Promoting Transformational Change through Women's Economic Empowerment:

Connecting Men, Masculinities, and Care Work for a More Equitable Future

Jamie Humphrey

School of International Development and Global Studies

Supervisor: Dr. Susan Spronk

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With immense love, admiration, and gratitude for Dawnette Humphrey and Lauretta Trudeau,

the two most caring women I have ever known.

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Abstract

Despite women's empowerment being widely recognized as one of the most important pathways to gender equality, many intersecting barriers still prevent women from being able to exercise agency and autonomy in all domains of their lives. In terms of economic empowerment, a gendered division of care labour creates a double burden for women who have entered the paid labour market without experiencing a reduction in their responsibilities for providing unpaid care and reproductive labour for their families and communities. Drawing on the work of social reproduction feminists, this analysis explores the potential for the engagement of men and masculinities in care work to contribute to transformational shifts in gender norms that would enable women to experience more meaningful empowerment.

1. Introduction

"Men and boys doing gender justice and achieving richer and fuller (including healthier and less violent) lives – and women and girls achieving their full potential in political, social and work spheres – requires nothing less than a radical redistribution of care work."

(Barker, 2014, p. 85)

1.1 Care Work in a Time of Crisis

For decades, western governments and international development organizations have cited the empowerment of women as one of the most important pathways to gender equality[1]. Women's empowerment has been conceptualized in diverse political, social, and economic terms across regions around the world. However, any notion of empowerment is complicated by a range of intersecting and compounding barriers. Some barriers are more context-specific, while others cut across diverse groups of women on a more globally systemic level. One example of this type of near-universal barrier is an unequal burden of unpaid care and reproductive labour that disproportionately affects women and girls. On a global level, it is estimated that women perform roughly 76% of this unpaid labour, or over three times as many hours as men (ILO, 2018; Moreira da Silva, 2019; OECD, 2019; UN Women, 2020). At the current rate of social change, it would take between **90** to **210 years** to reach equality in unpaid care work between men and women within the home (Barker et al., 2021; ILO, 2018). Unpaid care and reproductive labour include both direct care (particularly of young, elderly, and/or ill family members) and

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[1] While gender 'equity' may be a more appropriate term in consideration of diverse experiences of discrimination and oppression, most mainstream development discourse maintains the use of gender 'equality.' The UNDP (2005) justifies this choice by asserting that equity (compensating for historical, social, economic disadvantages) *leads to* equality.

indirect care (such as cooking, cleaning, and collecting household supplies, including water and fuel) (Bolis et al., 2020; ILO, 2018; OECD, 2019).

This ongoing unequal burden is detrimental to women and girls in many ways. For example, it perpetuates gender and economic inequalities, limits their participation in social and political activities, and undermines their health and wellbeing (Barker, 2014; Bolis et al., 2020; GAD Network, 2017; van de Sand et al., 2018). As such, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognize the barrier of unequal care work expectations under SDG 5 (gender equality and women's empowerment) as its fourth target (UN, n.d.). Yet despite being recognized as an essential global goal, meaningful progress on addressing the unequal division of care labour has been minimal. This can be demonstrated by ongoing processes of global data collection. For example, using time-use survey data, the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2018) estimates there are 16.4 billion hours spent on unpaid care every single day, which translates to 2 billion people working 8-hour days with no pay. The people who are enduring this invisible and unrecognized care work are predominantly women. Further, they are often women who experience other forms of oppression and discrimination at the intersections of gender and race, ethnicity, citizenship status, class, and/or socioeconomic status. Men are also contributing to care, but to a much less degree. Between 1997 and 2012, the gender gap in time spent on unpaid care declined by only 7 minutes[2] on average (ILO, 2018).

Due to compounding global crises, including climate change, unfettered racism, and the COVID-19 pandemic, gendered inequalities around care work (among other inequalities) are becoming even more exaggerated. As stated by MacGregor et al. (2022),

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[2] Based on evidence from 23 countries with available data.

Climate change intensifies the work involved in caring for people, animals, plants, and

places. It reduces the availability and quality of public services in marginalized

communities and directly compounds the unfair distribution of unpaid care work that

sustains gender inequality. (p. 1)

Histories and ongoing realities associated with capitalist and colonial exploitation sustain

systemic inequalities in public service access, particularly clean water (Spronk, 2020). Water is

central to much of women's care work, including preparing food; cleaning homes; tending to

young, sick, and elderly loved ones; and maintaining crops and livestock for feeding families and

generating income (ibid). As climate change exacerbates water scarcity around the world,

women are forced to adapt to the increasing challenges associated with water shortages. For

example, this includes travelling farther distances to find clean water, which exposes them to

various risks and increases the time required to fulfil care roles. This is particularly pronounced

in lower-income countries where many women have less access to basic services as well as time

and labour-saving equipment (Bolis et al., 2020; Chopra & Zambelli, 2017).

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number and intensity of care

responsibilities have increased substantially. With schools closed, health resources stretched, and

quarantines in effect, the institutional and community support that are instrumental to the

management of women's care workloads have been greatly reduced or altogether eliminated[3]

(Grantham et al., 2021; Power, 2020). Recent evidence also shows the pandemic has forced girls

to spend considerably more time on household chores than boys and, more than ever, women

have been forced to leave the paid workforce to keep up with care needs (Grantham et al., 2021;

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[3] Predating the pandemic, crucial public supports had already dropped to unsustainable levels around the world due to global neoliberalism which drives practices of deregulation, liberalization of economies, and privatization of state enterprises (Wada, 2018).

Power, 2020; UN Women, 2020). Grantham et al. (2021) identify the follow groups of women as those who have been most affected by the pandemic: women in the informal sector with no paid leave, social protection, or ability to work remotely; women living in rural areas with limited access to infrastructure and public services; women living in poverty; single mothers; essential workers; adolescent girls; and women who belong to minority racial and ethnic groups (p. 5).

While women have shouldered the majority of the burden, the overwhelming demand for care work during the pandemic has been felt by most people around the world, including men. In a 2020 study, Oxfam International found that the pandemic had increased the amount of care work performed by men with evidence from Kenya (79% of men felt their unpaid care work had increased), the Philippines (65%), USA (64%), UK (36%), and Canada (36%) (Bolis et al., 2020). This tells us that men *can* contribute to the unpaid labour required for raising a family and maintaining a home, and leaves us with the following questions: Why does it take an extraordinary circumstance for men to get more involved? And how can we safely encourage men to prioritize and value their involvement in care work as an essential factor, not only to the sustainment of life, but to gender equality?

