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Dirty Harry Meets Dirty Diapers: Masculinities, at-Home Fathers & Making the Law Work for Families

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**DIRTY HARRY MEETS DIRTY DIAPERS:
MASCULINITIES, AT-HOME FATHERS,
AND MAKING THE LAW WORK FOR FAMILIES**

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Methodology

(Full text of the Article available at <http://ssrn.com/author=1104408>)

The sample for this study was drawn from an Oct. 20, 2010 search of the Westlaw USNEWS database. The string used was [atleast3(“at-home dad!”) & da(aft 10/13/2002) atleast3(“at-home father”) & da(aft 10/13/2002)].¹ The search produced 425 sample articles. No samples were removed from the date-restricted sample set.²

The data were coded by two second-year law students who served as the author’s research assistants.³ Each research assistant had knowledge of family law, at-home fatherhood, and masculinities theory.

After surveying at-home father media coverage and relevant sociological, psychological, and legal literature, the author initially devised 16 variables to search for in each story.⁴ These variables were not devised to support a specific argument. Rather the author sought to identify the prevalence of hegemonic masculinity indicators that were present in news coverage of at-home fathers. If one of the specified variables was present, the coder was to enter a “1.” If it was not present, the coder was to leave the field blank.

In order to determine inter-coder reliability, each research assistant independently coded the 24 most recent articles in the dataset. The author did not participate in coding. Examination of the original 16 variables in the first 24 stories yielded inter-coder reliability of 88.8 percent. Discussion between the author and the two coders showed that some variables needed to be broken into multiple indicators. One overly broad variable was disaggregated into several more-specific variables. These changes increased the number of variables to 31.

¹ Oct 13, 2002 reflects the publication date of the article *Trophy Husbands* by Betsy Morris in Fortune Magazine, which was used as a starting point for analysis in this author’s prior article, *‘Trophy Husbands’ and ‘Opt-Out’ Moms*, 34 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 663 (2011). Only stories included in the USNEWS database as of Oct. 20, 2010 are included.

² Stories that were published in whole or in part in more than one news outlet are included. Eight stories in which Brian Reid, the author’s husband, was quoted were not removed so as to preserve the integrity of the sample set.

³ The electronic versions of the news reports, as contained in Westlaw, were coded.

⁴ See Beth A. Burkstrand-Reid, *Dirty Harry Meets Dirty Diapers: Masculinities, At-Home Fathers, And Making the Law Work for Families*, 22 TEX. J. WOMEN & L. 101, n. 64 (2013).

Coders recoded the first 24 stories. With these coding clarifications, inter-coder reliability increased to 93.5 percent. After a third conference, the researchers and the author determined that questions remained over the proper coding of four related variables. An enhanced definition of each of those four variables was agreed upon. The final inter-coder reliability check resulted in marginal, if any, improvement (an increase of 0.1 percent reliability).

At that point, the two coders reconciled their coding of the first 24 samples. The remaining samples were randomly divided between the two coders and independently coded. As a result, 425 stories were examined for the presence of 31 variables for a total of 13,175 data cells.⁵

Using the services of the NEAR Center at the University of Nebraska, the data were analyzed in the following fashion: A frequency analysis was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and R, an implementation of the S programming language. In addition to frequency calculations, chi-square comparisons were used to determine whether differences between two sets of variables were statistically significant. Analyses were also performed comparing groups of multiple, related variables.

When the two-set variables were disproportionate—when, for example, there were more specific categories included in an overarching group than specific categories in another overarching group—we set the expected proportion out of the two combined to determine anticipated versus actual significance. For logistic regressions, a p-value of .05 or less was considered significant. As this analysis was not parametric in nature, fewer assumptions about the distribution of data could be made. Determinations as to meaningfulness versus statistical significance are necessarily subjective and were made on a variable-by-variable basis. In addition, the NEAR Center performed regression analyses. At the end of the study, it was determined that the most useful data were calculations of the frequency of individual variables and grouped variables.

⁵ See Individual Variable Descriptions; Group Descriptions (attached).

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INDIVIDUAL VARIABLE DESCRIPTIONS

(A, B, C absent; used as administrative codes)

Letter, Variable, Percentage	Description
D Discusses “class” 1.31%	<i>Direct reference to “class,” such as lower, poor, middle, executive, collar, union. Category of family, not from individual job.</i>
E Dad lost job 14.19%	<i>AHD assumed role because he lost his job immediately prior, or newspaper referring to one specific dad.</i>
F Wife’s earnings 26.86%	<i>AHD assumed role because wife’s earnings or earning potential was higher, or paper making dad-specific mention.</i>
G Cost of childcare 12.66%	<i>AHD assumed role because of high cost of childcare or because childcare costs would consume his or his and part of wife’s pay.</i>
H More time with children 6.99%	<i>AHD assumed role because he wanted to spend more time with his children.</i>
I Someone “should” be home 16.38%	<i>AHD assumed role because of a stated belief that at least one parent should be at home.</i>
J Workplace inflexibility 1.97%	<i>AHD assumed role because of workplace inflexibility (time off, flex schedule, overtime, parental/sick leave, etc.).</i>
K Consequences of leaving paid work 8.73%	<i>Discussing negative impact AHD role can have on husband’s potential earning or ability to reenter workforce.</i>
L Dad has paid work 27.29%	<i>AHD maintains any paid work (at-home, freelance, contract, shift, etc.).</i>
M Status symbol 0.44%	<i>Any mention of AHD as a status symbol, trophy husband, necessary for rise of upwardly mobile working women.</i>

