CHINESE FATHERHOOD, GENDER AND FAMILY

FATHER MISSION

MARIO LIONG

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Chinese Fatherhood, Gender and Family

Father Mission

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To my parents,
Hoen Foeng and Yau Tuen

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Introduction: Chinese Fatherhood Revisited

In November 2001, when I was conducting a questionnaire survey to complete my Master's research project on the mental health of unemployed men, I met a 60-year-old man at a job centre of the Labour Department in Hong Kong. This was the time when Hong Kong was struck hard by the Asian financial crisis—6 % and 3.1 % of men were unemployed and under-employed respectively (compared with 3.1 % and 2.2 % respectively in 1996 before the financial crisis). I approached him to ask if he could help me by completing a questionnaire. He smiled and said he would help. When he handed his completed questionnaire to me, he began to tell me about himself. He had a university degree in engineering from China. However, his degree was not recognized in Hong Kong, so he could only do some low-skilled jobs when he arrived there. After some years, he started his own business manufacturing and selling car machine parts, but lost all his money when the Asian financial crisis began in 1997. He was working at a gas station when I met him and hoping to find another higher-paid job or an extra part-time job to make more money. I asked him why he did not apply for social security and had to exhaust himself in his old age. He reluctantly revealed to me that he had to support his 25-year-old son, who was unwilling to study or work. Apart

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from the fact that the income from social security was not enough to cover the family expenses, he was worried that the stigma of being a social security recipient would make his son feel shameful. He added that he would definitely retire and live on welfare if he had been childless.

I was stunned. I could not imagine a father feeling responsible for financially supporting a healthy adult son who was unwilling to work. He even cared about his son's feelings enough to refrain from retiring and living on welfare. I wondered how many Chinese fathers would think the same. I became interested in how men make sense of their father identity and responsibility, and how their interpretations and fathering practices are related to the notion of manhood and masculinities in the Chinese context.

Parenthood is gendered in the contemporary Western world. Fatherhood is constructed differently from motherhood, each with different gender roles. Women are the family's main parent (Marshall 1991) whereas men are part-time parents, baby entertainers, and mother's assistants (Sunderland 2000). Moreover, men do fewer house chores than women, take a smaller share of parental leave, and work full time to a much greater extent than their female partners (Leira 2002). The gendered parenthood in turn marks a long-term structural inequality between women and men (Dowd 2000). Women have to shoulder the cost of caring work, which is not valued in society (Crittenden 2002; Ruddick 1995). Although women have become workers and even breadwinners, they are still the primary caregivers; whereas men remain secondary parents even though they are no longer the sole breadwinners (Doucet 2006), because the father's paid job is taken for granted and is often incompatible with caregiving (Nentwich 2008).

Differentiation of parenthood based on gender is also observed in Hong Kong. Fathers find themselves responsible for providing financially for the family whereas mothers take care of children's needs and daily routines (Choi and Lee 1997; Opper 1993). Even when men help out with house chores, they usually share those occasional, heavy, and difficult tasks, and play with their children rather than taking care of their everyday needs (Lee 2002). Although women's labour participation is considered a norm, they have to put their familial duties first and ensure that family members will not suffer from their employment; whereas men are expected to put their

jobs first, and share household tasks only if these tasks do not hinder their jobs (Lee 2002). The ideology of the breadwinner/home-maker divide along gender lines seems to remain strong at the household level (Chuang and Su 2009).

With changing economic, social, and gender conditions, this traditional notion of parenthood is being contested. The cultural ideal has it that fathers provide the sole economic support for the family. Yet the actual practice could not be further from the ideal. Particularly since the financial crisis in 1997, unemployment and under-employment of men, as well as increased education and job opportunities for women have made the practice of the sole male breadwinner ideal rare in Hong Kong. Together with the challenges from the women's movement towards conventional masculinity and male privileges, socio-cultural conditions have posed serious challenges to the conventional fatherhood.

In view of these changing gender relations, in recent years some non-government organizations have argued for the need to redefine father identity by promoting the notion of "new fatherhood." To be "new fathers," men should not only bring money home but are also expected to be caring, to be leaders and protectors of the family, to be good role models to their children, and to help develop their potential. With the efforts of the women's movement in the 1980s and 1990s, equality between women and men has occupied a place in the mainstream political agenda. Although it would be hard to find someone who explicitly claims to disagree with the notion, gender-equal values and practices are still far from being realized. Thus, the non-government organizations which argued for the "new fatherhood" notion claimed that their intention was to encourage men to work towards gender equality, as they were required to be more caring and to share housework and childcare with their wives. They argued that the notion responds to the claim of feminism and would bring about positive change in spousal relations and the family; thus women and men, children and parents, as well as society at large, would benefit with more input from men into parenting.

The Controversy of "New Fatherhood"

Feminists have long stated that maintaining a distinct gender division in parenting is equivalent to sustaining gender inequality. One famous critique of uninvolved fathering is by Nancy Chodorow (1978). In her psychoanalytic theory, both female and male new-born infants have a sense of oneness with the mother. However, as they grow up, while daughters continue to identify with their mother, sons are pushed away by the mother in order that they can identify with the more remote father. She believes that this creates the effect that male children unconsciously reject anything feminine, including their nurturing psychic quality. At the same time, female children develop a sense of inferiority as they identify with a culturally devalued femininity. Coltrane (1997) also thinks that this practice of gender division in parenting (mothering in opposition to fathering) has created a vicious circle in maintaining gender inequality in society.

Some men's studies scholars, inspired by feminism, initiated studies to criticize the conventional notion of masculinity. For example, Pleck (1981) points out that men are trained to acquire traits that are dysfunctional in regard to their work and family. Men are socialized to see their breadwinning role as fundamental to their gender identity and family functioning, leading to their engagement towards employment but away from childcare (Trivers 1972; Rypma 1976; Rossi 1977). The majority of fathers are found to spend less time with children than do mothers across the world (Bittman and Pixley 1997; McMahon 1999; Russell and Bowman 2000).

Considering the maladaptive effects of conventional masculinity, these men's studies scholars investigated ways in which men could benefit from reconstructing masculinity. They urge for a return of men to their family as caring husbands and involved fathers (Brooks and Silverstein 1995; Levant 1992; Levant and Pollack 1995). Barnett et al. (1991) claim that a man's physical well-being will be better when he is satisfied with his fathering role, and that both husband and fathering roles are significant predictors of men's psychological well-being.

These advocates' suggestions resonate with the claims of some feminists, who also urge fathers to increase their involvement in childcare to

reduce the gendered costs of caregiving and to achieve gender equality (Doucet 2006). This "new fatherhood" involves an emotionally intimate relationship between fathers and children in addition to the traditional provider role, making mothers and fathers interchangeable in terms of their roles in the family, and in effect degendering the parenting role (Silverstein et al. 2002). Men sharing childcare and housework can liberate women from familial duties, can develop some supposedly feminine qualities such as sensitivity, and can subsequently blur the gender boundary in the family setting (Coltrane 1995). Lamb (1997) proposes the importance of paternal involvement in building positive psychological characteristics in children and in freeing the mother to develop herself. Doucet (2000) suggests that encouraging men to be involved in children's lives can foster men's attentiveness towards children's needs and their recognition of the link between children's needs and the wider community, which can lead men to relate to others in a more gender-equal manner. Henwood and Procter (2003) also suggest that the notion of "new fatherhood" builds public confidence in the importance of the father, validates men's desire for intimacy and emotional connection with children, and helps men incorporate the ability to attend to others' needs as part of their masculinities. Furthermore, the notion and practice of caring fatherhood can be passed on to the children (Silverstein and Auerbach 1999). Nurturing fathers with egalitarian values can encourage their daughters to achieve high status and teach them to develop their potentials in the public sphere (Soh 1993). Thus, by establishing a "new fatherhood," gender equality can be realized and perpetuated (Silverstein et al. 2002).

Nevertheless, other feminists do not agree with the gender equality claim of "new fatherhood." They criticize the concept as old wine in new bottles as it does not problematize the gender dichotomy in caregiving. Fathering continues to be an important marker of the conventional heterosexual masculinity (Collier 2001). Ruddick (1997) attacks "new fatherhood" as a notion encouraging sexual distinctiveness as well as masculine and compulsory heterosexual parenting. Nentwich (2008) also points out that simply balancing the double burden does not trouble the gender binary in maintaining the public–private dichotomy, because men who participate in caring work are so welcomed that they are seldom criticized for not doing enough. More importantly, the discourse in the

new fatherhood ideology indicates that fathering is an achievement—a learnt skill and effort—which requires hard work and struggle against other demands, neglecting and even devaluing the social importance of mothers and mothering which is considered just an instinct (Collier 2001). Therefore, "new fatherhood" is not the answer to gender equality within the family. Rather, to subvert the gender binary, a man should practise caregiving and a woman should be engaged in a paid job as a given, and without mentioning it (Nentwich 2008).

Even worse, although being an accepted ideal, "new fatherhood" has not yet been generally practised and conventional fathering is still the norm. Although parenting is said to be interchangeable between genders in the "new fatherhood" notion, men continue to show reluctance in practice in sharing parenting duties equally with women (Collier 2001). With their breadwinner identity and the privileges derived from patriarchy, men continue to enjoy greater freedom in their choices between work and caring (Miller 2010). Although the second-wave feminist movement and women's participation in the labour force challenge the traditional notion of the gender division of labour within the family, in practice childcare duties mainly fall on women who are expected to make the home a pleasant place, to promote fathers' bonding with their children, to provide financial and emotional support to the family—indicating that gender divisions in familial relationships remain untouched in the social structure (Fox 2001). Even in Sweden, where the social acceptance of caring fathers is high and the expectation for men to be breadwinners has reduced, women still shoulder the primary responsibility in childcare and house chores and men work more and bring more money home than women (Johansson and Klinth 2008). Moreover, men who are involved in their children's lives may not necessarily hold more gender-equal attitudes (Johansson and Klinth 2008). Many fathers spend more time with sons than daughters, hold more gender stereotypical views, and are controlling and strict with children (Coltrane 1995). Involved fathers continue to regard mere presence as a way of demonstrating physical and emotional closeness (Miller 2010); yet this physical presence in the household symbolizes a legitimate father figure with decision-making power and authority to guide their children (Marsiglio et al. 2000b). In addition, even fathers who are primary caregivers leave the responsibility

of satisfying children's needs to their working wives (Lamb 1986). Men are often responsible for less time-consuming, less tedious, and less socially subordinated tasks, such as household repairs, playing with children, and taking them out, rather than cleaning, grocery shopping, washing, daily care of infants and children (Hearn and Pringle, with members of Critical Research on Men in Europe 2006). This has led to continued constraints in women's lives. Therefore, some fatherhood researchers indicate that involved fathering is more a cultural ideal and representation than real practice and that the emphasis on involved fathering and paternal rights and responsibilities signals men's efforts to resurrect their dominance for fears of the erosion of their authority in the family (Hearn and Pringle, with members of Critical Research on Men in Europe 2006; Gatrell 2007; Ranson 2001; Wall and Arnold 2007).

Therefore, this "new fatherhood," despite its "new" appearance, is not eradicating conventional gender notions. Researchers found that fathers taking parental leave or staying at home give priority to caregiving and playing rather than doing housework (Nentwich 2008) These men see themselves as parents and not as home-makers, reflecting their power and domination in the family that is derived from the ideology of male breadwinner (Brandth and Kvande 1998). Featherstone (2009) maps out the existing research on fathering in the British context from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and social work, exploring different realms of fatherhood, such as work, caring responsibility, fathers' rights, and policies. She concludes that more involved fathering does not necessarily mean equal partnership with the mother. At a time when involved fatherhood has become a dominant discourse, men claim to be close to their children but at the same time maintain their conventional masculine role within the household (Plantin et al. 2003).

So the notion of "new fatherhood" has not answered the call of the feminists. Rather it has hijacked their position. "New fatherhood" seems to add only one more additional factor—emotional connectedness with children—to the traditional fatherhood. Thus, the notion sustains a father's status quo in the family, which is in fact reproducing and reaffirming the traditional masculine and heterosexual notion of fatherhood (Ruddick 1997; Vavrus 2002; Zoja 2001). As a result, feminists argue that the claim of "new fatherhood" to counteract the hegemony of gendered

parenthood fails. Without actually deconstructing the normalized masculine configuration, "new fatherhood" remains essentially a gender hegemony.

Researching Fatherhood

Paternal Involvement

Most studies on fathers focus on the impact of paternal involvement on children's development. They often focus on the effects of involved fatherhood and absence of fathers on children (c.f. Lamb 2010), rather than examining fatherhood per se. The rising number of divorce cases and the issue of deadbeat fathers who avoid or ignore financial obligations to their children after divorce trigger studies of the importance of fathers' involvement with children (Dudley and Stone 2001). Divorce parenting research is dominated by the father-absence perspective, which blames nonresident fathers for causing negative developmental outcomes for children (Johnson 1996). Many of these studies highlight the negative consequences of the absence of fathers (e.g., Blankenhorn 1995; Harper and McLanahan 2004; Popenoe 1996; Snarey 1993).

In reaction to the conservative argument that urges for a return to conventional family and fatherhood, gender researchers studying family analyse fatherhood to understand ways to encourage more involved fathering. Coltrane (1997) and Dienhart (1998) identify strategies and practices of shared parenting that contribute to men being more involved in parenting among white, middle-class families. Parke (1996), using psychological perspectives, discusses different stages and aspects of fatherhood from the life-course approach and the family system perspective to identify factors that influence paternal involvement.

Actually, structural conditions have pushed men to increase their participation in caregiving and become involved fathers. With women increasingly focusing more on their careers, the decline of the male breadwinner role owing to rising unemployment and reduced wages among men, as well as rising divorce rates and the emergence of different familial forms, fathers are demanded to increase their involvement in caregiving (Plantin et al. 2003; Gregory and Milner 2005; Burgess

1997). Wheelock (1990) argues that the reason for unemployed men with working spouses taking up more domestic work and childcare is pragmatic consideration and does not mean that these men have changed their gender attitudes. However, more recent studies indicate that active involvement in children's lives changes men's view of themselves—they become less self-centred and more nurturing (Plantin et al. 2003). When men who are laid off and take care of children at home for some time go back to the job market, they want jobs that allow them more time with their children (Burgess 1997). Fathers in general also show a change in attitude and are more willing to be involved with their children (Gregory and Milner 2005).

Increasingly more and more studies show that fathers can nurture. Fathers in two-parent families are capable of developing close relationships with their children if given the opportunity (Smith 1998). As long as they become involved, men feel more competent as parents (Baruch and Barnett 1986). With the absence of the mother through employment, divorce, or death, fathers demonstrate capability and readiness to take up caregiving (Dowd 2000; Gatrell 2007; Lamb 1986; Risman 1986). Men who are primary caregivers come from all walks of life, and relate to their children in similar ways as the mother (Burgess 1997). So men *do* demonstrate "capacities to do emotional, hands-on caring which is remarked to be significantly different to their own fathers' style of involvement" (Miller 2010:192).

However, there exists a class difference in paternal involvement. Since breadwinning is the taken-for-granted backdrop of paternity among middle-class men (Dermott 2008), even though they share the caregiving duties equally with their wives, they still spend less time with their children than working-class fathers, who may not hold strong values towards equal sharing (Deutsch 1999). Middle-class fathers' professional work often demands them to be flexible in their work; they spend many hours at work and enjoy large discretion to excuse them from their paternal responsibilities because their wives can take up their tasks if needed, thus sacrificing the time spent in the family (Ranson 2001). Moreover, the lack of structural and policy support for equal parenting hinders middle-class couples from considering whether the man should stay at home to take care of children because the financial loss would be great (Plantin et al. 2003). Working-class couples tend to earn similarly

and therefore share the familial duties more equally (Burgess 1997). For them, who should stay at home is a matter of practical consideration, as is who can get and keep a job (Plantin et al. 2003).

The Masculine Construction of Fatherhood

The changing gender relations in the family due to divorce, and changes in family policy and parenting approaches have aroused an increase in fatherhood research (Gregory and Milner 2005). These research studies do not only focus on the effects of paternal involvement but also explore fatherhood as a gendered experience and phenomenon. Inspired by women's studies, which aims at documenting women's experiences that have been neglected in the conventional disciplinary research (Auslander 1997), men's studies wants to do the same, by investigating masculinities and experiences of men as gendered beings within the larger context of gender relations. The study of fatherhood aims at revealing the diverse and interrelated meanings between paternal masculinities and manhood itself (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 2003).

Even when the ideal men's role in the family has changed, the configuration of conventional masculinities continues to shape men in their parenting practice. Fathers continue to carry out their paternal responsibility in a way that connects with the dominant masculinity, which is different from mothering. For example, fathers across the social classes engage in physical activities with their children, emphasize fun and playfulness with infants and younger children, and promote independence and risk-taking in older children (Doucet 2006; Pruett 2001). By examining the structural and discursive resources and constraints among middle-class white men in constructing their paternal responsibilities and experiences during their first two years of paternity, Miller (2011) found that fatherhood is still constructed around the breadwinning role. From his interviews with men who graduated in the 1970s from a California high school, Townsend (2002) reveals that fathers in the USA still make sense of their paternity in relation to employment, marriage, and home-ownership. These three aspects of paternity make up what he proposes as the "package deal," which is the cultural requirement of being a qualified man. Paid work allows fathers to

provide their children with material well-being, safety, and schooling; through marriage fathers give their children a caring mother with good character and good endowment; the home that the father provides protects children from "bad" influences, and serves as a protective shelter. In other words, fatherhood continues to be defined in terms of economic provision, protection, and endowment, in addition to being emotionally close. Familial masculinity is still mainly constructed in relation to children through "providing and protecting" (Burgess 1997:109).

While economic ability defines masculinity and fatherhood, it is also the reason why fathers are distant from their children. Although contemporary men criticize their own fathers for being distant and uninvolved, these men, at the same time, excuse their fathers for distant fathering because of their work duties (Daly 1995). Men nowadays still admire their own fathers who have contributed to their families through breadwinning (Brandth and Kvande 1998; Silverstein et al. 2002; White 1994). This definition of good father justifies them staying in an unsatisfying job (Dermott 2008). Workplace culture continues to discourage fathers from having more involvement in caregiving, such as taking family leave (Wall and Arnold 2007).

Even involved fathers continue to consider themselves primarily as workers. Among those family-oriented men, work occupies a higher position than parenting duties—they have to struggle to do the best at work and some are even unwilling to accommodate family needs if that would affect their work (Ranson 2001). Fathers need to be emotionally involved with their children, but at the same time to provide economic support and guidance to their children (Waller 2002). Moreover, Cowan and Cowan (1992) and LaRossa and LaRossa (1981) find that parental roles tend to result in stereotypical gender division of labour with the father focusing on economic provision and the mother on childcare and housework, even though the couples had planned for an egalitarian division of domestic work.

The masculine construction of paternity defines men's role in parenting and the family. The cultural code of masculinity makes it hard for men to display feminine qualities—women also expect men to display conventional masculinities and refuse to accept men's showing their vulnerability (Featherstone 2003). Boys and men are therefore not socialized to be

nurturing (Burgess 1997). This construction of masculinity affects fathers' priority in parental roles. When men consider their primary responsibility as economic providers, they put work higher up in their priorities (Marsiglio 1995). With economic power, fathers have more discursive resources to justify their distant parenting role (Miller 2010). The continual association of successful fatherhood and masculinity with employment and provision is thus responsible for the slow progress in achieving equal sharing of childcare over the years (Townsend 2002). Therefore, even when discourses around shared and equal caregiving are prevalent in contemporary times, this limited familial and paternal role of men reproduces patriarchal arrangements and men's power within the family (Miller 2011).

Nevertheless, some fatherhood scholars suggest that the construction of fatherhood has shifted to focusing on the relationship with children. For example, Dermott (2008), using national survey and qualitative interview data, argues that breadwinning is no longer central to fatherhood; instead, an intimate father–child relationship that involves emotional connection, communication, and reflexivity is emphasized. Edin and Nelson (2013) examine the way in which economically deprived working-class unmarried fathers view their paternal responsibility and relationship with the mother of the child. They found that these fathers rejected their role as providers and considered fatherhood as loving and accompanying their children, leaving breadwinning and disciplining to the mother.

This shows that the contemporary construction of fatherhood is undergoing changes in relation to socio-economic conditions and gender ideology. Because the meaning of being a man and a father is constructed through cultural ideas and ideals of masculinities (Miller 2010), we need to look at the socio-cultural backgrounds and conditions that shape familial relationships in the Chinese context in order to understand Chinese fatherhood.

Traditional Chinese Fatherhood and Family

The gender construction of Chinese parenthood gives the father authority. The father, as the head of the family, has authority over the mother and

children (Abbott et al. 1992). He provides for the family (Jankowiak 1992), controls the financial resources, and makes important decisions in the family (Chuang and Su 2009). The father is expected to be aloof and distant whereas the mother is nurturing and supportive (Chuang and Su 2009; Wilson 1974). Despite the ideal patrilineal family relation is one in which "the father is affectionate, the son is dutiful" (Shek and Sun 2014:27), traditional Chinese fathering emphasizes strict disciplining and role modelling and is thus considered authoritarian and affectively distant (Li and Lamb 2013). As Confucianism considers emotion as antagonistic to educational attainment, a mother's love and affection can spoil the children and the father is the one to observe the mother not to spoil the children (Ho 1987). Fathers should therefore be stern and should discourage emotional indulgence, meaning that they are not to show their compassion towards their children (Jankowiak 1992). As fathers are responsible for educating and disciplining their children, even with spanking and scolding, and are therefore not expected to take care of infants or young children before they can receive instructions (Abbott et al. 1992; Ho 1989). The majority of caregiving activities are the responsibilities of the mother; fathers keep a distance from the day-to-day care of children (Sun and Roopnarine 1996).

Children are expected to be compliant, respectful, and filial towards their parents, especially their fathers (Li and Lamb 2013). They should behave themselves and bring honour to the family; though they are not rewarded for doing so they are severely punished if they do something wrong (Chuang et al. 2013; Shek and Sun 2014). In addition, Confucian filial piety creates the sentiment in children that parents are great and that children should obey and serve them, repaying their indebtedness to their parents by providing for them in their old age (Abbott et al. 1992; Shwalb et al. 2010).

With the patrilineal system and patriarchal ideology, the father–son relationship is more important than the spousal relationship, and sons are regarded as more important than daughters (Chuang et al. 2013). Therefore, fathers have high expectations of their sons and are strict with them (Shek and Sun 2014). As a result, the affectional distance between the father and the child is greater than that between the mother and the child (Ho 1987). Sometimes this distant fatherhood can result in anger and anxiety in children in later life (Jankowiak 1992).

Contemporary Chinese Fatherhood

Breadwinning and education remain important in contemporary Chinese fatherhood. While Chinese mothers engage in both work and family, Chinese fathers continue to focus more on their own career (Shwalb et al. 2010:354). Fathers are still more inclined to tackle their children's education. They feel responsible for helping their children succeed in school and pursue higher education and thus help more with their children's homework and do more with regard to moral education and disciplining than mothers (Tam and Lam 2013). Chinese fathers still spend little time involved in childcare (Jankowiak 1992). Therefore, Chinese mothers are perceived to be warmer than fathers and fathers are considered more controlling than mothers, especially among sons (Berndt et al. 1993).

Having said that, as women's participation in the labour force increases, men's role within the family changes accordingly—contemporary Chinese fathers are more involved in their children's lives than in previous generations (Chuang et al. 2013; Li and Lamb 2013). They now show love and compassion to their young children, although they prefer to express it in the private home than in public (Jankowiak 1992). In return, Chinese fathers also enjoy their children's companion and love and enjoy watching their children's growth and development, which gives greater meaning to their lives (Chuang et al. 2013). Xu and O'Brien (2014) found that many Chinese fathers in Shanghai actively engage in childcare, such as feeding, changing diapers, and putting the infants to sleep.

In contemporary times, Confucian familial structure and parenting seem to have been diminishing in their influential power. Chinese fathers show less support of Confucian teachings and authoritarian behaviours. For example, fathers work outside the family, thus spend less time with their children, and become detached; yet this distance urges them to be kind and less demanding towards their children, whereas mothers are more involved in their children's lives and become strict mothers (Shek and Sun 2014). Fathers and mothers show affection to infants in similar ways, indicating that the traditional Chinese notion of the nurturing mother and the strict father is changing (Shek 2005). Similarly, the importance of

the father–son relationship, as reported by Hsu (1967), has changed because fathers were found to have a warm relationship with daughters (Sun and Roopnarine 1996) and fathers prefer to develop qualities such as self-confidence in both sons and daughters (Chuang and Su 2009). Chinese fathers who have higher education and are affectionate to their children hold less rigid gender attitudes (Li and Lamb 2013). Younger fathers focus less on filial piety and encourage their children to develop qualities such as independence, creativity, and self-confidence, but not obedience (Chuang and Su 2009; Ho and Kang 1984).

Chinese fathers in Hong Kong demonstrate similar patterns. They are found to put less emphasis on filial piety and respect for the elderly and more on children's abilities, such as independence, self-respect, expression of opinions, and creativity (Ho 1987). Younger fathers are more involved in their children's education and learning (Ho 1987), and fathers with higher education are more nurturing, and more involved in their children's schoolwork than their counterparts with lower education (Tam and Lam 2013). Having said that, Confucianism and traditional Chinese culture remain influential on Chinese parenthood (Ishii-Kuntz 2015), which results in an enduring resistance to gender-equal familial and caregiving practices as well as the continuation of specific parenting values and practices among Chinese parents (McHale et al. 2013).

However, cultural tradition and ideology are not the only factors in determining the trajectory of fatherhood. Changes in socio-economic and cultural conditions and influences from globalization also contribute to the shaping of fathers' conceptions and practices. I do not assume that Chinese fatherhood is fixed and unchanging, is only dependent on the Chinese cultural ideal, or is free from global influences. For example, the men's movements in the USA inspired some organizations and writers in Hong Kong to assert the importance of men in the family, to urge men to be responsible fathers, and to liberate men from traditional roles, which impacted the role of fatherhood in Hong Kong (Tam et al. 2009). This book aims to delineate Chinese fatherhood in the midst of the current situation in Hong Kong by tracing and scrutinizing the cultural, social, and historical development and circumstances in society.

Aim of the Book

Scholarly work addressing Chinese fatherhood is limited in quantity and scope. The existing knowledge of Chinese fatherhood is either from studies that examine the Chinese family structure or parenting roles, for example the earlier anthropological accounts of the Chinese family and kinship from the structural perspective (e.g., Baker 1979; Cohen 1992; Hsu 1963, 1965, 1967; Watson 1986) and the roles of Chinese fathers within the familial structure (e.g., Hsu 1943; Freedman 1970), or from later empirical studies adopting a psychological perspective in examining parental roles and involvement (e.g., Abbott et al. 1992; Wang and Yu 1997), and sociological research on the impact of state policies and changing economic and social conditions on fathering (e.g., Chen 2005; Sheng 2012; Weeks 1989). An earlier review of Chinese father studies by Ho (1987) discusses the father's role in the Confucian ideal and summarizes scattered information from social research on the father's role and his relationship with children. Recent reviews by Shwalb et al. (2010) and Li and Lamb (2013) point out that Chinese fathering studies are mainly concerned with fathers' involvement in childcare and sharing of housework, fathers' parenting styles, the impact of fathers on children's development, and father–child relations. Few studies have focused on the meaning attached to fatherhood and the identity of the father from the perspective of the agents. Tam and Lam (2013) point out that the limited number of studies that examine Chinese fathers do not reflect the voice and subjective experience of the father but only focus on investigating the effects of fathers on child developmental outcomes and the factors that influence fathering.

Studies exploring how fathers make sense of their paternal identities and practices are relatively new (Marsiglio et al. 2000a). With changing cultural demands on fathers and socio-economic conditions, contemporary fathers need to struggle to make sense of their own fatherhood (Daly 1995). Research is needed to examine the impact of men's understanding and reflexivity of their paternity on gender and the family. Miller (2010) cautions us to notice our gendered locations in studying and understanding fathers' experiences and not to measure and judge fathers from the maternal gaze. Therefore, it is important to understand from a gender

perspective the subjective experiences of fathers in their struggle and negotiation between structural demands and exercising their agencies through reflexivity.

This book seeks to understand how fathers in Hong Kong make sense of and practise their parenthood in relation to the socio-cultural construction of men and masculinities, social and familial contexts, and their own deliberations. It contributes to Chinese family research with detailed analysis of the subjective experience and identity of fathers, especially scrutinizing fatherhood from a gender perspective, analyzing the dialectical construction between fatherhood and manhood, and the agency of fathers. With its different socio-historical trajectories from mainland China and Taiwan, Hong Kong is distinctive in its own culture and parenting practice (Berndt et al. 1993); hence a study exploring Chinese fatherhood in Hong Kong can contribute to and fill the gap in the existing knowledge base of Chinese family and parenthood. It is also important to examine how and under what conditions individual practices change normative conceptions of gender (Deutsch 2007). The analysis in this book not only delineates the way masculinity is embodied and practised but also examines how individual fathers reflect upon it during times of crisis.

Theoretical Framework

"Father" is never a fixed identity. Fatherhood, which refers to the cultural construction of fathers' rights, responsibilities, and statuses as well as discursive criteria of good and bad fathers (Gregory and Milner 2005), is an ongoing construction subject to questions and change. It changes with different social situations and is influenced by structural constraints, such as traditional values, social norms, and cultural expectations upon fathers (Coltrane and Parke 1998; Daly 1995; Marsiglio and Cohan 2000).

Studies of fathers' roles and involvement often see fathers from a deficit or inadequate perspective by comparing them against the ideal motherhood model (Dienhart 1998). This approach neglects the construction of masculinities in fatherhood and ignores individuals' understanding of their paternity. Fathers are agents in reacting to and creating their familial contexts. They consciously evaluate their resources and situations and

deliberate appropriate strategies that match with their values and goals. When conventional fatherhood is increasingly called into question and familial relations are less governed by tradition but are negotiated between individuals, fathers have to reflect upon the meaning of paternity and adjust their practice to adapt to social change (Williams 2008). They are reflexive upon their status at home and their fatherhood from what they perceive from others and society (Marsiglio and Cohan 2000). Therefore, instead of treating mothering as the standard, fatherhood has to be analysed with reference to the conceptions of masculinity within the particular historical and socio-cultural context (Bjornberg 1998; Brotherson, Dollahite, and Hawkins 2005; Moxnes 1999) and individual fathers' agency.

Fathering practices are mixed with reflexive considerations and spontaneous reactions in the family context. It is important to acknowledge both fathers' unconscious adherence to structural demands and their reflexive strategies to maintain or advance their social positions. Practice theories that examine structure/agency and reflexivity are employed as the framework to analyse the dialectical construction of fatherhood by structural ideal and individuals' agency.

Structure/Agency

Social researchers have long debated the influence of structure versus agency on individuals' values, behaviours, and decisions. Structure refers to the contextual constraints that fall on individual social actors in shaping their consciousness and behaviours. It includes social arrangements, relations, and practices that are external to and out of any individual's control (Musolf 2003; Rubinstein 2001). Although the focus of social science has surrounded the external factors, the role of human agency in maintaining the structure should not be forgotten. It refers to the free choice in making decisions of action and the ability that human beings have to make sense of their environment and act according to their interpretation (Musolf 2003). Parker (2000) points out that structures do not exist without human action—indeed, they are the products of historical processes. Musolf (2003) also thinks that "human beings have collectively constructed

the structures of our world and that world is alterable by human agency" (p. 7). However, arguing for complete agency is not totally convincing. Human beings are not totally free in their actions. Wacquant (1989), in explaining the relationship between agency and structure, points out that "individuals make choices . . . [but] they do not choose the principals of these choices" (p. 45). Snow (2001) suggests acknowledging the existence of both: on the one hand human beings are not passive actors merely carrying out orders from the structure; on the other hand, they are not totally free but choose their lines of action within predispositions and structural constraints.

