widespread in parts of North America and Western Europe, but are limited mostly to middle class men in the LAC, if available at all. National AIDS campaigns and safe motherhood campaigns can also include messages about men's roles as fathers, as can existing campaigns related to reducing violence against women.

Include the issue of men as fathers in existing sexual and reproductive health services and initiatives, including HIV/AIDS prevention efforts.

As mentioned several times in this document, there have been tremendous advances and research, and program development, many with public sector support, related to men's involvement in sexual and reproductive health. For the most part, however, these experiences have not taken into account men's roles as fathers nor included information and messages to promote positive father involvement. Sexual and reproductive health initiatives in the region have often been so focused on reducing or limiting fertility (and the spread of STIs, including HIV/AIDS) that they have often ignored men's desires and interests in becoming fathers, and often ignored men's roles as fathers.

Scale up interventions to reach younger boys and young men with alternative gender messages.

Both theory and some research suggest that childhood and adolescence are crucial moments for reaching boys and younger men with alternative messages about gender and masculinity, including their future (and actual) roles as fathers or caregivers of children. There has been some important initial work on engaging young men and rethinking the socialization of boys by diverse NGOs in the region, including Servol in the Caribbean and the Program H in Mexico and Brazil. These approaches deserve consideration for documenting and scaling up via the public sector.

Target the workplace and employers to create more flexible employment policies and as an environment for fatherhood campaigns.

Considering that work is an environment in which men spend the largest portion of their time, interventions should target workplaces and trade unions to a greater extent to enact workplace-based campaigns and policies to allow men (and women) greater flexibility to be with their children and to promote a more appropriate work-life balance.

B. Policy Initiatives Related to Fatherhood in the Region

Review current policies and how they influence men's participation as fathers.

The issue of men's role as fathers has seldom been included in policy initiatives in the region, beyond the issue of child support. The literature consulted here, and the collaborating consultants, confirm the need for greater information on existing policies and how they already effect men's participation as fathers.

Review national public health policies, including maternal and child health (particularly the involvement of fathers in birth) to consider the involvement of men.

Limited evidence would suggest that greater positive involvement by men in child health, prenatal care and childbirth is mutually beneficial to children, women and men themselves.

Review national labor policies to study ways of promoting greater father involvement, given the clear connection between men's employment and their participation as fathers.

This includes a revision of paternity leave policies (and perhaps an extension or enhancement of father leave in some countries), as well as including the special needs of fathers in national employment creating and training policies.

Study alternatives for men's involvement in early childhood development policies.

Several countries in the region have national policies and publicly supported initiatives related to early childhood development. These policies and initiatives should be reviewed to explore possibilities to engage men to a greater extent, including recruiting additional men as caregivers or staff.

Support alternative fatherhoods, including recognizing and supporting the right of same-sex couples to form civil unions or marriages, to adopt children and/or to have their own children through assisted reproduction.

Even though evidence shows that same-sex couples can provide as good a home for children as heterosexual couples, many barriers still exist to gay adoption and fatherhood. It is imperative that same-sex couples have the same individual and familial rights as heterosexual couples.

C. Research Recommendations

As we have seen in this paper, there is a tremendous base of qualitative research, and limited quantitative research, in the LAC region on which to build program and policy development related to father involvement. Nonetheless, there are several areas in which additional research is required, including:

Additional quantitative research including longitudinal research

This might include comparative studies across countries, as well as research on the intergenerational transmission of fatherhood patterns and the effect of parenting on children over time.

Research on men's roles in diverse family and caregiving arrangements.

As mentioned in several instances, most research on fatherhood continues to focus on heterosexual nuclear families or on biological fathers. More research is needed on the role of men in the lives of children in general, as well as men who act as surrogate fathers and on same-sex couples and gay fathers.

Research on men's subjective experiences and desires for childbearing.

As noted several times in the text, only recently have researchers begun asking men about their own attitudes related to fatherhood. This could include research on positive outcomes for men when they are meaningfully engaged as fathers as co-parents. More of this is required, particularly as we seek to identify men's self-interest in greater involvement as fathers.

Incorporating questions about men's roles as fathers and in the lives of children in existing national surveys.

The Demographic and Health Surveys, national household samples and census data provide strategic moments to include additional questions about men's roles as fathers, as well as their attitudes to gender equality, including division of household labor, shared decision-making and attitudes about violence.

Research on the impact of policies and legislation related to child support, divorce and paternal leave.

Most such policies have been enacted (if they have been enacted) with limited research. Both qualitative and quantitative research is needed to inform revisions and future changes in such policies and legislation.

Program evaluation and research on pathways to change.

As noted in this paper, few of the programs working directly with men have had the resources to carry out systematic evaluation of their work. More evaluation research is needed, as is additional research on factors that lead to change, particularly to more gender-equitable behaviors and attitudes on the part of men.

Carrying out research in collaboration with the public sector and with governmental organization.

Chile provides an excellent example of how research carried out in collaboration with the public sector (and with policymakers) is more likely to yield results that are incorporated into public policy.

D. Final Comments

Men's roles in the families and as fathers continue to be clouded by normative ideas of what men should do. In too many cases, we have relied on the reports and views from others (women, children, service providers) about men rather than on men's views and self-reports. In addition, men's roles in the families have too often been seen as instrumental, or to serve the needs of others, rather than understanding how men define their own needs. Promoting gender equity, of course, requires engaging men in the needs of and care of others. But men can and should have self-interest in change. Positive engagement as fathers and caregivers is a powerful, often overlooked, motivation for men to become more involved in positive ways in the lives of their families.

It will not be easy nor is it a short-run effort to promote greater involvement by men in the family, as fathers and in child well-being. Generations of programs and policies have been developed – some incorporated into national policy and legislation – that assume men's lack of interest and lack of involvement in such issues. Professionals, researchers and policymakers have only recently begun to debate these issues, and in some cases have resisted this discussion. To be sure, women and children have suffered from some men's negative involvement in families, and their lack of involvement and support of their families. These shortcomings and inequities exist and cannot be ignored.

Nonetheless, promoting the engagement of men in meaningful ways requires looking at both deficiencies and potential, and the current ways that men support their families. It requires questioning personal and political views about gender roles – in itself no easy task. The research presented here offers evidence of the real and potential benefits that can result when men are more involved with their families in positive ways. Valid and creative program experiences exist. The outstanding questions are whether there is political and personal will to take the issue forward.

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