

Wall, Glenda and Stephanie Arnold. 2007. "How Involved Is Involved Fathering? An Exploration of the Contemporary Culture of Fatherhood." *Gender and Society* 21:508-527.

PRIMARY ARGUMENT: The authors argue that despite an assumed cultural shift in ideals of fatherhood, media representations of fathers have continued to characterize men as the “secondary” parent to mothers.

IMPORTANT DEFINED CONCEPTS:

- Hegemonic Masculinity: It is a set of values and ideologies that formulate an ideal masculine image, and they are used by members of our society to reinforce and justify gender inequalities. Hegemonic masculinity expects men to be unemotional and strong (not showing weakness and vulnerability), which are often in conflict with the traits of a caregiver.
- Culture of Fatherhood: A society’s values, norms, and beliefs about fatherhood that must be distinguished from the conduct or actual practices of fathers. American fatherhood has undergone more changes in culture, than in conduct.
- New Fathers: a new cultural ideal of fathers who are nurturing, develop closer emotional relationships with their children, and share the joys and work of caregiving with mothers.

PRIMARY FINDINGS:

1. The sample articles portrayed parental guilt and anxiety as something predominantly experienced by mothers, suggesting that childcare is still mothers’ primary responsibility only. Rare examples of fathers’ guilt mainly focused on their regret of not being able to spend time with their children due to long working hours, not being a bad father.
2. The sample articles also present the struggle between work and family as predominantly experienced by mothers. In other words, (full-time) employment is assumed to be the responsibility of fathers but not mothers.
3. When showing examples of fathers involved with childcare (showing feminine traits), the articles often feel the need to address the father’s masculinity, suggesting that masculinity is still viewed as a required trait of man and childcare threatens that.

KEY QUOTE: “When media portrayals and advice literature are subject to content and discourse analyses, superficial references to “new fathers” and “parents” are often undermined by images and text that position fathers as part-time, secondary, less competent parents with fewer parenting responsibilities and greater breadwinning responsibilities than mothers,” (511)

QUESTION: In a polygynous family, does a hierarchy of involvement develop and if so, what determines the relative importance of mothers?