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ABSTRACT

A review of the published empirical literature on families in the several areas of concentrated Mexican American settlement (primarily California, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and various cities in the Midwest) is presented in this paper. Objective is to provide a frame of reference on the sociology of Mexican American families. Variations in family behavior appear to be linked to such factors as socioeconomic status, nativity, age and generation, specific place of residence, and language use patterns. Therefore, this synthesis is concerned with family variance "per se" by considering a number of relevant factors (i.e., age, occupational status, educational attainment, and community of residence). Studies dealing with the following topics are cited: 1) the extended family; 2) family roles; 3) dating and courtship; 4) ritual kinship relations; and 5) intermarriage. The paper is concluded with some general comments on family disorganization and family persistence. (NQ)

Variations in Mexican-American Family Life: A Review Synthesis*

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The objective of this paper is to provide a frame of reference on the sociology of Mexican-American families which hopefully will have utility for interested students and also the future research efforts of the NC-128 subcommittee on Mexican-American populations. I had originally intended to devote the paper to an assessment of the relationship between residency in particular geographical regions and the variation among Mexican-American families along several dimensions of family structure and process. By reviewing the published empirical literature on families in the several areas of concentrated Mexican-American settlement (namely California, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and various cities in the Midwest), I had hoped to evolve generalizations distinguishing family patterns between these sites. It became apparent in the course of the literature review, however, that while areal differentiation seems significant, geographical region is much too broad and inclusive a variable to adequately account for the dynamics of family variation. Nor is there enough information available which would allow us to make strict comparisons between specific sites. Nevertheless, the literature suggests that a tremendous amount of intra-regional and even intra-community diversity exists, which in many ways is more significant than gross regional differences. Variations in family behavior appear to be intimately linked to such factors as socioeconomic status, nativity, age and generation, specific place of residence, language use patterns, etc. Therefore, this synthesis will be concerned with the question of family variance per se by considering a number of relevant factors.

We find numerous references to the family throughout the rapidly expanding body of literature on Mexican Americans. With few exceptions, nonetheless, there exists little information of a concrete empirical nature which would enable us to make firm generalizations on family form and process. Irrespective of their numerical size and the crucial roles they perform in terms of sustenance and socialization, Mexican-American families as of yet have not been given systematic treatment (Penalosa, 1968:608). In many studies, the family is only a tangential consideration as concentrated analysis is given to such topics as culture, values, or health (Staton, 1972:325). Much of the work that has been done is in the form of theses and dissertations on various communities--most of which are unpublished and difficult to obtain. To date, the most comprehensive investigation was that conducted by the Mexican-American Study Project at UCLA in the late 1960's based on Los Angeles and San Antonio samples. These data appear in what is generally considered to be the standard reference on Mexican Americans by Grebler, Moore, and Guzman, The Mexican-American People: The Nation's Second Largest Minority (1970) and additionally are available in various Study Project advance reports.

For the most part prior to this, popular conceptions of Mexican-American family life were based primarily on a number of community and village studies conducted in predominantly agricultural areas of New Mexico and Texas (See Kluckholn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Loomis, 1940; Johanson, 1943; Simmons, 1952; Edmondson, 1957; Madsen, 1964; and Rubel, 1966). In a number of ways, these studies were perceptive and enlightening relative to understanding family life in traditional slowly-changing rural environments.

Unfortunately though, they provided us with few insights into family behavior within urban milieus--where today over 80% of the Mexican-American population resides. Even more unfortunately, these studies were used in both academia and government as the primary descriptions and baselines for policy formulation concerning Mexican-Americans in general.

Penalosa states that no theoretical framework has been developed to account for transformations in Mexican-American family life (1968:681). While an explicit theoretical framework may often not be presented, however, family research seemingly has been guided almost single-mindedly by a definite perspective. This perspective is based on the twin concepts of acculturation and assimilation, and an ideal-typical construct postulating, on the one hand, the "traditional" Mexican family type, and on the other its presumed polar opposite, the "modern" middle-class American family type. Hypothetically, Mexican-American families undergo a variety of changes, and in so doing move further away from the "traditional" and closer to the "modern," as their members become increasingly acculturated to and assimilated or integrated into the dominant Anglo-American society. Of course, this represents nothing that is novel, as in the last fifty or so years a number of ethnic minorities have been so sociologically scrutinized.

On the other hand, we know relatively little about how Mexican-American families actually interact internally or how they contend and interact with external social units (with the possible exception of limited studies pertaining to medical services and agencies (see Saunders, 1954; Clark, 1959; and Rubel, 1966). Few studies have actually "gotten-in" to Mexican-American families in the sense that families have biographies and are constantly

"becoming" rather than static units. A glimpse of what can be uncovered in this fashion is revealed by Ramos (1973) in an ethnomethodological analysis of a poor Mexican-American family and the conflicts it faced due to the contradictory demands placed on it by the agents of various community agencies.