N “Mr. Mom” 23.36%	<i>Any use of the phrase “Mr. Mom.”</i>
O Economy/recession 16.16%	<i>Any mention of economic downtown, recession, or general mention of dads losing jobs.</i>
P AHD hunting 1.09%	<i>AHD participating in hunting.</i>
Q AHD aggression 0.00%	<i>Physical or verbal aggression toward other men or women (spouse or mothers), name-calling, threats, “bring-it-on”-type language.</i>
R AHD playing sports 7.42%	<i>AHD playing sports.</i>
S AHD watching sports 2.40%	<i>AHD watching sports.</i>
T Dads groups 41.05%	<i>AHD seeking out/participating in father-specific or at-home-dad-specific groups (physical or on-line).</i>
U Sex objects 2.62%	<i>References that AHD will come on to mothers, have affairs, etc., or the perception of that occurring.</i>
V Moms as exclusionary 10.92%	<i>References of mothers excluding or shunning AHD from playgroups, school activities, or other social/child-related activity.</i>
W Rejecting household labor 2.62%	<i>Rejection of household tasks associated with women, e.g. laundry, cleaning, cooking.</i>
X Accepting household labor 35.37%	<i>Acceptance of household tasks associated with women, e.g. laundry, cleaning, cooking.</i>
Y Traditional male hobbies/ housework 17.47%	<i>AHD doing yard work, garbage, sports, hunting (some overlap), working in garage, automotive, handy-man.</i>
Z ADH leader, decision- maker at home 2.40%	<i>AHD making statements that he is “in charge,” the “leader” or “decision-maker,” or like language, of the home or children.</i>
AA Sculpting kids’ gender perceptions 3.49%	<i>AHD saying that his role will guide children’s gender perceptions.</i>

AB AHD temporary 13.97%	<i>AHD as being “between” jobs, saying role is temporary, saying looking for work while at home.</i>
AC Negative impact on wife 8.95%	<i>Professional or personal, increased work hours, responsibility, more stress (may see this in sole breadwinner comments), disconnected/alienated from family, friends, marriage difficulty.</i>
AD Positive impact on wife 6.55%	<i>More ability to network, promotion, raise, easier balance, better relationships.</i>
AE Rejected on basis of role 24.45%	<i>AHD facing social stigma, having manhood challenged by men or women—can refer to specific events or just general sense of approval.</i>
AF Negative homosexuality 0.87%	<i>Hostility toward homosexuality, references to not being “gay,” etc.</i>
AG Wife defense of femininity 0.00%	<i>“I’m still a good mom,” “I am still a good wife,” etc.</i>
AH AHD overt defense of masculinity 1.75%	<i>Overt-defense of masculinity by AHD—e.g. “I am still a real man,” “Real men don’t worry about what others think,” “I still work hard,” etc.</i>

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GROUP DESCRIPTIONS

Dad Economic Motivators <ul style="list-style-type: none">• E=Dad lost job• F=Wife's earnings• G=Cost of childcare	Dad Caretaking Motivators <ul style="list-style-type: none">• H=More time with kids• I=Someone "should" be at home• J=Work inflexibility
Workplace Inflexibility Specific <ul style="list-style-type: none">• J=Work inflexibility	Workplace Inflexibility Non-Specific <ul style="list-style-type: none">• G=Cost of childcare• F=Wife's earnings• H=More time with kids
Hegemonic Masculinity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• L=Dad has paid work• P=AHD hunting• Q=AHD aggression• R=AHD playing sports• S=AHD watching sports• U=Sex objects• T=Dads groups• W=Rejecting household labor• Y=Traditional male hobbies/housework• Z=AHD leader, decision-maker at home• AA=Sculpting kids' gender perceptions• AB=AHD temporary• AF=Negative homosexuality• AH=Overt defense of masculinity	Oppositional to Masculinity Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none">• H=More time with kids• F=Wife's earnings• I=Someone "should" be at home• J=Work inflexibility• M=Status symbol• N="Mr. Mom"• V=Moms as exclusionary• X=Accepting household labor• AE=Rejected on basis of role
Negative Indicators for Dad <ul style="list-style-type: none">• K=Consequences of leaving paid work• M=Status symbol• N="Mr. Mom"• T=Dads groups• V=Moms as exclusionary• AE=Rejected on basis of role	Isolation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• V=Moms as exclusionary• T=Dads groups• AE=Rejected on basis of role

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AH=Overt defense of masculinity 	
All Economic Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E=Dad lost job • F=Wife's earnings • G=Cost of childcare • K=Consequences of leaving paid work • L=Dad has paid work • O=Economy/recession • AB=AHD temporary 	Negative Indicators for Mom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AC=Negative impact on wife • AG=Wife defense of femininity
	All Caretaking Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H=More time with children • I=Someone "should" be at home • J=Work inflexibility • X=Accepting household labor
	All Caretaking Issues – X <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Categories above without X

v. 2.27.2012 *BBR*