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Portrayals of Fatherhood and Motherhood in Best-selling Child-rearing Manuals

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Abstract

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Mothers' increasing participation in the labor force and fathers' involvement in the care-giver role in childcare have been two trends in recent decades that potentially modify and redefine the parenthood in heterosexual families. Past empirical studies show that despite mothers' increasing economic contribution, they still shoulder more household labors and experience starker work-family conflicts. Studies also show that fathers strive to maintain their hegemonic masculinity in care-giving practices. This study investigates best-selling child-rearing manuals that reflect cultural ideals and expectations of motherhood and fatherhood, and thus reflect the cultural context under which issues of the division of childcare labor, the work-family conflict, and the construction of identity in childcare practices occur. I also include in my samples the newly emerged genre in parenting books – childcare books for fathers exclusively. Findings of this study suggest that mothers still play the primary care-giver role and take over more childcare responsibilities. They also play the role of “gatekeeper” who control fathers' access to childcare and monitor fathers' care-giving practices. On the other hand, fathers are secondary care-givers who participate in childcare not only for children but also for helping mothers. They also maintain their dominance in the family and demonstrate their strength in giving mothers support, assertion and acknowledgement. For work-family conflict, parents who follow their traditional gender roles as providers or care-givers are provided with more resources to cope with or mitigate the conflict, while parents who go against their traditional gender roles are expected to face struggles and to take extra steps to reassure their gender identities. The notion of masculinity is ambiguous and contradictory in fathering manuals – in explicit claims and arguments, authors take the stance against the traditional label of hegemonic masculinity and advocate for a new, alternative model of fatherhood, but implicitly, authors present the ideas of hegemonic masculinity as scientific and objective fact, or assumptions for appropriate fathering practices.

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Introduction

In recent decades, as more mothers enter the labor market and more fathers participate in child-rearing activities, the boundaries between roles in traditional heterosexual family models have been broken down or blurred (e.g., Sayer, Bianchi & Robinson 2004, Women's Bureau 2015, Bureau of Labor 2016). However, despite mothers' increased household economic contributions, gendered inequalities persist in the division of household labor and the experience of work-family conflicts. Arlie Hochschild coined the term "the second shift" in her 1989 book, describing the phenomenon that occurs when women in the labor force still shoulder most of the household labor, and thus take on a second shift of work at home. The workplace remains inflexible and insensitive to changes in family demands, with much of the resultant strain being absorbed by female employees. Thus, mothers face heavier workloads and more intense conflict between work and family. Fathers entering the new sphere of child-rearing also face challenges as they strive to maintain a masculine identity in this feminine sphere, developing distinctive styles of childcare practices accordingly (Brandth & Kvande 1998, Hauser 2015).

To investigate cultural ideas around parenting in a contemporary social context, I compare child-rearing manuals that target mothers and fathers respectively. In the context of changing discourses around work-family conflict, the division of childcare labor, and gender identities in parenting, child-rearing manuals are powerful cultural artifacts that

reflect norms and expectations around parenthood today. As a cultural object, child-rearing manuals have been studied as a symbolic product of persistent and normative cultural ideas around parenting. In *The Cultural Contradiction of Motherhood* (1996), Sharon Hays argues that the content of popular childcare advice books offers a window into the larger cultural models and implicit rules governing parenthood. And while there is no necessary link between what the books prescribe and what parents actually do, the popularity of the books suggest that they have been purchased and circulated in ways that reflect and promote a particular set of belief systems around parenting.

Hays' study addresses problems and contradictions for contemporary employed mothers to achieve the culturally desired forms of motherhood while at the same time maintaining as a worker in the capitalist economic sphere. She observes an ideology of intensive mothering that has three main components: 1) that mothers are primarily responsible for child-rearing, 2) that childcare requires physically and mentally demanding practices, and 3) that the child is sacred and child-rearing surpasses all considerations of self-interest and market evaluations. Hays' study has implications for the unequal division of childcare labor in that mothers are considered to be the primary caregiver and fathers are usually absent in the manuals. She also argues that the manuals reflect a deep conflict between work and family for mothers because the suggested methods require labor-intensive and emotionally absorbing work that would infringe on a

mothers' full involvement in the labor market. Also, the ideal of the sacred child urges mothers to prioritize child-rearing and potentially sacrifice their job to meet the exhausting demands of ideal childcare. Hays finds that the ideology of intensive mothering contradicts dominant capitalist logic and consequently lacks consideration for working mothers. Hays' argument is echoed by other studies of childcare manuals. For example, a study of childcare manuals in English Canada in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrates that despite women's participation in outside jobs and feminist calls for an equal division of the labor of childcare, child-rearing manuals reflect the real social changes insufficiently, still with the assumption of a mother-at-home (Haynes 2011). Child-care manuals, unresponsive to working mothers, lend no valuable advice to them and possibly exacerbate their problems in the already unequal division of domestic labor.

Few studies investigate childcare advice intended for fathers. While still in its infancy, a new genre of childcare advice books exclusively for fathers has emerged. Much less popular than the books targeting women, these manuals powerfully take on the work of constructing models of fatherhood and masculinity. My study will examine popular books in this genre with the hypothesis that these advice books, as cultural objects, offer insight into the dominant ideologies and accepted social practices of fatherhood. Besides investigating the problems in division of labor and the experience of work-family conflict, I will also scrutinize advice about fathers' specific child-rearing practices to explore how fathers establish their new identity as caregiver and differentiate

themselves from mothers, and what this differentiation may mean for gender equality in parenting.

Division of Labor

A study using time diary data from the mid-1960s to late 1990s finds that fathers spend more time today in childcare than in the past, and that the ratio of mothers' time to fathers' time occupied by childcare decreased over the half of century, which suggests a more equitable division of childcare between fathers and mothers (Sayer, Bianchi & Robinson 2004). More recent data on parents' daily time spent on childcare activities provided by the American Time Use Survey also reflects an increase in father's participation in families with different employment status. Compared to the amount of time fathers spent daily on caring for children from 2003 to 2006, the amount of time fathers spent with children daily from 2011 to 2015 increases in dual-earner families (0.79 hours per day increased to 0.89) and in families where mothers work part-time and fathers work full-time (0.84 increased to 0.86). The exception is families wherein mothers are unemployed and fathers are employed full-time. In these cases, the amount of time fathers spend on child-care time decreased from 0.83 to 0.79 hours per day. This pattern is explained by Raley et al. who demonstrate that fathers' responsibility and involvement in childcare increases when mothers spend more time working and contributing the household income (Raley, Bianchi & Wang 2012). Another study about the "recession

effect” also points to the relation between work (both work hours and income) and childcare labor division, supporting the hypothesis that during the recession period, men whose work hours and income decrease will have more availability and less bargaining power in childcare labor division, resulting in more participation in childcare activities (Knop & Brewster 2016). These recent studies show changes from Hochschild’s study which indicates that the economic contributions women make do not influence their share in housework.

Besides the increase in fathers’ involvement in interactions with and caring for children, the fathering ideal also changes to a more care-giving role. As a 1999 telephone interview with different generations of adults demonstrates, among cohorts born in years from 1965 to 1981, there is an increasing acknowledgment that fathers should share equally in caregiving activities (Bianchi, Robinson & Milkie, 2006). Though the traditional role of breadwinner has still been persistent and gendered, the role of a care-giver to the child becomes an important part of fatherhood that demands high input of time and effort – a cultural ideal of involved fathering, as noted by Bianchi et al., prescribes that “fathers nurture their children on a day-to-day basis, regularly caring for and playing with them”(127). A recent review on fatherhood literature also points out that, as shown by studies, more fathers are willing to question the traditional breadwinner model of fatherhood and to contribute to the fulfilment of multifaceted demands of the family, and that fatherhood becomes complex and involves diverse required roles such as

household help and nurturer (Crespi & Ruspini 2015).

That said, mothers' and fathers' shares of child-care are far from equal. According to the American Time Use Survey, in 2011 to 2015, mothers still spend 0.46 hours more per day on childcare responsibilities when both parents are employed full-time. The difference is starker when mothers are employed part-time or unemployed. The inequality in the division of labor is, of course, more complex than what a count of childcare hours suggests. Bianchi et al (2006) demonstrate that fathers tend to participate in more pleasurable and flexible interactive activities playing and reading, while mothers engage in activities with a rigid time-table such as feeding and medical care (which suggest more time strains for mothers' works), and more multitasking in child care (Bianchi et al. 2006). Offer and Schneider (2011) find that on average, mothers spend ten more hours a week multitasking in dual-earner families, and report more feelings of stress and distress for multi-tasking compared to fathers, especially when the multitasking happen at home or in public (Offer and Schneider 2011). The 2011 study further suggests that daily multitasking poses more threats to mothers' well-being than to fathers' because of the normative image of successful mothers handling every housework smoothly. Mothers' multitasking often happens when they fail to manage childcare and other housework or chores at ease, and the desire for them to maintain the normal image of successful mother adds on to their stress. Some international studies also suggest the disparity between fathering and mothering: an Australian study of time diaries finds that mothers commit

more time in direct childcare overall. Furthermore, the composition of mothers' childcare labor involves more time-rigid labor and physical labors such as feeding, bathing and dressing children, which composite for half of mothers' care-time but only one-third of fathers' care-time. Mothers also shoulder more overall responsibility of childcare: specifically, they spend more times in solo cares, when they take the sole responsibility for caring without accompany or assistance from their spouses (Craig 2006).

Another aspect of the tension of labor division between fathers and mothers is mother's appreciation of fathers' contributions and depreciation of her own contributions. In *The Second Shift* (1989), Arlie Hochschild proposes the concept "economy of gratitude", meaning that a man makes the gesture of conceding his masculinity in accepting his wife's work and helping out in housework to earn gratitude. The wife's appreciation results in an illusion that they are making equal contributions in housework and child-rearing. A 1998 study in Norway interviewed families using paternal leaves and found that mothers usually hold the father's care in a higher regard to their own contributions, admiring fathers' "masculine" way of care, depreciating their own kind of "girlish" care even when they are often taking more heavy-duty labors (Brandth & Kvande). Mothers in this study also indicate that they are often too worried and too anxious about their children, while fathers demonstrate a more relaxed and self-satisfied attitude. Thus, despite the tendency towards more equitable labor division, mothers still experience more physical and emotional burden, and are constrained by more restrictive

norms in childcare.

