ABSTRACT. Despite growing evidence supporting the notion that fathers influence their children’s education, few studies have examined the intersection of involvement and emergent literacy development. The present study explored the ways fathers (N=12) support children’s literacy skills in a low-income Latino community. After completing self-report measures of daily involvement and home literacy, fathers shared a wordless book with their children. Fathers reported engaging in a variety of involvement activities, lending support to the study of fathering as a multifaceted construct. Furthermore, fathers provided rich linguistic environments during book-sharing. Trends among narrative participation scores support past literature suggesting cultural differences in narrative styles. Results provide important contributions to the limited literature on Latino parenting.

As the fastest growing minority group, Latinos now constitute over 16% of the total population of the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The significant rise in the number of Latino families in the United States calls for special attention to these communities and the families within them. Concordantly, a small but growing body of literature exists regarding early education experiences of low-income families from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This research reports that Latino children are more likely to live in poverty than children from other ethnic and cultural groups (Espinosa, Laffey, & Whittaker, 2006) and that they tend to lag behind their peers in academic skills (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005; Espinosa et al., 2006). To understand these trends, scholars have investigated elements of the minority experience as well as environmental stressors associated with living in a low-income environment. Findings highlight the need for researchers to ground their studies in context and culture, as past research has relied on conceptualizations and measures based almost entirely on studies of middle-class European-American homes.

Recent research has identified family involvement as a key protective factor for low-income, ethnic minority youth (Jeynes, 2003). Studies have consistently shown that high levels of parent involvement are associated with high levels of social-emotional competence and academic success across ethnic and socioeconomic samples (Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004; McWayne, Campos, & Owsianik, 2008). Given the association between parent involvement and academic achievement and the trend of poor academic performance among Latino children in the United States, it is particularly important to understand how researchers have studied family involvement in these communities.

Although psychologists have traditionally weighed heavily on maternal influence on child development, researchers have devoted greater attention over the past three decades to the ways fathers contribute to their children’s lives. The growing number of studies investigating paternal involvement suggest that fathers make unique contributions to their children’s development and have a direct influence on young children’s overall literacy and academic achievement (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb,
2000; Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004; Cornelius-White, Garza, & Hoey, 2004; Karther, 2002; Lamb, & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Tamis-LeMonda, Niwa, Kahana-Kalman, & Yoshikawa, 2008; Zalaquett, 2006). Although father involvement is linked to positive child outcomes, similar to the shortcomings of family involvement literature at large, the majority of research on fathers has focused on middle-class, European-American families. As a result, less is known about fathers within culturally diverse communities.

**Father Involvement**

Variously called involvement, engagement, participation, investment, childcare, and childrearing, the concept of father involvement is defined, conceptualized, and measured in a variety of ways (Palkovitz, 1997). Even when researchers agree on terminology, they show little consensus regarding just what involvement is, how to conceptualize it, how to measure it, and how to compare engagement across individuals (Palkovitz, 1997). Scholars have critiqued initial investigations of father involvement, citing fathers’ oversimplified role as a financial provider and a flawed basis of involvement on observable absence or presence (Lamb, 2000). These simplistic conceptualizations ultimately fail to capture various other components of father involvement and ignore potential barriers to a father’s participation in his children’s lives (e.g., long working hours, maternal gatekeeping). To address these limitations, contemporary researchers investigate father involvement as a multidimensional construct.

The most cited framework for describing aspects of father involvement is Lamb and his colleagues’ tripartite model of father involvement. This model defines three dimensions of involvement: engagement (i.e., direct interaction), accessibility (i.e., physical availability), and responsibility (i.e., accountability and assumption of caregiving; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987). As noted by Lamb (2000), responsibility generally includes economic provisioning, but other behaviors, such as making medical appointments, grocery shopping, and coordinating children's social activities, are also recognized within this domain, thereby addressing multiple facets of the construct. From the mass of parenting literature since the conceptualization of the Tripartite Model, it is clear that father involvement can take on a variety of forms. Scholars have defined several means of involvement and have identified various paternal roles in modern society, including caregiver, protector, teacher, disciplinarian, role model, playmate, economic provider, and companion (Day & Lamb, 2003; Day, Lewis, O’Brien, & Lamb, 2005; Hawkins et al., 2002; Lamb, 2010; Palkovitz, 1997). In addition, fathers also serve as providers of emotional and practical support for mothers and as transmitters of familial, cultural, and societal values (Lamb, 2010; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008). These findings illustrate fathers’ important role and have led researchers to question who exactly is a “good” father.

Over the past three decades, the idea of “good” fathering has expanded beyond fiscal success to include increased involvement in the day-to-day care of children. For example, recent research suggests that fathers often provide the basic needs of children (e.g., feeding, bathing, diapering) as well as other childrearing activities (e.g., preparing meals, doing laundry) in addition to providing financial support for their families (Lamb, 2010). Stated simply, fathering is assumed to be “good enough” when it reaches levels similar to mothering (Pleck, 2004). However, many scholars claim that the quantity of involvement is less important than the quality of involvement (Palkovitz, 1997; Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). As a result, researchers have moved away from time-based measures of involvement to focus instead on other features of father-child interaction. Supporting the idea of caregiving as an aspect of fatherhood, recent findings demonstrate that fathers play a role in emotional nurturance through affectionate activities such as kissing, hugging, and maintaining open communication with their children in addition to taking on traditional provider and companionate roles (Lamb, 2010). Thus, over time, efforts to refine the conceptualization of father involvement have occurred simultaneously with growing efforts to assess men’s unique familial contributions more thoroughly.