Social scientists have been trying to integrate the agency–structure dichotomy and formulate theories to understand how the two interact to produce and reproduce society. Bourdieu, for example, proposes a praxis theory in mapping the connection and interaction between agency and structure. He thinks that social actors do not just confront their circumstances but make up part of the social conditions themselves. An individual internalizes social rules, and then reproduces them by acting according to the rules, which Bourdieu describes as "the dialectical relationship between the objective structures and the cognitive and motivating structures which they produce and which tend to reproduce them" (Bourdieu 1977:83). In the process, the social actors are themselves reaffirming the social structure which trains them to be those that they are at the present time (Jenkins 2002).

Bourdieu's theory offers an anti-essentialist approach in looking at practice. He thinks that an actor's practice and thought comes from the past experiences and pre-existing social structures (Dillabough 2004). Bourdieu coined the term habitus, which is a durable yet transposable scheme rooted in the body that encourages people to behave according to existing practices. It has a "generative capacity" that leads people to react in a certain style, although the behaviours can be different in different situations (Bourdieu 1990a:13; 1990b:55; 2000). Habitus operates through the bodily dispositions and deeply embedded emotions and thinking (Lovell 2000) and affects people in every aspect, including "ways of talking, ways of moving, ways of making things" (Jenkins 2002:75). It is the embodiment of objective regularities and tendencies from the past, producing practices that contain the anticipation of continuing the regularities and tendencies

in the future (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). The body enacts the past and believes in what it enacts; and through this enactment, values and knowledge gain their lives to continue in the world (Bourdieu 1990b). This is how the structure is embodied by habitus in social actors who behave within structural constraints, thus creating the endless cycle of control and reproduction of control between structure and agent. Social actors who share a similar social position develop a similar habitus, orchestrating their actions (Bourdieu 1990b).

Habitus only operates in relation to a social field. It has to be appropriate to the constraints, demands, and opportunities within a certain field (Bourdieu 1991). The same habitus can produce very different practices depending upon what is going on in the field. "A field . . . is a structured system of social positions—occupied either by individuals or institutions—the nature of which defines the situation for their occupants" (Jenkins 2002:85). Field is the mediating context between external environment and individual practice. The field sets the rules that define what actions are possible and encouraged (Adams 2006) and the agent integrates the rules that constitute the field into his or her habitus (Moi 1991). In a field, power relation exists according to the capital or resources which are at stake (Jenkins 2002). Capital may take different forms, namely economic (material resources), social (valued relations), cultural (relevant knowledge), and symbolic (social prestige). The field controls the participants' belief in the legitimacy and value of the relevant capital. Social actors strive to preserve or improve their positions within a field with respect to the defining capital of the field. Control of the desired capital in a particular field can contribute to the status of individuals and groups (Swartz 1997). While a field exists only when social actors bring in the corresponding dispositions and fill it with meaning, social actors have to integrate the rules that constitute the field into their habitus. So habitus is "objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted" (Bourdieu 1977:54).

Although habitus is so influential in people's lives, people are not aware of the way they are shaped in their behaviour and thought. They just thoughtlessly carry out their established routine which makes them competent in a particular social field (Bourdieu 1977). It is symbolic violence that leads the agent to accept below a conscious level the symbolic order

and the subsequent domination, thus synchronizing subjective structures and objective relations (Krais 2006). However, habitus is not something fixed or stable. It is shaped and structured by past experiences and is constantly modified by new experiences, although it tends to remain constant and guides the actor to choose experiences that match the existing structure and to reject incompatible information (Bourdieu 1990b). In Bourdieu's theory, social actors do not simply repeat the structure but actively anticipate future uncertainty and improvise within structural limits, which is called strategy (McNay 1999). In this sense, Bourdieu indeed is suggesting that human beings do make decisions but they are making choices within the constraints of the structure embodied by habitus.

Although habitus works at an unconscious level and is reinforced when it fits the field, when the alignment of habitus and field is disrupted, the opportunity for reflexive awareness of the habitus arises (Bourdieu 1998). Reflexivity refers to "the systematic exploration of the 'unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought', as well as guide the practical carrying out of social inquiry" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:40). It is the ability to genuinely "stand back" from habitus/field relations, and contemplate existing embodied structures in relation to subjectivity and social transformation (Adams 2006; McNay 1999). It involves questioning knowledge from a social position, field, and educational or socialization background (Schirato and Webb 2003). For Bourdieu, reflexivity, which enables actors to negotiate rules and to produce new thoughts and actions, does not happen in everyday routine but during tensions and conflicts within the limits of the field (McNay 1999; Schirato and Webb 2003). It is thus a situated reflexivity that is connected to the habitus (Adkins 2003).

Gendered Habitus and Reflexivity

Habitus is gendered. It generates practices based on the symbolic orders of gender that structure and organize the actor's worldview and action (Krais 2006). Bourdieu considers gender a fundamental element of one's identity in the habitus (Thorpe 2009). It "shapes the body, defines how the body is perceived, forms the body's habits and possibilities for expression, and

thus determines the individual's identity—via the body—as masculine or feminine" (Krais 2006:121). In other words, gender is naturalized and becomes taken for granted through shaping of the body's habits and its perception. Because gender enactment occurs at a prereflexive level, and the actor is not fully conscious of his or her action, when the field changes, gender habitus tends to endure and becomes dislodged from the structural conditions of its emergence (McNay 1999). In addition, the gendered habitus exerts its influence in all fields because gender norms exist in similar ways across fields, making it difficult to be destabilized by moving across fields; and it is therefore difficult to change (Chambers 2005). This explains why certain gender conventions persist even though they are no longer pertinent in the social context. To change these dispositional gendered responses, a radical transformation of social institutions and social norms is necessary (Bourdieu 2001; Chambers 2005).

With changes in gender conditions in late modernity, such as increased women's participation in the labour market and high-status professions, the original fit between habitus and field is disrupted, bringing a possible social transformation of gender (Adkins 2003). For example, femininity begins to gain status as a form of cultural capital (Lovell 2000), and the increasing acceptance of androgyny also indicates the revaluation of femininity as a capital and signals a reshaping of gender identities and relations (Illouz 1997). Chambers (2005) suggests that a mismatch between the habitus and the environment induces consciousness-raising, which involves radical questioning of gender conventions and can make individuals understand their complicity as part of the way in which domination perpetuates, and hence understand how it can be changed.

Nevertheless, Bourdieu is not that optimistic. He suggests that because of the inertia in the habitus, social transformation or challenge to the existing norms may not happen just because of a misfit between habitus and field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Reflexivity cannot directly and immediately lead to the change of dominance because the effects of symbolic violence as embedded in the habitus are durable—the embodied feelings and sense of responsibility that motivate the actor to act in the conventional way can last long after the conventional social conditions disappear (Bourdieu 2001).

Other gender scholars also suggest that reflexivity does not readily lead to detraditionalization of gender. For gender, the alignment between subjective dispositions and the objective structure is often not the case in reality, because the conventional images of masculinity and femininity are often idealized forms which can seldom be achieved and thus diversified and contradictory gender conceptions and behaviours exist (Krais 2006; McNay 1999). As gender identities are not unified but are potentially conflicting subject positions, the instability and complexity of gender between expectations and practice does not lead to crisis in contemporary identity formation (McNay 1999). Therefore, despite the structural change in gender, the unconscious perception of conventional masculinity and femininity is not easily changed, and reflexivity is only "linked to a reworking or refashioning of gender" in contemporary society (Adkins 2003:192). In other words, reflexivity helps actors devise strategies to adapt without necessarily undermining the existing gender structure (Chambers 2005). This means that conflicting experiences in gender can sometimes even reinforce the orthodoxy (Krais 2006). In this book, I employ this theoretical notion of practices in analyzing the naturalization and normalization of structural demands in gender practices and fathers' reflexive deliberation in their fathering.

Structure and Agency in Chinese Fatherhood

In analysing Chinese fatherhood in Hong Kong, this book examines the strategies men employ to negotiate their identities, paternal values, and practices with the gendered structure, and under what circumstances their reflexivity upon familial situations reproduce the structural constraints and/or create possibilities for change in the construction of men and masculinities. The analysis considers gender as a structure within the family context. To investigate how gender structure influences and limits individuals and how individuals change the gender structure, the book examines fatherhood in three components—individual gendered identities and behaviours, interaction between situational meaning and cultural context, and social institution and material constraints (Risman 1998).

I consider fathers as reflexive agents within the existing gendered structural constraints—they make use of available resources to construct their paternity and actively devise strategies in times of difficulties. Although men construct their own fatherhoods in various ways according to their reflexivity upon their own structural locations, this reflexivity is not necessarily critical reflection and can still be within the structural boundary (Dermott 2008). Their choices and actions, in general, do not transgress gender norms but only refashion them, leading to the continuation of conventional gender practices. Possibilities for critical reflection and reformulation of fathering practices generally occur in fragile situations, such as divorced non-resident fatherhood (Dermott 2008).

We have to bear in mind that in the existing gender order, men continue to hold power and privilege in society, including in the family, where they can choose how much they are involved in parenting (Hearn and Pringle 2006). Therefore, we need to take into consideration the power and privileges derived from this gender status.

Hegemony of Men

Apart from Bourdieu's praxis theory, this book adopts Jeff Hearn's critical approach in examining Chinese fatherhood. Hearn (2004) proposes the framework of Critical Studies on Men (CSM) that takes power into consideration in the analysis of men's practices within the critical feminist perspective. CSM "critically addresses men in the context of gendered power relations" and does not take men as a biological given but a "social category" and a "gender class" (Hearn 2004:49–50). It questions men's societal and structural dominations in patriarchies, recognizes unities and differences between men, and examines men's specific practices, identities, sexualities, and subjectivities. The hegemonic gender order creates differentiations among men and favours certain construction(s) of men and men's practice(s), with the participation and cooperation from both women and men, subordinating men who do not live up to the hegemonic standard or do not carry out the hegemonic practices. CSM puts the analysis of hegemony of men at its focus, which aims to reveal the naturalized, normalized, and taken-for-granted way in which the social

and cultural acceptance of the category of men and their practices occurs in such a system of gender order. Through understanding how fathers legitimize, deliberate, and make their actions possible within the social structure, this book aims to debunk the ideology and practices that produce and reproduce the hegemony of men in the familial context.

Methodology of the Study

This book is based on two research projects. One is my Ph.D. project carried out from 2004 to 2006, consisting of participant observations in discussion groups at a men's centre, the Love and Help Centre (LHC) in Hong Kong,[1] and in-depth interviews with 30 heterosexual biological fathers from different class, marital, and family backgrounds. Some of the informants came from the LHC whereas others were recruited individually from other social networks. The second project is a study commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Commission, Hong Kong, conducted in 2011, consisting of focus groups and in-depth interviews with a total of 71 fathers.

The participant observation of my Ph.D. project was conducted in two of the discussion groups of LHC, a district-based men's group and the Triumph Group.[2] The first group was situated within a family service centre in a district with many working-class new immigrant residents from mainland China.[3] The majority of the members were divorced men who were resident fathers taking care of their children. Most of them came from the working class. The Triumph Group was situated inside a family crisis unit that provided accommodation and counselling to clients encountering family problems. The family crisis unit provided a venue for the group to hold activities and sometimes referred their clients to join the group. The social background of the members of this group was more

[1] This is a pseudonym given to the men's centre which I joined in order to carry out participant observation. The adoption of the pseudonym is to protect the privacy of my informants as well as the staff of the organization. A brief description of LHC is given in Chap. 2.

[2] A pseudonym for the men's group under LHC.

[3] New immigrant residents are people who have been living in Hong Kong for three years or less.

diverse, with divorced men who were resident fathers and non-resident fathers; some were professionals, and some were working-class people.

In my Ph.D. project, I adopted the face-to-face semi-structured interview with a total of 30 fathers of diverse backgrounds. My informants, including the members of the above-mentioned men's groups, and fathers invited from snowball and convenience sampling, came from diverse backgrounds. They were aged from 41 to 70, consisted of professionals (teacher, lawyer, company consultant, accountant, social worker, and medical practitioner), business owners, clerk, blue collar workers (driver, masseur, construction worker, and hospital assistant), the unemployed and social security receivers, and retiree. Sixteen of them were married, five were divorced non-resident fathers (who did not stay with their children), eight were divorced resident fathers (who stayed with their children), and one was a widower father.

The project commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Commission was conducted in 2011 to explore men's situation in relation to the existing socio-economic conditions. Data of 34 fathers (29 from focus group discussions; five from individual interviews), among a total of 71 male participants aged between 18 and 80 in the focus group discussions and individual interviews, were used in this book. The informants came from different class backgrounds and were recruited through social service agencies, community centres, the Equal Opportunities Commission, and two public seminars. Twenty-eight of them were married, five were divorced non-resident fathers, and one was a remarried widower. To protect the privacy of all the informants, I have assigned pseudonyms to them.

Because the knowledge production process and the interpretation of data are situated in the specific socio-cultural milieu, and varies according to the ethnographer's social location and perspective (Denzin 1994; Haraway 1988), a reflexive account upon the fieldworker's values, subjectivity, and positionality at the field site is important for the readers to understand how the data are collected and on what grounds the analysis is based (Mauthner and Doucet 2003). I discuss the way collaborative ethnographic data were produced from the negotiation between my masculinity, positionalities, bodily representations, and the research topic with my middle-aged informants, as well as the ethical dilemma that arose from the fact that my informants and I shared opposite views on gender and family and how it

affected my research process in Liong (2015a b) respectively. I am not going to repeat the discussion here in this book. Readers can refer to the two journal articles to understand my reflexivity towards the ethnographic process.

Structure of the Book

This book examines Chinese fathers' negotiation of gender identity and practice of parenthood with the structural conditions. In the process, they reproduced conventional values and oppressive gender orders but also brought about changes to fathering practices. The book is therefore organized in a way to delineate this dynamic between structure and agency. Chapter 2 first discusses past research studies in explaining the socio-cultural conditions influencing Chinese fatherhood in Hong Kong from the British colonial era to the recent ideological and political development related to the family. It maps out the foundation of the contemporary structural requirements on fathering. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 discuss the three main paternal arenas and missions as understood and practised by the fathers interviewed. Chapter 3 brings out how fathers nowadays understand the most stereotypical paternal responsibility—economic provision—and the way it defines masculine identity. Failure in assuming the provider role can induce reflexivity from the father, which provides the possibility for redefining fatherhood or compensation in other areas that continues to reinforce fathers' power. Chapter 4 explores the connection between paternity and education, which is legitimized by the Confucian construction of masculinity. Fathers uncompromisingly believed that they are the legitimate parent in imparting values to children, and their practice strengthens masculine authority and the naturalized responsibility of protection and inheritance. Chapter 5 addresses fathers' understanding of marriage as the foundation of paternity. Relationship with the wife is secondary as long as it does not disrupt the family's integrity. Hence, fathers are willing to endure marital conflicts to protect the "intact" family and their paternity. Divorce on the one hand shakes fathers' legitimacy in parenting, but on the other hand paradoxically makes fathers more nurturing and caring. The final chapter takes the discussion of the ideology and practice of fatherhood towards understanding the dialectical construction

of structure and agency in the family context and the way in which individuals do gender. It discusses the possibility for reconstructing an egalitarian familial masculinity through reflexivity and subjectivity within the Chinese family.

Although this study intends to capture the diversity of Chinese fatherhood in Hong Kong, the available data is limited in certain respects. Fatherhood in this study is taken to be established through both the biological bond with the child and the heterosexual monogamous marital relation with the mother. Although divorced, remarried, and widower fathers were involved, the lives and experiences of gay fathers, stepfathers, foster fathers, teen fathers, unmarried fathers, and transsexual/transgender fathers were unfortunately not included in this book. The inclusion of these fathers may possibly yield some different perspectives in looking at gender, masculinity, and family. Furthermore, only Cantonese-speaking fathers have been interviewed. While they are the majority in Hong Kong society, it would have added much to the understanding of diversity in fatherhood had I met new immigrant fathers from mainland China. Despite the acknowledged limitations, this book serves as a contribution to family literature by documenting and theorizing familial masculinity in the Chinese context.

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2

From Control to Care: Historicizing Family and Fatherhood in Hong Kong

Family is inseparable from the historical and social milieu of the larger society. Social change transforms gender relations, which induce change in the conceptualization of the family and parenthood (Cabrera et al. 2000; Viazzo and Lynch 2002). Hong Kong has long been a patriarchal society with men holding powerful positions (Cheung 1997; Cheung et al. 1997; Tam et al. 2009; Westwood 1997). Men have dominated the public sphere and also held authority within the family (Choi and Ting 2009). As social and economic changes demanded that women should be employed and the awareness of gender equality started to flourish, women's overall status rose (Cheung 1995; Mak 2009; Wong and Lee 2009). Gender equality is now on the mainstream political agenda, with the Equal Opportunities Commission and Women's Commission established as Hong Kong's formal commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In this changing gender condition, new conceptions of fatherhood and family roles have emerged in the twenty-first century, influencing the practice of individual fathers. In this chapter, I will explain the cultural understanding of Chinese family and fatherhood, and trace

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how family and fatherhood have changed in relation to the social conditions of Hong Kong since the British colonial era.

The Cultural Notion of Chinese Family

The traditional Chinese family, in which both the ancestors and the descendants work together for the good of a particular kinship unit, is considered to persist through time (Ebrey 2003). The traditional Chinese family adopts the patrilineal kinship system, which stresses the importance of male descent and the relationship traces through the male line (Baker 1979). Family is thus a male group whose existence is reproduced by bringing in brides. It includes the deceased members (patrilineal ancestors), living members of the household, and the not-yet-born (descendants) (Wolf 1972). This is based on and reinforced by Confucian ideology, which stresses the importance of filial piety and obligations to the patrilineal ancestors, legitimating the family organized hierarchically such that older men have control and power over women and younger males (Ebrey 2003).

Within this patrilineal kinship system, marriage is the way to bring in brides from another family for reproduction. Marriage is recognized as an alliance between two families through the union of a male and a female. It is for the family rather than romance between the couple. Ebrey (2003) points out that marriage, in the view of Neo-Confucianism in the Song dynasty, is for the family to perpetuate itself through the incorporation of new members. According to this family-oriented thinking, when a married man has no children, he should acquire concubines to get more offspring for the family (Ebrey 2003). In contrast, remarriage of women was considered harmful to their husbands' families (Ebrey 2003). In imperial China, a woman has to bear sons to be qualified as an ancestress of her husband's lineage (Baker 1979). A wife could be divorced by her husband or his family for reasons such as being talkative or infertility (Wong 2000). The spousal relationship is unequal in this social structure.

To protect the interest of the patrilineal family, women are subordinated and controlled. After marriage, the newlywed couple adopts patrilocal or virilocal residence in which the wife moves into the husband's

family. This is one of the "three obeyings" of women in Confucian thought.[1] The spousal relationship is patriarchal. The wife is expected to put the interest of her husband's family first. For instance, she should care for her husband's heirs, no matter whether they are her own children or not (Hsu 1948). Husbands should have control over their wives. A man is considered to be a bad manager if he loses control over his wife and the concubines who are attached to him (Ebrey 2003).

As women are brought in from another patrilineal family through marriage to continue the descent line of their husbands' families, they are the ones who should care for and protect the interests of their children. Despite the importance of biological mothers to children and the family, Chinese women were marginalized as they were economically dependent on their husbands (Watson 1986; Wolf 1972). They were relegated to the domestic sphere and therefore experienced prohibitions and restrictions (Watson 1986). They existed only in relation to their husbands as wives or children as mothers and they were not considered to be "full" persons as men were (Watson 1986). Daughters were considered formally as temporary members of their fathers' families, as they were expected to get married to help other families to gain economic security (Wolf 1972).

In spite of all this, women are not without their agency or influence. According to Wolf (1972), women did not identify with patrilineal families very much. They formed their "uterine family" in which the mother was the centre with her children rallying around her (pp. 33–35). This smaller, closer, more lasting unit was more meaningful to the mother than the formal patrilineal one because it centred around the interest of the mother in the larger patrilineal family (Wolf 1972). Mothers who raised their sons properly could influence their sons' actions and decisions, even in those activities that were exclusive to men (Wolf 1972). Sons thus bear economic and political values for their mothers (Salaff 1981). Because the future of mothers is linked with their sons' future, women paradoxically support the patriarchal structure in protecting their sons' interest. This explains why

[1] "Three obeyings" (*san cong*) refer to the Confucian teaching to compel women to obey their fathers before marriage, to obey their husbands after marriage, and to obey their sons when they grow old. It originated from the Confucian classic *li ji* (Book of Rites).

mothers, in this context, are the defenders and rule enforcers for oppressive gender attitudes and values (Tam 1992).

Filial piety is the governing rule within the family. It is considered as the starting point of the realization of benevolence to others (Raiten 1989). It requires the father to provide his son with daily necessities and to educate and discipline him to be an upright man, and the son to obey, respect, and please his father because he owes his father everything he gets from him, including his life (Hsu 1948). Filial duties of the son include taking care of the physical needs of parents, showing reverence and gratitude to them, glorifying the family through moral, academic, and political achievements, and mourning and ancestral remembrance (Raiten 1989). Continuing the patrilineal descent line and managing the family business are also important duties of the son as defined by filial piety (Cohen 1992; Hsu 1948; Raiten 1989). No matter in which position, sons are required to do everything for the good of the patrilineal family, whose interest centres on the male members.

Since filial piety only stresses the requirement of doing everything good for the family and parents, a husband has no obligation to be good to his wife within the patriarchal family structure, despite the contribution of women to the protection of male interests. The husband only needs to provide for his wife financially. In return, she is required to obey her husband and do everything good for him and his family, even if that contradicts her own will.

Fatherhood in Traditional Chinese Culture

Fathers gain respect and power from the ideology of filial piety, which requires descendants to respect and listen to senior members of the family; they thus have much power and control over their sons and daughters as well as the family's property (Baker 1979; Cohen 1992). Over their life course, men are always accumulating new responsibilities and rights (Watson 1986). Only when they are sick or retire and choose to relax and enjoy life will they step down and pass the role of the household head to one of their sons (Cohen 1992).

With power and control, fatherhood in traditional Chinese culture is mainly about educating and punishing sons and daughters for the good of the family, as shown in the Chinese proverb "it is the father's fault if he just raises his children but does not educate them." A father can punish his sons by beating them for "drunkenness, laziness, gambling, disobedience, or almost any behavior inimical to him, such behavior by definition being unfilial" (Baker 1979:114–115). Men as family heads are responsible for any misconduct and crimes committed by family members (Baker 1979). Fathers also have the power and right to name their children, especially sons, which implies that fathers are the "civilized" parents who in turn "socialize" sons by giving them names for living in the public domain (Watson 1986:619).

The notions of marriage, family, and fatherhood described above are the cultural ideal derived from Confucianism. The cultural ideology frames fatherhood in terms of what responsibility a father should bear, what rights a father can exercise, and how a father and other family members should behave and interact. However, the actual practice of individual fathers and families can differ from the structural expectations. Fatherhood is indeed the product of interactions between social conditions, the conception of masculinity, and individual practices. To have a more complete understanding of fatherhood, it is important to look at the way social conditions shape its conception and practice. In the following section, I briefly discuss gender and family relation in Hong Kong in different historical periods to examine the structural factors that influence contemporary fatherhood.

Historicizing Family and Fathers in Hong Kong

Early Colonial Period: Nineteenth Century

Before British colonization in 1842, Hong Kong was a village in Xin'an County, Guangdong Province. At that time, Hong Kong was dominated by large-scale single-lineage villages (Baker 1968; Hayes 1977). Village organization was based on patrilineal descent, resembling other villages in South China. Men were heads of families as well as leaders of lineages with

decision-making power (Freedman 1970; Hsu 1948; Cheung 2006). Under the rule of the Qing dynasty, village elders in Hong Kong were in practice under the rule of the Xin'an County government, as long as their villages paid tax and did not commit crimes (Hayes 2003). After the Nanjing Treaty ceded Hong Kong to the British in the mid-nineteenth century, the British continued to recognize the authority of these village leaders, who supported the British regime (Ting 1990). In the beginning, rights were granted to them to settle disputes and assist police constables in fighting crimes within their ruling areas (Cai 2001; Ting 1990). Owing to strong opposition from the European community to give power to the local Chinese, these village leaders were removed from formal authority after the 1860s (Ting 1990). Nevertheless, these indigenous men continued to enjoy authority and high status in the de facto ruling of their villages according to the patriarchal tradition. These men's authority, power, and political interest were not much reduced but were still recognized by the colonial government. For instance, until 1994, the colonial government allowed the local patriarchs to restrict their village elections to men only (Cheung 2006). The local Chinese patriarchs were thus willing to cooperate with the colonial government.

In addition to winning those indigenous villagers' obedience, the colonial government invited some rich merchants, landowners, and professionals to be its advisors on local administration (Smith 1995). These elite men did not actually hold any administrative power in these positions but they accepted those titles with the aim of advancing their social status and their own business (Cai 2001). This social inequality was not challenged by the silent majority (Smith 1995). Rather, ordinary people recognized the social authority of these elite men by seeking help from them when they were in dispute or in trouble with the colonial policy and law.

Apart from political benefits, the British helped produce and maintain the hegemony of men in the public sphere. After the British occupied Hong Kong, the Qing government banned its people from trading with the British. Yet economic motive triumphed over political order. Some Chinese men ignored the Qing government's orders and came to Hong Kong to trade (Smith 1995). They were rewarded by the colonial government with land in Hong Kong, and thus made a quick fortune; some of them returned to their hometown in mainland China, while others stayed in Hong Kong and became rich landlords (Smith 1995). Colonial

governance reinforced male dominance in both the economic and political arenas with the cooperation of elite men who earned their fortunes in the politically stable and free-trading environment of Hong Kong society. These rich men were not willing to lose their economic benefits by offending the British, so they cooperated with the colonial government to advance both their economic and political status.

Confucian values were prevalent in Hong Kong society at that time. Male descendants were considered the only legitimate heirs of family property (Shiga 1978; Watson 1991). The estates of rich men were handed down to their eldest sons according to customary practice (Smith 1995). Confucian values of obedience and harmony were stressed in the wills of male tycoons, such that their children, wives, and concubines were required to accept the gender-biased arrangement. As sons were considered more important to the family than daughters, wealthy fathers were only concerned with their sons' personal qualities, asking them to acquire stereotypical masculine attributes such as integrity, uprightness, and courtesy in their wills (Smith 1995). Some rich men even described themselves as capable masculine figures dedicated to the family and requested their male heirs to follow their examples (Smith 1995). Fathers worked hard for their sons, who in turn should do the same for their own sons. The patriarchal family structure not only granted men authority and power, but also instructed them to maintain it as their life goal. Thus, family was an institution that housed predominantly the interests of its male members.

Women who were economically dependent on these upper-class men had to live under the control of the male-centred system. For example, in nineteenth-century Hong Kong, wealthy fathers were more concerned with their daughters' marriage than with their personal qualities and abilities (Smith 1995). Their focus was to marry out their daughters and provide them with sufficient dowries. Wives and concubines of wealthy men could get a share of their estate if they remained chaste. Women were considered dependents who were to be provided with enough food and luxurious goods. They were not expected to achieve anything in particular and thus were not given the resources to do so. The control from the patriarch was to ensure that they did not ruin the family's harmony and economic interest.

Among the ordinary people, men also dominated the economic and political space. In the colonial period, the vast majority of the Chinese

population in Hong Kong was men from mainland China who worked as blue-collar workers, such as coolies, carpenters, servants, hawkers, and so on (Cai 2001; Wong 1974; Xian 1997). In the early years, these men organized themselves into different ethnic groups to fight for better working opportunities (Cai 2001). Later on, they cooperated to form some larger neighbourhood or religious organizations to better protect their interests under colonial rule (Cai 2001).

Economy was the guiding principle in manhood and gender relation. Men were expected to be responsible to their family by bringing money home. Many men from villages near Hong Kong left their children and wives to earn a living or to strive for better financial success. Around the year 1898, when the British took the New Territories, many men moved out of their villages and worked in the urban area as cooks, waiters, and seamen on ocean-going ships, or even went to foreign countries to pursue a living (Hayes 1976). Ordinary women in Hong Kong were dependent on what the men had left them. As women were bound by the traditional values to stay at home and often had limited education, they were restricted to the village where they were left to maintain the household. Some women resisted their traditional role by choosing to be spinsters, by running away from their villages, or even by committing suicide, whereas others conformed but wished to be reincarnated as men in their next lives (Hayes 1976). Women were denied their autonomy and rights; they were to serve and conform to the power-laden gender system that formed the basis of their oppression.

Pre- and Post-Second World War: Early Twentieth Century

In the twentieth century, Hong Kong started to become a place of settlement for emigrants from mainland China. Around 1911, when the Qing dynasty was overthrown, the political situation in the mainland worsened, pushing a lot of refugees to move to Hong Kong. This time the immigrants brought along their family members, thus making the male-to-female ratio of Hong Kong population less unbalanced (1000:727.63) (Xian 1997). These immigrants included both investors and labourers, who subsequently contributed to the manufacturing industries and trading in Hong Kong

(Xian 1997). The situation of these migrants was different from that of their predecessors. They started to live in Hong Kong as a family, although they might still consider Hong Kong as only a temporary settling place. They formed the first generation of the "settled stem family" (Wong 1974).

Men continued to be family breadwinners as reinforced by government policy. Factories started to increase in number from the early 1900s and reached a peak in the 1930s, recruiting a quarter of the working population in the colony (Ngo 2003). Instead of supporting the growing manufacturing industry, the colonial government began to regulate employment in the industry by passing factory legislation that prohibited child labour and regulated factory safety and the employment of women and young persons, restricting industry's development (Ngo 2003). This not only limited the development of manufacturing industry but also hampered women's participation in the labour market, reinforcing men as the sole breadwinners in lower-class families. Being economically dependent, women continued to occupy a peripheral position in society and the family alike. To make things worse, females did not have equal opportunities for receiving education, particularly those living in the villages in the New Territories. In 1911, in the southern district of the New Territories, only 231 females could read and write, and 7760 were illiterate; in the northern district, 235 females could read and write, while 25,664 were illiterate (Hayes 1976).

Wives and daughters were considered the property of their husbands and fathers respectively. At that time, fathers, as heads of household, had the power to sell their wives and children (particularly daughters), especially when economically deprived (Sinn 1994). Often the selling of children happened in extreme economic difficulties—daughters were sold first, often as concubines or *mui tsai*,[2] to upper-class families

[2] *Mui tsai*, literally meaning "little sister," were young girls from poor families sold by their parents to wealthy homes with the intention of performing household tasks. They were not regarded as a part of the family and appeared to be without parents or siblings (Watson 1991). Although they were supposed to be provided with basic necessities by the master's family, they could not enjoy personal freedom (Watson 1991). They could only hope for emancipation when their master's family married them out. Yet in reality, those who were found to be attractive would be taken by the household head as concubines (Smith 1995). Many cases reported maltreatment of these young girls by the master's family. Girls sold as *mui tsai* could be sold again and again (Jaschok 1988), some as concubines and some as prostitutes against their will (Sinn 1994). Finally, in the 1920s, the recruitment of new *mui tsai* was outlawed, and the colonial government started to restore the existing *mui tsai* to their parents (Poon 2004, 10 March 2009). However, the practice of *mui tsai* only disappeared after the Second World War in the urban areas and in the 1950s in villages in the New Territories (Sinn 1994).

(Wong and Lee 2009). In extreme desperate conditions, sons were sold too, but as adopted sons, not slaves (Wong and Lee 2009). This human trafficking practice of *mui tsai*, with a large majority of the victims being female, was justified in the gender-unequal society as a charity to the poor (Watson 1991).

