

# Culture, History, and Sex: Anthropological Contributions to Conceptualizing Father Involvement

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**SUMMARY.** This paper provides a brief overview of anthropological approaches and studies of father involvement with the hopes of providing insights into how father involvement is conceptualized in the United States. The paper reviews four topics: (1) how our culture shapes how we feel about father-child relations; (2) factors cross-cultural studies have identified as being associated with high levels of father involvement; (3) the different roles of fathers during the past 120,000 years of human history; and (4) how biology and male reproductive interest influence father involvement. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service; 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: [getinfo@haworthpressinc.com](mailto:getinfo@haworthpressinc.com) <Website: <http://www.haworthpressinc.com>>]*

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A striking absence of anthropological literature is evident among the extensive bibliographies on fathering developed by the National Center on Fathers and Families as well as the Family and Child Well-Being Research Network. Excellent studies of fatherhood from the perspective of cross-cultural psychology are listed in these bibliographies, but anthropological studies of fatherhood are infrequently listed among these sources. Some may feel

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that good reasons exist for the exclusion of anthropological literature—what do anthropologists have to contribute to understanding fathers' involvement in the United States anyway? Perhaps it was Margaret Mead's statement that "Fathers are a biological necessity and a social accident" that has turned fatherhood researchers away from anthropology. Then again, this may result from the impressions that anthropologists often limit themselves to studies in "Bongo Bongo land" with research designs that are so qualitative and descriptive as to be neither reliable or relevant to policy decisions in the U.S. There is, of course, a grain of truth to these images, but this paper aims to dispel some of these misconceptions. Consequently, this article provides a brief overview of anthropological approaches and studies of father involvement, with the hope being to provide insights into how father involvement is conceptualized within the U.S. This is an important endeavor, because the way father involvement is conceptualized often influences how research is conducted and policy is developed.

### ***CULTURE ETHNOCENTRISM AND EMOTIONS***

The unifying concept in anthropology is culture, or a construct minimally defined as shared knowledge and practices that are transmitted non-biologically from generation to generation. A distinctive feature of culture is that it is by nature ethnocentric. Once one acquires cultural beliefs and practices and utilizes them for some time, there is a tendency to *feel* that these beliefs and practices are natural and universal. Routinization (how to eat, brush teeth, go to toilet, take care of infants) and the nature of regular interactions with others (called internal working models by Bowlby, 1969) pattern the emotional basis of culture. Individuals are usually unaware of the emotional basis of culture unless they see or experience something different (e.g., being asked to eat termites or caterpillars, seeing 8-month-olds using machetes or 5-year-olds smoking cigarettes).

A few examples of father involvement in other cultures are useful ways of demonstrating the emotional basis of our own culture. Among the patrilineal Fulani, divorce is relatively common, and the father always receives custody of the children after divorce; it is assumed that the "best interests of the child" are being served by being with the father's family. If a woman has a child by a man outside of marriage, the child is expected to stay with the woman's husband's family, not the mother or the biological father. Among the East African Kipsigis, fathers do not hold infants during the first year of life.

How would most U.S. fathers feel if they were not able to hold their infants for a year? How would U.S. mothers feel if their children always went to the father after divorce? The point here is that, by looking outside of our

own culture, we come to better understand how our own culture affects how we *feel* what is right or wrong. We begin to evaluate our cultural assumptions about the roles of fathers and why paternal involvement is highly desirable. For instance, due to the assumption that father involvement is highly desirable, all of the papers in this collection and the national institutes that foster research on fathers (e.g., the National Center on Fathers and Families), are organized around the idea that father involvement should be increased. In addition, millions of dollars are spent every year in the U.S. to conduct research and develop policies and programs to increase father involvement. This reliance on strong moral authority reminds me of dairy commercials that say "milk is good for you"—which assumes that milk is universally good for all. The reality, of course, is that milk is not good for most lactose intolerant peoples of Mediterranean, African, and Asian descent where it can cause upset stomachs and diarrhea. This example, in turn, illustrates a type of nutritional ethnocentrism.