Contemporary empirical literature includes examinations of men’s lives, their interactions with family members, and the distributions of resources and responsibilities within the family (Bradley, Shears, Roggman, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2006; Day et al., 2005; Lamb, 2010; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002). As previously indicated, research suggests that fathers in the United States have evolved from the traditional fathering role of sole provider to a more nurturing, “involved” father. Furthermore, with the entrance of women into the workforce during the 1950s, fathers were expected to share the responsibilities of providing...
Latinos. These changes in family structure have encouraged researchers to adjust conceptualizations of parenting. However, despite these advances, sample populations have mostly included majority members of American society, and considerably less attention is paid to diverse minority communities.

Past critiques of father involvement literature have repeatedly noted the shortage of empirical work that reflects the increasing diversity of families in the United States. As noted by Palkovitz (1997), many people still assume the roles prevalent in middle-class European-American educated families are the model for good (i.e., involved) parenting. However, attitudes concerning appropriate types and levels of paternal involvement vary considerably and are largely reflective of cultural and contextual factors (see Domenech Rodríguez, Donovan, & Crowley, 2009). It is thus critical to recognize intercultural and intracultural diversity when exploring paternal influences on child development. Although the aforementioned empirical works are important to consider in understanding Latino father involvement, recent authors have begun to explore how distinct cultural values mediate involvement among Latino fathers.

**Latino Father Involvement**

Researchers investigating fatherhood in diverse communities suggest that involvement does not simply vary by culture, but rather, culture constructs fathering (Auerbach, Silverstein, Zlotnick-Woldenberg, Peguero, & Tacher-Rosse, 2008). As such, within investigations of Latino fathers, it is crucial to recognize and identify the diversity of the Latino culture. The term *Latino* includes individuals from various cultures in North, Central, and South America. It is important to note that use of the term *Latino* is in no way meant to minimize individual heritage but rather represents the complexities of the population. Great variation exists within Latino communities regarding ethnicity, race, language, and socioeconomic status as well as specific customs and practices (Bailey, McCabe, & Melzi, 2008; Campos, 2008; Umana-Taylor & Fine, 2001). In addition, individual and collective migration experiences account for important differences among Latino communities in the United States (Campos, 2008). Although the term *Latino* describes a highly diverse population, the term also describes a shared family value system that expands across Latino cultures (Cabrera & García-Coll, 2004; Glass & Owen, 2010; Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2002).

Family-oriented elements of Latino culture such as *familismo*, *machismo*, and *respeto* suggest that paternal involvement is culturally valued. Traditionally, Latino family values define the father’s role as the breadwinner and protector of the family, thereby placing the father at the head of the household. Given this dominant position in the traditional generational hierarchy, the father earns respect from all other family members. Past researchers have recognized this unconditional respect and have used the concept of *machismo* to describe Latino masculine norms. However, researchers have focused primarily on negative aspects of these values, such as aggressive attitudes, sexism, hypermasculinity, and interpersonal dogmatism (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008; Campos, 2008; Cervantes, 2006) therefore creating and confirming the stereotype of Latino fathers as controlling and emotionally unavailable. Indeed, Sánchez-Ayéndez (1988) documented that traditional Puerto Rican fathers reported strict discipline and little direct involvement in childcare. This aged depiction, however, has been challenged as being one-dimensional and ethnocentric. Current scholars suggest that Latino fathers have been studied as deviations from the European-American norm (Campos, 2008; Glass & Owen, 2010; Saracho & Spodek, 2008; Torres, Solberg, & Carlstorm, 2002).

Recent findings contest the view of Latino fathers as having limited interest and involvement, demonstrating instead that fathers within Latino communities participate in their children’s lives in various ways. Studies have shown that Latino fathers do, indeed, exhibit nurturing behaviors and partake in the day-to-day activities associated with childrearing (Capps, Bronte-Tinkew, & Horowitz, 2010; Downer, Campos, McWayne, & Gartner, 2008; Landale & Oropresa, 2001; McWayne et al., 2008; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008; Taylor & Behnke, 2005). Furthermore, researchers have found that Latino fathers spend more time in direct interactions with their children than do their European-American and African-American counterparts (Toth & Xu, 1999). Taken together, these findings refute past stereotypical characterizations and indicate that, in addition to supporting their families financially, Latino fathers may serve as a caregiver, a playmate, a teacher, and, at times, “un amigo.”