Work-Family Conflict

Despite their active participation in the traditional sphere of family, mothers are increasingly involved in employment in the labor force. According to a report released in 2015 by the U.S. Women's Bureau, mothers' participation rates in the labor force increased from 47.4% to 69.9% from 1975 to 2015. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the 2016 labor force participation rate of mothers with children is 70.5%, with mothers who have children under the age of six at 64.7%. This trend complicates mothers' daily experiences and amplifies the need for mothers to reconcile these two aspects – family and work – of their lives.

One source of support for mothers might be public childcare policies. Multiple trans-national studies have shown that public policy initiatives around childcare have a significant influence on mother's occupational status and division of childcare labor (Craig & Mullan, 2011; Abendroth, Huffman & Treas, 2014). For instance, Abendroth et al.'s research, which compares the wage penalty for mothers across 13 countries, finds that in countries with higher expenditures on childcare policies, especially on policies that reduce the strain between mothers' families and careers such as the public daycare, the wage penalty for mothers is significantly mitigated. The current childcare policy in the United States provides support for working parents: according to a report, in 2014, the

federal government spent 10 percent of its total expenditures on childcare benefits. The major childcare policy where 40% of expenditures went, the child-related tax provisions – the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), was a refundable component of worker’s income tax. The U.S. did not have a daycare program that are compatible to the ones in Abendroth et al.’s study, but, based on earned incomes, EITC also aims to “incentivize employment (i.e., encourage individuals to leave welfare for work and increase work hours).” (Board on Children et al., 2016: 110) By connecting the childcare benefit directly to income-generating job, this policy frames mothers’ employments to be concretely beneficial to child-rearing, and hence alleviates the work-childcare conflict. However, the report also show that EITC is under-participated in 2014.

Despite the well-intended policy, the conflict between work and childcare remains damaging for many mothers both in America and around the world. Recent studies have shown that working mothers experience wage penalties (Yu & Kuo, 2017) as well as cumulative damage to their occupational status (Abendroth, Huffman & Treas, 2014). The work-family conflict experienced by mothers often results in them having to shift to more flexible and less competitive jobs, and miss out on career-enhancing training programs. Breast feeding, a childcare practice recommended by childcare manuals, also impose further damages to working mothers’ earning. Over the five years after child-birth, compared to formula feeders, breast-feeders generally face greater wage penalties. Mothers with a long-duration (over 6 months) of breast-feeding experience the steepest

decline in their incomes, have the least average work hours, and are most likely to be unemployed (Rippeyoung & Noonan, 2012).

On the other hand, with a 92.8% rate of participation in American labor force as of 2016, fathers do not experience this conflict in the way that many mothers do.

Hegemonic masculinity, the culturally dominant ideal of manhood, is usually associated with income-generating work and the role as the provider (Brandth & Kvande 1998). The traditional role as breadwinner for the family exempts fathers from having to sacrifice their career for childcare, and instead incorporates working and earning as the essential identity and responsibility of fathers. Kellewald (2012) shows that fatherhood, associated with the provider role, has a positive impact on fathers' hourly wages, generating a "fatherhood premium" in fathers' incomes. Kellewald argues that the provider role prompts fathers to alter their behaviors in a way that increases their economic contributions in order to meet the expectations associated with the provider role. The more the provider role is salient, clear, and high in commitment for fathers, the more advanced fathers' wages (Killewald 2012).

Gender Identities

As fathers become more involved in childcare and other housework, cultural ideas evolve to include a more diverse set of roles, forcing many fathers to face the challenge of balancing their multiple identities and responsibilities (Crespi & Ruspini 2015).

Furthermore, when the caregiving role integrating into the ideal of fatherhood, fathers face the problem of managing masculine identities in a field which has traditionally been considered feminine.

Several studies based on interviews with fathers who actively involve in childcare activities investigate how fathers deal with multiple roles and maintain their gender identities. A 2015 American study finds that fathers prioritize roles that fit better with their gender-norms and are thus more comfortable for them. Although the caregiving role is more important than generations before, the provider role remains the most emphasized central identity for fathers, and is regarded by interviewees as the “paternal instinct to provide” (Hauser). This is consistent with the findings from the time-use diary that fathers are much less likely than mothers to reduce the working hours to meet increased demands from childcare (Raley, Bianchi & Wang 2012). In other words, they tend not to sacrifice their role as the provider for the role as a caregiver. This propensity is rooted in a specific cultural and discursive atmosphere that reinforces gender norms and sanctions any deviations. In Australia, while the “involved father” model is commonly acknowledged, the news media discourse dominantly values the income-earning father who is also involved in childcare practices in much higher regard than stay-at-home fathers. Fathers’ choice to leave the role of provider and take the role of caregiver is often portrayed as a compelled one, because of redundancy (Stevens 2015).

On the other hand, for fathers who engage in childcare practices, they strive to

maintain their “manhood” in this traditionally female area. One major strategy they use is to differentiate their practices from mothers’. Brandth and Kvande’s 1998 study about fathers taking paternal leave in Norway shows three ways fathers use to differentiate their childcare practices from mothers’ in three ways: 1) Fathers build a side-by-side friendship with children rather than the face-to-face nurturing style of mothers, which means that fathers engage more in activities where they do things together with children, such as walking in woods, rather than feeding or changing diapers (they will do it when it is necessary, but mothers are the primary responders); 2) Fathers occupy a different sphere of activity, the out-door, which implicates more masculine activities such as sport, and differentiation from mothers who stay at home and handle housework, Much fewer fathers consider housework as a part of parenting activities than mothers do; 3) As indicated previously, fathers hold a more relaxed attitude of childcare, avoid too much interference with children’s behaviors, and cultivate the independence of children. Their attitude is held in higher status by mothers, who consider themselves over-anxious and over-protective toward children, and admire fathers’ chill and calm manner in handling childcare. Another study in America confirms these three ways of differentiations (Hauser 2015). Fathers engage in masculine activities with children such as sports. They also avoid participating domains that are considered to belong to mothers, such as the parenting group. In terms of attitude and emotion, fathers avoid emotional work such as comforting the child, and resists from displaying emotional weakness. They are expected

to calm mothers who are excessively anxious during emergencies.

This emotional difference found in interviews corresponds to the images of fathers and mothers depicted in older child-rearing manuals. A study of child-rearing manuals from 1915 to 1980 demonstrates the emotional stereotypes of mothers and fathers, which echo the observation in real-life differences of fathers' and mothers' attitude and emotional involvement in childcare (Shield & Koster 1989). Mothers are deemed as over-emotional, over-anxious, and lacking self-control in emotional expressions, which, manuals warn, may be dangerous to children. Fathers, on the other hand, are considered to keep an emotional distance from children, restraining their own emotion. However, this emotional distance is pictured in a positive light, regarded as objectivity instead of insensitivity. Fathers are considered more dispassionate but more accurate in evaluating children's real needs comparing to mothers. Studies about father's more relaxed attitude and tendency to avoid expressing emotions are consistent with this emotional stereotype, and the higher status of fathers' type is also reflected.

Besides intentional distinctions from mothers, another strategy for fathers to maintain their masculinity is by interpreting childcare as a new challenge in life, the mastering of which is itself a masculine attribute (Brandth & Kvande 1998).

There are also series of literature that see fathers' identities through the lens of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is defined by Connell (1996) as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the

problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women”. The hegemonic masculinity is a cultural and institutional claim to authority, maintaining the legitimacy of men’s superior positions in the social structure. Not every man can live up to the requirement of the hegemonic masculinity -- Connell discussed fatherhood as a complicit form of masculinity because it involves men’s participation in the feminine sphere of household. The characteristics associated with masculinity are encouraged and valued among the society. Many studies about fatherhood associate the hegemonic masculinity with the provider role and masculine values such as independence, strength, and technical competence (Dolan 2014; Lee & Lee 2018). On the other hand, some scholars view involved fatherhood opening up new meanings of being a man and opportunities for alternative masculinity. For instance, Lee and Lee’s 2018 study of stay-at-home fathers relates fathering practices to a model of caring masculinity. Caring masculinity, proposed by Kalen Elliott (2007), rejects the dominance of men over women and embraces the value of caring, interdependence, positive emotion and relationality, and ultimately encourages gender equality. However, Other research finds that the “new father” image still follows the hegemonic masculinity. A study that conducts an analysis on articles published on a Canadian newspaper series “Family Matters” suggests that, though the press praise “involved fathers” and progressive family relations, it still emphasize the hegemonic masculine aspects of those involved fathers, such as their masculine physique

and their abilities to contribute to the family economically. In addressing the work-family conflicts, the articles only talk about working mothers' strain and guilt in acting as both the primary care-giver and the worker, while fathers are implied to be the part-time, secondary parent. The hegemonic masculinity is not challenged but reassured.

Childcare Manuals

Wendy Griswold emphasizes the importance of studying cultural objects as interactions and reflections of social structures and practices (2013). Sharon Hays' study about child-rearing manuals echoes this idea by emphasizing that parenting is not natural but culturally constructed, involving an enactment of cultural ideals about socially appropriate child-rearing. Popular childcare manuals are thus important materials to study because they reflect these cultural ideals. The popularity of the manuals she selects also shows that, on consumers' side, those particular manuals "struck a chord with readers and evidently supply what many parents perceive as the necessary and appropriate information and guidance" (1996: 52). Mona and Gealson emphasizes that childcare manuals reflect the cultural ideas or values presented to parents by society (1999). Shield and Koster suggest that childcare books instill people with beliefs about parents and make explicit what is implicit in cultural beliefs about parenting (1989). Childcare manuals serve to reproduce and maintain cultural norms about parenting, both reflecting and making explicit existing cultural ideals and beliefs, and actively presenting or

distilling cultural beliefs to parents. On the other hand, scholars acknowledge the discrepancy between childcare manuals and the real conditions of parents and actual parental practices, such as the cultural contradiction of motherhood indicated by Hays, the lack of reflection of mothers' participation in the labor force in the 1960s and 1970s indicated by Haynes (2011). The childcare manual is, after all, not an accurate record of real-life families or a blueprint of parental practices, but a reflection of assumed beliefs, ideals, and values in the culture.

