

THE CQ Researcher

PUBLISHED BY CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY INC.

◆ WINNER, 1999 SIGMA DELTA CHI AWARD
FOR JOURNALISM EXCELLENCE

Fatherhood Movement

Can it reduce the number of fatherless children?

Thirty years of high divorce rates and rising birth rates among unwed mothers have left the United States a nation of fatherless households. More than a third of American children don't live with their biological fathers, and 17 million don't live with any fathers at all. Of those, about 40 percent haven't seen their fathers in a year. As the nation prepares to honor fathers on June 18, child-development experts are hoping a growing nonpartisan, multiracial, "responsible fatherhood" movement, dedicated to reconnecting estranged dads with their kids, will help increase fathers' involvement in their kids' lives. But some question whether having fathers involved in children's lives is essential, while others say that some of the movement's goals — such as promoting marriage and joint custody — will hurt mothers.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

THE ISSUES	475
BACKGROUND	482
CHRONOLOGY	483
CURRENT SITUATION	488
AT ISSUE	489
OUTLOOK.....	491
BIBLIOGRAPHY	493
THE NEXT STEP	494

CQ

June 2, 2000 • Volume 10, No. 21 • Pages 473-496

FREE WEB TRIAL
See back cover

THE ISSUES

- 475 • Are fathers essential for raising healthy, well-adjusted children?
 • Should government policies encourage marriage and discourage divorce in order to decrease fatherlessness in America?
 • Should joint custody be assumed as the preferred arrangement in divorces involving children?

BACKGROUND

- 482 **Changing Roles**
 The nuclear family model is a modern invention and “an aberration from the historical norm.”
- 486 **The Moynihan Report**
 African-American leaders decried as racist a 1965 government report on fatherlessness among blacks.
- 488 **Whites Affected, Too**
 The father-absence rate among all segments of society skyrocketed in the 1990s.

CURRENT SITUATION

- 488 **Welfare Reform**
 Critics blame a 1996 welfare-reform law for driving more dads out of the home.
- 490 **The Fathers Count Bill**
 Lawmakers are considering several bills to discourage illegitimate children and encourage marriage.

OUTLOOK

- 491 **More Family Changes?**
 Experts predict increasingly diverse family structures.

SIDEBARS AND GRAPHICS

- 476 **Single-Parent Households Tripled**
 Nearly 60 percent of black children and 20 percent of whites are affected.
- 480 **Most Deadbeat Dads Can't Afford Child Support**
 Nearly 40 percent say they lack the money to pay up.
- 483 **Chronology**
 Key events since 1839.
- 484 **Critics Blame Child-Support System for Encouraging Fatherlessness**
 Government policy discourages the poorest dads from staying involved in their kids' lives.
- 487 **Rise of the Stay-at-Home Dad**
 Fathers once stayed home because they had no choice after being laid off.
- 489 **At Issue**
 Is promoting marriage a good way to encourage fathers to be more involved in their children's lives?

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- 493 **Bibliography**
 Selected sources used.
- 494 **The Next Step**
 Additional articles from current periodicals.

June 2, 2000
 Volume 10, No. 21

MANAGING EDITOR
 Thomas J. Colin

ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR
 Scott W. Wright

STAFF WRITERS
 Mary H. Cooper
 Kenneth Jost
 Kathy Koch
 David Masci

PRODUCTION EDITOR
 Angela S.D. Shoemaker

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
 Scott D. Kuzner

CQ PRESS
 A Division of
 Congressional Quarterly Inc.

VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER
 John A. Jenkins

DIRECTOR, LIBRARY PUBLISHING
 Kathryn Suarez

DIRECTOR, OPERATIONS
 Sandra D. Adams

CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY INC.

CHAIRMAN
 Andrew Barnes

VICE CHAIRMAN
 Andrew P. Corty

PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER
 Robert W. Merry

Copyright 2000 Congressional Quarterly Inc. (CQ). CQ reserves all copyright and other rights herein, unless previously specified in writing. No part of this publication may be reproduced electronically or otherwise, without prior written permission. Unauthorized reproduction or transmission of CQ copyrighted material is a violation of federal law carrying civil fines of up to \$100,000.

The CQ Researcher (ISSN 1056-2036). Published weekly, except Jan. 7, June 30, July 7, July 21, Aug. 11, Aug. 18, Dec. 1 and Dec. 29, by Congressional Quarterly Inc. Annual subscription rate for libraries, businesses and government is \$444. Single issues are available for \$10 (subscribers) or \$20 (non-subscribers). Quantity discounts apply to orders over 10. Additional rates furnished upon request. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The CQ Researcher, 1414 22nd St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

Cover: As the nation prepares to honor fathers on June 18, supporters of the fatherhood movement note with concern that 17 million American children don't live with a father or other male figure. (Corbis Images)

Fatherhood Movement

BY KATHY KOCH

THE ISSUES

To understand the burgeoning fatherhood movement, talk to Thomas Fulford, a recovering crack addict and ex-con. Fulford has gotten his life back together and is reunited with his two sons and says the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization made it possible.

“My relationship with them has really blossomed,” says Fulford, 48, who was divorced from the boys’ mother when they were youngsters. “We have a working, loving relationship. We’re upfront with each other,” he says of the boys, now 20 and 22, who came to live with him last year after he finished serving time for bank robbery.

But it’s not easy. “They are learning things that they should have learned from me 10 or 15 years ago,” he says, “but we’re still dancing around, getting to know each other.”

Recently remarried, Fulford says, “All of this happened because I’m living the risk-free lifestyle that the institute promotes.”

The institute is part of a fast-growing coalition of groups dedicated to reversing America’s high rate of fatherlessness — the “single greatest social problem plaguing our nation today,” according to Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Conn.¹

More than one-third of the nation’s 71 million children don’t live with their biological fathers, and 17 million don’t live with any father at all. And about 40 percent of those children haven’t seen their fathers in a year, according to the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), in Gaithersburg, Md.

“Court and school officials report that many children do not even know what to put in the ‘Father’s Name’



Thomas Fulford (right) credits the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization with helping him rebuild his life and reconnect with his son Thomas Jr.

Thomas J. Colin

blank on printed forms,” David Blankenhorn, president of the Institute for American Values, wrote in his 1995 book *Fatherless America*.²

The fragile coalition of racially and politically diverse groups spawned by the fatherhood movement includes conservative pro-marriage groups like Blankenhorn’s, fathers’-rights groups working on the child-custody and child-support concerns of mostly middle-class divorced fathers and more liberal organizations helping low-income fathers reconnect with their children.

Judging by the rapid growth of the movement, it has tapped into a sore spot in the nation’s psyche. “There’s a greater awareness today that children are better off when they have both dad and mom around,” says David L. Levy, co-founder and president of the Children’s Rights Council. “When we started in 1985, for a long time we were the lone voice in the wilderness. No one else was talking

about the importance of both parents in a child’s life.”

Now it seems everyone is talking — and writing — about it. Amazon.com’s database lists 685 books about fatherhood. Literally dozens of Web sites are now dedicated to fatherhood issues, including at least one for stay-at-home dads. (See sidebar, p. 487.) And pro-fatherhood events like the 1995 Million Man March and the 1997 Promise Keepers rally have filled entire stadiums.

The movement has also caught the attention of legislators on both sides of the aisle. With broad bipartisan support, the House last November passed the Fathers Count Act, which would provide millions of dollars to groups promoting responsible fatherhood. A similar measure pending in the Senate also has bipartisan support.

Meanwhile, political leaders like Democratic Vice President Al Gore and former Republican Vice President Dan Quayle have championed the movement.

“What’s incredible is the breadth of bipartisan agreement that this movement has been able to generate,” says NFI President Wade Horn.

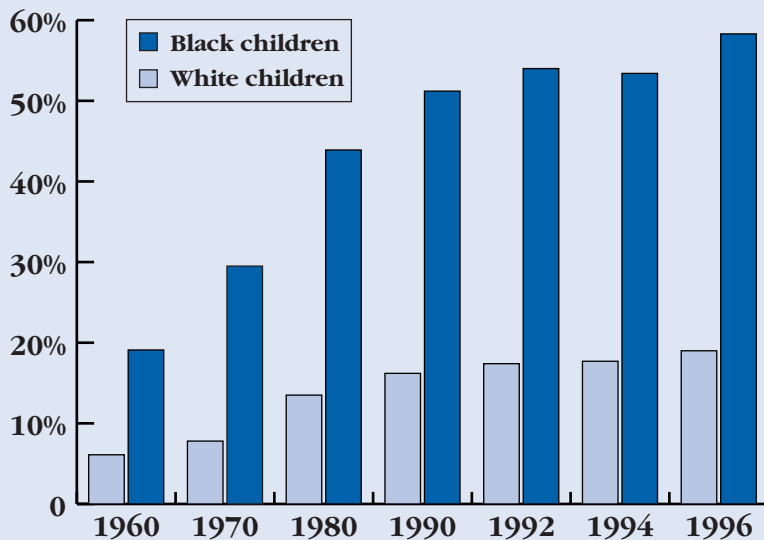
He points to a policy statement issued last Father’s Day by 50 scholars, community leaders and reformers — black and white — as evidence of a new consensus developing around issues that once fostered deep divisions along racial and political lines. The document called for a nationwide effort to reduce fatherlessness in black America, where 70 percent of all babies today are born to unwed mothers.³

The statement grew out of a 1998 conference — sponsored by the Morehouse Research Institute in Atlanta and the conservative Institute for American Values — on “fragile families.” Fragile families are formed

Single-Parent Households Tripled

The percentage of children — white as well as black — living with their mother tripled from 1960 to 1996. Nearly 60 percent of African-American children are affected, compared with 20 percent of whites.

Children Living With Mother Only



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1997

when young, low-income, poorly educated and unmarried parents have a child.

Many black communities with fragile families, the statement said, have become “radically fatherless.” In 1990, it said, about 4.5 million U.S. children — nearly 80 percent of them African-American — lived in predominantly fatherless neighborhoods, in which more than half of all households were headed by single women.

The statement noted that while a higher percentage of black babies are born out of wedlock, by far the largest number born each year are white. One in three white births are now to unmarried mothers, a figure that has been steadily rising. Among all races, unmarried births have increased 1,000 percent since 1946.⁴

“Father absence is not a uniquely African-American problem,” said the Morehouse statement. “It is an American problem that crosses racial, ethnic and class lines. All across the United States, fathers are quietly disappearing from the lives of children.”