1.2 Methodology

Applying a social reproduction feminist lens, this analysis aims to unpack the above questions in conversation with the practice of women's economic empowerment (hereafter, WEE). Social reproduction feminists spotlight the complex 'behind the scenes' processes, networks, and relationships that create the conditions for human existence within societies (Bhattacharya, 2017). More specifically, the central claim of social reproduction theory is that "human labor is at the heart of creating or reproducing society as a whole" (ibid, p. 2). This theoretical lens is integral to my analysis of the gendered division of care as it necessarily

considers both the systemic and individual relations of power that construct and maintain restrictive gender norms. Moreover, social reproduction feminists identify global capitalism as the central cause of diverse experiences of oppression and inequality. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from Arruzza et al. (2019):

> We do not separate ourselves from battles against climate change or exploitation in the workplace; nor do we stand aloof of struggles against institutional racism and dispossession. Those struggles are *our* struggles, part and parcel of the struggles to dismantle capitalism, without which there can be no end to gender and sexual oppression. (p. 54)

In the pages that follow, I will demonstrate the potential for the critical interrogation of masculinities and engagement of men in care work to contribute to transformational shifts in gender norms that would enable women to experience more meaningful forms of empowerment. Barker's (2014) opening quote shares his self-proclaimed 'radical' proposal for the abounding possibilities of equality that would follow a complete redistribution of care labour. My analysis aims to explain how this could be true. Although I primarily discuss the involvement of men in care on an individual level to attain a shift in the balance of responsibilities within the home, this analysis is situated within a broader call for gender transformation. This means that men and masculinities must also be engaged in correcting the unequal division of care labour on societal, state, and global levels. This approach is necessary to create the long-term, sustainable change in gender norms that will not only redistribute the responsibility of care more equitably across individual and institutional actors but facilitate a total reassessment of the value of care work that sustains life for us all.

This desk-based analysis is divided into five sections. The present introductory section will conclude with a consideration of the construction of gender norms that relegate care work to women under global capitalism. In the second section, I will discuss empowerment as a development goal for gender equality before narrowing my focus to WEE. Although the contents of this analysis are also useful in broad conceptualizations of empowerment, I maintain that they are particularly important for WEE. The primary goal of this form of empowerment is expanding women's economic opportunities, mainly through providing access to the paid labour market; it is here that care work becomes a double burden. The third section will review literature on the role of men and masculinities in development work. It will also define and discuss the concept of hegemonic masculinity as well as "masculinity in crisis" narratives. In the fourth section I will consider the potential for more caring masculinities to lessen care inequalities. Finally, the final section will briefly consider promising practices for engaging men in care work programming before highlighting some areas for future research. Based on the Elsevier (n.d.) definition, this analysis takes the form of a state-of-the-art literature review, meaning it summarizes current and emerging trends, research priorities, and standardizations in this field of interest; aims to provide a critical survey of recent literature on the subject; and offers a new perspective on the issue.

Before moving forward, there are a few important considerations to note. This analysis discusses gender predominantly in alignment with the conventional binarism that continues to dominate most societies. However, this is not in an attempt to affirm the gender binary, but rather to expose one of the countless harmful outcomes of dividing gender into two strictly opposing categories. I acknowledge that those who are harmed most critically are often those who exist outside of the gender binary which makes the repeated use of 'women,' 'girls,' 'femininity,' 'men,' 'boys,' and 'masculinity' problematic. My choice to write with these binary

terms relates to the very limited availability of data and scholarly literature on this topic that embraces more inclusive language[4]. The lack of inclusion of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions in development discourse is an issue that has also been raised by other scholars, including Aylward & Brown (2020) and Husband-Ceperkovic & Tiessen (2020). Additionally, while considering gender relations on a household level, this analysis reflects the focus of most existing literature on heteronormative, nuclear family arrangements. One final consideration, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of experiences relating to meanings associated with care work and its gendered division, including those that may differ from what is represented here.

1.3 Socially Constructed Gender Norms in Global Systems of Power

The gender norms that construct and uphold the unequal division of care work are easily traced to global systems of power, namely capitalism. Capitalist social relations effectively divide labour into 'productive' and 'unproductive' categories, which helps to uphold historical divisions between genders (as well as race and socioeconomic status). 'Unproductive' (or care and reproductive) work, the majority of which is assigned to women, is not paid[5], while men are generally assigned waged 'productive' labour. With care and reproductive labour confined to the domestic sphere, its significance is made invisible and the fact of its being unpaid reinforces the structurally subordinate position of those who perform it (Arruzza et al., 2019; Bhattacharya, 2017; Fraser, 2014). Despite not producing 'value' in capitalist monetary terms, according to social reproduction feminist theory, this type of labour is still responsible for creating the subjects (workers) of capitalism through practices such as raising and socializing children;

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[4] For reference, India and Nepal added a non-binary gender option to their census in 2011; Canada and Australia in 2016; Pakistan in 2017; Uruguay in 2018.

[5] If care and domestic work were assigned a financial value, it is estimated to be $10.8 trillion USD per year (Barker et al., 2021).

building communities; maintaining households; providing affective support to family and community members; producing and reproducing shared societal meanings and values; and so on (Bhattacharya, 2017; Fraser, 2014). Exploitation is inherent to the capitalist system which was built upon colonial violence and the enslavement of racialized bodies (Arruzza et al., 2019; Mignolo, 2011). As noted by Arruzza et al., "not only does this system live by exploiting wage labour and leveraging surplus, it also free-rides on nature, public goods, and the unwaged care work that reproduces human beings" (p. 119).

Although they are often superficially connected to notions of tradition and culture, patriarchal gender norms that sustain labour inequalities are reinforced by capitalist power imbalances. In recent decades, men's participation in 'unproductive' work has been slow to increase while men and women *both* participate in 'productive' labour.[6] Despite this, men are still remunerated at a higher rate. In fact, at the current rate of progress, it will be another ~**267** years (up from 202 before the COVID-19 pandemic) before the gender gap in economic participation and opportunity, which includes pay parity, will be closed (World Economic Forum, 2021). As a result of this gross discrepancy, men in patriarchal capitalist societies continue to accumulate more assets, control more capital, and have more power in social, political, economic, and most cultural domains (Arruzza et al., 2019; Oxfam, 2020). In consideration of the immense inequalities that are embedded within the capitalist system, social reproduction feminists call for a "wholesale transformation of the socio-economic order [to] achieve gender equality" (Handl & Spronk, n.d., p. 1). Identifying the origin of gendered divisions of worth and value within the global capitalist system will continue to be important

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[6] Women currently account for ~47% of the global paid labour force (ILO, 2022).

throughout this analysis, particularly in regard to how WEE is conceptualized in contemporary development discourse and policy.

On in individual level, gender norms can be understood as social rules, beliefs, or attitudes that determine 'appropriate' behaviour for men and women, influencing their actions, responsibilities, and experiences (Kabeer, 1999; MenEngage, 2014; Vlahovicova et al., 2019). They also dictate definitions and expressions of masculinity and femininity as relational identities. Generally understood in opposition to femininity, masculinity is commonly equated to dominance, toughness, risk-taking, and financial breadwinning (Ammann & Staudacher, 2020; Correia & Bannon, 2006; Kaufman, 2004; MenEngage, 2014). In contrast, femininity is often ascribed to inherent characterizations of sensitivity, compassion, and nurturing. This leads to the widely accepted assumption of care as a natural function of women, while for men it is their distance from feminized care that represents manhood (Fraser, 1996; Hrženjak & Scambor, 2019). The oppositional binary framing of masculinity and femininity is tremendously restrictive and reductive as it essentializes men and women while erasing the capacity for an individual to embody characteristics that are not 'assigned' to their gender. This includes, for example, men's abstention to care work. Furthermore, rigid expectations of femininity and masculinity can be extremely dangerous when used as a pretence for violent behaviour or to justify misogynistic discrimination (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Leek, 2019; Macomber, 2018). For example, common male characteristics of bravery, intelligence, and rationality have been used to dominate women who are described as weak, vulnerable, and unable to protect themselves.

