



**MALE ROLE IN FAMILY NETWORKS:
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES
FOR ENHANCING FATHER INVOLVEMENT**

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Societal as well as individual perspectives of fatherhood and father involvement have evolved over time. While the current dominant motif of father involvement emphasizes the components of father involvement that include direct interaction between a father and child (play, caretaking); accessibility, or how available a father is to his child when needed; responsibility, or managing and providing resources for a child (doctor's appointments, supplementing family income or child support; building social capital, or how fathers provide a support network for children as they grow up to contribute to society (Pleck and Masciadrelli, 2004).

However, fathers are involved in their children's lives in a multitude of ways that go beyond traditional roles of "economic role" and "playmate" (ChildTrends). Historically, unequal access to undertaking the static as well as changing dimensions of father involvement is acknowledged as a causal factor, but rarely are racial and ethnic as well as socioeconomic statuses examined as possible explanations for assessing differences in paternal involvement.

The current US economy has contributed to structural changes in family as well as parenting statuses and subsequently affected the father involvement across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic statuses. As a result, flexibility in the assumption of father involvement roles and activities may necessitate other individuals within the nuclear and non-nuclear family contexts, particularly in complex family structures, undertaken traditional father involvement roles and activities. These individuals may include other male as well as female kin and non-kin figures.

Conceptualizing these changes as well as an examination might yield findings that could be useful in developing program and policy interventions that enhance father involvement as well as child and family well being.

<http://www.childtrends.org/files/dadmeaning.pdf>

Pleck, J.H., & Masciadrelli, B.P. (2004). Paternal involvement by U.S. residential fathers: Levels, sources and consequences. In M.E. Lamb (Ed.), *The Role of the Father in Child Development, 4th Edition* (pp. 222–271). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.