Another shortcoming of the acculturation-assimilation perspective is its implicit ideology. Accordingly, complete acculturation and assimilation are presumed to be the most functional and "correct" responses for Mexican Americans. In so doing, it is a form of cultural chauvinism which rejects both the utility and legitimacy of cultural pluralism and bi-culturalism. Clearly, the notion of the "melting-pot" is a myth and the historical operations of such institutions as the educational system have been blatantly oriented toward the goal of "Anglo-conformity" (see Ramirez, 1974). As Romano correctly notes, conceptual frameworks such as acculturation-assimilation place blame for failure on Mexican-Americans themselves and deny the relevancy of external conditions. They picture Mexican Americans as a passive, uncooperative, and disjointed lot (until they somehow become acculturated and assimilated)--rewrite history by denying the catalytic and continual roles Mexican-Americans have played historically in labor, educational reform, and political movements--and serve as handy rationalizations for the maintenance of the status quo (Romano, 1973a).

Although commonly depicted as an undifferentiated rural population given to a "traditional" way of life, Mexican Americans, as we know, are a diverse and heterogeneous population characterized by important internal differences. And consequently, "...the same complexity that is found in the general Mexican-American population is also found in the

family of virtually every Mexican-American" (Romano, 1973b:177). Murillo relates that:

> The reality is that there is no Mexican American family "type". Instead there are literally thousands of Mexican American families, all differing significantly from one another along a variety of dimensions. There are significant regional, historical, political, socioeconomic, acculturation, and assimilation factors, for example, which result in a multitude of family patterns of living and of coping with each other and with their Anglo environment (1971:97).

The following sections will consider to what degree as revealed in the available literature, significant variations exist across Mexican-American families. In previous studies only several topics have been frequently touched upon to the extent that a synthesis is possible: the extended family, family roles, dating and courtship, ritual kinship relations, and intermarriage. Basic demographic data on such factors as family size, fertility, dependency, distribution, separation and divorce, etc., has been purposely omitted due to space limitations and its ready availability in other references (see U.S. Department of Commerce, 1970a and 1970b; and Grebler, et al., 1970). The paper will conclude with some general comments on family disorganization and family persistence.

The Extended Family

Numerous studies have stressed the great importance of familism among Mexican Americans. Presumably, the family is the most important social unit, taking primacy over even individual family members much less over all external groups. This commitment not only pertains to the individual and his immediate conjugal family but also to a wider circle of relatives including married sisters and brothers and their children, grandparents, aunts and uncles, first cousins (primos hermanos, and those of fictive kinship--godparents (padrinos), coparents (compadres) and

brothers-in-law (concuños). The family supposedly occupies a key position being an invaluable (and sometimes the only) source for physical and emotional aid and fulfillment. Conversely, the outside world is cruel and capricious--even neighbors must be suspected and guarded against. Thus when duty calls in the form of a relative in need, one must necessarily proffer aid even at the cost of personal ambitions and achievements. Although the nuclear household is the ideal, obligations to parents are clearly summed up in the notion of el deber de los hijos--"the duty of the sons to support elderly parents" (Rubel, 1966:59). This is the "traditional" picture of Mexican-American familism.

Studies considering familism are somewhat mixed in assessments of its contemporary strength in urbanized areas. Although generally, it seems to be declining. The most frequent index of familism used is the presence of three of more generations of kin in a given household. In a 1955 study of a barrio in San Jose, California, Clark noted a very strong commitment among families to bringing close elderly relatives into the home. Indeed, there was a strong aversion toward the Anglo custom of placing the elderly in rest homes. And those who failed to take care of their parents were subject to sharp criticism by barrio residents. Of the fifty households sampled, 16% were classified as "extended" (1959:145-148). Goodman and Beman revealed a similarly strong commitment and a very high proportion (over 50%) of extended families in a late 1960's investigation of a Houston, Texas barrio (1968:86). However, the generalizability of this finding is highly limited due to the small sample size (16).

Penalosa, on the other hand, suggests that in southern California cities extended families are no longer present in any significant degree

(1973:260). Grebler, et al., assume that extended-family households are quite rare in large metropolitan areas. Less than five percent of their large sample of families in Los Angeles and San Antonio contained three or more generations of kin (1970:353).

In a study of residents of west-side San Antonio, Francesca delineated sharp generational (age) differences in orientations toward helping parents. While the elderly exhibited strong preferences toward providing for parents, young Mexican Americans believed that they owed little responsibility (1957:26). The Lubbock, Texas, findings of Cartwright, et al., concerning the elderly are in contradistinction to this: "...although the traditional family relationships characteristic of Mexican Americans are still basically intact, Anglicization is also taking place" (1969:185). Whereas about one-half of their sample of elderly Mexican Americans were residing with their children, the majority (60%) believed that their children had no obligation to do this. Neither did they feel that the government or other institutions such as the church carried any great responsibility for their care (1969:188).

Two studies conducted among farm migrant families found the extended household unit to be rare. Hawks, et al., revealed that 93% of their sample of California migrant households were two-parent non-extended families. They state that, "The stereotype of the migrant family does not jibe with reality. Most migrant families do not live in extended families, although they do feel close to their relatives and try to include them in their lives" (1973:24). Ulibarri suggests that the highly limited financial means of migrant families precludes them from taking-in needy relatives. While there was concern for relatives among his sample of Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona migrants, "The indications

were that the concept of the extended family has been lost among these people" (1971:165).

