

**José Olavarría, "Men of Home? Chile rearing and Housekeeping
among Chilean Working-Class Fathers,**

en Mathew Gutmann, *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America.*

Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2003, pp 333-350.

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Men at Home? Child Rearing
and Housekeeping among
Chilean Working-Class Fathers

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I like doing housecleaning. This has nothing to do with being a man or a woman, I still have to do my share. . . . What woman wouldn't like her man to help?—Alex, age twenty-one

This essay examines changes in fathering among working-class men who live with their children in Santiago, Chile.¹ Despite the fact that hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal fatherhood in the nuclear family are reference points for urban fathers, in gathering their life histories and conducting in-depth interviews I have observed that the growing autonomy of women, the demands of modernity, economic adjustment policies, and the requirements of the nuclear family itself have had an impact that has changed the subjective meanings of domesticity, introducing new practices (at least according to the men themselves) and creating a series of new dilemmas that they have been forced to confront.²

In Chile, as elsewhere, the workplace and the home were separated—particularly in urban areas—only as a result of the industrial revolution, which detached the site of production from where people lived. This situation “gradually gave rise to the public/private distinction, leading to a separation in the spheres of action of women and men, of power and affection” (Jelin 1994, 76). Simultaneously, in response to the requirements imposed by the economy and those of reproducing the labor force, in conjunction with family policing policies that sought to impose discipline on the family life of low-income urban sectors (Donzelot 1979), a particular type of family gained strength: a nuclear family in which the father/patriarch played the role of head of the household and provider and in which the mother took charge of domestic matters and child rearing in the home. This type of family was idealized as the normative model—particularly in the twentieth century—assumed to be “normal” and “natural.” Its existence gained ideological dominance through the theory of gender-determined roles, despite discrepancies with lived experience. In this sense the distinction between the domestic and public spheres, achieved through an abrupt division in social reality based on gender differences—placing men in charge of public duties and women in charge of private and domestic matters as if this were a universal constant of social organization—is a historical artifact, as has been militantly demonstrated by the women’s movement, by feminism, and, in recent years, by some men who aim to transform gender relations in order to achieve greater equity with and autonomy for women.

Objective transformations in the conditions of everyday life in recent decades, particularly because of economic adjustment policies and the values of modernity, are generating profound changes in behavior, replete with new demands, deficiencies, and possibilities. The latter are not necessarily consciously perceived by men in their own lives or by other members of their nuclear families, as has been demonstrated by research involving men not only in Chile (Olavarría 2001a, 2001b) but in other Latin American contexts as well (Fuller 2000; Gutmann 2000; Viveros 2000). Many men assume that these new realities do not, and will not, affect

them, although they are feeling the effects of these transformations in their daily existence.

Awareness among men that the separation between home and workplace does not reflect their own experiences or that of their partners has begun to gain force in recent years, although at times the disruption of the dual world—the public and the private—has gone unnoticed by men. The main trigger in this recognition has been the massive incorporation of women into the world of gainful employment, a situation that has become the norm among working-class families. Once a woman joins the workforce, it is unlikely that she will leave it and return to domestic work as her single and/or main activity, except, for instance, temporarily after the birth of a child. Men are beginning to notice that women are not “returning to their homes,” although many are unwilling to accept this reality, and despite the fact that the actors are often the same, they are confronted by a new reality in which the patriarchal nuclear family is subject to changes not only in the power resources available to men and women but also in the relationships and meanings articulated between them.

The explanation that fathers have for these two processes—women moving into the public sphere, specifically toward “the market space,” to use de Barbieri’s term (1996), and men moving to the private sphere, child rearing, and domestic chores—is closely linked to power resources and to the position of authority assigned to fathers in the patriarchal nuclear family. Men interpret these changes from this standpoint. In general, even if they are not consciously aware that the basis of patriarchal fatherhood is going through a crisis, it is increasingly difficult for men, particularly working-class men, to achieve these positions of authority. Objectively, fatherhood takes place in a context of growing insecurity linked to recent demographic processes that highlight a family order in Chilean society (that of the patriarchal nuclear family) that is increasingly unstable, as evidenced by a drop in the number of marriages, an increase in marriage annulments,³ and a rising number of children born out of wedlock in situations in which many men, initially at least, do not legally acknowledge paternity.

