

While men bear half of the biological responsibility for conception, until the 1980's, they had been largely ignored in the discourse on pregnancy and child care. In the last two decades, however, studies of fatherhood have experienced an explosive growth (for comprehensive reviews of the literature see Lamb, 1976, 1981, 1987, 1997). Lamb, in his 1997 edition of The Father Role in Child Development, summarizes his reading of the last two decades of the fatherhood literatures in terms of three themes which merit special attention: ". that fathers play complex, multidimensional roles, that many patterns of influence are indirect, and that social constructions of fatherhood vary across historical epochs and subcultural contexts" (p. 1

This last theme of historical and cultural variations in the social constructions of fatherhood echoes the messages of cultural ecologists (Ogbu, 1981; Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi and Johnson, 1990) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) human ecology model in emphasizing the importance of the social ecology of fatherhood. Lamb notes that while researchers have finally recognized that fathers have different roles in different cultural or subcultural contexts and that many communities hold different views of what constitutes normative fatherhood (see also Hochschild, 1995), these subcultural variations in the social construction of fatherhood have been less frequently and less comprehensively studied than other fathering topics (see Lamb, 1987; Sullivan, 1993). Consequently, current discussions of fatherhood continue to be dominated by what is known about white, North American, middle-class society, hence perpetuate the practice of using Euro-American family functioning as a basis for judging families in other ethnic groups regardless of their unique histories and cultural practices.

Whereas nationally representative samples of longitudinal data sets such as National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experiences--Youth Cohort (NLSY) and High School and Beyond (HSB), have made it possible for researchers to examine transitions to fatherhood in a prospective framework, the reporting has been limited to Caucasian and African American respondents (see Elster, Lamb, & Tavares, 1987; Hanson, Morrison, & Ginsburg, 1989; Lerman, 1986; Michael & Tuma, 1985; Pirog-Good, 1995). Data from different Spanish speaking youth in the national samples have been too few to warrant separate reporting even though Hispanics have

been over-sampled (Center for Human Resource Research, 1995). The same is true for different groups of Asian and Pacific Islanders and Native Americans.

Prospective longitudinal studies which have made it possible to examine the transition to fatherhood on nationally representative samples have presented the typical profile of the adolescent father as a young man with a truncated education, limited earning capacity, depressed, and likely to have come from a family which received public assistance. Since adolescent parenting rates for minority teens are higher than that of white teens' (see Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997), the typical teen father is erroneously assumed to be a minority adolescent. While this typical profile is appropriate for Caucasian adolescent fathers, it is not for African-Americans or adolescents categorized as "other" with respect to race and ethnicity (see Lerman, 1993a; Pirog-Good, 1995). We need both theoretical and empirical studies on young men of color that addresses their unique circumstances and consequent profiles.

Why Study Puerto Rican Young Men?

Puerto Rican young men fall in to the "other" category to whom the typical profile of the adolescent father may not necessarily apply. The need for subgroup-specific information on them is lacking, as it is for all "other" groups whose limited presence in representative samples does not allow for separate analyses. On the other hand, recent changes in Puerto Rican adolescent fertility rates present an anomaly which begs an explanation. The secular trend of lower adolescent childbearing observed every year since 1991 does not hold true for Puerto Rican girls (Mathews, Ventura, Curtin & Martin, 1998). Figure shows that the decline in birth rates for African-Americans and Whites has been steady and linear; whereas, for Puerto Ricans it has been curvilinear, increasing from 1991 to 1992 then leveling off and declining by 1994 and then declining sharply in 1995. Puerto Rican teen mothers have been the focus of several studies (see, for example, Darabi, 1987) and with this intriguing drop in fertility in 1995, we are confident they will be the focus of intense study in the near future. However, there is currently no systematic information on the role Puerto Rican young men play in birth rates observed in this subgroup. Just