Several investigations in the Midwest reveal the conspicuous absence of extended households. In a study of early 1940's Detroit, Humphrey found that the duty of caring for elderly parents was no longer accepted by many of the families. He suggested this was a consequence of the urban wage system which could only meet the necessities of the nuclear family (1944:644). Lin's 1963 study of a Kansas City, Kansas barrio determined that, contrary to the beliefs of local Anglos, the nuclear family was the norm. Only five percent of the households were extended. And unlike many places in the Southwest, Kansas City Mexican Americans did not possess extensive extended family networks within the city. Many had migrated to the community in the 1920's by themselves, particularly the males, and thus, because of distance and time had not yet developed large extended families. Additionally, the great respect formerly reserved for the elderly had waned considerably. Many youngsters (termed by Lin as "pseudo-sophisticated") were noted, in fact, as disliking their grandparents because of their "old-fashioned Mexicanness" (1963:73-79).

Like Francesca in San Antonio, Goldner found significant generational differences relative to orientations toward aiding elderly parents in St. Paul, Minnesota. Whereas first generation Mexican Americans strongly desired to keep aged parents in their homes, those of the second generation were much more reluctant to do so--although they were willing to aid their parents in maintaining independent domiciles (1959:95-96).

In an isolated colonia near Toledo, Ohio, Macklin ascertained that while the ideal arrangement was considered to be the nuclear unit, approximately one-third of the households were extended (1963:148). In a

relatively uninsulated area of East Chicago, Samora and Lamanna found a number of families which included single unattached males who apparently had migrated to the area alone to work in the steel mills. The authors suggest that extended family ties are important facilitators for those moving from Mexico and the Southwest into the community (1967:134).

The relevance of the extended family, however, is strongest in historical and contemporary cases of rural non-industrial systems. Castillo found that prior to 1850, approximately one-half of the Los Angeles Mexican population resided in extended households. With intensively increasing industrialization and urbanization over the course of the next several decades, however, the proportion declined radically (1975:43). Over-time, the extended family has occupied the most important positions in New Mexican village life. Indeed, as Knowlton suggests, the extended family was the basic support system for rural Spanish Americans: "There were no competing primary or secondary institutions or associations. Until very recently, the functions of education, socialization, social control, religion, social welfare, and earning a living were all carried out within the family" (1965:40). In Atrisco, over 40% of the households contained extended families (Kluckholn and Strodtbeck, 1961:192). Of the many small New Mexican villages some may consist of only one large extended family (Knowlton, 1965:41). Village studies conducted by Kluckholn and Strodtbeck, (1961), Loomis (1940), and Johansen (1943), among others, describe the extended family as the basic unit of economic production with the eldest male, the patriarch, exercising complete authority over family property and functions. These families were marked by keen respect for each family member and strong solidarity and affection. Such a strong we-feeling permeated the community that childless couples (objects of

pity by fellow villagers) were often given children to raise by large intact nuclear families. Kluckholn discovered that 12% of Atrisco children were being raised in such an arrangement (Kluckholn and Strodtbeck, 1961:194).

While the extended family both as a kinship network and as a household arrangement is still extremely important in rural New Mexico, its overwhelming influence seems to have waned in the last several decades. As long ago as 1940, Johansen studying southern New Mexican villages in Dona Ana County ascertained that isolation due to inadequate transportation and communications systems was breaking down. Increasing social contact with the outside world had brought about a certain dissatisfaction among the young with traditional arrangements. And increasingly greater numbers of the youth were moving out of the villages to take advantage of the social and economic opportunities in urban centers (1943:130). Along with increasing urbanization and the growth of military installations as pull factors in terms of enhanced opportunities, Knowlton also ascribes transformation in traditional village life to the encroachment of land speculators and the federal government on Spanish American lands as severely disrupting local economies (1965:43). Atencio, conversely, claims that the residential dissolution of extended families led to the loss of property as in their absence they were no longer able to productively employ the land (1964:48).

With the movement to such urban centers as Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Pueblo, the productive function of the extended family has ceased of course. However, the extended family's role is still crucial. The rural migrants' adjustment to city life is incalculably aided. Many of the elderly are provided assistance by close relatives. And although the

dominant pattern today is the separate nuclear household, bonds between relatives still remain strong and are characterized by frequent visitation (Knowlton, 1965:45).

In conclusion, it appears that the relevance of the extended family has changed considerably for Mexican Americans throughout the United States. But certainly the relevance of the extended family has changed dramatically for many Anglo Americans also in the last several decades. Familism seems to be declining regardless of ethnic group as we become more mobile, urbanized, secularized, and (to borrow Riesman's term) "other-directed." Traditionally, the extended family has had great utility as a unit facilitating various need satisfactions for the individual. To do this as a cooperative unit it entailed a certain degree of sacrifice in terms of personal autonomy. Although evidence points to the ideal household arrangement as the nuclear family, circumstances often have necessitated a sharing of quarters. Orientations toward extended arrangements apparently change with changing economic and social circumstances. New avenues often lead to change in reference and participatory groups with the frequent consequence being the decline in involvement with fellow family members.