2. Women's Empowerment: An Evolution of Practice

2.1 Women's Empowerment as a Goal of Development

Gender equality has been recognized as a priority for international development for many decades and has largely coalesced around the concept of women's empowerment. In early (1980s/90s) conceptualizations, empowerment was conveyed as a radical approach that emphasized collective action (Cornwall, 2016). During this time, many feminist authors shared insights on the centrality of power relations in effecting structural change and the necessity for experiences of empowerment to be self-made rather than bestowed upon women (Batliwala, 1997; Kabeer, 1994; Rowlands, 1997; as cited in Cornwall, 2016). Kabeer (1999), a thought leader on women's empowerment, defines the concept as the "process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability" (p. 437). For Kabeer, the capacity to exercise strategic choice is influenced in the interrelated dimensions of resources, agency, and achievements. With these earlier understandings, the process of empowerment shifts social power in three critical ways: by challenging the ideologies (such as gender) that justify and sustain social inequalities; by changing existing patterns of access and control over economic, natural, and intellectual resources; and by transforming institutional structures that reinforce and sustain power inequalities (such as the family, state, or market) (Batliwala, 2007).

Over time and with an increasing level of neoliberal influence on the development sector, conceptualizations of empowerment have shifted. While gaining major popularity, contemporary empowerment is often lauded as a 'one size fits all' remedy for diverse social challenges, including poverty. This has led many feminist scholars to claim that mainstream empowerment has been reduced to a mere buzzword (Batliwala, 2007; Cornwall, 2016; Cornwall & Rivas,

2015; Mason, 2019; Mosedale, 2005). It has also been noted that empowerment narratives have regularly employed a false universalization of Global South women that ignores diversity and frames 'women's struggles' through the lens of white, western feminism (Mohanty, 2002). Moreover, Cornwall & Rivas (2015) claim its rapid increase in popularity created a "fog of consensus" within development circles that unquestionably connects, and often conflates, equality and empowerment for women (p. 400). The conflation of empowerment with other development outcomes such as better health and increased income, or drivers of empowerment such as ownership of assets or education not only provides a false notion of success but can disguise unintended negative consequences of empowerment interventions (Cadesky, 2020; Maiorano et al., 2020; Mosedale, 2005).

2.2 Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)

While women's empowerment is cited as a goal in multiple domains, including social and political, the most commonly employed pathway to empowerment focuses on the economic domain. Handl & Spronk (2022) remark that "the dominant image that international development agencies conjure up when they talk about empowerment is that of women being given the material means to empower themselves as individuals" (p. 6). Approaches to WEE generally prioritize women's participation in the paid economy through engagement in waged work and/or entrepreneurship as well as the reduction of economic barriers such as access to financing or capital. Canada's own Feminist International Assistance Policy promotes WEE through its third action area: growth that works for everyone[7] (GAC, 2017).

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[7] Many scholars have provided important critiques on women's empowerment in FIAP, including a failure to adequately incorporate intersectionality (Mason, 2019; Morton et al., 2020); highlighting contradictions between feminism and Canada's foreign policy actions (Robinson, 2021; Smith & Ajadi, 2020; Swan, 2021); and that it lacks a necessary transformative approach (Tiessen, 2019).

One of the most common critiques of contemporary applications of WEE is the tendency for programming to adopt an instrumentalist approach. This means that development actors often seek to maximize women's economic efficiency in market terms based on an evaluation of what they can then contribute to their families, communities, and/or host and donor economies (Brown & Swiss, 2018; Cornwall & Rivas, 2015; Okech & Musindarwezo, 2019; Saha et al., 2018). The guiding narrative of instrumentalizing women for economic benefit is epitomized in the discourse of gender equality as "smart economics." This narrative rose to popularity after the publication of the 2012 *World Development Report*. While positioning women as entrepreneurs, one of the main objectives of the smart economics framework is to harness the aforementioned inherently nurturing qualities of femininity to lift populations out of poverty and fuel economies (Roberts & Soederberg, 2012). This framing of empowerment emphasizes economic capital as most essential for gender equality, despite the potential for other forms of capital, such as human or social capital, to be more transformative for many women.

By failing to challenge the inequalities that are embedded in global systems of power, many WEE approaches in the context of neoliberal economic restructuring have plunged women deeper into poverty. One of the most obvious examples of this process is the practice of microfinancing, a policy innovation which became widespread across the Global South in the 1990s. Upheld by neoliberal notions of self-help and individualism, early microfinanciers brought together three goals: eradication of poverty, empowerment of women, and the spread of free enterprise throughout the world (Karim, 2011; Wada, 2018). The microfinance model of providing small loans to poor women received incredible amounts of financial, technical, and political support from powerful countries and international organizations. However, over time, critical research has demonstrated that an over-reliance on microfinance as a singular poverty

solution combined with a lack of regulation against predatory lending practices have led to multiple harmful unintended consequences. This includes a disruption of social networks due to the use of social collateral, spiraling cycles of indebtedness, and increasing risks of gender-based violence (Bateman, 2018; Karim, 2011; Wada, 2018). Unfortunately, the immense global institutional effort that was (and in many ways, continues to be) directed towards the reduction of economic barriers for women has not yet been adequately applied to the plethora of other ways that women experience oppression (Roberts & Soederberg, 2012).

2.3 WEE and Care Work

When women enter the paid labour force without a reduction or redistribution of their responsibilities for care, it creates a double burden. Evidence from the *Growth and Equal Opportunities for Women (GrOW)* [8] program demonstrate "that while women welcome the chance to earn income of almost any kind, their paid work options are few and poorly paid, and by no means contribute to their 'economic empowerment'" (Chopra & Zambelli, 2017, p. 3). Weighted down by the double burden, women often experience additional negative impacts relating to their paid work arrangements. These can include decreases in income due to productivity as a result of over exhaustion; experiencing reprimand from employers for being late or needing to miss work when a family member is ill; restricted work hours due to pregnancy and infant care; low wages and/or an inability to bargain for fair wages due to employers claiming their care work a detriment to their performance; exposure to risk due to multitasking paid work and child care; and precarious work conditions related to informal employment that is undertaken to accommodate care schedules (Chopra & Zambelli, 2017; GAD

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[8] A research program spanning 50 countries that is funded by the Canada's International Development Research Centre, the UK Department for International Development (now the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office), and the Hewlett Foundation.

Network, 2017; ILO, 2018; Saha et al., 2018). To mitigate these challenges, women often have

no option other than an intergenerational transfer of care responsibilities to their children,

primarily daughters (Chopra & Zambelli, 2017).

Despite these substantial impediments, paid work is not fundamentally incompatible with

women's empowerment. The potential for women to experience empowerment as a result of

economic initiatives depends on the context, their motivation for participating in paid work, the

presence of regulatory frameworks to support their rights, and the conditions of the work they are

engaged in (Oxfam Canada, 2019). If desirable conditions are accompanied by the engagement

of men in care work, the double burden can be transformed into a 'double boon' (Samtleben &

Müller, 2022). This double boon would mean "(1) women have access to decent, empowering

work; and (2) unpaid care and ancillary work is redistributed such that women undertake no

more than their fair share of the labour of social reproduction" (ibid, p. 7).

2.4 Shifting Towards a More Transformative Approach to WEE

To attain the ideal conditions for WEE, it is necessary to adopt transformative approaches

to gender equality. With an emphasis on long-term radical social change, gender-transformative

approaches recognize the underlying causes of pervasive inequalities and consider power

relations at both individual and institutional levels, with the aim of dismantling structural barriers

(Cole et al., 2020; Hillebrand et al., 2015; Mullinax, 2018; Tiessen, 2019). Cornwall (2016)

describes the individual and institutional levels of gender-transformative approaches as two

"vital levers," meaning they require: (1) processes that produce shifts in consciousness, including

challenging normative beliefs, expectations, and behaviours in everyday life; and (2) engagement

with culturally embedded understandings of gender, power, and change that push change

processes beyond the individual to address commonly held assumptions that perpetuate women's subordination (p. 345).

