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**DAVID BLANKENHORN** is founder and president of the Institute for American Values, a private, nonpartisan organization devoted to research, publication, and public education on family issues. His ideas have been cited in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and elsewhere, and his articles have appeared in scores of publications, including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, *The Public Interest*, and *Newsday*. A frequent lecturer, he is the chief editor of *Rebuilding the Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family*.

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FATHERLESS AMERICA

DAVID BLANKENHORN

DHX-108



# FATHERLESS AMERICA

Confronting Urgent Social Issues

DAVID BLANKENHORN

"Blankenhorn is one of America's most thoughtful public debaters. His book is well reasoned, empirically sound, and a must-read for anyone interested in the public debate." —William J. Bennett

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 CHAPTER 12
 

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## A Father for Every Child

The most urgent domestic challenge facing the United States at the close of the twentieth century is the re-creation of fatherhood as a vital social role for men. At stake is nothing less than the success of the American experiment. For unless we reverse the trend of fatherlessness, no other set of accomplishments—not economic growth or prison construction or welfare reform or better schools—will succeed in arresting the decline of child well-being and the spread of male violence. To tolerate the trend of fatherlessness is to accept the inevitability of continued societal recession.

Many voices today, including many expert voices, urge us to accept the decline of fatherhood with equanimity. Be realistic, they tell us. Divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing are here to stay. Growing numbers of children will not have fathers. Nothing can be done to reverse the trend itself. The only solution is to remediate some of its consequences. More help for poor children. More sympathy for single mothers. Better divorce. More child-support payments. More prisons. More programs aimed at substituting for fathers.

Yet what Lincoln called the better angels of our nature have always guided us in the opposite direction. Passivity in the face of crisis is inconsistent with the American tradition. Managing decline has never been the hallmark of American expertise. In the inevitable and valuable tension between conditions and aspirations—between the social “is” and the moral “ought”—our birthright as Americans has always been our confidence that we can change for the better.

Does every child deserve a father? Our current answer hovers between “no” and “not necessarily.” But we need not make permanent the lowering of our standards. We can change our minds. Moreover, we can change our minds without passing new laws, spending more tax dollars, or empaneling more expert commissions. Once we change our philosophy, we may well

decide to pass laws, create programs, or commission research. But the first and most important thing to change is not our policies but our ideas.

Our essential goal must be the rediscovery in modern society of the fatherhood idea. Malinowski called it the “principle of legitimacy.” For every child, a legally and morally responsible adult male. Others have described this idea as the imperative of paternal investment, achieved through a parental alliance with the mother. A more familiar name for such activity is married fatherhood.

The essence of the fatherhood idea is simple. A father for every child. But in our society, few ideas could be more radical. Embracing the fatherhood idea would require a fundamental shift in cultural values and in parental behavior. No other change in U.S. family life could produce such dramatic improvement in child and societal well-being.

To recover the fatherhood idea, we must fashion a new cultural story of fatherhood. The moral of today’s story is that fatherhood is superfluous. The moral of the new story must be that fatherhood is essential. In today’s script, the Unnecessary Father dominates the action. In addition, too many understudies are doing far too much. The star of the new script must be the Good Family Man. The understudies must leave the spotlight.

The new story will be simultaneously more positive and more negative, more celebratory and more reproachful, than today’s anemic account of unimportant men. The good news, largely ignored in today’s script, is that married fatherhood is a man’s most important pathway to happiness. Being a loving husband and committed father is the best part of being a man. The bad news, similarly missing from today’s watered-down narrative, is that high rates of divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing, the twin generators of paternity without fatherhood, are incompatible with male happiness and societal success.

At the intellectual center of the new story, defining and sustaining the fatherhood idea, must be two propositions about men. The first is that marriage constitutes an irreplaceable life-support system for effective fatherhood. The second is that being a real man means being a good father. The first proposition aims to reconnect fathers and mothers. The second aims to reconnect fatherhood and masculinity. Both of these propositions carry profound societal implications. Each will powerfully shape the plot and characters of an invigorated cultural story.