In addition to unwed parenthood, skyrocketing divorce rates also are fueling the fatherlessness epidemic. Today more than half of all marriages end in divorce, compared with about 15 percent in 1960.⁵

While they tackle the problem in different ways, fatherhood groups agree on one thing: Fatherlessness has reached crisis proportions in the United States, and the effects on children are devastating. For instance, according to senior Heritage Foundation research fellow Robert Rector:

- Almost 75 percent of illegitimate children will experience poverty before they turn 11, compared with only 20 percent of children raised with two parents at home.

- Sixty percent of convicted rapists, 72 percent of teen murderers and 70 percent of long-term prison inmates are males who grew up without fathers.

- Fatherless children are suspended from school, drop out, commit suicide and are abused or neglected significantly more often than children raised in two-parent households.

- Children of single mothers get involved in substance abuse, sexual promiscuity and teen pregnancy more than kids with fathers at home.

But because members of the movement disagree, sometimes heatedly, about how to fix the problem, the result is an uneasy alliance between the left and right. Conservatives generally see the problem as a lack of marriage, while the left sees it as a lack of money. Conservatives say the answer is to attack rising illegitimacy and divorce rates by encouraging matrimony, reforming welfare, making divorce harder to obtain and changing cultural norms about extramarital sex and unwed parenthood. Liberals say fatherlessness will be eliminated only by spending more money on job training and improved educational opportunities for economically marginalized fathers.

“Marriage is most fragile in communities where men can’t get and keep jobs,” says Scott Coltrane, a sociology professor at the University of California at Riverside and author of *The Family Man*.

A third segment of the movement — divorced fathers — wants to change divorce, child-support and child-custody rules that it says discourage fathers from staying involved in their children’s lives.

“Certainly there are deadbeats, but there are also the pushed away, the forced away and the dead broke,” Levy says.

Meanwhile, women’s advocates suspect the motives of fathers’-rights groups like Fathers Manifesto, which supports sole father custody in all cases and the repeal of women’s right to vote.

“From what they’ve said on their Web sites, they do not have the best interest of children at heart,” says Kim Gandy, executive vice president of the National Organization for Women (NOW). “They are all about bashing women. It is beyond the pale.”

Horn disavows the Fathers Manifesto group, particularly some of its statistics about damage done to children raised by single mothers. “We have nothing whatsoever to do with them,” he says. “They are a bunch of misogynists who don’t have any problem making up false statistics to support their rhetoric.”

As Congress and advocacy groups grapple with the fatherlessness crisis, here are some of the questions they are asking:

Are fathers essential for raising healthy, well-adjusted children?

The American Psychological Association (APA) unleashed a firestorm among conservatives last June when it published “Deconstructing the Essential Father,” a study by two clinical psychologists at Yeshiva University Medical School in Bronx, N.Y. Authors Louise B. Silverstein and Carl F. Auerbach concluded that raising a healthy child hinges on the quality and reliability of the parents’ rela-

tionship with the child.

If that relationship is strong, they wrote, it doesn’t matter whether the parenting is by the mother, the father, two moms, two dads, a grandmother or caregivers with no biological relationship to the child.⁶

“The traditional family is one way of parenting, but there are other

tial and irreplaceable in the lives of their children “the most alarming trend I see today.” Two parents are better than one only if those parents are doing good parenting, he says.

“But [fatherhood advocates] argue that even an emotionally remote father is enough to improve a child’s outcome,” he continues. “Children need regularity, care and love. That can be provided by two mothers or two fathers. There’s nothing built into our genes that requires the participation of men.”

Silverstein and Auerbach also criticized fatherhood advocates’ claim that dozens of sociological studies prove unequivocally that fatherlessness is the root cause of urban decay, societal violence, teenage pregnancy and poor school performance. Their interpretation of the data is a “dramatic oversimplification of the complex relations between father presence and social problems,” the authors wrote.

“We don’t really know what is causing the problems,” Coltrane says. “There could be a self-selection bias in those studies.” Many of the social problems cited by the fatherhood advocates are more related to class, poverty and residential situation, he points out.

Phil and Carolyn Cowan, psychology professors at the University of California at Berkeley, say their own study of 200 divorced families showed that the quality of a child’s relationships with his parents and the parents’ relationship with each another determine the child’s academic, social and emotional outcomes. “Just having a father in the house is not in and of itself the



AFP Photos/Richard Ellis

A man embraces his son during the 1995 Million Man March in Washington, D.C., organized by Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan in part to encourage more African-American males to pledge commitment to their families and communities.

equally good ways,” Auerbach said. “We do think kids need parents, as many parents as possible. We just don’t think it even has to be one biological parent.”⁷

Other academics agree. Coltrane calls the “uncritical acceptance” of the theory that the fathers are essen-

controlling factor,” Carolyn Cowan says.

Moreover, when studies control for poverty, only about 5 to 12 percent of single-parent children have an increased risk of trouble at home or school, says Phil Cowan, a senior researcher at the Council on Contemporary Families. “If there isn’t a father in the home, it is still possible for the child to grow up well,” he says. “It may increase his odds of having problems, but it doesn’t guarantee it.”

And while children from divorced households have adjustment problems, so do children who remain in high-conflict married households, he points out. “At least 20 different studies, including our own, show that kids in high-conflict households are more depressed, more aggressive and do worse academically than their peers,” Phil Cowan says. “There’s lots of research like that, which the [fatherhood] folks are just not citing.”

“Kids in all kind of families have all kinds of problems,” says Pepper Schwartz, a sociology professor at the University of Washington, “just as kids from all kinds of families do well.” In fact, she says, several studies show that children living in one- or two-parent gay or lesbian households are “no different from children in heterosexual households, in terms of their sociability or their acting-out behavior, their grades or rates of delinquency.”

Indeed, fatherhood advocates contend, legitimizing gay and lesbian parenting arrangements was Silverstein and Auerbach’s real agenda.

“For radically divergent concepts of the family, such as those espoused by homosexual activists, to be considered ‘legitimate,’ it must first be shown that neither mothers nor fathers are essential to successful families,” wrote Timothy J. Dailey, a senior analyst at the conservative Family Research Council (FRC), in re-

sponse to the APA article. He listed dozens of studies showing that the authors’ key assertions were “insupportable by the weight of evidence.”

“I think the authors hate marriage,” Horn says. “They want to deconstruct society in a way that marriage doesn’t matter.” He calls the Silverstein-Auerbach report “intellectually frivolous and insubstantial.” The authors “completely distorted the empirical literature” about the impact of fatherlessness on children’s lives, polarizing what until then had been an extraordinarily non-polarized issue, he says.

Horn angrily denounces what he calls “ivory tower, limousine liberals, who live in gated communities offering theories about society, while consigning large segments of the population to live in communities devastated by the consequences of those theories.”

He continues, “I would pay [Silverstein and Auerbach’s] rent for them to live for six months in a one-room apartment in a public-housing complex where 90 percent of the households are unmarried.”

Furthermore, the Institute for American Values’ Blankenhorn contends, Silverstein and Auerbach ignored 30 years of research showing that children growing up without an involved mother and an involved father are likely to exhibit “just about every negative indicator you can think of.” Publicizing that research — and changing attitudes about fatherlessness — have been the primary achievements of the fatherhood movement, he says.

“Fathers make irreplaceable contributions to the well-being of their children,” Blankenhorn adds. “That’s the one thought that binds all these diverse fatherhood groups together.”

Charles Ballard, founder and CEO of the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood, agrees. “Children raised by one parent don’t have the full rights

of passage that would enable them to experience and enjoy both sexes as parents,” he says. “To create a whole child you need the male and female parts.”

John Guidubaldi, a professor of education and school psychology at John Carroll University in Cleveland, concedes that neither parent is essential. “Children can be reared without fathers and without mothers,” he says. The real issue, says Guidubaldi, a former member of the U.S. Commission on Child and Family Welfare, is not whether either parent is essential but “whether it is optimal for the mother to raise the children alone.”

Nonetheless, he says, father involvement in a child’s life can be life-altering. Guidubaldi presented a study to the APA convention last year on father involvement among 200 Ohio students with severe learning disabilities. “The higher the rate of father involvement in the students’ lives, the better-adjusted the kids were,” he says. “If you can show that father involvement improves children’s adjustment in this high-risk group, imagine what greater effects it has in the society at large.”

Should government policies encourage marriage and discourage divorce in order to decrease fatherlessness in America?

“To reduce fatherlessness, we need to help men get and stay married,” Ballard says, pointing to the Fathers Count Act, which would provide millions of dollars to private organizations like Ballard’s to do just that.

Some pro-marriage groups have advocated giving married households priority for tax-supported benefits like subsidized housing and Head Start slots, or forgiving fathers for unpaid child support if they marry the mothers of their children.

Others want to tighten divorce laws, because they blame the nation’s

high divorce rates for much of the increase in fatherlessness. "Already 50 to 70 percent of marriages end in divorce," Ballard says. "We believe marriage is an endangered species."

As a result, some state legislators are rethinking no-fault divorce laws, which became popular during the last three decades. In all 50 states either spouse can dissolve a marriage without having to show cause.⁸ Giving spouses "a unilateral right to divorce," critics say, makes divorce too easy to obtain.

Some states are considering re-introducing fault divorce. And at least 15 states last year considered allowing couples to choose "covenant marriages," adopted in the late 1990s by Alabama and Arizona, which let couples choose marriage contracts requiring intensive premarital counseling and allowing only limited grounds for divorce.

"The marriage contract should be at least as binding as the bond between you and a car salesman,"

Blankenhorn says. "When it takes two people to make the marriage contract but only one to dissolve it, that trivializes the whole relationship."

If both parties want the divorce, perhaps they should be able to get a no-fault divorce, he concedes. "But otherwise, why should the state put the power of the law behind the person wanting the divorce?"

Guidubaldi agrees. For too long, he argues, American society and the legal system have reinforced divorce. "We have devalued both marriage and the idea of staying together for

the sake of the kids," he says. "We use that as an excuse."

Citing statistics showing that two-thirds of divorces are initiated by women, Guidubaldi admits that perhaps "marriage is failing women in some way." However, he says, the legal system also gives women an incentive to leave an unhappy marriage. Women are confident that the courts will award them sole custody of the children, child support and probably half the family's assets, he says.

"Couples with children should have a greater burden of proof be-

fore they marry, they are less likely to get divorced, he says.

Encouraging marriage is a legitimate goal of the government because it improves the well-being of children and society, proponents say.

"A high divorce-rate society is a society in trouble," Blankenhorn says. Society is a stakeholder in marriage because it is a pro-child institution and because it provides an optimum environment for raising children, he says.

"Studies show that marriage is good for men, women and children,"

Horn says. "They are happier, healthier and wealthier, and they live longer, have less depression and less suicide," he says. "Plus, communities are safer when they have higher rates of married households."