Paradoxically, gainful employment among women has turned into one of the pillars supporting this type of family, while concurrently creating

new realities that undermine its permanence. If women do not work, the family's quality of life deteriorates, at least in relative terms. When women are providers, their role gives rise to tensions for many fathers, especially because remunerated employment provides women a certain autonomy that they previously lacked. Earning their own money and being able to decide how to spend it and going out and establishing relationships with other people, including other men, affect the authority of the patriarch. The father cannot exercise effective control over what "his" woman does when she is not at home. And men are not indifferent to these changes.

Men describe their partner's financial collaboration as "assistance" and "the leftovers," certainly not the main contribution, which is what the men are supposed to provide. Within the home, although men may help women with housework, most continue to see this as women's responsibility. In general, the explanations and justifications that men use in these situations do not alter the position afforded them by dominant notions of fatherhood, although the underpinnings of their position are actually eroding and their discourse is therefore contradictory.

Nevertheless, despite changed behavior among many working-class men in Santiago and their own reinterpretation of their domestic activities, the patterns of hegemonic masculinity continue to be strongly rooted in the discourse separating the home from the workplace. As thirty-nine-year-old Alexis explains, "I have never liked having my wife work; I want to have a job myself and have her take care of the children until they grow up. I work and I provide for all their needs. I fulfill all my duties, [and] I pay the bills. Maybe this is a very chauvinistic system, but I feel self-sufficient because I was raised this way. I was raised to look out for my family."

The Sense of the Domestic

Particularly among younger men, helping in the home can be a spontaneous affair, although this occurs less frequently among older men as well. By their own accounts young fathers are apparently more willing to help women "do anything," an attitude that they do not feel reflects poorly on their manhood. On the contrary, they actually feel satisfied doing it. As thirty-five-year-old Víctor explains, "I don't find anything unpleasant;

when I'm home I do the ironing every day; if dishes need to be washed, I do so; if my little girl needs her diaper changed, I change it."

But this predisposition is limited by the time men actually find or claim to be available for such activities. Men work long hours, often on weekends, holidays, and overtime, to increase their income, which effectively prevents fathers from becoming more involved in domestic activities.⁴ They help out mainly on weekends. Even so, men feel that women are grateful they do any household chores. Although some men dislike doing so, they help out when they see that their partner is tired or that she is running out of time to complete "her duties." Twenty-seven-year-old El Sardina clarifies, "I think she likes me to help. On weekends I help her make the beds or when I get home early and she is still busy with chores; but I don't like this very much because she is picky." For some, helping women is a problem of conscience.

Permanently taking charge of household chores is for most men impossible to imagine. This is particularly true for older men, who more uniformly believe that domestic chores are the responsibility of women. Forty-eight-year-old Antonio states:

I'm not going to tell you that I enjoy doing it; I wouldn't do it willingly. I would feel obliged by circumstances, and maybe I would not stay [at home]; I would be out looking for any kind of job. I would feel bad because I've already become accustomed to work; I've been working for a very long time. Maybe I would feel all right not working for one or two weeks, but then I would feel that something is missing, like a vacuum. Perhaps it is a little bit chauvinist. Yes [it is], because, for instance, I wouldn't like being dependent on my children or on my wife.

Moreover, it is one thing for a father to want to help with household chores and another for him to be told to do them. He can help his partner, as a way of showing affection, companionship, and/or love, but this help is born out of his own will and is, at most, a "moral" duty. It is not imposed by a third party. This sentiment is expressed by twenty-nine-year-old Moncho: "I used to like doing housework, painting, sweeping the yard, because I believe I am a clean person. What I dislike the most is to be ordered around. Because, I don't know, in the life I lead on the street, or when I was

in jail, I was the one who gave the orders." When a woman orders a man around—if she dares do so—a man becomes offended and his reaction can range from indifference to, at the very least, verbal violence. Fathers do not like women to give them orders: men are the ones in charge, even in a field in which women hold the upper hand.

