



THE SPECTRUM OF STEPFATHERING
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Stepfamily life is currently being transformed by increases in nonmarital childbearing, cohabitation, father/joint custody of children, racial and ethnic diversity, support of same sex relationships, and population aging. The repercussions of these changes for relationships between stepfathers and stepchildren are not well understood. What we do know is that the range of men currently engaging in behaviors consistent with stepfathering is vast. Stepfathers today take a number of different pathways into stepfatherhood, and take a number of different pathways out. Their level of commitment to and involvement with their stepchildren can vary greatly. Thus, it has become important to revisit what it means to be a stepfather in contemporary American Society. Assuming that our current rates of union dissolution remain high, especially among remarried and cohabiting couples, stepfathering might be better thought of in terms of stepfathering "spells" as opposed to a permanent status. This presentation reviews current trends in and diversity in stepfathering and the implications of each for parents, children, and families.