Married fathers are better for kids than visiting non-custodial fathers, he adds. They are more available to help solve daily problems, and they are more

likely to discipline a child, he adds. "When a father sees his child once every other week, he doesn't want to spend their precious time together disciplining the child," Horn says. "He wants to be the child's friend and have a good time."

"Given all of that evidence, why not promote marriage?" he asks. "We subsidize home ownership because it promotes stable communities. We give tax deductions to encourage charitable giving. They both have implications for the greater good of society, and so does marriage."



CBS Photo Archive



AP LaserPhoto/Ron Edmonds

Former Vice President Dan Quayle angered single mothers, women's groups and liberal politicians when he criticized sitcom mom Murphy Brown in a 1992 speech for opting to raise a child out of wedlock.

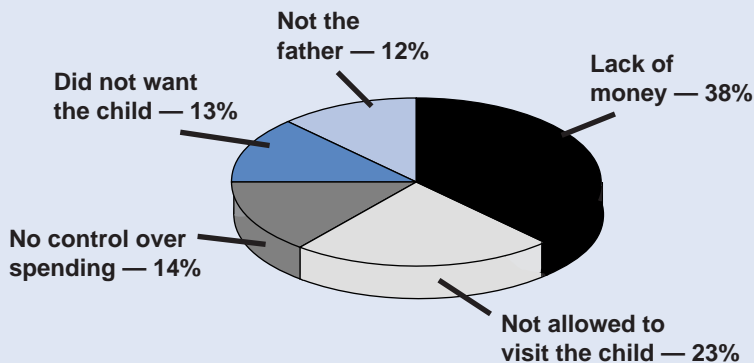
fore they can relinquish their bonds," he argues, and the legal system should jettison its gender bias favoring mother custody. "If both parties understood clearly that they each had an equal likelihood of getting the children, it might make divorce less attractive," he says.

Ballard's group promotes abstinence until marriage because it promotes family economic stability, he says. However, he thinks it should be harder to get married in the first place. If couples are required to take marriage-education classes or counseling

Most Deadbeat Dads Can't Afford Child Support

Nearly 40 percent of absentee fathers say they lack the money to pay up. Nearly one-quarter say they didn't pay because visits weren't permitted. In fact, federal records show most children never receive the money they are owed from absent fathers or mothers because of nonpayment. And despite stepped-up enforcement efforts, the federal government reports that several billion dollars in child support goes uncollected in the United States each year.

Why Absent Fathers Say They Don't Pay for Support



Source: National Fatherhood Initiative, "Father Facts," 1998

Ron Henry, a Washington attorney and a frequent congressional witness on joint-custody issues, agrees. "Marriage is a highly efficient way to eliminate poverty," he says.

But for years government aid programs — especially the old welfare system — have only provided funds if there is no man in the house, he says. "We spend tens of billions of dollars each year actively subsidizing single parenting. It's a question of leveling the playing field."

Both Henry and Horn emphasize that it's not just marriage but a good, non-violent marriage that benefits children. "Marriage is the best environment for rearing children, except in extreme pathological cases," Henry says. Adds Horn, "The cure for domestic violence is to put the abuser in jail."

Domestic violence is a primary concern of womens'- and victims'-

rights groups, who say making divorce more difficult to obtain would increase the likelihood that women will remain in abusive marriages. "Marriage is not always the best solution," says Julie Fulcher, public policy director at the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. "If it's a violent relationship, then it would not be appropriate to encourage that couple to get married."

Several studies show that 50 to 80 percent of welfare recipients are either victims or survivors of domestic violence, says NOW's Gandy, though others dispute those figures. "Welfare was the economic vehicle that allowed them to escape from domestic violence," she says. "Now they want to establish rewards for women to marry those same men?"

"If people are in a high-conflict, angry relationship that is terrifying

for children to watch, why would the government want to blindly keep that couple together?" asks the University of Washington's Schwartz.

She also worries that couples might get married just to be eligible for subsidized housing. "If we reward such sham marriages, then what have we accomplished?" she asks.

"Such a policy would penalize the weakest among us — the poor, who might stay in a terrible relationship just to get the subsidy," she says. And it would make it that much harder for the single mother, who already has a lower income than the two-parent family, to find affordable housing."

Gandy blasts any proposal that would allow states to forgive a father's child-support arrearages if he marries the mother. "We would be creating a huge financial incentive for these already manipulative men to wheedle their way back into the woman's life," Gandy says. "And what's to prevent a man from marrying a woman to get out of paying and then walking out on her the next day."

"Rather than trying to keep two people together who hate each other, we should be giving single parents a lot more help and support," Gandy says.

She also opposes giving taxpayers' money to "reactionary and misogynistic" fathers'-rights groups that seek greater rights to child custody and reduced child-support payments in divorce cases.

Fulcher worries that faith-based organizations would be eligible for the federal grants for marriage-promotion activities. "The role of women in marriage differs according to your faith," she says. "We'd be getting into a real fuzzy area here with regard to the separation of church and state if the organization favors one type of marriage — such as a patriarchy — over another."

Sociology Professor Coltrane agrees that reliance on faith-based solutions could be problematic. "Fun-

damentalist parents are more likely to use violence to discipline a child because they believe that's what God tells them to do," he says.

The Cowans also question whether government-subsidized groups would only be allowed to promote heterosexual unions. "If the government wants children to grow up in families that will help them be better citizens, then it should help strengthen relationships between all couples raising children," Carolyn Cowan says.

Paula Edelbrick, family policy director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, says that when the government starts promoting marriage it appears to be coercing specific lifestyles. "That's really destructive," she says.

Others question the very idea of spending money to promote marriage to solve social problems. "Our problems result from the fact that we are a violent society that doesn't protect its children," Coltrane says, noting that other societies provide more day-care and family-support services.

Schwartz questions making divorce more difficult to obtain. "No-fault divorce answered a huge militant demand from people who were prevented from leaving marriages that weren't working," she says. "They were lying about mental cruelty or infidelity just to create grounds for divorce. Why should we go back to that situation?"

Besides, she says, divorce rates are the same across the states, whether they have no-fault or fault divorce laws. "This is a case in which you take a very delicate problem, and the government decides to take a crowbar to it, and the solutions can often cause as many problems as the problem itself," she says.

Should joint custody be assumed as the preferred arrangement in divorces involving children?

Fathers'-rights groups argue that

family court judges should always presume that joint custody is always preferable to sole custody by the mother.

The Children's Rights Council's Levy says the data is so overwhelming that fathers are essential for raising well-adjusted children that the courts should grant joint custody — at least legal if not physical — as often as possible. "You already have shared parenting during the marriage," he says. "We're just saying, let that continue when there's a separation or divorce, unless there's a good reason not to, such as a child endangered by an abusive parent."

But proponents and opponents disagree over which form of custody is better for kids.

"Joint custody seemed to be a great idea when it was first proposed, but it has been a disastrous experiment for the children," Edelbrick says.

"Our 30-year-long experiment with having mothers as the sole custodial parent has been disastrous for the children," Guidubaldi counters.

Proponents like Guidubaldi say that the evidence shows overwhelmingly that most children do best when they receive the emotional and financial support of both parents. But for decades the courts have suffered from what he calls a "gender bias" in custody cases, with 87 to 90 percent of cases giving mothers sole custody.

In the early 20th century the courts adopted the "tender years" doctrine — declaring that children should remain with their mothers at least as long as a baby is nursing. That doctrine evolved into a presumption that mothers were the primary caregivers and fathers the primary breadwinners, Guidubaldi says. "But that presumption ignored fathers as caretakers and mothers as breadwinners," he says. "These strict gender-role assumptions interfered with the notion that fathers should have time with their kids."

That fact was brought home to Guidubaldi in 1983, when the Commission on Child and Family Welfare commissioned the largest study ever done on the impact of divorce on children.⁹ It found that 51 percent of the children in sole-custody arrangements only saw their fathers once or twice a year, at most. "Those results astounded us," he recalls.

Moreover, those children performed more poorly in school than their counterparts from intact families, he says. "On 21 out of 27 social and emotional criteria, they did more poorly," Guidubaldi says. And the negative effects were still there when the study was repeated several years later, he says. "There was more depression and acting out behavior."

The results argued for reviewing the assumptions judges made in custody cases, Guidubaldi says. But the commission's final report to Congress and the White House downplayed the results, prompting Guidubaldi to write a dissenting opinion. He argued that the government should support shared custody because it is good for kids and because fathers with joint custody are more inclined to pay child support.

"Our report didn't go far enough because gender politics interfered with what is in the best interest of children," he says.

Today, Guidubaldi and fathers'-rights groups advocate "shared parenting," a version of joint custody in which both parents outline how they intend to share child-care responsibilities after the divorce.

But women's-rights advocates say shared or joint custody arrangements are unworkable if the parents are hostile. "If two people couldn't get along well enough to stay married, how can they handle dealing with collaborative activities for the child?" Schwartz asks. "People corrupt the system and use their kids for their own emotional acting out." Children caught in the middle feel

threatened and frightened, and their loyalty is divided between the two parents, she says.

“Joint custody is something to aim for,” she says, “but without post-marital parenting counseling, it usually doesn’t work.”

Gandy, who practiced family law in Louisiana both before and after that state instituted a joint custody presumption in 1978, says, “It was terribly, terribly disruptive for the children.

“It created an unbelievable amount of additional litigation,” she remembers, because joint custody became a bargaining chip for the men, she says. Judges ended up making decisions based on the best interest of the parents instead of the child, she says.

“It broke my heart,” says Gandy, describing how she watched as dozens of women, desperate to maintain some stability in their kids’ lives, willingly gave up their homes and their share of the community property just so the children wouldn’t have to spend half their school week with each parent.

“There’s nothing wrong with joint physical or legal custody if the parents can agree to work in the child’s best interest,” says “But I absolutely do not think it should be forced in high-conflict marriages and if the parties don’t believe it can work.”

Guidubaldi, however, insists that studies show only 25 percent of divorces are considered high-conflict. “And only 10 percent of those — or 2.5 percent of all divorces — showed an association between joint custody and poor child adjustment,” he says.

But experts on domestic violence say that if a relationship is violent, joint custody can endanger children and wives. “One of the best ways domestic abusers gain access to their victims is during visitation exchanges,” Fulcher says. “This is a big issue for us.”

To protect such victims, some states have adopted a “rebuttable pre-

sumption of joint custody,” whereby joint custody is not necessarily assured in cases involving abuse.

But Guidubaldi claims that because only a tiny percentage of husbands are abusive, spousal abuse is a “straw man” raised because victims’-advocate groups “need some noble emotional banner to wave in order to politicize this issue to the detriment of children.”

“Less than 1 percent of American families have any repeat severe domestic violence,” says Stuart Miller, senior legislative analyst for the American Fathers Coalition. “Why write laws based on what the psychopaths might do, and in so doing exclude the majority of children from seeing their fathers?” he asks. “Besides, there’s always a domestic-violence exception in any law that affects children.”