In a large sense, the new story must help us change from a divorce culture to a marriage culture. In a divorce culture, divorce overshadows marriage as a defining metaphor for the male-female relationship. Divorce comes to be seen as modern, cutting-edge, a representative generational experience. The institution of marriage and the norm of marital permanence come to be seen as comparatively old-fashioned, beleaguered, even quaint—a way of life primarily suitable for older or boring people.

In a divorce culture, people are intensely interested in divorce and want to improve divorce. Family scholars study it. Children's books tell stories about it. Policy makers pursue the goal of better divorce. In contrast, marriage commands relatively little attention in a divorce culture. Even the primary custodians of the marital tradition—the clergy and marriage counselors—frequently lose their regard for that tradition and drift toward a preoccupation with divorce.<sup>1</sup>

For a basic contradiction defines our contemporary divorce culture. On the one hand, we are a marrying people. Indeed, American attitudes toward marriage remain distinctly romantic and even sentimental, especially regarding the potential in marriage for personal fulfillment and adult companionship. Yet at the same time, we are a society in the midst of a widespread collapse of confidence in marriage as an institution, in the ideal of marital permanence, and in the preeminence and necessity of marriage as a child-rearing environment.<sup>2</sup>

In short, while we believe in marrying, we are losing our belief in the institution of marriage. As a result, we are simultaneously institutionalizing divorce and deinstitutionalizing marriage. For divorce, our goals are to regularize it, destigmatize it, and improve its procedures. For marriage, our goals are the opposite. Deregulate and privatize it. Make it more flexible. Reduce its privileged legal status and cultural influence. Describe it in high school textbooks not as an ideal but as one of many options. In a divorce culture, marriage is increasingly viewed as a problem, divorce as a viable solution.

This view of marriage destroys fatherhood for millions of men. By normalizing the rupture of the parental alliance and the departure of men from their children's homes, the norms of a divorce culture decimate the foundations of good-enough fatherhood. To recover the fatherhood idea, we must recreate a marriage culture. The alternative is the continuing decline of fatherhood.

A stronger story of fatherhood must also reclaim and revise the connection between fatherhood and masculinity. Across cultures, as David D. Gilmore reminds us, manhood is regarded as a test, a challenge, a prize to be won. In general, societies assume that women possess traits of femininity. But men must typically "prove" their masculinity.<sup>3</sup> Of course, elite opinion today is frequently quite suspicious of this idea. Yet, for most men in our society, to "be a man" remains a matter of considerable importance.

Tragically, the weakening of fatherhood in our generation has produced a large and dangerous chasm between fatherhood and masculinity. Over here is the manhood test. Over there is fatherhood. Consequently, to "be a man" increasingly has very little to do with being a father.

In today's elite fatherhood script, the New Father constitutes an androgynous rejection of all traditional masculinity. As a cultural model,

the New Father urges men simply to ignore or ridicule the manhood test. The New Father is expected to define his masculinity by either disavowing it or inverting it. As a result, the New Father model explicitly compels men to make a choice: Be a New Father or be a man. The pathway to the former is the rejection of the latter.

A similar split is occurring in popular culture and in the larger society. From Arnold Schwarzenegger-style fantasy movies of male omnipotence to the teenage gang culture in our central cities, the idea of "being a man" is increasingly identified with violence, materialism, and predatory sexual behavior. I am a man because I will hurt you if you disrespect me. I am a man because I have sex with lots of women and my girlfriends have my babies. I am a man because I have more money and more things than you do. Norms of good-enough fatherhood—I am a man because I cherish my wife and nurture my children—are simply not part of this manhood equation.

If our society forces men to choose between passing the New Father test and passing the manhood test, one result will be less fatherhood. Similarly, if we encourage men to pursue a manhood that is untempered by norms of responsible fatherhood, the primary results will be more violence and less fatherhood. The former urges fatherhood without masculinity. The latter stands for masculinity without fatherhood.