Another example is the current U.S. childbirth practice in which fathers are expected to have an active role—called "natural" childbirth—giving the impression that fathers around the world are involved in childbirth. In fact, cross-cultural studies have demonstrated that fathers seldom have an active role in childbirth, and in no culture do fathers direct the birthing process (Hewlett & Hannon, 1989). Father involvement and participation in childbirth appear to be especially important in the context of the middle-class American family which by cross-cultural standards is extremely atomistic. Other characteristics of middle-class American families that affect the context of father involvement are (1) low infant mortality rates, (2) the absence of regular warfare, (3) the fact that parents' time with children is limited due to work schedules, (4) that parents usually have no background in child-rearing until the first child is born, and (5) that children do not stay with parents when they get married.

Riesman's (1992) study of the Fulani points out another aspect of child-rearing that we tend to think of as universal and natural. He asked Fulani men about the important things fathers contribute to their children. "The father's first obligation" said the men, "is to seek out a good mother for the child." Given Riesman's Euro-American background he thought this meant a mother that was a good caregiver—attentive, loving, and supportive. What the Fulani men actually meant was a mother from a prestigious family with lots of kin. Fulani believe that parental care has very little impact on the child until he or she reaches the age of reason (7-8 years old). The child's character is determined by God; a father has a responsibility to correct a child who is doing something wrong, but God determines whether or not the child listens. Fulani fathers provide very little direct care to their children, yet, according to Riesman, their children are more vibrant and self-assured than most U.S.

children. Riesman points out that in the West, children are made, not born, as suggested by the title of Virginia Satir's book, *People-Making* (1972). Consequently, parents and teachers are regularly trying to shape young children's lives (e.g., make children eat something, make a child share with another, make a child go to bed). This does not happen among the Fulani and most African cultures with which I am familiar. This cultural view, according to Riesman (1992) and my ethnographic experience, takes away children's autonomous development.

Along these same lines, Western parents and researchers are interested in increasing father involvement, in part, because we believe this form of caregiving has significant social-emotional outcomes for the young later in life. This strong "future orientation" serves as a regular motivating force for the current conception of paternal behaviors with children, but from a cross-cultural standpoint, it is an uncommon arrangement. This people-making concept in Western cultures, however, has led researchers to focus almost exclusively on the role of fathers during childhood, whereas very little is known about the significance or dynamics of paternal roles in adulthood.

One anthropologist (Townsend, 1996) used a life course perspective to examine fathers' roles among the Tswana of Botswana, where the government of Botswana has adopted the American idea of "deadbeat dads." The government has adopted this stance because national demographic surveys indicate an increasing number of "illegitimate" births and female-headed households. Townsend finds that when men migrate to cities for work, the first child in a relationship is often born in the mother's family home. Male involvement during this period comes primarily from the child's maternal uncle rather than from the father. A man slowly pays the bride price to his wife's family and eventually, possibly years later, the family moves to live with the husband's family. This practice, with its roots in matrilocality, is not viewed as a problem by the local people. Government officials, however, have come to view this as a national problem because it shows up as "illegitimate" births on the national census. Townsend states:

In the extended families I describe, "deadbeat brothers" may be as important a social problem as "deadbeat dads." . . . It may not be a contribution to the welfare of children to eliminate "deadbeat dads" at the expense of creating men who fail in their responsibilities as brothers, uncles, grandfathers, and social beings. (p. 128)

Americans, of course, are not the only ethnocentric people. When I describe the U.S. infant care practice of placing infants in cribs located within their own rooms, the Aka, with whom I have lived for several years, tend to view this as child neglect. A central aspect of good parenting for the Aka, therefore, is to hold the infant constantly.

Culture is by nature ethnocentric and it patterns emotional reality. National policy decisions regarding father involvement have to be made carefully and with sensitivity to the enormous cultural and ethnic diversity within the U.S. Although increased father involvement appears to be important in white middle-class families, in groups like the Aka, fathers can and do contribute to their children in several other ways that are poorly understood. That is, many cultures exist in which fathers provide very little or no direct care, but also where the children are mentally and physically healthy. Studies of African Americans by Furstenburg and his colleagues (this volume and Furstenburg & Harris, 1993) are instructive in this regard. They find important differences between male and female children, as well as between poor African American families and middle class white families when examining the relationship between paternal involvement and child well-being.