In fact, fathers’-rights groups claim, women perpetrate as much domestic violence and child sexual abuse as men. “National violence statistics show that both men and women perpetrate violence,” Guidubaldi says.

But domestic-abuse experts bristle at such suggestions. “They are completely illegitimate the way they are interpreting those studies,” Gandy says. “They come up with several pages about violence by women, but it would take encyclopedias to list all the cases of husbands killing their wives.” When women kill a spouse, it makes big headlines precisely because it is so rare, she says. ■

BACKGROUND

Changing Roles

The role of fathers in the family has changed throughout history,

according to social historians.

“The fatherhood advocates who say that fathers are biologically programmed to be the provider and disciplinarian and mothers the nurturers ignore the fact that throughout the ages, in cultures ranging from primitive to complex agrarian, men have been more involved in child rearing,” Coltrane says. “Men have often been caretakers and nurturers.”

And generally speaking, he says, in societies that share parenting and have more equality between men’s and women’s roles, “men are usually less involved in masculine, chest-pounding, antagonistic, violent activities.”

Moreover, throughout history women have played a fundamental role as provisioners, he says. Even today in many West African societies, women raise all the family’s food, and child rearing is a community-shared responsibility.

In fact, he says, the concept of the nuclear family, with a biological mother and a head-of-household biological father raising children on their own is a fairly modern, Western construct. “There have always been families raising healthy children that didn’t include one mother and one father,” Coltrane says.

The model of the isolated, two-parent family, with the woman as nurturer and the father as provider, comes from the 1950s, which he calls “an aberration from the historical norm.”

John Gillis, a social historian at Rutgers University, says the idea of a household headed by a biological father is a post-revolutionary concept. In Colonial America, he says, the king was considered “father” of his subjects, and there was an omnipresent “head of household,” but it wasn’t necessarily the biological father. The patriarchal householder had authority over all the men, women, servants and children who lived

Continued on p. 486

Chronology

1700s-1800s

In Colonial era, children are considered the property of the father, women have few rights and divorce is rare.

1839

The “tender years” doctrine advanced by the English lawyer and author Justice Thomas Noon Talfourd provides the first major challenge to paternal preference.

Early 1900s

Courts and state legislatures support maternal preference, increasingly viewing the mother as the more nurturing parent. For the first time, fathers are told they must support the children even if custody is lost.

1950s-1960s

View of divorce as “shameful” changes as sexual revolution brings divorce into the open. Some states challenge the notion that the “best interests” of the child are best served by giving custody to the mother.

1965

Then-Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan calls fatherlessness “the fundamental weakness of the Negro community” in a landmark report to President Lyndon B. Johnson. Johnson responds by declaring a War on Poverty, launching numerous social programs aimed at helping the poor.

1969

Gov. Ronald Reagan, R-Calif., signs nation’s first no-fault divorce law. Other states follow suit.

1970s

Women’s movement gathers momentum. For the first time, custody decisions are based on the best interests of the child.

1975

Congress creates the Child Support Enforcement and Paternity Establishment program; all child support goes to states.

1990s-2000s

Family-values debate gathers steam, fueled by the religious right. A fatherhood movement is launched. President Clinton cracks down on deadbeat dads.

1992

Child Support Recovery Act authorizes federal criminal penalties on parents who fail to meet child-support obligations for a child living in another state. Vice President Dan Quayle ignites controversy by criticizing decision by TV character Murphy Brown to become a single mother.

August 1993

Several leaders of what will eventually be called the fatherhood movement meet in Aspen, Colo., to discuss responsible fatherhood.

Oct. 27, 1994

The first National Summit on

Fatherhood, in Dallas, attracts 250 people.

Nov. 8, 1994

Republicans win majorities in House and Senate. House Speaker-elect Newt Gingrich, Ga., vows to eliminate welfare payments to mothers who can’t establish paternity.

1995

President Clinton calls father absence “one of the most important social issues of the day.” Thirty cities host community fatherhood forums; Gov. George Allen, R-Va., launches Virginia Fatherhood Campaign, the first statewide fatherhood initiative.

1995

Million Man March held in Washington, D.C.

1997

House and Senate form bipartisan congressional task forces to examine fatherlessness and its role in national policy. Second National Summit on Fatherhood is held. House unanimously calls on men to re-dedicate themselves to responsible fatherhood.

June 1999

Senate resolution encourages greater involvement of fathers in their children’s lives.

Nov. 10, 1999

House authorizes \$140 million over six years to help welfare fathers find jobs and to help community and religious groups encourage marriage and teach parenting skills.

June 2-3, 2000

National Fatherhood Initiative hosts Third National Summit on Fatherhood in Washington, D.C.

Critics Blame Child-Support System . . .

Critics say the child-support enforcement system exacerbates fatherlessness, particularly among poor and never-married fathers.

"The current child-support rules discourage the poorest fathers from staying connected to their children," Vicki Turetsky, senior staff attorney for the Center for Law and Social Policy, told the House Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee on May 18.

"The rules treat child support as repayment for welfare benefits, rather than as a father's financial contribution to his children," she testified. "They work against poor mothers and fathers who want to use their own money to support their own children."

Jackie Boggess, a senior policy analyst for the Center on Fathers, Families and Public Policy in Madison, Wis., has studied how public policies affect low-income, never-married fathers. She contends that the current system "is primarily being used as a way to get poor fathers to pay back the welfare system. And many of those fathers absolutely do not have the money."

The federal-state program's focus on repaying welfare costs is the biggest barrier to poor fathers taking responsibility for their children, agrees Joan Entmacher, vice president and director of family economic security for the National Women's Law Center, a nonprofit that works to improve child-support enforcement. If fathers do pay child support, it doesn't go to their children but to reimburse welfare," she points out.

Even those who are out in the field enforcing the rules contend that the system needs reform and that many aspects are "outdated and counterproductive." Marilyn Ray Smith, chief legal counsel for the Child Support Enforcement Division in Massachusetts, echoed the sentiments of other witnesses when she told the Subcommittee on Human Resources: "The current rules are a failure by almost any measure. They are difficult for states to follow, for staff to explain, for parents to understand, for computers to implement."

Since the late 1970s, most child support is paid directly to the state instead of to the child's mother. If the mother receives welfare, states then reduce her public-assistance check by that same amount.

States used to pass on at least \$50 of the child-support payment to the mother. But when Congress rewrote the welfare law in 1996, that became optional, and most states decided to keep the money. "It's very frustrating for the fathers," Entmacher says.

Moreover, families entering the welfare system must sign over all claims to unpaid child support that accumulated before the family started on public assistance. "So families who tried to hold out the longest before going onto welfare can lose all of the support owed to them if it is collected

after they are on welfare," Turetsky said.

Elaine Sorenson, principal research associate for the Urban Institute, says mothers have little incentive for helping states identify the father of their children because the money does not go to the kids. Often, the moms don't want to cooperate because the father is giving her some money under-the-table, she says, "so there's a disincentive for either one to play by the rules."

Failure to disclose such information, however, makes the mother guilty of welfare fraud and puts the father in jeopardy of going to jail. In addition, Boggess says amendments to the 1996 welfare law call for mothers who refuse to name the father of their children to lose at least 25 percent of their welfare check.

The program's focus on recovering welfare costs also scares fathers away from being involved in their kids' lives because states can spring massive bills for unpaid support on sometimes unsuspecting fathers. States typically bill fathers for welfare, hospital-delivery costs and other expenses that quickly reach such high sums that men who are unemployed or hold low-paying jobs just go underground, she says.

"A poor father who just signed the paternity papers may be prepared to pay child support each month," Entmacher says, "but he's not ready to pay a hospital bill for many thousands of dollars. Many of these fathers are just as poor as the mother, and the prospect of walking in and being hit with \$12,000 in debts is just unimaginable."

Likewise, she says, many states do not suspend a father's child-support responsibilities if he goes to jail. "So when he gets out of prison, he's got this enormous bill for unpaid child support. Plus now he's got a prison record, which makes it all that much harder for him to get a good job so that he can pay it," she says.

The welfare-reform law also called for the creation of a new national database that tracks the Social Security numbers of anyone who gets a job, enabling states to track delinquent dads and garnish their wages. But Entmacher contends that fathers often don't even know they are accruing debts. Some men may not know that they have fathered a child or that the mother receives welfare, she says. Others never receive a notice that they owe child support because they don't have a permanent address.

"The system has to do a better job of avoiding those huge debts accruing," Entmacher says. "Such situations really discourage both the fathers and mothers from establishing paternity." Plus, once they realize that the money wouldn't go to the children, "it just totally discourages them, and sometimes the father just drops out of the child's life."

Groups representing both low-income mothers and

... For Encouraging Fatherlessness

fathers want reforms, including requiring that payments go to children instead of to the state and disregarding fathers' contributions in calculating mothers' welfare benefits.

States generally see child-support payments as payback because taxpayers provided financial support to the family when the father didn't.

But advocates for the poor say that some members of Congress are realizing that allowing at least some of the money to be passed on to the mother will help her get off welfare. Since the new welfare-reform law passed in 1996, millions of welfare mothers have gone to work and need extra cash to pay for transportation, clothing and child care in order to keep working, advocates say. Several bills pending in Congress would offer states an incentive to pass on at least some child-support money to the family.

One bill would give all of it to the mother. "Republicans don't want to take this action because we don't want to make it any easier for mothers to stay on welfare," said Human Resources Subcommittee Chairman Nancy L. Johnson, R-Conn. "It's better for them, for their children and for society if they get jobs and achieve self-sufficiency."

She pointed out that delinquent parents owe about \$40 billion in back child support to the state and federal governments. "In fact, we now make collections in only about 14 percent of welfare cases," she said.

But Turetsky told the subcommittee that preliminary results from pilot projects in Wisconsin and Vermont — where child-support payments are passed on to moms — show that fathers are more likely to pay in such instances and that families tend to move off welfare faster when they receive the money.

DNA Testing

The advent of DNA testing to determine paternity is also aggravating the fatherlessness problem and is throwing a genetic monkey wrench into the already messy child-support situation, the system's critics say. Some fathers who discover a child is not theirs will then refuse to pay child support or remain involved in the children's lives.

The 1996 welfare law made it easier for a father to voluntarily declare paternity of a newborn. By doing so, the father is then liable for child-support payments. But if the father later learns through genetic testing that the child is not his, he is still liable for the child support, simply because he signed the paper declaring paternity.

"Often the fathers and mothers don't know the full consequences of what they are signing," Entmacher says. She says parents should be better informed about what they are signing and that states should make paternity tests available at subsidized rates for low-income fathers. That would save money in the long run, she says, by

avoiding costly legal battles down the road. It also would protect children from the pain of learning years later that the man they thought was their father isn't, she says.

