

Kramer vs. Kramer in real life - research on father-custody families

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Kramer vs. Kramer in real life

In about 10 percent of divorces involving children, the father is awarded custody. How do these families get along? Richard Ades Warshak of the University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas has analyzed 28 studies of father-custody families. In general, father-custody and mother-custody families face the same problems, such as distress at the parents' separation, and they react in similar ways.

In seven studies that directly compared children in father-custody and mother-custody homes, none of a wide range of features of psychological development was attributable solely to the sex of the custodial parent. Warshak says, "Not one [study] supported the stereotypical view that custodial fathers are incapable of adequately rearing their children.'

However, Warshak emphasizes one consistent difference between mother-custody and father-custody families. "A consensus of results indicates more favorable outcomes for boys in father-custody homes and girls in mother-custody homes,' Warshak says. Although not discounting the importance of mother-son and father-daughter relationships, he says the studies indicate more problematic behavior between custodial parents and school-age children of the opposite sex. He suggests that in custody decisions, some weight should be given to the child's sex, although it should be considered as only one of many factors that influence a child's postdivorce adjustment.

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