Family Roles

Perhaps the most prevalent stereotypes relative to Mexican American families are those concerning family roles. And, as described in much of the literature, family roles correlate quite closely with what might be termed as "traditional." Generally, roles are viewed as being strictly differentiated along the dimensions of age and sex. Elders are afforded great respect and deference, and sex roles are rigidly dichotomized with the male being the archtype of dominance and aggression, and the famale

being the polar opposite--passive and subordinate. The father is the patriarch, the sole breadwinner (although sometimes aided by the earnings of adolescent sons), and the family protector and judge. His word is "law" and commands strict obedience. Presumably, he is psychologically obsessed with continually proving his virility and manhood by engaging in such behaviors as excessive drinking, defending his honor at any cost, and through extra-marital conquests. The husband's machismo is strikingly contrasted by the behavior of this wife. Confined to the home, she is bound up in all the duties that are entailed in being an exemplary wife and mother of a large family. Her activities beyond the home are limited to frequent visitations with relatives. As in the case of the mother, the children are supposedly models of respect. While parents may be quite lax and indulgent with them, this dramatically changes about the time the children reach puberty. Thereafter, they can expect to be treated aloofly and coldly by their father--although they may still interact warmly with mother. While sister-sister relations tend to be quite close and intimate, both boys and girls are taught to be highly respectful toward older brothers. The boys also serve to protect and regulate the behavior of sisters away from the home. The eldest brother occupies a special place in the family. For when the father dies, he assumes the role of patriarch.

This cursory description serves as a summary, albeit crude, to a number of studies--most notably those conducted in the lower Rio Grande Valley by Simmons (1952, Madsen (1964), and Rubel (1966), and those in rural New Mexico by Loomis (1940), Leonard and Loomis (1941), GAP Reports (1954), and Edmondson (1957). We may or may not accept the applicability of these generalizations for those places at those times. But what of

family roles outside of the rural communities of the Southwest? Are they equally as clear-cut and two-dimensional as the simple dictum suggested by Rubel that "the older order the younger, and the men the women" (1966:59).

Available evidence suggests that, in fact, roles within Mexican-American families are dynamically changing, varied, and oftentimes bear little resemblance to those depicted above. Mexican-American families, for example, are not unusually stable, as separation and divorce rates approximate those of the Anglo population (see Clark, 1961:144; and Grebler, et al., 1970:128-131). Tracing structural changes in the families of New Mexico, Knowlton writes that, "At the present time, Spanish-American families are spread out along a continuum... There is no longer a single Spanish-American family system" (1965:43). While kinship ties between brothers and deference to the traditional role of eldest brother after migration to urban areas are still significant, various alterations have become pronounced. Among lower-class Spanish-American families, for example, the father may lose much of his traditional authority if he is unable to secure employment that is stable and adequately paying. The control that fathers can command over their children is roughly contingent upon their abilities to meet their offsprings' economic needs (1965:44). And although the children have much more freedom than previously, parents are still far from being permissive. Among Spanish-American businessmen and professionals, there was observed a strong desire to emulate Anglo patterns relative to a more independent wife role and egalitarian decision-making. However, Knowlton suggests that this role change may produce a variety of strains and tensions, and at times, reversions to authoritarianism. Even in the cities, nevertheless, the

father is still generally the patriarch of the nuclear family.. And even though the wife may work, he continues to make the more important decisions (1965:44-45).

Restudying El Cerrito, New Mexico in 1956, Loomis found similar patterns to those delineated above. Among those moving to urban centers, he noted a change toward lower-class Anglo practices. Wives were no longer submissive to husbands particularly in the area of child-rearing. Also, adolescent children were becoming increasingly important in the family as they "...are often the chief linkage the parents have with Anglo culture" (1973:230).

Bodine suggests that World War II was a crucial event in altering authority relations within Spanish-American families in Taos, New Mexico. With the men in the service, the women came to run the homes. "Many men returned from the War to find their wives were not only capable of handling their own affairs but determined to preserve their new-found independence. In many cases the traditional structure of husband-wife status and role playing was broken" (1968:148).

Clark's 1954 analysis of Sal Si Puedes, a San Jose barrio which she termed as being more "Mexican" than others in the area, also provides us with a picture which is at variance with the notion of "traditional" roles. "Although the patriarchal-authoritarian family pattern...is regarded by many Spanish-speaking people as an ideal, actual family relationships in the barrio are often quite different. Wives, for example, although theoretically subservient to their husbands, sometimes openly defy male authority" (1959:150). Working wives in particular were exerting strong influence over family expenditures (1959:151). In the province of child-rearing, changes were not as graphic. Children were

held in high esteem, but only the very smallest were given outward signs of affection. Fathers ranged from the permissive to the harshly disciplinarian, and children generally held them in very high regard. Older siblings still enjoyed authority over the younger, and some mothers continued to defer to the oldest son (1959:154).

As expected, acculturation to Anglo concepts appears to have a close relation to role changes. Using language use as an index of acculturation, Tharp, et al., found that among English-speaking Mexican-American wives in Tucson, conceptions of marriage roles varied dramatically from those held by Spanish-speaking wives in the same city. English-speaking wives had pronouncedly more egalitarian attitudes toward family authority and decision-making, more permissive attitudes concerning child-rearing, more companionate attitudes towards sex and other relations with husband, and less concern with homemaker roles (1968). These findings, however, should not necessarily be accepted as indicative of the influence of acculturation as measured by language use since the researchers failed to control for such seemingly important variables as socioeconomic status, length of residency in the U.S., urban-rural background, and age.