#### ***FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH INCREASED FATHER INVOLVEMENT***

Since the focus of this collection of articles is to increase father involvement, I will briefly describe a few anthropological studies that have examined this topic. Anthropology is often characterized as being a holistic discipline, because researchers try to consider an array of factors that influence cultural beliefs and practices. My own study of Aka fathers (Hewlett, 1991) suggests the need to understand a complex web of factors in order to understand the extraordinarily high levels of paternal care (e.g., fathers are either holding or within an arm's distance of their infants for more than 50% of a 24-hour period). Factors which contribute to high father involvement include high fertility, no warfare, a non-violent ideology, flexible gender roles, male-female cooperative net hunting, and valuing both male and female children. Extensive husband-wife cooperation on net hunts and many other economic activities seem to be especially influential, but only within the context of these other features.

Although the Aka study refers to fatherhood in a society that is quite different from the United States, this research does have implications for our understanding of fatherhood roles in the contemporary U.S. society. For example, Aka children are very attached to their fathers, despite the fact that Aka fathers do not engage in vigorous rough and tumble play. This absence of behavior, in turn, contrasts with the U.S. context in which vigorous play has been identified as a key factor in understanding father-child attachment. Instead of rough and tumble play, however, it appears that Aka infants become attached to their fathers through regular communication and being held frequently. Consequently, data from the Aka study point to the importance of the amount of time spent with infants and contributes to the U.S. debate about

the relative merits of quantity- versus quality-time devoted to the young. The primary reason that Aka fathers are not vigorous playmates is that they have spent considerable time with their infants, know them well, and know how to communicate with them in other ways.

The Aka data, as well as other cross-cultural studies, support the hypothesis of sociologist Nancy Chodorow (1974) that, when fathers are active in infant care, boys develop an intimate knowledge of masculinity, which makes them less likely to devalue those things identified as feminine. Consequently, greater gender egalitarianism and the status of women are fostered. In contrasting cultural circumstances, however, when fathers are not around very much, young men usually have not been exposed to a clear sense of masculinity. Consequently, their identities develop in opposition to those things that are feminine, which they, in turn, tend to devalue and criticize. Table 1 illustrates some of the cross-cultural support for Chodorow's hypothesis: as father involvement increases, the participation of women in political decisions increases (i.e., one measure of the status of women).

The Aka data are also consistent with other cross-cultural studies indicating that close husband-wife relations and relatively equal contribution by each spouse are linked to greater father involvement (Katz and Konner, 1981). Table 2 documents the fact that men are not always the primary breadwinners; in half of the societies studied the breadwinner role was shared about equally by men and women. Table 3 shows that societies in which husbands and wives share more activities such as eating, leisure time, and shared rooming arrangements, have higher scores on an index of father involvement with children.

Super and Harkness (1992) also utilize a holistic approach in their comparison of African Kipsigis fathers and middle-class U.S. fathers in Boston. They examine the "development niche" (physical and social setting, cultural practices, and parental ideology) of these two groups and point out how

TABLE 1. Father-Child Relations and the Status of Women

Number of Societies with:	Distant Father-Child Relations	Close Father-Child Relations
High female participation in public decisions	9	22
Moderate female participation in public decisions	5	14
Females excluded from participation in public decisions	15	4

Chi-square = 14.7;  $p < .001$  (After Coltrane, 1988)

TABLE 2. Contribution of Women to Overall Subsistence—The Myth of the Male Breadwinner

Female's percentage contribution to family diet	Number of societies	Percent
0-20	4	4.4
21-40	37	41.1
41-60	45	50.0
70+	4	4.4

Note: Developed from data reported in "Cross-cultural codes dealing with the relative status of women," by M. K. Whyte, 1980, in H. Barry & A. Schlegel (Eds.), *Cross-Cultural Samples and Codes*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

TABLE 3. Relationship Between Husband-Wife Relationship and Father Involvement in 37 Societies

Number of Societies with: Husband-wife proximity <sup>a</sup>	Low Father Involvement <sup>b</sup>	High Father Involvement
High	4	10
Low	17	6

Note: chi-square = 7.33;  $p < .01$ .

<sup>a</sup>Husband-wife eating arrangements, husband-wife rooming arrangements, and husband-wife leisure time activities were scored by Broude (1983) from 1-3; a score of 1 means husband and wife eat, sleep, or have activities together, while a 3 means they are not together for these activities. A "high" proximity means the culture had an average score of 1.0-1.5, while "low" proximity means the culture had an average score of 1.6-3.0.