After the Second World War, the civil war in mainland China drove many Chinese emigrants to Hong Kong. The population of Hong Kong rose from about 600,000 to more than 2 million (Zheng 1997). Until 1966, only 30 % of the workers between 15 and 65 years old were born locally (England 1971). The male migrants, as heads of household, brought their spouses and children from mainland China to Hong Kong (Hopkins 1971). These men were mostly of working-class background. They worked as hawkers and cooks, running small family stalls or shops (Hopkins 1971). Sons were still considered more important than daughters in the family. At that time, schools were more popular than before but were still not free. Poor parents, especially those in the rural areas, preferred to send only their sons to school (Hayes 1976).

Patriarchal familial arrangements remained popular in the migrant society. Before the 1960s, the colonial government only provided basic welfare to the refugees, and left other needs, including education, to charitable organizations (Brown 1993; Kwong 1999). After 1965, the government began to take up more responsibility in social welfare such as providing basic housing for the immigrants. While the government designed the public housing estates with the nuclear family in mind, the ideal of the patrilineal extended family continued to exist in these housing estates. Occupiers considered it normal to live with their extended family and relatives because of the traditional ideal of having several generations living under the same roof. Often elderly parents from mainland China, as well as wives and babies brought in by sons, were added to the already small and crowded rooms (Hopkins 1971). The elderly invited to the rooms were often taken care of by female family members, as men assumed the sole breadwinner's role within the family (Hopkins 1971). The duty of looking after the elderly then fell on the wives' shoulders.

Hong Kong's economy soared with the industrialization of the 1960s and 1970s. The economic upturn allowed people to improve their living standard by working hard, which facilitated the discourse that prioritized

earning money over other rights (Lee 1981). For example, although factory workers needed to work long hours with low wages and also lacked job security, their breadwinner role made male workers reluctant to express their discontent directly and publicly through social movement (England 1971). Working-class men, with familial responsibility in mind, did not dare assert their political rights but only focused on economic gains.

Concubinage was tolerated in colonial Hong Kong until 1971, coexisting with monogamous marriage under the Marriage Ordinance. With the desire of women in Hong Kong to abolish concubinage since the 1930s, the colonial government initiated a review process in 1948 (Wong and Lee 2009). Similar to the issue of the *mui tsai* system, many powerful and wealthy Chinese men opposed the abolition. They emphasized that concubinage was a Chinese tradition, which helped to maintain filial piety by expanding the patriline, and that the family structure would be in danger if concubinage was abolished (Wong and Lee 2009). Some women's groups, including the YWCA, the Hong Kong Council of Women, the Hong Kong Chinese Women's Club, and the Hong Kong Association of University Women, cooperated with each other, and launched a petition campaign against concubinage (Wong and Lee 2009). The Protestant Church in Hong Kong, upholding monogamy as one of its beliefs, stood by the women's groups (Smith 1999). They argued that concubinage was an "uncivilized" custom already abandoned in China, caused injustice to the principal wives and harming the concubines and the families involved because it was a form of slavery (Wong and Lee 2009:159–160). However, the colonial rulers put more weight on the opinion of the few powerful and wealthy Chinese men who were invited into their governing circle. As a result, even though the abolition finally succeeded when the practice became less popular and unjustifiable, with the stronger urge for equality between women and men in both local and international contexts, the process of abolition was lengthy and Hong Kong was the last society to make this move among its Asian neighbours (Wong and Lee 2009). The cooperation of colonial rulers and local patriarchs in maintaining male privilege and hegemony was again demonstrated.

Economic Boom: 1970s and 1980s

In the 1980s, Hong Kong grew to be an economically successful country. It was the third largest container port and financial centre in the world (Howe 1983). The expansion of the export-oriented, labour-intensive manufacturing industry contributed to this success (Chiu and Lui 2004). In the 1960s and early 1970s, there was an influx of migrants from China to provide the labour. However, with further expansion of the manufacturing industry and the gradually stabilizing political condition in China leading to a stop in emigration, there was a shortage of labour in Hong Kong, with job vacancies between 4 % and 9 % of the labour force, resulting in a rapid rise in wages (So 1986). Some attributed this economic success to neo-Confucian ideology, which pushed workers to work diligently and to rely on the family and kinship network for welfare rather than public expenditure (Kahn 1979).

Equality between women and men gained increasing acceptance in Hong Kong society after the victory over the abolition of polygamy. Economic development also helped to improve women's status. Female labour participation increased steadily from 42.8 % in 1971 to 49.5 % in 1981. The employment rate for women aged between 25 and 54 increased sharply from 34.5 % in 1971 to 53.1 % in 1981, meaning that more young women gained economic power (Hong Kong Women Foundation and The Department of Social Work and Social administration of the University of Hong Kong 1995). Policy that sustained inequality of wages between women and men among civil servants was eradicated. Before that, the Salaries Commission stipulated, mainly based on the Victorian legacy, that the salary of female officers should be set at around 70 % of the salary of their male counterparts (Kwok et al. 1997). In 1975, the wage disparity was eliminated in the Civil Service, and by 1981, equal fringe benefits were provided for married civil servants regardless of sex (Kwok et al. 1997).

Women's individual identity started to be recognized through the revision of marriage and other relevant laws in the 1970s. The Married Persons Status Ordinance, passed in 1972, gave married women the right to hold property; the Separation and Maintenance Orders Ordinance and the Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Ordinance helped married women claim maintenance in the case of separation or wilful neglect (Pegg

1986); the Matrimonial Causes Ordinance, passed in 1971, allowed both wife and husband to petition for a divorce for reasons of irretrievable breakdown of marriage (Kwok et al. 1997). In addition, the Intestate's Estate Ordinance, also passed in 1971, allowed both daughters and sons to equally share their parents' estate (Pegg 1986).

Despite the improved status of women and girls in employment and legal protection, men were still privileged in the society. The rise of the standard of living benefited the genders differently. The middle class in Hong Kong expanded greatly in the early 1980s, consisting of a high concentration of men as managers, professionals, and business owners. In the 1980s, 80 % of the male population were in employment, compared with only 47 % of females (Census and Statistics Department n.d.-a.). The employment participation rate of women levelled off after 1976, remaining at about 50 % (Wong 1991). Because men still assumed the role of sole economic provider, they were the ones who enjoyed much of the fruit of the economic boom.

The family continued to be a site that bred male dominance. The colonial government ended the Chinese customary marriage, put forward free compulsory education, developed new towns, and encouraged young couples to move there. All these social changes, together with providing more welfare, reduced the influence of the extended family while giving the government the role of caring parent (Jones 2001). Members of individual nuclear families, having lost the dependence on their extended kin network, needed to take care of themselves (Lau 1982; Salaff 1981), resulting in an oppressive gender order in which the husband and father dominated over the wife and children, especially daughters (Jones 2001; Salaff 1981). Although young women gained more personal freedom and bargaining power in the family because of their economic contribution, it did not mean that they were being treated equally within the family. As the notion of son preference was still prevalent and sons bore the expectation to succeed in the public domain, families tended to pool resources for the education of sons. Many young girls from working-class families were deprived of educational opportunities and had to work to supplement the family income and to support their male siblings financially while they received further education (Salaff 1981).

By the end of the 1980s, fatherhood was still largely defined in economic terms. A survey conducted by the Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong (1990) shows that conventional gender beliefs were prevalent and breadwinning was the most important duty of fathers. Among the 1378 fathers whose children were studying at primary school, 51.1 % were opposed to their wives having paid work outside the family except when the family faced serious financial difficulties. 42.2 % responded that their children were looked after by their spouse. Around half of them did not participate in taking care of their children (taking children to school and bringing them back home, attending children's extracurricular activities, arranging children's leisure activities). 47 % of them had done no or little housework. Rather, they were responsible for paying household costs (51.4 %), repair work (37.5 %), and educating children (50.1 %). Work had occupied much of their life. 70.9 % of the fathers had to work more than nine hours a day and 26.5 % even had to work more than 11 hours a day.

Changing Gender Scene? 1990s and Onwards

Nearly two decades after the eradication of laws and marriage practice that discriminated against women, gender equality as a value started to gain recognition in society. In previous periods, the women's movement, such as the elimination of *mui tsai* and Chinese customary marriage, was mainly led by expatriate women and well-to-do Chinese women. In the 1980s, grassroots feminist groups appeared. They were active in bringing women's needs and rights to the mainstream political agenda, and urged the government to set up a working group to consider women's needs, which later developed into a petition for the establishment of the Women's Commission (Lai, Au, and Cheung 1997). The Sex Discrimination Ordinance, enacted in 1995, together with the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission in 1996 and the Women's Commission in 2001, shows societal recognition of women's equal status and the formalization of women's needs and concerns on the political agenda.

One of the landmark events that demonstrates the recognition of gender equality value is the overthrowing of the customary inheritance

practice in the New Territories. Before 1994, lineages in rural Hong Kong were allowed to preserve their patriarchal structure and customs with the New Territories Ordinance. Patrilineality was taken as the organizing principle of the lineages in the New Territories (Hayes 2003). Lineage elders, who had the power to make decisions on matters of security and conduct of lineage members, were all men. They oversaw familial matters, such as adoption of children, division of family property, and taking in husbands for widows; when disputes arose in the lineage or family, they were the ones to mediate (Hayes 2003). While men were considered socialized individuals who could grow and accumulate new responsibilities and rights, women were considered outsiders and were not incorporated into their husbands' lineage (Jones 1995; Watson 1986). Women thus enjoyed no inheritance rights or right to participate in lineage rituals (Watson 1981; Wong 2000).

In late 1993, some indigenous rural women, backed by women's groups such as the Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres and the Hong Kong Christian Council, fought for their inheritance rights (Wong 2000). The women's groups framed the movement as a conflict between male dominance and women's rights by adopting the discourses of human rights and gender equality to attract wider public support (Stern 2005). When the Legislative Council passed the New Territories Ordinance (Amendment) in 1994, granting rural women the right of inheritance, this movement was constructed and understood as a triumph of women's rights and gender-equal values over conservative gender practice and ideas. However, these indigenous women did not aim to change the patrilineal inheritance system but only wanted to pursue their rights to inherit their fathers' properties because they wanted to keep the properties within the family and to avoid them falling into the hands of more distant relatives who would sell them out (Chan 1995). Rather than reprimanding the patrilineal system, these women blamed individual relatives for taking their fathers' properties without returning any financial benefits to their fathers (Merry and Stern 2005). Thus, in practice, the indigenous women's thinking and agitations did not shake the patrilineal system (Chan 1995).

From this, we can see that although gender equality has become a widely recognized value in the city, in practice, gender inequality is still in play. Even in 2015, only 50.8 % of the female population was economically

active, whereas 68.7 % of the male population was in the labour force (Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong 2016). Higher education and well-paid jobs are predominantly male spheres (Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong 2016). In 2015, the median monthly wage among females was HK$13,000, whereas that of males was HK$16,700 (Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong 2016). A high proportion of male employees worked as professionals and at the management level, which had higher salaries, whereas female employees were more numerous in clerical and elementary occupations (Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong 2016). Even among people with the same educational level, gender disparity in employment earnings still exists (Lee et al. 2009). In the family, although men take up more domestic duty when women participate in the labour force (Tsang 1994), with less income than men, women still assume the majority of house chores and child care despite their employment status (Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong 1990; Lit et al. 1991; Lee et al. 2009). The social expectation that successful women should manage both their family and careers well further added to the reason why women across class were responsible for the majority of housework (Choi and Ting 2009; Lee 2002). Women's familial duty, in turn, hinders them from bargaining higher wages with employers, resulting in their acceptance of low wages (Lee and Wong 2001).

Paternity in Hong Kong still pretty much follows the conventional path of breadwinner and educator in the twenty-first century. The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (2001) conducted a survey to investigate the expected roles and actual behaviours of fathers. They interviewed 510 fathers aged between 20 and 65 using a structured questionnaire. More than 90 % of them thought that "good" fathers should be able to bring enough income home, should maintain a good marriage relationship, and should be a good role model to children. Yet 23.1 % admitted that they did not have enough time for their children and 16.1 % did not understand their children. However, the desire to have more time for family and children did not come first for these fathers. They gave priority to economic provision for the family (23.4 %) and their worry about unemployment came above all other worries (31.9 %). Although fathers

were reported to be more involved in their children's lives than in the survey done in 1990, conventional fathering practice in the family was still dominant. The focus on the breadwinning role of fathers is more evident among some middle-aged grassroots and unemployed fathers. The Caritas Community Development Service conducted two small-scale research studies on grassroots men and unemployed fathers in 2003 and 2004 respectively (Caritas Community Development Service 2003, 2004). The studies found that the male informants considered economic ability the most important indicator of masculinity. This notion led them to see themselves as losers.

Routine child care is thought to be the maternal domain. A report finds that most fathers thought they should be the household heads and that they did not participate much in child care as they considered it the responsibility of the mother (Lu and He 1996). Fathers in general are passive in supervising children's schoolwork (Yip 1999). Only upon the mother's request or when mothers are not available will fathers get involved. Non-custodial divorced fathers only provide financial support for their children and tend to be detached from them after separation, because they feel inadequate with regard to child care and do not want to bother with it (Kwan 2005).

Gender-Insensitive Family Policy

The postcolonial government in Hong Kong played an important role in maintaining conventional gender order within the family. Despite its gender mainstreaming effort and the establishment of official institutions responsible for gender equality and women's issues, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) government was gender-insensitive in its policies and held conventional gender beliefs (Liong 2016).[3] For instance, a government television commercial urges divorced nonresident

[3] The Special Administrative Region (SAR) is a territory under the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which is a highly autonomous state with its own government, policies, legislature, monetary system, and substantial external relations. Hong Kong became an SAR after the change of sovereignty from the United Kingdom to the PRC in 1997.

fathers to pay alimony to support their children. It shapes the image of "responsible" fatherhood by defining it in terms of economic provision:

> Dad: As a parent, I naturally care about my kids.
> I want them to grow up in a happy and healthy environment.
> After my divorce, even though the kids don't live with me, I still do my best to take care of them.
> Voice-over: Be a caring parent, pay maintenance on time.[4]

According to the commercial, the way for a responsible father to take care of his children is to provide for them financially. The construction of masculinity with economic provision is reproduced in the government's discourse.

Also in the government's discourse, the family was constructed and upheld as the basic unit of the society, which was responsible for many social problems. It set up the Family Council to coordinate different government's policies to fit the goal of strengthening the family-oriented value and to oversee the different commissions dedicated to different groups of people, such as women, the elderly, and youth. The rationale was that if family was carrying out its function, every member would be satisfied and there would be no social problems. Yet the mentality that social problems would not exist if everyone valued their family ignores the structural factor in causing those social problems, and reflects that the government is not willing to bear its responsibility.

The SAR government promoted family-oriented values to society by adopting the discourse of Confucianism to promote self-reliance and dependence on the extended family (Jones 2001). Inherited from its colonial predecessor, the SAR government is dedicated to laissez-faire economic policies and low government expenditure (Petersen 2009). As a result, the family has to bear the majority of the responsibility of taking care of the economic and psychological needs of its members, which is thought to be reasonable under Confucian ideology. This means moving the caring burden for both the elderly and children from the government to women

[4] The text and video of the commercial, "Pay maintenance," can be found at http://www.isd.gov.hk/eng/tvapi/payer_1e.html.

in the family. For instance, when it is suggested that the elderly should be taken care of by family members rather than going to a hospice or home for the aged, under the conventional family arrangement, the responsibility of caring for the elderly is delegated to the women. In addition, the limited provision of government-funded childcare facilities exclusively for extremely poor families or families with marital or health problems push the majority of women to be responsible for the welfare of each individual member of the family (Kwok et al. 1997). Women thus have to endure a double or even triple burden (Association for the Advancement of Feminism 1990).

Despite the contribution of women to the family, their efforts in the private sphere as housewives or double-burdened women are not recognized by society (Lai, Au, and Cheung 1997). Housewives bear stigmatized identities in Hong Kong (Ho 2007a, b). Even worse, a family itself may not be safe for its contributing members. According to the Social Welfare Department (2005), 84.3 % of domestic violence victims were women. One in four women had been a victim of domestic violence (Man and Bok 2013). Domestic violence cases, however, are often downplayed in society as an argument or quarrel between wife and husband due to lack of communication (Lai, Au, and Cheung 1997). Without considering the power dynamic within the family, a family-oriented attitude itself perpetuates the subordination of women.

The assumption of solidarity and sharing of the same interests among family members across gender and age has been strongly challenged by feminists (Ferree 1990). It hides women's subordination within the patriarchal family structure. When the existence of power relations within the family is not acknowledged, the promotion of family harmony simply results in the submission and sacrifice of women (Ha 2008). The SAR government's manipulation of family values without considering gender relation and power simply reflects its intention to escape from providing welfare to the citizens and lack of dedication to eradicate gender inequality within family and in society alike.

Fatherhood in Hong Kong Today

Despite the dominance of conventional familial discourse, because of changing social conditions, fatherhood in Hong Kong is gradually transforming. Divorce is becoming more prevalent in contemporary Hong Kong. In 1981, there was only 0.29 divorce case per 1000 population (Census and Statistics Department 2012). In 2015, per 1000 population, there were 2.88 cases of divorce (Census and Statistics Department 2016). There are more and more single fathers (from 11,907 in 1996 to 17,665 in 2011) (Census and Statistics Department 2016), and they face particular problems because of their gender. Because they have to look after their children, without much childcare support, most of these single fathers cannot find suitable jobs and have to rely on social security, which makes them feel inferior (Chen and Yu 2005). As the construction of masculinity is still surrounding economic provision, a father who is jobless and lives on social security is considered unmanly. Research indicates that the gender conception of single fathers has an impact on their fathering. Masculine fathers were found to be less affective with children, and showed less fulfilment in assuming the caring role when compared with androgynous and feminine fathers (Yue 1994). Only feminine fathers who placed family first did not worry much about their career advancement; this was not the case with masculine or androgynous fathers, who regarded career as being more important (Yue 1994). Most single fathers still hold the belief that they are not as suitable as the mother to look after children, and blame their former spouse for breaking up the family (Chen and Yu 2005). However, a study shows that single fathers indeed performed familial matters better than fathers in two-parent families, except in disciplining children (Wong 2004).

While single fathers are forced to take up the caring role, some fathers in two-parent families willingly take the same path. Although more and more fathers have increased their involvement with their children since the 1990s, with the increasing demand for men to participate in child-rearing, their involvement was mostly restricted to recreational activities with their children (Tsang 1994). Some changes appeared after the millennium when Hong Kong experienced an economic downturn after

the Asian financial crisis, which struck men more severely (Chang et al. 2009). In 2003, the male unemployment rate reached a peak of 9.3 %, four times higher than that in 1997, whereas there were 6.2 % of women being laid off, about three times higher than in 1997 (Census and Statistics Department 2003a, b, 2004). Some men lost their jobs while their wives could luckily keep theirs. Because of the parenting needs in these families that required one of the parents to stay home to take care of the children, the men gave up their job-seeking and their wives became the sole breadwinners. These men called themselves "full-time fathers."

This new kind of fatherhood appeared in the context of an increasing emphasis on parenthood in Hong Kong society. Quality of parenting became a subject of focus in the mass media. Experts on parenting appear in books, newspapers, seminars, and on radio and television programmes to teach people how to be good parents. Two social factors contributed to this phenomenon, namely low birth rate and a competitive economic environment. The birth rate of Hong Kong in recent years is low when compared with developed countries. In 1981, per 1000 women, there were 65.2 live births (Census and Statistics Department 2016). However, in 1991, the number of live births dropped to 45.1 per 1000 women (Census and Statistics Department 2016). In 2015, it was down again to 35.0 per 1000 women (Census and Statistics Department 2016). The average family size dropped steadily from 3.9 in 1982 to 2.9 in 2015 (Census and Statistics Department n.d.-b., 2016). With fewer children, parents are able and willing to put more resources into them.

Parenting attitude is also associated with society's economy. With the economic restructuring in the 1990s that transformed Hong Kong into a society dependent on financial and service industry, employees with higher educational qualifications were in high demand whereas people with a lower educational level could not easily find jobs. The economic downturn triggered by the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001, and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003 further intensified competition in the labour market (The Women's Foundation 2006). Parents thus seek ways to improve their children's achievements in academic results and other extracurricular abilities, so as to make their children more competitive in seeking better schooling to get jobs with higher salaries and better prospects.

With the increasing importance of parenting in contemporary Hong Kong, fathers' involvement starts to increase and the society becomes more accepting towards "full-time fatherhood." Rather than following the conventional stigma that stay-at-home men were lazy, economically dependent, useless, and unmanly, the media discourse portrayed these "full-time fathers" as loving and caring men who sacrificed their career for the sake of the family and children (Liong 2015c). Although these men actually follow the path that is regarded as natural for women, they enjoy a far more positive media representation than housewives who bear derogatory labels (Liong 2015c). Nonetheless, these "full-time fathers" are exceptional because men only comprise about 2.7 % of all home-makers in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department 2016). In addition, despite the supportive media message, in reality these fathers often had to endure social and gender discrimination and they needed some time to overcome their own psychological obstacles in becoming a house husband and a full-time father.[5] They even had to tediously explain their decision to their friends and relatives.

Men's Movement in the Family Context

In addition to the media being supportive to stay-at-home fatherhood, Hong Kong has a men's centre advocating involved fatherhood to the public—the Love and Help Centre (LHC).[6] It is a social service agency in Hong Kong that targets at male clients and promotes the "new good man" notion. According to the LHC, new good men should not only bring money home but should also be caring, be leaders and protectors of the family, be good role models to their children, and should help develop the potential of their children. They argued that involved fatherhood would bring about positive change in spousal relations and the family, thus women

[5] Some of these fathers have published their experiences, such as Weiyuan Pan, *Fat Dad and Tomato: Happy House-husband* (Hong Kong: Atang Tu Shu 2002) (in Chinese), and Weiming Wang, *Full-time Father: From Shackles to Home* (Hong Kong: Ming Chuang Chu Ban She 2006) (in Chinese).

[6] This is a pseudonym given to the men's centre that I joined in order to carry out participant observation. The adoption of the pseudonym is to protect the privacy of my informants as well as staff of the organization.

and men, children and parents, as well as the larger society, would all benefit from more input from men in parenting. In addition, the LHC argued that the "new good man" notion was in keeping with gender equality because fathers were required to be more caring and to share housework and child care with their wives, thus responding to the claim of the feminists.

The LHC was a non-government organization (NGO) established under a Christian-based social service agency in Hong Kong. Christian values were embedded in their work, especially when it came to family service. In the colonial era, missionaries set up churches, schools, and clinics for the locals and at the same time disseminated Bible teachings to them (Smith 1999). Hong Kong society thus widely accepts Christian family values. The LHC defined a legitimate family as a nuclear family based on heterosexual, monogamous marriage, and believed that it is of utmost importance to the society to keep the family intact.[7] They identified the rising divorce rate, reduction in the size of the family, higher employment rate among women, and prevalence of dual-career parents to be factors that can break up the family.[8]

The LHC originated from two counselling groups for men who themselves had extramarital affairs or had wives with extramarital affairs. Later the two groups expanded to become several family service units jointly providing a range of services to men. With an aim to "preserve and strengthen the family as a unit" and to create and maintain "harmony" in the nuclear family, meaning that family members should love one another and avoid conflict, the LHC provided a family counselling service for couples to help them develop attitudes and techniques that would bring about a conflict-free relationship. Although they acknowledged that divorce was on the rise, they considered divorce as breaking up the family. The "broken family" had to be avoided, and so separation could only be the final resort for marital

[7] Because of protecting the privacy of my informants, I do not cite the source here. On the LHC's website of marriage and family support service, it states clearly that "a good marriage or family relation is inevitable element in creating a prosperous society." Moreover, pictures showing families on the website only comprise the father, mother, and children, implying LHC's definition of the family as heterosexual and monogamous.

[8] The original statement on the LHC's website of family service is: "Any political, economic or social change would have tremendous influence on the family. Social phenomena such as rising divorce rate, decreasing birth rate, and increase in women's employment which leads to continuous increase of dual-earner parents result in family problems of different scales."

problems. The LHC's strategy was to offer courses for men who were facing marital problems or were thinking about divorce, to guide them to think seriously about their divorce decision. It was again a measure to save the nuclear family, even though divorce was admitted to be a legitimate way out. All in all, the LHC defined a normal and ideal family as heterosexual, monogamous, and with children, which they called the "complete family."

To protect the "complete family," the LHC urged men to assume their family role as husbands and fathers through creating an environment of mutual support for their participants. The LHC emphasized that men were capable of facing challenges from both their career and their family, and that men needed other men to share their worries and needs (especially emotional needs). The LHC's courses and workshops included teaching men how to be good fathers, how to manage stress, how to fulfil emotional needs, and how to be close to their spouses. They also organized self-help discussion groups for men.

In addition, the LHC aimed to promote a positive image of men in the family context (e.g., "Men can be caring husbands and responsible fathers"), which was part of their campaign to advocate public support for men to be involved in the family. They organized an annual celebration to promote the "new good man" notion among their members and to the general public. Activities in this celebration, such as carnival, stage performance, dinner, and hiking, encouraged fathers to enjoy being involved with their children and to value the personal growth that they themselves experienced in fatherhood. The LHC also organized seminars to explore the direction and development of the conception of manhood and fatherhood in Hong Kong. Moreover, they collaborated with the business sector and the media in their advocacy campaign. The LHC had once worked with a commercial enterprise to insert a caring husband image in its television commercials. Apart from promoting the product, the commercials could advertise the "new good man" notion to the public. Throughout the year, the centre invited individual members to share their personal stories with local newspapers and television programmes, thereby displaying the "good role models" from the centre to promote the fact that men could be caring fathers and loving husbands. With this close connection with the media, some of the centre's social workers became opinion leaders on men's issues.

Conclusion: New Wine in Old Bottles

In this chapter, I review the socio-historical development of gender and family in Hong Kong from the nineteenth century to the present time. Male-dominant ideology in Hong Kong has been preserved by government policy, culture, and specific economic and political conditions, and thus has not faced severe challenge. After 1997, the postcolonial government intended to construct Chinese national identity through identifying Confucianism as the major discursive resource (Chiu and Wong 2005) and emphasizing the importance of familial responsibility and harmony rather than individual rights.[9] The emphasis of Confucianism and familial responsibility matches the government's aim of imposing tighter social control among Hong Kong citizens (Chiu and Wong 2005). Male dominant values and gender hierarchy underlying Confucianism are not questioned but taken for granted.

The contemporary Hong Kong family becomes a site for perpetuating the conventional gender order. Women continue to be primary caregivers. Men, who are defined as the economic providers, have to subordinate themselves under the neoliberal market economy to provide for their families. This is particularly true for working-class men who have less bargaining power in the labour market. They often go into financial and identity crisis once their skills are no longer needed in the market. As Hong Kong is dependent on the global capitalist economy, its control over the demand for labour is very limited. With inadequate welfare, the insecure and fluctuating economic condition and the expectation of breadwinning make men vulnerable.

The economic downturn after 1997 and the subsequent high unemployment rate struck men by removing their economic dominance. Although

[9] The chair of the Family Council stated that family responsibility and harmony were Chinese tradition. The message of the chair of the Family Council can be found at http://www.familycouncil.gov.hk/english/home/home_chairman.htm (accessed 1 June 2013).

In addition, in 2010, the Secretary for Home Affairs mentioned that the government aimed to reinforce Confucian familial values in response to the request from the lawmakers to promote Confucianism. Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, *Legislative Council: The Speech of the Secretary for Home Affairs in Response to Question on "Promoting Confucianism"* (Available at: http://www.hab.gov.hk/file_manager/tc/documents/publications_and_press_releases/20100113_SHA_YKC_TC.pdf accessed on 1 June 2013). (in Chinese).

some men transformed themselves into primary caregivers, the majority struggled to stay as breadwinners to keep their masculine power. Against the patriarchal background in Hong Kong society, the rise of women's status and the increase of divorce were considered a threat to the conventional family and fatherhood. This worry triggered the dominant gender class to gather force. A men's movement in the name of family protection appeared, in order to restore men's position within the conventional family.

The narrow conception of gender equality in Hong Kong society contributes to the slow progress of transforming gender relation within the family. Because liberal feminism, which focuses on the same treatment and equal opportunity for women and men in the public domain, is the dominant perspective in Hong Kong's understanding of gender relations, other feminist perspectives, such as radical feminism, which urges the complete eradication of patriarchal social norms, are lacking in Hong Kong. Hence, the rise of women's economic status is often taken to mark that gender equity has been achieved in society, which masks the need to eradicate oppressive gender values within the family. This has led to the continuation of the normalized and naturalized male-dominant values and practices in the family.

Therefore, even when fathers become more involved with their children or more fathers become primary caregivers, it may not indicate a gender-equal move. It may just come out of necessity (e.g., absence of the mother) or out of the notion of involved parenting to produce "successful" children. Gender equality has not been given a top priority in the patriarchal city. Within this context, family in Hong Kong is largely a manifestation of conventional gender ideology, even though it seems to have put on some new clothes, such as the notion of "full-time fatherhood" or "new good man."

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3

Power of Invisible Care

When my informants talked about the responsibility of fathers, the most important aspect was considered to be breadwinning, or providing for the family and children. This was not a surprise to me, because in both the Chinese traditional notion of manhood and in the popular notion of the neoliberal society of Hong Kong, men are expected to thrive in their career to bring money home and women to take care of children at home.

Economic provision is the conventional masculine code for demonstrating love to children (Hyde et al. 1993; Silverstein 1996). This discourse was prevalent among many of my informants. Since industrialization, the dichotomy of "home versus workplace" has existed, resulting in the physical and psychological separation of work from home in contemporary society (Levant and Pollack 1995). Therefore, when fathers are undertaking their labour of love to financially support their beloved children, their contribution is invisible to their loved ones (Saracho and Spodek 2008). A father's love towards his children is indeed an "invisible love." This "invisible love" justifies the father's breadwinning role and legitimizes the father's absence from taking care of children and from

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most of his children's life (Hewlett 2000; Pleck 1981; Pleck and Lang 1978).

This chapter is aimed at examining the naturalized notion and practice of economic provision among fathers. Almost all fathers interviewed in this project considered economic provision their natural duty. Hence it forms an important part of the hegemonic acceptance of the category of men in the family context. It brings about economic capital that can be transformed into other capital that benefits the family. Fathers are expected to bring money home to satisfy the family's material, psychological, and developmental needs. In the discursive realm, breadwinning is taken for granted as an exclusive contribution of men. It thus contributes to men's power over women because men's employment is regarded and associated with the main economic support to the family whereas women's income is considered temporary and supplementary (Potuchek 1997). Fathers' focus on work and absence from the household duty and caregiving are therefore justified by the structural demand for them to be breadwinners and the material benefits their work can bring to their families.

As a result, economic provision forms an important part of the hegemonic gender order that produces and reproduces systematic distinctions between men who are breadwinners and women and men who are not. It not only maintains distinction of paternity from maternity, but also signifies men's capability and achievement. Men who cannot provide for their families often feel inferior. Yet some compensate their children's lack of material benefit with caregiving and emotional closeness, whereas others strive hard to get back to work. In other words, crisis situations that hinder some fathers in fulfilling this masculine demand can trigger reflexivity towards this definition of manhood; but not every father changes his masculine habitus. It all depends on the available capital and the individual's interpretation of the meaning of fatherhood.

Economic Provision as Masculine Achievement

While waged work defines a man's ability and is an important criterion of manhood (Acker 1992; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 2003), economic provision is considered the primary responsibility of the father. In the field of the family, the sense of economic responsibility comes from the masculine habitus that men feel the urge and motivation to earn more money when they know they are going to be fathers. Almost all fathers interviewed in the two studies, regardless of social class background, began their fatherhood with the thinking that their primary responsibility was economic provision.

> Some think that success means having a job which can provide for the family. I agree with it . . . Meeting children's needs is my criterion to judge whether I am successful or not (Calvin).