Francesca tested the relationship between age and various cultural patterns including family role orientations among lower-class San Antonio husbands and wives. She found that as age increased, orientations toward traditional family patterns likewise increased. Third generation (young) couples tended to favor outside employment for the wife, the occasional assistance of husband with household chores and child-care, less authoritarianism and status inequality between spouses, etc. (1957).

Role changes have been perhaps the most dramatic in the Midwest. In the early 1940's in Detroit, Humphrey noted that, "While most women

accept the restraints imposed on them by the culture of the homeland, a small proportion of Detroit Mexican women come to take advantage of the greater freedom possible there. If the wife has assimilated American culture more rapidly than her husband, she may use her knowledge to effect a reversal, from subordination to superordination in family roles" (1944:624). However, the most significant change was that between father and children as the latter were usually the most acculturated and proficient in English. Teenage males, being the most familiar with Anglo ways, now served as the intermediaries between the family and the world outside the barrio. Thus, many of the youth had gained status equal to that of the father--and some had become even dominant (1944:625).

Among second generation immigrant families in St. Paul, Goldner found the power of the patriarch diminishing as increasingly more men were consulting with wives. These wives were much more likely to work outside the home, and there was a noticeable reduction in the number of children. Frequent explanations among the men as to why decision-making was becoming shared included, "She has a right" and "She works, so she has say" (1959:81). Fathers were becoming less strict with their children, also. On the other hand, Samora and Lamanna (East Chicago) suggest, that, "Parental control continues to be extreme by American standards" (1967:35).

Even among the presumably most "unacculturated" of all, the migrant farmworkers, authority patterns do not conform to traditional stereotypes. According to Hawkes, et al., (California) the father is not the "all-powerful tyrant." Rather, most family decision-making was shared jointly by the married couple (1973:23-24). Neither does Ulibarri's analysis of migrant farmworkers give us a picture of a cold, repressive, and authoritarian family situation: "...perhaps the most successful involvement of the

migrant and ex-migrant worker in all his life's endeavors was his family. The migrant's and ex-migrant's nuclear family exhibited itself as a well-organized unit where all members enjoyed wholesome status and prestige and where there was mutual concern for each other" (1971:165).

According to Stevens (1973) and Officer (1964), presumed machismo is much more complex than apparent (for a critique on studies on Mexican-American families and machismo see Montiel, 1973). Based on observations of Latin American societies, Stevens contends that the macho husband and the submissive wife act-out highly complementary and symbiotic roles. Machismo is countered by marianismo (reference to the Virgin Mary), the latter a self-denying martyr-type role which enables the woman to attain venerated status and spiritual superiority in the eyes of husband and children (1973:57-63). Officer suggests that explicit in the roles of Mexican-American wives in Tucson is the imperative of sustaining the appearance of their husbands' machismo.

> It was through the male that prestige came to the household and everyone was expected to aid the man of the house in satisfying the requirements of the male role... In the privacy of their own boudoir, a Mexican [American] woman might criticize her husband, taunt him, even insult him, but when others were present she assumed a submissive role (1964:99).

Grebler, et al., speculate that strict male dominance never may have been a reality, but instead only a cultural ideal. Although their sample of Los Angeles males firmly reported that in their childhood homes father had been the decision-maker, when asked who had made the decisions relative to the children and daily household operations their reply was "mother." Decisions on large expenditures were made jointly by parents. In terms of contemporary Los Angeles and San Antonio families, they found significant

age, income level, and neighborhood ethnicity differences on orientations toward such issues as "wife's major role as being child-bearer," "husband's complete control over family income," "child-care and babysitting by husband," and "husband's aid in performing household chores." Favorable attitudes toward birth control were noted among both men and women (1970:360-365). Such findings strongly contradict conventional notions concerning machismo and Mexican-American males. Grebler, et al., in fact, found that the only aspect of family behavior which bore any resemblance whatsoever to "traditional" roles was that in the area of child comportment. Emphasis on control is still apparently quite strong as approximately 40% of the sample felt the major pursuit of teaching in the schools should be directed toward discipline (1970:367).

In conclusion, recent studies suggest that "traditional" Mexican-American family roles are no longer predominant. Changing social and economic realities have brought about concomitant modifications in the roles of husbands, wives, parents, and children. Specific salient conditions which appear to be closely linked with role changes include immigration into unfamiliar environments, urbanization, employment of wives, increasing socioeconomic status, movement out of the barrio, and in short, increasing acculturation and assimilation.

Ritual Kinship Relations

Ritual kinship ties are presumably integral aspects of traditional Mexican-American family life. Basically they serve to widen and enhance the individual's primary group by either transforming outsiders into family members or relatives into particularly close associates. The usually intimate bond between two sisters, translates their husbands' relationship with each other into a special type of association, the cunado.

This tie between brothers-in-law or concuños tends to facilitate and strengthen the relationship between sisters as well as their respective families. The most important fictive relationship, however, is the compadrazgo or ritual coparenthood. There are basically four occasions for the establishment of coparentage bonds--at the child's baptism, first communion, confirmation, and marriage, although baptism is the most frequently sponsored and most seriously taken event. The compadrazgo details certain obligations of the godparents (padrinos and madrinas) toward the godchild. Yet, it is even more significant as a bond between the godparents and the child's parents (compadres) as the ritual tie serves the function of formalizing bonds of solidarity and/or containing potential conflict. Not a relationship entered into lightly, intended godparents must be worthy of responsibility and deep respect.