<sup>b</sup>Fathers in each culture were scored by Barry and Paxson (1971) from 1-5 in terms of physical and emotional proximity. Low father involvement fathers received a score of 1-3, while fathers with high involvement received a score of 4 or 5.

parental ideology is central to understanding father's involvement in the two cultures. Although mothers provide more than half of the family subsistence, Kipsigis fathers emphasize their economic role (e.g., providing food and clothing, paying school fees, and medical bills) and their role as moral leader (e.g., teaching deference, respect, and obedience). Although they often are available to help out with children, Kipsigis fathers do not hold infants. These fathers were happy when their children were responsible and listened to elders. In contrast, Boston fathers emphasized the importance of establishing

emotional relationships with their children, and of stimulating the cognitive and physical growth of the young. Kipsigis fathers, however, do not talk about establishing emotional relationships and Boston fathers do not talk about economic contributions. Such patterns of behavior indicate, in turn, that fathers talk about whatever worries them and fail to talk about things that are taken for granted.

This is consistent with Robert LeVine and associates' work (R. Levine, Dixon, S. Levine, Leiderman, Keefer & Brazelton, 1992), which suggests that parental goals for their children are linked to demographic and ecological factors. Kipsigis fathers are concerned with physical survival because infant mortality rates are between 10% and 20%. Infant mortality in Boston is less than 1%, so, in this case, fathers are less concerned about physical survival. Instead, fathers from Boston are more concerned that their children acquire the extensive knowledge and cognitive skills needed to survive in the U.S. labor market.

### ***FATHER INVOLVEMENT IN HUMAN HISTORY***

Anthropology is different from other social sciences in that the time periods investigated are often much broader. A sociological or psychological analysis of father involvement in history generally implies going back to the Victorian era or possibly the Middle Ages. By contrast, anthropologists are just as likely to be interested in patterns of father involvement that occurred thousands or millions of years ago. This is not surprising because archaeology and physical anthropology are subdisciplines of anthropology. Table 4 summarizes the relative importance of a variety of types of father involvement during the past 120,000 years of human history.

I am not going to describe the ways of life in each time period (see Hewlett, 1991, for more detail), but rather use the table as a means of demonstrating the following: (1) fathers contribute to their children in several ways, with the relative importance of different contributions varying dramatically in human history; (2) different ecologies and modes of production have a substantial impact on the contributions of fathers to their children; and (3) the father's role today is relatively unique in human history.

Fathers' roles as defenders and educators have declined, because the state has taken on a large proportion of these responsibilities. Furthermore, although the size of the typical father's family (i.e., kin resources) is no longer an important factor that influences the well-being of his children, his material wealth is central to their well-being. Direct caregiving seems to be especially important for current families as well as for such Holocene foragers as the Aka and !Kung. For these foraging cultures, men and women contribute

TABLE 4. Relative Importance of Different Dimensions of Father's Roles in Human History

Forms of father involvement	Late Pleistocene foragers (120,000-20,000 yrs. ago)	Holocene foragers (20,000 yrs. ago-present)	Simple farmers and collectors (10,000-present)	Intensive farmers and early industrialization on (5000 yrs ago-present)	Post-Modern (last 30 years in Anglo upper-middle class)
Provider of food and shelter	***	**	*	***	**
Caregiver of young children	*	**	*	NS	**
Transmit knowledge, primarily to sons	***	***	***	**	*
Defense of family	**	**	***	**	NS
Number of kin resources	***	***	***	**	NS
Inherited wealth and material resources	NS	NS	*	**	***

Note: Developed from *Intimate fathers*, by B.S. Hewlett, 1991, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

NS = not important/significant. \* = somewhat important. \*\* = important. \*\*\* = very important.

about equal amounts to the diet, whereas warfare and defense of resources is not important.

### SEX, REPRODUCTION, AND FATHER INVOLVEMENT

Anthropologists are also somewhat different than other social scientists in that they are interested in how human nature, human biology, and the long evolutionary history of human populations influence culture and vice versa (e.g., Leakey's 1994 studies of human fossil evolution; Jane Goodall's 1991 studies of chimps). Consequently, anthropologists are active contributors to recent theoretical developments in evolutionary biology that are controversial.

There are two reasons I want to include a discussion of evolutionary approaches. First, father involvement is influenced by evolved propensities in both fathers and children, so it is essential to identify and understand these propensities if one is going to have a holistic understanding of involvement. Second, although biology is often viewed as a constraining factor, in actuality, biology is a generative or enabling factor in reference to father involvement. What actually seems to occur, in fact, is that biological propensities enable rather than constrain interactions by allowing fathers and children to engage in several important activities (e.g., father-child “bonding” and communication).