Meanwhile, family courts generally are ignoring the DNA results and ordering fathers to continue paying child support, arguing that it is in the interest of the child. In Ohio, for instance, Dennis Caron was sentenced to 30 days in jail recently for refusing to continue to pay child support for a child he found out through DNA testing was not his.

At least two states, Pennsylvania and Ohio, are considering bills to allow DNA testing to be considered in child-support cases.

From Deadbolts to Deadbeats

The issue of visitation is closely linked to child support. If a father is behind in child support, some mothers won't let their kids see him, even if the father doesn't have a job. And if there is bad blood between the parents, some mothers may withhold visitation as a weapon against the father. The father, in turn, may retaliate by withholding child support.

"Visitation interference has reached epidemic proportions," says Dianna Thompson, executive director of the American Coalition for Fathers and Children, citing studies showing that 40 percent of mothers actively interfere in fathers' visitation. "Dads go to pick up their kids and the children aren't there."

Even though a judge can order the mother to stop interfering with visitation, she often will do it again anyway, Thompson says, because there is lax enforcement of visitation orders. "In many states, if the father misses a child-support payment he can lose his business, driver's, hunting or fishing license and have his assets seized or land in jail," Thompson says. "But what happens to the mom if she violates the visitation agreement? Nothing."

If shut out long enough, she says, "These deadbolted dads become deadbeat dads." If a father doesn't have the resources to continue the court battles, or the time to take off from work to pursue those battles, she says, "He'll eventually just drop out of his children's lives."

Courts should better enforce visitation agreements, she says, because fathers that have access to their children are strongly motivated to pay child support.

Many child and family advocates say the whole focus of the child-support system should be overhauled, so that instead of collecting money for the states' coffers, it focuses on keeping the fathers involved in their children's lives.

"The government will use millions of taxpayer dollars to ensure that a child-support check is there on Father's Day," Thompson says, "but won't lift a finger to see that the father is there."

Continued from p. 482

within his extended “household,” which could include a church, school and workplace.

“Then the American Revolution overthrew the notion of hierarchy, and all adult males were considered ‘citizen brothers,’ with equal rights,” Gillis says. Thus, the modern age of parenting by a biological father was born. During the 18th century, historians point out, most child-rearing manuals were directed at the fathers, not the mothers. And in the rare instances when a divorce occurred, custody of the children always was awarded to the father.

Gillis says that the amount of time fathers spent in the daily life of their children has varied across historical times and cultures. In fact, father-absence is not new, he says. In earlier times the father was often away from home fighting wars or looking for food.

After the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, fathers were away from home for extended periods of time — working, fighting wars or taming the Wild West, Gillis says. This was particularly true among

men in elite positions, such as the military or the civil service, he says. “We might be surprised at the level of fatherlessness that existed during the so-called golden age of fatherhood,” he says.

But Blankenhorn points out, “There has never been this level of father-absence before; not even close. Even during World War II the amount of father-absence in this country did not reach the levels we have today, and most of

those men came back. And they were doing something heroic,” he says, which from a child’s point of view is different from abandonment.

According to Gillis, the current fatherhood movement is also not new. During the 1920s, a “new fatherhood movement” coincided with the fledgling feminist movement of the period. “Women wanted men to share in the family duties, and men wanted to become better fathers,” Gillis says. “It’s the same movement we see today with women struggling to create more equality in the home

older generation criticized the younger men for being “too soft,” he says, because they spent too much time with their families. “Some folks even wrote about how that was the era of the ‘new father,’” he says.

The Moynihan Report

In March 1965 then Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote in a report to President Lyndon B. Johnson that fatherlessness was “the fundamental weakness of the Negro community.” Johnson considered the situation dire enough to declare his famous War on Poverty not long after that.¹⁰

The “Moynihan Report” touched off a furor among black leaders, who felt that discussing black illegitimacy rates distracted attention from the larger issues of racism and lack of opportunity. For the next two decades the subject was too sensitive for political debate. When the Heritage Foundation’s Rector once brought it up during a press conference, he remembers, a reporter

stood up and denounced him.

“After the Moynihan Report, if you talked about fatherlessness among blacks it meant you were racist,” Blankenhorn says. “You just couldn’t say that black children needed fathers.”

The subject was not openly discussed until the 1970s, when a few black social reformers like Ballard started talking about it, he says.

Since then, the illegitimacy problem in America has only gotten worse,



CQ Photo/R. Michael Jenkins

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-N.Y., was an assistant secretary of Labor when he sparked a furor among African-American leaders by calling absent fathers “the fundamental weakness of the Negro community” in a 1965 report to President Lyndon B. Johnson. The topic became virtually taboo for the next two decades.

and to domesticate the fathers who had been wandering far and wide during the 19th century.”

Then men went abroad again during World War II, but, according to Blankenhorn, when they came home they were ready for more emotional connectedness to their families. Ironically, he says, fathers began expressing more emotional intimacy with their wives and children during the much-maligned 1950s. The

Rise of the Stay-at-Home Dad

The things stay-at-home dads have to put up with. “We’ll be out somewhere and one of the kids will start making a fuss,” says Curtis Cooper of Apple Valley, Minn. “Then all of a sudden some woman, without knowing us at all, will come up and tell me what’s wrong with my child. I’m with my children all day; she’s with them two seconds, and yet she thinks she knows what my kids need better than I do.” The thought makes him chuckle.

The same thing used to happen to Robert Frank, author of the new book *The Involved Father*, who stayed home with his two kids for 12 years. Once when the kids were very young, he was at a mall with them, preparing to go outside on a cold Illinois day. “This grandmotherly type person came over and started putting their hats, mittens and scarves on them,” he remembers. “Then she proceeded to walk us out to our van and buckle them in, giving me a lecture on child development the whole time.”

“She just had no idea who she was dealing with,” says the family counselor with a Ph.D. in educational psychology and a minor in child development. Stay-at-home dads learn to take such stereotyping in stride, he says.

But at first, the hardest challenge for a stay-at-home dad is dealing with the social isolation and “the identity thing,” says Cooper, who founded the Dad-to-Dad network (www.slowlane.com).

The network helps at-home fathers link up for playgroups and dads’-night-out dinners. Started in 1995, it now has 30 chapters around the country and is growing steadily, he says.

He estimates that there are about 2 million fathers staying home with their children full time, based on information from the U.S. Census Bureau. “But no one really has an accurate figure,” he says, “because no one knows how to define them. Do you count the fireman who works the night shift but is home with his kids during the day?”

“It’s a phenomenon that’s growing and growing,” Frank says. “It’s the wave of the future.” He thinks it will continue until there is equal and balanced parenting between spouses.

A decade ago, many fathers stayed home because they had no choice after being laid off. Now more fathers are doing it by choice.

“We didn’t want someone else raising our kids,” Cooper says. “And my wife travels all the time and had the better career path ahead of her.” His wife is director of marketing for a pest-control company and he was an assistant buyer for Athlete’s Foot stores.

Attitudes toward at-home dads have changed in the last two decades, says James Levine, director of The Fatherhood Project at the Families and Work Institute in New York. Twenty-five years ago, when he wrote *Who Will Raise the Children?* about at-home fathers, people thought the role was “freakish.” Today, as nurturing roles have become more acceptable for men, more and more families “are moving toward a more equitable division of labor, and toward the understanding that both parents are equally capable of providing the competent care children need,” Levine said.¹

Having dads as the primary caretaker is good for kids, according to Kyle Pruett, a clinical professor at the Yale University Child Study Center in New Haven, Conn., who is conducting the only longitudinal study on families with at-home fathers. He finds that children raised by fathers have better social problem-solving skills and tend to do less gender stereotyping. “Girls have a more robust interest in math and science, and boys are more interested in relationships and nurturing,” he said.²

Moreover, when fathers stay at home, the two parents end up sharing nighttime and weekend parenting duties more equally, says Frank, who conducted two studies on the subject in the early 1990s. “When the father comes home from work, he usually doesn’t want to take over parenting,” he says. “But the working mother understands better that the dad needs a break when she gets home.”

Frank also found that if both parents are home, the child approaches the parents equally with problems, unlike in traditional families where the child goes to the mother 80 percent of the time. “It was good news for fathers and mothers,” he says. “Because it reassured the mothers that they would be able to maintain their strong attachment to the child, even if the father was the primary caretaker.”

¹ Quoted in Marilyn Gardner, “Beyond Mr. Mom: At-home dads seek respect for their role, but worry about later career,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 22, 1999.

² *Ibid.*

both among blacks and whites. Only 7 percent of America’s children were born out-of-wedlock in the 1960s. Today, nearly one-third of Americans are born to unmarried mothers. America has one of the highest illegitimacy rates in the industrialized world, with a child born to unmarried parents every 25 seconds, according to Rector.

Contrary to popular belief, unwed parenthood is not just a teenage problem, nor is it a black problem. “More out-of-wedlock births occur to women age 30 and over than to minor teenage girls,” writes Rector. And illegitimacy is growing fastest among whites. Of the 1.2 million babies born

into fatherless homes in 1997, 41 percent were white and 32 percent were black.¹¹

In fact, in the last two decades, nearly all of the increase in illegitimacy was due to the rise in fatherless childbearing among white mothers, Rector points out. Between 1980 and 1997 black, unwed births increased by only 100,000 per year while white, out-of-wedlock births more than doubled, from 328,984 to 793,202 per year. “By 1997, there were almost two white out-of-wedlock births for each black birth,” Rector writes.¹²

Nevertheless, the problem is more acute within the black community, where nearly 70 percent of all babies are born out-of-wedlock, compared with 21.5 percent of white babies. “This crisis cuts across American society, but is most severe among African-Americans, and we as members of that community have a special responsibility to end it,” wrote Ronald B. Mincy, a senior program officer at the Ford Foundation, and Obie Clayton, director of the Morehouse Research Institute, in a letter to the editor of *The Washington Post*.¹³

Whites Affected, Too

But it wasn't until the early 1990s, when the nation realized that out-of-wedlock births among all segments of the population had skyrocketed, that the issue became widely recognized as a societal problem. By 1995, the father-absence rate for white America had reached the same level that it had reached for black America when Moynihan sounded his alarm.

“Suddenly in 1995 what had been called a crisis of family structure among black Americans in 1965 was now happening among white Americans,” Blankenhorn says. “The problem had just metastasized into a so-

cietal issue. It was harder to put it into a little box as ‘their’ problem, as a welfare problem or poor people’s problem.”

Scholars began paying attention, and long-term studies began coming in about the consequences of growing up in a one-parent home. Prominent academics began publishing credible studies, paving the way for more popular change of attitudes.