Because economic provision is the natural and most important paternal responsibility, fathers who are unemployed show reluctance to have children:

> My first child was an accident. I was unemployed at that time. When my wife told me she was pregnant, I had thought of not having the child. However, my father encouraged me not to give up the child. He said that I should take up my father role no matter how hard it was. He himself was poor and worked very hard to raise us. I was finally convinced by him and decided to bear the father's duty (Jones).

The hegemony of men as breadwinners means that men's income should contribute to the majority of the family income as they are the one to support the family (Potuchek 1997). Hence, even in dual-earner families, men are expected to shoulder a larger proportion of the family expenses because of their breadwinning role:

> We divide the family expense into different items. Those big ones are mine: paying the mortgage of the apartment, domestic worker's salary, school fee, and occasional expenses like travelling. Grocery, my wife

> knows well. Grocery is hers. She also pays for our daughter's extra-curricular activities (Fred).

Within the Chinese kinship system, family is a corporate entity in which members of the group can have a share of the jointly owned property and shared resources in the economic aspect (Watson 1982). While the father is the legitimate family head and financial manager in charge of economic affairs in the family, managing the family well means, above all, taking care of the material well-being of the members. His foremost task is to provide for the family members. Therefore, family is often cited as the main reason for the father's hard work in breadwinning. For example, Paul, a 50-year-old, middle-class father, said,

> For men, it is simple. When you have wisdom, experience, interpersonal network, and work opportunity, it's not a problem to earn your living. When you earn enough for your family, your family is stable.

Sunny also said:

> The [father's] duty is to make your family not worry about their living. So fathers have to work hard to earn more money[. . .]If I have no family burden, I will not be that hard-working.

Therefore, the common reaction of men knowing that they were going to be fathers was being more motivated in their work. Goethe, a 50-year-old married father, was a home-maker when I met him. He used to be a factory worker, working in the same factory as his wife. Goethe's two daughters, before they attended kindergarten, were taken care of by Goethe's mother in mainland China and thus lived separately from him and his wife. When asked to recall his early fatherhood, Goethe told me that he was fuelled by his two daughters into carrying out routine factory work:

> Having children made me more motivated in my work. Before having children, I didn't have much motivation. You know, you need to feed them; not only that. You have to spend a lot . . . I worked harder.

As a man who became a father early in life—at the age of 19—Martin faced negative comments and suspicion from others about his fatherhood. He reacted by striving hard to achieve high in economic terms to prove his capability as a father. He described his experience this way:

> As one job could not give me enough money, I did two. I was young then. I didn't know what love was. I got married because my girlfriend was pregnant. I just knew that the child had to be born and I needed to take care of the family by supporting my wife and my child (Martin).

Fathers bring money home not only to satisfy the material needs of their children and families but also to improve their children's health, knowledge, educational qualifications, and standard of living. In other words, economic capital that the father has can be turned into physical, cultural, social, and symbolic capital of the children (Anheier et al. 1995). Through economic provision, fathers could satisfy their spouses and children's needs in various aspects, such as material enjoyment and improving health:

> I brought my children to good restaurants and travelled with them to Korea, Thailand and Taiwan . . . I bought a computer for them very early. I bought them things that were uncommon at that time. I bought karaoke and video game console which cost more than HK$1000 at that time. I wanted them to be satisfied. I gave them the best I could (Martin).
>
> When he was born, my son's health was not good. Someone advised us to give him some food supplements, like bird nest. At that time I could afford it [. . .] Once my son had intestinal problem. That's dangerous. If we delayed the treatment he would die. I was very frightened at that time [. . .] At that time, I could afford to let my son stay in a private hospital. My daughter was also born in a private hospital (Stephen).

Fathers' economic capital also helps build their children's cultural capital—improving their education qualifications and knowledge. For example, Calvin said, "If a father can support his children to finish high school, and to study in college, then he is already successful." Apart from formal schooling, some fathers trained their children to have better sense with fashion by spending money. Dino thought that his daughter did not

have good taste in fashion as she just wanted to buy as many clothes as possible with her limited money. Dino intentionally gave her some extra money to let her buy her own clothes and subsequently criticized the quality and design of them. When she realized that she had made a poor choice, he told her to give them away and accompanied her to buy new ones. Dino thought this would help his daughter learn from experience, so he did not mind spending extra money.

In addition to the tangible benefits derived from economic provision, the act of breadwinning *per se* signifies the ability to provide which is an important symbolic capital for children and a foundational element for masculine identity:

> Work is important to men. Jobless men are often depressed and have low self-esteem. They will become lost. Their children will be humiliated by others because their fathers are jobless. So even though I don't have any financial pressure now as my children have grown up and are now working, I still work as a taxi-driver for three nights a week to prove my ability to work (Jones).

As the economic capital gained through economic provision could be transformed into physical, cultural, and symbolic capital of the children, working-class fathers with limited economic capital sacrificed their own material benefits to leave more economic resources for their children's needs. Cody quit habits that cost him money so as to leave much of his limited income for his family: "Before I got married, I gambled a lot—horse racing, mah-jong, you name it. Now I quit all of them. No gambling, no drinking. I become a good man. I must, otherwise the family would be finished." Henry used to be lavish before he became a father. He spent most of his income on enjoying good food with his friends. But when he had children, especially after his wife left him, taking with her most of his savings, he became frugal in his habits, as he only had limited money from social security. He even secretly worked part-time while receiving social welfare to provide a better life for his daughter:

> Now I have to save as much as I can. For meals, I let my daughter have enough and then I eat the left-over. I choose to walk instead of getting on a public transport in order to save money for my daughter.

In order to improve the living standard of the family, these working-class fathers were willing to sacrifice not only their enjoyment but also their own interests or dreams which could hinder economic provision. Timothy used to be a *dim sum* chef at a Chinese restaurant before divorce, and he worked more than 12 hours a day to earn enough to support his family. He put aside his own dream of owning a restaurant as he did not want to risk losing a stable income for his family. Therefore, when a Chinese restaurant owner offered to sell his restaurant to him because of emigration, he rejected it right away even though he wanted to acquire it very much. He decided he would rather play safe than invest in the risky catering business:

> After my sons were born, I didn't think about my plan any more. I just wholeheartedly provide for the family [. . .] You know, for married people, we are not as aggressive. We place the family first. If I have a job with a monthly income of HK$12,000, I would not dare to change to another with HK$13,000 because it may not be as stable [. . .] When I was still working in the kitchen, I was always worried about how to satisfy my boss. I was afraid that he would fire me. It was hard.

In the field of the family, economic provision can provide fathers with necessary economic capital to satisfy family members' material, educational, and health needs, and to build up the cultural and symbolic capital of their children. In the case of deficiency of economic capital when fathers are out of job or earn little, fathers expect to sacrifice their material benefits and life goals to meet the needs of their family members, children in particular. Economic provision is thus institutionalized as the responsibility and achievement of fatherhood.

Care of the Family

The sacrifice and effort fathers made to satisfy family needs suggests that economic provision is considered a natural way in which they can express their love and care to their spouses and children. As they love their families, they are willing to suffer the hardship to bring money home. Fathers consider economic provision as an important or even the most important criterion in judging whether they are a good parent. The ideology of breadwinning is adopted as part of the father's habitus in shaping his paternity and even his emotional experiences.

Although Vincent considered breadwinning a shared duty between him and his wife before they had children, he told his wife to quit her job when she was pregnant because he was worried about her health and safety. He said that he was willing to take up the role of providing alone, even though it meant that household income was reduced. Being a sole breadwinner was his way to show care for his wife and concern about his children's healthy development. Dominic even put provision and love in parallel to show that his main way to love his children was by breadwinning:

> I wished that our children could grow up healthily. I wanted to provide him economically to show my love to him . . . I think I am a good father. I can earn money to support the family, to give them education and buy what they want.

As part of the habitus, economic provision is not only a natural way to express their care towards their family members but can also be an emotional response when a man faces his paternity. Maurice appeared to me as an aloof and tough man when we first met. What came to his mind immediately after knowing that his wife was pregnant were the expenses needed to raise the child, so he decided to focus on his duty of earning more money. He considered breadwinning as his single most important duty to the extent that he visited his wife for only a short while

after she had given birth and then immediately returned to work. As he thought that taking care of the child was not his job, he would rather focus on his own duty—breadwinning. When asked about his feelings when he knew that his first daughter was born, he said:

> I have to think about how to spend and save money out of my limited wage. [Taking care of] the child comes second. It is different from the view of the mother who places children first [. . .] When my daughter was born, I was working. It seemed that I was not concerned about her. But, you know, the feeling was strange. Other fathers would accompany their wives but I just worked. My wife doubted whether I was concerned about her. Indeed I was not concerned about that aspect. I didn't know how to face my wife and daughter. I could only "fix" my family [economic situation]. I don't know what to do with stuff other than that.

To Maurice, his familial duty was economic provision but not the emotional needs of his wife or children. His habitus produced the spontaneous reaction of worrying about the family expenses and focusing on work, which turned him away from caring about his wife's feelings. The ideology that economic provision was the natural duty of the father made Maurice worry—he was worried that he was not able to fulfil this expectation; therefore, he turned to work to try his best to meet the demand and, at the same time, to escape from anxiety during his transition to a father. Work became his natural response to escape from negative emotions, and at the same time was an acceptable and practical solution to the source of his anxiety:

> Everyone is different in fatherhood. I was also worried and nervous but did not express it. I continued to work and did my duty. I did not concern much about the feelings of my wife [. . .] My wife chose to give birth in a private hospital which cost us a lot . . . Anyway, I had to pay even though it was expensive.

When the emotions of worry and anxiety signify weakness and vulnerability which are not compatible with manliness (Bennett et al. 2007; Jakupcak et al. 2003), non-emotional economic provision was a

spontaneous and natural way out, as directed by the masculine habitus to escape from these "weak emotions."

Socio-Economic and Class Factor on Economic Provision

The hegemony of men as economic providers is further reinforced by contemporary socio-economic conditions. Since the colonial era, Hong Kong has always been a market-oriented capitalistic society that upholds self-reliance and minimal governmental assistance (Chui and Ko 2011). This neoliberal market ideology and the lack of a decent welfare system leads to strong reliance on the family to take care of its own members' welfare (Chan 1998). The father, as the head of the family, is expected to defend the welfare and benefits of his spouse and children. With this responsibility in mind, men work hard to safeguard their job and economic providing power in the competitive labour market (Leung and Chan 2014). However, the nature of work in contemporary society, such as heavy workload, long and inflexible working hours, and extension of work to family, assumes individuals to be independent and free from family duties, and thus makes it difficult for fathers to be involved parents (Hojgaard 1997). Such socio-economic conditions form and perpetuate men's habitus of strong pursuing of work-related achievements and qualifications, which normalizes the situation that men are being squeezed dry by their work.

Wishing to earn more money after being a father, Anson looked for jobs but could not find a suitable one because he did not have a college degree and was at mid-life; hence large companies which offer stable jobs and better pay did not want him whereas small companies were so bounded by their limited budget and adverse economic environment that they could not expand or offer him a decent salary. Therefore, Anson started his own business of recycling and spent much time on it:

> I have been doing my present business of green products for one year or so. When my daughter was born, I was working in a moulding company. I wanted to earn more money but it's difficult to find a job. So I chose to start my own business . . . I go to work every day at 9am. The working hour ends at 6pm but I normally leave at 8–9pm.
>
> On weekdays, I seldom interact with my daughter [. . .] I need to work at home. I have to put more efforts in my work as I am still finding a way out with my career.

When his sons were small, Burt had much construction work to do because Hong Kong's economy was soaring. Burt only assumed a subsidiary role in taking care of his sons, especially after his wife became a full-time mother. Work had hindered him from paying as much attention as his wife could.

> I was working as a construction worker at that time [when my eldest son was born]. The pay was quite good. I had many jobs to do. From one construction work to another, I might only need to wait for ten days or two weeks, and then I could quickly get another job. Also there were a lot of temporary jobs. So at that time, it was easier to earn money [. . .] Sometimes, when I got home from work and I saw [my wife] cooking, I would help her feed [my son] [. . .] He often cried in the middle of the night. Then my wife attended to him. Since I worked, I did not do that.

Sunny invested much time on his work because of his low educational qualifications and subsequent lack of bargaining power in the competitive labour market. He was afraid that taking leave to attend to family matters would leave a bad impression on his supervisor, and therefore only went to the hospital after work to see his new-born daughter and his wife. He also felt the pressure to do further study in order not to be eliminated by the market-driven society:

> If I didn't further study at night, I would have remained as a factory worker now. I might be able to be promoted as technician in the factory, but what would have happened to me when the factory moved to mainland China? What could I do then? Actually some of my friends who had worked in the factory became security guards. So at that time, I only had economic

consideration in my head. Not only for a short time but for the future. Now, I kind of regret [about not spending enough time with my children] but could I manage work, study, and taking care of my kids at the same time? That's easier said than done!

With low educational qualifications, Samuel had few choices but to work in the demanding logistics industry. Because of the intense commercial activities between Hong Kong and mainland China, he had to work very long hours and therefore had no experience of taking care of young children:

When my daughters were small, my working hour was long. In the logistic industry, we need to work until late at night, until 11pm and 12am, and I needed to leave home at 6–7 in the morning. Children seldom had chance to talk to me. In a commercial city like Hong Kong, we just cannot spend much time with our children due to the demand of our work [. . .] When my daughters were young, I was seldom at home. I was busy all the time.

The fathers discussed above came from a working-class background. Comparatively, they did not have much bargaining power in the competitive labour market and had to work long hours to earn enough for the family. When they defined their fatherhood in relation to economic provision, their dedication and hard work in their jobs or businesses granted them economic capital. They tended to feel particularly satisfied and proud for being sole breadwinners of the family. Being able to provide for the family becomes a sense of achievement for working-class men:

My family has four members, two kids. My wife does not work, so my income is to support the whole family. I have satisfied the requirement to be a successful man. I am proud (Tony).

I try my best to balance both work and family. I think I am doing both, work and taking care of my family. I am doing fine. Since we got married and had a kid, [my wife] quit her job because there must be someone to take care of the kid, to take care of the family. Another one has to bring money home. The breadwinner should focus on work and squeeze time to take care of the kids (Cody).

When fathers could satisfy this expectation to improve their families' material benefits and cultural capital of their children, they were less likely to reflect upon this hegemonic model of fathering. Only when they experienced crisis situations such as distant relations with their children later in life, faced the loss of their spouses, or when they lost economic power, would they feel the need to be more involved with their children. I will discuss reflexivity on economic provision among fathers during a crisis in the last section of this chapter, entitled "Habitus and Reflexivity in Crisis Situations."

The vast majority of the middle-class fathers interviewed in the two studies did not mention any hardship or struggle in their economic provision or work. Even though they also considered economic provision as their primary paternal responsibility, they did not feel it was particularly stressful because their jobs were more stable and with higher pay. Some even commented that their fatherhood and work were complementary:

> My job [as a social worker] is not a big obstacle [to my fatherhood], rather I consider it useful to my fatherhood. Some years ago, I had to write some essays. Some newspapers invited me to write about my fatherhood. In the writing process, I reflected on my experience as a father and helped myself grow. That's helpful. Also, [as a facilitator] in the fathers' group, I heard some advice for me to improve my fathering. So my work is helpful to my parenthood and not an obstacle (Leo).

In addition, middle-class fathers had shorter or more flexible working hours than their working-class counterparts, so they had more time at home and could see their children for a longer period and more frequently. Nevertheless, they did not consider caregiving as one of their major fathering duties, regardless of whether their wives were employed. They focused on turning their economic capital into the cultural and social capital of their children, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Some of them insisted on having their own lives or pursuing advancement in their careers, and thus did not feel the need to be more involved with their children. Dominic thought that work and friends were as important as the family, and he was not willing to abandon either part of his life:

> [My sons] want me to spend more time with them and so I have more difficulty in further study or going out with my friends. But I try my best to balance family and friends. It's not possible to just hang out with my friends and leave my family. It's also not possible to just spend time with my family and leave my friends (Dominic).

Thinking that he could not do anything when his wife was giving birth to his son and that engagement in the public sphere was more important, Daniel went to a bowling competition and visited his wife only afterwards. He thought that his role was to provide and therefore put his work first, including working-related activity:

> After I sent my wife to the hospital, I had to go to work. My son was about to come out but I still had to work. Even after my son was born, that evening, I could not go to visit my wife immediately after work. Why? I needed to represent my company in a bowling competition. It's my first time to play bowling but I got a medal. I told people that it's the luck brought by my son [. . .] Once I promise people something, I will definitely keep my promise unless in some very exceptional circumstances. My son was born already and I needed not to go to the hospital so urgently. I couldn't help in the delivery. I didn't know how to take care of him and feed him. So going there earlier or later made no difference.

Leo thought that his work was an important part of his identity and could not be replaced by fatherhood. Although he did take on some share of house chores and did respond to his children's requests, he prioritized work over his fatherhood. He did not associate his priority on work with job security or income, but with his life goal and achievement, which was his symbolic capital:

> Now, after I return home and having done the housework, I have to work in front of the computer to plan the activities and write some memos. That's not an obstacle between me and my children. No matter what I am doing, they will come to me. When they ask me, if I can't immediately answer them, they will wait for me [. . .] Is this affecting my fatherhood? It probably is but not much. Life is like that. You have a lot of stuff to deal with [. . .] I have my career. My children are just a part of my life. I still have other things to deal with.

Economic Provision as Taken-for-granted Privilege

The naturalized responsibility of economic provision leads fathers to give priority to their work and their public engagement. Compared with mothers, fathers tend to have more freedom to choose their level of involvement in the family. With the difficult and highly competitive socio-economic environment and the lack of a family-friendly social policy (Shae and Wong 2009), work and family demands are incompatible. In such a context, when fathers choose to focus on their work, they are less likely to be involved with their children. Many fathers just took it for granted to focus on work and excused themselves from caregiving, leaving it all to the mother, who was considered the caregiver and often had to sacrifice her career:

> [When my kids were small,] I was working in the construction site. Except working in the daytime, I had to socialize in the evening. So most of my time was spent on work. I had neglected my family [. . .] I didn't have close relationships with my kids. When I came home, they were already asleep. Before they got up, I had gone already . . . Two-thirds of a month was like that (Toby).

The hegemony of men as economic providers justifies men's inclination towards work as normal and natural, and thus legitimizes fathers' privilege of making choices between family, friends, work, and further study—they are not bound to take care of children. Even though he is aware that his work would reduce the time he can share with his children, the father does not experience any guilty feeling towards the priority he places on work and other life aspects. This indicates the naturalization of prioritizing public engagements in the habitus, and help from the mother to do the caregiving task further reinforces this habitus. On the contrary, working women often report feeling guilty about neglecting their children (Blair-Loy 2009; Inkson et al. 2007), and many mothers are being deprived of opportunities to be engaged in the public world because of their housework and caring duties. Some fathers recognized their privileged positions but did not reflect upon the inequality:

> Mother's role is more toilsome because it is restrictive. For example, I can further study. If I hadn't further studied, how could I get a high-paid job that gave me autonomy, friends, and time to do volunteer work? Does my wife have a chance to further study or to take up an internship? It's impossible. Pregnancy and the tedious childcare work are really toilsome and require attention nearly 24 hours a day (Paul).

Sunny also mentioned the privilege of achieving in the public sphere he enjoyed from the gender order. He realized that his focus on work was partly sustained by his wife's sacrifice of her work and her role of caregiver:

> [My wife] quit her job and became a housewife to take care of my elder daughter, since she did not earn much although I did not earn much either ... If I hadn't taken up evening school, I would only be a factory worker too.

As Sunny mentioned that he and his wife earned similar wages at the time of pregnancy, the gender division of labour and the subsequent further study opportunity were not decided out of a practical reason of earning power but because of the gender order and the hegemony of men in the field of family.

Gender inequality within the family is not unknown to society but instead of seeing it as unfair and changing it, the mainstream discourse in Hong Kong celebrates the conventional gender division by praising the mother for her toil and sacrifice, especially on Mother's Day. Even though Paul and Sunny realized the restrictions their wives had, they did not find this problematic. They considered the gender division of labour within the family natural and normal.

In addition, women's taken-for-granted practices of quitting their jobs and assuming full-time caregiving make the hegemony of men as breadwinners possible. Even though women sometimes complained about a lack of help from their husbands, the fact that they continued to shoulder all the caregiving responsibility and demanded men bring more money home reproduces the hegemony of men to focus on their work and become distant from the family. For example, Nick shared that his wife encouraged him to pursue his career:

> My wife told me, "I will quit my job after five years, so you have to work until 60. You have to work hard." I am willing to do so because I want to work, to have some achievements [. . .] Men can't stay in the same position for 20 years because others' comments, your own evaluation of yourself, and your wife's remarks would discourage you to do so.

Moreover, in order to allow the father to go to work, not only does the mother have to take up the father's share of housework and parenting, but all family members are also asked to adapt to the father's work plan. Because of Willy's work and later the establishment of his business, the entire family had to move to mainland China to be able to stay together. Even though his wife also had a full-time job, Willy's work took a higher priority. He explained his theory on family to me:

> Because I did business in mainland China at that time, my whole family moved there. This is rare. Usually it's the husband who stays there alone. But I thought that if my work needed me to stay in mainland China, I needed the whole family to go there. I couldn't lose my family for work, so we went together until my son was one or two years old. It's a very special experience [. . .] My wife quit her job and followed me to mainland China. Family is our first priority, more important than work.

Although Willy claimed that he placed family above work, what happened was his wife gave up her work to accompany him to mainland China whereas Willy considered it natural for his wife and children to follow him. The interests of other family members were subsumed in the career interest of the father.

Nevertheless, because some fathers valued their familial relationship, and out of practical consideration, they were willing to take up more house chores and caregiving tasks. When I met Samuel, he was a father of two grown-up daughters and an 11-year-old son. Samuel had focused on his breadwinning role earlier in his fatherhood and had not been involved in taking care of his two daughters at all. His wife got cancer after she gave birth to the youngest son. After his wife died, he had to take care of his son who was still small. Hence he was willing to work with less pay and shorter working hours so that he could spend more time with his son. He said:

> The working hour [of my present job] is not long. The pay isn't much but I like [the job] because it is stable and gives me time to take care of my son [. . .] Sometimes, if there isn't much work, I can have a day off on Saturdays. Then I can have extra-curricular activities with my son, like playing football or table-tennis.

However, the fact that these fathers were willing to earn less or even sacrifice their career advancement did not mean that they could give up their work and economic provision altogether. After all, they were fathers who could provide for their families. Economic provision still came first and the sharing of house chores and caregiving was a bonus for being a "good" father and husband, demonstrating the hegemony of men as economic providers:

> To be a good husband, a good father, first of all, you need to have a job. At least you can provide an acceptable living standard to your family. After basic necessities, then it is ownership of an apartment [. . .] After the child is born, you need to take care of the education expenses [. . .] To be a good man in the family, you should do whatever job you can do, and do house chores like cleaning and cooking [. . .] When our kid was studying at primary school, both me and my wife were working. So whoever woke up earlier would do the grocery and cook [. . .] At that time, my wife often worked till late at night [. . .] So it was me to look after our kid more often, I cooked more often [. . .] I helped my kid to take a shower (Louis).

Even though these fathers participated in caregiving, they did not abandon economic provision. The hegemony of breadwinning in fatherhood demonstrates the dispositional feature of the habitus. Even though the actors take up caregiving duties and realize the unfairness of the structure, the habitus makes it difficult for the social actor to give up on the structural norm. Practices outside the habitus become unthinkable to them, unless in crisis situations.

Habitus and Reflexivity in Crisis Situations

While all fathers interviewed in the two studies considered economic provision their primary and natural responsibility, some fathers encountered life or family crises that pushed them to reflect on their economic provider role. They either chose or were forced to leave their work and stay at home. However, removal from the provider role did not mean that these men readily accepted alternative definitions of manhood and fatherhood. Some fathers who embraced the economic provider role so much that they chose to give up their paternity when they could no longer be economic providers.

Simon used to own a renovation company which gave him high earning power. He could afford bigger and bigger apartments for his family and even ended up living in a house. At that time, he just wanted to make his business bigger and bigger, and therefore always socialized with managers and bosses of other companies to increase his network and business opportunities. This made his relationship with his wife distant:

> I didn't think about my wife then. Never. I didn't think from her perspective. She didn't like to go out with me but she told me she felt bored at home. Then I told her to learn something. She had learnt feng shui, spending almost HK$300,000. I pay the fee because I could afford it then. I could only satisfy her in that way. Gradually, we talked less and less. But I didn't feel stressed or find it problematic at all. I had a lot of money. No problem at all.

However, later the management of his company went wrong and financial problems arose. He began to take out loans to pay his workers and went broke when he found that he could no longer pay back the loans. As the economic provider of the family, Simon then took up many different jobs, such as chef, masseur, and cleaner, despite that he found it really hard to accept his fall of social status. He wept and could not talk for a while when he described his work experiences after bankruptcy:

> Cleaning the kitchen [in a club] is surely hard. But I quit not because it was tough but because they asked me to go out to collect the dishes. I knew a lot of people going to that club. I didn't want to meet them again. [They might say,] "Oh, you are now washing dishes here?" I used to be rich and . . . (weeping).

Thinking back on his experience, he attributed his business failure to the time when he put down his business and took care of his sick wife and their new-born:

> Well . . . actually after my wife gave birth to our child, I didn't go out for some time. At that time, our relationship became better. When my wife was pregnant for 7–8 months, she called me when I was drinking with some people. She said she had intense pain in her belly. Later on, we found that there was a tumour in her uterus [. . .] So she had a C-section and then a surgery to remove her uterus [. . .] After that, I stayed at home most of the time for nearly one to two years. This was a turning point as it affected my business. I didn't go out with people, so they found some other companies [. . .] My business went down and affected my cash flow.

At that time when he spent more time at home, he did all the house chores and caregiving together with a domestic worker. Although he enjoyed doing house chores, he still regarded economic provision his primary responsibility: "I think men have to work after all. You can't depend on women to support you. That's absolutely not possible." Therefore, he focused on his work again after his son was nearly two years old to try to save his business. Then his relationship with his wife turned bad again and she finally proposed a divorce. Simon was broke at that time and did not fight for the custody of his son because he could not be economic provider:

> I don't have any stress now. I live on social security . . . I can't give any money to [my ex-wife] now as I have barely enough money to spend. I can't take care of them even if I want to . . . The judge was right [to give the custody to my ex-wife] [. . .] If I am not capable [of providing], me getting the custody is not good to both me and my son. How can I take care of him on my own? I can't manage my economy well and how can I have the time

> and energy to attend to him? [. . .] If I have the money, I can take good care of him and educate him well.

The hegemony of men as economic providers dominated Simon's habitus and made him focus on his work and remain distant from his family. Indeed, Simon could readily take up the primary caregiver role when there was a need, as long as he could still provide for the family. On the contrary, not being able to provide meant he could not be a responsible father and he would rather give up his son's custody and live alone. The crisis of economic provision does not necessarily trigger any reflexivity. Giving up paternity when broke actually reinforces the hegemony of economic provision in fatherhood.

Most men interviewed in the two studies carried on with their fatherhood when facing crisis in economic provision. They either chose to find a way back to breadwinning or negotiated a new fathering identity. Their subjective evaluation of their ability to resume the provider role determines their level of insistence on economic provision as their paternal identity. Paul became a stay-at-home father unwillingly for several years after he suffered a serious heart problem that prevented him from working. He used to be a factory owner and he was proud of his career achievements and high social status. He was therefore frustrated to be at home, thinking that he was a loser. He could not accept right away that he had to economically depend on his wife, so he did not agree to let his wife work. It took him more than one year to accept his caregiving role. He said:

> In those one to two years, my wife didn't go to work [. . .] After I was psychologically prepared, and had learnt how to do all the house chores, I then had the confidence to accept the new role. My wife also gradually adapted to the society. Then we exchanged our roles. After exchanging the roles, it lasted for three to five years. She was a factory worker. She worked for seven hours a day. It's full time.
>
> When I slipped and needed to be a mother, I had to learn and train myself from the very beginning. I had felt that I couldn't manage, and it was hard [. . .] Also, the discrimination from neighbours . . . some friends and colleagues called me to show their concern. But there were people with evil

> hearts [. . .] I used to work hard in the middle level of the society. It's hard to accept the stress. When I look back, I find that it was the hardest time as a father.

His use of the word "slipped" to mean "the fall of status" indicates his sense of inferiority as a stay-at-home father. When he had to stay at home during his recovery from the illness, he prepared himself for returning to work by further studying. After he recovered, he immediately looked for jobs and managed to secure a full-time job in a factory. He strived hard to become the general manager of that factory. After he retired, he continued to take up a consultant position of a trading company. In leisure time, he took up voluntary work to help others overcome life difficulties. He was very satisfied and proud of his achievements in the public sphere.

Willy used to be a project manager in an NGO that provided education to children in remote areas in mainland China. His wife was a full-time teacher in Hong Kong. He had to stay in mainland China frequently and his wife was not at home in the daytime, hence they could only leave their children with a domestic worker. Yet he found that without parents at home taking care of them, his two children got problems. His daughter was depressed because she suffered from dyslexia and could not manage her academic work whereas his son became over-dependent on the domestic worker and became spoilt and rude. Willy thought that if the situation persisted, their family would be in deep trouble. After serious consideration, he decided to quit his job and became a stay-at-home father because his wife had a more stable and well-paid job than he did. At the beginning, Willy found that being a stay-at-home father meant the loss of dignity and self-worth:

> It is hard to face others' responses and comments. People often think I'm weird [. . .] Once I took my daughter to a hospital for assessment of her dyslexia. I was asked by the nurse to fill in a form in which I had to indicate my occupation. This was something that made me feel embarrassed . . . I couldn't say I was a house-wife and there is no such term as house-husband. I finally wrote "full-time father." During the assessment, the nurse asked me, "You mean you are jobless, right?" I felt a bit uneasy but I could understand how she made that comment. I then said I was not jobless but I

> devoted all my time to be a father. Hahaha . . . I think it is actually work, an important work . . . I must have this mentality to manage others' comments because it is easy to feel useless.

Although Willy said that he had the mentality to face the discrimination, he still regarded work crucial to his identity and as a way to prove his contribution and significance. So he had to develop the euphemism "full-time father" to name his stay-at-home father status, mainly to convince himself that he was not jobless and "useless." After all, the belief that he had to work and to have public engagement did not leave him. He sought every chance to achieve that goal:

> After one year, I gradually felt my family had settled a bit, so I wanted a job but I did not want to leave my family. Eventually I had a special opportunity. I became a parent [in an NGO to take care of a group of children]. Usually they hire a mother and she and her own family move in to a big apartment to take care of eight children who have family problems. They provide an apartment for you, a monthly salary, and a domestic worker to help you cook [. . .] I was the first man they hired to be a parent [. . .] After many struggles, I found that nothing is impossible. As long as you are willing to take a step, there are plenty of opportunities ahead. Staying at home does not mean useless. Let's say my newspaper columns. I wasn't a professional columnist. I wasn't famous and didn't have such experience. But I strived hard to find opportunities. I asked all the newspapers one by one if they wanted my stay-at-home father story. Of course I knew the chance was slim. But [a local newspaper] gave me the opportunity, then [another local newspaper] contacted me. So that's a very interesting experience. Only when you are willing to try . . . Even my present job is the result of my hard work. There wasn't a vacancy. It was me who approached the organization. I proactively contacted the directors of some listed companies and NGOs, telling them what service I could provide and sending them my CV. The only condition was that I needed to work at home. There were some responses and I picked my present job because it was the most suitable.

His success in being able to manage both the family and his career development stimulated him to plan to write a book. After all, Willy preferred holding a full-time job to being a stay-at-home father:

> I didn't plan to be a stay-at-home father forever. I planned to do it for around five years [. . .] but I have already had a full-time job in just two and a half years [. . .] So I am a part-time dad now. I have to slowly get out of the full-time father role.