In reference to urban southern California, Penalosa argues that "...the ritual coparenthood relation no longer has any significance as a fictive kinship relation" (1973:260). Grebler, et al., as well point out that the function of compadrazgo has declined with urbanization (1970:354-355). Purportedly few cases of orphaned children being cared for by godparents have been noted. On the other hand, Rubel's analysis of "traditional" Weslaco, Texas, revealed that orphaned children were not taken in by godparents but by close blood relatives (1966:70). So perhaps adoption has never been a key function of compadrazgo. Also, according to Grebler, et al., the young do not view the relationship as seriously as older Mexican Americans. In a small subsample of Los Angeles respondents, they found many cases in which it was not strong, and a few where it was non-existent. Among those from Mexico it is apparently strongest and socioeconomic status has reportedly little association with

either its presence or strength. They conclude that "...although undoubtedly still viable, [the compadrazgo] appears to be a minor feature of kinship and community social organization in the major urban centers". (1970:355).

Conversely, in a low-income barrio of San Jose, Clark determined the compadrazgo to be one of the strongest Mexican cultural elements present, and highly functional in binding individuals together and maintaining neighborhood and community stability (1959:158). Likewise in Kansas City, it remained an integral part of barrio life. "Besides the consanguineal and affinal kin affiliation the ritual coparenthood, compadrazgo, is the most important feature of social organization, which has a significant function in religious instruction, cultural value orientation, social control, and maintenance of emotional overtones" (Lin, 1963:75). And only about one-fifth of Lin's informants took the relationship casually (1963:86).

Obviously, the evidence suggests that generalizations concerning the persistence of ritual coparenthood should be only cautiously advanced. Even between (and probably within) highly urbanized centers, the existence of fictive kinship bonds apparently varies greatly. It seems safe to say, however, that compadrazgo and cunádo are relational forms which decline in import and relevance as Mexican Americans move residentially out of the barrios and colonias. Nontheless, as suggested above, they appear to be functionally important affiliations within the more socially insulated predominantly Mexican-American sections.

Dating and Courtship

In the "traditional" Mexican-American family, adolescent sons and daughters are differentially treated by parents in almost all aspects of

socialization and supervision. But perhaps nowhere are these differences more graphic than in the areas of courtship and dating. Teenage sons generally are given almost complete freedom outside of their homes; and moreover, parents may presume that sons will sow a liberal quantity of "wild oats." Daughters, on the other hand, supposedly are subjected to a severe double standard. They are of matter of course expected to assume the other-worldly, chaste, and submissive characteristics of their mothers. As in their mothers' role, their place is ideally in the home. Behavior away from the home is rigidly circumscribed and supervised by not only fathers but also by brothers. Any compromising or potentially dishonorable situation must be avoided. Dating is forbidden. Limited courtship only begins with the father's approval after the young man requests permission for the daughter's hand through an often highly ritualized process which may include the services of an intermediary (portador). If the father accedes to the suitor's request, the young man may then make periodic visits to her home--meetings which are, of course, chaperoned. As in the case of many young Anglo women, the elaborate marriage ceremony is the high-point in the girls' life.

Rubel points out that the above pattern was the normative ideal in Weslaco, Texas, being more or less followed by local families. However, he noted the gradual attraction among Mexican American youth toward the Anglo customs of unchaperoned and serial dating and the desire to avoid possible parental refusal by elopement (1966:77).

In New Mexico, Knowlton found that with movement to large cities, such strict guidelines had been attenuated, but in many cases, not too radically.

> Many families will still not permit their daughters to date before they go to college. Others accept controlled dating. The girl is not permitted to date many different boys but is expected to go steady or to date only one or two. Varied dating will definitely shadow a Spanish-American girl's reputation. The girl is not permitted to bring her boyfriend into her home or to introduce him to her parents. This would be regarded as an insult. When a couple has agreed upon marriage, the boy will come with his parents to make a formal visit to the girl's home (1965:45).

Clark's analysis of San Jose revealed patterns that were at mixed variance with traditional practices. Families were divided in allowing their daughters to date. Among parents from Mexico, there was strong resistance to dating. Nonetheless, a number of girls openly defied their parents commands, and followed Anglo customs. In general, however, girls were allowed to go to mixed parties and dances. Most marriages were arranged with little parental interference. Clark speculated that in only one out of 100 cases were parents in control of marriage arrangements (1959:142-143).

In Kansas City, parental authority appeared to be considerably less. Lin states that, "Girls too refuse to be regulated by parents." And, most parents agreed that at age 18, girls should be allowed independence. Increasingly more unmarried high school graduates were moving away from home into apartments. Even at younger ages, girls were being given freer rein, and dating practices were approximating those of Anglo youths: "...the use of the telephone is so effective in fixing a date that the parents recognize the impossibility of controlling their daughters' contact with their boyfriends. Many parents, however, still object to loose behavior and some parents set certain nights and a curfew for their daughter's dating" (1963:82).

On the basis of this limited evidence, it appears that dating and courtship patterns are being modified perhaps more quickly than other traits such as family roles. All of the factors which have been mentioned in previous sections seemingly have relevance to these changes, but perhaps the most important variable is generation--since it is the youth who have been encountering the dilemma of reconciling parental expectations with the conventional behavior of other youths.