The challenge for a new story of fatherhood is to resocialize masculinity by reuniting it with fatherhood, recognizing that these two ideas for men stand best when they stand together. Fatherhood cannot destroy or oppose masculinity. But fatherhood must domesticate masculinity. In a good society, men prove their manhood by being good fathers. The alternative is the continuing decline of fatherhood and a deepening ambivalence and skepticism toward masculinity.

## Twelve Proposals

Who will fashion this new story? What is the best strategy for igniting a culture shift? What will be the signs that our society is seeking to recover the fatherhood idea?

A culture shift in favor of the Good Family Man cannot draw its main strength from Washington politicians, Hollywood scriptwriters, Madison Avenue advertising firms, or the conferences of professional family scholars. Cultural elites can help or hinder social change, but their views, mercifully, are not all that matters. For fatherhood, the seedbeds of renewal must be local and immediate. The real shift must occur from the bottom up, around kitchen tables, less a reflection of elite fashion than a revolt against it. The most important leaders of the new movement will not be

celebrities and experts on talk shows, but guys from Paducah and Dubuque who decide to strive for a certain kind of life. To encourage and give voice to such a movement, here are a dozen modest proposals.

First, every man in the United States should be requested to take the following pledge:

*Many people today believe that fathers are unnecessary. I believe the opposite. I pledge to live my life according to the principle that every child deserves a father; that marriage is the pathway to effective fatherhood; that part of being a good man means being a good father; and that America needs more good men.*

In 1992, there were almost 94 million males in the United States over the age of fifteen. Of that total, about 28 percent, or 26.3 million, lived in family households with their own or adopted children under age eighteen.<sup>4</sup> A diverse coalition of civic and religious organizations, brought together for the purpose of strengthening fatherhood in the United States, could strive for 10 million fatherhood pledges in the first two years of the campaign.

Of course, talk is cheap. Making a promise is easier than keeping it. But promises can signal and shape our individual aspirations. They can also serve as public symbols of cultural change, or at least of the desire for cultural change. Moreover, taking such a pledge could also link men to more concrete ways of strengthening their fatherhood: literature to read, local initiatives to join, opportunities to get other men involved.

Second, the president of the United States, acting through the White House Domestic Policy Council, should issue a brief annual report to the nation on the state of fatherhood. These reports would document our society's progress, or lack of progress, regarding what might be called leading fatherhood indicators. The four most important indicators are presented in table 12.1.

For decades, administrations have routinely compiled and examined leading economic indicators. But here is a thought experiment. Ponder the state of the economy in your local community. Now ponder the state of fatherhood locally. Which number is higher: the proportion of adults who are unemployed or the proportion of children growing up without fathers? Which number concerns you more: the number of business failures or the number of divorces? Which number is going up faster: the rate of inflation or the rate of out-of-wedlock childbearing?

Which has the deepest impact on your community: the economic trend or the fatherhood trend? If you had to pick only one of these two trends to change for the better, which one would you choose?

During the 1992 presidential campaign, James Carville, the political

TABLE 12.1  
Leading Fatherhood Indicators

	1960	1970	1980	1990
Percent of births outside of marriage	5.3	10.7	18.4	28.0
Divorced males per 1,000 married males	27.4	33.3	76.2	112.5
Male prisoners per 100,000 males	230	191	274	574
Percent of children living apart from their fathers	17.5	22.4	32.2	36.3

Sources: See note 5, p. 314.

strategist, famously summarized his view of public priorities: "It's the economy, stupid." But what if Carville is wrong? What if many Americans believe—or come to believe—that fatherhood standards are just as important as living standards? And that raising the former will also help to raise the latter? Annual reports on fatherhood, based on the leading indicators, might help to foster a serious national conversation about fatherhood in America.