Getting Involved in Reproductive Duties

According to the men interviewed in our study in Santiago, their engagement and participation in child rearing and household chores are determined mostly by the demands and expectations of their partners, their own interest in helping their partner and being closer to their children, the needs that arise when their partners join the labor force, and the insecurity of their own jobs. These factors reinforce each other and give some weight to the ways men describe their involvement in these tasks. But we must not forget that the share of child rearing and household chores undertaken by men is considerably smaller than that of women. Thus, when men say that they help in this regard, we need to keep in mind precisely what they are talking about, how much time they actually devote to these duties, and the fact that they would be unlikely to exchange their share in the division of labor with women (Sharim and Silva 1998).

The attitude adopted by women when they start living with their partners defines to a great extent the involvement of men in household reproductive activities. Life as a couple is determined by the type of relationship that a woman hopes to establish; it depends on her ability and the power resources available to her to negotiate and to involve her partner in child rearing and household chores. According to men's testimonies, they have been involved in reproductive activities if, from the outset, women made it clear that they wished to maintain some independence and equality in the relationship: that the women would continue working at a paying job or that they intended to join the labor market in the future, even with small children. Forty-six-year-old Pedro explains this dynamic in his relationship: "She has always worked. When I met her she was working, and even now, she is working two days a week. [Since] it breaks her heart to leave the baby . . . I have to take on that responsibility so that the child will not be alone, because it makes me sad for the child to be alone. It is a way

to help her, but it causes me problems." The strength of the affective link at the beginning of the relationship is also important and gives women power resources that allow them to negotiate their partner's potential involvement. This is particularly the case for young men whose partners have clear demands about the type of relationship they wish to establish.

Some fathers who had not been involved in domestic chores in previous relationships may alter their practices with subsequent partners, either by doing what they failed to do before or by ceasing to do what irritated their earlier partners. As thirty-five-year-old Daniel reveals, "Occasionally I'll tidy up the house, fix electrical things or anything else that's broken. I like doing all kinds of things around the house. I didn't do this with my previous wife because it bored me, plus the fact that I was tired when I came home." But women who do not involve their partner from the moment they start living together may also change later in the relationship and begin demanding more independence. According to the men interviewed, some women change during their time together as a couple; they become more consciously aware of their situation and "dare" to point out this fact. Forty-eight-year-old Antonio describes this process:

I have noticed a really positive change in recent times, compared to several years ago. My wife pointed out things that I had no idea I was doing wrong, or what was wrong. Before that, she didn't dare bring it up; she was more submissive, a lot more. Recently, she has started saying, "No way!" and explaining why. . . . At first, I get mad, but afterwards I think about things and I say, "She's right," and may even tell her so. Sometimes I apologize and say, "You're right, I like the way you're doing things. I like what you've changed; it's helped you." I say something like that and that way I encourage her.

When men hear these "new" demands, some acknowledge them, accept them, and begin, by their own accounts, to change.

Men's involvement in domestic tasks, initially considered women's work, is also triggered by women's participation in the labor force. A paying job places limits on women's possibilities to perform domestic work and makes evident the need for the father to help at home. Realizing the demands faced by his partner, thirty-five-year-old Nano clarifies: "I help my wife with everything because she gets tired and women work

more than men. She has a lot more duties in terms of household chores, cooking, ironing, washing, all that. . . . I don't like ironing because I sweat a lot and I get very tired. Occasionally, when she has a lot of work and is stressed, I help her do the ironing." "Helping" women is a necessity about which men cannot be indifferent, even though they may refrain from becoming involved.

When they have to replace women, men may finally acknowledge all that is involved in women's work. The domestic order that they thought was natural becomes altered and involves a cost: they assume duties at home for which they were not previously responsible. Forty-three-year-old Pez explains: "That was when I realized that women really do a huge job at home, that they have to be on call twenty-four hours a day. Because, what happens, a man works eight or ten hours, comes home and sits down to be catered to. But I realized what it is to be there, for instance, when one of the girls couldn't sleep or got sick during the night." Coming to an agreement with their partner to handle chores that she previously assumed by herself, particularly if there are small children at home and schedules to keep, can force men to share in child-rearing duties.