Because cultural perspectives commonly leave out biology and sex (i.e., an individual’s reproductive interests), which include both mating and parenting, evolutionary theorists are generally critical of these approaches. From an evolutionary standpoint, men and women are expected to have different reproductive strategies, because men and women have different reproductive biologies. For example, the differences between men and women characterized in the book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (Gray, 1992) are not surprising to evolutionary biologists. Evolutionary researchers also expect men’s relations with their children to be at least partially different from those of women because of different reproductive strategies. It is important to remember that reproductive strategies are complex and that their expression is dramatically shaped by demographic, ecological and cultural contexts. Evolutionary theorists tend to view individuals as active agents manipulating their ecological and cultural structures for their own benefit, whereas cultural models tend to view individuals as actors taking on roles from various cultural structures for the benefit of the group. The economic perspective described by Willis (1996) is consistent with an evolutionary perspective in the sense that economic interests and the strategies of husbands and wives should be examined separately.

Evolutionary biologists make an important conceptual contribution when they use the term male “investment” rather than “involvement,” because they are interested in all of the ways in which fathers contribute to their children. Investment refers to anything a father does with a child that limits his ability to have another child. This includes both direct forms of investment (e.g., caregiving, proximity, protection, knowledge transmission, as well as providing food, shelter, and other resources) and indirect forms of investment that are not directly targeted for children, but from which the young benefit (e.g., social-emotional support of his wife, maintenance of the home or kin resources).

Social scientists have used the term “involvement” because their research focuses on how father-child interactions (or lack thereof) influence a child’s development. Evolutionary ecologists tend to focus on child survival and

fitness, but it is clear that the types of investment listed above dramatically influence the child's social, emotional, cognitive, and motor development. The concept "investment," however, is broad and does not have the morally or politically correct overtones of involvement. Although many fathers in the developing world from agricultural cultures are not very "involved" with their children, this does not mean, however, that they are "bad" fathers. Instead, they are investing in several other significant ways (e.g., the provision of food) that ensure the survival and social-emotional well-being of their children. Since developing areas of the world often have minimal state-level institutions for security and adjudication, fathers help provide family security/defense as well as contribute to community-based political decisions.

Moreover, the importance of a kin network is often overlooked in the West, but in some parts of the world kinship resources are viewed as *the* most important part of a father's investment in his children. Among some Australian Aborigines, for example, the most important wealth a man passes on to his children is the "wealth" that comes from the security of sufficient numbers of siblings (or half-siblings). Among the Aka the number of brothers a man has affects, in part, the amount of direct care he provides his infant. As a result, fathers with greater kinship resources provide less direct care.

Unfortunately, space does not allow an adequate review of all the studies of fathers with roots in evolutionary anthropology, but I would like to briefly describe some prominent contributions. Primate studies suggest that male care is often mating effort rather than parenting effort (Van Schaik & Paul, 1996), which means that male care is more a means of attracting females rather than investing in one's offspring. Male care in non-human primates is infrequent, but where it does occur the species have the most promiscuous mating systems. Consequently, males are likely to care for infants that are not genetically related (Smuts & Gubernick, 1992). Among humans, where hunting provides a substantial proportion of the diet, the meat that men have captured not only is consumed by the hunter's family, but also is distributed to many others for their survival and growth. That is, families with good hunters may not get any more meat than families with poor hunters.

Some suggest that this strategy is a means by which men try to increase mating opportunities with other women (Hawkes, 1990). Despite this distribution strategy, however, small-scale studies, e.g., Marlow's (in press) study of Hadza fathers, and studies of urban industrial societies, e.g., the Albuquerque Men's Study (Anderson, Kaplan, & Lancaster, 1996) demonstrate that men are more likely to spend time with and provide resources to biological rather than to step-children. Marlow also demonstrates that Hadza fathers provide less care to their biological children as their mating opportunities increase (i.e., the number of reproductive women around increases). These observations are consistent with Euro-American psychological and

sociological literature which indicates that fathers are more likely to provide care to infants or children in public rather than private settings, for example in playgrounds and grocery stores (Mackey & Day, 1979). Men may be more likely to care for children in public settings because it provides a means of attracting another mate (for marriage or extra-marital relationship). Men display infant care in public because some females may view caregiving as an attractive and desirable feature in a mate.