Thus, child-rearing books can serve as a cross-section of the cultural parenting ideologies, enactment of which address and correspond to real-life problems of gender differences and inequalities in parenting, such as the division of labor, work-family conflict, and gender identity expression in parenting.

Empirical evidence about fathering practices suggests that in practice, fathers do not adopt the ideas described in the ideology of intensive mothering. Firstly, fathers are not the primary caregivers, because they spend less time with children compared to mothers. Fathers' care for children is not as intensive physically and emotionally as mothers', because they engage in more flexible and interactive activities with children instead of the time-rigid cares and labor-intensive housework, and more relaxed in their attitude toward child-rearing. Finally, they do not sacrifice their economy and market values for their children; instead, their capitalist and financial values is the most important part of fatherhood. As a result, fathers are much less influenced by the cultural contradictions for

working mothers. They are not bound by at-home and time-rigid activities, can adjust their time of childcare to meet the requirement of their job, and their identity as income-generating workers does not conflict with fatherhood because they deem the role of provider as the most important part of fatherhood.

Since parenting practices are not natural but cultural, the differences between fathering and mothering practices and experiences should have roots in cultural ideals about appropriate parenting. I expect the popular childcare manuals to reflect these cultural ideals, and reveal the differences between images of fathers and mothers in parenting ideologies.

Methodology

Sampling

I adopt a purposeful sampling and select two child-rearing manuals that claim to target both parents and two manuals that are intended exclusively for fathers. Books that claim to provide guidance for both parents enable direct comparisons of childcare labor and responsibilities assigned to mothers and fathers in the same manual. On the other hand, manuals that only address to fathers suggest, by their very existence, that fathering is different from general parenting and that child-rearing is a practice that involves gendered identities. Thus, in their efforts to distinguish themselves from traditional types of parenting books, these manuals are likely to reflect an intentionally gendered

construction of fatherhood. Considering that income-generating work is regarded as a major component of masculinity (Brandth & Kvande 1998), I expect that manuals for fathers will differ from books for both parents in their handling of work-family conflict issues.

In order to select samples that are most representative of cultural ideas about parenting and fatherhood, I choose books based on: 1) popularity, 2) addressing early childhood, 3) encyclopedic manuals.

The popularity of particular manuals shows that they “struck a chord” with the audience and provide knowledge and information that are considered necessary and appropriate (Hays 1996). I assess popularity based on bestseller lists in “Parenthood and Family” category of the *New York Times*. However, the *New York Times* stopped announcing bestsellers for “Parenthood and Family” category since January 2017.

Another problem is that the genre of fathering manuals is newly emerged and belongs to a relatively niche market, so few of the fathering manuals ever enter the *New York Times* best-seller list of the general “Parenthood and Family” genre. Thus, I use rankings of best-sellers on popular book-selling websites (Amazon.com and Barnes & Nobles) as proxy measures for popularity in order to obtain the up-to-date data about popularity and more specific categorizations of parenting books to address the niche market¹.

¹ The advantages of this kind of data are that the ranking is more up-to-date, and that book-selling websites have more specific sorting and categorizations of books. For example, Amazon has individual categories and rankings for “fatherhood” and “early childhood” (which also helps me to address my second requirement), instead of covering all these categories by the general “Parenthood and Family” category like the *New York Times* list. The disadvantage of

To ensure that my samples are comparable, I only select manuals that address early childhood, instead of toddler or teenager. I choose the period of early childhood because 1) it is when parents start to develop their own parenting styles and negotiate the roles and responsibilities each other should take in the child-rearing process, and 2) it is when caring for the child demands most time and effort, and thus the work-family conflicts most prominent. I use both the categorizations on book-seller websites and the introductions of each books to address this requirement.

Finally, I look for encyclopedic manuals that cover all aspects of parenthood instead of focusing on one or two child-rearing problem. Encyclopedic manuals capture the full picture of parenting practices including work-family conflicts, and they are also more likely to provide comprehensive advice for the audience's life as parents addressing issues about identity. However, when looking at the ranking, I find few encyclopedic manuals in the best-seller list – the top-ten lists of parenting book are occupied by personal stories and problem-specific manuals. A 2004 report from Publishers Weekly confirms my observation: childcare books addressing individual concerns and experiences were increasing in sales, and taking the place of all-encompassing how-to manuals (Holt)². Thus, it is difficult for me to select four encyclopedic best-sellers.

this source is that the ranking of best-sellers in the category is based on sales of books on a single book seller, which may lead to biases.

² The reporter attributes the trending of memoirs and problem-specific solutions to the increased pace of modern lives – “Today's parents, savvier and more time-pressured than those of previous generations, want information that pinpoints their concerns”. This same trend is also reported by Publishers Weekly in later year (Patrick, 2007).

Thus, I selected the *New York Times* bestseller *On Becoming Baby Wise* as a substitution for encyclopedic manual. This book deals with the problem of crying and infants' irregular resting-waking schedule, and provides a range of advice for parents to regulate the eating and sleeping schedule for the child. I select this manual because the parenting practices it suggests enable both father and mother to participate, so the division of labor between parents is reasonably comparable, and it deals specifically with the time strain related to childcare demands and breastfeeding hinders mothers' wages and career developments (e.g. Yu & Kuo, 2017, Rippeyoung & Noonan, 2012). Thus, I expect this manual to provide insights regarding work-family conflicts.

I also selected the book *What to Expect the First Year* by Heidi Murkoff as one targeted to both men and women. This book comes from the well-known *What to Expect* series of child-rearing manuals, which includes the iconic *New York Times* bestseller *What to Expect When Expecting*. As the publisher indicates in the advertisement of the third edition of *What to Expect the First Year*, up to its publication in 2014, the whole *What to Expect* series had sold over 34 million copies in the United States, and the first two editions of *What to Expect the First Year* had over 11 million in print. *What to Expect the First Year* is ranked very high in its category in different book-seller websites (#2 in the parenting reference category and #3 in the infancy category on Amazon, #1 in the infant category on Barnes & Noble). This book gives month-by-month instructions for both parents in the first year of infancy.

Another manual for both parents I select is *On Becoming Baby Wise: Giving Your Infant the Gift of Nighttime Sleep* by Robert Bucknam and Gary Ezzo, stood as one of the New York Times best-sellers for three months in 2016 (the last year when the NYT announce best-sellers in the “Parenthood and Family” category). According to its publisher, this book, up to its fifth edition, had been purchased by over six million parents in the United States. It is also ranked as one of the best-selling books in its category on different book-seller websites (#1 in the motherhood category, #2 in the fatherhood category, and #3 in the early childhood category on Amazon, and #4 in the infant category on Barnes & Noble). This book focuses on the management of the infant’s daily schedule. As I discussed, it does not meet all requirements, but I try to minimize the impact of this compromise.

The first father-specific manual I use in my sample is *The New Father: A Dad’s Guide to the First Year* by Armin A. Brott, a New York Times best-selling author, belongs to his *New Fathers* book series whose total sale amounts to over a million copies. The *New Father* also stands out as one of the most best-selling books in its category on different book-seller websites (#11 in the fatherhood category on Amazon and #21 in the infant category on Barnes & Noble).

The second fathering manual I picked is *Dude, You’re A Dad* (#99 in “Fatherhood” on Amazon and #31 in “infants” category on Barnes & Nobles). This manual is not ranked as popular as *The New Father*, but it still has a reasonably good popularity in the

niche market of fathering manuals. Moreover, the author of this book wrote another phenomenally popular fathering manual addressing pregnancy: *Dude, You're Gonna Be A Dad* (#5 in "Fatherhood" on Amazon, #4 in "Pregnancy & Childbirth" on Barnes & Nobles). Though I do not include the pregnancy manual because, as discussed, it is hard to compare parents' work-family conflicts and childcare tasks involved in different period of child development, I include the early-childhood fathering manual from the same author, *Dude, You're A Dad*. As the author of a best-selling infancy fathering manual, the author is proven to hold ideas of fatherhood that are largely acknowledged and embraced in the cultural context. It is reasonable to consider that he expresses the same culturally appropriate and representative ideas in the early-childhood fathering manual.

Method

In this inductive and exploratory study, I adopt thematic content analysis. According to *Applied Thematic Analysis* (Guest, McQueen & Namey, 2012), thematic analysis is an inductive qualitative analysis that identifies and describes themes and develop codes to mark these themes from the raw data for further analysis (e.g. comparing code frequencies, identifying code co-occurrence, displaying relations between codes). Boyatzis defines themes as any pattern in the data that "describes and organizes possible observations or..... interprets aspects of the phenomenon." (Boyatzis, 2009: vii) Themes can exist both on the manifested level when they are directly observable, and on the latent

level when they underlie the explicit content. Thematic analysis is ideal for this study because it allows exploratory coding not limited by specific theoretical frameworks and enables identification of implicit ideas and patterns that are not explicitly presented by words.

This study is guided by three issues as mentioned: construction of masculinity, division of labor, and work-family conflict. I code the content that address these directions first as “masculinity”, “division of labor” and “work-family conflict”. When coding, I find the relationship between spouses to be relevant to masculinity and division of labor, so I also code the content addressing “partner relationship”. In order to approach the division of labor, I adapt a concept from empirical studies, “solo care”, which I will explain in details in the finding section. After the primary round of coding, I look at the coded content to identify themes and patterns, and re-categorized them accordingly. The second round of coding yields themes such as “Hegemonic masculinity” and “alternative masculinity”. Within the second round of coding, I identify new patterns such as “Hegemonic masculinity as objective facts”, “Hegemonic masculinity as motivation/justification”, “Alternative masculinity as explicit argument”. The patterns I found in my third round of coding constitute the bulk of my findings (see Appendix 1). I use the software MAXQDA to code and organize my data.