Work and public engagements dominated Paul's and Willy's mind and provided them with more satisfaction than caregiving. Even though the crisis situations forced them to change their practices and triggered reflexivity upon their existing identities, the fact that they possessed much symbolic capital (i.e., experience of high social status from their previous work), cultural capital (i.e., work experiences, educational qualifications, work-related knowledge and information), and social capital (i.e., work-related social network) urged them to get out of their domestic roles as soon as possible to gain prestige and status through achievements in the public sphere.

Fathers with resources showed reluctance to stay in the primary caregiving role and demonstrated lower tendency to reflect upon the hegemonic responsibility as they perceived themselves to have the power to get back what they had "lost." On the contrary, working-class fathers tended to accept their primary caregiver role as they recognized that they had limited resources to realize their economic provision again. Goethe used to be the major breadwinner of his family. Although his wife also worked in the factory, he shouldered most of the household expenses. He told me that his wife listened to him at that time, making him happy. After he hurt his back in an accident and lost the ability to work, he could not accept the loss of his economic provider role and became depressed. He started gambling and ended up with large debts. His financial difficulty nearly led to his marital breakdown as his wife had thought of divorcing him. Later he sought help from a family service centre, and a social worker and Goethe's friends together managed to persuade his wife to use her savings to repay his debts. This crisis triggered change and acceptance of his caregiving role and subordinate position at home:

> Working or not working doesn't make much difference in my fatherhood; just that I cannot give money to [my daughters] to spend. The change is that I am now the cook at home . . . When [my wife] is in a bad mood, she

> would bring up [my gambling thing and] say something hurtful to me. But I am fine. I let her vent her anger. I don't have to be angry with her. When she gets mad, I just walk away and pretend that I can't hear [. . .] My wife now has the control of everything in the family as she is the one who supports the family. I don't work. So I told her, "You want to control, I let you control. I am fine." (laugh)

The crisis induced reflexivity in Goethe and made him accept his home-maker role. However, he did not challenge the dominance of economic power. In his mind, he did not deserve the dominant position because he could no longer provide. When the economic power shifted to his wife, he obeyed the "rules of the game" and became a subordinate in the family. Even though he practised a conventionally feminine role in the family, it is just a reworking or refashioning of gender norms because he considered himself a "failed" man who did not deserve any decision-making power.

The same is evident in the case of Timothy, who was a single father with close relationships with his two sons, but felt inferior for not being able to provide for his children. Timothy was a 41-year-old divorced resident father. His wife had a bad relationship with his parents but because Timothy could not afford to rent an apartment elsewhere, they had to live under the same roof. Gradually, his wife began to hate Timothy's parents and also became angry with him for not solving the problem. When she could no longer put up with the situation she left. After this Timothy had to quit his job and live on social security to take care of his two sons, who were nine and four years old, because his parents were too old to look after their grandsons. As a stay-at-home father, he did all the house chores and caregiving tasks, such as cooking, doing laundry, and helping his sons with their homework. In return, he enjoyed a close relationship with them:

> As I am the only one to do the house chores, sometimes I feel really tired. But when I see my sons happy and obedient, I feel that all my efforts are worthy [. . .] They like to listen to my past experiences and stories about other parts of the world. Sometimes, we go to the playground nearby to play some sports. They love to move!

However, Timothy thought that he should not be responsible for caregiving but should carry out economic provision, and therefore felt uncomfortable being a stay-at-home father. The discrimination he faced intensified his sense of inferiority:

> If my wife was still here, I would work hard to earn more money. I could just focus on handling the stress from work, and my wife could help handle the family matter. I think it is the best scenario. Now I am unemployed and often see a lot of bad gazes and hear negative comments when I go to the wet market and when I pick up my sons from schools.

But when asked if he regretted being a father given all these difficulties, he said,

> My parents expected me to get married and bring them grand-children. It is a natural duty as a son to make them happy. So even I suffer from this failed marriage, I feel relieved because I have met my parents' expectation. I don't see my children as a burden. They are worthy for me to take up the responsibility [of caregiving]. After all, I see myself as a responsible father.

Because of his belief in filial piety and his sense of responsibility towards the family, Timothy gave high priority to familial duty. His limited resources in getting help for caregiving pushed him to assume the primary caregiver role, and his goal of fulfilling his filial duty and making his parents happy and satisfied allowed him to endure the hardship and discrimination. He therefore accepted being a stay-at-home father without actively seeking a return to the public domain. Despite enjoying intimate and satisfying relationships with his sons, he still held the hegemonic belief that economic provision was an essence of fatherhood.

Jones used to be a distant father who earned much money. Failure in his business took away Jones' status of being a successful economic provider who could afford an expensive apartment and high material living standards for his family. This crisis triggered suicidal thoughts, and also reflexivity upon his priority on work over his relationship with his children:

> I used to live in a luxurious apartment. It's a very large apartment. I started a fashion business in 1988. I earned a lot. But later when my business failed and I ended up in a large debt, I thought that I was a burden to my family, so I wanted to end my life. But when I thought of my children, I didn't commit suicide at the end. I thought that they would become fatherless if I died. I now live in a public housing estate. It's as comfortable as the luxurious flat. Luckily I didn't commit suicide. Now I think that everything has its good and bad sides [. . .] At that time, although I was rich, my relationship with my children was very distant. My business needed me to travel away from home frequently. I couldn't see my children often. Since I was seldom at home, I became very strict to them. I easily got mad at them. My children were afraid of me at that time. When I came home, they quickly hid in their own rooms. I had a lot of money at that time but I didn't have the chance to communicate with my children.

When his children knew about his financial problems, they comforted him, and their relationship improved as Jones gave up his dominant attitude and listened to them. A close relation with his children was a compensation for his failure in business. However, Jones still considered work an important aspect of his identity. He chose to work as a taxi-driver three days a week, even though he was free from economic provision as his two children were working and could bring money home. Reflexivity due to crisis does not change Jones' gender habitus in relation to economic provision but gave him a new perspective in looking at his fatherhood and reprioritizing his relationship with his children over work and breadwinning.

The difference between middle- and working-class fathers in crisis situations corresponds to Bourdieu's speculation that privilege brings about "the domination of the dominant by his domination" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:173). Fathers with more resources are more likely to stick to their habitus. On the contrary, under-privileged fathers are more easily able to relieve themselves from structural demands and envision the alternative, as Bourdieu suggests with the concept "the special lucidity of the dominated" (Bourdieu 2001:31). However, acceptance of the care-giving role does not mean challenging the structure or a change of habitus. These men still considered economic provision important. After all, the

ideology that work proves a person's value and standing in the society is pervasive (Leung and Chan 2014).

Economic provision is a hegemonic demand to men. Even when they failed to provide, they continued to give consent to rather than challenge this responsibility in their reflexivity. It is because they embody the schemes of thought and perception that take the existing structure and condition for granted, resulting in an undisputed relation between objective order and subjective understanding (Bourdieu 1977). Bourdieu coins the term symbolic violence to depict an agent's complicity towards the oppressive structural demand (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Domination exists and persists because agents' thoughts and practices match the structure. Therefore, even when actors are harmed by the structural demand, it is possible that they do not perceive it as such.

Martin used to own a sub-contracting business in the construction industry and had made plenty of money to bring material benefits to his family. However, once the contractor he worked for gambled away HK$5 million and fled, leaving Martin to spend his savings and even to borrow money to cover the salary of the workers. When he could not repay the loan, he went broke. He considered it a "total failure" in his life. The ability to provide had been his identity and source of success. At that time, he could not face his "failure" and locked himself up at home, which deepened his financial problem:

> It was a total failure. My business failed in 2002. I had locked myself at home for over a year. I used up my savings and even had credit card loans. My children were still small and needed me to feed. My wife hadn't worked after marriage as I could give her enough money. She had some bad friends who always gambled and played mah-jong with her. She lost a lot of money. So she didn't have much money left. The savings were quickly used up. I was unemployed then. She supposedly should support half of the family expenses. If I could provide, I would but I couldn't at that time. I hid at home. On the one hand, I hated my wife; on the other hand, I was depressed and always thought about the negative side. I am a smart person who can always find a way out but at that time I just couldn't.

The sense of responsibility to provide overwhelmed Martin, which brought him a sense of failure and much stress. Martin individualized the problem by blaming himself for failing to be the provider. He did not apply for social security but relied on his own work ability. To make a living, he put his pride aside and called his former employees for jobs. However, the rejection and humiliation he faced pulled him further down and triggered his intention to commit suicide:

> If I divorced with my wife then, I needed not bear the responsibility and didn't have much pressure. But I had to bear the responsibility of being a good father and good husband. I had to find a job. I called my old colleagues who said to me, "My boss, I worked for you in the past. I am not qualified to hire you now." I was so sad to hear that. He doubted my work ability by saying that I hadn't been in that position for a long time and that's hard and so on and so on. I was so humble but he humiliated me. I also called many other friends. They said the same thing to me. I was so sad. I had been so good to them. I often treated them with expensive meals. I bought them cigarettes and wines as gifts in the past when I was rich. When I became poor and could only pay for a box lunch which cost only HK$10 for the whole family, I got those responses.

Martin planned to jump off the roof of his apartment building but the second he wanted to jump, he thought of his late mother-in-law. Although she did not like Martin at the very beginning and thought that the marriage between Martin and her daughter would not last long, she helped them out financially when their first child was born. This memory triggered Martin's reflexivity upon his self-doubt about his providing ability, which resulted in his insistence on solving the problem on his own. He recalled that he took care of his mother-in-law financially and travelling abroad with her. These memories confirmed his ability to bring material benefits to the family from scratch. Together with the objective condition that there was no one but him to solve his family's economic problem, his reflexivity confirmed his hegemonic masculine responsibility within the family:

> When I was on the rooftop, I heard [my mother-in-law] telling me to be strong to overcome the problem. She told me not to give up as I had many

> children to support. She told me that I could overcome so many problems and I could overcome this one [. . .] My mother-in-law was very hard-working. She cared about her children very much. I admire her so much. Although she didn't receive much education, she could support the whole family by selling vegetables at the wet market. When she died, she had money left for each child [. . .] If she could do that out of such a difficult situation, why couldn't I? [. . .] I got her words and stepped down. The next day, I applied for social security.

When he had later overcome his difficulties, Martin resumed his economic role and aimed to achieve high social status in the public sphere. It shows that a crisis does not necessarily trigger change in the habitus; rather it confirmed Martin's confidence in his ability and sense of responsibility for being an economic provider within the family:

> After that, I got a job again. I restarted my life. At that time, I earned HK$400–500 a day. I performed well in my work as I had good communication skills and leadership. My boss knew it. After a while, I was promoted. I now earn HK$700 a day. This salary is not too low [. . .] Many of my fellow workers appreciated my work. I didn't tell them my past. I didn't want them to know [. . .] The happiest thing is that my co-workers appreciate my work and the boss praises me. Now do I have another dream? I want to be a boss again. I wait for a chance [. . .] I spent just one year to reach the position of being the head. I was just promoted.

Martin's strong sense of responsibility as a providing father coincided with the structural demand that he had to face the economic problem on his own. Under such a circumstance, his reflexivity did not bring him out from the habitus of economic provision and turn him into a caregiver, but changed the way he thought of the providing role—from understanding it as failure of his masculine identity to believing it to be a temporary condition and even a chance to show his work abilities again.

The hegemony of men as economic providers has shaped fathers' mentality in defining themselves in terms of work and breadwinning, resulting in low self-worth when they could not work and provide. Crises are opportunities for fathers to reflect upon their taken-for-granted breadwinning duty. However, the symbolic capital associated with economic

provision remained strong and hindered fathers' imagination and practice of other possibilities in redefining their fatherhood. Fathers who could not provide felt bad about themselves, yet they stayed compliant and supported the hegemonic notion of men as economic providers. This mentality is what Bourdieu refers to as symbolic violence, which helps reproduce the hegemony even among those men who cannot fulfil masculine requirements.

Conclusion

The consideration of economic provision as invisible and indirect love and care for the family and children is a manifestation of the habitus of these fathers. They internalized the structural demand that men should give high priority to their career, and hence thought that fathers' emotional detachment, a distance between father and children, and absence from home and caregiving was normal, inevitable, and excusable. This conception of men has become naturalized so that fathers regard it as the "real essence" of being a man. As a result, men are constructed and justified to pursue their career and economic power.

Economic provision brings about the father's sense of success and social recognition as well as privilege within the family. Under the capitalist logic, economic provision signifies the basis of all aspects of family and parenting. It is constructed as the most important contribution to the family, which is carried out by the father. In the Chinese context, economic provision supports the structural power of the father (Cohen 1992; Freedman 1970). It also renders an important part of the hegemony of men because it corresponds to the Chinese masculine mission of accumulation of economic, social, and cultural capital for men themselves (Watson 1986), at the same time benefiting their families. Economic provision is thus the source of paternal authority.

However, crisis situations can prevent fathers from bringing money home. Failure to provide creates feeling of shame and inadequacy, as well as disempowerment in men (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 2003). In crisis situations when "the routine adjustment of subjective and objective structures is brutally disrupted" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:131),

individuals are forced to face new conditions and need to exercise conscious deliberation (Elder-Vass 2007). Nevertheless, conscious deliberation does not necessarily indicate a change in the habitus. Although some working-class fathers who could not provide accepted their new primary caregiver identity, they still considered themselves inferior in the society. Many other fathers continued to place economic provision and work high up in their priorities, and strived hard to be breadwinners again.

Economic provision constitutes an important element in the hegemony of men. Even men who "fail" this structural expectation considered providing an important paternal responsibility. The hegemonic gender order structures what men think and practise, resulting in systematic differentiations among men. When fathers insist that work is a more important and appropriate arena for men than caregiving, economic provision is further institutionalized or reinforced as the unquestionable habitus in the field of the family. It is thus naturalized as a system of distinctions between men who can provide and those who cannot, between those who provide better standard of living to their families and those who can barely provide. This hierarchical system restricts the imagination of other possibilities to express love and care and to exercise paternity.

Nevertheless, some fathers demonstrated willingness to be primary caregivers for a certain period of time and to take up a considerable share of house chores and caregiving when needs arose. For example, Willy had planned to be a stay-at-home father for five years to handle his children's academic and behavioural issues; Simon put aside his business and took care of his sick wife and new-born child; Louis often did the grocery and cooked for his wife; Donald did cleaning at home; Calvin did the grocery and laundry when his wife was busy working, and he claimed to be willing to consider becoming a home-maker if his wife earned way above him and could shoulder all the family expenses. Therefore, even though economic provision still dominated these men's minds, they had demonstrated participation in house chores and caregiving at home.

This is actually an opportunity for change. Despite the habitus being durable, it is not fixed but is constantly shaped by new experiences (Bourdieu 1990b). The experience of participation in caregiving and doing house chores out of necessities can be naturalized and internalized

in the habitus of these men over time and can subsequently encourage more and more men to do so. The key to change the field is to make the conventional habitus incompatible. For instance, the introduction of family-friendly policy to encourage gender-equal familial practices can open up the possibility of change. Swedish family policy carries with it the objective to make the family gender equal; it thus introduced in 2002 a generous 16-month parental leave, with two months designated specifically for the father (Duvander et al. 2010), so as to encourage mutual responsibility between women and men to take care of children and house chores (Bjornberg 2002). As a result, Swedish fathers spend less time in paid work and more time doing housework and looking after their children when compared with men in the rest of the world (Dribe and Stanfors 2009). Therefore, although the initial implementation of paternity leave in Hong Kong only allows three-day leave with 80 % salary compensation, it is a good start for changing the field to encourage and facilitate men's decreasing focus on work and increasing participation in caregiving and building a closer relationship with family members.

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4

Cultural Parent

While fulfilling economic duty is considered an essential responsibility of a father, as shown in Chap. 3, education of the children is considered an even more important aspect of fatherhood. The phrase "to feed without teaching is the father's fault" from "*San Zi Jing*" (Three-character Classic) captures the significance of education in Chinese fatherhood.[1] This saying emerged when education was used to continue the prosperity and success of the family lineage (Woodside and Elman 1994). Nowadays in Hong Kong society, where the large family has been reduced to a nuclear family and where individualism prevails, education is the way in which fathers pass on their valued qualities to their children to prepare them to survive in the public sphere. It involves both academic training and teaching of practical skills, social manners, and proper values. However, the belief that the father is the more appropriate and responsible parent for educating children remains prevalent, reflecting the naturalized and normalized

[1] Three-character Classic is a classic Chinese text created in the Song Dynasty by Wang Yinglin. The arrangement of three characters as a phrase facilitates easy learning and recitation by children. The contents of this text include Confucian morality and Chinese history. Although it is not taught in public schools nowadays in Hong Kong, some popular phrases, such as the quote above, are frequently cited and known to most Chinese.

M. Liong, *Chinese Fatherhood, Gender and Family*,
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construction of men as knowledgeable and authority figure. This chapter aims to discuss the hegemony of men as reflected in the responsibility for education in Chinese fatherhood and how this responsibility provides legitimacy to paternal authority and power in Hong Kong society. I first analyse the ideology of education in Chinese culture to explain the background to the cultural legitimacy of paternal authority. Then I go on to discuss the actual practices of fathers in order to develop their children's academic and intellectual abilities and pass down desirable values. Finally, the chapter examines situations when fathers' authority was challenged in order to elucidate the operation of habitus and the hegemony of men as authority figures within their families.

Ideology of Education in Chinese Fatherhood

The concept of *wen* is an element of Chinese masculinity that legitimizes fathers' assumption of the educator's role. The concept of the *wen–wu* dyad proposed by Kam Louie refers to the masculine achievement of both cultural and physical capabilities in life (Louie 2003). Wen–wu literally means "literary–martial." Wen is the intellectual, artistic, and cultural facet whereas *wu* is the physical, martial, and athletic component. They are not opposite or mutually exclusive. On the contrary, an ideal man is expected to triumph in both aspects (Louie 2003).

The "twin brother" talents of wen and wu are not equal in status, however. "[A]n extract from the Confucian classic *Spring and Autumn Annals* says: 'The virtues of wen are superior, the greatness of wu is lower, and this has always and will always be the case'" (Louie 2002:18). Morality and ability can be fostered by studying culture/literature (wen), as defined in Confucianism (Woodside and Elman 1994). Although both wen and wu talents were officially assessed in government examinations in Imperial China, the ultimate social authority and political power to run the state as officials was determined by the *wenju* (civil service examinations), which tested candidates' knowledge in Confucian literature (Louie 2002:5). The preference of wen to wu was associated with the gain of more political and social power by attaining recognized qualifications in wenju,

and was further advanced by the general respect and admiration from fellow villagers, family members, and friends when one succeeded in the civil service examinations.

As the civil service examination was open to all male citizens—"[a]ll Chinese men, regardless of social standing, had the right to aspire to high-ranking civil posts through the examination system" (Louie 2002:14), it was not rare to hear a man of peasant origin elevated to official status after passing the wenju. Wen is not limited to a particular social class. Rather it is a kind of personal quality: "Wen is generally understood to refer to those genteel, refined qualities that were associated with literary and artistic pursuits of the classical scholars, and can thereby be partly analysed as a leisure-class masculine model" (Louie 2002:14). Neo-Confucian scholars, in particular, dignified this scholar–gentleman masculinity and downgraded the wu quality as aggressive, barbaric, and uncivilized (Blake 1994).

The establishment of the national school system in the Song dynasty further institutionalized Confucian teaching (Woodside and Elman 1994), leading to the association of wen with the more elite masculinity, and wu with non-elite masculinity (Louie 2002). As the wen quality could be gained through education, families, especially elite families, tended to invest their financial and cultural resources in boys to help them succeed in the intellectual arena (Woodside and Elman 1994). In order to excel in the civil service examination, boys were trained on history and Confucian classics from the age of four or five, as well as on essay writing from the age of ten (Bailey 2007). This pursuit of academic achievement and wen qualities constructed the notion that "everything is inferior to studying."[2]

With the help of the educational and political system in imperial China, wen became hegemonic in the Chinese context. Men who embody wen qualities in their habitus (i.e., their way of thinking and behaving) are considered admirable. Even men who do not possess wen qualities also consider wen admirable and superior. The superiority of wen continues to live in contemporary times. James Watson, for example, found that leaders of the villages in San Tin and Ha Tsuen in Hong Kong made

[2] From Wang Zhu. 1998. *Shen tong shi* (Poems by a Gifted Child). Jinan: Qilu shushe.

efforts to cultivate a respectable and superior image by showing wen qualities such as calmness under stress, and non-violence or violence with restraint (Watson 2004). Wen is thus incorporated in the habitus of Chinese men as an appreciative quality in shaping their own pursuit and expectations towards their children.

Fathers, especially those with a literate background, were conventionally concerned with their sons' wen qualities and academic achievements. One typical example was Ceng Guo-fan, a high-ranked official in Qing dynasty (*c.* nineteenth century). Even when he was preoccupied by his official duties, he did not stop writing letters to remind his sons of the importance of studying and to encourage them to read. Liu (1994) suggests that Ceng wished to see his family attain political and educational success. Ceng repeatedly told his sons to be virtuous—rise early and work hard to strive for literacy and knowledge—so that they could take up the scholarly vocation of service to the state (Liu 1994). Another father, Yan Zhitui, a writer in sixth-century China, wrote the *yan shi jia xun* (*Family Instructions for the Yan Clan*) and also repeatedly reminded his sons of the utilitarian goal of learning—to be an official and to earn wealth and fame subsequently (Lee 2000). In imperial China, descendants with outstanding performance in the civil service examinations brought fame to the family and the lineage (Lee 2000). As the head of the family, the father gained much prestige from the success of his sons, and was therefore eager to push his male family members to study and succeed in the cultural and political arenas. The hegemony of wen thus legitimizes the importance of education in Chinese fatherhood.

Father as the Cultural Parent

The hegemony of wen brings about the ideology that the father is the cultural parent who has the right and responsibility to teach and discipline his children. According to the Confucian ideal, the father, especially the literate father who is considered as knowledgeable and is expected to have high educational attainment, has the authority and responsibility to improve his children's intellectual ability, such as teaching them words and writing prose, and to socialize them, including teaching them to

follow the moral conviction to behave properly, and to have the right values to continue the family's social status and be filial members of their lineage and family (Lee 2000). The father is the mentor and has the final say in planning his children's life, developing their intellectual and literary abilities, and training them to behave well. In other words, the father has the cultural legitimacy and authority in socializing his children to acquire wen quality.

As shown in the interviews with my informants in the two studies, fathers described themselves as the major actors in their children's education. They thought that they were the more legitimate and knowledgeable parent in setting the direction of education for their children when compared with the mother. They wanted to be the authority figure when educating children so that the children could grow up in the most appropriate way. For fathers who were sole breadwinners, education was unquestionably their exclusive duty. In their minds, fathers represented the public sphere. Their experience in the public sphere led them to think that they were more capable of equipping children with what was needed for their future success. For example, Daniel proposed that the father should be "the leader" and the mother could only be "the executor" in terms of education. To him, the importance of a father in educating his children lay in his behavioural modelling, and therefore he did not need to do much. Although Daniel was not active in the daily teaching of his son, he considered that he should have the final say in his son's education:

> Teaching is the responsibility of the father. The father is the leader and he must be a good role model for the children. Otherwise, the children will be confused [. . .] When the child does something wrong and you want to teach him/her, if one [parent] says you should do this [to correct yourself] whereas the other says another way is better, then it will lead to confusion [. . .] The ways me and my wife teach our son don't differ much. Although it's her who teaches our son, I notice that her teaching does not differ from what I have expected.

Paul even commented explicitly that his wife was not qualified to educate his children. He thought that he was more suitable because he was educated and had certain achievements in his career:

> Fathers should bear the breadwinning role and stress the importance of moral education of the children [. . .] So I take up the role of teaching as I can communicate with my children. I tell them: Mom takes care of you. She hasn't received much education in Hong Kong and knows little and so her responsibility is just caregiving [. . .] Then I told my wife, "You have already fulfilled your responsibility to bring our children up. For matters like education, moral conduct and life plan, I should be responsible."

Because of this belief that they were more qualified than the mother to educate children, many fathers told me that they corrected the mother's way of socializing and educating the children, especially on moral issues. Paul, for example, described how he was annoyed when his wife transmitted the wrong values to their children, and how he immediately stopped and corrected her:

> Yesterday, we had a quarrel. [My wife] talked about her friend who sold her apartment and moved to her son's place so that she could apply for public housing [. . .] I told my wife not to speak for that person in front of the children. I had to make things clear [for our children]. Having a financial problem and selling the flat is one thing but that she did this in order to apply for government housing is wrong. It is abusing the government's resources. It's wrong! These values can't be communicated to our children. I insisted and repeated [my argument] and slowly corrected her.

Even when the father agreed with the mother's teaching, they thought that there was still more to be done to make the education complete. Benjamin, in his early 40s, became more involved in teaching his daughter after divorce. His daughter, aged 11, lived with her mother after divorce. Benjamin visited her twice a week and he enjoyed a close relationship with her. Although he did not oppose what his ex-wife had taught their daughter, he argued that he completed the education by counteracting what his ex-wife had done. He explained,

> [My daughter's] mother is a very *socialized* [Benjamin's own word, meaning well-mannered and worldly] person. She understands etiquette and interpersonal relationship very much. As she has already [trained our daughter on manners], I need not add on that. Rather, when my daughter reaches

> adolescence, I want to free her from these strings [. . .] So I want her to know that those manners and rules are just a system of operation. Her mother has taught her that very well. It's the first stage. She *socialized* her. I will focus on the second stage. I will *de-socialize* her [meaning teaching his daughter that etiquette was not absolute or natural]. Then she will be a complete person.

In their narratives, fathers believed that they knew better than the mother in educating their children to be more rational, moral, and knowledgeable. This belief led them to complain about the mother's "inaccurate" teaching, and the undesirable outcomes. Goethe, for example, attributed the bad relationship between his younger daughter and his wife to his wife's constant comparing of their two daughters:

> My wife often compares our two daughters [. . .] I told her that she shouldn't say something like that as it would hurt the relationship between [our daughters]. The girls were fine when they were in primary school but they started to compete when they grew older, especially in secondary school when my younger daughter became rebellious. I told my wife not to compare the younger daughter with [her sister] in terms of their academic results. The more you compare the worse she gets [. . .] So sometimes the relationship between my younger daughter and my wife is very bad.

Nick rejected the way his wife forced their daughter to learn and thought that this way of parenting was harming their daughter:

> Does our kid really need so many activities and classes? Every Saturday she has to learn Spanish for three hours and then at noon learns harmonica, then around 1pm learns English. At 3pm, she has to attend a piano class. Non-stop for the whole day. This is actually hurting her!

Fathers considered themselves in good standing to educate their children. The cultural superiority of wen legitimizes education as an important responsibility defining Chinese fatherhood. Together with the cultural and social capital gained from their formal education and engagement in the public sphere, the paternal habitus of being the cultural

parent grants fathers authority and a sense of importance within the family. This paternal identity is manifested in practice in developing children's academic and intellectual abilities, and cultivating desirable values, reinforcing the hegemony of the man as the capable and knowledgeable figure in the family.

Education in Practice

As the cultural parent, the father has legitimacy in determining how his children are educated. Education serves two main goals of fatherhood, namely inheritance and protection. Fathers pass the socially desirable qualities, abilities, and values to their children to maintain and improve the social status and living standards of the family and the children, and to contribute to society at large. Fathers hoped to see their children taking on the advantages they themselves had enjoyed and considered the children's success as their own achievement. Through education, they also wanted to protect their children from poverty, harm, undesirable social outcomes, and suffering. These two goals thus intertwined with each other and fuelled fathers' efforts in educating their children.

Developing Children's Academic and Intellectual Abilities

The cultural notion of wen in Chinese masculinity pushes fathers to emphasize the academic performance of their children. The ultimate realization of wen was through success in the civil service examinations in the imperial era. This notion of wen is still prevalent in contemporary Chinese society. For instance, in Taiwan, political candidates tend to attract supporters with their high academic qualifications (Louie 2002). Practically, in Hong Kong society today, it is widely believed that achieving good marks in examinations and entering good schools signify achievements and status, and can ensure decent future career prospects and living standards. Therefore, fathers regard the gaining of educational qualifications as a way to protect children's future. They tried hard to

encourage their children to achieve higher academic achievements. Among middle-class fathers, their own high educational qualifications led them to expect their children to achieve. Informants who were university graduates and professionals tended to mobilize their financial resources as well as cultural and social capital to complete this class inheritance project.

Gary had an accounting degree from Canada and his wife was a graduate from a university in Taiwan. He expected his daughter to get a college degree and he supported her with two kinds of capital—monetary support and citizenship. He said:

> I expected my daughter to complete college education. Her parents both completed university and how can she not do the same? [. . .] I told her, "Studying helps you know more [. . .] You could have a stable income and live a healthy and stable life [after you got a university degree]" [. . .]As I am a Canadian citizen, although she was born in Hong Kong, she can study in Canada. I have told her that.

Another informant, Willy, could not quite accept the fact that his daughter was unable to manage her schoolwork, as he thought that both he and his wife were well educated. To him, it was a crisis in his family. He therefore gave up his full-time job to stay at home to take care of her. Willy told me:

> My daughter has dyslexia. Indeed both my two children do. They are not good at words [. . .] For example my daughter came second last in class in primary one [. . .] That's a big alarm to us because my wife and I are well-educated people. We are both clever and smart, hahaha. Why did our daughter do poorly in class? Then I started to be concerned with her school work more.

In addition, as a stay-at-home father, Willy took the opportunity not only to help his children's schoolwork but also to teach them to develop a global perspective. He himself had studied abroad and had lived in foreign countries. He therefore wanted his children to acquire the experience of diverse cultures. He tried to build up their curiosity by telling them what

was happening in the world as reported in the newspapers, and travelled abroad with them. Willy said,

> In the afternoon, I read newspapers with them. It is very useful to read newspapers. I discuss with my children things that happened around us [. . .] I will bring them to foreign countries, to many different places [. . .] so when something happened in the places they have been to is reported in the newspapers, they are interested to learn about it [. . .] Also I placed a world map at home. I want them to have broader perspective—the world is like this, very wide and huge.

Middle-class fathers expected their children to acquire the abilities that could continue their middle-class status. To help their children acquire middle-class vision and social status, these fathers passed on their cultural and symbolic capital to their children through providing them with as much formal education and training as possible. They considered it as a way of protecting their children in a competitive society.

Frank and his wife were anxious about finding good secondary schools for their daughters to secure their future study and work opportunities. Thus, Frank demanded his daughters should achieve academically and participate in extra-curricular activities to accumulate capital, in order to enter a good secondary school. He said:

> Whenever my elder daughter learnt some extra-curricular stuff, the motivation behind was to have something to show to the principals during school interviews [. . .] I demand my daughters to achieve certain academic level; at least I won't give up on that. It is to let her know that the exam is a chance for her to show her ability. She cannot treat it casually. We do all these for her future good.

Even though Leo did not take much care of his children's daily homework, he was concerned about his children's communication and intellectual abilities because these were crucial in determining their academic results and future prospects. He was particularly anxious about his children's abilities in English. Therefore, he spent time and effort to

stimulate their interest in reading and to help them to improve their English:

> When [my children] were small, I tried to stimulate their interest in reading. I read some story books with them. I didn't just read the texts to them but I added my own creativity to make the story funnier. It's to let them imagine. So now their communication skills and story-telling ability are strong.
>
> When they were small, I only had private tuition with them on English. I didn't teach them anything else [. . .] Even now they will ask me English [. . .] When they were studying in high school, I told them to read some English texts to me. If they pronounced the words wrongly, I would correct them [. . .] As my children have pretty good results, I am not anxious about their academic performance. But there is still something that makes me anxious. Their English is so bad. I always ask them to spend more time to study English. But no matter how hard I tell them, they don't seem to listen at all. So I am anxious. I hope that they can study well and have a better prospect.