There was also an interesting change in the political debate, Blankenhorn says. In the 1970s, it had become a partisan issue. The left had thought illegitimacy was something that only the religious right talked about. Those who thought it was a problem were accused of blaming the victim. This had a chilling effect on scholars, he says. If you were a good centrist or good liberal, you thought it was a big waste of time to talk about illegitimacy rather than about the causes and solutions for poverty.

But then in 1992 Republican vice presidential candidate Dan Quayle criticized a TV character, Murphy Brown, played by Candice Bergen, for mocking the importance of fathers by having a child out of wedlock. Liberals, including presidential candidate Clinton, roundly criticized Quayle’s speech as an attack on single mothers.

“But right after Clinton’s election, an astonishing series of things took place that changed the whole debate, thanks to Clinton and Gore,” Blankenhorn says. “Clinton made a speech in Texas soon after he was elected saying that one of the most important social issues of the day was father absence,” Blankenhorn says, “even though he had mercifully made fun of Quayle.

“So it became a nonpartisan issue,” he says. Democratic as well as Republican governors began setting up task forces on fatherhood. “By the time Clinton had been in office a year

there was no difference in what Clinton was saying about this than what Dan Quayle had said.”

By 1999, Blankenhorn points out, 80 percent of the signatories of the Morehouse position paper on fatherlessness among black Americans, were African-Americans. The statement acknowledged that the African-American family has been undermined by a variety of forces — racism, changing cultural norms, structural changes in the economy and public policies ranging from slavery to modern welfare programs.

Nevertheless, it continued, for the sake of the children, the African-American community had to bring to the fatherhood movement the same “energy, dedication and passion” that was summoned to wage the struggle for basic civil rights.

“So for 30 years we had been living with a big elephant in the living room, but it had been considered rude to acknowledge it,” Blankenhorn says. “But by the late 1990s, society was finally able to say, ‘there’s a problem.’” ■

CURRENT SITUATION

Welfare Reform

“The single biggest contributor to the decline of marriage was welfare policy as it existed prior to 1996,” says Washington attorney Henry, citing the “man in the house” rule — mothers could not receive welfare and other benefits if there was a man living with her. “It drove the dad out of the house, even if he was unemployed.”

Continued on p. 490

At Issue:

Is promoting marriage a good way to encourage fathers to be more involved in their children's lives?

CHARLES A. BALLARD

President, Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization

FROM TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES, OCT. 5, 1999.

Perhaps, no message coming out of Congress is so important as “promoting marriage and two-parent families and aggressively helping men become responsible parents.” This . . . will do much to build sturdy communities while reducing violence, poverty, educational failure, crime, child abuse . . . and a host of other problems.

Some will argue “just give the man a job, and he will get married and care for his family.” If a young, poor, uneducated father gets his education and gets a job, he will pay child support. . . . There are many young and old men who have good-paying jobs. However, they avoid getting married and paying child support. There are many men who are well-educated, have good-paying jobs and are married. Many of these men divorce their wives and children and refuse to pay child support, sending their children into poverty.

So just having a job doesn't mean that a man will get married, or if he is married, will care for his family. What is missing in these men's lives is a change of heart, a change of attitude. Then marriage, fidelity, love, affection, nurturing and compassion will have real meaning.

We must promote marriages that are made up of this kind of good stuff. Then men will get married and care for their families until death. This is a relatively new area for the American welfare-reform system, and there needs to be clear curriculum regarding marriage and dealing with the economic situation of fathers.

If we do not invest in the most promising practices with demonstrated track records and clear-cut performance measures, I am concerned that an unintended consequence could be to replicate the failed experience of major federal expenditures in the area of teen pregnancy and similar programs. . . .

To give the national fatherhood programs real significance, we must provide real resources so that they can reach a larger number of fathers. By following this recommendation, the lives of thousands of fathers — and many more thousands of children — will be positively affected. Not only would the approach reduce welfare rolls, but [it] would create healthier economical outcomes for children. . . .

This [would be] a most welcomed development after more than three decades of federal policies that punished marriage. . . . These federal policies helped to create a “miasma of fatherlessness” in America for our children.

RON MINCY

Senior program officer, The Ford Foundation's Human Development and Reproductive Health Unit

FROM *FATHERHOOD TODAY* MAGAZINE, FALL 1999

Though there is no reason to expect dramatic increases in the number of children reared by married couples, new research by the Urban Institute provides optimism about father involvement. Sixty-two percent of American children under 3 live in families in which parents co-habitate or in which the father visits the child at least once a week. I call the poor among these families “fragile families.”

But as children get older, the proportion who live with married and fragile families rapidly declines. Fatherhood programs are learning how to help never-married and divorced or separated fathers remain involved in their children's lives. The fatherhood movement should focus on this task, leaving the importance of marriage for others to debate.

This does not mean that marriage has nothing to do with fatherhood, because fathers in a loving, equitable and well-functioning marriage are in a better position to support their children. . . .

So, how can the fatherhood movement take up the issue of marriage without saying to the almost one-third of American children born to unwed parents, plus those of divorced or dysfunctional marriages, “You're not our priority?”

. . . To men who have no children, the fatherhood movement should discourage unwed fatherhood because it puts the father in a weaker position to support his child. However, for children born to divorced, separated, unmarried or dysfunctional-married parents, the prevention question is moot. If marriage is feasible, marriage promotion can become part of a practitioner's intervention strategy for that family. . . . However, if marriage is not feasible, the practitioner still works to improve the parents' relationship so it does not become a barrier to the relationship between the father and child.

Political conservatives tend to focus on the effects of fatherlessness on the moral condition of our society. This has pit them against liberals and progressives, whose focus — child poverty and well-being — conservatives believe to be too narrow, and feminists, who want options for family composition that conservatives believe are too broad.

. . . I doubt a coherent fatherhood movement could ever emerge in the midst of such a debate. Instead, we all should remain ruthlessly focused on fatherhood promotion. The prospects for improving the lifelong capacities of children, through the early and positive involvement of both mom and dad, are just too great to choose otherwise.

Continued from p. 488

“We gave women money only as long as they did not marry the father of their children,” Henry says. “We even sent social workers around spying on people to make sure there was no man hanging around. If you set out to consciously destroy the black family in this country, you’d be hard-pressed find a better way of doing it.”

The landmark welfare-reform law, passed by Congress in 1996, “turned that system on its head,” Henry says, when it made funds available to help maintain two-parent households. “There’s no federal requirement that recipients get rid of dad anymore,” he says, although many states have not adjusted their systems to take advantage of the new flexibility Congress allowed.

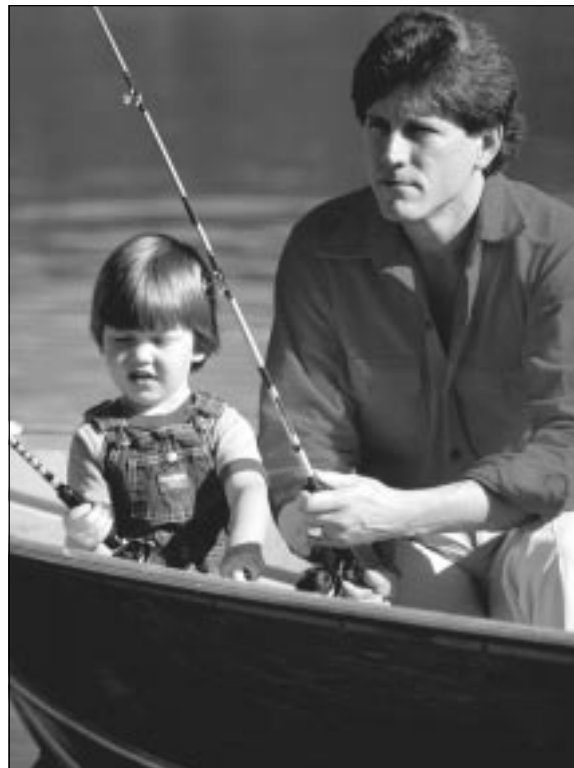
The law also discouraged out-of-wedlock births by “capping” welfare payments to those children already born when the mother first goes on welfare. If an unmarried welfare recipient has another child once she has begun accepting welfare, the government will not pay additional benefits for the new child.

The law also called for beefed-up enforcement of child-support payments and established a new nationwide registry designed to track so-called “deadbeat dads” who are behind in their child-support payments.

It also obligated \$837.5 million in state and federal funds to be spent over five years to discourage child-bearing among teens and unmarried adults. More than half of that was for abstinence-only sex education, and \$400 million was to be awarded — \$100 million a year for four years — to five states that show the greatest

decrease in unwed motherhood without increasing abortions. Last September the first of those block grants were awarded, with each state receiving \$20 million.¹⁴

Rector of the Heritage Foundation points out that since the welfare-reform debate began — for the first time in 30 years — there has been a “pause” in the climbing illegitimacy rates in the United States. The growth rate of unmarried births



Corbis Images

Some experts predict Americans will be more focused on children in the future, even as family structures become more diverse.

among white women slowed slightly, but declined dramatically among black women. In fact, unwed births among black teens have reached the lowest point ever.

But many conservatives complain that the welfare-reform law failed to take the next logical step — getting the fathers back into their children’s lives.

The Fathers Count Bill

“Reducing illegitimacy and encouraging marriage is the one place where reform has really fallen short,” Rector says. “The principal effort should never have been just to make single mothers work hard, but to restore the culture of marriage. The next round of reform will be absolutely full of programs designed to do that.”

One such measure is the Fathers Count bill, sponsored by House Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee Chairman Nancy L. Johnson, R-Conn., and ranking member Benjamin L. Cardin, D-Md. It would provide \$140 million for community-based fatherhood programs and for job training for non-custodial fathers to help them become employable so they can pay child support.

“It’s a drop in the bucket, when hundreds of millions of dollars are being used to support single mothers,” complains Levy of the Children’s Rights Council. His group would like any government or state programs offering benefits to provide them to both parents, if they are both actively involved in the child’s life. Some states already do this, he says.

A companion bill is languishing in the Senate. Despite its bipartisan support, it hasn’t moved forward, Horn says, because it hasn’t gotten onto the radar screen of a sufficient number of Republicans on the Senate Finance Committee. The Finance Committee has jurisdiction because the bill would affect millions of dollars in child-support payments, which are funneled through a federal agency.

The bill offers states an incentive to pass through at least a portion of child-support payments to the family. Currently, if the mother is or has been on welfare, all of the money — except \$50 in some states — goes to state and federal child-support enforcement agencies.

The White House, which favors the measure, has also directed federal agencies to encourage responsible fatherhood in their employee policies and practices, and to include fathers in all child-welfare studies.