Findings

Division of Labor:

Overall, in investigating the division of childcare labor, I find that the parenting manuals assign mothers the bulk of childcare responsibilities as well as the more complex, emotional tasks involved in caregiving. Firstly, I confirm a key finding from Hays' 1996 study in that the two sampled manuals *What to Expect the First Year* and *On Becoming Baby Wise*, which both claim to be for both parents, actually assume mothers as their default readers. Secondly, in instructional advice across the four books, fathers are not expected to be the primary executer of childcare advice, and seldom perform childcare practices independently, while mothers are expected to take on more responsibility independently. Thus, the ideology of intensive mothering that Hays finds in her analysis holds true for mothers but not for fathers. Thirdly, in my entire sample of manuals, there are indications that fathers as care-givers are secondary to mothers, but fathers take on the additional role as helper and supporter for mothers. Furthermore, the fathering manuals suggest that mothers are considered the "gatekeepers" of childcare responsibilities, because they are the ones who decide how and how much fathers can interact and care for the child. Finally, discussions in the fathering manuals about the natural difference between fathers' and mothers' caring styles encourage an acceptance of fathers taking on the tasks that are more interactive and time-flexible, while leaving the emotional work and time-rigid tasks to mothers.

Mothers as Default Audience

Replicating what Hays found in her study, I find that the two manuals that claimed to be for both parents are actually intended primarily for mothers. Though *What to Expect* uses the gender neutral pronoun “you” to refer to its audience, there are clues suggesting that it refers to mothers in default. Noticeably, when addressing mothers specifically, the *What to Expect* uses “you” without any extra explanation or signals. For instance:

“You’re ready to go back to work, but maybe you are not ready to stop breastfeeding yet ... once you get the hang of pumping on the job, you’ll realize that being a breastfeeding, employed mother may not be such hard work after all.”
(*What to Expect the First Year*)

Without any explicit gender specification, this directive addresses mothers exclusively, with the assumption that the audience will position themselves as mothers when reading this manual with no need of specifications.

On the other hand, when the authors of the “gender neutral” manuals give instructions intended for both parents, they tend to address fathers explicitly. In other words, fathers are not assumed to be included in the audience – the pronoun “you” might not include fathers unless otherwise noted:

“To cocoon your cutie even more snugly, tuck his or her body under your shirt or sweatshirt (there are even kangaroo care tops made specifically for skin-to-skin wear). That goes for daddies, too—your baby will love to cuddle cheek-to-chest (and yes, even cheek-to-chest-hair).” (*What to Expect the First Year*)

Here, in addition to the instruction to “you” as the audience, the author explicitly

states “that goes for daddies, too” – fathers are not in her mind as a part of the ordinary audience, but a special group of readers that she need to reach out explicitly. Another evidence is that, when the author addresses fathers, she uses a distinct column with a different background color to distinguish this advice from the rest. She also explicitly signals “Fatherhood” in the title of this column: “For Parents: The New Face of Fatherhood”. This formatting implies that instructions exclusively for fathers are something special and different, set aside from the rest of the manual.

The other manual, *On Becoming Baby Wise*, does not use a gender-neutral pronoun, which enables me to compare the numbers of places fathers or mothers are mentioned directly. In this book, there are only two places where “fathers” are explicitly addressed, and neither of them indicate any specific child-care practice, but both talk about maintaining good relation with the mother or help the mother generally. In *On Becoming*, I do not detect indications of the father conducting specific childcare practices by himself. On the other hand, there are 33 practical advices directed to mothers alone (more details of solo care will be discussed in the next section). Mothers are the care-giver that the author has in mind when she writes practical instructions.

Division of Labor Implied by Instructive Advices

Because fathers are not set to be the default audience, I only take advices that address

“fathers” or “dads” explicitly as instructions for fathers in manuals that claim to be for both parents. In these instructions, fathers are usually addressed along with mothers. However, in any juxtapositions listing the mother and the father together as potential executors of the given childcare suggestion, the father is always listed after the mother:

“But even before that, they [babies]’re priming for a life of engagement and interaction with other humans (starting with mommy and daddy)—making eye contact, studying faces, and tuning in to voices.” (*What to Expect the First Year*)

“How can you get a sleepy baby to stay awake long enough to take a full feeding? Mom or Dad can remove everything but the baby’s diaper and hold him skin-to-skin.” (*What to Expect the First Year*)

In these excerpts, the structures of the sentences always place mothers first, prioritizing mothers as the first responder and fathers as the secondary. This pattern is constant through out both books. Some other suggestions also show clear differentiation between the level of participation in care-giving activities by mothers and by fathers:

“The one thing a mom and dad must do when offering a bottle is to take the time to sit and hold their baby. This combines the cuddling that baby needs with the well-deserved rest Mom and sometimes Dad need.” (*On Becoming Baby Wise*)

“It is important that moms cuddle, hold, and talk to their babies frequently throughout the day.....but Mom should not be the only one cuddling the child. Dad, older siblings, Grandma, and Grandpa are some of your baby’s favorite people.” (*On Becoming Baby Wise*)

In other words, the father is acknowledged and included as a care-giver in addition to the mother. He is positioned as a secondary responder who “sometimes” participates.

Solo Care

In order to investigate the division of labor and how fathers and mothers are presumed to take different shares in the child-rearing responsibilities, I look at “solo care”, which is when the manuals for both parents provide instructions to one parent specifically, or statements implying that one parent is conducting or capable of conducting the childcare practice independently of their partner, thus shouldering the sole responsibility. For instance, the following statement is coded as “solo care” for fathers, because it implies that fathers can shoulder the task of cuddling or touching by themselves:

“Research shows that a dad’s touch has an equally positive effect on a baby’s health, well-being, and development (massage has been linked to fewer sleep problems and better digestion in babies, among many other physical and emotional perks)” (*What to Expect the First Year*)

The idea of solo care has been used in empirical pieces about division of labor as an indicator of who shoulders the primary responsibility in childcare (e.g. Craig 2006, Craig & Mullan, 2011). In their extensive instructions of childcare practices, manuals for both parents include very few indications of solo care for fathers: only nine times in *What to Expect*, none in *On Becoming*. In other words, in the best-selling childcare books, fathers are rarely depicted as a sole care-giver who can independently carry out tasks, but rather as secondary or coordinate care-giver. Even in the few indications of fathers’ solo care in *What to Expect*, fathers are still depicted as a care-giver secondary to mothers. The “baby-bonding action” is primarily the domain of the mother, with the father framed as an outsider who need opportunities and accesses to perform the action:

“Breastfeeding isn’t open to dads, but every single other area of newborn care

is. From bathing and diapering, to holding, baby-wearing, rocking, and playing, to bottle-feeding expressed milk or supplemental formula and eventually spooning up those solids, there will be plenty of opportunities for dad to get in on the baby-bonding action.” (*What to Expect the First Year*)

“Dads of nursing newborns clearly don’t have what it takes to feed their little ones—that is, unless they’re giving supplementary bottles of formula or breast milk. Bottle-fed babies, on the other hand, will happily let their fathers do the feeding.” (*What to Expect the First Year*)

The last citation about fathers participating in bottle-feeding the child is worth highlighting, because in the context, it is described as a benefit of formula feeding for mothers to consider when they make the decision between breast-feeding and formula-feeding. In other words, mothers should take fathers’ relationships with children into their considerations when they make their own child-rearing decisions, and fathers’ childcare activities are influenced and partly controlled by mothers’ decisions. This implication of mothers as the “gatekeeper” of fathers’ interactions with children corresponds to similar contents in fathering manuals, about which I will discuss in the next section.

As discussed, *What to Expect* uses a gender-neutral pronoun “you” to refer to the reader, and because mothers have been constructed as the default audience, it does not need to specify the gender of the audience when it refers to mothers only. Thus, it is hard to count the instances of mothers’ solo care because there is no viable method to distinguish the advice for both parents or for mothers only. Thus, I only count instances of mothers’ solo care in *On Becoming*, and find 33 indications of mothers conducting childcare practices alone. Many of these instructions are about feeding, and there may be

biological reasons that mothers should take this responsibility alone if she decides to breast-feed. *On Becoming* does encourage mothers to breastfeed, and though it also discusses formula-feeding as a viable option, it talks about other activities such as sleeping and scheduling babies' daily cycle assuming the mother is breast-feeding. However, because the timing of feeding is an important method used to control babies' daily schedule (the main topic of this manual), all practical advice is directed to mothers and mothers alone. In this book, the mother is the only one who worries about and takes actions in response to babies' crying. The advice given by the manual assumes that the mother is the only one who calculates and monitors babies' schedule and who manages babies' general routines. Any failure or difficulty to achieve an ideal standard of care should be met with a strategy in which the woman consoles herself, rather than a strategy in which she shares the care-giving with a father. Fathers seldom appear as a helper who can potentially share some of the responsibilities:

“Newborns routinely cry a total of 1 to 4 hours a day. No mother can console her child every time he cries, so do not expect to be a miracle worker with your baby. Pay close attention to your baby's different cries and you'll soon be able to tell when he needs to be picked up, consoled, or tended to, and when he is better off left alone.”

“Wisdom dictates that a mother should recognize that a baby responds to different forms of comfort at different times. If you use one source exclusively, such as nursing, you are not necessarily comforting your baby, only stopping his cry by arousing the sucking reflex.”

“When reworking Baby's routine, Mom must fit the other five feed-wake-sleep cycles between the first morning feeding and the late evening feeding. However, those five cycles do not all have to be of equal length (and probably will not be); some will be longer and some shorter.

Every mom must determine what works best for her baby and herself.”

There are also instructions that treat mothers as the only person concerned in child-care practices that have no barriers for fathers, such as dealing with a colic child – the sub-heading of the solution is “What Can A Mother Do?”