Along with the multiple roles fathers have in their children’s lives, contemporary scholars also
suggest that gender roles have become less rigid within low-income Latino families, thereby challenging strict hypermasculine ideals. For example, the findings of Auerbach and his colleagues (2008) suggest a shift toward role sharing among Latino families in the United States, in particular, the sharing of financial responsibility. These findings demonstrate not only cooperation between Latino parents but also that the paternal role cannot be pinpointed to one specific function, monetary or otherwise. Changes in parental function also highlight the need for researchers to identify and investigate the nuanced roles Latino fathers take on within their communities. Perhaps more importantly, these findings signify the importance of socioeconomic factors in studies of fatherhood and the importance of targeting specific parent-child activities in order to understand the unique contributions fathers make to their children’s development. Interestingly, researchers suggest that Latino parents may place particular emphasis on reading and writing skills, as they see literacy as the key to upward mobility in American society (Ortiz, 2004). This finding is also underscored by the identification of emergent literacy development as a cornerstone of academic success, a critical link for better understanding the academic trends among Latino youth in the United States.

**Latino Father Involvement in Emergent Literacy Development**

Although researchers have attempted to examine fathers’ participation in early literacy development, there are few empirical studies focusing exclusively on Latino fathers. As noted by Dickinson, DeTemple, Hirschler, and Smith (1992), past researchers viewed mothers as primary caregivers and assumed that teaching young children to read and write was an item on mothers’ “duty list of responsibilities. As such, although several studies have emerged on Latino family involvement in children’s literacy development, these investigations have mostly examined maternal contributions (Ordoñez-Jasis & Ortiz, 2006; Ortiz, 2004; Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005). However, a few studies have emerged that document the importance of fathers in young children’s literacy experiences.

Although early empirical efforts (e.g., Laosa, 1982) illustrated that fathers spent less time in early literacy practices than mothers, recent research indicates that Latino fathers value literacy learning. Although the number of studies is small, findings suggest that Latino fathers do assume responsibility of children’s literacy development, motivate children to develop their reading skills, and participate in a range of activities that support children’s literacy (Bernal et al., 2000; Karther, 2002). Furthermore, recent qualitative investigations document that Latino fathers place heavy emphasis on their role as a teacher, role model, and educator for their children (Raikes, Summers, & Roggman, 2005). Latino fathers’ participation in early literacy ranges from parents who rarely engage in literacy activities with their children to those who establish consistent patterns of literacy development (see Saracho, 2007, for a review). In addition to variability among fathers, other findings suggest positive correlations between Latino father involvement behaviors, such as parenting style, childcare responsibilities, and child academic achievement, mirroring the results of broader parent involvement literature (see Campos, 2008, for a review). Taken together, these studies demonstrate that Latino fathers are important figures in their children’s literacy learning.

However, as Glass and Owen (2010) noted, research examining specific interactions between Latino fathers and their children is needed in order to refine researchers’ understanding and identify the precise ways fathers support children’s developing language and literacy skills. One such parent-child activity, book reading, has both a well-documented influence on children’s emergent literacy (Caspe, 2009; Duursma, Pan, & Raikes, 2008) and a recognized presence among Latino fathers and their children (Saracho, 2007). Although parent-child book-sharing is well studied within psychological research, by and large, these investigations have tended to focus on mother-child interactions.

According to the developmental literature, mothers adopt a variety of scaffolding styles when sharing books with their children (Haden, Reese, & Fivush, 1996; Melzi & Caspe, 2005; Melzi, Schick, & Kennedy, 2011). Melzi and Caspe (2005) examined the narrative styles of middle-class Peruvian and European-American mothers and identified two book-sharing styles: *storytellers*, who act as the sole narrator with minimal child participation, and *storybuilders*, who coconstruct the story with their children. Mothers also differ in the type of information they focus on, such that storytellers narrate the story with great detail, whereas storybuilders tend to relate events in the story to the child’s real-world experiences (Caspe, 2009). Research has shown similar book-sharing styles among mothers...
Latino Fathers and Their Children

Taylor

across various cultural groups, including African American and East Indian mother-child dyads (Hammer, Nimmo, Cohen, Draheim, & Johnson, 2005; Harkins & Ray, 2004). The recent work of Melzi and her colleagues (Melzi et al., 2011) explores a new dimension of maternal scaffolding that distinguished between maternal book-sharing styles (i.e., narrative participation) among Latino communities with various national and socioeconomic distinctions, indicating that book-sharing style might vary according to distinctive cultural traditions.

Given that many interactions are language-based, comprehending the ways parents narrate—whether telling short stories, building tall tales, or simply conversing with their children—is critical to understanding parent-child interaction. Interestingly, there is some evidence for similarities among mothers’ and fathers’ storytelling styles. Reese and Fivush (1993) examined father-child and mother-child past-reminiscing and found no significant differences between mothers’ and fathers’ narrative styles. Additionally, recent research on parent discourse suggests that mother-child and father-child conversations are quite similar in the forms and frequency of language, thus providing generally equivalent linguistic environments (Cristofaro & Tamis-LeMonda, 2008; LaBounty, Wellman, Olson, Lagattuta, & Liu, 2008; Rowe, Coker, & Pan, 2004; Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004). Nevertheless, scholars have yet to explore paternal book-sharing styles, and as a result, almost nothing is known about Latino father-child book-sharing, particularly among low-income families.