The Department of Health and Human Services and major foundations have also collaborated with fatherhood and women's groups by supporting pro-fatherhood demonstration projects. The Department of Labor has made welfare-to-work grants to fatherhood demonstration projects in Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Los Angeles and Racine, Wis. Labor Secretary Alexis Herman has encouraged states to devote a good part of their welfare-to-work money to job training and counseling for fathers of children receiving welfare benefits.

Many conservative groups also think the government should prohibit unwed teen fathers from participating in after-school sports and activities and improve its child-support enforcement program and statutory rape laws. ■

OUTLOOK

More Family Changes?

In his book about fatherlessness, Blankenhorn of the Institute for American Values predicts that if current trends continue, the shape of American society will radically change. By the end of this year, as

people born after 1970 make up a large chunk of the working-adult population, the nation will be divided into two groups of roughly the same size, he writes: "those who grew up in the daily presence of fathers . . . and those who did not."

Blankenhorn hopes to reverse that trend. "Perhaps by communicating with this generation of 12-year-olds that they shouldn't have babies until they are married, we can change things so theirs won't be fatherless children," he says. "After all in today's full-employment economy, we look at a 15-year-old with a baby and we see an unemployed worker!" he jokes.

But the University of California's Coltrane foresees a nation with increasingly diverse family structures. "I expect we will have more civil unions, domestic-partner unions and cohabitation. "Heterosexuals will use these new forms of marriage to have 'lighter' forms of matrimony," he predicts.

Coltrane thinks the quickest and best way to get men more involved in parenting is to pay women the same as men. "If women were paid the same as men, and it wasn't an economic disincentive for men, we'd see a lot more men involved in their children's lives," he says.

Gandy of NOW predicts that fathers'-rights groups will be successful at getting many more state legislatures to pass laws presuming joint custody. "They are gaining in political strength and are organizing politically," she says. "They have a lot more resources, especially divorced men, compared to divorced women. So they can make campaign contributions in ways that divorced women cannot. They are very powerful, and there are a lot of men in state legislatures who know what a great bargaining chip joint custody would be if they ever got divorced."

The University of Washington's

Schwartz thinks America will become more child-focused. "We are seeing an enormous amount of fallout from a society that can't cope with modern-day stress and parenting," she says. "These child crimes have had an impact on the American psyche.

"As a nation, we've always been penny-wise and pound-foolish about family programs when compared to other industrialized countries," she continues. "But this is a place where the left and the right meet. So I think policy-makers will invest more money in kids, such as more subsidized child care with better-paid child-care workers, and perhaps switching to an 11-month school year."

She thinks the percentage of American homes where the couples are or have been divorced is likely to rise as the older generation — a generation that generally didn't get divorced — dies off. "And I don't see us going back to a low divorce rate. I think it will stay in the 50 to 60 percent range," Schwartz says.

However, University of California psychologist Phil Cowan disagrees. He already sees the divorce and crime rates slowing down. "Many of these trends are turning around without the society turning back the clock and going back to traditional family arrangements," he says. "It seems to me that the new forms of family arrangements are settling out some. I would hope that the whole discussion will become less sloganistic, more differentiated and nuanced."

Ballard of the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood predicts that 10 years from now "we'll have better, happier American families." Like Schwartz, he predicts many more programs supporting the family, with the emphasis placed on what is in the best interest of the child.

"We now have mayors, governors, attorneys general and other elected officials who understand that having fragile families increases the tax rate

and crime,” he says, “and that the more you create wholesome, loving families, the more income your communities will have.” ■

Notes

¹ Lieberman’s statement was made July 14, 1999, at a press conference as the Responsible Fatherhood Act was being introduced in the Senate.

² David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America* (1995), p. 10.

³ “Turning the Corner on Father Absence in Black America,” Morehouse Research Institute and The Institute for American Values, 1999.

⁴ Robert Rector, “Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing and Paternal Absence: Trends and Social Effects,” The Heritage Foundation, July 7, 1999.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Louise B. Silverstein and Carl F. Auerbach, “Deconstructing the Essential Father,” *American Psychologist*, June 1999, pp. 397-407.

⁷ Quoted by Joan Lowy, “Dad? Who Needs Him? Support of Non-traditional Families Sends Religious Right into a Tizzy,” *The Arizona Republic*, Aug. 29, 1999.

⁸ Herbert Jacob, *Silent Revolution: The Transformation of Divorce Law in the United States* (1988), p. 80.

⁹ “The National Association of School Psychologists-Kent State University Nationwide Impact of Divorce Study,” U.S. Commission on Child and Family Welfare, 1983. The randomly selected sample included 144 families in 38 states from all socioeconomic levels and from rural, suburban and urban

FOR MORE INFORMATION

American Fathers Coalition, 2000 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Suite 148, Washington, D.C. 20006; (202) 955-6001; <http://users.erols.com/afc/about.html>. This is the federal lobbying arm of the National Congress for Fathers and Children, which promotes father-inclusive policies at the federal legislative and regulatory level.

Children’s Rights Council, 300 I St., N.E., Suite 401, Washington, D.C. 20002-4389; (202) 547-6227; www.vix.com/crc. This nationwide child-advocacy group supports family formation and preservation and lobbies on behalf of separated, unwed and divorced parents.

Council on Contemporary Families, 280 Jefferson Rd., Princeton, N.J. 08540; (609) 924-9574; www.contemporaryfamilies.org. This organization of family researchers, theorists and practitioners brings a liberal interpretation to the family-values debate.

Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002; (202) 546-4400; www.heritage.org. This public policy research organization advocates individual freedom, limited government and the free-market system.

Institute for American Values, 1841 Broadway, Suite 211, New York, N.Y. 10023; (212) 246-3942; www.americanvalues.org. Founded in 1987, the institute does research and public education on major issues affecting family well-being and civil society.

National Fatherhood Initiative, 1 Bank St., Suite 160, Gaithersburg, Md. 20878; (301) 948-0599; www.fatherhood.org. Founded in 1994, the NFI is dedicated to increasing the number of children growing up with involved fathers. It conducts public-awareness campaigns and conducts research and policy analysis.

settings. Because it was repeated several years later, it evaluated the long-term effects as well as the immediate effects of divorce.

¹⁰ “The Negro Family: the Case for National Action,” March 1995, Department of Labor.

¹¹ Rector, *op cit.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ “Doing Something About Fatherlessness,” letter to the editor, *The Washington Post*, 06/23/1999.

¹⁴ For background, see Kathy Koch, “Why Did Black Teens’ Birthrate Decline?” *The CQ Researcher*, July 10, 1998, p. 594.

Bibliography

Selected Sources Used

Books

Blankenhorn, David, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*, The Institute for American Values, 1995.

Institute President David Blankenhorn decries the social consequences for a nation where fathers sometimes appear near extinction, either through devaluation or willful abandonment of responsibility. This controversial exploration of absentee fathers and their impact on the nation shows how fatherhood is under siege — about 40 percent of children grow up without fathers in the home — and proposes a plan for rediscovering the goal of “a father for every child.”

Franklin, Donna L., *Ensuring Inequality: The Structural Transformation of the African-American Family*, Oxford University Press, 1997.

A University of California at Los Angeles sociology professor traces the evolution of the black family, from slavery to the present, highlighting how cultural and governmental forces have combined to create the current crisis in which a staggering number of African-American children are growing up without fathers.

Popenoe, David, *Life Without Father: Compelling New Evidence that Fatherhood and Marriage Are Indispensable for the Good of Children and Society*, Martin Kessler Books, 1996.

A family sociologist examines evidence from social and behavioral science, history and evolutionary biology to explain why fathers are abandoning their families in record numbers. He documents how fatherlessness contributes to such social problems as juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, welfare dependency and child poverty.

Articles

Joan Lowy, “Dad? Who Needs Him? Support of Non-Traditional Families Sends Religious Right into a Tizzy,” *The Arizona Republic*, Aug. 29, 1999.

The reporter discusses the debate that raged between conservatives and liberals following publication of an American Psychological Association (APA) journal article last June questioning whether it is essential that children be raised by their biological fathers.

Reports and Studies

Horn, Wade, “Father Facts,” National Fatherhood Initiative, 1998.

This is NFI’s third edition of this comprehensive, 106-page

summary of research on the social, psychological and economic consequences of children growing up without fathers in the home. It includes numerous charts and graphs illustrating trends in divorce, out-of-wedlock births, child poverty, single fatherhood, cohabitation, marriage and adoption.

Horn, Wade and Andrew Bush, “Fathers Marriage and Welfare Reform,” *The Hudson Institute*, August 1997.

The authors discuss how welfare reform was only the first step in repairing the problem of fatherless families. Sending single mothers into the work force will not help reunite missing fathers with their children, the authors argue. They offer a five-point plan that states could adopt to encourage marriage. It includes distributing discretionary government benefits, using welfare-to-work funds to increase men’s marriageability, enforcing child support obligations, restricting unwed teen fathers from participating in sports and other extra-curricular activities and enforce statutory rape laws.

Morehouse Research Institute and The Institute for American Values, “Turning the Corner on Father Absence in Black America,” 1999.

This policy statement, signed last Fathers’ Day by 50 racially and politically diverse scholars, community leaders and reformers, exemplifies the new consensus developing in the fatherhood movement around issues that once caused deep division along racial and political lines. It called for a nationwide effort to reduce fatherlessness in black America, where 70 percent of all babies today are born to unwed mothers.

Moynihan, Daniel Patrick, “The Negro Family: the Case for National Action,” March 1995, Department of Labor.

This report by the then-assistant secretary of Labor for policy and planning research, touched off a furor among black leaders because Moynihan called fatherlessness “the fundamental weakness of the Negro community.” The report helped prompt then-President Lyndon B. Johnson to declare his famous War on Poverty that same year.

Silverstein, Louise B. and Carl F. Auerbach, “Deconstructing the Essential Father,” *American Psychologist*, June 1999.

This APA journal article unleashed a firestorm among conservatives last June. The authors, clinical psychologists at Yeshiva University Medical School, concluded the most important criteria for raising a healthy child is the quality and reliability of the relationship between the child and its parents — not whether one of those “parents” is the biological father.

The Next Step

Child Support

“Clinton Proposes Crackdown on Child-Support Delinquents,” *USA Today*, Jan. 27, 2000, p. A6.

President Clinton unveiled proposals to crack down on parents who are delinquent in child-support payments. These parents could find their cars booted, gambling winnings withheld, passports denied and participation in Medicare curtailed in order for the government to collect what they owe. The plan could bring in \$2 billion over five years, aides say.

Comanor, William S., “Child Support Feels Different on Male Side; Divorced Fathers Who See Their Kids Regularly Do Better at Providing Financial Support to Mothers,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 22, 1999, p. B5.