There are other contents that indirectly suggest that the mother is the one and only person who is concerned with childcare responsibilities. For instance, when accepting a baby into their lives, the books note that mothers and fathers face different challenges:

“For Mom, the challenge is physical and emotional..... Now specific infant needs must be matched with understanding of how to best satisfy those needs. It is a time when she becomes acquainted with all the new baby sounds that will suddenly trigger a variety of emotions never previously experienced. She will be struck by the compelling sensation to nurture, protect, and provide for her baby. It is also an adjustment time for Dad, starting with a need to share his best friend, his wife, with his son or daughter. In essence he is giving up something to gain more.” (*On Becoming Baby Wise*)

In other words, mothers are emotionally and physically devoted to the child and striving to identify and satisfy the child’s needs. Her challenge is not about herself – the manual indicates no consideration for the mother herself – but about how compelled she is by so many emotions and concerns. However, fathers do not share the same challenge – childcare is, for them, a problem of gain or loss. They do not see the child as the only ultimate goal for child-rearing – they need to be assured that they will gain emotional or relational rewards for themselves. In other words, mothers follow the ideology of intensive mothering – they devote intensive emotion, time and energy to child-rearing with the child as the center of their considerations. They are selfless and treat the child as

sacred. However, fathers seem to be exempted from these child-centered and child-as-sacred sentiments: they are not compelled to devote themselves as much as mothers do, and they are allowed to calculate gains and losses for themselves in child-rearing. Even when fathers are providing help for mothers, they are not compelled by a nurturing instinct or devotion to the child, but persuaded by gaining a satisfying relationship with their spouses. On the other hand, mothers are assumed, again, to be overloaded, to invest all their time and energy in childcare. In fact, I do not find indications of other aspects of mothers' lives, such as their careers, in this manual.:

“That is why it is essential for Dad to help at home, especially with multiples. Your wife will be able to listen to, share, and enjoy you only if she feels your support and encouragement. Your wife is the chief feeder, diaper-changer, bather and teacher/entertainer of the set of babies entrusted to you. She has no down time: 24 hours a day she has to be calm and controlled, so she can make the important assessments and decisions that are part of your babies' daily life. The more you cherish and serve your wife, the more you will get back in the beautiful forms of a composed, wise mom and peaceful, secure children.” (*On Becoming Baby Wise*)

Fathers' perception of Mather's Role: Primary Care-giver and Gatekeeper

Primary Care-giver v.s. Helper and Supporter

Akin to manuals for both parents, fathering manuals also indicate mothers as primary care-givers. I do not compare the instances of solo care by fathers and mothers in fathering manuals, because these manuals are for fathers only.

However, I still find evidence that mothers are perceived as the primary care-giver

by fathers:

“Help her [the mother] get some time to herself. Take the baby, even if it’s only for a half hour, and let your partner take a break. Don’t be surprised if all she wants to do is shower and take a nap.” (*The New Father*)

“[To help the mother,] Give her regular breaks: Make sure you give her guilt-free time away from the baby. She will need it. Let her go to the gym, take a nap, whatever she needs to recharge. Don’t worry. Your turn will come.” (*Dude, You’re A Dad*)

As both manuals suggest, taking childcare responsibilities are not only about the child but also about helping mothers who are overwhelmed by childcare tasks that belong to them. In other words, it is assumed that mothers are the primary care-giver who will automatically take over all child-rearing responsibilities if fathers do not offer help. Also, these statements suggest that when fathers participate in childcare practices, they are taking over some of the burden that would otherwise belong to mothers. This idea may feed into the economy of gratitude – fathers’ participation in childcare is not a matter of course, but rather something extra, something that is in service to mothers and deserves gratitude.

Besides providing practical help to the care-giving tasks, fathers are also pictured as emotional supporters. In fathering manuals, echoing the notions of masculinity, authors tend to picture fathers as the one who stay strong and supportive for the family, while in contrast picturing mothers as the emotionally fragile and anxious person who need the support, consolation and acknowledgement from fathers. Thus, though mothers are in

practice the primary care-giver, fathers are the dominating and powerful ones mentally and spiritually, and the ultimate judge whose verdicts on mothers' performances are valued. The hegemonic-subordinate power hierarchy between fathers and mothers are apparent in statements about the interactions between partners:

“Mom and baby need you to be there and to be strong for them.” (*The New Father*)

“She [the mother] really needs to know that no one could have done more, or been stronger or braver than she was..... Some of these thoughts might seem obvious—so obvious that you might think they don't need to be said at all. But they do—especially by you [the father].” (*The New Father*)

“Moms are under pressure, if from nobody else, then from themselves. They feel the need to be perfect. Perfect house, perfect at work, and being an all-world mother. Give her the support she needs” (*Dude, You're a Dad*)

Mother as the Gatekeeper

On the other hand, there is another perception of mothers that is worth noting – one for which I did not find any previous empirical literature. In *The New Father*, there are several indications of mothers as the “gatekeeper” who influence and control father-child relations by her ability to exclude or limit fathers in childcare activities:

“Many women have been raised to believe that if they aren't the primary caregiver, they've failed as mothers. In some cases, that leads the mother to act as a gatekeeper, not sharing in the parenting and actually limiting the dad's involvement to an amount she feels isn't a threat.”

““The breast-feeding mother has the control of parenting and must realize that she has the power to invite the father in or exclude him,” writes Dr. Pamela Jordan. ‘She can play a vital role in establishing exclusive father-infant time, often while simultaneously meeting her own needs for time away and alone.’”

“The better your relationship with your partner and the more confident she is

in your parenting abilities, the more secure the father-child attachment will be”

These statements about mothers as gatekeepers have several connotations: 1) Forced by society, mothers tend to take on more of the childcare responsibilities and leave less for fathers because they feel threatened for not adhering to ideal forms of mother as primary care-giver; 2) Mothers share childcare responsibilities unwillingly, only when they see fathers as qualified in parenting abilities; 3) Fathers do not have full agency in their relationship with the baby. These connotations leave more burden on the mothers' side, and at the same time give fathers excuses not to blame themselves when they do not participate in childcare practices enough. Firstly, it is the mother's voluntary choice to be the primary care-giver and the father only follows her decision; though the manual suggests that this mindset is not natural but socialized, it does not indicate that fathers should in any way free mothers from this mindset. Secondly, this role as the “gatekeeper” is an extra responsibility and burden to mothers because besides being the care-giver in their interactions with the child, mothers should also pay attention to fathers' parenting abilities and monitor fathers' interactions with children. Finally, fathers need to overcome the unwillingness of mothers to share their childcare responsibilities. Even if the father-baby relation is not satisfactory, fathers do not bear the whole responsibilities because it might be mothers' fault (or society's fault) that mothers do not give enough opportunities for fathers to participate.

Different Caring Style

The fathering manual *The New Father* also discusses different styles of caring adopted by fathers and mothers. Noticeably, many of its suggestions correspond to what is found in previous empirical studies. Firstly, fathers tend to participate in more playful and interactive activities that does not require constant attention, while mothers are associated with more time-rigid, functional practices (Bianchi et al. 2006). The manual neutralizes this inequality by framing it as merely differences in parenting styles:

“Dads tend to play more with their children than mothers do, and that play tends to be more rough-and-tumble and more unpredictable than mothers’.”

“Dads tend to emphasize independence more than moms and give children more freedom to explore. If a baby is struggling to grab a toy that’s just out of reach, mothers are more likely to move the toy closer, while dads are more likely to wait a little longer, seeing whether the baby will be able to get it. Moms are more likely to pick up a toddler who’s fallen, while dads are more likely to encourage the child to get up on his own.”

“When she [the baby]’s hungry, she’ll be more easily soothed by your partner (if she’s breastfeeding), but she’ll be happier to see you if she wants some physical stimulation.”

As Bianchi and colleagues indicate, fathers enjoy the “fun part” of child-rearing – the physical and interactive games, which tend to be time-flexible and hands-off (or, according to the manual, “promoting independence”). On the other hand, mothers are responsible for time-rigid and necessary tasks such as feeding. The implication that fathers emphasize independence while mothers tend to be over-protective is also echoed by another empirical study about real-life differences between fathering and mothering (Brandth & Kvande

1998). According to Brandth and Kvande, this parenting style of fathers' is praised and considered superior to mothers' care.

Another significant difference between mothers' and fathers' care can be seen in the emotions involved in child-rearing (Shield & Koster 1989; Brandth & Kvande 1998; Hauser 2015). According to these studies, fathers tend to keep a certain emotional distance from their children, and thus can assess the child's behaviors more objectively and rationally. Mothers, on the other hand, are better at emotional work such as sympathy and comforting, but at the same time may be over-anxious or over-emotional. The child-rearing manual for fathers present the same indications:

“Dads tend to think more about how a child will fare in the world as he or she grows; moms tend to think more about the child's emotional development. When reacting to a test score, for example, a dad might be concerned about how the score will affect the child's future plans and ability to be self-sufficient, while a mom is more likely to be concerned about how the score makes the child feel.”

“Men tend to stress the physical and high-energy, women the social and emotional.”

Noticeably, both the Shield & Koster and the Brandth & Kvande piece find that the objective and rational attitude associated with fathers is held in a higher status than the emotional and protective attitude associated with mothers. Thus, the best-selling fathering manual *The New Father* reflects and verifies what is found in empirical evidences. By stating these differences as self-evident matter of facts, this manual conceals the inequality and hegemony involved in different childcare practices taken by fathers and mother. In other words, it states the cultural assignment of pleasurable and higher-status childcare

activities to fathers as something natural, something taken-for-granted. Therefore, it reinforces the cultural stereotypes without discussing the potential inequality and hegemonic masculinity implied in these stereotypes.

Work-family conflict

Comparing the illustrations of work-family conflict in contents about mothers' returning to work and fathers' considerations of parental leave, I find that working mothers faces a starker conflict between work and family compared to working fathers, but when fathers want to prioritize their childcare responsibilities, they engage in more complicated identity work to preserve their masculinity in the provider role. Firstly, for fathers who choose their career over housework, they are assured that their income-generating jobs and economic contribution to the family can substitute for housework. However, mothers do not have such an excuse – they are torn between work and family, choosing one means compromising the other. Secondly, fathers who decide to invest more in childcare are suggested to make extra effort to protect their provider identities by preserving work hours and income. On the other hand, mothers are not expected to follow the provider role strictly -- advices provided for them tend to suggest cutting work hours and career opportunities.