The positive impacts of gender-transformative approaches have been demonstrated in a variety of women's empowerment initiatives. For example, after reviewing 70 WEE intervention evaluations, Pereznieto & Taylor (2014) found interventions that applied a holistic approach of WEE (focusing on broader social contexts in addition to income generation) were more effective in terms of impact due to their emphasis on positive change in women's and girls' power and agency. Similarly, after reviewing 61 health program evaluations aimed at gender equality, Levy et al. (2020) found only programs that took a systematic approach (for example, measuring change in attitudes towards social norms that perpetuate gender-based violence in reproductive health interventions) achieved broad health outcomes. Without this approach, the structural aspects of gender inequality prevailed, and the long-term impacts of the programs were unsustainable.

Shifting the unequal burden of care work will require a gender-transformative approach that strives for a more holistic experience of empowerment for women. This means re-establishing the grassroots, collective conceptualization of empowerment that was called for decades ago. Mosedale (2005) offers a useful complement to Kabeer's 1999 definition (above) by adding, empowerment "is the process by which women redefine gender roles in ways which extend their possibilities for being and doing" (p. 252). In this way, empowerment becomes a goal in and of itself, rather than a means to achieve other goals. Furthermore, as they are relational concepts, when women redefine what it means to be feminine, conceptions of masculinity must also be challenged. Learning how to meaningfully and safely engage men and masculinities in the redistribution of care work has the potential to affect necessary structural

change in gender norms and power relations that can lead to an increase in gender equality overall.

As an organizational leader in incorporating unpaid care considerations into WEE initiatives, Oxfam provides promising insights on gender-transformative programming. Their *WE-Care Program* has been operating in 25 countries since 2013 and is aimed at "reignit[ing] progress on gender equality by addressing heavy and unequal unpaid care and domestic work" (Oxfam International, 2020, p. 5). Recently published evidence from *WE-Care* projects challenge the myth that nothing can be done to change gender norms regarding care. For example, *WE-Care* and partners installed water access and laundry facilities in communities in the Philippines and Zimbabwe to reduce travel distances and encourage men to engage in household tasks (ibid). Two years after project implementation, the time spend on care tasks by women and girls had decreased by an average of two hours a day, owing to the water infrastructure as well as redistribution of tasks to men and boys (ibid). The *WE-Care Program* also produced findings that link the acceptance of gender-based violence within a community to less involvement of men in care in some countries, including Zimbabwe and Uganda (ibid). This important finding demonstrates how harmful norms of masculinity can reinforce one another and provides a potential pathway (in engagement with men to reduce gender-based violence) to challenge unequal care responsibilities.

3. Men and Masculinities

3.1 Role of Men and Masculinities in Development

To assess the value of engaging men in care work as a pathway to WEE, it is necessary to first review the history of men's involvement in the gender and development (hereafter, GAD) agenda. Over the past three decades, there has been a gradual increase in recognition of the role

that men and masculinities must play in the attainment of gender equality. Calls for the inclusion of men and masculinities generally fall amongst three overarching narratives: reaching men is necessary to avoid the derailment of women's and girls' initiatives by male resistance; gender equality can be furthered with specific initiatives aimed at men and boys, (e.g. gender-based violence reduction); and/or that meeting certain needs of men and boys can enhance the overall equality agenda (Kaufman, 2004). One of the first and most notable examples of this recognition came out of the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing. The *Beijing Declaration* explicitly states the authors' determination to "encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality" (UN, 1995, p. 10), while the *Platform for Action* mission statement "emphasizes that women share common concerns that can be addressed only by working together and in partnership with men towards the common goal of gender equality" (ibid, p. 16).

The first official global policy document on the subject was published in 2004 by the UN Commission on the Status of Women, titled, *The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality*. This publication included recommendations for the engagement of men and boys in socialization and education; the labour market and workplace; in sharing family responsibilities; and the prevention of HIV/AIDS (UNCSW, 2004). These recommendations were accompanied by recognition of men's potential to use their various roles (within the home, community, and state) to support and enact changes in normative attitudes and roles around gender; foster healthier relationships; enable more equal access to resources; and make space for women in decision-making processes (ibid). Connell (2005) recognizes this document as the first to acknowledge men systematically as agents in gender equality processes and to frame gender equality as a positive project for men to contribute to.

With calls for inclusion made on the global stage, discussions and debates around *whether* and *how to* involve men and masculinities gained more traction amongst feminist scholars and development practitioners. Various rationales were made to support men's involvement. Optimistic proponents, such as Chant (2000), suggested it was "now more than ever" time to make space for men in development due to the failure of women-focused approaches to GAD to make more significant reductions in gender inequalities (p. 9). Cited consequences of men's exclusion from GAD work included: failing to challenge dichotomous categorizations and stereotypes of men as 'oppressors' or 'the problem,' and women as 'victims' or 'the solution' acting as barriers to the success of interventions (Bedford, 2007; Chant, 2000; Cornwall & Rivas, 2015; Ferguson et al., 2014; Wanner & Wadham, 2015); men's exclusion leading to an increase in hostility toward women and development initiatives overall (Chant, 2000; Connell, 2005; Correia & Bannon, 2006); and men's exclusion from women's empowerment leading to an increase in women's workloads and responsibilities (Chant, 2000; White, 2000). Kaufman (2004) also notes that "men are the gatekeepers of current gender orders and are potential resistors of change," meaning that failing to bring them onboard with the GAD agenda will only lead to a further marginalization of women's and girls' issues (p. 20). However, perhaps the most common justification for making space for men in GAD was an acknowledgment that men, like women, are gendered subjects. This led to substantial dialogue around the relationality of gendered power between women and men, as well as amongst different men.

Gendered power can be found embedded in societal hierarchies, economic systems, and cultures (Connell, 2005). It is also actively and continuously constructed within social contexts through individual and interpersonal behaviours (Wanner & Wadham, 2015). Cornwall & Rivas

(2015) eloquently describe the complexity of gender power relations as "relational entailments of gendered difference," adding that "women [do] not exist in a vacuum, but in entanglements of affinity and connection" (p. 402). Kabeer's (2010) writing expands on this sentiment, emphasizing the significance of the relational element of empowerment:

> Women do not exist in isolation either from each other or from men in their society. …
> [M]en's attitudes and behaviour towards women in the different spheres of their lives will
> be critical to the kinds of change women are able to achieve. And men's willingness to
> ally themselves with women in their struggles for gender justice will provide a powerful
> reinforcement of the momentum for change. (p. 107-8)

Due to the relational nature of gender, men and masculinities are present in GAD work whether they are intentionally incorporated or not. For example, a women's empowerment approach to reproductive rights focusing solely on enabling women to make their own health choices neglects the power relations women may experience in their household, such as a male partner who makes the decisions about condom use (Chant & Gutmann, 2002; Wanner & Wadham, 2015; Wood & Jewkes, 1997). Choosing to incorporate men purposefully and carefully in GAD work can help to avoid such unintended consequences.