The present study sought to address these gaps in the literature by focusing on father involvement and paternal book-sharing within a specific Latino community: English-speaking Latino families. As one subculture within the larger Latino community in the United States, the experiences of English-speaking Latinos are not identical to the experiences of Spanish-speaking Latinos, who tend to be recent immigrants. Of particular relevance to this study, results of a study of father-child book-sharing demonstrated that low-income fathers were more likely to read to their children frequently if they spoke English at home (Duursma et al., 2008). Researchers have also found a positive association between English language and nurturing activities for Mexican fathers (Capps et al., 2010), suggesting that some dimensions of acculturation shape parenting across different groups and may predict father involvement behaviors. Despite these advances, continued investigations are needed to understand associations between involvement routines and book-sharing among low-income Latino fathers. Accordingly, the present study was guided by the following questions: (a) How are low-income English-speaking Latino fathers involved in their children’s lives? (b) How do these fathers support their children’s developing language and literacy skills? (c) How do fathers participate in storytelling during book-sharing interactions?

**Method**

**Participants**

Twelve fathers and their children participated in this study. The dyads were recruited from Head Start centers in New York City. Since 1965, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has helped Head Start offer educational programs and other support services for low-income families with children age 3 to 5 (ACF, 2011). Participants were English speakers (16.7% monolingual, 83.3% Spanish bilingual). Of the bilingual fathers, five reported English as their dominant language, two reported Spanish dominance, and three reported equal use of both languages. Fathers ranged in age from 24 to 44 years ($M = 31.82$, $SD = 7.04$). The majority of the participating fathers (66.7%) were born in the continental U.S. Immigrant fathers ranged in years living in the U.S. from 6 to 28 ($M = 16.75$, $SD = 10.44$). All participating fathers identified with Latino/Hispanic culture, and 83.3% also identified with a specific nationality or cultural heritage within the larger Latino/Hispanic community (see Table 1 for a summary of fathers’ demographic information). The majority of fathers lived with their children and the participating child’s mother, with the exception of three fathers (i.e., two nonresidential fathers and one nonresidential stepfather). Fathers reported an average of 10 years of formal schooling, and the majority of fathers were employed (41.7% full-time and 33.3% part-time). One father was recently laid off and actively pursuing employment, and two fathers were not employed outside the home. All employed fathers reported providing financial support for their children, 25.0% were the lone source of income for their families, 41.6% of families had two working parents, and 8.3% of families also received financial support from extended family members.

As displayed in Table 2, the participating children included 9 boys and 3 girls, all of whom were 4 years old. Great variation existed among children’s ethnicities and family structure, reflect-
Taylor | Latino Fathers and Their Children

ing the diversity of Latino families in the United States. The majority of children were first-born (66.7%; see Table 2), and the number of children per family ranged from 0 to 4, with an average of 1.75 in each family. On average, households had approximately 5 members, most of whom included extended family members.

**Procedure**

Recruitment of participants occurred with the help of Head Start center staff. After obtaining informed consent, fathers and children completed protocol in their homes (25%) or at their Head Start center (75%), depending on fathers and/or Head Start center staff’s comfort with the researcher visiting the participating families’ homes. The researcher had volunteered in one of the participating Head Start centers for over a year, but fathers were also recruited at another Head Start center via research partnerships of the researcher’s mentor.

During pick-up and drop-off times at Head Start, the researcher explained to fathers that he was interested in learning more about the ways fathers participate in their children’s development, in particular how they support their developing language and literacy skills. Children were told that the researcher wanted to learn more about how fathers and children share books. The researcher also explained that the interaction would be audio- and video-recorded and that the participants had the option to review and/or delete the recordings at any point. All participating families received a $20 gift card, a coloring page, and a box of crayons. Head Start center staff members who helped with recruitment were thanked with gift cards as well.

Fathers completed a demographic questionnaire to gather basic information about the participating families. Fathers also completed a measure of involvement and a home literacy questionnaire. Lastly, fathers completed an additional account of their daily activities, which 8 (66.7%) fathers completed.

**TABLE 1**
Summary of Fathers’ Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>N = 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>M (SD)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>31.42 (6.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Education</td>
<td>10.17 (1.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belizean</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuadorian</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemalan</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>2 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduran</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>5 (41.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language(s)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English monolingual</td>
<td>2 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English dominant</td>
<td>5 (41.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal language use</td>
<td>3 (25.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish dominant</td>
<td>2 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country of origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>8 (66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fatherhood status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>9 (75.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonresidential</td>
<td>3 (25.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>5 (41.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>4 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not employed</td>
<td>3 (25.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2**
Summary of Children’s Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>N = 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>n (%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9 (75.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3 (25.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American-Puerto Rican</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuadorian-American</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemalan-American</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic-Black</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>4 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduran</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican-American</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican-West Indian</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Birth order</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First born</td>
<td>8 (66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second born</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later born</td>
<td>3 (25.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After they completed paper-and-pencil measures, fathers were asked to share the wordless picture book *Frog, Where Are You?* (Mayer, 1969) with their child as they typically would share a picture book. This task has been used extensively in language research to elicit narratives from families of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (see Berman & Slobin, 1994) and was especially appropriate for the present study because wordless books allow people of all literacy levels and book-sharing experience to engage in storytelling, which encouraged fathers to feel more comfortable with the task. The researcher did not interact with participants during the book-sharing activity, and there was no time limit on the interactions.