Third, a few good men should start creating Fathers' Clubs in their local communities. If the idea caught on, Fathers' Clubs could spring up in communities across the country. In 1940, as the nation faced this century's first fatherhood crisis, the National Conference on Family Relations urged the "organization of community councils in every sizable American city for the express purpose of dealing with family problems arising from the war crisis."<sup>6</sup> In the 1990s, as we face the crisis of volitional fatherlessness, men in America should found Fathers' Clubs aimed at invigorating fatherhood at the grass roots through organized father-child activities and through community leadership, including reaching out to fatherless children.

The seeds for this idea have already been planted. In 1991 in Indianapolis, a group of fathers calling themselves the Security Dads began attending local ball games, dances, and other events that attract crowds of teenagers. Their goal, as one member of the group explains, is to help children in the community by making sure that "there won't be a lot of trouble." As another Security Dad put it: "What works is the father image, so we don't need to say very much. Just being there is what counts. With an officer, they think, 'Hey, I must be in trouble.' With us, they smile and say, 'Hey, what's up.' And we love it."<sup>7</sup>

In Omaha in 1989, in the basement of the Omaha Pilgrim Baptist

Church, eighteen African-American men formed a group called MAD DADS (an acronym for Men Against Destruction—Defending Against Drugs and Social disorder). The group called upon the city's "strong, drug-free Men and Fathers" to serve as "positive role models and concerned loving parents, as well as a visible presence in our city against the negative forces that are destroying our children, our homes, and our city." According to Eddie F. Staton, the group's president, these fathers

report crime, drug sales and other destructive activities to the proper authorities. This strong group of Men paint over gang graffiti, and challenge drug dealers and gang members to get out of the area. These loving Fathers also provide positive community activities for youth, chaperone community events and provide street counseling for those in need.<sup>8</sup>

Over 800 fathers have come together across lines of race and class to form a "rainbow army" of MAD DADS in Omaha. The organization has opened local chapters in eight other states.<sup>9</sup> Much more than movie celebrities or sports stars who sell sneakers on TV, fathers who create organizations such as Security Dads and MAD DADS are the heroes of our time. Perhaps their example can help to inspire the emergence of a national Fathers' Club movement.

Fourth, the U.S. Congress could provide valuable assistance to community organizers, clergy, and other local leaders who are serious about creating higher standards of male responsibility. The Congress could permit localities across the nation to apply for designation as Safe Zones. Like a military Safe Zone in a war-torn society, a civilian-led Safe Zone in a U.S. city would be dedicated to the reduction of violence. To create a Safe Zone, local leaders would be required to fashion and implement a serious strategy for reducing male violence by increasing male responsibility. To increase the chances of success, Safe Zones would receive two types of special federal assistance: money and other in-kind resources, as well as regulatory relief aimed at establishing greater local control of community institutions, such as police, parks, and public housing.

Safe Zones would be Enterprise Zones for male responsibility. They would embody a new social contract, not only between the federal government and the locality but also between men and the surrounding community. The first Safe Zones would be frankly experimental—less prescriptions than laboratories. The basic idea is premised not on the necessity of social services and outside expertise but on the potential for social change through community empowerment.

Success would depend on local leaders. Each Safe Zone strategy would be designed according to what residents believe would work. Yet, despite

the diversity of approaches, all Safe Zones would be evaluated by the same twin standards. Is this community reducing the violent crime victimization rate? And is this community reducing the proportion of children who live in father-absent homes?

New leaders would emerge. So would new approaches, or at least serious approaches. All-boys' residential schools with lots of male teachers, perhaps drawn from the ranks of decommissioned military officers. Jobs, including guaranteed after-school jobs for teenagers. Community policing. More YMCA's and Boys Clubs. Curfews for teenagers. Treating small offenses, such as shoplifting or loitering, with greater seriousness. Parents' patrols in parks and playgrounds. Permitting landlords to evict violent residents. Fathers' Clubs. Informing every boy and girl in the community that sexual promiscuity is wrong and that out-of-wedlock childbearing is unacceptable. Identifying the father of every child born. Finding men to serve as surrogate fathers to fatherless children. Encouraging unmarried girls to give up their babies for adoption by married couples.