Discussions on masculinities provide a more nuanced understanding of men as gendered subjects. A common starting point for such discussions is hegemonic masculinity. Raewyn Connell (1987) introduced this concept as an analytical tool that could be used to recognize men's attitudes and behaviours that facilitate the subordination of women and perpetuate gender inequalities. With repeated use and varying interpretations by academics across several disciplines, the concept of hegemonic masculinity now generally denotes a dominant form of masculinity that represents cultural ideals of manhood (Connell, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2015;

Ruxton, 2004). It can also be used to illustrate a collective endorsement of the power of men across social divisions such as race, age, or religion that acknowledges similar interests across diverse groups of men to uphold gender hierarchies (Morrell & Jewkes, 2011).

Although hegemonic masculinity is specific to context, location, and time, Correia & Bannon (2006) argue there are some near-universal characteristics, or what they term "prerequisites for being a man": an ability to work and achieve financial independence; becoming a father and exercising control (providing material needs and physical protection) over one's family; exerting power and authority (particularly over women); and, recognizing that manhood is not given but must be achieved (p. 246). Further, hegemonic masculinity supports a set of restrictive gender norms specific to the private sphere that influence men's behaviour in the home. In the private sphere, "real men" have the final say in household decisions; control household assets; protect and exercise guardianship of women in the household; dominate sexual and reproductive choices; and do not engage in unpaid care and domestic work (OECD, 2021, p. 44). Finally, it is important to note that hegemonic masculinity typically invokes very harmful expectations relating to sexuality and gender identity by endorsing heterosexuality, homophobia, transphobia, and hypersexuality (Heilman et al., 2017, p. 22).

Characterizing masculinity as attitudes and behaviours allows us to disrupt the assumption that the overall concept is synonymous with men. Rather, masculinity should be interpreted as a symbol of gendered power that facilitates the subordination of women. As symbols, "masculinity and femininity do not 'belong' to individuals but are part of the common fund of power/meaning on which they draw" from to negotiate relationships (White, 2000, p. 38). Although symbols of masculinity are more readily available to men, not all men have power and not all those who have power are men (Cornwall, 1997). Moreover, recognizing masculinity

as attitudes and behaviours reveals they are more malleable than previously thought. If masculinities are seen to be diverse and changeable, "men and boys can more easily see a range of possibilities for their lives" (Connell, 2005, p. 1817).

Returning to the evolution of men's role in GAD, the increased awareness of men's gender identities led to the employment of another set of rationales to include men that was connected to the notion of "masculinity in crisis." Crisis framing stems from recognition of the harmful impacts of global patriarchy on men and boys. For example, pressure to maintain the role of financial breadwinner, particularly in the midst of economic crises; increased exposure to death related to accidents, suicide, and homicide; increased risk-taking behaviour and substance abuse; an unwillingness to seek medical help when needed; or a failure to experience the full range of human emotions (Chant, 2000; Connell, 2005; Correia & Bannon, 2006; Hrženjak & Scambor, 2019). Additionally, as a result of embedded hegemonic masculine ideals of dominance, shifts in social and economic power that favour progress for gender equality can be characterized as a threat to some men. This zero-sum accounting of power and rights has then been used to explain why some men turn to violence against women to restore traditional gender power hierarchies (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Correia & Bannon, 2006; Jewkes et al., 2015; Spark et al., 2021). One example (among many) of this type of behaviour can be found in Loureiro's (2019) research in Kashmir. In the aftermath of a large earthquake, men who felt excluded from post-earthquake assistance turned to increasing control and domination over women as a reassertion of the region's traditional patriarchy (ibid).

However, there is critical opposition among feminist scholars who caution against the "crisis of masculinity" narrative. Primarily, if men are framed as "in crisis," not only are women at fault, but women are also responsible for fixing them (White, 2000). Attributing responsibility

for men's problems to women is what White (2000) refers to as a "patriarchal script" (p. 35). She warns that such patriarchal scripts can lead to apologetics and the re-inscription of ideologies supporting male dominance, noting "the resilience of structures of inequality lies precisely in their ability to accommodate new contexts" (p. 39). Lastly, framing masculinity as in crisis *at present* also suggests that historical masculinity was stable at some point, which overlooks countless past harms and injustices (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016; Gourarier, 2019). Locating aspects of "crisis" in conceptions of masculinity throughout (predominantly western) history, Gourarier (2019) proposes to "apprehend men's sense of unease less as a symptom of crisis than as a political resource" that makes some, often destructive, behaviours and attitudes defensible (p. 188).

While accepting the validity of these concerns, it also important not to entirely discredit all justifications made to support the "masculinity in crisis" narrative. While the framing itself is problematic, it is undeniable that people of all genders, including men, suffer at the hand of global patriarchy. However, where men are suffering due to zero-sum accounting of shifts in power in societal, economic, and political spaces, Wojnicka (2021) maintains that we must avoid the negatively charged term 'crisis,' and instead focus on the nature of changes in gender identities. These changes are "a logical result of the fact that masculinities are not ahistorical and static phenomena but rather products of certain times, processes and events" (ibid, p. 1). Following this understanding, we can situate shifts in masculinities more positively within the call for structural changes that are required for gender-transformative approaches to gender equality. Furthermore, contextualizing changing masculinities in the present global environment enables us to realign our focus to the inherently exploitive system of capitalism which endorses and rewards hegemonic patriarchal ideals that prevent progress in numerous development

issues.[9] In doing so, we can more accurately identify what constitutes a crisis and concentrate on potential solutions.

3.2 Applying Engagement Strategies

Following the widespread acknowledgement of the important role of men and masculinities in GAD work, numerous other national development agencies, international organizations, and NGOs have released policies, reports, and strategic intentions on the subject. However, despite the growing global calls for men's inclusion and an establishment of partnerships across genders, men's involvement *in practice* has remained minimal. A 2007 Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) report on gender equality and aid delivery found despite demonstrating progress, no development agency had matched its rhetoric and objectives with the necessary resources or accountability measures to make substantial progress toward equality or women's empowerment. To date, the same been true for commitments to engage men and masculinities. Recently, Wanner and Wadham (2015) conducted a content analysis of 'Gender Equality Action Plans' from the Asian Development Bank, UK Department for International Development[10], Swedish International Development Co-Operation Agency, UN Development Programme, and the World Bank. These authors found that none of the organizations "specifically discussed the role of men and masculinities despite clear acknowledgment that gender equality and analyses apply to both men and women" (ibid, p. 21). Furthermore, the efforts that *have* been employed to engage men and masculinities remain within a fairly limited scope concerning mainly gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) (ibid).

