



Lockman, Darcy. (2019). All the Rage: Mothers, Fathers, and the Myth of Equal Partnership. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

Reviewed by: Stephanie Semenok, MacEwan University

Darcy Lockman's book, "All the Rage: Mothers, Fathers, and the Myth of Equal Partnership", demystifies reasons why mothers are burdened by the heavy workload of parenting while most fathers seem unaffected from the struggle of raising children. Lockman takes a broad interdisciplinary approach to gathering research of statistics and experiments. Many academic studies and real-life experiences involved were interesting and valuable for the display of inequality. Lockman discusses ideologies and societal issues embedded into why equal partnership is a myth, even in modern times. Lockman puts into words what some mothers are feeling, but don't have the awareness and/or language to describe it.

Lockman greatly sums up the charted territory explored in regards to unequal partnership, "As I spoke with mothers and experts, they landed on three broad explanatory categories for the problem's tenacity: biology, cultural mandates around maternal devotion, and the ubiquitous prioritization of men's needs and the desires relative to women's" (p. 16). Lockman's intentions for writing this book is to prove that unequal partnerships still exist in modern parenting relationships and are held in place by layers of outdated ways of thinking, which go unquestioned.

The academic audience which would benefit from reading this book is multidisciplinary.

Any student who desires to work with mothers in a helping profession could recognize the need for supports in place to empower positive changes on societal and personal levels. Social workers would be able to approach their field of work in a more macro view, that is more well-rounded. Having knowledge about societal restraints held on parents provides a deeper understanding of why a couple might be having interpersonal struggles, and therefore suggest approaches to alleviate the pressures. Social workers can take on an activist role. Lockman discusses the importance of activists and the need for unpleasant realities to be put in peoples' faces in order for society to change (p. 272).

Society promotes the normative idea that women are better suited to be caregivers because of biological differences between sexes. Lockman discusses that what is being promoted is actually social norms and not a scientifically proven caregiver gene, only bestowed upon people with female reproductive organs. Biologists do not use the term maternal instinct because, an instinct does not have to be learned and it has no variation between members of its species (p. 71). Motherhood feels natural for some, maybe even instinctual, but that does not mean that parenting isn't one life-long learning lesson full of adjustments and sacrifices for all. Once the biological myth was debunked through animal (pp. 77-78) and human studies (p. 88), Lockman moved forward to discuss cultural implications of unequal parenting.

Mothers are living in the echo of the golden age of nuclear families and the pressures of our current economy. As discussed by Lockman, the industrialization of society had men move away from their fathering role at home and into a role of a distant factory worker (p. 20). This created a distinct divide in gender roles, which are still used today and perpetuated by modern day

androcentrism, gender polarization and biological essentialism (p. 102). A “good mother” consists of norms and values that are entrenched in society. These accustomed restraints placed upon women go unchallenged because of group membership and fear of being labeled as a “bad mother”. Lockman adds to this by saying, “Stereotyped expectations influence the acquisition of gendered behaviours, turning expectations into prophecies” (p. 98).

The prioritization of men’s needs and desires over women’s was evident in the entire book through personal interviews and also from our collective history. One sentence that spoke to me was that “... it will be seventy-five years before women worldwide achieve gender equity in their homes” (p. 26). Gender equity is not in homes because most men are busy maintaining their place at work. Instead of compromising their job title and taking a lighter load at work, men compromise their relationship instead, with an unhappy wife at home (pp. 40-41). The lack of validating women’s struggles can lead to a dissolution of the relationship. Mothers whose emotional needs are not being met start to feel alone and so the thought of actually being alone wouldn’t be a disappointment (p. 22).

I wish that there was more of a discussion about what the family dynamics looked like within Lockman’s interviews of mothers. The mothers interviewed would be described by how many children they had, their occupation, and where they lived. Too little of information was given and it left me wondering about additional family dynamics and additional stressors that could be hindering the mother and father’s wellbeing. It seems as though the women were interviewed about their relationships during the early parenting phase, where there is a well-known initial drop of marital satisfaction. I wondered what the same mothers would say in later interviews after the

demands of early parenting subsided and the shock of a huge lifestyle change leveled off. Too much was left for the imagination about socio-economic status and other variables of the mothers interviewed. Further and more detailed analysis would have been beneficial to find the corresponding points and similarities of all the mothers lives that contributed to dissatisfaction.

Throughout the book there was a strong bias against fathers and husbands. Hundreds of women were interviewed and yet there was no contribution or room for explanation from their partners. Very few discussions on how women actively contribute to keeping their relationship unequal was brought up. The contributions of mothers were described as maternal gate keeping (p. 188), manspreading (p. 109), and failing to recognize power dynamics in their relationship (p. 56). Other than those examples noted, unequal partnerships were viewed as a societal issue and an issue of fathers maintaining privilege.

Although there was an overwhelming amount of evidence that husbands in heterosexual marriages and relationships took advantage of their wives/partners caregiving roles, there were examples of liberties taken in all forms of relationships. Gay male couples acknowledged that their relationships were flawed with gender roles and distribution of labour even though they did not have a female mother figure in the relationship (p. 106). Mothers that took a more sympathetic approach to discussing their relationship were viewed as uneducated on the unjust ways of their relationship because of their accommodating behaviors (p. 101). Lesbian mothers typically shared the earner role, yet the biological mothers took on significantly more household chores (p. 247). There was great emphasis on what seemed to be each and every father's inability to parent at a

satisfactory level according to the general consensus of mothers, even though most other forms of relationships agreed to having flaws and fluctuations in fulfillment.

Equal partnerships are ideal to support mental health and wellbeing of those invested in the growth of the relationship. Yet it is unlikely to keep a relationship consistently equal throughout the course of the family's life stages. There is give and take in healthy families. There are sacrifices and benefits involved in raising children. It was discussed that some spouses equally gave up portions of their career and prioritized living below one's means, but that wasn't seen as a great option either because of stigma for not conforming to the status quo (pp. 113-116). The achievement of balance and equality was mentioned but not further discussed. Digging deeper into the tangible ways that the couple consciously contributed into their equal partnership would have been very valuable. This left me, as a reader, feeling unsure of what options are available to attain and support equal partnerships. Equal partnership in parenting is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow; It can be seen as magical and is highly sought after, but it is always out of reach.

I was looking forward to the last chapter describing solutions, but instead it briefly covered very few ideas for change. Any issue must first be discussed in great detail before any solutions can be proposed. I see the value of speaking about all the rages of unequal partnership in depth. After reading 280 pages, I really wanted more discussion on ways for change. There was a proposed gender-neutral prenatal educational course from the Gottman Institute in Seattle which encouraged a proactive approach to setting up relationships for success (p. 237). Perhaps, there may be another book in Lockman's future in which further research, studies and real-life

experiences are shared and showcase regarding proof of equal partnership and how to attain it in realistic ways. I enjoyed Lockman's writing style, humour and a very deep relatability to mothering struggles. Another book dedicated to solving the problems she outlined would be a refreshing and needed further addition to her writing career.