Some residents might view the two Safe Zone standards as arbitrary or unrelated. But I suspect that most would recognize that the issues of violent crime and fatherless children are closely related. More good fathers, less violence. More weddings, fewer funerals for children. In an increasingly fatherless society, Safe Zones would become local experiments—radical pilot projects—for reducing male violence through restoring effective fatherhood.

Fifth, ask married fathers to transform public housing in the United States. With the possible exception of prisons, surely the most violent and fatherless places in our society are the 1.3 million units of public housing owned and operated by the federal government.<sup>10</sup> Routine violence, intimidation by gangs, destruction of property, teenage childbearing, an ethos of fear and fatalism—these are the defining characteristics of residential communities almost totally devoid of responsible male authority.

In large part due to regulations that effectively favor fatherless families and discourage marriage, very few married couples live in public housing. But why not change the rules? Put an end to the marriage disincentives.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, why not give priority in public housing to married couples?

Over a five-year period, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development should pursue an explicit policy aimed at tilting the balance in public housing decisively toward married couples, especially married couples with children. At the same time, new regulations should also increase the opportunities for tenant management and tenant ownership—less power for bureaucrats and more for residents, including the power to evict unruly residents. Finally, during this transition period, in

part to assist mother-headed families that otherwise might have been awarded a place in public housing, the Congress could also increase funding for housing vouchers available to all low-income families.

Let us see what would happen. If nothing much changed, we would have an empirical basis for doubting the thesis that fatherlessness generates violence and disorder. But what if almost everything changed? Less crime. Less teenage childbearing. Less violence against women. Better outcomes for children.

Public housing could provide a hardest-case test for a larger idea: the fatherhood idea. Perhaps married fathers can do what mothers, the police, social workers, and public housing officials are now manifestly unable to do: turn public housing developments into reasonably hospitable environments for raising children.

Sixth, a few good community organizers, veterans of the civil rights and poor people's movements and professional practitioners of Saul Alinsky's philosophy of "comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable," could build the infrastructure for a broad new populist movement to empower families and strengthen community life. Unlike what is often called the "religious right," these new organizations would not affiliate with the Republican party and would not anchor themselves in the issues of homosexuality, abortion, and school prayer. Conversely, unlike what might be termed the secular left, these new efforts would strive unapologetically for family and civic renewal. In each local organizing site, the principal aims would be the reversal of family fragmentation, the recovery of the fatherhood idea, the protection of children, and the rehabilitation of community values and institutions.

The Industrial Areas Foundation, Alinsky's major institutional legacy, is already increasingly practicing what its organizers call "values-based organizing"—a strategy for igniting broad-based community action informed by ethical and spiritual reflection. They are pointing the way for others. Perhaps some good organizers could help unleash a serious demand for cultural renewal in the United States. Not simply more political jockeying between Republicans and Democrats, or another predictable ideological debate between liberals and conservatives, but some angry, responsible thunder from the grass roots that would help us all to shake off defeatism and face up to the challenge before us.<sup>12</sup>

Seventh, an interfaith council of religious leaders could speak up and act on behalf of marriage. As odd as it may sound regarding a practice in which most adult Americans voluntarily participate, marriage has very few public defenders. For in a divorce culture, marriage is a subject surrounded by great uncertainty and ambivalence, as well as no small amount

of overt hostility. To defend the marital institution in a divorce culture is to invite controversy.

So we need some leadership. Over the past three decades, many religious leaders—especially in the mainline Protestant denominations—have largely abandoned marriage as a vital area of religious attention, essentially handing the entire matter over to opinion leaders and divorce lawyers in the secular society. Some members of the clergy seem to have lost interest in defending and strengthening marriage. Others report that they worry about offending members of their congregations who are divorced or unmarried.