Leo even made use of his symbolic capital to help his daughter to get into a good primary school. He was interviewed by a local newspaper, and he attached the interview clipping with the application to boost the chance that his daughter got admitted. He also trained his daughter's social skills and accompanied her to the interview. All these factors showed that he was indeed anxious about his children's academic achievements.

Some fathers made use of their social capital to develop their children. For example, Paul introduced his children to the university students he knew since he wanted his children to make friends with educated people and to develop an aspiration for high educational qualifications:

> At that time, my economic condition was good. I could hire some college students to be interns at my company [. . .] Sometimes I invited them to come over to my home to have dinner or I brought my children to my company; so the interns and my staff with university degrees could help educate my children [. . .] Also I knew a lot of well-educated people when I further studied. I liked to organize some gatherings so that my kids could

> get to know other kids from other well-educated families. So when my daughter was studying in form six, she already had friends who were college students. So she could learn from her seniors.

Class habitus shaped fathers' concerns and practice of educating their children in different ways. In addition to helping their children to study in good schools, middle-class fathers provided guidance to their children to build up their cultural capital in academic and intellectual arenas—academic achievements, communication skills, language ability, knowledge about the world, and the ability to appreciate art. As they themselves were highly educated, these middle-class fathers could help their children acquire the relevant academic knowledge and intellectual abilities. They read to their children to make them appreciate the value of knowledge and learning, and took their children to museums, art galleries, and foreign countries to expose them to new culture in order to enrich their intellectual ability (Frieman 2005). On the contrary, despite working-class fathers being active in helping their children get better formal education, they were not as resourceful as their middle-class counterparts: they did not teach academic knowledge and develop their children's intellectual abilities themselves. They tended to rely solely on the school for academic matters. Thus, they were active in helping their children to get into good schools to ensure they could have better development.

Vincent shared with me his anxiety about his children's schooling. He was not only active in gathering information and picking schools for his children, but he also approached different schools to find a good one. He said:

> When [my children] were about to finish their kindergarten, I looked for schools for them. In the district where we lived, there were a lot of schools. So we had to pay some effort to choose good schools for them. We needed to do a lot of preparations, like asking relatives and friends, collecting brochures, and asking the teachers. Finally, we picked one and my daughter could enter into that school. Then my son just followed his elder sister to study in the same school until they graduated from it. For secondary school, for my daughter, we were not anxious. Her academic results were good. That's smooth. But for my son, it's not that smooth. My son's academic

> results were sort of in the middle. We didn't expect that he could not enter the same secondary school that his sister was studying. When I saw his allocation result slip, I was so scared that my face turned pale. My wife and I immediately took leave from work. I went to Kowloon East and my wife Kowloon West to go to different schools to see if it's possible for them to admit my son. We made several copies of my son's information and distributed them to different schools. We both took a large pack and worked with our respective list of schools. We were very anxious at that time. We didn't sleep well then. If he could not study in a good school, how could he study in the university? At the last moment, we went to a new school near our district. I found that the school was indeed quite good, new and with well qualified teachers. We were lucky. Now my son is studying in that school.

In order to gain an admission interview for his daughter, Anson did not mind risking rejection and losing face. He begged a school with a good reputation to give his daughter an interview opportunity. He saw this as a way of showing his love and care of his daughter. Anson described events:

> My daughter was studying in [a government-run primary school]. The teachers were . . . definitely not good . . . Me and my wife decided to find another school for her [. . .] Some schools granted her interview opportunities. But two of them arranged the same time for exam and interview [. . .] I said to my wife that she brought our daughter to one of the schools for exam and I went to the other for interview. I made an excuse to the school that my daughter was sick and I attended the interview for her. I knew that it's not possible. I just wanted to give it a try. When I went there, of course I was rejected. But I kept asking for another chance to show the school my sincerity and eagerness. The teacher-in-charge saw that. The teacher then took my daughter's CV and tried to see if it was possible to arrange another time for interview. The next day we went to the school and requested to meet the principal [. . .] My daughter is now studying in that school. My wife appreciated my effort as she would not beg the school like I did.

Since working-class fathers thought that they were not capable of educating their children themselves, in order to boost their children's academic performance they did not hesitate to spend extra money on

private tuition or tuition classes for their children, or to provide material reward to motivate their children to study hard. These fathers did not expect their children to have bright futures but simply hoped that their children would not suffer from the same difficulties and pain that they themselves had experienced in society. What they could do was to help their children with money and the social network that they had earned through hard work, hoping that their children could survive in a highly commercialized and competitive society.

Worrying that his daughter could not earn her living with low academic qualifications, Maurice tried hard to arrange various vocational training courses for her. Even though she did not respond positively and often skipped classes, he did not mind spending money and using his social capital to help her, hoping that she might finally find her area of interest one day. He told me his plan:

> [My daughter] resisted the teachers [in the grammar school] very much. So I decided to find some courses in vocational training institute for her to study, like beauty and hair styling courses. I thought these courses were more interesting for her and at the same time she could be equipped with some vocational skills. But she still always skipped classes and failed the attendance requirement [. . .] I will enrol another hair styling course for her in the next semester. I have also asked some of my friends who own hair salons to hire her as junior after she has completed the course.

Dino was even willing to take a chance by spending all his savings and starting all over again as a junior chef in a Chinese restaurant in the USA. Because he found that his two children might not be able to enter university in Hong Kong, he thought that it was easier for them to get university degrees in the USA. He explained:

> Now the immigration department of the USA is considering my case. I applied for family reunion to emigrate to the USA [. . .] If I go, my children can receive better education [. . .] After getting there, I can temporarily depend on one of my elder sisters there. But afterwards, I have to have my own place to live [. . .] To have them study there, I need to have a large sum of money [. . .] If I work as a junior chef, I don't need to have any experience and I can earn USD2000 a month. Is it enough to cover the

> children's expenses? Not just to cover the daily expenses, but also for saving for the college fees. I don't know.

Although working- and middle-class fathers both believed that academic qualifications were linked with future living standards, they showed different expectations towards their children. Middle-class fathers wanted their children to succeed in gaining high status and a competitive edge, whereas working-class fathers tried their best to equip their children with enough qualifications to protect them from poverty and suffering. Working-class fathers, with less cultural capital, supported their children's schooling as much as they could with their economic and social capital, hoping that they could have a stable and worry-free life in the future.

Fathers considered themselves as mentors who handled important educational matters for their children. However, for the fathers interviewed, checking homework and guiding children to study for tests and examinations were daily caring tasks similar to cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry. They therefore did not consider supervising children's schoolwork to be their duty. Putting supervision of children's homework and childcare task in parallel, Daniel implied that they were in the same category:

> My wife was concerned with [my son's] schoolwork. She was often concerned with the children's academic performance. She bathed him. She did all those caring jobs. Fathers don't worry about those things that much.

Philip thought that he took care of the main direction of his children's study, so he only occasionally asked about their school life:

> I don't look at my children's homework but when I return home early, I spend two hours before they sleep to ask what they have done in school, what important things and activities they will do, what exams they will have, and what they have learnt. I can know more about their study.

Martin was not the one who took care of his children's homework, but he thought that he was the one who educated the children. Thus, even

though he did not do anything in particular to help his children in their school work, he regarded his children's academic achievements as the fruits of his teaching efforts:

> When my children were small, I worked hard and was busy and so I didn't look after their homework. But my children were all good at studying. My two daughters and the youngest son all got good results in schools. They always came first or second in class [. . .] I didn't need to care about their schoolwork [. . .] My wife didn't work and thus took care of the children. I told her not to let children turn bad. If they have problems, tell me [. . .] I set up a good role model for them and I know how to teach them [. . .] Their mother doesn't know how to teach them.

The tedious task of supervision of children's homework or schooling is the mother's realm (Choi and Lee 1997). She is responsible to help the children meet the requirements of the school (Lee 2002). Fathers were less concerned with children's schoolwork than mothers mainly because the job was regarded as child-caring. Some exceptions existed either because the father was more educated than the mother or the mother was busy with her employment. However, in such cases, the father just assumed a consultative role or the mother took up the house chore duties while the father looked after children's school matters. The father was still responsible for the more important aspect (i.e., school work). Moreover, when the mother was available again, she resumed the duty of supervising children's school work. For example, Louis said:

> When [my daughter] was small, it was me who helped her with her school work. At that time, her mom often worked overtime. So she was involved less when my daughter was studying in the primary school. I supervised her school work at that time. I took her to the activities in some youth centres. When she studied in high school, her mom took over to help her pick which school to study, pick courses to take. She helped her more with the school work then and I handled it less.

Education, according to these fathers, involved the overall strategy, not mind-numbing schoolwork checking. Therefore, although mothers took

care of children's schoolwork, they were not considered as educators but only caregivers.

Cultivating Desirable Values

What fathers pass down to their children may not necessarily be academic abilities but desirable values, such as a sense of public engagement, love, persistence, and altruism. Class habitus again demonstrated differences in this paternal practice. Middle-class fathers tended to emphasize ideological and attitudinal values in their children. They wanted their children to develop a sense of responsibility to do good in society. Usually, the father had already been concerned with a particular social issue or aspect and wanted his children to follow. This mentality coincides with the sense of responsibility to society in Confucian manhood. The Confucian scholar Gu Yanwu of the Ming dynasty proposed that to protect justice and morality is the responsibility of every man.[3] This sense of responsibility was defined particularly as part of literate men's identity because they were the ones who had the knowledge and power to influence society. In contemporary times, middle-class fathers not only demand of themselves that they should bear this responsibility, but they also try to cultivate this sense of responsibility in their children.

During the time when he suffered from heart problems and was unemployed, Paul met many people encountering different life problems, and this made him realize the importance of psychological support for people experiencing crises. He then participated in some voluntary counselling work, and wanted his daughter to contribute to society in the way he did. Paul said:

> I started to do some counselling work. I shared my experience in [my difficult time] with many people. I knew a lot of people who were unemployed, had mental illness, suicidal intention, or familial problems. I shared my experiences with them and learnt a lot from them too.

[3] Gu, Yanwu. 2006. *Ri zhi lu ji shi* (Record of Daily Study with Collections of Notes). Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she.

> So I encouraged my daughter to study social work as I thought that society needed help. After she studied social work, she found that education was even better as it could prevent problems from happening. So she changed to study education.

Some fathers taught their children to be aware of unjust issues in the society as they themselves were. Being the founding member and leader of a men's rights group, Dominic wanted his two sons to be aware of the discrimination that men faced in the society, and to have sympathy towards poor men:

> Sometimes I told them about cases in which media play up something that is unfair to men [. . .] I even brought them to the [men's] group and let them see some men who live a poor life. This could let them know that not everyone is as happy and jolly as they are.

Middle-class fathers were also concerned about teaching their children attitude toward life. As attitude is abstract, they had to demonstrate it through role-modelling. As a stay-at-home father, Willy was able to help his children overcome their academic difficulties, to broaden their perspectives through activities, and to manage the house chores well. At the same time, he was active in seeking opportunities to get a job, engage in the public sphere, and earn income for his family. He thought that his children could see how he turned an originally face-losing home-bound stay-at-home father identity into an accomplishment and a successful story of how a man could handle family problems and manage both his family and work. He considered the process a demonstration to his children on how to overcome a life challenge. He thus attributed his children's good adaptive ability to his role-modelling. He said:

> Father's responsibility . . . for me the most important is being a role model . . . It's not easy to be a family man as this isn't [what I have been trained to perform]. But I am willing to learn and I want to try my best to do it. It can let my children see that their father can be very flexible [. . .] To a certain extent, they have already had this attitude . . . They seldom say something is impossible. They often have new ideas and new thoughts on how to solve problems.

Working-class fathers also wanted to pass down desirable values to their children but they differed from middle-class fathers in that they focused less on ideological but more on practical and tangible matters. For example, rather than encouraging his children to study to be a professional to help others or to identify discrimination, Stephen taught them to help others in their everyday life through his own actions:

> Even though I am not rich, I can help others. I often help the elderly in our neighbourhood. I want to set up a good role model for my kids. For instance, I swept the stairs in the common area of our building to let my son know that we can serve others without any benefit. I often help my neighbours repair stuff [. . .] My children saw that I helped others. I hope that they can follow my footsteps and pass it on to their children.

Stephen was proud that his son actually followed in his footsteps in offering help to others in need:

> Recently, I saw a housewife living next to us with her head shaved. I asked my neighbours her situation and knew that she had intestinal cancer. I wanted to show my care to her but I didn't know what to do. I was afraid that I would hurt her feelings. I told my son and he managed to take the first step! When he met her in the lift, he gave his cross to her. My son inspired me. One day I saw that the door of her flat was left open; I went in and gave her a present. Her husband came out and thanked my son for his cross. They were excited and moved.

To train his children to develop good qualities and habits, Philip adopted the direct way of setting up ten concrete rules for his children to follow:

> I bought a small whiteboard and hung it in the living room. I wrote ten rules for them to follow from very small, like sleep at 9 every day, do what and what when they wake up, how long they can watch TV. They know when to turn off the TV and return to their room to do homework. I wrote very detailed rules. When they could follow all of them, I then added some more.

Apart from teaching their children desirable values, fathers also wanted to protect their children from undesirable values and behaviours. The

fathers interviewed were often worried that their children would engage in some illegal activities, such as joining gangsters, stealing, drug abuse, and prostitution. Some were worried that the impulsiveness of their adolescent children would get them into trouble. Some were anxious that their children would follow their own wrongdoing, such as being addicted to gambling. In order to protect their children from undesirable behaviours, fathers adopted "consequence education"—teaching children the negative consequences of those behaviours. For example, through negative portrayals of gangsters in the media, visits to jail, and the father's previous counter-examples, fathers wanted their children to think twice before they acted. When fathers caught their children engaging in deviant behaviours, they tended to punish them seriously, including scolding, prohibiting them from returning home, and even physical punishment. In carrying out protection in this way, fathers exercised control over them, constructing and reproducing paternal authority and power in the process.

Willy trained his children to obey his authority very early on. He would not accept any deviance, and negotiation was deemed a challenge to his authority. He thought that it was the father's responsibility to hold on to his power in order to educate his children and protect them from going the wrong way. Willy said:

> The indicator of me being serious is the word "obey." For instance, when I have given my order but [my son] doesn't follow, I will say "obey," and then he has to obey. If he doesn't, then I will beat him. But I need to be cautious with my words. I can't say no or "obey" all the time [. . .] [My children] understand this principle clearly. So now, our relationship is good [. . .] I think that children often fight [with parents] for power . . . They like to listen to themselves, but I think that they should listen to their parents at this stage.

However, some middle-class fathers, such as Benjamin, reflected that they did not want to exert too much influence on their children while guiding them in the direction they desired. He wanted to give more autonomy to his daughter and hoped that she could develop independent thinking:

> I want her to be herself and I don't want to influence her so much. But she is influenced by me inevitably as I am her dad. So I think that I should strike a balance.

Yet when Benjamin discovered that his daughter had adopted a gender identity that deviated from his expectation, he could not help directing his daughter's gender to the "appropriate" state, and revealed his hope for his daughter to be feminine. He said:

> [My daughter] is boyish. Her sex role is more inclined to the masculine. I don't ask her to be a boy or a girl. But I encourage her to have more feminine stuff to balance off [. . .] But I don't force her not to be a boy, like make her wear a dress and not trousers. Maybe when she starts dating, she will change.

Even though Benjamin reminded himself not to exert too much influence on his daughter, the intention to guide children in the desired direction was still inevitably strong. In his study on nineteenth-century American fathers, Johansen (2001) also found the dilemma of fathers in expecting children to be independent while at the same time requiring them to be obedient. However, Johansen (2001) suggests that fathers exerted authority and power in training their children; thus they tended to reproduce the existing norms. The paternal habitus of authoritative educational figure is hard to escape despite the reflexivity.

The education practice carried out by fathers indeed demonstrates what Bourdieu coined as "pedagogic authority," which is "an arbitrary power to act, misrecognised by its practitioners and recipients as legitimate" (Jenkins 2002:105). With the influence of wen in Chinese masculinity, fathers considered themselves to be the legitimate educators, passing down and equipping children with proper abilities and values, in order to make them competent and capable. Inheritance and protection are seen as legitimate reasons for the father to demand his children to acquire those qualities he thinks desirable. Fathers turn their capital such as knowledge, social relationships, and problem-solving ability into helping their children develop their academic achievements, other practical skills, and desirable values. They can gain respect and admiration from the knowledge and

ability they display, and demand obedience from children with their authority. In the process, as suggested by Bourdieu, power relations are reproduced, and the hegemony of the man as mentor and authority figure within the family is maintained.

Challenge to Paternal Authority

Even though fathers are granted cultural legitimacy and authority in assuming the educator role, their power is dependent on consent from their children and spouses. Rejection of the father's authority in education by the mother and children is often a manifestation of distant and conflictive spousal and father–child relationships. The notion of the father as the cultural parent is internalized in fathers' habitus, which naturalizes and normalizes their sense of importance and power within the family. When the mother or children disagree or reject the father's way of education, the field changes and no longer fits the habitus. Nevertheless, the old habitus persists, and thus brings about negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and helplessness.

Compared with his wife, Dominic spent much less time with his two sons, who therefore listened to their mother more. His wife also did not welcome him interfering with her education of their sons. Therefore, even though he did not agree with her teaching, he could not find any way to change her. He felt frustrated not only because of his distant relationship with his sons but also because his status at home was being challenged. He told me about his helplessness in his educational role:

> My sons don't quite listen to me, but they listen to their mother. They once told me that it's good enough to have their mother teaching them when I wanted to teach them their homework. My wife thinks that it's good enough to have her to teach our children too. Sometimes I feel unhappy as they don't allow me to teach them. I am unhappy sometimes. My wife is very willing to spend time examining their homework. I am forced to accept [this situation] [. . .] [My wife and I] are quite different in teaching our children. She is stricter to them [. . .] Sometimes

> I think that she has been teaching the children for so many years. If I force her to change, it may not be good for both of us. Sometimes I try to change her but she doesn't listen to me.

As education signified the father's authority at home, Dominic understood the obstacle to his educator role as a loss of status. He chose to speak up at some points as he did not accept his lack of authority at home:

> Sometimes when I think that my wife is too strict I will tell her. I want to find a position in the family. I want to let her know that I am the husband and should have a role in the family. If I don't speak up, she may think that husband has no role and no status at home at all.

The fact that his sons did not accept his authority to teach them troubled Dominic most. He felt disturbed when his sons answered him back because he did not know how to teach them. He believed that speaking to them reasonably did not work and that he could not use physical punishment either. He could only comfort himself by assuming that this was just a temporary state, as his sons were in the turbulent state of adolescence and were therefore rebellious.

Often children who did not accept their father's authority were considered rebellious and made the father feel challenged. Carl's daughter was not satisfied with her father's control, and intentionally resisted and challenged his authority. Carl, as a single father, did not reflect upon his way of educating his daughter but attributed her rebellion to anger and a belief that it was Carl's mistakes that led to divorce and her broken family. He justified his control on his daughter as the proper way of educating her:

> She had wanted to go out at night. I discussed with her at what time she should return home. We agreed upon a time. If she was late, I would lock the door and she had to go to her mom's place. She once came home late and I locked the door. She was angry and thought that I was acting against her. But after that, she understood the importance of being punctual and did not come home late again [. . .] You have to insist even though she dislikes it, so that later she will understand. That's difficult but I cannot let her do anything she likes.

When his daughter refused to observe her father's authority and power, Carl felt that his authority was challenged and regarded her resistance as a rebellion towards him:

> Once my daughter did not show me her term end school report. She did not get bad results. It's above average. But she was rebellious and intentionally hid it from me. She also intentionally came home late that night [. . .] She went to the Ocean Park in the afternoon. The Park closed at 6pm but she came home just five minutes before 12 midnight. As soon as she entered, I scolded her and asked her to show me her report. She ignored me and went into her room. I knocked on her door and went on scolding. At 12:30am, some police officers came to my flat [. . .] She called the police saying that I abused her. The police came up with shields. Also there were ambulance officers [. . .] She just wanted to act against me [. . .] Our relationship had turned that bad.

A mother's and children's challenge to a father's authority brings about frustration and disappointment in fathers, who then blame the mother and children for not observing the paternal authority that is justified and legitimized by the structure. Because fathers can always find some knowledge, skills, and values to teach and pass on to their children, they seldom think that they are incapable of being an educator even when facing a challenge. Thinking that they are the cultural parent, fathers tend to blame others for not submitting to their authority rather than reflecting upon their role as educator or the way they educate their children. The practice of blaming the mother for her bad education was particularly prominent in situations of marital conflict or breakdown when fathers' power and status was shaken. Education was the way in which the father could claim back his authority, which he could not give up, especially in situations of fragility.

Benjamin described himself as a higher-level educator in teaching his daughter when compared with his ex-wife. While the mother taught the daughter to follow social rules, Benjamin taught her critical thinking by counteracting her mother's teachings to make her a "complete" person. He said, "Whenever her mother is angry on those things, I will do the opposite to balance off. The more her mother is angry, the more I show

that it's no problem." But when asked to give an example on how he taught his daughter in the opposite way, his teaching was actually more supplementing the mother than contradicting her. He had a similar way of thinking to his ex-wife:

> For example, her mother will be angry when her room gets messy. I tell her that the way she puts her things will make it difficult for her to find them later. Her mother has a reason to get angry [. . .] I want her to know the reason behind those proper acts and don't want her to take them as a formality only. For example, greeting others before you start eating is a good manner. Good manner is important as it makes others happy. But is it [morally] bad if you don't greet others before you eat? Not really. But still I ask her to greet others first. I let her get used to that. After you get used to that, you [would do it naturally]. But if you [haven't learnt that] at the very beginning, you cannot operate properly in the society. I want her to know how to operate in society. It's important.

Benjamin explained to his daughter why her mother asked her to follow rules. He tried to make his daughter understand and subsequently follow her mother's words in order to live easily in society. What he taught his daughter was actually not different from what his ex-wife taught. Indeed, what he did was reinforcing his ex-wife's teaching. Towards the end of the interview, Benjamin admitted that it was not their philosophies of education that differed but their relationship that counted. He said calmly:

> We often argued over our daughter's education. I knew that it's because the foundation of our relationship wasn't good [. . .] The argument over education was just a way to express that [. . .] We were arguing over some conceptual stuff [because] we did not love each other. If we loved each other, it didn't matter which approach we followed. Following mine or hers didn't really matter [. . .] It wasn't love at the foundation [of our relationship]. It was competition. We just had to argue with each other.

Benjamin transferred his discontent of his ex-wife to her approach to education. Their relationship problem was projected onto the educational aspect of parenting. His rejection of her way of teaching did not mean that

he disagreed with the content but was a way in which he could degrade the mother's contribution to the child's upbringing and demonstrate his own paternal authority and influence.

Another case was Stephen. Stephen was in his 50s, and had a son and a daughter. Some years before the interview, he discovered that his wife had had an extra-marital affair. He was very disappointed with her and regarded her as selfish and not devoted to the family. During the interview he especially picked on education to criticize her, in contrast to his way of educating their children:

> My wife is not good as she only sticks to her way of parenting. She doesn't want to improve [. . .] My wife is solemn. Her parenting style is authoritarian and she stresses only the children's academic performance. She was influenced by her own father who never smiled. She was brought up in such parenting style. I am not like her [. . .] I don't parent in that way. I hug my children [. . .] so that they can feel love and happiness [. . .] She doesn't notice [our son's altruistic behaviours]. She is too strict. For example, she asks [the children] to place their files very neatly. But youngsters just don't care about that!

Stephen's criticism of his wife's parenting style demonstrated his discontent towards her. At the beginning of the interview, he kept on criticizing his wife's teaching. Near the end of the interview, he eventually revealed that his wife had had an extra-marital affair that broke his heart. Then he started to recognize his wife's contribution:

> My wife is good to our children. She is a good person, but maybe she just doesn't express her love to them [. . .] She is solemn, like a mother, a parent. [But] I am like a friend to the children [. . .] Our children are afraid of my wife. She used to beat them. Now she doesn't.
>
> My son got very good results in primary school. He often got the second place in class and was among the top ten in primary five and six. I was very happy to see him doing well at school. His mother pushed him a lot. She paid for his private tuition. It was the effort of my wife. Although we have different approaches in teaching children, I don't want to diminish her contribution.

After divorce, Rick wanted to get custody of his son because he thought that his ex-wife was irrational and only wanted to train their son to be obedient. He considered this as a kind of child abuse and complained in the interview about it. He said:

> The ways we teach our son are totally different. I focus on helping him to develop his own way of thinking and solving problems. But his mom doesn't allow him to do so. She just says, "You have to listen to me. I want you to do such and such." She even scolds him, "You cannot do this!" when he has done something wrong. If the child has not done it before, he doesn't know he can't do that [. . .] I was always scolded by my mom, so I know this brings very bad influence on a person. I had no autonomy in the past [. . .] So I think that we cannot teach our son in that way [. . .] I have been fighting for the custody for two years. Problems have emerged in our marriage since our son was two years old. I insisted on not leaving the home because I could not give up on my son.

But at the end of the interview, he admitted that after he lost the custody, he stopped influencing the mother's parenting, and she became more reasonable to their son. This demonstrated that conflicts over the education of their son originated from their relationship problems. He said:

> I now have visitation rights. The visitation arrangement is flexible. She has improved. She doesn't scold him irrationally. Maybe it's because we have separated and I no longer have any influence on my son. He just listens to her. I can see that my son just listens to her to avoid any trouble.

Parents' relational conflicts can be manifested as concerns and arguments over children's education, which is a legitimate domain over which the father exerts his influence. It was the aspect Rick fought for after his marital breakdown. Therefore, he felt frustrated when he lost custody of his son because he could no longer teach him in the way he found desirable, which means he lost not only his wife and his family but also influence over his children—he lost his authority.

Conclusion

The superiority of wen quality in defining Chinese masculinity provides the cultural legitimacy of fathers as authority figures in mentoring and educating their children whereas fathers' work and public engagement endow them with practical resources in their education practice. The father considers himself the parent who imparts values to children and sets the direction of education. The notion of cultural parent is deeply embedded in fathers' habitus, which leads them to emphasize education to pass down intellectual and academic abilities and other desirable and admirable qualities to their children, to protect them from bad influences, and to prevent them from suffering hardship. They make use of their economic, social, and symbolic capital in the process to advance their children's cultural capital. In return, fathers gain power, authority, and recognition from the educator's role, as it signifies access and possession of useful capital and a sense of importance within the family.

However, when women's status rises, they also possess relevant capital and can compete with the father in educating children. The father feels challenged when the mother asserts herself and disagrees with him. With the hegemony of men as educators, fathers consider themselves as the legitimate and authority figure in teaching their children, and therefore often feel frustrated, angry, and/or helpless when they face situations that prevent them from exerting their influence on children. In such situations that challenge their structural power, fathers seldom reflect on their naturalized and normalized ideology and their practice of educating their children; rather they tend to blame their wives and children for not subsuming themselves under their legitimized authority. Despite their reflexivity upon the contribution of the mother in educating children, the fathers' act of blaming indicates the dominance of paternal authority as educator, but also the fragility of paternity, which is based on a harmonious marital and familial relation. This will be discussed in Chap. 5.

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5

Marrying Masculine Responsibility

Among my informants, only fathers who had experienced divorce or relationship difficulties with their spouses spontaneously mentioned their marriage when asked to talk about fatherhood. On the contrary, fathers who did not have any difficulty in their marital relations did not talk much about their marriage even when I asked them. Marriage is taken for granted in harmonious families and only becomes noticeable and critical when it is in peril. Compared with economic provision and education, which require conscious and continual efforts and activities to sustain, marriage is construed as a lifelong commitment. Without having experienced marriage problems and the shattering of marital expectations, fathers assumed that their marriage would last for life and no particular effort was needed. On the contrary, men who suffered from marital conflicts regarded their paternal foundation shaken. Some started complaining about their wives right away when the interview began, and could not stop even when I deliberately asked them other questions.

In his interview, Gary could not stop telling me how his wife upset him. Right after I explained to him the objective of the study regarding fatherhood and his rights as an interviewee, he started to talk about his painful first love which led him to leave Hong Kong and study abroad. Then he explained to

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me from the beginning how he met his wife and why he was mad at her. They met at a factory in Taiwan when Gary was sent as an expatriate from his company in Hong Kong. According to Gary, he did not love his wife even from the beginning. He was only attracted to her physically, and they often had sex in hotels or his apartment. Later on he left the company and returned to Hong Kong, but they continued to keep contact and decided to get married after some years. He married her because he thought that it was a suitable time for him to get married, not because of love. However, after getting married, he was angry with her for not fulfilling her duty as a wife. He mentioned several occasions when his wife refused to attend some social gatherings with Gary's friends and siblings, and when she did not do what he told her to. Gary commented that she was cold and self-centred. While he did not show affection to his wife, he demanded empathy and obedience from her. He developed a grudge when she did not show any concern about him when he went back home after a trip. "To be honest, I hate my wife. She is rude, cold, introverted, not verbally expressive about her emotions, and is bad in interpersonal relations," he said. He even felt uncomfortable referring to her as "wife" or staying with her in their apartment during weekends. He had thought of divorcing her and thus had separated his money from hers for several years. However, he did not propose a divorce because of their daughter: "It isn't that she doesn't love our daughter. She talks with my daughter a lot and gives money to her." He thought that it was better to have both parents taking care of his daughter. To avoid being a bad influence on his child, he had even decided not to argue with his wife any more.

Gary's marriage started off as passion, but he ended up seeing it as a responsibility not to his wife but to his daughter. He kept his marriage going because he noticed that his wife was good to their daughter, whom he treasured more and more. Instead of treating her as a wife, Gary saw her as a good mother. Rather than seeing marriage as a romantic bond, fathers considered it the foundation and legitimation of their fatherhood and family, as it defined proper roles and duties of individual family members for the benefit of the children.

Marriage is a social and civil recognition of the conjugal union between two persons based on a sense of responsibility between the couple. It signifies the legitimacy of sexual relations and parenting, and is therefore considered crucial to the establishment of a nuclear family and its stability (Wasserman 2007). In Chinese culture, the sense of responsibility between

a couple is considered important as it is related to the much valued family harmony, which is central to social order (Shek and Sun 2014). Under this notion of family harmony, which stresses collective interest over individual benefit, every family member is expected to observe social and familial rules and norms.

Marriage as the Legitimate Path to Fatherhood

Marriage in Chinese culture implies a whole new arena of familial responsibility rather than a site for personal satisfaction (Adrian 2003, 2006). In traditional Chinese ideology, marriage is considered a rite of passage and a change in status that everyone will eventually undergo. Being married is associated with one's self-worth and achievement, and single women and men who have passed the proper age to get married often face social pressure from their parents and relatives to marry (Higgins et al. 2002). For men, marrying and having children is considered as fulfilling one's duty to the parents as a filial son; a never-married son is thought to be depriving his family of resources as he fails to bring the labour of a daughter-in-law to the family, and he has to be supported by his siblings in old age as he does not have children to provide for him (Adrian 2003).

This familial ideology continues to exist in many men's habitus in contemporary times. Timothy, a stay-at-home divorced father in his early 40s, considered marriage a mission not only for himself but also for his parents. He met his South-East Asian ex-wife through a marriage bureau. According to Timothy, marriage was for having children and thus for fulfilling his duty as a son:

> My parents told me, "There are three things that would make a son unfilial. Among them, not having children (sons) is the most serious."[1] I then knew that they expected me to get married and bear grandchildren for them. I agreed as I wanted to make them happy [. . .] It is a natural duty [for a son]

[1] This phrase has its source from the *Mencius*, which records the philosophy of Mencius and is written in the Warring States Period (403–221 BCE). The paragraph that the phrase comes from describes three unfilial act of a son—not persuading parents to correct their errors, not being an official to support the elderly parents, and not getting married and producing children.