Our efforts should be on ensuring frequent and continued contact between a father and his children. If we do that, the problem of child-support payments will largely take care of itself. The essential reason for the failure of the current policy is that there are two very different justifications for support payments. The first is to ensure an equitable sharing between the parents of the costs of raising their children. The second is to provide an increased level of resources for the children.

Havemann, Judith, “California Faces Loss of Funds; Problems With Child Support System Raise Federalism Issues,” *The Washington Post*, May 13, 1999, p. A25.

After years of warning California to reform its child-support system, federal officials threatened to cut off \$4 billion in welfare funds unless the state does a far better job of funneling support payments to needy children. By any measure, California has one of the worst child-support systems in the nation.

Havemann, Judith, “Child Support Recovery Has Gone Up 20 Percent; HHS Says Collection Gains Prove 1996 Law Is Working,” *The Washington Post*, April 2, 1999, p. A27.

Nearly three years after Congress ordered states to get tough on child support by revoking driver’s licenses and tracking down deadbeat parents on the job, collections have increased by about 20 percent, according to new federal figures. The Department of Health and Human Services hailed the record collection amounts as proof that the child support sections of the 1996 welfare-reform law are beginning to work. Child support collections have increased from \$12 billion in 1996 to \$14.4 billion in 1998.

Lucas, Greg, “Statewide Crackdown on Child Support; Davis Signs Measure to Improve Collection,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sept. 25, 1999, p. A1.

California began a huge overhaul of how it collects child support when Gov. Gray Davis signed legislation designed to get more money to the 3 million kids who depend on

those checks. The legislation strips the state’s 58 district attorneys of the task of collecting from deadbeat parents and creates a new statewide computer network to track child-support cases. California’s 17 percent rate of collection is one of the lowest in the nation.

St. George, Donna, “Parents Pay When License Is Threatened; Child Support Plan Draws Millions From Md. Drivers,” *The Washington Post*, Sept. 9, 1999, p. B1.

A Maryland initiative to suspend the driver’s licenses of parents who are delinquent on their child-support payments has goaded offenders into paying \$103 million since 1996, state officials say. The threat of losing driving privileges has prodded people across the state into handing over cash — about 121,724 moms and dads during the past three years. Striking at driving privileges is but one of several ways the government threatens parents who don’t pay up. Typically, wages have been docked and tax refunds intercepted; debts are reported to credit-rating agencies, too.

Deadbeat Parents

“Deadbeat Dad Gets Home Confinement,” *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 11, 2000, p. 3.

A father who had made only minimal child-support payments since his 1982 divorce was sentenced to 5 months of home confinement and ordered to pay at least \$400 a month in support to his five children. Jesse Jesus Chavez, 48, who now lives in Glendale, Ariz., quit at least one job to avoid having child support withheld from his paycheck, according to federal charges filed last June in Chicago. He owes about \$117,000 in unpaid support.

Masters, Brooke A., “Deadbeat Dad Gets 20 Months,” *The Washington Post*, April 8, 1999, p. B4.

A Fairfax, Va., man who racked up \$106,000 in overdue child support and interest and fled the area twice to avoid paying was sentenced to 20 months in prison, in the first federal felony case of its kind in the area. John T. Mosher, 44, formerly listed by state officials as one of Virginia’s top 10 deadbeat dads, was convicted of violating the federal Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act, a 1998 law that made it a federal felony to avoid paying more than \$10,000 in child support for more than two years.

Parker, Kathleen, “Deadbeat Dads More Myth Than Reality,” *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 27, 1999, p. 13.

Remember the \$800 toilet seat and the \$200 hammer? Now we have the \$22 nickel. Inflation? No, just your tax dollars at work. This time the money pit isn’t overpriced military equipment, but that elusive culprit, the Deadbeat Dad. In Florida last year, it cost taxpayers \$22.65 to track him in order to collect 5 cents. All told, the state of Florida — using state and federal funds — spent \$4.5 million to collect \$162,000 from deadbeat parents.

Puente, Teresa, "Dad Faces Felony Charges for Failing to Pay Child Support," *Chicago Tribune*, April 7, 2000, p. 1.

Robert E. Oravec reportedly worked in computer sales and earned more than \$100,000 last year. He drives a 1991 Jaguar and a 1984 Mercedes-Benz and pays \$1,700 in monthly rent on a suburban home on 5 acres in Kildeer, Ill. But Oravec, 47, is a deadbeat dad and allegedly owes his former wife and two teenage sons more than \$46,000 in child support, prosecutors said.

Wickham, DeWayne, "Pataki's Deadbeat-Dad Plan Right on Target," *USA Today*, March 30, 1999, p. A15.

When word surfaced out of Albany that Gov. George Pataki wants New York to join the long list of states that have upped the ante in their efforts to collect child-support payments from deadbeat dads, there were howls of protest. Under Pataki's get-tough proposal, New York, which has the nation's second-largest number of welfare recipients, will cut off all payments to women who refuse to help track down fathers who don't support their children. Twenty states already have a similar law.

Wolcott, Holly J., "Suspected Simi Valley 'Deadbeat' Dad Held," *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 2000, p. B3.

A former Simi Valley, Calif., resident has been arrested in Massachusetts on suspicion of owing more than \$31,000 in child support for his 8-year-old son. Authorities said that John Charles Simmons, 42, hasn't made his monthly \$320 payment in more than four years — the total owed includes interest — and has eluded police by moving frequently since leaving Simi Valley in 1995.

Yi, Daniel, "Lottery Winner Loses in Child Support Case; The District Attorney's Office Taps the \$11 Million Jackpot to Collect \$109,608 in Back Payments for Man's Son, 11," *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1999, p. B1.

Amador Granados may be wishing he had taken a lump-sum cash payment on his lottery winnings eight years ago. The Anaheim, Calif., resident, who won an \$11-million SuperLotto jackpot, is a deadbeat dad, say officials at the Orange County district attorney's family support division. So the agency went to a sure source — the \$561,000 a year in winnings he collects from the State Lottery Commission — to recover past-due support.

Fatherhood

Cohn, D'Vera, "Single-Father Households on Rise; Census Report Reveals Trends in Custody, Adoption Cases," *The Washington Post*, Dec. 11, 1998, p. A1.

The number of single fathers with children at home has increased by 25 percent in the past three years, the U.S. Census Bureau says in a new report, reflecting a rising acceptance by courts and society that men can be

effective parents on their own. In 1970, fathers accounted for only about one in 10 single parents. In 1998, it's one in six. In the last three years, the number of single-parent families headed by fathers has grown from 1.7 million to 2.1 million.

Parker, Kathleen, "Divorced Fathers Revolt," *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 20, 1999, p. 21.

One cannot exaggerate the extent of anger, pain and frustration among the hundreds of thousands — maybe millions — of men who now comprise what is loosely known as the Fatherhood Movement. The Children's Rights Council is one of the oldest, better organized of the 500 or so "fathers" groups in the United States.

Parker, Kathleen, "Fathers' Protests Deserve Airing," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 4, 2000, p. A19.

Think Boston Tea Party. Now fast forward 226 years to this Sunday, when dads from across the country plan to toss divorce, child-custody and child-support decrees into the Lincoln Memorial's Reflecting Pool. Thus begins a revolution by men weary of fighting within the system to make divorce fairer. They want changes in how children and child support are awarded; they want to stop media messages that paint all men as potential batterers and deadbeats; they want their children back.

Peterson, Karen S., "Crossing Racial Lines, Coalition Reaches to Fathers," *USA Today*, June 17, 1999, p. D10.

The Morehouse Research Institute and the Institute for American Values joined to present a report called a "cultural watershed": "Turning the Corner on Father Absence in Black America." It deplores "the political, economic, social and cultural forces that are separating fathers from their children." The Morehouse Research Institute, affiliated with Morehouse College in Atlanta, is a clearinghouse for information about black American males; the Institute for American Values is a private think tank promoting the family.

Peterson, Karen S., "Shoring Up Marriage," *USA Today*, July 21, 1998, p. D1.

Theodora Ooms, founder of The Family Impact Seminar, a Washington, D.C., resource center on family and marriage policy, is at the forefront of the country's newest social trend: the "marriage movement," which focuses on how to preserve one of the core relationships in life. Statisticians predict at least four in 10 new marriages will end in divorce. The marriage movement is a loosely defined, widely based, sometimes bipartisan group of researchers, academics, grass-roots activists, clergy, disillusioned family therapists who think marriage therapy comes too late if at all, schoolteachers and public officials. Most leaders emphasize marriage per se, not parenting or family values.

Back Issues

***Great Research on Current Issues Starts Right Here.
Recent topics covered by The CQ Researcher are listed below.***

Now available on the Web

For information, call (800) 432-2250 ext. 279 or (202) 887-6279.

JULY 1999

Refugee Crisis
Childhood Depression
New Challenges in Space
Defense Priorities

AUGUST 1999

Regulating Pesticides
Hospitals' Financial Woes
Medical Marijuana
Traffic Congestion

SEPTEMBER 1999

Drugmakers Under Siege
Adoption Controversies
Prison-Building Boom
Airline Industry Problems

OCTOBER 1999

Endangered Species Act
Democracy in Eastern Europe
The New Millennium
Rethinking Ritalin
Public Broadcasting

NOVEMBER 1999

Saving Open Spaces
Closing In on Tobacco
The Consumer Culture
Panama Canal

DECEMBER 1999

Reforming School Funding
Embryo Research
Asthma Epidemic

JANUARY 2000

Utility Deregulation
Auto Industry's Future
The Digital Divide

FEBRUARY 2000

Employee Benefits
High-Impact Litigation
Legacy of the Vietnam War
Medical Mistakes

MARCH 2000

Energy and the Environment
Zero Tolerance
Policing the Police
Islamic Fundamentalism
Campaign Finance Reform

APRIL 2000

Child Poverty
Gay-Rights Update
Community Colleges
Zoos in the 21st Century

MAY 2000

Rating Doctors
Human Genome Research
Future of Korea
Future of Computers

Future Topics

► ***Trade, Labor and the Environment***

► ***National Parks***

► ***Future of Books***

Go On-line With *The CQ Researcher*!

The award-winning *CQ Researcher* gives Web subscribers:

- **Quick Access to New Reports** — View them on-line a week before they arrive in the mail.
- **Easier Printing** — Print full reports with a single click or select sections with our new .pdf files.
- **Handy Search Capabilities** — Access our archives back to 1991.

Like what you see? Add the on-line version of *The Researcher* to your regular print subscription for a small additional fee and find out why *Booklist/RBB* calls *The Researcher* "an indispensable source for information on contemporary affairs."

Call (800) 638-1710, Ext. 501, for more information or to arrange a free trial.