At the same time, about 75 percent of all couples who marry still choose to be married by a religious leader in a church or synagogue.<sup>13</sup> Religious leaders still counsel more young couples than any secular counseling program could ever hope to reach. In general, regularly attending religious services still correlates with a more durable marriage.<sup>14</sup> Most important, while our secular culture increasingly views an enduring marriage as simply an option, our religious tradition still teaches us that an enduring marriage is a commitment.

A new interfaith council on marriage could encourage local pastors and other religious leaders to recommit themselves to marital preparation and enrichment. When couples want to get married, for example, many church leaders do little more than rent them the space and preside at the ceremony. Yet several important efforts, such as the Catholic Church's "Engaged Encounters" and the Marriage Saver programs recently initiated by several religious organizations, clearly demonstrate that it is possible for local religious leaders to improve marriages and reduce divorce in their congregations.<sup>15</sup> In turn, based on such leadership by example, the interfaith council could also speak up for marriage in the public square, seeking to spark a national discussion about whether and how we might wish to change from a divorce culture to a marriage culture.

Eighth, the U.S. Congress should pass, and the president should support, a resolution stating that the first question of policy makers regarding all proposed domestic legislation is whether it will strengthen or weaken the institution of marriage. Not the sole question, of course, but always the first.

To take this question seriously would be to challenge a great many policies of the federal government. Much of the federal tax code, including the otherwise salutary 1993 expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit, is indifferent or hostile to marriage. Almost the entire current welfare system, including Aid to Families with Dependent Children, constitutes a direct economic subsidy for out-of-wedlock childbearing. Taken together, far too many government activities end up taxing marriage to fund family fragmentation. Of course, one congressional resolution would not work magic

in any of these policy areas. But it might create a valuable opportunity to discuss priorities.

Ninth, local and county officials from across the nation should follow the example of the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners in Minnesota. In 1994, these county commissioners drafted a "vision statement" to identify local priorities and to plan for the future. In the document, the commissioners called upon themselves and the citizenry to move toward a community "where healthy family structure is nurtured and fewer children are born out of wedlock."

This proposed goal for Hennepin County produced what the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* termed "a big ruckus." A reporter from the newspaper summed up what many local leaders were saying about the commissioners and their idea: "Exclusionary. Judgmental. Intolerant. Offensive. Stigmatizing. Degrading. Archaic."<sup>16</sup>

An assistant parks commissioner was outraged: "Why is this statement here? Why are you pointing fingers?" The county's community health director argued that "we have a lot of single parents who work here. A lot of them feel it was shaming to them as single parents and shaming to clients."

A lesbian leader chastised the commissioners for "discounting" gay and lesbian parents. A pastor said that the real issue was jobs, not marriage. A leader from the United Way said that the real issue was how to "nurture" children, not "how people choose to configure themselves." A state fiscal analyst told the commissioners that "there are a lot of good single-parent families and there are a lot of bad two-parent families, and you're not going to change that by hoping everybody's getting married."<sup>17</sup>

In the midst of this firestorm, the commissioners, or at least some of them, insisted that the county's escalating rate of unwed childbearing—about 27 percent in 1992—was causing or aggravating a plethora of local problems, from child poverty to infant mortality, thus lowering the quality of life for everyone in the county.<sup>18</sup> Their message was simple: We need to change our minds on this issue. Moreover, the commissioners hoped that the new goal would help them refocus policy priorities. The traditional goal had been to ameliorate some of the consequences of the trend. Now there was an additional and superordinate goal: to reverse the trend.

Two points stand out from this story. First, if you want to say something controversial, say that every child deserves a father and that unwed childbearing is wrong. Second, the vision statement of the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners ignited and gave shape to a serious local debate about the possibility of recovering a primary idea: the fatherhood idea. That possibility concerns not just the politics of Hen-

nepin County but the future of the nation. It is time for all of us to consider this possibility.

Tenth, state legislatures across the nation should support fatherhood by regulating sperm banks. New laws should prohibit sperm banks and others from selling sperm to unmarried women and limit the use of artificial insemination to cases of married couples experiencing fertility problems. In a good society, people do not traffic commercially in the production of radically fatherless children.

