

Men's Health

FEBRUARY 1993

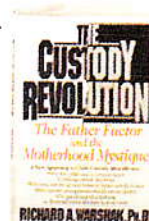
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Visitation Wrongs

From **The Custody Revolution**, by Richard A. Warshak (reprinted by permission of Poseidon Press/Simon & Schuster, Inc.; \$21)

Watch a father's reaction to the birth of his child. Then watch a child's reaction to the death of his father. Witnessing only these two events makes it difficult to understand how anyone could fail to appreciate the central importance of the child's relationship with his father. But if a divorced father wants to see his children more than four or five days a month, he'll quickly learn that the odds of being allowed to are very slim. His lawyer, his ex-wife, his peers, and perhaps



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even his psychotherapist will discourage him from trying. The divorced father's secondhand status as a parent is firmly entrenched and accepted without question.

The preference for mother custody is not a historical imperative. It didn't arise in response to scientific research, but in response to economic pressure and social prejudices. There has never been a scientific justification for the motherhood mystique. The consensus of research findings, far from validating the mystique, underscores the importance of both parents.

Unless you believe that a father's value to his children diminishes after divorce, it's hard to justify a custody policy that routinely and automatically disrupts the divorced father's relationship with his children. The notion that only mothers are important to their children is false; it's time to jettison it from custody policy. Copyright 1992 by Richard A. Warshak, Ph.D.