Intermarriage

The ultimate indicator of assimilation is intermarriage. And, as the Mexican-American population becomes increasingly heterogeneous, and as assimilation into Anglo society increases, we should expect the rate of marriage between Mexican-Americans and Anglos to concomitantly rise. Data from a variety of sources, reveal that Mexican-Americans are entering into more primary relationships with Anglos over time. For example, Grebler, et al., found that whereas about 15% of their Los Angeles respondents had predominantly Anglo childhood friends; almost 40% of their childrens' friends were predominantly Anglo (1970:396). Data from San Antonio, on the other hand, reveal that there are significantly fewer Mexican-Americans (both adults and children) having mostly close Anglo associates. Likewise, in terms of orientations toward intermarriage, San Antonio Mexican-Americans voice greater opposition (although those favoring social distance are only 20%) (1970:392).

Studies based on the analysis of marriage records support the above findings concerning differential ethnic association. The intermarriage rate for Mexican-Americans in San Antonio between 1940 and 1955 was about 10%. And although in Los Angeles between 1924 and 1933 it was only

nine percent; in 1963 intermarriage was 25%. New Mexico data graphically illustrate the phenomenon of increasing rates over time: 1924-1940, eight percent; 1953, 13%; and 1964, 19% (Grebler, et al., 1970:406). Examinations of marriage records in the South Texas cities of Brownsville, Edinburg, and Sinton by my associate Phillip Monk, conversely, reveal that although rates have been increasing over time, the change has been rather undramatic and the rates are considerably less than those of the above three study areas. He also noted significant variations in rates between these South Texas communities (1975).

In Kansas City, Lin found an increasing rate of Anglo-Mexican-American marriages--despite the great resistance parents usually mounted against them. One-third of the marriages were with Anglos; and purportedly intermarriage was an important source of cleavage within the Mexican-American community. Hostility was usually directed against those who were felt to be "too good for Mexicans." Interestingly, the success rate of Anglo male-Mexican female marriages was considerably higher than that of the opposite arrangement. Indeed, with an alleged failure rate of 80% between Mexican male-Anglo female marriages, local priests strenuously counselled against this particular form. Anglo wives were supposedly much more demanding and shrewish than their Mexican-American counterparts. (I might add that Anglo wives might have been also much less tolerant toward the peccadilloes of their Mexican husbands than would Mexican wives.) Nevertheless, Lin suggests that even if the marriage is stable, it eventually alienates both husbands and wives from their respective ethnic groups to the extent that they become "marginal men" (1963:80-84).

On the other hand, Officer discovered that intermarriages were quite stable (denoting a relatively low divorce rate) and of a non-alienative

nature in Tucson, Arizona. With a long history of intermarriages in the city, over 25% were mixed in 1959. And while early patterns conformed to the Anglo male-Mexican female variant, almost half were now between Mexican-American men and Anglo women. The couples were remarkably well-adjusted and accepted by both ethnic groups. The writer made the interesting observation that in most cases one of the partners usually gave up many vestiges of his or her cultural background, and seldom was there an equal blending. He was impressed

> ...with the number of mixed marriages brought to my attention in which the Anglo partner had been the one who did most of the adjusting. Anglo spouses often learned Spanish after their marriages and began to participate in the activities of the colony. This certainly was related to the fact that Mexican family life was so much stronger than that of the Anglos, and there was a tendency of a nuclear family based on a mixed marriage to pull toward the extended family of the Mexican partner (1964:108).

However, in general it seems that variations in rates of intermarriage appear to be influenced by a number of factors--factors which in a broad sense tend to widen the Mexican American's reference and participatory groups beyond those of the barrio and predominantly Mexican-American circles. Intermarriage appears to be related to such variables as occupational status, educational attainment, ethnic make-up of neighborhood, etc. (Mittelbach and Moore, 1968). Historically, intermarriage has been most frequent for Mexican-American females than males, although in recent years it seems that proportionately greater numbers of males have entered into mixed marriages.

While mixed marriages tend to increase with generation removed from immigration to the U.S., such a generalization may be tenuous when applied to specific areas in the U.S. As we know, many of the Spanish Americans of northern New Mexico trace their heritage back to pre-U.S.

annexation. Yet, within the rural villages, intermarriage is almost non-existent. In the Midwest, particularly in the areas of heavy industrialization, intermarriage has been noticeable since the 1920's for numerous first generation Mexican males due to the lack of compensurate numbers of in-group females (see Jones, 1928:597, and Taylor, 1932, among others).

Importantly, intermarriage is also contingent upon the historical and contemporary nature of local inter-ethnic relations. In many of the "inland" agricultural towns of South Texas, for example, where stratification lines have bordered traditionally on semi-caste forms, community bigotry and intolerance has certainly precluded the marital desires of all but the most daring inter-ethnic couples. On the other hand, in cities such as Brownsville, a community in many ways much more "Mexican" than "American," intermarriage has been more or less accepted since the town's inception. Neither should intermarriage be viewed as an unequivocally. Anglo-Mexican phenomenon. As an example, one may see the descendants of 19th century Negro soldiers around the southwest Texas towns of Brackettville and Del Rio speaking impeccable border Spanish and living in barrios and colonias.