Work-Family Conflict: When Work is Prioritized

In the discussion about work-family conflict, situations favor fathers or mothers differently according to whether the career is prioritized or the family is prioritized. Fathering manuals show that if fathers prioritize work over family, they are exempted from the conflict. The strain between career and family implies that if one invests more time and energy in one side, one has to invest less in the other. However, the fathering manual *The New Father* eliminates such as strain indicating that the working time is equally contributive to the family, and thus spending time on work is substitutable for spending time on housework and childcare – the conflict does not exist:

“We should be going for symmetry rather than equality. In other words, how much time are you and your partner each logging for the benefit of your family? If it takes half an hour to cook dinner and about the same amount of time to give the baby a bath, feed him, put him in PJs, read him a story, and put him to bed, wouldn’t those things roughly offset? And what about when one parent works in an office ten hours a day while the other is taking care of the kids (working just as hard) at home for those ten hours? Whose contribution to the family is more important?” (*The New Father*)

“Every few months or so, a new study makes the news, announcing that although women are dramatically increasing the hours they work outside the home and men are increasing the hours they work inside the home, women are still working longer hours than men..... While technically correct (women are clocking more hours on housework and child care), when you read the actual articles—and the research they’re based on (which, sadly, not enough people do) —you find a very different story.....Moms do more housework and child care but dads do more paid work, and when you add up all those hours, it’s dead even.” (*The New Father*)

This idea justifies working fathers’ position – when they invest more in their career than in their family, they are still contributing to the family as a provider, and thus do not need to adjust or re-balance their schedules. Fathers are thus exempted from the time strain

-- they do not need to adjust to meet child-care requirements, do not need to sacrifice or compromise their career and potentially their masculinity expressed in income-generating work, and at the same time do not meet moral or emotional sanctions of not being a good father. However, they can use their investment in their works to replace housework and child-rearing labors only at the expense of mothers' career. When the father use working hours to compensate for housework, house work and childcare labor are left to the mother alone, increasing mothers' time strains and work-family conflicts. Mothers do not have excuses or exemptions from such a conflict. When discussing mothers' going back to work, the manual *What to Expect the First Year* (claimed to be for both parents but addresses mothers in default) illustrates that a mother is torn between the work and the family, and whichever side she chooses, she is likely to feel compromised or regretted for the other side:

“And speaking of compromise, there's likely to be some in any choice you make—and realistically, some second thoughts, too ... and even a few regrets. After all, no matter how committed you might be to staying home, you're bound to feel a twinge or two when talking to friends still pursuing their careers. Or, as committed as you are to returning to work—you're sure to have a tug at your heart passing parents and their babies on the way to the park while you're on your way to the office.” (*What to Expect the First Year*)

Thus, because there is no a mechanism that can justify mothers' position between work and family, mother experience a starker conflict between work and family.

Work-Family Conflict: When Family is Prioritized

Fathering manuals also reassure fathers that their career may not necessarily be compromised by their involvement in family labors, and that the care-giver role is reconcilable with the provider role – they do not need to prioritize one over the other:

“In his four-decade-long study of fathers, John Snarey found that, ‘contrary to the stereotype of rigid work-family trade-off, a positive, reciprocal interaction may exist between childrearing and bread-winning.’” (*The New Father*)

However, when fathers decide to prioritize childcare responsibilities and to adjust their works to meet the childcare requirements – in other words, when they decide to prioritize their care-giver role over the provider role – they are advised to put in extra effort to still preserve their roles as providers.

“Flex time. You’ll still work the same number of hours, but you might, for example, start at 5 A.M. and go home at 1 P.M. instead of the usual 9 to 5
Alternate work week. You still put in your forty hours, but you might work Wednesday through Sunday and take Mondays and Tuesdays off.

Part-time work. Less than a typical forty-hour week but usually more than twenty hours/week. You’ll need to find out how many hours you’re required to work so you don’t lose your benefits.” (*The New Father*)

In the three strategic advices to reorganize a father’s work time to meet childcare requirements, the author recommends ways for fathers not to compromise their working hours or working benefits even when they need to make changes for his family. In other words, it is culturally appropriate for fathers to strive to preserve their identities as income-earner as the ideal of hegemonic masculinity requires, even when they choose to participate in the role of care-giver. However, the instructions for mothers do not imply such a need to preserve the “provider” role. Instead, the manual *What to Expect* suggests

mothers to cut work-time without the assurance to preserve work hours and benefits:

“Work part-time. If you can swing a part-time schedule, at least at first, you’ll be able to spend more time strengthening breastfeeding links. Working 4 or 5 half days is more practical than 2 or 3 full ones for several reasons. With half days, you may not have to miss any feedings—and certainly no more than one a day.” (*What to Expect the First Year*)

This phenomenon may imply that culturally, the provider role for fathers is more important than it is for mothers. For fathers, the ability to provide for the family is so important and treated with so much care that even when a father decides to potentially compromise the provider role for childcare demands, he needs to do it in the culturally desired way of reconciling his work and family by preserving work hours and benefit – even when this preservation demands extra efforts and energy. For mothers, providing for the family is not treated with the same level of care and importance – when she has to cut work-time for childcare, she only need to consider the schedule of her child instead of taking the extra step to find ways to preserve her provider role. These observations suggest that in work-family conflict, parents who prioritize the role that is traditionally associated with their genders – fathers who prioritize the provider role and mothers the care-giver role – have more resources to cope with the conflict and face less resistance from the cultural context.

Masculinity

The two fathering manuals I examined both demonstrate an ambiguous, even

contradictory view of hegemonic masculinity. On the surface, according to their explicit arguments and claims, fathering manuals reject hegemonic masculinity, advocating for an alternative model of fatherhood which is equal to motherhood in caregiving and which actively defies the imposed label of hegemonic masculinity. However, the claim of equality is contradicted by suggestions that fathers' caring style is superior to mothers'. Also, implicitly, fathering manuals appeal to hegemonic masculinity by noting certain masculine traits as facts or self-evident assumptions that explain fathers' behaviors or short-comings as a care provider. The books also frames the active rejection of the imposed label of hegemonic masculinity as itself a demonstration of hyper-masculinity. Thus, while fathering manuals overtly claim to reject stereotypes and labels, their logics end up feeding into and reinforcing the traditional image of men.

Equality v.s. Superiority in Caregiving

One of my sampled manuals, *The New Father*, illustrates fathers' unique parenting style that differentiates from mothers'. Explicitly, it makes claims that women and men bring different things to the role of "caregiver," but their caring styles are not better or worse than each other. The book elaborates on how fathers and mothers may contribute to the development of children differently but equally. In so doing, the book seems to reject hegemonic masculinity by making explicit statements that there is no hierarchy among fathering and mothering practices – there is no one more superior to the other, but equally

important and needed:

“The point is that they parent differently—not better or worse, just differently. And children benefit greatly from having plenty of exposure to both styles.” (*The New Father*)

“Don’t let anyone tell you that the ‘guy things’ you do are somehow not as important as the ‘girl things’ your partner may do (or want you to do). Ultimately your baby needs both kinds of interactions, and it’s a waste of time to try to compare or rate them.” (*The New Father*)

Hegemonic masculinity means the domination and superiority over subordinate femininity. However, according to these explicit claims, the hierarchy does not exist, and thus a new model of fatherhood – one that is equal in importance and responsibilities with motherhood – seems to emerge. However, this claim that there is not hierarchy among fathering and mothering is contradicted within the same manual, where the author quotes scientific statements that are presented as objective facts:

“Many researchers have found that the differences in father-child and mother-child parenting styles can have a significant impact on the child. ‘There were indications that children’s intellectual functioning was stimulated more in families with high father involvement,’ writes researcher Norma Radin. ‘We attribute this effect to the fact that fathers appear to have a different way of interacting with children; they tend to be more physical, more provocative, and less stereotyped in their play behavior than mothers.’” (*The New Father*)

In other words, fathers’ parenting style is not just different – it is superior. Children’s intellectual functioning is highly valued in the culture, and thus father’s style of parenting – more physical, provocative and less stereotype – holds a higher status in the cultural hegemony. Noticeably, the idea that fathering practices hold a higher status compared to mothering is reflected in empirical interviews about parents’ view of fathering (Brandth &

Kvande, 1998).

In *The New Father*, the author takes the explicit stance asserting the equality between fathers' and mothers' care when making claims and overt statements of his own opinions. However, he presents the contradictory view that fathering is superior to mothering as a matter of objective fact – not by his own words or arguments, but by quoting supposedly scientific statements from a researcher.

Hegemonic Masculinity as Imposed Hindrance

The two fathering manuals also explicitly denounce the specific masculine traits demanded by the ideal of hegemonic masculinity such as competence, independence, and the association with the provider role instead of the care-giver role. Hegemonic masculinity is portrayed as a set of behavioral imperatives imposed by society and people such as the mother, employers, and friends of the father. The books argue that the ideals of masculinity imposed on men are in stark contradiction to the care-giving role that fathers might actually want to take, and thus creates special difficulties for fathers to perform childcare practices as normally accepted as mothers do. For instance, *The New Father* acknowledges that it is more difficult for a father than for his female counterpart to seek the necessary help when he is confused in the child-rearing process because social expectations prevent him from demonstrating ignorance and weakness:

“From the time we were little boys, we’ve been socialized to associate knowledge with masculinity—in other words, real men know everything, so admitting to being lost is a sign of weakness (and, of course, a lack of

masculinity). Second, we've also been socialized to be strong, independent, and goal-oriented, which makes asking for help a sign of weakness (and, again, a lack of masculinity)." (*The New Father*)

In this quote, the author argues that since society imposes a restrictive form of masculinity on men that mandates independence and competence, it is harder for fathers to adjust and improve themselves in childcare because they cannot ask for necessary help.

Besides the general culture and society, the authors explicitly point to traditional care-givers, women, as a source of barrier for fathers to participate in the care-giver role. According to the manual, care-giving fatherhood is especially challenging (compared to motherhood) because women exclude men from caregiving communities that might be supportive of parents:

"You'll probably find that women—moms, nannies, babysitters—tend not to welcome men into their groups at parks or playgrounds or malls and the other places people take their kids during the day. And you'll have to get used to the funny looks and stupid comments you'll hear from people who see you with your kids in the middle of the day—and who tend to see anything related to child care as 'women's work.'" (*Dude, You're a Dad*)

Against fathers' will, the stereotype of men to be outsiders of childcare tasks influences others' attitudes and behaviors, and thus hurts fathers' effort to seek community and limits the opportunities for fathers to fit in the role of care-giver.

