

NYT Encourages Women to Blame their Husbands for COVID-19 Struggles

“I want my mommy!” is the standard cry of small children everywhere. However, during the recent COVID-19 crisis, it’s become a feminist issue. That seems to be the conclusion of an article in the *New York Times* titled [“They Go to Mommy First: How the pandemic is disproportionately disrupting mothers’ careers.”](#)

The logic goes like this: Kids want their mommy. But mommy needs to work, and schools and daycares have closed for the pandemic. Mommy has no one but daddy to help her out. Yet when kids need something, they typically go to their mother before their father. As a result, mothers have taken on a disproportionate share of the extra childcare. According *The New York Times*, this has a “cumulative, undermining effect” on the mother’s career.

I appreciate that *The New York Times* is shining a light on how mothers are struggling during the pandemic. No one is denying that it is very hard – if not impossible – to work fulltime while looking after children in the home. But I am troubled by the slant the article takes. The blame is placed on men’s shoulders. If fathers were doing their fair share of the work, the narrative goes, mothers wouldn’t have it so hard.

The first mother profiled in the article is a librarian named Maggie Levine. She normally works around 35 hours per week. But she has a newborn baby and – upon her return from maternity leave – she has only been managing to put in 10 hours remotely.

This shouldn’t surprise anyone who has ever looked after a baby. The amount of care that babies require is staggering. I

have given birth three times, and I'm impressed Levine is managing to work even 10 hours.

However, the author of the article juxtaposes Levine's situation with that of her husband, James Maher.

When I asked Maher how many hours a week he worked in pre-pandemic times, compared to how many hours he works now: 'My usual is around 40, and I'm probably hitting around 40,' he said.

The clear implication is that he is a parasite. Fathers like Maher are not just neglecting their duty, they are actively benefitting from the extra childcare their wives are taking on. His career continues uninterrupted but hers takes a hit.

Even if a father does somehow manage to spend as much time looking after the kids as his wife does, that is still not good enough, for women are engaged in additional "emotional labor." The article explains:

Terri E. Givens, a mom of two boys in Menlo Park, Calif and the chief executive and founder of a company that provides career development for academic leaders, had another explanation for the gender disparity: Moms are the emotional barometers for the household, and they're managing an unseen amount of extra work, thinking about child care, dentist appointments and the happiness of their children, even when men are making an effort. 'My husband is one of the best you'll find,' she said of her spouse, who is an engineer. 'But it's that [emotional labor](#) that's really hard to quantify.'

COVID-19 has thrown into relief many of the challenges faced by working mothers. *The New York Times* could have focused on any of these. Why not place blame on politicians' decisions to close schools and daycares? The [science](#) is clear that children are very unlikely to transmit the virus. Or why didn't they call out the modern economy which makes it so hard for mothers to stay home or work part-time?

Simple. Those things don't fit our feminist cultural narrative. Women are encouraged to think of themselves as victims, and their oppressors are their own husbands and children.

Personally, I'm grateful my children come to me first instead of their father. It is one of great privileges of motherhood. Sadly, *The New York Times* is encouraging mothers to think of their children's love as a curse rather than a blessing.

—

Image Credit:
Pexels