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[9] Issues such as climate change (Hultman & Anshelm, 2017; Pease, 2016); peacebuilding (de la Rey & McKay, 2006; Jenkins, 2017); and forced migration (Dhoest, 2019; Freedman, 2015), to name few.
[10] Now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

The disconnect between promises and practices regarding the meaningful engagement of men has many causes. Lang & Smith (2004) identify four areas of constraint to the advancement of these efforts: structural, organizational, personal/interpersonal, and conceptual. Structural constraints are typified by an entrenched culture of male privilege and patriarchal norms that prevail within development organizations and contradict the public-facing rhetoric that is put forth (ibid). Organizational constraints are related to a lack of hiring and support of gender experts (ibid). The third area of constraint, personal/interpersonal, relates to relationships in the field which can be impacted by individuals' resistance due to a reluctance to address gender privilege in their own lives, or the belief that gender spaces are "women's spaces" (ibid). Finally, conceptual constraints are largely caused by the conflation of 'women' and 'gender' (ibid). Many authors echo the concern of this conceptual constraint, citing the continued categorization of GAD as 'women's issues' as the root of the problem/practice disconnect (Chant & Guttman, 2002; Connell, 2005; Cornwall, 2000; Greig et al., 2000). To date, the primary strategy for implementing the GAD agenda has been a process known as gender mainstreaming. Or rather, the integration of gender into legislation, policies, and programmes at all levels of political, economic, and societal spheres in the process of working towards equality (Chant, 2000; Moser & Moser, 2005). Despite the use of 'gender' to describe this process, many authors have critiqued the practice of gender mainstreaming as using 'gender' as a mere re-label for 'sex,' leading to a reinforcement of the above-mentioned women-only view (Moser & Moser, 2005; OECD, 2007; Powell, 2005).

Despite critiques of gender mainstreaming, there are a number of undeniable justifications for major development actors and policy instruments to make women their primary focus. In addition to men collectively earning roughly twice the income of women while women

work three times as many hours (accounting for care work), gender inequalities in economic assets, political power, and cultural authority result in men controlling the resources that are required to meet women's claims for justice (Connell, 2005). This is merely one illustration amongst countless examples of ongoing injustices that have been recounted in feminist literature. The emphasis on women can also be defended in relation to the various reasons that men may have to resist their involvement with gender equality work. For example, maintenance of power; complicity in current economic, social, and political arrangements; perception of gender equality as 'women's business' and/or less important than other global problems; beliefs of entitlement; as well as less conscious psychological ambivalences (Hearn, 2001). Connell (2005) refers to these incentives for resistance as "patriarchal dividends," or privileges that men stand to lose due to their historic and continued control of gendered power (p. 1808). Although, when discussing these privileges, it is essential to note that the benefits of patriarchal dividends are not shared equally. Applying a lens of intersectionality reveals class, race, national, regional, and generational differences that influence the unequal gains *and costs* for men in maintaining patriarchal dividends (Connell, 2005, emphasis mine).

3.3 Feminist Concerns about Men's Engagement

After roughly thirty years of debate around the engagement of men and masculinities in GAD work, some feminist concerns have been addressed while others have not. One of the most longstanding concerns is that funding for programs focused on men and masculinities siphons precious funding from essential work with women and girls and re-directs these resources back to men (Carreria & Bannon, 2006; Chant & Gutmann, 2002; Kaufman, 2004; Lee & Smith, 2004; Leek, 2019; UN DAW, 2008; White, 2000). Redistributing funds that have come at the expense of decades of feminist advocacy is not the only area of concern. There is also a risk that

increasing levels of men's involvement can encroach on the already scarce political and

metaphorical space that currently exists for feminist work (Kaufman, 2004; Leek, 2019; White,

2000). Leek's (2019) interviews with feminist practitioners in the development field emphasized

that the political places where men and masculinity dialogue take up the most space are

theoretical 'women's spaces,' such as UN Women and the UN Convention on the Status of

Women. Whether or not these shifts in resources and power dynamics are intentional, an

increased emphasis on men and masculinities in GAD work has the potential to diminish the

hard-fought gains that women have gathered, which can undermine the overall goal of gender

equality (Chant & Gutmann, 2002; Connell, 2005). Furthermore, any attempts to reconcile these

concerns by implementing men and masculinity programming separate from, but parallel to,

women's work (as some policy makers have attempted), again overlooks the relationality of

gender, re-excludes women, and can serve to promote increased gender segregation (Connell,

2005; Leek, 2019; White, 2000).

There is also legitimate concern that increasing the inclusion of men and masculinities

can end up reproducing and reinforcing male privilege within GAD spaces. This can be

demonstrated by the tendency for men to receive more attention, recognition, and praise than

women doing the same work from observers within development organizations as well as the

media and other external actors (Flood, 2005; Leek, 2019). For example, Leek (2019) highlights

that *HeForShe*, a global campaign launched in 2014 by UN Women that called on men to

involve themselves with gender equality, received more mainstream media attention and gained

more popularity than any other UN Women movement. There is also the issue of the "glass

escalator" effect which refers to men entering traditionally women-dominated spaces and

moving quickly into leadership positions (Hultin, 2003; Williams, 1992). This trend has been

identified in development contexts such as the movement against gender-based violence where male activists are often glorified (Macomber, 2018). Macomber (2018) shares observations from anti-violence conferences and interviews with feminist educators within the movement against gender-based violence. This author finds deeply entrenched aspects of male-dominated culture having spilled over into the movement with respondents highlighting men's tendency to "take up too much space" in discussions and program planning while self-identifying as subject matter experts and overriding women with many years' expertise (p. 1502). Reproductions of male privilege in GAD spaces increase the workload for feminist practitioners who must then bear the burden of addressing these indiscretions. This is due to an overall lack of accountability amongst the men involved who remain hesitant to trade their patriarchal allegiance and bond with other men for an allegiance with women (Macomber, 2018).

Finally, there are concerns relating to a push to include *all* men in GAD work, even though problematic intentions still remain in some groups. When men initially began to enter feminist spaces, most identified themselves as "highly politicized" and aligned themselves with calls for gender justice (Macomber, 2018, p. 1494). However, the inclusion strategy for men and masculinity in development has evolved to recognize the need for all men to be involved in gender equality efforts. While this is not inherently a bad thing, especially considering the potential for education and awareness to reach more diverse groups of people, expanding engagement beyond feminist circles can provide a platform for anti-feminist backlash, such as those that exist within some 'men's rights' movements (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Leek, 2019; Macomber, 2018). Male behaviors that have been identified as troublesome are supported by the elevated status and greater legitimacy that men's voices are awarded in most societies (Flood, 2005). However, it is important to maintain optimism for the potential to include men and

masculinity in these areas in safer and more meaningful ways. In their interviews with feminist development practitioners, Macomber (2018) and Leek (2019) both found that there remains an overall support, and in Leek's research, a consensus across all interviewees, for engaging men and masculinity in *theory*. Therefore, the focus must be placed carefully on the *nature* of men's involvement and *how* it is put into practice.

3.4 Responding to Feminist Concerns

As the recognition of men's role in women's empowerment objectives has evolved, so too has a body of literature that remains critical of and aimed at ensuring their involvement does not produce harmful effects. In 2008, the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (now UN Women) released a publication detailing the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality. Two years later, the World Health Organization published a similar document showcasing policy approaches to meet the same goal. Both organizations identified two guiding principles that can be adapted to diverse contexts: policy and programming with men and boys must be situated within an agenda that maintains a central goal of gender equality through the active promotion of empowerment and human rights, including women's rights; and this agenda must also address the broader context of social justice which includes the structural determinants of gender inequalities (UN DAW, 2008; WHO, 2010). The second principle acknowledges the limitations of simply shifting attitudes or gender norms and pushes for a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, economic, and political forces that act as constraints for people of all genders (WHO, 2010). Kaufman (2004) echoes these sentiments by reinforcing the need to ensure this work not only continues to direct resources to women and girls, but also maintains emphasis on their strategic needs within a framework of empowerment. Strategic needs stand in contrast to

practical needs as those that are required to transform gender relations, such as a reallocation of the responsibility for domestic and care work (Moser, 1989).