The books also remind men that ideal masculinity in society demands that a man prioritize his work over family, and that failure to do so results in negative sanctions in the workplace:

"The penalties men pay for asking for family leave are quite heavy. They're seen as not serious about their jobs, they get lower evaluations from

coworkers and managers, and they may get passed over for promotions and receive smaller raises than male coworkers who act more like ‘real men’ and don’t request time off for family reasons.” (*The New Father*)

In short, the books suggest that hegemonic masculinity is forced upon fathers in the workplace and imposes extra hardship for men to meet childcare demands. In all these excerpts, hegemonic masculinity is depicted as something imposed by external forces against fathers’ will while damaging and limiting fathers’ honest efforts to participate and invest in the care-giving role. In other words, against their will, men need to put in extra effort to get used to or overcome this label, and thus it is more difficult for men to achieve the same level of investment and achievement in the care-giver role as women do despite their honest effort. In other words, fathers are framed as victims rather than perpetrators or active performers of hegemonic masculinity.

Thus, fathering manuals call for a new model of fatherhood that is not restricted by the labels imposed by cultural expectations of masculinity. *Dude, You’re a Dad* talks about the active redefinition of fatherhood by men’s efforts:

“.....by taking on the role of being an active parent and partner to your BRP³, you will be, in essence, attempting to redefine how fathers are thought of today.”

Hegemonic Masculinity as Matter-of-Fact

Despite the explicit and direct denouncement of hegemonic masculinity as a hindrance to care-giving fatherhood and the claim of possibility of new forms of masculinity made by

³ BRP means Baby-Raising Partner, a phrase used in *Dude, You’re a Dad* to refer to mothers.

fathering manual, the actual instructional content in the manuals offers an entirely different view of masculinity implicitly. For example, though fathering manuals reject the label of hegemonic masculinity explicitly, they actually acknowledge and reinforce the hegemonic image of masculinity by purposing hegemonic characteristics such as competitiveness and physical strength as statements of facts. A discussion about diaper-changing presents the competitiveness and superiority of masculinity as a matter of fact:

“Who is better at changing diapers, men or women? Men! A study showed that men clocked in a faster average time to change their child’s diaper. So whether it’s our large, rippling muscles that allow for this, or our pretending we are part of a NASCAR pit crew, it is one area we can claim victory in the battle of the sexes. The bad news is that our reward is changing all of the diapers.” (*Dude, You’re a Dad*)

The manual appeals to these masculine characteristics as matter-of-fact, suggesting that men are naturally superior in certain child-rearing tasks, and thus reinforcing the hegemony that fathers are superior to mothers because of their gender.

The fathering manuals also appeal to “toughness” as a characteristic presumed in fathers’ behaviors. In this instruction below, the manual encourages fathers to actively demonstrate their strength and toughness. The appropriate actions suggested for fathers involve being tough and masculine in dealing with problem – hegemonic masculinity is still the presumption of the appropriate fatherhood.

“And while we’re on the subject of rest, you may have to get tough with the staff to make sure your partner gets enough. The nurses will tell her that she needs to sleep as much as possible, but if you don’t ask them to give her a break, they’ll be in every hour or two to check her vital signs.”

Fathering manuals seem to offer conflicting models of masculinity to their readers. On the one hand, they picture fathers as passive receptors and victims of hegemonic masculinity, as I discussed in the previous section. However, they are also encouraged to enact and preform the very hegemonic forms of masculinity they explicitly reject – such as toughness, extreme physical strength, and competitiveness.

Hegemonic Masculinity as Justification

Furthermore, though the manual encourages an alternative model of masculinity in fathering, the hegemonic masculinity blurs into the type of masculinity promoted by the manual:

“As we’ll discuss throughout this book, being an involved father will affect you in a number of ways. You’ll learn to feel, express, and manage emotions (positive, negative, and everything in between) you never knew you had. You’ll be more empathetic and better able to see things from others’ perspectives. Plus, dads who are actively involved with their children tend to be mentally and physically healthier and are more likely to advance in their careers.”

The author’s introduction for fathers to become an involved care-giver is in itself defying the hegemonic masculinity by deviating from the provider role. Benefits of tanking on a non-traditional role also implicate an alternative masculinity in fathering: though feelings, expression, emotion and empathy are traditionally regarded as feminine, the manuals picture them as benefits that a man values. However, hegemonic masculinity blurs into this statement because the author includes career development as one of the benefit of taking on the care-giver role. This statement demonstrates that hegemonic

masculinity and the provider role are still highly valued within the culture as the central part of desired fatherhood, because even when talking about the care-giving fatherhood, the benefit to the provider role is still used as an appropriate justification of this alternative fatherhood.

Finally, the rejection to hegemonic masculinity, the rejection to an imposed label, turns out to feed into and reinforce the label of hegemonic masculinity. Fathering manuals discuss in great length about hegemonic masculinity as limitations and challenges to fathers. Fathers need to put in extra effort to overcome this imposed label. However, this action of resistance becomes itself a demonstration of hyper-masculinity, because it is “fighting” and it indicates a “real man”:

“You will be fighting the past reality of less involved dads-as-parents, and the continuing perception that only a minority of dads are pulling their weight.....”

“So you have a choice. Either accept the hardest yet most rewarding challenge you’ll probably ever face by becoming an actively involved father and taking on a significant share of the responsibility for raising your children, or take the easy way out and leave it all to someone else. What would a ‘real’ man do?”

By framing the resistance against hegemonic masculinity and the effort to build a new model of fatherhood as demonstrations of strength and braveness, the manual justifies the rejection of hegemonic masculinity (potentially the participations in “feminine” role of care-giver) by picturing it as an effort to demonstrate and reinforce hegemonic masculinity. It may be argued that this is the most culturally appropriate and persuasive way to talk about defying hegemonic masculinity – by absorbing the rejection as a part of masculinity.

Discussion

Conclusion

In this study, I investigate three aspects of parenthood: the identity (masculinity) construction for fathers, the division of childcare labor, and the work-family conflict. For the division of household labor, I find that mothers are the one who takes on more independent childcare tasks and shoulder more responsibilities as the primary care-giver based on various observations: 1) bestselling-manuals that claim to be for both parents target primarily and in default mothers; 2) mothers are placed as the first responder when they are mentioned along with fathers; 3) mothers engage in far more solo care, which means that they are expected to conduct more independent childcare practices and shoulder more responsibilities by themselves; 4) they are pictured as devoting more emotion and energy in child-rearing compared to fathers; 5) in fathering manuals, they are recognized as the primary care-giver while fathers as the helper; 6) they shoulder the responsibility of “gatekeeper”, which means that they control fathers’ access to opportunities of engaging in care-giving activities. Noticeably, though mothers take the primary responsibility and also control in childcare practices, fathers are the ones that evaluate mothers’ performances. Mothers are portrayed as emotionally fragile and in need of fathers’ assertion of their efforts and performances in child-rearing practices.

For work-family conflict, I find that parents who prioritize the traditional role associated with their genders have more resources and less resistance from the cultural context to cope with the work-family conflict. When fathers choose to prioritize their provider roles, fathering manuals resolve the work-family conflict for them by arguing that the two spheres of actions – work and family – do not contradict each other because working is to contribute to family. However, for mothers who do not give up their careers and seek balance between the career and childcare, manuals suggest that the conflict between work and family is not resolvable, and choosing one side means scarifying the other. However, when fathers choose to prioritize the care-giver role that potentially damage the ideal of hegemonic masculinity, they are expected to make extra effort to maintain their work hours and income, and thus preserve their provider role and hence masculinity. On the other hand, if mothers choose to prioritize their families, manuals suggest them to compromise their career by cutting work-hours and career opportunities without concerning about their role as providers.

For the identity construction, I find that fathering manuals explicitly reject the traditional idea of hegemonic masculinity by 1) stating that fathering and mothering are different but equal, so there is no such a differentiation between the superior and the subordinated; 2) framing hegemonic masculinity as a label imposed by the society and other people, which hinders fathers' participation in the care-giver role and thus should be rejected; 3) advocating for an alternative model of fatherhood. However, fathering manuals

turn out reinforcing the hegemonic masculinity implicitly in three ways: 1) contradict the statement of equality between fatherhood and motherhood by presenting the superiority of fathers' caring style as a scientific fact; 2) assume the ideas and associated traits of hegemonic masculinity as objective facts and presumptions of behaviors in instructive contents; 3) blur the ideal of hegemonic masculinity into the new model of fatherhood as justifications for rejecting the traditional fatherhood and developing a new model – the ability to face challenges and overcome difficulties is itself a component of hegemonic masculinity.

In conclusion, observations I obtain from this investigation confirm phenomenon found in empirical studies. Despite mothers' increasing participation in the work force, they are still viewed as the primary care-giver who takes over more child-rearing tasks and responsibilities, as suggested by empirical studies (Bianchi et al, 2006; Craig, 2006). When fathers follow their provider role in work and family, they are provided with the advantages (Killewald, 2012), while mothers who maintain in the work force face difficulties in coping with the work-family conflict (Abendroth, Huffman & Treas, 2014; Yu & Kuo, 2017). In the construction of masculinity in fatherhood, fathers' style of caring is considered different and superior to mothers' care (Shield & Koster 1989; Brandth & Kvande 1998; Hauser 2015). Finally, the perception of overcoming difficulties as a component of hegemonic masculinity that justify fathers' new role as caregiver is also a mindset identified by interviews with care-giving fathers (Brandth & Kvande 1998).

Another intriguing finding is that in my investigation, I find another side of the story about fathers' seeking of communities. In empirical interviews of fathers, Hauser finds that fathers actively and intentionally avoid parenting groups because they regard joining a community as something feminine and belongs to mothers (2015). However, in fathering manuals, fathers' lack of community is framed as a result of mothers' and other care-givers' rejections – fathers are actively seeking the community, but their efforts fail because of outside forces. However, it is possible that fathers' response in the 2015 is itself a result of the experience of being rejected, or an anxiety about the possibility of being rejected -- a more in-depth interview may address this problem with more certainty.