In conclusion, it should be clear then that intermarriage is not a simplex linear question. While such variables as socioeconomic status and generation bear heavily on this phenomenon; historical processes, degree of urbanization and isolation, as well as other local conditions cannot be ignored.

Conclusions

As this review hopefully has illustrated, "the Mexican-American family" does not exist. Variables related to variations in family patterns

include: generation removed from immigration, age, occupational status and educational attainment, employment status of wife, community of residence, specific place of residence within the community, region, and specific historical conditions.

In terms of the Southwest, it appears that families in California exhibit the greatest variation, and those in South Texas and rural northern New Mexico probably the least. But as Moore suggests, numerous communities in the Imperial, San Joaquin, and Coachella valleys have sociologically more in common with South Texas towns than with highly urbanized centers in California (1970:107-108). Even within such a metropolis as Los Angeles there is a high degree of variation as one goes from the concentrated ethnic enclaves, the barrios, to middle-class suburbs. In some South Texas communities such as Zapata, Roma, and Rio Grande City, where Mexican-Americans have been historically the ruling political and economic force and are over 95% of the total population; "traditional" patterns appear to be closely approximated. In others such as Corpus Christi and San Antonio, we should find internal differences almost commensurate with those existing in Los Angeles.

The greatest variation from the "traditional" model seems to be found in Midwest cities. Either settling out of the migrant stream or being directly attracted by opportunities for employment in heavy industry, Mexican Americans moving to such places as Kansas City, Chicago, and Detroit apparently have been confronted with the most dramatic alterations in family life as they have not had the cultural cushion as families in the Southwest have had. They have had more or less to face the full effects of the dominant society.

Mexican-American families conventionally have been conceptualized as bastions of stability and respite in an otherwise uncertain and often hostile world. Although familial relations were supposedly autocratic, all members at least had the assurance of clearly defined role expectations to guide them in their everyday behaviors. Given the presumably strong influence of Catholicism, divorce was viewed as an unacceptable alternative in the face of an unsatisfactory marriage.

Stereotypes, conversely, have conveniently glossed over the objectively and subjectively disorganizing influences of immigration, economic hardship and poverty, language barriers, cultural and generational conflict, as well as the usual problems in day-to-day living that human beings unavoidably face. With all of these factors against a background of exclusion and exploitation; it is indeed surprising that such idyllic notions have persisted. Mexican-American families are not unusually extremely stable--intergenerational conflicts are frequent, and divorce and desertion rates are roughly equivalent to those of the Anglo population.

A number of studies, but perhaps most noteably those by Madsen (1964), Rubel (1966), and Heller (1966), have maintained that the lack of rapid upward social mobility among Mexican Americans lies in the overly exaggerated influence of family. Accordingly, Mexican Americans cannot get ahead because the family takes precedence over the individual. Any type of gain the individual may make (if indeed, he should possess those peculiarly non-Mexican-American characteristics of high ambition and aspiration) will certainly and swiftly be erased because of the enforced necessity to help needy relatives (who may or may not first try to help themselves). Thus, by definition the Mexican American is confined to a sort of socioeconomic treadmill. With this perspective on the "over-adaptive"

family, it is but a short analytical leap to the community level and the notion of the "atomistic" society. In this community, "non-achieving" is the norm lest the potentially upwardly mobile family incur the wrath and envidia of less fortunate neighbors. Social, economic, and political gains are viewed by the community as the products of having "sold out" or of some equally nefarious device. Of course, cooperation toward goal-achievement between families is clearly out of the question. In all, we see that the tendency for non-achievement is doubly reinforced: first at the level of family, secondly within the community context.

As previously mentioned, such conceptions suggest that Mexican-Americans are their own worst enemies and that the family and community are constraining and non-facilitating groups. As in the picture of the "stable" Mexican-American family, the pathological view of family and community clearly denies the gains made by Mexican-Americans in individual pursuits and the fact that Mexican Americans do have high career aspirations (see Kuvlesky, Wright, and Juarez, 1971; and Wright, Salinas, and Kuvlesky, 1973). Furthermore, such a view fails to recognize the background of external oppression and the history of highly exacting cooperative efforts among la raza toward such goals as economic justice (see, for example, Cohen, 1968; Erenburg, 1968; Lopez, 1970; Wollenberg, 1969), school reform (see Torgerson, 1970; Gutierrez and Hirsch, 1973; and Frisbie, 1973), and community control of political institutions (see Acuña, 1973; Miller and Preston, 1973 and Shockley, 1974). In fact, Chicano parties such as La Raza Unida and Familias Unidas working in highly traditional areas in rural South Texas have found the organization of the community through tightly interdependent family networks to be quite successful (Miller, 1975). Myths of stability and myths of pathology only obfuscate and relegate

Mexican-American families to "over-socializing" units somehow curiously lacking in human attributes. They deprive the family of the qualities of dynamism, change, and variation.

In closing, it seems clear that differential acculturation and assimilation are closely associated with family change. Perhaps the relationship is tautological. Nevertheless, I think that we should move on to a different and new stage of analysis in our research. For example, rather than being concerned with proving the acculturation-assimilation thesis again and again; why not conduct such fundamental research as examining the dynamics of families as they attempt to cope from a rational framework with a constant variety and never-ending number of internal and external contingencies? Clearly, future research must be guided by a new conceptual framework.

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