



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

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Darcy Lockman's book, "All the Rage: Mothers, Fathers, and the Myth of Equal Partnership" examines gender disparity in the private sphere, particularly in the domain of child-rearing responsibilities. Her growing frustration and disbelief in her husband's lack of contribution to household and parental responsibilities transformed into an extensive examination of historical and contemporary male dominance and female subordination. Lockman explores the topic through personal observations, ethnographic research, focus groups and interviews, surveys, and content analysis of various sources ranging from peer-reviewed scientific literature, to published books, magazine articles, movies and television. Her investigation is structured into chapters that outline mothers' wide-spread discontent with current parenting realities and progress toward an examination of social norms and gender constructs.

Lockman contends that female advancement in economic and political spheres has shifted women's belief systems. Women today enter into marriage and motherhood with the disillusion that they will share equal responsibilities with their partner, yet most mothers find themselves fighting a losing battle of gender equality that none of them saw coming. Deeply entrenched gender roles have left an overwhelming number of mothers exhausted and enraged at the injustice of it

all, while fathers (and outsiders) view this discontent as a personal issue. Lockman challenges one feminist's assertion that, "Feminism's crusade remains unfinished because examining the personal is far more threatening than condemning the political" and in her quest, explores the political and ventures deeply into the personal sphere of gender imbalance (p. 18).

One has only to review historical scientific research, dominated by men, to recognize the well-established gender bias that has long-confirmed the male advantage, contrary to scientific data. Lockman reminds us that males have positioned females as the inferior sex for hundreds of years and defines it as gender essentialism, "the idea that women share some innate essential property that differentiates them from men." She presents notorious examples like Aristotle's claims that female nature is afflicted with natural defectiveness and Darwin's assertion that women are intellectually inferior, among others (p. 59). More modern research has undeniably concluded that there is no biological determinant that makes females better suited for child-rearing than males, introducing gender existentialism, "a social construct radically impacting the way we think, act, and see ourselves, linked to sex, not by biology, but by culture" (p. 96). Herein we find ourselves in the nature versus nurture debate and the evidence leads to one conclusion: behaviours befitting fathering and mothering are socially — not biologically — determined, instilled in us from the moment we are born.

Delving into gender socialization, Lockman examines the defining traits of traditional 'femininity' or 'masculinity.' Femininity is synonymous with community, referring to women's warmth, expressivity, and concern for others, which juxtaposes masculinity's agency, characterized by competence, assertiveness, and independence. Therefore, while it is ingrained in

women that motherhood is the most important role they can have, men are not socialized to alleviate the burden of others or feel guilt for enjoying personal freedom. Thus, if deeply rooted gender norms are not purposefully dismantled in the home, upon the arrival of children, conventional patterns prevail and men (fathers) continue to embrace personal autonomy — due to pre-existing dominance and entitlement — while women succumb to the behavioural prescriptions and expectations of the nurturing mother.

Lockman's findings reveal that the existing state originated when women were denied power and responsibility elsewhere and very willingly offered it on the home front. At the time, they happily accepted. However, upon entering the paid workforce, women faced two incompatible ideals: the competent and dedicated employee and the ever-present mother. To prove they could have it all — while attempting to overcome the guilt of abandoning their sole duty as mothers — many women intensified their efforts to epitomize the perfect mother and increased societal expectations along the way. Despite grievances of overburden and self-sacrifice, many mothers are reluctant to reduce their parental involvement and allow fathers to increase their contribution for fear of relinquishing their authority as primary parent. Therefore, according to Lockman, "[t]he rising status of women outside the home has actually increased our inclination to reinforce male dominance inside it" (p. 123).

Conversely, Lockman exposes some mothers' repeated asks for fathers to contribute more only for their pleas to remain unanswered. Overcome with frustration, these mothers accept defeat and continue to do it themselves, further reinforcing the status quo. This lends itself to another opinion, that "women's greater relative comfort with under-benefiting juxtaposed with men's

greater relative comfort with over-benefitting sets the course for men to refuse responsibility and for women to comply with their refusal” (p. 148).

As mothers’ frustration steadily increases, Lockman examines resistance to egalitarianism on the home front and dares to ask: In a world where women are encouraged to become more like men, why are men not encouraged to become more like women? Her examination of the issue is as follows:

In the last thirty years...women have become likely to report feeling agentic. Women today feel more agentic, but no less communal, than their sisters in the 1970s. Similarly, contemporary men report an increased sense of agency than they did in the past, with no change in communality, which they never took much stock in from the get-go.

As we see...at home and at work, women have become more like men, men have become more like men, but men have not become more like women. And women have not become less like women. As women adopt agency, what has stopped men from embracing more communal traits – from becoming...more like women? (pp. 254-255)

Unfortunately, few researchers have shown much interest in exploring this conundrum further; however, Lockman’s examination of prevailing male entitlement and female unentitlement seemingly reveals that men see no benefit in giving up their position of superiority. To exemplify this finding, Lockman discusses the less common, but not obsolete, situation where the father shares equal parental responsibilities, only to face harsh criticism for not adhering to traditional male gender roles. Therefore, becoming an equal parent comes at the cost of his career and social networks.

Since the 1950s, shifting socioeconomic conditions have somewhat modified cultural

attitudes about gender, however, in the last twenty years, further progress on the home front has been minimal, if not non-existent. Lockman's research uncovers the problem — that most couples intuitively, rather than consciously and explicitly, divide the work of planning and remembering. By default, it becomes the female's responsibility and with respect to parenting, the word 'intuitive' becomes synonymous with 'mother's responsibility'. Therefore, co-parenting intuitively, rather than consciously, is how parents revert to traditional gender norms.

According to sociologists Ridgeway and Correll, change will be difficult to achieve. "The gender system will only be undermined through the long-term, persistent accumulation of everyday challenges to the system resulting from socioeconomic change and individual resistance" (pp. 132-133). However, individual resistance is no small feat and success is contingent upon many challenging conversations, extensive planning, and congruent behaviours that are added to an already lengthy to-do list. Despite many foreseeable challenges, researchers contend that eventual change can be achieved if both men and women tackle existing gender roles by consciously and collaboratively dividing parental and household responsibilities.

Lockman's book disappoints readers in that her conclusion of interwoven themes gets somewhat lost at the end. Rather, her final chapter contains several additional anecdotes and cautionary tales, ending with a simple comparison of past and present, with a nod to a future unknown that leaves the reader dangling. The reader is consequently left to derive their own conclusions and solutions by piecing together recurring sentiments throughout the book.

Despite its closing, Lockman's examination of gender norms encompasses a breadth of research from psychologists, sociologists, social psychologists, anthropologists and personal

everyday life. This inclusive compilation is likely to captivate her intended audience — likely spanning from social scientists and researchers in each of the aforementioned fields, to post-secondary students, educators and educated mothers and fathers — who are trying to understand and navigate the expectations of today's parents. Her presentation of findings was thorough and complemented by a smart, sometimes humorous, comprehensive discussion that unearthed numerous challenges with the current state of affairs. Her arguments ignited my own sense of injustice, despite not being a mother myself. I have already recommended this book to friends and family members who have expressed their individual frustrations at the overwhelming responsibilities and lack of paternal involvement that has defined their experience of motherhood.