Unemployment—a common situation among working-class men—makes them face a twofold dynamic: on the one hand, they are forced to confront the importance of women's work in the home, even if they may have verbally acknowledged it repeatedly in the past, and, on the other hand, they have to assume some of these duties. The generally insecure and unstable nature of working-class men's work makes unemployment a "normal" experience (Olavarría, Benavente, and Mellado 1998). Being left without a job produces multiple effects on these fathers. Becoming unemployed means being left very quickly without money. Their savings are minimal, and they have no other resources except for their own ability to work and that of their female partners, older children, and other family members. Unemployment compels many of them to temporarily assume household chores. During this time they have no choice but to do these chores, especially if their wives work or are looking for work.

Taking charge of household chores can depress some men, even if wives are careful not to reproach them for their joblessness and are supportive while they are unemployed. Men, especially at the beginning, may feel worthless; they have no ready cash for their own expenses and have to

ask their wives for money. And they cannot talk about this with anyone because they would be viewed as "loafers." Later on, however, they are obliged to acknowledge their unemployment and somehow adapt until they find a new job. In the meantime they assume the chores of rearing, feeding, and keeping the children clean, caring for them, teaching them, and responding to their needs. This situation brings home, often with a destructive force, the fact that they are crossing the threshold of the forbidden because they have lost part of the power that ensures their authority and self-esteem; they are now dependent on women and they are crossing into the feminine world. Although unemployment is, for some, an opportunity to feel the love, fondness, and solidarity of their female partners, for others, on the contrary, the experience is characterized by women's contempt and rejection.

Raising and Spending Time with Children

The space for rearing and spending time with children—generational reproduction—is one of the areas of fatherhood where the effects of modernity have had the greatest impact on the intimate lives of couples and people in general. The often contradictory demands imposed by modernity, of seeking individual independence on the one hand and more intimacy in relationships on the other, have had a special effect on the lives of couples and on the expectations and feelings of fathers. Women are increasingly demanding more independence and equality from men, and both women and children are demanding more intimacy and intensity from their emotional relationships. Similarly, fathers search for enhanced physical and emotional closeness with their children; for many men this means a willingness to respond to the demands made by their families, although they acknowledge that they do not always achieve this goal and that this is a source of conflict. This situation generates many tensions in the feelings and practices of these men, tensions that are expressed in the ways they bring up and socialize their children. Encouraged to speak about raising their children, men present a favorable self-image, which reflects the fact that they have assimilated a more egalitarian view of their relationships with their partners and more emotional intimacy with their children. But we should not be deceived: it is necessary to distinguish between what



Man carrying his son in Mexico City. Photograph by Matthew C. Gutmann.

the men interviewed report they have done and their actual practices. We know too little of the latter except, occasionally, as byproducts of what men have done.

Men in Santiago learn what is expected of a father through their own experiences and what they have been taught by their own fathers and mothers. Fathers have been many-sided characters: they are loved, cherished, and respected, but at the same time they are feared, distant, and sometimes hated. Their behavior has been frequently ambiguous and confusing; they are conscientious in some instances and unprincipled in others (Fuller 1997; Olavarría 2000a; Olavarría, Benavente, and Mellado 1998).

In general, the contradictory perceptions of men regarding their fathers

with respect to child rearing and socialization make them feel unprepared to be fathers when their first child is born. As the saying goes, "When the child arrives, the father is born." Yet they make negligible efforts to find out about fatherhood before the fact in order to identify approaches that might differ from the contradictory ways in which they were fathered. This approach leads, in principle, to the reproduction with their own children of the type of fathering they experienced. Fatherhood is confronted spontaneously; it is something that catches many of them by surprise. Thirty-five-year-old Nano maintains, "I wasn't ready to be a father. I wanted to be one, but I wasn't ready." Apart from having a clear idea of what their obligations are in terms of the responsibilities of being a father, for example, acknowledging the child and providing for him or her, child rearing is not an issue, even though it may be long awaited. But with current changes in the objective situations that these fathers experience, things have not been easy for them.