**Measures**

**Inventory of Father Involvement (IFI; Hawkins et al., 2002).** Paternal involvement was assessed with the IFI, a 26-item measure that assesses fathers’ satisfaction with their involvement in parenting along affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Related to Lamb et al.’s (1987) Tripartite Model of Involvement, the IFI includes items that reflect responsibility (e.g., “Accepting financial responsibility for children you have fathered”), engagement (e.g., “Spending time just talking with your children when they want to talk about something”), and accessibility (e.g., “Attending events that your child participates in”). Participants were instructed to rate their performance on each item over the past 12 months, on a 7-point scale, ranging from 0 (very poor) to 6 (excellent). Support for the reliability of the IFI has been noted in previous studies (i.e., Cronbach’s α = .95 and .97; Flouri, 2004; Hawkins et al., 2002), and most recently, an investigation of Latino father involvement reported a Cronbach’s α of .98 (Glass & Owen, 2010). In the present study, Cronbach’s α was .94.

**Home Literacy Survey.** The Home Literacy Survey, an 18-item parent-report of home literacy activities and resources (e.g., number of books available in the home, father-child reading frequency, library visits), was adapted from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Head Start Family and Child Experience Survey (ACF, 1999) for Latino families by Schick (2011).

**Account of daily activities.** In effort to avoid confining the participating fathers’ involvement activities to those specified by empirically established measures, a time-diary task was developed by the researcher and employed in the present study. Fathers were asked to document all activities during the past 24 hr, including whether the participating child and/or any other people were present during the activity. Fathers were also instructed to note the day of the week documented, answer typicality of the day (1 = not typical, 4 = very typical), and list any other common father-child activities not previously documented or discussed.

**Transcription and Coding**

Eleven of the 12 participants completed the book-sharing interaction in English. Recordings were transcribed at the utterance level using a standardized format *Codes for the Human Analysis of Transcripts* (CHAT) available through the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES; MacWhinney, 2000). Utterances were identified by grammatical closure, intonation contour, or prolonged pausing. The researcher transcribed all conversations, and transcriptions were then verified by a research partner who was also trained according to the standardized format.

Book-sharing discourse was segmented into three sections: prereading, book reading, and postreading (see Melzi & Caspe, 2005; Melzi et al., 2011). Prereading exchanges included all dialogue from the moment the recording began until the actual discussion of the story, including any talk about the title, author, book cover, or predictions about the story. Book-reading exchanges included all discussion about the pictures portraying the story. Postreading exchanges consisted of all father-child dialogue after the discussion of the final picture in the book (e.g., questions about whether the child liked the story or would like to read the story again). The controlled nature of the narrative task allowed for cross-comparison of narrative data. As such, discourse during book-reading exchanges was analyzed independently between and among dyads. Due to the fact that not all dyads engaged in pre- and postreading conversations, these discussions were analyzed only at the group level.

Following the coding procedures set forth by Melzi et al. (2011), paternal and child language was coded for two main narrative scaffolding variables that are critical for children’s emergent literacy development: narrative elaboration (i.e., extent to which parent requests or provides new and varied narrative information) and participation (i.e., extent to which parent conarrates the story with the child). Narrative elaboration was coded at the utterance level for pragmatic function (e.g., elaboration requests and conversational maintenance), targeting utterances containing information that
occurred in or pertained to the story world created by the pictures in the book. Narrative elaborative utterances were distinguished as either provisions (i.e., any elaborative utterance that provided new information in a declarative form, including responses and spontaneous provision of information) or requests (i.e., any elaborative utterance that elicited new information from the interlocutor, including open- and closed-ended questions and fill-in-the-blank statements). Utterances whose primary purpose was to maintain the flow of the conversation without adding any new narrative content were coded as conversation. Thus, conversation codes included utterances that served to confirm, correct, clarify, and/or repeat the reading partner’s prior utterances. Additionally, utterances that did not occur in the story world illustrated in the book (e.g., inferences about future events, general knowledge information, metatieracy and metanarrative talk) were coded as nonnarrative related information. Lastly, utterances that were entirely unrelated to the narrative in any way (e.g., discussion of the present or task itself) were coded as nonnarrative unrelated. Inter-rater reliability was established between two coders (i.e., the researcher and a research partner) using J. Cohen’s (1960) Kappa values. For each set of coding schemes, k = 0.95.

Narrative participation considers the conversational roles adopted by parents and their children in the negotiation of who provides narrative information. Narrative participation was assessed by the researcher through analysis of father-child discourse during each frame of the picture book. For each frame, fathers were given a score of 0 (Father as audience) to 3 (Father as narrator), depending on the amount of new narrative information they provided. The audience role represents subtle participation in storytelling, such that all or the majority of new information is provided by the child. The narrator role represents active storytelling, such that all or the majority of new information is provided by the father. Combined scores for each of the 24 frames are totaled and averaged to create a total narrative participation score.

Types of involvement were discerned according to the prevalence of specific behaviors included in the Account of Daily Activities. Each account was coded using an open-coding procedure, and codes were sensitive both to fathers’ activities and whether other family members were present during the documented activities. Consistent with Miles and Huberman’s (1999) recommendations, inter-rater reliability was calculated using the formula: Inter-rater Reliability = Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement). The rate of reliability for this study was 95%. Additionally, the ways fathers supported specifically children’s emergent literacy development were investigated through exploration of involvement dimensions in relation to different features of the father-child book-sharing task.