> to get married and have children. I feel that I have achieved a perfect peace of mind after I have my two sons.

Marriage paves the way for family and fatherhood. Hong Kong fathers in general regard marriage to be an important element within the family (Shek 2001). My informants often referred to marriage as the basis of the family. Marriage is not an end in itself; rather, it is a means to fatherhood. Goethe told me about a girlfriend he had before he met his wife. They broke up because she saw another man secretly; but more importantly, it was because Goethe wanted to get married and have children but she did not think the same. The mere presence of love was not sufficient for him to keep the relationship going. He said:

> When I got married, I wanted to have children. Because [my ex-girlfriend] didn't want to have children, we broke up. She loved me and I loved her [. . .] She told me that she didn't want to get married. Even if we got married, she didn't want to have children [. . .] I think that marriage is a life stage which everyone has to pass through. For me, it's a must. Also it's a must to have children [. . .] I told her that. But she insisted [that she did not want any children].

Moreover, fatherhood, realized through heterosexual marriage at the structural level, is an important step of Chinese manhood. According to the *Great Learning*,[2] a man's ultimate mission is to demonstrate his virtue throughout the world (Gardner and Zhu 2007). However, a man has to refine himself by cultivating intellectual and moral qualities before he can carry out external endeavours. Among these masculine missions, establishing a family through marriage and having children is an important intermediary step between the private and the public domains. It is because marriage and family is a man's testing ground for his personal abilites and is thus the foundation of his further masculine expedition.

[2] The *Great Learning*, often attributed to Confucius and his disciples, is a chapter from the *Book of Rites*. It describes the education for governing the state and the "conditions of just rule" (Höchsmann 2004:49).

Willy has wanted to be a father since he was studying in high school. At that time, he vaguely had the idea of having someone to carry on his qualities and characteristics. Later he thought that fatherhood was not only about passing on qualities to his children but also about demonstrating the ability to bring up and influence a person to embody ideal personal qualities. He considered this confidence and ability to influence an important component in fatherhood, which is a key step to real manhood. He shared with me his idea:

> Before my daughter was born, I already had the idea that I wanted to see a child growing up in a fair and just environment that I provided. It's like an experiment. I wanted to see how she would become. So I always long for seeing my children grow up [. . .] There's something in this world that if you haven't experienced, you can't feel that you are mature enough, not qualified as a man. So if you ask me whether fatherhood is important, I will say it is very important. It makes life complete—so complete that you are confident enough to influence your kids.

Willy's idea of being a father demonstrates the ideology that manhood depends on the endeavour of developing one's personal qualities to the extent that he can exert his influence to his children and family. Only with this achievement a man can be qualified to manage the more crucial public engagements. Leo and Samuel also shared Willy's view. Leo, who planned to be a father in his high school days, thought that fatherhood was important because a father had the power to build or ruin another life. Samuel sensed that the responsibility of him as a father lies in developing his son to be a grown-up with his own career and position in society. Fathering children is a manifestation of the power to influence, which is thought to be an essential component of manhood. To achieve this status, a man has to get married and have children.

Divorce as Stigma

Because the legitimacy of fatherhood depends on marriage, divorced fathers are deemed problematic—they are suspicious of not fulfilling their duties as husbands and fathers or have done wrong that leads to their divorce. Carl, a 52-year-old divorced resident father with a daughter and a son, was dumped by his wife who took much money from him when she left home. His financial trouble, together with divorce, brought him great anxiety and he wanted to seek emotional and tangible support from friends. Yet what he heard right away was blame from his friends, who, without understanding the ins and outs, said that he had to have done something wrong that ruined his marriage. He recounted to me his frustration:

> When I told [a friend] whom I have known since high school [that my wife has left me], the first thing he asked me was whether I had gone to prostitutes. Of course I could have done so as some of my friends did invite me to go with them. But I swear I didn't. Not even once! After my wife left me, I called my best friends for help. But they just scolded me, saying that I must have done something bad to my wife. Even after they knew the truth, they still could not help me.

Carl felt particularly frustrated when his daughter's class teacher also displayed prejudice towards his divorced father status. After divorce, he discovered that his daughter had behavioural problems and could not manage her schoolwork. As she did not listen to him, Carl could only go to see her class teacher to discuss what they could do to handle her situation. However, he found that the class teacher was unwilling to work with him. He said:

> The class teacher thought that I had lost my wife and I had to have done wrong in my marriage and so did not cooperate with me. Even when my daughter forged my signature on some school documents, the class master still did not believe me. I couldn't stand it any more and filed a complaint to the principal. Only after I told the principal and the class teacher the whole thing about my family, the class teacher started to compromise a little [. . .] After that, I told myself I had to accept the existence of prejudices in this world. I don't need to seek sympathy from others. I know my life is going to be difficult.

Because of the conception that marriage is the basis of fatherhood, divorced fathers who cannot maintain their marriages are considered problematic and therefore are not suitable to carry out their paternal role. This stigmatized idea about divorced fathers is further problematized by the discourse that divorce is detrimental to children's development (Lau 2003). Hence, some of the fathers, such as Gary, chose to endure a loveless marriage than to divorce.

In addition, as marital breakdown was deemed a crisis in fatherhood, the possibility of marital breakdown because of personal faults and spousal conflicts could trigger some fathers' reflexivity upon the way they saw and practised their fatherhood, including how they handled their marriage. Goethe, mentioned in Chap. 3, used to be the head of the household, and at that time his wife listened to him and was dependent on him financially and emotionally. However, after the injury that forced him to quit his job, he went into gambling and ended up in a huge debt. His wife nearly divorced him but was eventually convinced by his friends and some social workers not to do so. Goethe was grateful to her for keeping the marriage and helping him get out of the debt. Therefore, he willingly took up his home-maker role and became subordinate to her. The marriage crisis prompted Goethe to accept role reversal and to tolerate his wife's bad temper.

Vincent often quarrelled with his wife over their children's education and everyday familial matters. Moreover, as both of them worked, work stress and children's behavioural problems could also trigger them to be angry and to quarrel. Over the years, the hurtful things they said when they were emotional had created grudges between them and made their relationship distant. Vincent saw that if the distant relationship between him and his wife continued, their marriage would possibly break down. He was worried that divorce would bring a bad influence to his children's academic performance and psychological development. He then sought help from a family service centre and participated in a men's discussion group, where he learnt how to get along with his wife and improve their relationship. He realized that apart from his paternity, his marital relation also needed his continual effort to maintain. Simply fulfilling the responsibility of a father—economic provision, education, and caring for their children—was not enough to make his wife happy. To save his marriage, Vincent took the advice of the social workers and the members of the

discussion group to please his wife more. For example, he took the initiative to celebrate his wife's birthday, gave her a call in the middle of the day, and sent her flowers on their marriage anniversary. Although he claimed that those actions were silly, he was willing to do them not for the sake of his marriage per se but for keeping an intact family for his children.

Although marriage is the foundation and legitimation of fatherhood, once paternity is achieved, marital relations no longer catch the father's attention, which then shifts to his children. Once he became a father, Vincent just took his marriage for granted. He assumed that his wife also shared his view that the relationship between the couple was no longer as important as in the past. He said:

> I thought that after marriage, when I was good to the family and to the children, then I had already done my part and she would be happy. I found out later that it's not the case. She wanted me to care about her and make her happy.

Vincent's wife could not care for the children without his care and love. The fact that the foundation of his fatherhood was in peril triggered Vincent's reflexivity and actions in making changes in how he handled his relationship with his wife. Yet this reflexivity on his marital relations was based upon the hegemony of the intact family. Vincent did not wholeheartedly agree with what he was doing. He considered those acts of pleasing his wife not a completely genuine expression of love but a gesture and an instrumental way to stabilize his family. He compromised because he wanted to keep his family intact for his children.

Affection is thought to be detrimental to the family structure in Confucian ideology, which regards marriage as a way to strengthen kinship ties so as to build a stable and prosperous society with simple and clear patrilineal bloodlines. Under this ideology, individuals' passion is diverted to feelings contained in kinship (Wilkins and Gareis 2006). Hence, affection between spouses in Confucian culture is understood not as a passion but as roles and responsibilities to each other. For instance, in *Lienűzhuan*,[3] one story

[3] *Lienűzhuan* is a book written in Han dynasty (202 BCE—220 CE), recording stories of women. It reflects the Confucian requirements for the conduct of women.

depicts a man who refuses to divorce his wife even when she asks him to do so because of her inability to bring his family any children. The woman places her husband's interest above her own, and therefore asks him to divorce her so that he can marry another woman as wife to reproduce for his family. The man also sacrifices his duty and interest to continue the family line for the sake of his wife. Passion is absent in the narrative but both the wife and husband are considered to have mutual affection towards each other as they both place their spouses over themselves. However, the husband is morally superior because he is showing *en* (benevolence) to his wife (Hinsch 2007). The concept of en denotes a hierarchical relation between husband and wife—the wife's loyalty and affection towards her husband is assumed, whereas the husband's liking of his wife is a generous gift to a subordinate (Hinsch 2007). The husband is not supposed to care so much for his wife but when he does so, he is understood as an exemplary husband.

Vincent's way of handling his marriage reflects this patriarchal conception of marital relation in his habitus. By fulfilling his structural responsibilities as a father through breadwinning, being loyal to his wife, and caring about his children, he expected to have a harmonious family—an obedient wife and filial children. However, in reality, what he ended up with were arguments and distant relation with his wife, which became a crisis for him. His marital crisis sparked his reflexivity to change the way of relating to his wife in order to get his family back to the structural ideal. Nonetheless, he had a condescending attitude towards what he did in pleasing his wife—he was practising en to her as what he did was extra to the structural requirements. The change he made was partial, as he did not reflect upon the unequal spousal and familial relations in his habitus, and did not wholeheartedly care for his wife.

However, for most married fathers, working-class and middle-class, in order to prevent deterioration of their marital relation and even divorce, they chose to endure—to keep quiet and walk away to avoid conflict with their spouses. They considered avoidance of conflict to be a rational response as it could prevent a bigger conflict or even divorce. However, in doing so, they put the blame of conflict on their wives whom they considered irrational and emotional, which was again a condescending attitude. In their narratives, these men constructed themselves as rational

and reasonable fathers who put the benefits for their children first, whereas their wives appeared to be selfish. For example, Nick said:

> If my wife goes mad, that means she is unreasonable, then it is useless to reason with her. Even if I do so, I can't guarantee that we won't end up in a fight, which is not good to our children. So when it happens, I will shut up. Go to the bathroom or walk away and take a deep breath.

Ivan also shared his experience:

> Once I had a fight with my wife. I forgot what it was about. She went back to stay with her natal family. At that point, all the responsibilities were on my shoulder. My in-laws called me, my parents scolded me, "How come you can't keep your wife?!" I really don't think I was wrong but when she left, she won. It meant that I couldn't take good care of her and so she left home.

With the rise of women's status, men's power to be in control of the family diminishes, yet the cultural expectation towards them to maintain a harmonious family remains. As discussed above, a divorced father is stigmatized because he is either thought to have done something wrong that makes his wife angry or is unable to take good care of her and maintain his family. Under this structural demand, in order to evade condemnation and stigma, married fathers choose to keep quiet to avoid serious conflicts with wives.

Enduring an Extramarital Affair

Harmony, not intimacy, is the ideal in Chinese family relations. It refers to the situation that all family members fulfil their own roles and perform their duties, resulting in smooth family relations with no conflict between members. In particular, in the patriarchal socio-cultural context, family harmony is understood to be peaceful spousal relations in which the wife does not "talk back and create conflict" but "puts up with [her husband's] bad temper" (Choi and Peng 2016: 72). In other words, the husband is expected to fulfil his structural responsibility to satisfy his wife and keep

her under control. It is often said that family harmony can bring about a stable family which can benefit children. Some fathers were therefore willing to keep quiet to avoid conflicts with their wives, and some even endured their wives' extramarital affairs to keep their marriages intact for the sake of their children.

During the interview, Stephen repeatedly complained about the bad parenting of his wife. He kept on contrasting his parenting style with his wife's and pointing out her parenting weaknesses. For example, he described his parenting as being affectionate as he did not scold his children but explained to them why they had got bad academic results or what they had done wrong. He thus enjoyed an intimate relationship with his two children. On the contrary, he described his wife as solemn and authoritarian, so the children were afraid of her: "This morning, my daughter asked me to sign her dictation result. She only got 35 marks. She asked me to sign because she knew that her mother would be so angry that she would tear her book." Only near the end of the interview, Stephen revealed that his wife had had an extramarital affair that had broken his heart:

> My wife has made me suffer a stroke [. . .] She had an extramarital affair [. . .] I really want a harmonious and happy family. I also envy some old couples who still stay very close. My wife's extramarital affair hurts me very deeply. But if she chooses that path I cannot stop her [. . .] When I discovered her affair, I sat in a park for seven hours. I called up my friends. I used up a lot of batteries. Even my friends wanted to stay away from me.

Stephen blamed his wife for being selfish and not devoted to the family. According to Stephen, his wife's extramarital affair indicated that she focused more on her own pleasure than the interests of her husband and children. Parenthood and marriage is understood as responsibility, and when they are antagonistic to personal satisfaction, sacrifice of the individual's fulfilment is expected. Therefore, married women having extramarital affairs are considered as seriously breaching the ethics and morality as a wife and mother.

Although Confucian ideology stresses the importance of the loyalty of both women and men to the family, differential treatment towards women and men is apparent in marriage and sexuality. Under the customary

marriage system in Chinese culture, a man can have a wife and several concubines. As the family is understood in the patrilineal sense, men remarrying or having concubines is a means of bringing more offspring to the family, thus these acts are not considered a problem. In practice, men enjoy more opportunities to seek sexual gratification with women other than their wives. On the contrary, a virtuous wife should not change her husband for the rest of her life, and women remarrying was considered as harming their husbands' families in all cases under the neo-Confucian standard (Ebrey 2003).

Even in Chinese society today, a sexual double standard still exists. Having a mistress is a status symbol for men (Tam 1996) whereas women having extramarital affairs are considered irresponsible, selfish, and immoral (Zhang 2010). The discourse on maternity puts motherhood as women's core identity, further encouraging them to push away and sacrifice other aspects of life (Ho 2007b); therefore, they should avoid extramarital affairs but tolerate their husbands' affairs for the sake of their children (Fan and Lui 2004; He 2005). Married women who have extramarital affairs face condemnation as their affairs bring about humiliation to their husbands and damage to their families (Chang 1999). Therefore, Stephen felt justified in being angry at his wife and criticizing her parenting.

Despite feeling hurt by his wife's affair, Stephen did not want to divorce her because he thought that a "broken" family would alienate his children and have a bad influence on them. In the end, maintaining a harmonious marriage, to Stephen, was the key to paternal responsibility. He sought help from social workers and psychiatrists to prevent his grudge leading him to commit domestic violence. Thinking about his children, he even chose to treat his wife as a friend to make their relationship less conflictual:

> I know that my wife works hard but can only get a low wage. So I told my children to love her more. We should love the enemy. I don't talk much with her. I just treat her as a friend. Now if she doesn't talk to me then I don't talk to her. I won't beg her any more. But I still care about her. Like when she was sick, I gave her some pills. I told her not to smoke too much. I don't know whether she could feel that or not. If we don't communicate at all, my children will say that I cannot do what I preach—I don't even care about my wife.

His use of the word "enemy" showed that Stephen could not forgive his wife. Yet, to Stephen, her actual contribution to the family as parent could overcome her "fault" as wife.

Marriage was considered a responsibility to the children instead of a romantic commitment. Stephen condemned his wife's parenting based on her violation of her wife's role. But realizing that his wife could actually satisfy the children's educational and material needs, and could handle their daughter's biological concerns, Stephen was willing to endure his painful marriage. While responsibility overrides affection and personal happiness in the familial structure, marriage is recognized as a part of parenthood, rather than simply an intimacy between two people. Chinese parents are in general devoted to their children and are willing to sacrifice for their children's benefits (Xu et al. 2005). Under the notion of responsibility to maintain a harmonious intact family for his children, Stephen decided not to divorce and put aside his pain. He chose to see his wife as a parenting partner, and recognized her contribution to their children's upbringing even though he could not forgive her.

Children were the immediate concern for these fathers encountering bad marriages. The wife was considered to be functional in the family, especially in parenting. In a loveless union, the importance of and focus on children is particularly demonstrated. In the dominant discourse naturalizing the mother–child relationship (Chodorow 1978; Coltrane 1989), the wife is considered to be able to mediate between father and children through her emotional role (Hochschild 1983; Liljestrom 1986). The father often gains indirect understanding of his children through the mother (Backett 1987). As the relationship with children is the most important element in fatherhood, for the fathers I have interviewed, the sentiment with the wife was considered secondary.

Timothy's wife left the family because she could not endure living with Timothy's parents. She often quarrelled with her in-laws, and Timothy

did not know what to do as he could not afford to rent an apartment in order to move out. This resulted in his wife hating and distrusting him. Finally, she chose to move out on her own, and ended up in an extra-marital affair. When Timothy discovered this, he was very angry; therefore even when his wife returned two months later, Timothy found it very hard to accept her again. He thought that she was irresponsible in leaving their sons and running away with another guy. He blamed her for not understanding his financial condition as a wife. However, when he recalled how his wife suffered pain in her labour and became physically weak after giving birth, as well as the happy time they enjoyed when their sons were born, he was grateful to her and admitted that he still loved her and was concerned about her. He shifted the blame to himself. He felt sad and regretted not moving out from his parents' home to keep his happy family together. Acknowledging that he was also responsible for the breakup, he thought that he should give his wife a second chance and not divorce her, but to see if she could be a good, caring mother again.

Recalling the happy time of his family life led Timothy to contrast it with his current marital crisis and triggered recognition of his wife's contribution and his sympathy towards her. He shifted from blaming his wife for not taking up her maternal role to thinking that he, as the husband, had failed to fulfil the duty to earn more money to afford separate accommodation. However, his reflexivity did not help him see beyond the existing familial role. The incidence he recalled about his wife was the hardship she endured as a mother. His plan to reconcile with her was based on the condition that she could demonstrate again that she could be a dutiful mother. These thoughts showed that Timothy still did not consider his wife's individuality but kept on seeing her as a mother and wife. The child-centred mentality dominated how Timothy saw his wife, even though he realized her hatred of living with his parents was the major source of their marital breakdown.

In contemporary times, women's rise in social status and economic independence has given them the opportunity to end unhappy marriages

and seek emotional and sexual pleasure outside marriage (Chang 1999; Hochschild 1994; Pyke and Coltrane 1996; Zhang 2010). Women who are not satisfied with their marriage and sexual life may refuse to conform to their expected familial role and seek opportunities that transgress the boundaries of good housewife and mother (Ho 2008), threatening the patriarchal notion of family harmony. Nevertheless, women in Hong Kong are still bounded by the traditional values of the proper role of women in the family as mothers and wives (Chan and Ma 2002). Hence, they demonstrated mixed feelings about their extramarital relationships—even though they enjoyed the romance, they feared that the affair would jeopardize their marriages (Ho 2007a). As divorce is thought to upset family order and harmony in Chinese culture, the parent who initiates divorce is considered the one at fault.

Married men also placed their familial role above their romantic pursuit (Ho 2012). All fathers interviewed indicated that they prioritized their family and children and should not pursue extramarital affairs that cost too much money which should be spent on the family; yet they were divided in their views of themselves having extramarital affairs. Some indicated that casual sexual flings in the business context with no romantic and financial commitment were harmless to the family, and that their wives should understand. In contemporary Hong Kong, with this sexual double standard, men's extramarital sexual encounters receive more toleration despite their controversy (Tam 1996). This acceptance originated from imperial China, when prosperous men socialized with each other in the company of courtesans (Bossler 2002; Yao 2002). In contemporary China, wealthy and powerful men also display their status and masculinity by having beautiful women around them (Osburg 2013). Hence, for men, extramarital relationships are separate from their long-term commitment- and responsibility-based spousal relations.

Simon used to own a construction company, which meant he had to do business in mainland China, and his wife was worried that he kept a mistress there. This worry over an extramarital relationship often ended up in quarrels between them. He said:

> I tried my best to go home during weekends. But sometimes I just couldn't. She didn't know that the business environment didn't allow me to do so. Either you stopped doing business, or you had to socialize with people. She didn't understand and always complained. She accused me of secretly keeping a mistress. To be honest, it's inevitable to have some sexual encounter with some women in those business gatherings. Everyone does that. I wasn't addicted and I knew how to get out.

As the media stirred up moral panic about Hong Kong men crossing the border to acquire second wives (Tam 1996), women often suspected their husbands of having extramarital relations when they crossed the border. But to Simon, having casual sex was not an extramarital affair, as it was part of his work to get business to financially support his family. As it would not lead him to waste family resources on other women, he denied it when his wife asked if he had an affair. Although his wife could no longer stand his long absence from home and finally proposed a divorce, Simon, after all, did not intend to sacrifice his family in pursuit of an extramarital romance.

However, other men suggested from the beginning that sexual encounters outside marriage were detrimental to familial relations and would threaten their fatherhood, and therefore they tried hard to avoid them. To these men, fatherhood contradicts the pursuit of sexuality outside marriage. Many of these men praised themselves as loyal husbands and responsible fathers who did not have any extramarital encounters. Gavanas (2004) found the same idea in her study on fatherhood politics in the USA. She discovered that fathers' groups tried to domesticate fatherhood by monogamous heterosexual marriage and responsible fatherhood. Sexuality is thought to be a natural drive for men and it has to be controlled within the family through moral values (Gavanas 2004). Unrestrained sexuality is thought to cause damage to the family because fathers need to spend extra resources on more than one household.

Marital Relations as a Gendered Responsibility

The focus on the family pushes parents to emphasize their roles and responsibilities that benefit the family. These roles and responsibilities are defined by the structural demands and are gendered. Marriage is gendered as it involves differential allocation of privileges and obligations to women and men. Under the patriarchal familial conception, a woman is required to focus on the interest of her husband's family. Watson (1986) suggests that women exist only in relation to their husbands or children as wives and mothers and they are not considered as "full" persons, as men are. The wife should think of the heirs of her husband in a patrilineal way, no matter whether they are her own children or not (Ebrey 2003). Married women in the traditional Chinese extended family were expected to serve and please every family member of the husband, and to act submissively (Ling 2000). Hence, Gary thought that his wife was not good when she refused to attend the family gatherings. With the influence of the cultural ideal, marriage continues to be understood and practised as a site in which the gender order is maintained.

Paul appreciated very much his wife's contribution to the family in terms of housework and childcare, allowing him to study and pursue his career in order to get higher pay and social status. He could also be free to build up his social network and influence in the public sphere through his voluntary work. At home, he was the authority figure who educated the children. He even referred to housework and caregiving as "trivial matters," and thought that it was normal for the father to assume the more important part of parenting, such as education and breadwinning, while delegating the "trivial" task to the less capable parent—the mother:

> So I take up the role of teaching as I can communicate with [my children]. I told my children, "Mom takes care of you. She hasn't received much education in Hong Kong and knows little and so her responsibility is just those trivial matters."

Fathers enjoyed the higher living standard because of their wives' domestic contribution (Kaufman 1997), yet they still kept on belittling the caring work that women did. In the presence of a mother, the hegemony of men as

breadwinners and educators is made possible. Frank thought that it was his wife's job to take care of their babies. So when she found it hard to manage both her waged work and caring work, he asked her to quit her job and become a full-time mother. He had never thought of sharing the caring task with her. He said:

> At night, when the children cried, I seldom needed to get up. Often it was the mother or the domestic worker who handled that. When mother was working, it was harder for her. It was because at that time she was breast-feeding the baby [. . .] Later, it was so tough that I asked her to quit her job.

Requesting the wife to take up the caring job does not mean just a household division of labour. Looking after children is deemed an inferior task and the mother's domestic contribution is depicted invisible and worthless (Arendell 1995). The father's role and the mother's role are constructed as opposite and thus have different statuses (Cowdery and Knudson-Martin 2005). It is exactly the constraint of the domestic sphere that hinders or stops the wives from participating in the public sphere and acquiring socially recognizable abilities and statuses. This is a double-edged sword for the father: On the one hand, it creates and sustains the father's control in the family; on the other hand, it works to the disadvantage of the father and the family when he loses his job because the mother who has little work experience finds it hard to find a comparable job to support the family. Martin felt very content with his wife, who was a housewife and did not work outside the family. He thought that if his wife had worked outside, she would have a larger social circle and have a greater chance of meeting other men, which would be a threat to him. To Martin, staying at home signified that his wife was virtuous, as she could fulfil her responsibility as a wife. However, when he was unemployed, he blamed his wife for not sharing his financial burden. When his wife was reluctant to seek waged work, he was angry with her, without realizing that she became less competitive in the labour market because of being relegated to the domestic sphere for an extended period of time. "She supposedly should support half of the family. If I could [provide for the family], I would; but at that time I couldn't [. . .] During my hardest time,

I hated my wife. Since we married she hasn't gone to work," was his complaint towards his wife during his unemployment.

When Martin later got out of his hardest time and regained his power and confidence in his work, he realized that his wife had supported him during his tough time by fulfilling her maternal duty and by giving him emotional care. He was also grateful that his marriage remained intact. He considered it an achievement and a result of their efforts in fulfilling their respective responsibilities as husband and wife:

> I care about her. I often ask her about her day and the kids' situations. I seldom go out for the whole day during weekends. If she asks me where I go, I will tell her honestly and even ask her to come with me. Don't tell lies. When you are honest, she will trust you. How to care about the wife? You have to be good to her. You can't date other girls. No drinking or gambling. No women will be happy with that. You have to do your part. My wife has done her part. I must do my part. No need to say I love you every day. The sentiment is expressed through responsible behaviours.

What Martin suggested is that good marital relations mean both the husband and wife following the structural demands, and that spousal relations do not need physical or emotional intimacy. It is consistent with what Adrian (2003) describes about married couples in Taiwan. She discovered that married couples there were expected to primarily focus on their family duties than to spend time with each other and have fun; couples and family members were more bound by shared responsibilities than emotional closeness. As discussed in the previous section, traditional Chinese literature and Confucian scholars also comprehended spousal affection in terms of the concept of responsibility.

Similar to Martin, many interviewed fathers regarded marriage as a responsibility and took it seriously. They thus strived hard to fulfil their responsibility of economic provision. They did not think about ending their marriage because of a bad relationship with their wives; nor did they want to evade their economic provision role through divorce. In many cases, it was not until a point of crisis or when the conflict was too great to reconcile that the father would agree to a divorce.

Donald had been quarrelling with his wife for more than ten years over his gambling habit. His losses from gambling reduced the amount of money he could give his wife to support the family, which resulted in his wife complaining and quarrels over daily matters. Yet Donald did not think of divorce because he wanted to maintain the family intact for his two children until they graduated from college and became financially independent. Seeing himself as the breadwinner, he became more and more obsessed with gambling in order to get back the money he lost. Unfortunately, instead of winning money, he lost even more and ended up with a large debt that he could not repay. As he thought that he could no longer provide for his family and his debt might be a burden to his wife and children, he attempted suicide by burning charcoal when he was alone at home. Luckily when his wife and children returned, they discovered that he was in a coma and immediately took him to hospital. He returned to consciousness after two days and disclosed his debt to his wife. She then proposed a divorce. Donald accepted, and felt relieved from the responsibility of providing. He stopped gambling and filed a petition for bankruptcy to get rid of his debt. At the time of the interview, he was giving his ex-wife HK$6,000 a month from his retirement fund as alimony. He told me how the breadwinning responsibility had given him too much pressure:

> Family to me is a burden. I needed to take care of my children's education and their relevant expenses on top of other family expenses. Those expenses and my marriage problem gave me a lot of stress. Now I am single and can spend as much money as I have. I feel more relaxed and don't feel any pressure now.

Toby started to quarrel with his wife when his business failed and he could no longer bring money home. As all the family expenses were on his shoulders, his wife was anxious and started complaining. She often vented angry and demeaning comments to Toby, such as "You are a loser. You can't turn back the clock." Toby felt hurt and finally could not stand it. He quarrelled with his wife and they agreed to stop this hateful relationship with a divorce. Toby gave all his savings to his ex-wife and flew to the USA, and later mainland China. When he returned to Hong Kong after some years, he lived on social security and refused to contact

his wife. He considered that to be a reasonable move, because he had fulfilled his provider role by giving all he had to her and did not want to be insulted by her again.

Divorce did bring some relief to these non-resident fathers, who no longer felt the need to be solely responsible for providing for their former spouses and children. When they left the married family, they could adopt the habitus of a single man who did not need to shoulder as much responsibility but only had to take care of himself. For example, Donald said, "Now after divorce, I feel . . . I am free. It's like . . . I am single again. I don't need to worry that much. I don't need to worry about the family. I am single and am freer."

These men were bounded by their habitus of masculine responsibility of economic provision. To them, to fulfil their masculine responsibility was important to maintain a good marital and familial relations. They were therefore willing to bear the hardship themselves in order to take care of their families' financial needs. However, prioritizing and focusing on provision led them to neglect building close emotional relationships with their spouses and children, which made these fathers vulnerable when they could no longer provide. Fulfilling the structural demand of providing did not bring them the "expected" happy family; on the contrary, they were left alone when they could no longer provide. Both Donald and Toby had hateful relationships with their former spouses and were distant from their children. Toby was weepy when he described his regret of not spending time with his children when they were small:

> Twenty years ago, [my children] were still small, but it was already difficult [to get close to them] . . . I seldom talked with them (pause). Now the society is talking about family happiness, father–child bonding. I think that's very good but to me, it's a regret [. . .] When the relationship with children has become distant, there is no more love. That's what's happening to me now (weeping).

For some fathers, the responsibility of providing for the family was so overwhelming that they missed the chance to build a closer relationship with their children. They felt even more helpless in building closer relationships with their children after divorce. They could not reconcile

with their ex-wives and were therefore reluctant to see them again, as they would very likely end up in a fight. Therefore, they chose to stay away from their former spouses and children altogether.

Not only divorced fathers but also some married fathers regretted focusing too much on their work and ending up with distant familial relations. Sunny was a factory worker in Hong Kong when he became a father. As he wanted to sleep well, he slept at the flat next door, leaving his wife who was a home-maker to take care of their new-borns on her own. He enjoyed a short period while he had a close relationship with his two daughters when they were studying in elementary school. Yet his economic burden made him worried about unemployment, and this pushed him to further study after work in order to get promotion. His busy life reduced his time spent with his family. When factories moved out of Hong Kong, Sunny decided to start his own business, and this alienated him even more from his family. At the time of the interview, he had a stable financial situation but an isolated life. He found that his wife could enjoy a close relationship with their daughters but he seldom had anything to talk to them about. He would rather lock himself in his office in the evening and at weekends. Yet he told me of his regret:

> Now when I look back, I think that's wrong to just focus on my work and business. My wife had complained to me that I did not care about our daughters but only focused on earning money. I should have realized that children are closest to their parents in their childhood. When they grow up, they will go. I did the same to my parents. I just don't know why I didn't think that way when my daughters were small.

When fathers see marriage as a responsibility, they believe that by fulfilling their structural responsibilities they can obtain the structural reward—a happy family. In the process, their familial habitus drives them to focus on their masculine responsibility of economic provision and education. They emphasized fulfilling those roles so much that they neglected the importance of building intimate relationships with their spouses and children, which is essential in a happy family. Only when they experienced a distant marriage, marital conflict, or even divorce, were

these fathers induced to reflect upon their habitus and priority in fatherhood.