Demands on fathers to participate more actively in the rearing and socialization of their children have existed for some decades. These demands, nonetheless, have intensified in recent years across all social sectors. Now, according to their accounts, young fathers generally help mothers with child rearing, particularly during the first months and years. This assistance continues over time, with some men continuing to help their partner do household chores, even occasionally cooking, washing the clothes, and other "household things" to ensure that the woman gets a break, especially during the weekends. As twenty-five-year-old Yayo specifies: "Occasionally I may change a diaper. I check to see that my child is combed, that she has washed her face; the two of us do it. As soon as I get home from work I start playing with her. It's the first thing I do. I play with her. I like to make her laugh. I like to teach her." Nevertheless, there are some boundaries that men will not cross.

Experiences and Lessons during a Child's Life Cycle

In child rearing the moments of greatest physical contact are during the first months of the child's life. This is repeatedly mentioned by younger fathers, although some of the older ones have also had this experience. They feel the need to watch, to touch, to caress their children and to make

them feel the father's love and affection. Some men take their child for a walk at night, put the child to sleep, feed him or her, change her or his diapers, and wash the baby. Twenty-five-year-old Yayo's experiences are similar: "I used to look at her [my baby], pick her up. I spent my time watching her. I was concerned for her comfort and cleanliness, her welfare, as I am to this day." This happens especially with the first child—frequently, the ones that follow do not enjoy this privilege, as some men lose their enthusiasm after the first child and, although they say that they also love the others, do not make as great an effort as they did with their first child because that is what the mother is there for; and in their minds she is the one ultimately responsible for the children.

Fathers feel demands for further involvement when their partner works during the first months or years of their child's life. Younger fathers tend to help more with child rearing and socialization, although among this group of men such work is still deemed principally the duty of mothers. It is their "role." When children are older, fathers try to establish spaces and times to spend with them, which is not always possible, according to their accounts. They watch television together, dance, talk, go out shopping together, go for strolls, and listen to music. A few take them to their daycare centers or to school. They may talk about school and homework with older children.

Although going out for walks or to the park may occur only occasionally, they are activities that both fathers and children remember for a long time. As thirty-four-year-old Alexis recounts, "Last week we went to the Metropolitan Park on an outing organized by the company and we had a great time. We had a barbecue; the kids got on all the rides; we rode the train; it was great!" When children become teenagers, however, tension arises in their lives and those of their parents. Teenagers challenge parental authority, disobey, and start becoming independent. Nonetheless, according to the testimonies of these fathers, their children often still demand emotional contact with them. The intensity that these fathers believe characterizes their relationship with the children, especially with the boys, starts to weaken; they feel that a distance begins to set in, and disagreements and conflicts emerge.

Fathers, in general, acknowledge that they should give more freedom to their teenage children, especially boys, because regardless of what the

parents say, the youths will find ways to become more independent. Teenagers no longer accept parental authority and demands without question. As thirty-nine-year-old Herman relates regarding his son, "My relationship with Víctor, now that he is older, has changed a bit, because he is more of a man, he is starting to make his own decisions and he no longer likes certain things." When children set up their own homes, parents generally continue to keep an eye on their lives. They keep up the relationships through regular visits held both in their own homes and in those of the children. There they talk, reminisce over stories and anecdotes, and eat and drink together. Yet the worries do not end.

Dilemmas: Married Life and Fatherhood

The experiences that men currently face as fathers in Santiago challenge what they have learned about fatherhood, which often does not coincide with their actual lives. In their relationships with the mothers of their children, many men are forced to question the subjective meanings of fatherhood. Masculine identities have been reproduced in men's own nuclear families by reference to a hegemonic masculinity that encourages a patriarchal type of fathering. But they feel that this pattern of fatherhood is losing hold and does not allow them to address the new demands that confront them. Similarly, they believe that they lack adequate responses to their partners and children, who continually ask for more independence, demand respect for their own decisions, and seek closer affective relationships with their fathers. Furthermore, particularly among younger men, ambitions create questions about their role as fathers, questions for which they lack clear answers.