Many authors have shared additional considerations to accompany the implementation of these guiding principles. Macomber (2018) places emphasis on the notion of accountability, highlighting two dimensions: proactive accountability which is demonstrated by adhering to the guidance of women's leadership; and reactive accountability which can be demonstrated through men's receptivity to constructive criticism, men holding other men responsible for their words and actions, and through self-reflection regarding male privilege (ibid). Kaufman (2004) proposes the use of language of responsibility rather than blame which includes avoiding reductive generalizations that skirt responsibility from institutional and systemic sources of inequalities. Although, Bedford (2007) calls attention to the limitations of language of responsibility, demonstrating how easily it can also become a narrative of blame. Referring to past World Bank gender policies, Bedford cautions against the representation of men as "unreliable policy problems who failed to adhere to a complementary model of good partnership" within the home, or a framing of men, particularly poor men, as irresponsible, inherently oppressive, lazy, and violent (p. 299). The goal is to frame men's involvement as allyship where their responsibility relates to their future potential, rather than strictly to their ownership of past/present inequalities.

It is also important to closely consider men's and boys' life stages to identify appropriate and effective entry points to build awareness of the value of GAD work. Relatedly, knowledge of life cycles is also necessary to understand the diverse ways that men and boys can act as inhibitors to women's empowerment at various ages. For example, in relation to care it is not merely a "husband" problem. Gender norms begin developing in life's earliest stages which

means they can become deeply embedded in one's identity and therefore very difficult to abandon or change (Mosedale, 2015). Men, "whether as husbands, brothers, fathers, or sons, frequently are integral to the development of 'pathways' for women" to experience empowerment, meaning early engagement is essential (Spark et al., 2019, p. 1138).

This selection of insights from various authors demonstrates the positive potential for the engagement of men and masculinities when practice is grounded in feminist rights-based theory. While maintaining vigilance regarding the feminist concerns described above, White (2000) also offers a boost of optimism, suggesting this work can be seen as an opportunity for more innovative and imaginative approaches to GAD.

4. Transformative Potential of Men's Engagement in Care

4.1 Obstacles to Men's Involvement in Care

To assess the potential for the engagement of men in care work to have a positive impact on gender equality and women's empowerment, we must return to the gendered division of care. There are many diverse factors that contribute to men's lack of participation. As previously noted, one of the most common claims is that women are more naturally able to provide care. This implies distinct biological differences between sexes that make men incapable of the emotional capacity required for care work (Pease, 2017; Wanner & Wadham, 2015). However, many authors agree that the challenges are not related to biological differences, but rather various social constraints (Hanlon, 2012; Holmes, 2015; Pease, 2017). Building on a White Paper published by Wall et al. (2017) on men's care in Portugal, Cunha et al. (2018) broadly identify the following categories of obstacles to men's participation in care: reproduction of gender stereotypes within families and education systems; influence of gender norms on career paths leading to a lack of support for men to pursue caring professions, or reinforcing these

norms through the glass escalator effect when they do pursue them; a lack of institutional policy support for men to engage in family care, particularly in the labour market and legal domain; and a lack of research and awareness on the importance of self-care for men, including understanding the social determinants of men's health. Many men also report fear of (or experiences of) social ostracization, ridicule, and shame associated with performing care labour, particularly where it is culturally unacceptable for men to do so[11] (Barker et al., 2012; Burgher & Flood, 2019; Doyle et al., 2014; Morrell & Jewkes, 2011; Rost, 2021).

Tronto (1993) offers another justification for men's lack of participation with her concept of "privileged irresponsibility" (p. 121). This concept refers to the ability of those who hold privilege in society, including male privilege, to "simply ignore certain forms of hardship that they do not face" (ibid). In terms of care, this means that existing gender hierarchies enable men to expect care from others without reciprocating. While recognizing that it may be somewhat simplistic to say that men are merely able to give themselves a "pass" out of care labour, Tronto (2013) argues that "by focusing on irresponsibility we [are] better able to see how some people end up with less, and other people far more, of the responsibility that might be better allocated in society" (p. 64). Again, there are conflicting opinions on the efficacy of irresponsibility framing. However, Tronto's insights are useful to stress the shared responsibility of care in society and to move towards its corresponding redistribution.

4.2 Caring Men

While the causes of men's lack of participation are complex, they do not dissolve men's *ability* to care. Men do indeed have the capacity to contribute in a more equitable manner, this

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[11] This social backlash can also come from women who interpret men's caregiving as a threat to their femininity and participate in their own methods of reinforcing gender norms (Doyle et al., 2014).

capacity merely needs to be nurtured, valued, and accepted. Recognizing this, scholars and organizations such as Promundo (a global consortium dedicated to gender equality through the engagement of men and boys) are uncovering the most important preconditions for facilitating men's care. Promundo's international research provides crucial data on this subject. Findings from their *Men and Gender Equality Policy Project* (2012) and *International Men and Gender Equality Survey* (2011) show that younger men, those with higher education levels (secondary and above) and those who witnessed their own father engage in care are cross-culturally more likely to engage in care themselves (Barker et al., 2011; Kato-Wallace et al., 2014). However, the research also shows that men's involvement is generally not a simple linear process. Many men report unexpected life circumstances (such as separation or divorce, death in the family, or chronic illness or disability experienced by the primary family caregivers) as the main reason for their involvement in care, rather than their own choices (Barker et al. 2012). Childhood experiences such as having to care for younger siblings or witnessing acts of gender-based violence can also impact men's relationship to care, but this is not always accompanied by more equitable views on gender norms overall (Kato-Wallace et al., 2014). Finally, in their research on caring men in South Africa, Morrell and Jewkes (2011) found that caring role models, including family members, teachers, or religious figures, were also an important factor for men's engagement. They found that in childhood and adulthood, men who engaged in care were actively involved in seeking relationships in which they also received care from others (ibid).

In the context of masculinities, caring contributions are often considered to be outside of the conventional definition of care labour that generally includes direct care of individuals and domestic work. This means that men often interpret their traditionally masculine roles of protector and provider as caring contributions because they fit more comfortably into their

established/desired masculine identities (Barker et al. 2012; Kato-Wallace et al., 2014; Morrell & Jewkes, 2011; Pease, 2017; Rost, 2021). Conducting research in Northern Uganda, Rost (2021) found that some men come up with additional creative ways to engage in care work that do not challenge their hegemonic masculine identities. For example, men's participation in housework was often justified by using machinery or tools such as a grinding mill instead of a grinding stone, or a bicycle to fetch water instead of walking (ibid). This rationalization was also found in young boys who emphasized the tools used for their household chores much more often than girls (ibid). Rost explains that the use of equipment in care work can attach a social value to men's involvement in it. In Northern Uganda, this social value was attributed to financial status (having access to tools) and a desired notion of modernity[12] (gender equitable behaviour seen as modern and western-inspired) (ibid). Morrell and Jewkes (2011) found many South African men also characterized their care roles within the bounds of hegemonic protector and provider ideals. However, some men in their study did describe care as an emotional engagement that included a commitment to some values of gender equality, such as opposition to violence, patriarchy, and authoritarianism (ibid). Still, some of these same men simultaneously maintained support for men's power and control in decision making; demonstrated homophobic beliefs; and/or rejected gender equality as their motivation for care or as a goal for the future (ibid).