**Results**

**Preliminary Analyses**

Although the present study was initially designed to allow for quantitative analyses, the challenges of community-based research called for a more qualitative approach, which encouraged greater depth in the exploration of the data. For the purpose of this paper, however, basic statistical procedures were run when possible. Accordingly, patterns in the data were investigated to explore the aims of the study: (a) identify involvement routines among low-income Latino fathers, (b) explore paternal support of emergent literacy development, and (c) investigate aspects of storytelling during father-child book-sharing interactions.

**Identification of Father Involvement Routines**

To assess how low-income English-speaking Latino fathers were involved in their children’s lives, data were described and comparisons were drawn between the Account of Daily Activities, IFI, and Home Literacy Survey. Fathers were found to adopt several involvement routines and engage in a variety of activities with their children regularly. Activities ranged in type from basic childcare (e.g., helping children get ready for school) to completing household chores and playing around the house. For a summary of the fathers’ daily activities, see Table 3.

As a group, fathers engaged most frequently in provider role and basic childcare activities. Consistent with their reported role as breadwinners, 48% of fathers’ activities were classified as working or engaging in other household/provider routines. Basic childcare, the second most frequent activity, accounted for 18% of fathers’ reported activities, indicating that childcare routines made up a substantial proportion of a father’s day. However, individual variability in involvement was reported, and fathers differed both in amount and type of involvement.

To assess involvement beyond that documented in the time diary, father involvement and home literacy scores were computed from the IFI
and Home Literacy Survey, respectively. Father involvement and home literacy were strongly correlated, $r(10) = .73, p < .01$. Table 4 displays descriptive statistics for the IFI. It is interesting to note that subscales of Discipline and Teaching Responsibility ($\alpha = .94$), Providing ($\alpha = .98$), Time and Talking Together ($\alpha = .83$), Praise and Affection ($\alpha = .94$), Developing Talents and Future Concerns ($\alpha = .91$), and Reading and Homework Support ($\alpha = .84$) achieved acceptable levels of reliability, whereas subscales of School Encouragement, Mother Support, and Attentiveness did not. Given the small sample size, further quantitative analyses (e.g., effects of demographic variables on involvement) were not conducted, bypassing the impact of these questionable reliability levels on other findings.

**Exploration of Paternal Support of Emergent Literacy Development**

**Involvement in emergent literacy development.** To investigate how fathers supported children’s developing literacy skills, reliable dimensions of involvement were explored in relation to components of the Home Literacy Survey. All fathers reported reading to their children. The majority of fathers (75%) reported that their children’s mothers also engaged in book reading, and two reported that other family members (e.g., older siblings, extended family members) also read to their children in the home. See Table 5 for a summary of findings. It is also important to note that the Head Start center from which the majority of participants were recruited issued children’s books to families for “weekend reading.” A number of fathers talked about sharing these books in particular with their children.

In addition to sharing books, fathers also reported engaging in literacy activities such as watching educational TV, practicing writing words and numbers, talking about Head Start, and singing songs. Similar to occurrence of book-sharing, the frequency of these activities varied among fathers, but the design of the present study prevented a statistically significant explanation of these findings with regard to involvement and demographic variables. Patterns did emerge, however, as all fathers who reported engaging in educational routines within their account of daily activities were residential. Additionally, two of these three participants were fathers of girls, a finding that may be important because 75% of the sample had sons. Lastly, and of particular interest to this study, all of the fathers who reported engaging in educational activities during the daily routines were bilingual (one reported English dominance, one reported Spanish dominance, and one reported equal language use in the home).
Identification of fathers’ narrative participation during book-sharing. Paternal discourse during book reading ranged from 106 to 230 utterances, for an average of 178 ($SD = 37.54$) and a mean length of utterance (MLU; ratio of words to utterances) of 3.99 ($SD = 0.34$). In addition to differences of narrative length, fathers engaged in book-sharing in unique ways while providing rich linguistic environments for their children. Controlling for the amount of conversation, analysis of the type, and frequency of fathers’ narrative discourse features suggested that the majority of fathers in the sample tended to adopt narrative styles that encouraged greater narrative provision and required less input from children. Accordingly, children also differed in discourse during the book-sharing interaction but tended to engage in nonnarrative conversation most often.

As previously discussed, fathers tended to act as the sole narrator and seemed to encourage little participation from their child beyond that of simple conversation. However, some fathers displayed a greater tendency to share the role as narrator and coconstructed the story with their children. In conjunction with these differences, fathers also differed in the type of information on which they focused, such that some fathers described the story with great detail, whereas others tended to refer back to the child’s real-world experiences or the present itself. The following excerpts provide an example of the observed differences among fathers’ storytelling participation. Both excerpts refer to the same frame of the story, in which the boy is looking for his frog inside a tree, while the dog runs away from the beehive he presumably knocked down. The first excerpt demonstrates a style of narration with limited child participation. The second excerpt demonstrates a style of narration that includes active storytelling from the child.

**Excerpt 1**

Father: So, the boy yelled into the tree, and the owl came out.
Father: The kid fell.
Father: And the dog runs by with the bees behind him.
Father: You see that?
Child: Yeah.