Child-centred Fatherhood

Fathers who experienced distant marital relations or were divorced tended to displace their love and care to their children as a way to compensate for the loss of intimacy with their wife and to satisfy their own emotional needs, making their fathering more child-centred. After discovering his wife's affair, Stephen wanted to learn to handle his spousal relations. He looked for relevant books and talks, yet ended up reading many parenting books and attended courses and workshops about parenting. He then realized that his bad temper could not help him educate his children but drove them away from him. He tried to build a close relationship with his children and be a role model to educate them. He said:

> Fathers of the old generation were very solemn. When they came home, they just watched television. Children dared not talk with them. I do not parent in that way. I hug my children. I rent comedy films to laugh with them so that they can feel love and happiness [. . .] I hug and kiss my children. Now my daughter is 11 years old and I start avoiding doing so. But I still kiss my son sometimes. My daughter now holds hands with me.

The distant relationship with his wife made Gary emotionally closer to his daughter. He told me, "I said to my daughter jokingly that if she passed away, I would follow her as there would be no one worthy for me to live on. I don't know if I can survive the blow if she dies." He sometimes even whined to his daughter to get her care:

> I told her about my recent sickness. Sometimes, I told her jokingly that I might not be able to live another 10 years and I would not reach the age of 70. Then she was nervous and bought me my favourite food. I was kind of whining. Although she is like a tomboy and looks cool, she is good to me. I am not reserved [in my emotion to her] and always kiss and hug her.

After divorce, Burt lost his wife to act as a bridge between him and his two sons. He had to build closer relations with them to learn what they were up to. He changed from a distant father to a father who would cook for his sons and proactively share his stories and experiences with them. He told me about his new fathering,

> When they come to my home and if I have time, I will cook for them. If I don't have time, we will eat out. Now we have more time to talk than before. In the past, although I had dinner with them during weekdays, we didn't talk much. I went out at weekends. I could know what happened to them by asking my wife. But now if I don't ask them, no one will tell me. So I have to talk with them. But sometimes they don't tell me how they are doing. Once I learnt from a seminar that if you want your children to tell you their stories, you have to tell them yours. So I told them my experience of joining the July 1st demonstration. My elder son then shared his experiences at work. He is a salesperson and it's difficult to find potential customers. A lot of his colleagues have quit the job. My younger son talked about playing basketball at school.

Burt wanted to get close to his sons as a way to satisfy his sentimental needs and to feel their love and care. Therefore, he showed his care to his sons, hoping that they would care about him in return. He became very sensitive to how his sons reacted and was worried that they did not like him. He said:

> Once I hurt my leg and was admitted to the hospital. When I left the hospital, I wanted my sons to accompany me home. They did that. But that weekend I expected them to come to visit me. But they said that they didn't feel well and couldn't come. I wished them to come to see me very much. I wondered if they were afraid or even resisted to take care of me [. . .] I was emotionally disturbed by their action, so I asked a social worker for advice. He explained to me that maybe they didn't know how to take care of me, or they might be really sick. He told me not to think too much about their intentions. If I have that prejudice, then I can't improve my relationship with them.

For some fathers who had a distant marriage or were divorced, caring fatherhood was a strategy for them to deal with their loss of spouse. The marital crisis sparked reflexivity towards their distant fatherhood in the

past and turned them into more caring fathers. However, their reflexivity did not extend to the way they handled their marriages and treated their wives. For example, Burt still did not understand why his marital relationship gradually turned bad, and Stephen continued to blame his wife for ruining his happy family.

Turning away from saving their marriage and focusing on building closer father–child relations reflect the mentality that marriage is considered fragile and easily threatened when compared with the more enduring parent–child relation. A relationship with children is considered more valuable and significant, and hence fathers are more willing to invest emotionally in it (Edin and Kefalas 2005). Some fathers experienced a deterioration in their marital relations because of this emphasis on children. Usually they had conflicts with their spouses related to their children's education. Some of these conflicts ended up in divorce. Rick found that his ex-wife was too controlling towards their son. As he himself had had a controlling mother who demanded him to be obedient, he did not want the same to happen to his son. Instead, he considered role modelling to be more appropriate in teaching certain good behaviours to the child. He insisted that his son should be allowed autonomy and freedom to explore his future direction rather than just following what his wife wanted. He and his wife therefore often argued over their son's appropriate education. Once he had a fight with his wife over the matter, which ended in domestic violence. He said:

> Our son was three years old then. She scolded him for not cleaning the table after a meal. Then I told her not to scold him as he was only three years old. After she heard that, she picked up all the dishes and threw them in the sink. Later that night, I told her, "You have given a very bad example to our son." She didn't respond at all and I saw my son crying on his bed. Then we started to quarrel. When I talked about how wrong she was, she just took our son and went into her bedroom. She didn't want to listen and didn't want our son to hear. I chased after them and wanted to go into the room but she just slammed the door and hurt my hand. I was furious and immediately called the police. I wanted to scare her because she was a police officer. A record of suspected domestic violence could hinder her

> promotion. Then she was nervous and ran out pushing me to the floor, and even hit me.

After the incident, Rick and his wife could no longer stay together and therefore filed for divorce. They went to the court to fight for the custody of their son, and the court finally gave the custody to the mother, with only visitation rights for Rick. Because they no longer lived together, Rick accepted that he had no way to fight with his ex-wife over the education of their son and felt helpless. However, he was happier after divorce because he did not need to live with someone he hated and could just focus on developing a closer relationship with his son.

On the other hand, even when divorced fathers consciously maintain smooth relations with the mother, they do so for the sake of maintaining a close relationship with their children. Benjamin thought that the relationship between parents had a strong influence on the development of children. Putting his daughter's psychological growth first, he tried to maintain a congenial relationship with his ex-wife. Even though he wanted very much to have the daughter's custody, he decided he would rather let his ex-wife have it, so as not to worsen his relationship with her. He recounted:

> After some discussion with her, I knew that she wouldn't let go. If I fought with her [for the custody], there would be conflict [between us] and we would end up in court. It's not the issue of who got the custody. If we made things messy, we would both lose and be unhappy. The two adults would be unhappy and the child would be unhappy. The child would think that you guys had said how good your relationship was and made a lot of promises and now it ended up like that. It would give her a very bad example. I didn't like that . . . So if [my ex-wife] insisted, I let her take care of [our daughter].

Keeping a harmonious relationship with the wife is therefore part of fatherhood among divorced non-resident fathers. It is in their interest to do so. The father's relationship with the mother affects the extent and the manner of involvement with children (Marsiglio, Day, and Lamb 2000 b). As the mother can often assist the father in keeping in touch with the children after divorce (Arendell 1995), with improvement in the coparental relationship, the father–child relations can be improved or stabilized

(Ahrons and Tanner 2003). In maintaining a friendly relationship with the ex-wife, the father can not only protect his children from the loss of maternal care, but can also keep the ties with his children, satisfying his sense of responsibility for them (Furstenberg and Cherlin 1991).

A child-centred mentality was also noticeable among divorced fathers who were considering remarriage. Rather than simply finding a romantic and sexual partner for themselves, these fathers, especially those with younger children, considered remarriage more as a way to provide a caring mother for their children. Henry stated explicitly the priority of his daughter in his consideration of remarriage:

> There was a woman who lived in the next public housing estate. She was also a single parent. She asked me whether I wanted to have a partner. I told her that it was not me to decide whether we could be husband and wife. It was my daughter. I will marry whoever can take care of my daughter and can get along well with her. You have to please my child first, and then I will be with you. I won't let the new woman ruin the life of my child who has been with me for such a long time.

While Dino also prioritized his children in his remarrying considerations, he was worried that he might miss the chance to find his life partner if he focused only on taking care of his children until they had grown up. He told me of his ambivalence:

> Do I find a partner when I am 60? Or should I find a partner now? If I [have a partner], will this affect my children? Though they need not call my new wife mom, in the end they will need to have some kind of relationship with her. And if they have to live with a woman who isn't their mom, what will their relationship be?

His children were still Dino's main concern in his decision to start a new relationship. He regarded his children's preference the most important in the consideration. Remarriage, to him, although not a way to provide a caring mother to his children as they were already adolescents, still required the acceptance of his children.

Conclusion

Marriage is a largely taken-for-granted domain in fatherhood. Fathers with no marital conflict did not mention their marriage or show reflexivity on family relations when describing their fatherhood. Marriage is not considered to need particular attention and constant effort to maintain. Instead, efforts and attention should be given to the children, who are regarded as the reason for fatherhood. The assumption that marriage is a life-long commitment and responsibility turns it into the foundation of fatherhood. The consideration of children's benefits guides fathers to emphasize their structural roles to achieve a stable and harmonious family. Fathers believe that by fulfilling their responsibility to provide and to guide, they can enjoy a happy family with filial children. Nevertheless, paradoxically, the widely believed paternal responsibility for economic provision and education can alienate spousal relationships, harming the foundation of parenthood. When the promised outcome of a happy family does not occur, fathers tend to blame themselves and others for failing to fulfil their respective roles and duties, rather than seeing the hegemonic nature of the structural demand.

Within the paternal habitus, individual's will and interest are often subsumed under the requirements of the power-laden structure. It leads men to defend the patriarchal family and to see his wife and himself in terms of structural roles: "father," "mother," "wife," and "husband." This habitus is a double-edged blade. On the one hand, the caring mother provides the father with the opportunity and the peace of mind to develop his economic power and social status by looking after the children and house chores. The father, by fulfilling his paternal responsibility of economic provision and education, can win the social recognition of having his marriage and family under control. However, on the other hand, when things go outside the structural expectation, fathers feel compelled to endure pain to keep the family intact. For instance, considering the intact family significant for the healthy development of their children, some interviewees, as described above, tolerated a painful or loveless marriage just to guarantee a caring mother and a legitimate intact family for the children.

When marital crisis or divorce occurred, the foundation of fatherhood is shaken and fathers are removed from the structural normalcy. Divorce puts fathers in a vulnerable position—they consider themselves as having failed in keeping their marriage and family intact and may risk losing contact with their children, threatening their paternity. This change in the family field triggers reflectivity upon the father's usual practice—they start to find ways to reconcile with their spouses or to adapt to the situation by proactively building closer relationship with their children. Even among fathers who were hopeless in reconciling with their children because of long-term distant relations, after divorce, they did reflect upon their previous negligence of their children's lives. Crisis in marital relationships is the catalyst to elicit a different thought and practice in fatherhood. However, this reflexivity is partial. It does not turn away from either the gendered notion of marriage and family or from child-centred paternity and continues to consider improving the relationship with wife as being secondary, and merely for the sake of the children.

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6

Rethinking Chinese Fatherhood

In 2009, a Mass Transit Railway (MTR) television commercial portrayed a "new good father" image to promote its service:

> A father cooks breakfast for his son while he sleeps at the table before going to school. "I will do anything I can as I only have this son," the father says to himself. On the day of the parent–child performance in the school, the father holds his son's hand as they go to the venue, both wearing a robot costume. "I will walk with him no matter how far it is," the father speaks with determination. Every day, before going to work in Central, the father takes his son to school in Wan Chai by MTR. On the train, the father dozes off while his son rests on his chest. As the train passes University Station, the father speaks to himself, "My biggest wish is to have him attend the university," while the son draws on his father's hand a picture: a father holding the hand of a child who wears a mortar board. When the father sees it, he hugs his son with satisfaction.

In the commercial, the intimate relationship between the father and the son is the focus. They share the same dream of the son graduating from a university, and the father works hard to help his son achieve that goal—he provides for him economically, accompanies him to school, gets involved

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in his school activities, and takes care of his daily needs. It portrays the ideal caring father image at the turn of the twenty-first century in Hong Kong. The father in the commercial fulfils nearly all the paternal responsibilities that my informants mentioned—providing for children, educating them, and building a close relationship with them. However, the commercial does not mention the marital and familial status of the father. As the mother is completely absent in the commercial, it is not clear whether he is a married father, divorced resident father, unmarried single father, or a gay father. In this sense, the commercial demonstrates a child-centred mentality: Once the child is born, the father's relation with the mother becomes secondary. On the other hand, as caregiving is widely considered the maternal duty, it is only when the mother is absent that the father's caregiving can appear natural in the media representation.

Hegemony of Men as Fathers

Breadwinning, education, and keeping the marriage and family intact are the three naturalized and normalized responsibilities of Chinese fatherhood, granting men social status and power in the family. Economic provision is seen as the foremost aspect of paternal duty, no matter whether it is among married or divorced fathers. It continues to dominate masculine identity (Arendell 1995; Ho 2014; Townsend 2002). Fathers consider breadwinning as the way to show love and care towards their children and spouses. It is also a widespread expectation to fulfil in order to be qualified as a responsible husband and father. Even nowadays, when dual-earner families have become the majority, the father's salary is still regarded as the main source of family income and is used to cover major expenses within the household (Enderstein and Boonzaier 2015). This belief sustains the importance and indispensability of the father within the family. In addition, work that makes economic provision possible signifies the success and recognition of men in the public sphere, as it brings economic gains (economic capital), knowledge (cultural capital), prestige (symbolic capital), and social network (social capital) to fathers. Fathers can then utilize these various forms of capital to carry out their educator

role, so they pass on proper values and knowledge to their children, to protect them.

In establishing a family through marriage, the father can have a legitimate foundation for his fatherhood, hence can focus on his paternal endeavour of economic provision and education. Marriage is considered the socially recognized prerequisite to paternity and a way of showing commitment and responsibility to the intimate relationship (Ho 2014; Ting 2014). It allows the father to provide his children with a "complete family," which is thought to facilitate their healthy psychological development and to provide them with a caring mother to look after their daily needs. However, marriage is also a domain in fatherhood that is often taken for granted. After having children, the relationship with the wife becomes secondary, as long as the marriage is safe and does not end up in divorce or separation. What the father is concerned about is mainly that the family is kept intact and is not "breaking down," because marriage is a site of the manifestation of masculine power (Adams and Coltrane 2005:240). Time and time again research has shown that men are beneficiaries of traditional marriage. Married men have better prospect in jobs and earn more than their unmarried counterparts (Nock 1998), and they enjoy greater marital satisfaction than married women (Fowers 1991; Ting 2014). Women often bear the major responsibility of housework, regardless of their occupational status (Census and Statistics Department 2003a, b; Hochschild, Arlie R. 1989; The Women's Foundation 2006). Men who are married can hence benefit practically and symbolically from this foundation of paternity.

Nevertheless, not all men benefit from the hegemony. Not being able to fulfil the three domains of responsibility is a threat to paternity and is considered irresponsible. With pay cuts, unemployment, and keen competition in the labour market, men feel strained when they are forced to reduce their financial contribution to their families (Ho 2014). When breadwinning is central to men's gender identity, being out of work signifies a lack of useful skills and abilities or a lack of incentive to work and being irresponsible. Both carry negative connotations to manhood, and therefore failure in breadwinning is considered a threat to the masculine identity and can increase conflict within the family (Leung and Chan 2014). For education, when children do not listen to the father or

when the mother challenges his education principles and practices, the father often feels frustrated, isolated, and angry. Many interparental conflicts originate from disparate approaches in education and marital breakdown can arise out of prolonged conflicts between spouses. In the stigmatized discourse of divorce, which is widely shared by the majority of Hong Kong society, marital dissolution is often seen as a personal and social problem. Husbands' extramarital affairs, gambling addiction, huge financial debt, and failure in providing are often considered the major causes of divorce (Hung 2012). With these social conceptions, divorced fathers suffer from the stigmatization that they must have done something wrong, and hence develop a sense of inferiority. The belief that children are the major sufferers from this "problem" further intensifies the stigmatization. Divorce is looked upon as a disruption, a transition, and a period of disequilibrium for the family (Rice 1994), as a consequence of too much individual freedom (Dizard and Gadlin 1990), and as a disease that will pass on to the next generation (Catton 1988). Hence, many fathers are willing to endure loveless and distant marriage for the sake of their children.

When rights and responsibilities are interconnected, men who do not or cannot carry out their assigned responsibilities will not be able to enjoy the privileges granted by the structure. In this study, for example, unemployed fathers considered themselves "useless," "failed," and "inferior." Some fathers also feel helpless and desperate when their children do not listen to them. Divorce is seen to take the non-resident father away from his site of power, whereas resident fathers consider that their "broken families" will leave damaging scars on their children. These fathers consider themselves as "failed," although they try hard to compensate for these "weaknesses."

Structural Thinking

While the hegemony of men defines these men as having failed in their role as fathers, they are actually deprived social actors, who simultaneously contribute to the reinforcement of the oppressive structure. The habitus of the father creates "a profound and durable transformation of bodies (and minds)" (Bourdieu 2001:23), which appears as the natural law

forming the dominant principle of gender division. It is maintained by the motivation of the father to try hard to fulfil his structural responsibilities in return for the masculine privileges such as social status, power and authority within the family, and domestic care and labour from the wife.

I coin the concept "structural thinking" to describe the expectation of the father to have the ideal family by fulfilling his structural responsibilities. Structural thinking is part of the habitus, and it provides the motivation for the actor to stick to the established practices by creating the anticipation of gaining the benefits and outcomes defined and promised in the structure. For instance, fathers tend to think that if they earn enough money for their families, care about their children, and stay loyal to their wives by avoiding extramarital affairs, their wives and children will be obedient to them, and they will have a harmonious and happy family.

Nevertheless, when the promised outcomes do not occur, structural thinking makes the social actors blind to the biased nature of the habitus, thus leaving the power-laden structure unchallenged. Some fathers blame themselves and feel regretful when they cannot fulfil their structural responsibility and cannot get the expected outcome. On the other hand, when the father considers himself as having fulfilled his responsibility but still ends up with undesirable outcomes, such as marital conflict, the wife having an extramarital affair, divorce, and children being disobedient and even hateful towards him, he blames others for not following the structural demands. For example, when the relationships with their wives and children are strained, some fathers regard their wives and children as unreasonable and problematic since they do not conform to the structural expectation.

With symbolic violence, fathers demand themselves and others to conform to the structural demands. Fathers are willing to endure pain and hardship to meet the demands of a responsible father. At the same time, they demand in return that their wives should perform their duties and their children should assume an obedient and filial role. As structural thinking is part of the habitus, it shares its resilient property. It is difficult to see through the structural constraint, and men who cannot fulfil the structural demands tend to individualize the problem and blame themselves or their spouses in the process (Leung and Chan 2014). In structural thinking, the individual's will and interest are subsumed under the requirements of the power-laden structure. It is therefore not

surprising that structural thinking neglects the individual's subjectivity and naturalizes the hegemony of men through the notion of responsibility and rights as defined in the social structure.

Reflexivity in Crisis

However, crises that make fathers unable to fulfil the structural responsibilities are opportunities for them to reflect upon their taken-for-granted duties. Marital conflict can alert fathers to reconsider the way in which they handle the relationship with their wives, whereas divorce can make fathers more involved with their children as a compensation for the loss of spouse, to satisfy their own sentimental needs. Nevertheless, the degree of reflexivity towards the existing structure or the acceptance of caring fatherhood depends on their estimation of whether they can resume "normal" paternal duties and status. Fathers who can maintain or restore harmonious marital relations do not demonstrate much change in the way they relate to their children, although they do show more concern towards their spouses' feelings and marital satisfaction; whereas divorced fathers or fathers who encounter prolonged marital conflict begin to practise more caring fatherhood to build closer relations with their children. This is similar to divorced mothers who transfer their care and love from their husbands to sons, as discovered by Lau (1999). Marital relations are closely linked with men's fathering practices (Kwok et al. 2013).

The same applies to economic provision. A financial crisis can lead fathers to turn away from the mere pursuit of career and monetary reward to develop a closer relationship with their children and spouses. Fathers can be away from paid work and stay at home to take care of their children. However, unemployed or stay-at-home fathers who are resourceful enough to resume their work status tend to be reluctant to remain in the caregiving role for a prolonged period, whereas those who are less resourceful accept their primary caregiver status more readily. Here, social class is a factor that contributes to the differentiation and hierarchy in fatherhood and masculinity. Although the caring fatherhood of both the middle-class and working-class fathers is triggered by marital and familial problems, including children's academic and disciplinary problems as well as

unemployment, working-class fathers, because of financial restrictions, are more willing to stay in their primary caregiving role by giving up their career than their middle-class counterparts. Children became the source of these working-class fathers' sense of importance. With career aspirations and resources to satisfy them, middle-class fathers aim at returning to their original career path after a certain period of stay-at-home fatherhood. Deutsch (1999) suggests that fathers with a low income cannot move up the career ladder and are more likely to take care of children than the higher-income fathers. It follows that power manifested in terms of economic and social status remains substantial in the hegemony of men. If they can attain the power, fathers with resources would not readily give it up.

Rethinking Fatherhood, Reconsidering Family

The family is a site and institution bounded by gender ideology and power. Individuals are required to act according to different familial roles which are gendered and embedded with power differentials (Coltrane 1997). Fatherhood is a manifestation of the gender structure/habitus in which fathers are expected and expect themselves to be breadwinners, educators, and to keep their marriage and family intact in order to gain authority and status. Under the existing structural demands, even when the father is involved in the family, it does not guarantee change in the existing gender structure. The "new good father" notion, which encourages men to return to the family, does not change the hegemony of men—men as provider, authority figure, and leader—and does not change the hegemony of the two-parent family, which is exalted as the ideal. As Adams and Coltrane (2005) suggest, the new fatherhood movement does not aim at eliminating gender inequality by changing the hegemonic elements of masculinity; rather, it points to the loss of men as outsiders of the family. Without reflecting upon the gender relations within the family, simply urging men to assume their paternity is likely to reinforce the existing structural demands.

Moreover, when economic provision, education, and marriage remain hegemonic in fatherhood, this conception and practice of paternity brings higher status and applause to fathers and conceals the contribution of the

mother and other caregivers, propagating patriarchal power. In other words, the hegemony of men can devalue the home-maker's contribution and create a sense of inferiority among those men who are primary caregivers, as they fail in achieving the familial masculine standard. It is the reason why Ruddick (1997) rejects distinctive fatherhood, as it always carries prestige and power along with it.

Understanding the existing habitus and structural thinking as well as reflexivity in a crisis situation can help raise possibilities for change in the masculine configuration. Integrating theories of Bourdieu (2001) and Hearn (2014), this book considers the hegemony of men, which reproduces the gender binary and hierarchy in parenthood, to be the result of countless everyday interactions which may be concealed or visible, immense or small. The successful fulfilment of structural expectations can help fathers win recognition from their spouses, children, and society, which in turn reinforces their habitus and strengthens the structural belief in such a normative notion of paternity. On the other hand, when they cannot satisfy their structural requirements, men suffer oppression and exclusion. As the hegemony of men is oppressive to both women and men, gender equality cannot be achieved solely by empowering women (Enderstein and Boonzaier 2015); rather, the established social category of men needs to be transformed and even abolished. Even though structural thinking and the hegemony of men continue to dominate Chinese fatherhood in Hong Kong, this book argues that crises that make fatherhood deviate from the gender structure can be an opportunity for men to rethink their parenthood and to adopt parenting practice that is different from the hegemonic ideal.

"Failure" in fulfilling the hegemonic responsibilities is a time to inspire and guide men to see through the constraints of the conventional gender division of labour and find another way to contribute to their families. Men should be encouraged to get involved in childcare, which can help them to develop sensitive and caring personalities, because the conventional masculine style of interaction (i.e., directive and authoritarian) causes more trouble than it solves in taking care of small children (Coltrane 1997). Through taking care of their children's everyday needs, men can become more caring and available to their children, and build a closer emotional bond with them.

Changes in social, economic, and cultural conditions have jeopardized the practice of conventional familial masculinities. With higher education, more and more women continue to work after marriage, thus dual-earner families are getting more and more common than the sole male breadwinner model (Ting 2014). This gives women more power in educating children and in marital relations. The increased number of women proposing divorce is indeed evidence of their rising power to resist oppressive marital and familial relationships (Rice 1994). These circumstances that put conventional masculinity in crisis can push men to face the problematic nature of the hegemony of men and can provide them with an opportunity to reflect upon the taken-for-granted conception of manhood.

Simply being exposed to personal crisis situations cannot guarantee a change in habitus, as shown in the stories described in this book. A large-scale change in the field to make the habitus incompatible is more effective in bringing about changes in gendered parenthood. In other words, measures of social engineering based on the explicit goal of achieving gender-egalitarian family and parenthood are needed. The introduction of family-friendly policy to encourage gender-equal familial practices is an example of such measure to open up the possibility of change in the structure. For example, Swedish family policy carries with it the objective to make the family gender equal; in 2002 the government thus introduced a generous 16-month parental leave with two months designated specifically for the father (Duvander, Lappegård, and Andersson 2010), so as to encourage mutual responsibility between women and men in taking care of children and household chores (Bjornberg 2002). As a result, Swedish fathers do spend less time in paid work and more time engaged in housework and looking after their children when compared with fathers in the rest of the world (Dribe and Stanfors 2009).

Paternity leave has shown to be associated with higher family commitment, higher involvement in childcare tasks and household chores, closer relationships with children among fathers (Brandth and Kvande 2003; Doucet and Merla 2007; Haas and Hwang 1999; Tanaka and Waldfogel 2007). This is a policy that encourages fathers to build closer ties with their children and to share the caregiving role with the mother to achieve gender equity (Bjornberg 2002; Brandth and Kvande 2001). More importantly, it endorses the recognition of the obligation and entitlement

of a father to be absent from work when his child is born (O'Brien, Brandth, and Kvande 2007). This is an opportunity for fathers to redefine their familial role. Hence, although the initial implementation of paternity leave in Hong Kong in 2015 was only three days, with 80 % salary compensation, this is a good start in changing the field to encourage and facilitate men's lesser focus on work and more participation in caregiving and building closer relationships with family members. However, the policy needs to be improved, with the aim of achieving gender equality in the family by introducing a more flexible arrangement of parental leave. The existing longer paid maternity (10 weeks) and shorter paternity leave (3 days) in Hong Kong continue to reinforce gender-distinctive parenthood, justifying the mother's heavier burden of childcare duty.

After all, the ultimate way of eradicating the hegemony of men in the family is to diminish and eliminate the gendered conception and practice of parenthood. The reconceptualization of paternal responsibility to include caregiving can act as a driving force towards that goal. As shouldering responsibility signifies a high masculine status within the familial context (Enderstein and Boonzaier 2015), tweaking parental responsibility to include caregiving is a transformative force as it repositions women and men as equal partners within the family (Datta 2007). The highly emotional caregiving experience among fathers is a catalyst for the refashioning of masculinity (Miller 2010). Although at present caregiving still cannot replace breadwinning in fatherhood (Brannen 2000; Daly 2001), this transformation is starting to gain momentum, as demonstrated by findings from across the globe (Pringle et al. 2011). For example, some men in Hong Kong are starting to believe that it is responsible to share housework equally, and some fathers are willing to assume more responsibility for housework and childcare during the weekends or when they can have fewer working hours (Gender Research Centre 2012). In South Africa, fatherhood is found to be the site for young fathers to challenge the stereotypical image of men as irresponsible parents by developing caring paternity (Enderstein and Boonzaier 2015). By assuming the responsible father role, these South African young men maintain a good relationship with their children's mother even after divorce to continue involvement in their children's lives (Enderstein and Boonzaier 2015). Fathers in Canada and the UK are now expected to be more involved in

taking care of children and building emotional connections with them, in addition to breadwinning (Doucet 2006; O'Brien 2005). Primary caregiving, after all, is not limited to one particular sex.

All parents, regardless of sex and gender, are capable of practising intimacy, care, and connection with their children. Exposing the hegemony of men as fathers in Hong Kong, this book aims to encourage an awareness of a more humane and democratic fatherhood, and a family system that respects and accommodates individual subjectivity, needs, and aspirations. A democratic father who truly cares about his family puts the child first and respects the needs and thoughts of each individual family member. Through appreciating and valuing the welfare of each family member, including the father's own, the father can move away from structural requirements, can build a world free of the dichotomous thinking of masculinity versus femininity, and can eventually end the distinction of the social category of father and mother. In addition, with a focus on human needs and agency, parents should be able to carry out their responsibilities according to their own abilities, potentials, and the needs of their children and family, rather than following structural requirements. Family forms other than the heterosexual monogamous type can be regarded as different but not inferior. The conception of family should be enlarged to include more diverse forms, including any combination of adults and children aiming to take care of one another, rather than upholding the ideal of an "intact family" (Silverstein 1996).

Conclusion

This book examines the subjective experience of men as fathers in relation to the socio-cultural construction of gender. In restoring men's gender in this study, I do not take men as given or the norm, but instead dig out the naturalized and normalized conceptualization and practice of men as fathers. Chinese men in Hong Kong understand and practise fatherhood from the three hegemonic paternal responsibilities, namely economic provision, education, and marriage. Although some fathers are primary caregivers, they continue to consider caregiving not essential in paternity, and some even consider it as deviant and inferior. Fathers tend to feel that

they do caregiving in a masculine way, even though they actually carry out the same practice as the mother (Miller 2010). Parenting by nature is gender neutral but it is still understood as gender specific (Biblarz and Stacey 2010). The hegemony of men continues to distinguish ideal fatherhood from the feminine domain of caregiving. Even during a crisis situation, we witness the coexistence of reflexivity upon conventional fathering and the continued practice and valuation of masculine parenting.

Emphasizing the distinctiveness of fatherhood and gendered parenthood reproduces not only the hierarchy between women and men but also that between men. Men who cannot achieve the masculine requirements in the gender structure suffer from social pressure, discrimination, and a sense of inferiority. Hence, the "new good father" notion, which encourages more involved fathering but retains conventional masculine parenting, is actually questionable in relation to the goal of gender equality. It simply introduces the higher participation of fathers in their children's lives rather than aiming at eliminating gender differentiation (Miller 2010). After all, fatherhood is not totally an effect of men's choosing and agency, but more the result of the socio-cultural context, which can facilitate or obstruct particular fathering practices (Featherstone 2003; Marsiglio and Pleck 2005). When social structure and policy that govern the organization of the labour market and the hierarchical valuation of paid work and caregiving remain gendered, the inequality in parenting and the family cannot be easily erased (Hobson 2002). Society as a whole should be aware of the importance and benefits of equality for all genders. Recognizing that the stress and crisis fathers experience as men actually come from the gender and class structure can induce reflection and vigilance upon the cost of structural thinking and the hegemony of men, which can potentially yield awareness that distinctive gendered parenthoods can be eradicated. In the end, parenting is more than paternity.

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Appendix

Details of informants quoted in the book

Name	Age	Marital status	Occupation
Anson	43	Married	Business owner
Benjamin	43	Divorced non-resident	Writer
Burt	46	Divorced non-resident	Construction worker
Calvin	52	Married	Clerk
Carl	52	Divorced resident	Teacher
Cody	56	Married	Security guard
Daniel	49	Married	Medical practitioner
Dino	40	Divorced resident	Driver
Dominic	49	Married	Lawyer
Donald	58	Divorced non-resident	Retired
Frank	40	Married	Teacher
Fred	54	Married	Business owner
Gary	53	Married	Accountant
Goethe	50	Married	Home-maker
Henry	51	Divorced resident	Freelance masseur
Ivan	38	Married	Teacher
Jones	49	Divorced resident	Driver
Leo	48	Married	Social worker
Louis	70	Widower remarried	Retired
Martin	44	Married	Construction site supervisor
Maurice	43	Divorced resident	Driver

(continued)

M. Liong, *Chinese Fatherhood, Gender and Family*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-44186-7

Name	Age	Marital status	Occupation
Nick	49	Married	Teacher
Paul	50	Married	Company consultant
Philip	36	Married	Technician
Rick	47	Divorced non-resident	Artist
Samuel	53	Widower resident	Driver
Simon	56	Divorced non-resident	Unemployed
Stephen	55	Married	Construction worker
Sunny	49	Married	Business owner
Timothy	41	Divorced resident	Home-maker
Toby	58	Divorced non-resident	Engineer
Tony	44	Married	Construction worker
Vincent	46	Married	Hospital assistant
Willy	43	Remarried	Part-time social organization manager

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