The fusion between the dictates of patriarchal fatherhood to be the provider, authority, and protector, and those of modern fatherhood, which calls for democratic, intimate, affectionate, and close fathering, creates new demands for fathers manifested in an emerging pattern that is proving thoroughly untenable. It is impossible to be a good father, one who complies with the demands imposed by this mixture, because these requirements are just too demanding for a single person. Thus, in exercising their roles as fathers, men seek answers and find themselves in the midst of a series of choices and dilemmas that are linked to those subjec-

tive meanings and practices that they must somehow resolve, either by active intervention or by letting things be, giving new meanings to fatherhood or reaffirming what they learned from their original models of how to be good fathers.

The birth of a child, especially the first one, frequently causes a conflict for these men. Until the child is born, the father experiences pregnancy through the mother, but once the child is born, the father often feels his world has been invaded, and he may view the child as a competitor for the devotion and affection of the mother, who also needs to be cared for. Thirty-three-year-old Negro explains: "That's where one's freedom ends and that of the other individual begins to emerge. One ceases to function for one's own benefit and starts functioning for the benefit of another."

Working and being with children is a contradictory experience because it is mediated by the ability to provide, to be the family's source of livelihood. The possibility of supporting one's family financially, however, is not always available to men, and in some cases it can become an obstacle that prevents them from achieving their desire to establish bonds of affection, of deeper and more intense family ties. Twenty-one-year-old Marcelo feels this pressure: "She [Marcelo's wife] would definitely like me to spend more time at home, to spend more time with the child." This is one of the main dilemmas reported by men, that they resolve through work the activity they see as their primary responsibility; even though they may help in the house, child rearing is the duty of women.

Generally fathers feel that they spend very little time with their children, that "now" they are less dedicated, insinuating that "before" they used to be more so. "Now" this has changed even though they would like to spend more time with their children. Their duties, however, prevent them from closer contact although, at the same time, they are aware that if they had more time, they would be bored, that they would not know what to do with it. As forty-eight-year-old Emilio said, "Unfortunately, my job is very enslaving, so I have very little time. At this moment, I have time [to go home], but I don't do it because I fear going home. I am not really afraid of going home, but what am I going to do once I'm there? Be bored? I'd rather stay out with my friends."

Demands for more affective closeness and intimacy in their relationship with their children is perceived by fathers as a requirement that they

cannot easily satisfy; this demand becomes stronger as children grow up, especially in adolescence, and it is expressed both in the way these fathers listen and are listened to by their children. For fathers seeking to be closer to their children, being a parent implies moving within two spheres that are sometimes contradictory and difficult to resolve: trying at the same time to be the one in charge and a friend. Where is the boundary? On the one hand, they feel obliged to show their children the difference between right and wrong, values and norms, and simultaneously to set limits on them. On the other hand, these same fathers also often seek friendship, affective closeness, and a degree of intimacy with their children.

According to their testimonies, fathers in Santiago need to teach children rules and moral values, self-respect and self-esteem. They must take care of them, protect them, occupy and preoccupy themselves with their children. But preparing their progeny for life also involves introducing them to the laws of the street and its contradictory practices of respect for others and the use of power. Fathers find that they need to guide and accompany their children so that they will be honest, worthy, and upstanding adults while simultaneously teaching them to defend themselves from the dangers of life and to enjoy what life has to offer. The trick is to do so with respect and understanding, without overpowering or overprotecting them. Jano, a thirty-five-year-old father, states his philosophy:

A father should allow children to be what they want to be and support them in the process. The important thing is not for the father to ask his children to be better than he is or for them to have things that he didn't have, but to let them be and always be there for them. But a child is also a being who is there to be shaped, taught values, and trained to be proud of herself or himself.

Some fathers fluctuate between allowing their children more freedom and autonomy and the urge to place limits and regulate their children. The choice lies between supporting what the children want and guiding the children based on the fathers' own experiences.