Eleventh, a few well-known professional athletes should organize a public service campaign on the importance of fatherhood. Through public speaking in the schools and through a series of public service television advertisements, these sports stars could tell us what their fathers mean to them. They could also tell us what it means to them to be a father. It was great to score the winning basket in the playoffs, but I would never have been there without my father, my first coach and biggest fan. I am proud to be a professional athlete, but being a good father is the most important thing I will ever do.

During the 1994 National Basketball Association playoffs, Hubert Davis of the New York Knicks won a crucial victory for his team by calmly sinking two free throws with only seconds left on the clock. After the game, a reporter asked him what he was thinking about as he stepped up to the line. "I was thinking about my father," Davis said. To the sports stars of our time, much is given. Perhaps Hubert Davis and others like him can give something back by standing up for fatherhood.

Twelfth, a few prominent family scholars could write new textbooks for high school students about marriage and parenthood. Almost all of the current textbooks on this subject are remarkably weak—dumbed down, reluctant to say anything serious about the subject of marriage, and without a clue regarding the importance or even the meaning of the fatherhood idea. What do we wish to tell a fifteen-year-old boy about what a good society expects of fathers? Other than viewing masculinity as a problem to be overcome, most current textbooks have almost nothing to say on the subject.

But rather than cursing the darkness, a few scholars could light candles. Instead of more stories featuring the Unnecessary Father, perhaps a new guy could appear in some of these textbooks: the Good Family Man. Perhaps we are ready to attend to his story.

These dozen proposals suffer from several flaws. As responses to the trend of fatherlessness, they are limited, speculative, and fragmentary. Taken

together, they do not constitute a blueprint. They are not intended as twelve new answers.

But they are intended as twelve attempts to ask one new question. The question is a fundamental one: Does our society wish to recover the fatherhood idea? If the answer is "no," then neither these proposals nor any like them will make much sense. They will seem jarring and arbitrary. But if the answer is "yes," or even "maybe," then these proposals might at least point us in a certain direction. That direction is away from a culture of fatherlessness, toward fatherhood.

## Notes

### INTRODUCTION

1. See Larry L. Bumpass, "Children and Marital Disruption: A Replication and Update," *Demography* 21, no. 1 (February 1984): 71–82; and Larry L. Bumpass and James A. Sweet, "Children's Experience in Single-Parent Families: Implications of Cohabitation and Marital Transitions," *Family Planning Perspectives* 21, no. 6 (November/December 1989): 256–60.  
Sweet and Bumpass's central finding is that "about half of all children born between 1970 and 1984 are likely to spend some time in a mother-only family" (p. 256). However, since nonmarital childbearing has increased dramatically since 1984—according to the National Center for Health Statistics, the number of births to unmarried mothers increased by 82 percent from 1980 to 1991—Sweet and Bumpass's estimation of "about half" is probably too low for children currently under age seventeen. Frank Furstenberg and Andrew Cherlin, revising Sweet and Bumpass's estimate, calculated in 1991 that "for children born in the 1990s, the figure could reach 60 percent if the divorce rate remains high and nonmarital childbearing continues its upward trend." See Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr., and Andrew J. Cherlin, *Divided Families: What Happens to Children When Parents Part* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 11. For births to unmarried mothers, see National Center for Health Statistics, "Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1991," vol. 42, no. 3, supplement, *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* (Hyattsville, Md.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, September 9, 1993), 9. See also Ronica N. Rooks, "Motherhood: Growing More Common Among Never-Married Women," *Population Today* (November 1993): 4.
2. My notion of a "fatherhood script" has been influenced by the discussion of "manhood codes" in David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). The idea of fatherhood as a "cultural invention" is taken from John Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and the Life Course in American History* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1986), 64. This same idea was presented earlier and at greater length by Margaret Mead, who concludes that "human fatherhood is a social invention." See Margaret Mead, *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (New York: Dell, 1969), 190.
3. Mead insists that "the human family depends upon social inventions that will