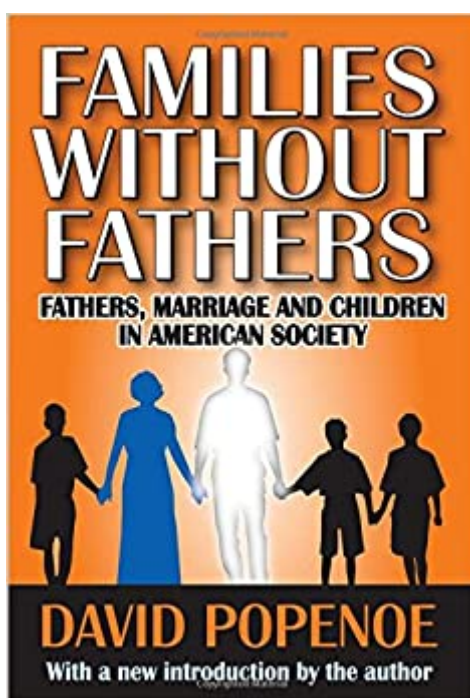


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Families Without Fathers: Fatherhood, Marriage And Children In American Society



Synopsis

The American family is changing. Divorce, single parents, and stepfamilies are redefining the ways we live together and raise our children. Many "experts" feel these seemingly inevitable changes should be celebrated; they claim that the "new" families, which often lack a strong father, are actually healthier than traditional two-parent families. For, at the very least, do children no harm. But as David Popenoe shows in *Families Without Fathers* this optimistic view is severely misguided. Examining evidence from social and behavioral science, history, and evolutionary biology, Popenoe shows why fathers today are deserting their families in record numbers. The disintegration of the child-centered, two parent family—especially in the inner cities, where as many as two in three children are growing up without their fathers—and the weakening commitment of fathers to their children that more and more follows divorce, are central causes of many of our worst individual and social problems. Juvenile delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, welfare dependency, and child poverty can be directly traced to fathers' lack of involvement in their children's lives. Our situation will only get worse, Popenoe warns, unless men are willing to renew their commitment to their marriages and to their children. Yet he is not just an alarmist. He suggests concrete policies, and new ways of thinking and acting that will help all fathers improve their marriages and family lives, and tells us what we as individuals and as a society can do to support and strengthen the most important thing a man can do.

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Customer Reviews

"[A] genuinely ground-breaking work about the consequences for African families of absent

fathers. • Adrian Thatcher, INTAMS

David Popenoe is professor of sociology emeritus and was co-director of the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University. He is the author or editor of numerous books and articles and as co-chair of the Council on Families in America, he was the primary author of its pioneering 1995 report *Marriage in America: A Report to the Nation*. Some of his other works include *Promises to Keep: Decline and Renewal of Marriage in America* and *War Over the Family*. David Popenoe is professor of sociology emeritus and was co-director of the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University. He is the author or editor of numerous books and articles and as co-chair of the Council on Families in America, he was the primary author of its pioneering 1995 report *Marriage in America: A Report to the Nation*. Some of his other works include *Promises to Keep: Decline and Renewal of Marriage in America* and *War Over the Family*.

Know anyone raised in a single parent family? And what a stupid question, right? As Popenoe points out the majority of children in the US now live in single parent families for at least some of their childhood. We have an illegitimacy rate of over 40%. Fewer people are even bothering to get married. And the result has been catastrophic for our children. Fatherlessness has resulted in an enormous increase in child poverty. In addition, these children are 3 times more likely to be teen mother, twice as likely to drop out of school, 2 to 3 times more likely to have...emotional or behavioral problems" (p 57), to have problems with drugs or alcohol, and are hugely more likely to end up in a prison compared to children raised with both their genetic parents. Did you know there was a "550 percent increase in ...violent crime...since 1960, while the population has gone up by only 41 percent." (p 61)? Social scientists once hoped remarriage would provide help for children in single parent households. But the statistics on remarriage are even more chilling for childhood outcomes than single parenthood. "Even after two years...disengagement by stepparents is the most common parenting style" (p 33) Very low levels of support, let alone love, and frankly, very poor levels of monitoring of behavior, are all too common. The plain fact is this: children raised by their genetic parents have an enormous advantage. And those raised in single parent homes are destined, all too often, for failure.

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