This leads to another dimension of evolutionary theory—female choice. Men are predicted to compete with each other for resources that are important for survival (women also compete, but to a lesser degree; Hrdy, 1992). Women are predicted, in turn, to select the winners—males who control or can provide resources, including willingness to care, to the women and their offspring. The implication of female choice means that, if father involvement is important, women need to select men with these qualities along with their tendency to select men with material resources.

Kaplan and associates (Kaplan, Lancaster, Bock, & Johnson, 1995) have also taken an evolutionary approach in their study of over 7000 Anglo and Hispanic men in Albuquerque, New Mexico. They found that, while paternity certainly was important, about 25% of Anglo and Hispanic men said they were fathers of children whom they knew were not their biological children. They also found that father “loss” at any time before age 16 reduced child quality, a variable measured by adult income and education of the child. Results indicated, in turn, that the negative impact of father loss was stronger for education than for adult income. This observation led them to develop the “competitive labor market theory.” Specifically, this perspective predicts that when paternal care increases a child’s acquisition of “embodied capital” (i.e., knowledge and skills that allow an individual to procure resources and earn a living), parents with higher levels of embodied capital will invest more in their offspring than parents with less embodied capital. Their evidence providing support for this hypothesis is that, controlling for income, more highly educated men spent more time with their children than men who were less educated.

Another preliminary finding in the Albuquerque Men’s Study is that men who identified themselves as homosexual or bisexual had about as many children as those who identified themselves as heterosexual (Bock, 1994). Bock suggests that homosexuality or bisexuality may be temporary life course adaptations to particular environmental contexts. Many gay men, therefore, may have already become parents earlier in the life course.

Finally, Hagen (1999) provides cross-cultural evidence to suggest that postpartum depression may be an evolved mechanism through which mothers withdraw investment and interest in a newborn, especially when the father or his family are not investing sufficiently in her and the infant. Evidence

indicates that a young mother who lacks much paternal support is more likely to experience serious postpartum depression. Hagen suggests that this is an evolved mechanism through which mothers attempt to gain greater paternal investment.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

This paper provides a general overview of anthropological contributions to conceptualizing father involvement. The culture and history sections indicate that caution is needed in developing national messages and images of fathers. President Clinton has pointed out that we are a nation of great diversity and that we should build upon this diversity. This observation also applies to the diverse ways in which fathers contribute to their children. We know relatively little about the complex nature of father's roles, and any national policy for fathers must respect the enormous socio-economic, cultural, and demographic diversity in the U.S.

U.S. conceptions of father involvement also limit and structure current research. Because "people-making" is a predominant schema in the U.S., research has focused on fathers' relations with young children. We know very little about the impact of fathers throughout the life course, especially in adulthood. As Townsend (1996) points out, our attempts to change policy toward increasing the involvement of fathers with children may have unintended repercussions for father-child relations later in life. That is, policies requiring greater father involvement in childhood may impact a man's role as stepfather or the father's ability to emotionally or economically assist and support children later in life.

Anthropologists have identified intracultural and intercultural factors that are linked to higher levels of father involvement: close husband-wife relations, equal male and female contribution to the diet, lack of regular warfare, lack of material wealth (i.e., father involvement is higher in cultures that do not accumulate wealth, such as hunting-gathering societies like the Aka). Increased father involvement in infancy also tends to increase gender equality cross-culturally.

The evolutionary approach also has policy implications. The embodied capital hypothesis implies that father involvement will increase if fathers are encouraged to obtain more education. The importance of female choice in shaping male behavior suggests women have a significant role to play in increasing father involvement. One reason why material wealth and consumerism are so important around the world (all cultures are moving towards increasing consumerism, none are moving in the opposite direction) is that men see wealth as important to attract a spouse, because women tend to select men with greater wealth.

Anthropologists who work in international development indicate that cultural change is most likely to occur if you build upon the beliefs and practices that already exist. If we want to encourage "involvement," then it is necessary to build upon what is there rather than creating negative images such as "deadbeat dads." Super and Harkness (1992) point out that Boston fathers have children for their own emotional enjoyment—children are fun. When divorce occurs, these views could be built upon to help encourage contact with their children. Many studies in this collection demonstrate the commitment by fathers after divorce to maintain contact with their children. New policies could be focused on efforts to make it financially, legally, and logistically easier for fathers to see their children.

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