

# You better do as she says, or she'll take away your kids.

Dalrock | 28 August, 2019 | by Dalrock

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In response to [A dangerous truth](#), commenter Anonymous Reader challenged my assertion that as a sociology professor, Wilcox had to understand that there are public policy reasons fathers are being kicked out of their children's lives. For reference, here is the quote he was responding to, in context:

If fathers don't fear losing access to their children, mothers can't use this fear to threaten them. As a [sociology professor](#), Wilcox has to understand the public policy reason fathers are being kicked out of their children's lives. Men didn't suddenly and mysteriously become less responsible; government kicked fathers out of the home to empower mothers. Yet Wilcox ignores this elephant in the middle of the room in his testimony to Congress.

Anonymous Reader countered with:

No, he does not have to understand any such thing. First of all, his paycheck depends in part of not understanding it. Second of all, we've both seen vids of him speaking: he is a deeply betaized man.

It would hurt his eyes a great deal at this point in his career to actually open them and see what the child-support paradigm of marriage really looks like. Because he might have to admit that he is part of that machine, that he's been playing his own designated part / role in the Kabuki theater of "Fixing The Family".

I agree that Wilcox's has huge incentives not to see what is really going on. But the theory that threatening to take men's children away is an effective way to achieve feminist goals is something that a sociology professor who specializes in marriage would absolutely be very familiar with. This is part of a larger theory called Intra-household bargaining. Key to this model is the "threat point". From the [Intergalactic article](#) on the topic (red emphasis mine):

## Bargaining power

Bargaining power is "the relative capacity of each of the parties to a negotiation or dispute to compel or secure agreements on its own terms".[1] In other words, "if both parties are on equal footing in a debate, then they will have equal bargaining power", and, conversely, if one party has an advantageous position in the debate, the parties have unequal bargaining power.

More specifically, **what determines the equality or inequality of bargaining power is the relative fallback positions or "threat points" of the individuals in the bargaining process; that is, which bargainer has more to lose** (economically, socially, etc.)?[2] In the context of intra-household bargaining, an individual's bargaining power and fallback position are defined by one's ability to survive and thrive outside the family.[10]

Not surprisingly, feminists love this model, seeing it as a way for women to make men do what women want. For example, in her paper [Cleaning in the Shadow of the Law? Bargaining, Marital Investment, and the Impact of Divorce Law on Husbands' Intra-Household Work](#), Jennifer Roff explains that threatening to take men's children away is an effective way to coerce them into doing a much larger share of the housework:

...once children are born, men face potentially greater costs to divorce than women due to custody loss, which allows women control over the most important marital capital, as well as

direct decision making regarding expenditure of child support. Brinig and Allen (2000) find that maternal custody following divorce is one of the strongest predictors of the female initiating divorce proceedings, with similar negative effects of paternal custody on female initiation of divorce.

...columns 4 and 7 indicate that joint custody and unilateral divorce laws have significant interacting incentive effects on father's household work. Consistent with a bargaining response, the increase in household work seen with unilateral divorce is primarily limited to those fathers who do not live in joint custody states and therefore face the probable loss of custody of their child upon divorce. Unilateral divorce laws increase fathers' share of household work by roughly 8 percentage points in those states without joint custody laws. However, this increase in paternal share of household work with unilateral divorce is eliminated completely in those states with joint child custody. Given that fathers' share of household work is about 25%, distributional effects of unilateral divorce on intra-household work are significant, with unilateral divorce in states without joint custody leading to an increase of close to 33% in fathers' share of household work.

She closes by reminding the reader that there is a public policy opportunity here to achieve more feminist outcomes within marriage by enabling mothers to take men's children away via no fault divorce:

Of course, this study faces several limitations, including the limited nature of time use data in the PSID. Still, given the relatively large increases in fathers' household work and decreased leisure following unilateral divorce laws, this research suggests that men, and fathers in particular, may behave strategically in response to changes in marital policy.

This is truly ugly business, and this kind of cold calculating discussion of the benefits of ripping men's children away is [disturbingly common](#). As a sociology professor, and as the president of the [National Marriage Project](#) for the last 10 years, there is no way Professor Wilcox is unaware of this.

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