The New Fatherhood

I consider a part of the value of my study to be exploring the new genre of fathering manuals. These genre targets a specific audience – fathers who concern about their role as care-giver in parenting, and thus who potentially deviate from the strict sense of hegemonic masculinity by differentiating from the pure provider role. What interests me is not only the manual's instructive content or arguments, but also how it presents and talks about specific topics in a way that is culturally appropriate for its audience. Some topics in fathering manuals that I find interesting and open to future studies are sex, consumption and the relationship with partner. In this study investigating the topic of masculinity, I

observe that fathering manuals talk about masculinity in two seemingly contradictory ways – in explicit argument and direct presentations of the authors’ opinions, it always takes the stance to reject traditional labels and advocate for equality and new definition of fatherhood. However, it also presents the hegemonic masculinity indirectly in a way that is subtler, and arguably harder to refute – by scientific statements, taken-for-granted facts and implicit presumptions. Furthermore, the development of new fatherhood and the defiance against hegemonic masculinity require hegemonic masculinity itself as the culturally accepted motivation and justification.

This contradiction in the attitude towards hegemonic masculinity corresponds to and possibly be the cause of the ambiguity in the emerging “new father” image. As empirical studies suggest, “new fathers” take on various new roles -- they not only need to provide for the family, but also need to take care of children and help out for mothers. However, the new roles they take as care-giver and as helper are shallow and flexible – they do not shoulder the primary responsibility, they are allowed to calculate gains and losses around the care-giver role and receive extra gratitude when helping mothers, and even if they fail to fulfill these roles, they are provided with proper excuses and exempted from being blamed. The only role that they need extra effort to follow and cannot stand failing is still the provider role. Further studies on audience receptions of these fathering manuals can help us to examine the extent to which this contradiction in masculinity represents fathers’ real opinions and experiences.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this study that I look forward to revise in future research. Firstly, my sampling is not exactly satisfying – I did not expect *On the Baby Wise* to be centered about breastfeeding, an activity that is biologically associated only with mothers. Although this manual still provides lots of information about the portrayal of mothers in the best-selling manual, there might be other manuals that enable a more reasonable comparison of the division of labor between fathers and mothers.

Another limitation is my adaptation of the concept “solo care”. In empirical studies, the solo care for each parent is clearly measured by the length of time that one conduct childcare practices alone. Therefore, the time of “solo care” indicates that for a period of time, the measured parent shoulders the responsibility of childcare alone. However, adapting this concept in content analysis of child-rearing manuals may be problematic because indications of one parent’s ability to conduct a certain type of childcare practice does not lead to the parents’ actual solo participation in this practice. Secondly, the concept of “solo care” is empirically measured by the length of time, which is not indicated by the child-rearing manual. Thirdly, as I discussed, child-rearing manuals treat mother as the first responder and father as the helper. When parenting manuals indicate that father can fulfill a task “as good as” or “not less than” mother, besides implying that fathers can

conduct this care act by themselves, this indication also means that mothers are the ones who are expected to be primarily responsible for this task. It is hard to capture this kind of nuances by the concept “solo act”.

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Appendix 1

Coding Scheme

Masculinity

Masculinity (1st round): Code "Masculinity" in fathering manuals

1) whenever author relates the experience or practices in fatherhood to fathers' identities

as men;

2) whenever the author indicates that fathers are different from mothers in their abilities, responsibilities, practices or mindset.

- Hegemonic masculinity (2nd round): Code “Hegemonic masculinity” within the content coded as “Masculinity”

1) whenever the author compares fathers and mothers in their abilities, practices or mindset and implies that fathers are superior or dominant;

2) whenever the author indicates traits of hegemonic masculinity (e.g. strength, toughness, dominance, provider role) and suggest a positive or neutral (matter-of-fact) relation of those traits with fatherhood.

■ Hegemonic masculinity as explicitly stated (3rd round): Code “Hegemonic masculinity” within the content coded as “Hegemonic Masculinity” whenever the “Hegemonic masculinity” content is presented as explicit argument, statement or claims that represent the author’s own opinions.

■ Hegemonic masculinity as implicitly stated (3rd round): Code “Hegemonic masculinity as implicitly stated” within the content coded as “Hegemonic Masculinity” whenever the “Hegemonic masculinity” content is presented as scientific fact, objective fact, implicit assumptions or the underlying logic of suggested actions.

- Rejection to hegemonic masculinity (2nd round): Code “Rejection to hegemonic

masculinity” within the content coded as “Masculinity”

1) whenever the author compares fathers and mothers in their abilities, practices or mindset and implies that mothers are superior or dominant or that fathers and mothers are equal;

2) whenever the author indicates traits of hegemonic masculinity (e.g. strength, toughness, dominance, provider role) and suggests a negative relation of those traits with fatherhood.

■ Rejection to hegemonic masculinity as explicitly stated (3rd round): Code

“Rejection to hegemonic masculinity as explicitly stated” within the content coded as “Rejection to hegemonic Masculinity” whenever the “Rejection to hegemonic masculinity” content is presented as explicit arguments, statements or claims that represent the author’s own opinions.

■ Rejection to hegemonic masculinity as implicitly stated (3rd round): Code

“Rejection to hegemonic masculinity as implicitly stated” within the content coded as “Rejection to hegemonic masculinity” whenever the “Rejection to hegemonic masculinity” content is presented as scientific facts, objective facts, implicit assumptions or the underlying logic of suggested actions.

- Alternative masculinity (2nd round): Code “Alternative masculinity” within the content coded as “Masculinity”

1) whenever the author indicates traits that do not belong to hegemonic masculinity

(e.g. emotional development, care-giver role) and associate such traits positively or neutrally with fatherhood;

2) whenever the author makes explicit claims about the alternative model of masculinity or fatherhood (e.g. “image of new fathers” “redefinition of fatherhood”)

- Alternative masculinity as explicitly stated (3rd round): Code “Alternative masculinity as explicitly stated” within the content coded as “Alternative masculinity” whenever the “Alternative masculinity” content is presented as explicit argument, statement or claims that represent the author’s own opinions.
- Alternative masculinity as implicitly stated (3rd round): Code “Alternative masculinity as implicitly stated” within the content coded as “Alternative masculinity” whenever the “Alternative masculinity” content is presented as scientific fact, objective fact, implicit assumptions or the underlying logic of suggested actions.

Division of Labor

Solo Care (1st round of coding): Code “solo care” in manuals for both parents

- 1) whenever the author provides instructions to one parent specifically;
- 2) whenever the author implies that one parent is conducting or capable of conducting the childcare practice independently of their partner, thus shouldering the sole responsibility.

- Solo Father (1st round of coding): Code “solo father” in content coded as “solo care” whenever the content addresses to fathers

- Solo Mother (1st round of coding): Code “solo mother” in content coded as “solo care” whenever the content addresses to mothers

Primary care-giver (1st round): Code “primary care-giver” in all manuals

- 1) whenever one parent is suggested to act as the primary responder (e.g. when “mother” is placed in front of “father” in juxtaposition);
- 2) whenever one parent is suggested to shoulder more childcare responsibilities/ psychological burden than the other (e.g. when the fathering manual indicates that mothers tend to take over more tasks and put on more stress)

Secondary care-giver (1st round): Code “secondary care-giver” in all manuals

- 1) whenever one parent is explicitly encouraged to participate in childcare;
- 2) whenever one parent is explicitly reassured to have the same level of ability/ resource as the other parent does in childcare (e. g. when one parent is indicated as “as good as” “not less than” another parent);
- 3) whenever one parent is suggested to need resource, access, or opportunities for specific childcare practices (e.g. “There are other opportunities for fathers to participate...”);
- 4) whenever one parent is indicated to participate only part-time “occasionally”, “sometimes”;
- 5) whenever one parent is indicated as the “helper” or the substitutive care-giver when the other is not available.

Work-Family conflict

Work-family conflict (1st round): Code “work-family conflict” in all manuals

1) whenever the author discusses the relation or balance between the parent’s work and family;

2) whenever the author discusses issues that implies work-family conflict (e.g. mothers’ returning to work, fathers’ parental leave etc.)

- Reconciliation (2nd round): Code “reconciliation” within contents coded “work-family conflict”

1) whenever the work or the family is suggested not to be conflicted (e.g. they are both contributive for the family);

2) whenever one is suggested to enhance or benefit the other;

3) whenever the solution provided by the author preserves both work and family

■ Prioritize Work (3rd round): code “prioritize work” within contents coded as “reconciliation” whenever the provider role is benefitted from the suggested reconciliation (e.g. provider do not need to adjust to meet childcare demands because working is equally contributive)

■ Prioritize Family (3rd round): code “prioritize family” within contents coded as “reconciliation” whenever the care-giver role is benefitted from the suggested reconciliation (e.g. participating more in care-giving benefits one’s career)

- Irreconcilable (2nd round): Code “irreconcilable” within contents coded “work-family

conflict” whenever

1) the author suggests that one has make compromise on one for the sake of the other

2) the solution provided by the author suggest that the parent makes compromise on

one side for the sake of the other

- Prioritize Work (3rd round): code “Prioritize work” within contents coded “irreconcilable” whenever the childcare labor is compromised (e.g. substituted by technology)
- Prioritize Family (3rd round): code “Prioritize family” within contents coded “irreconcilable” whenever the parent’s career is compromised (e.g. cutting work-time or income)

Partner relationship

Partner relationship (1st round): code “partner relationship” in all four manuals whenever

the relation or interactions between fathers and mothers are addressed

- Father as helper/ supporter (2nd round): code whenever
 - 1) Indications that mothers are in need of fathers’ help or support
 - 2) Fathers are encouraged to sympathize with and offer emotional and practical support and help for their partners
 - 3) Fathers’ engagement in childcare activities are framed as a effort of helping or supporting their partners
- Hegemonic masculinity as implicitly stated (3rd round): code whenever “father

as helper/supporter” is attributed to the masculine traits and hegemonic superiority associated with men (e.g. father should help because they are stronger or more powerful; man should support mothers because they are the ones who evaluate mothers’ performance)

- Secondary care-giver (3rd round): code whenever fathers’ engagements in childcare is framed as “helping” mothers (e.g. take the pressure off mothers by taking care of the child and allow mothers to have free time)