Many fathers reported that they feel uncomfortable when they have to acknowledge that their children, especially girls, are sexual beings, and, in general, they refrain from talking about sex with their own girls and boys. At most, they make an offhand comment, to acknowledge their son's

experience with women, or point out the necessary precautions to avoid getting a young woman pregnant. Conversations with daughters about men and sexuality are deemed unsuitable; no one knows what may happen, and fathers are often afraid to initiate this type of conversation. In short, they pay no attention to the issue or they transfer the question to their spouse; mothers are expected to speak to daughters. Fathers will take care of the sons, of course, when they get a little older. . . .

Men, like women, believe that the demands requiring them to be the providers and to participate in child rearing and spend time with children leave them practically no room for a more intimate life with their spouses. Forty-eight-year-old Antonio explains this dilemma: "We have devoted ourselves solely to the family, and therefore we have lost some room for our own relationship. We are always putting the children first and I sometimes tell her 'I'm fed up,' tired of being a father. I would like to be only a husband." The need to have space and time for themselves is another requirement that they face, but they view this more as a wish than as an actual possibility.

Some men also feel that their partners need more room for themselves. Thirty-two-year-old Marco, for example, is relatively open about this point: "She has her own space. She sometimes tells me that she is going to get together with her classmates, with the same ones she used to go to parties with. I take her there and then I bring her back." It is not always easy, however, for men to accept that their partners do things in which they do not participate or somehow cannot oversee. What will she do while she is not at home and not at work? The uncertainty caused by the possibility of another man "conquering" her is something that many men cannot tolerate; scenes caused by jealousy are usually based on this fear. But there also are men, like Marco, who believe that their partners, like themselves, are entitled to their own space and thus acknowledge greater autonomy for women.

Final Remarks

We are experiencing a process of deep transformations in the configuration of families and of fatherhood. This transformation is evidenced by the testimonies of working-class fathers in Santiago, Chile, and by statistics over the past twenty years that show a decrease in marriages and births

and an increase in marriage annulments, in children born out of wedlock, and in households headed by females (Olavarría 2000b). These developments are giving rise to changes in the perceptions that men have about the sexual division of labor and also about their relationships with their partners and children.

The patriarchal nuclear family and its relevant father figure are being subjected to severe tests in Santiago. This ideal of fatherhood is being increasingly challenged, both in the subjective sense and in the practice of fatherhood itself. It produces tensions, frustration, conflicts, and pain among many men because it generates dynamics in the relationships between genders and generations that presuppose a redistribution of men's prerogatives and abilities. The challenges also originate in the search for relationships that are closer and more intimate, invoking a greater affective and loving intensity with their family.

Some men hold on to the view of fatherhood that they learned from their own fathers, a view that is no longer possible to maintain. But the changes observed among men do not challenge patriarchal fatherhood as such; no alternative models have yet won wide support. Nevertheless, there are new practices among some men that point to relationships of greater intimacy and equality with their partners and children, which in turn will allow men to understand their families and encourage the independence and interests of other members of these families.

Notes

1. Material used in this paper is based on in-depth interviews with seventy working-class fathers in Santiago, Chile, based on the following studies: "Construcción social de la masculinidad en Chile: Crisis del modelo tradicional. Un estudio exploratorio," financed by the Ford Foundation; "Construcción social de la identidad masculina en varones adultos jóvenes de sectores populares," financed by CONICYT; "Ser padre: La vivencia de los padres de Santiago. Estereotipos, subjetividades y prácticas de la paternidad," financed by FONDECYT grant no. 1980280.

2. This essay specifically refers to "los sectores populares," roughly translated here as the working class, which include those populations classified in Chile as "poor" and "extremely poor." The former are unable to satisfy their basic needs, and the latter cannot even satisfy their need for food. Patriarchy is understood here as the system of domination that allows men to control women's capacities (including their reproduc-

tive, erotic, and labor skills. among others), a patriarch as one who exercises this power, and the patriarchal nuclear family as one in which all members are subordinate to a patriarchal father.

3. There exists no divorce law in Chile.

4. The average workday in Santiago for males lasts 11 hours, plus 2.7 hours for commuting, with an average work week of 55 hours (Sharim and Silva 1998).

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