**Excerpt 2**

Father: So, then he looked there and —Oh snap! A owl comes out of the tree! And what happened?
Child: Yeah! Then the boy falls.
Father: Yeah, and the owl scares the boy so the boy falls.
Child: Yeah, but he’s okay.
Father: You remember when you fell?
Child: Yeah.
Father: Just like the boy, he fell, right?
Child: Yeah.
Father: So the boy keeps lookin’ for his frog. And the dog runs by as the bees are chasin’ him.
Child: Yeah, they could sting.
Father: That’s right, they could sting! He better be careful.

As demonstrated by the excerpts, storytelling styles varied among fathers and their children: Some fathers encouraged active participation from their children, whereas others did not seek the child’s contributions to the story. Analysis of narrative participation offered further explanation of these tendencies.

The ways fathers and their children participated in narrative discourse was explored through examination of the shift between narrator and audience roles throughout the story (i.e., narrative participation). As displayed in Figure 1, narrative participation scores ranged from 45.84 to 72.00 ($M = 59.17, SD = 7.68$). Spanish-dominant bilin-

<table>
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<th>TABLE 5</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Summary of Home Literacy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Readers in the home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father only</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father and mother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father, mother, and other family members</td>
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<td>Frequency of reading at home</td>
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<td>Daily</td>
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<td>Weekly</td>
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<td>Monthly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of children’s books in the home</td>
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<td>More than 20</td>
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<td>15 to 20</td>
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<td>10-15</td>
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<td>5-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Note: IFI scores range from 0 (very poor) to 6 (excellent).</td>
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Latino Fathers and Their Children | Taylor

As a group, father-child discourse during pre- and postreading mostly included conversations about the task or the present itself. During prereading, 3 fathers read the title of the book aloud and described the cover to their child, inferring the plot of the story. During post-reading, 4 fathers also reviewed the story with their child and asked questions that tested story comprehension (e.g., “So, what happened in this story?” “Where did the frog go?”) and inquired about opinions (e.g., “Did you like the story?” “What did you like about the story?”). Additionally, three fathers asked their child if they would like to read the story next time, suggesting that fathers may take on narrator roles during the initial read, but that roles may shift in subsequent revisits to the same children’s book.

To investigate a relation between different involvement routines and features of storytelling, the data collected from three participants were explored further. These participants were selected for additional analysis, given complete data profiles (i.e., completion of all measures and tasks) and their reported engagement in educational routines within the daily activities log. Exploratory analyses suggested that fathers who engaged in educational activities tended to have higher narrative participation scores. The exploratory nature of this study prevents more substantial results, but findings are encouraging for future researchers to investigate a relation between involvement activities and paternal book-sharing styles.

Discussion

Few studies have examined the intersection of father involvement and children’s emergent literacy development, particularly among culturally diverse populations. Accordingly, the main objective of the present study was to explore the ways low-income Latino fathers support their children’s literacy skills. Concurrent with recent research on father involvement, the results of this study provide further support for the multidimensionality of father involvement, especially among a population as diverse as the sample. Furthermore, fathers’ interest in and support of children’s emergent literacy development was evident, a salient contribution to the limited literature on low-income Latino fathers in the United States.

The variety of involvement routines and variability among the frequency and type of daily activities supports the notion of fathering as a multifaceted construct. Far from past stereotypical depictions of Latino fathers as uninterested and uninvolved, the participants in this study contributed actively to childrearing, demonstrating both care and concern for their children beyond assuming financial responsibility alone. This finding stands in stark contrast to Sánchez-Ayéndez’s (1988) suggestion that Puerto Rican fathers offer little direct involvement in childcare. Given the reported involvement of fathers who identified as Puerto Rican in this sample, it stands to reason that the discrepancy between findings may indicate generational differences in the ways fathers care for their children. However, due to the small sample size of the present study, these statements are made with caution.

Although concrete trends were not observed with regard to home literacy activities, findings supported the view that fathers take an interest in their young children’s development in a variety of ways. Consistent with past literature (Ordoñez-Jasis &
Ortiz, 2006; Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005; Saracho, 2007), Latino fathers’ participation in early literacy varied among individual parents. From partaking in the day-to-day activities associated with childrearing to reading books at bedtime, it is clear that contributing to children’s development is an important aspect of Latino fathering, a finding that further emphasizes the suggestions of other recent involvement research (Capps et al., 2010; Downer et al., 2008; McWayne et al., 2008; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008). Furthermore, the results of the present study suggest that higher total involvement is correlated with higher home literacy. Thus, emphasizing the important role fathers play in child development may serve to promote home literacy as well. These considerations may be especially important for the study of fathering, as according to Glass (2007) important reminder that people of any given ethnicity do not necessarily identify with their culture to the same degree. These concepts are particularly important when studying a people as diverse as Latinos in the United States. The demographics of this sample alone reveal many differences among how Latino men classify their ethnicity, from men who embrace a Latino/Hispanic identity to men who stand by their family’s specific cultural heritage. Explanation for these within-group differences are left for future researchers to elucidate.

These considerations may be especially important for the study of fathering, as according to Glass and Owen (2010), Latino father involvement may vary on the basis of cultural and gender norms, acculturation process, and ethnic identity. The nature of the current study did not permit exploration into how Latino cultural values are met with mainstream American parenting norms. However, in light of the narrative participation trends regarding language use (an indicator of acculturation) and age (an indicator of generational status), future studies should account for the complex relations among these factors. By failing to do so, researchers may miss the ways cultural and generational value systems influence involvement and child development in diverse populations.

Future work that builds on the present study should take these factors into consideration in
order to contribute to the psychological literature on low-income Latino men. By and large, family researchers have noted the difficulty of recruiting fathers to participate in their studies, whether through direct commentary or indicated by a lack of fathers represented in studies of family involvement. Given the documented difficulty in recruiting participants among these communities (Domenech Rodríguez, Rodríguez, & Davis, 2006), researchers should establish partnerships with community members and expand recruitment efforts beyond traditional educational settings, such as schools and libraries. For example, many of the fathers in this study reported frequently taking their children to the park or playground during spring, summer, and fall seasons, particularly on the weekends. Hence, researchers should adjust recruitment strategies accordingly if larger, more representative samples are desired.

In response to the literature documenting the challenges faced by low-income Latino children in the American education system, researchers need to consider all aspects of the home environment in order to better understand these children’s educational experiences. Although past researchers have focused mostly on maternal contributions or family involvement in general, studies focusing on the unique contributions fathers make are much needed. Findings of this study, however limited, support the view of fathers as important figures in their young children’s literacy development. For example, the reported frequency of book-sharing and other activities that support literacy learning indicate fathers play a role in facilitating children’s early learning. Clearly, continued research is needed to build upon these exploratory findings and explain the effects of their unique contributions. For example, studies focused solely on paternal narrative styles will explain better the roles fathers adopt in telling stories to their children and how these roles relate to academic success.

Developmental researchers have repeatedly studied storybook reading as a cornerstone of children’s literacy. Findings demonstrate that different dimensions of maternal scaffolding styles support different critical skills for children’s early literacy development and contribute to academic success (Melzi et al., 2011), but researchers have yet to determine where fathers fall in this equation. Given the academic challenges Latino children in the United States face as they begin formal education, researchers should consider devoting greater attention to the ways fathers’ narrative styles contribute to literacy skills, such as letter recognition, vocabulary, and story comprehension skills. Considering the advances made by researchers of mother-child dyads, filling these gaps in the literature may be as simple as widening the participant pool to include the other half of the homestead.

Despite the variability in the present sample, narrative styles similar to those described by Melzi and her colleagues (Caspe & Melzi, 2008; Melzi & Caspe, 2005; Melzi et al., 2011) were observed. Trends among the participants of the present study suggest that fathers may adopt narrative styles similar to those endorsed by mothers of various cultural backgrounds. As previously noted, research on Dominican, Mexican, and Peruvian mothers of various socioeconomic backgrounds suggests that Latino mothers tend to adopt the sole narrator role (Caspe, 2009; Caspe & Melzi, 2008; Melzi & Caspe, 2005; Melzi et al., 2011). The practical implications of these results are important given Caspe’s (2009) finding that the children of sole-narrator mothers had higher emergent literacy skills. The present study’s finding that Spanish dominant bilingual fathers tend to have higher participation scores than monolingual English fathers corroborates past research on Latino mothers and may be especially important given the recent documentation of the importance of narrative participation among mothers and their children (Melzi et al., 2011).

As previously mentioned, there is some evidence for similarities among mothers’ and fathers’ storytelling styles in past reminiscing (Reese & Fivush, 1993). However, language researchers have yet to devote enough attention to fathers in order for this conversation to continue much further. In sum, several questions remain unanswered, such as whether mothers’ and fathers’ book-sharing styles are complementary, and how parental narrative styles may combine to supporting children’s literacy skills. The present study offers findings to encourage future studies focused on fathers and their children. Given these new directions, future researchers will be better equipped to investigate relations between paternal book-sharing and children’s literacy development.

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Latino Fathers and Their Children | Taylor

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Author Notes. Funding for this study was provided by a Psi Chi International Honors Society Undergraduate Research Grant, an NYU Steinhardt Dean’s Grant for Undergraduate Research, and an NYU Steinhardt Department of Applied Psychology Undergraduate Research Grant, without which this project would not have been possible. The author would also like to extend his gratitude to Dr. Gigliana Melzi, the Latino Family Involvement Project, and the members of the Applied Psychology honors program for their support and guidance in drafting this manuscript. All correspondence should be directed to: jjt290@nyu.edu

Jackson J. Taylor graduated summa cum laude with a BS in applied psychology from New York University in 2011. In addition to conducting his own research, he also served as vice-president of Psi Chi at NYU, assisted with research for the Latino Family Involvement Project, and cofounded and designed NYU Applied Psychology OUP, an online publication of undergraduate work. Oustside of NYU, Jackson interned at the United States Association for Body Psychotherapy journal where he explored his interests in attachment and the process of psychotherapy. He is currently a doctoral student of clinical psychology at the Derner Institute of Advanced Psychological Studies, Adelphi University. As his research efforts continue, he hopes to contribute to the body of literature on cultural factors in the therapeutic relationship.