Much of the existing research and programming on men's care work has been focused on fatherhood as an entry point to a broader redistribution of care. For example, another Promundo-supported program, *MenCare+*, includes fathers' education groups to promote more equitable care behaviours. In Rwanda, participants of the *MenCare+* program reported many positive

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[12] Rost acknowledges the deeply problematic colonial history/present of notions of modernity. Post-development and postcolonial feminist scholars have published extensively on this (including Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Maria Lugones, Arturo Escobar, Walter Mignolo, and many others).

changes in their care participation, including spending more time with their children, completing household tasks such as cleaning and cooking, and learning new practices such as infant care (Doyle et al., 2014). Many men in this program noted that performing household chores was a particularly important turning point in recognizing that they *are* capable of performing any domestic task, although overall change was still tempered by the pressures of hegemonic masculinity (ibid, emphasis mine).

Conducting research on fatherhood and masculinity in India, Burgher & Flood (2019) provide another dimension to the use of fatherhood as an entry point for care. These authors point to a necessary lens of intersectionality to understand men's adoption of caring roles as it often depends on their existing ability to fulfill the hegemonic requirements of manhood in their society (ibid). In their study, Indian fathers who readily embraced the identity of "family man" were highly educated men of an upper class with employment in socially respectable careers. While the specific factors vary across contexts, fulfilling the requirements of hegemonic masculinity can be influenced by social divisions including class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and (dis)ability level (Burgher & Flood, 2019; Hunter et al., 2017; Pease, 2017). Finally, like Morrell & Jewkes in South Africa, Burgher & Flood (2019) found that the "family men" in their study generally still employed contradictory narratives about gender. For example, they recount one man stating that having a girl as his first child is preferable because girls are "more useful earlier on" in terms of fulfilling domestic responsibilities (p. 218). Each of these examples show that men's involvement in care is not inherently beneficial. It is necessary to differentiate between care that reinforces existing gender hierarchies and care that challenges them.

4.3 Caring Masculinities

This important distinction informs the potential for caring masculinities to lead to transformative shifts in gender equality. 'Caring masculinities' represent an emerging concept originating from the field of critical studies on men and masculinities. The concept fits under an umbrella of 'alternative' masculinities that proposes various substitutions in place of hegemonic masculinity that are considered more conducive to men's health and gender equality. Karla Elliott's (2016) work is widely recognized as an influential framework for caring masculinities. According to Elliott, "the central features of caring masculinities are their rejection of domination and their integration of values of care, such as positive emotion, interdependence, and relationality" (p. 241). Recognizing that context will shape the formation of caring masculinities, Elliott affirms that the framework is not intended as a "homogenizing character description [for a] 'new man,'" but rather as an attempt to prompt discussion on the concept of care in men's lives (p. 241). There are many potential benefits to the adoption of caring masculinities. For men, these benefits include improved physical and mental health; decreased substance use; longer life spans; development of more intimate and nurturing relationships; and experiencing feelings of self-esteem, respect, and competence[13] (Bartlett, 2004; Hanlon, 2012; Kimmel, 2010). Potential benefits can also extend to women, children, and societies as caring masculinities present an opportunity to lower the costs of hegemonic masculinity while offering a 'gender equality dividend' (in relation to Connell's patriarchal dividend) that pushes gender relations beyond a zero-sum approach (Barker, 2014; Elliott, 2016).

Again, the challenge remains in ensuring that caring masculinities represent an alternative to hegemonic masculinity rather than an expansion of it. Hunter et al. (2017) advise researchers

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[13] In this context, competence refers to the development of caring *ability* rather than *mastery* (Hanlon, 2012).

to remain cautious of "changes in masculinity [that] are merely cosmetic" (p. 7). Likewise,

Doyle et al. (2014) phrase this challenge as thinking beyond men's token participation in care

work. This includes ensuring that care work is not characterized as a 'favour' to women and that

household decision making becomes more equitable (ibid). A useful distinction to aid in the

assessment of shifting masculinities is that between caring *for* (practices of care) and caring

about (affective relations of care) (Camilleri & Jones, 2001; Ungerson, 2006). Development of

the latter can serve as a potential indicator of men's adoption of Elliott's central features of

caring masculinities (above). For Elliott, it does not matter if men do not initially care *about*

because acts of caring *for* can lead to the development of more nurturing attitudes and emotions.

Yet, this is less sufficient for others. Pushing for a more obvious interruption of the relationship

between care and gender identities in general, Pease (2017) argues that "for men to adopt a

critical ethics of care, they need to exit from masculinity rather than reconstruct it" (p. 193). As

such, he suggests it would be more appropriate to discuss caring *practices* than caring

masculinities (ibid). Completely deconstructing gender norms is an important goal to maintain.

However, this does not negate the potential for more caring masculinities to be a worthy part of

the process if we remain vigilant against assumptions of linear progress in the transformation of

gender norms and identities. As Morrell & Jewkes (2011) note, engaging men in care is an

important goal with valuable outcomes, but it cannot be considered synonymous with

commitment to gender equality.

4.4 Transforming Norms on Caring

These concerns, as well as potential mitigations strategies, are present throughout the

literature on caring masculinities. Cornwall (1997) claims it is "clearly unreasonable" to expect

men to abandon culturally valued definitions of manhood without "anything of value" to hold on

to (p. 11). She refers back to consequences of hegemonic masculinity for men who feel a sense of powerlessness in the face of societal pressure. Here, Cornwall sees potential for men to re-evaluate their own difficulties, recognize the implications of hegemonic masculinity in their own lives, and then challenge their behaviours in relationships and situations where they maintain power. This exercise in self-reflection could be useful in transforming men's attitudes around care work, but it will certainly need to be accompanied by more thorough, proactive approaches.

To be truly transformative, the promotion of men's engagement in care work needs to occur at a structural, whole-of-society level. To demonstrate what this might look like, the ILO (2018) offers a rights-based '5R Framework for Decent Care Work:' *recognize*, *reduce*, and *redistribute* unpaid care work; *reward* care workers with decent wages and work conditions; and guarantee care workers' *representation* in social dialogue as well as collective bargaining processes. Implementing the 5R framework requires actions across diverse policy areas, including care, macroeconomics, social protection, labour, and migration (ILO, 2018). Expanding on this 5R Framework, the Women's Global Strike (2022), a collection of feminist organizations and activists from around the world, add a sixth 'R' in their social pact on care: *rights*. The inclusion of rights in their 6R Framework demands the following: recognition of care as a universal right, meaning it must be respected, protected, and fulfilled for all; addressing intersecting forms of discrimination relating to care; expanding the rights of all care workers; and strengthening access to justice for all care workers (paid and unpaid) (ibid).

Finally, returning to men's life cycles, shifting masculine norms requires intervention in periods of greatest norm acceptance. Learning and adopting gender norms as part of one's identity occurs through a lifelong process of socialization. This takes place in various contexts, including within communities, peer groups, workplaces, schools, religion, and politics (Adams &

Coltrane, 2005). Although, the primary site of socialization is generally within the family where children form the basis of their personalities, interpersonal skills, and social values that will impact their lifetime (ibid). Establishing equitable power relations within the home is critical in shaping future generations of caring men (Barker et al., 2011; Kato-Wallace et al., 2014; Ruby & Scholz, 2018). Ruby & Scholz (2018) claim that earlier stages of life, such as adolescence, are critical for the development of caring masculinities, noting that boys tend to retreat from sharing emotions and lean further into hegemonic masculine ideals as they age. Rost's (2021) study in Northern Uganda similarly found that younger generations had more progressive views on gender equality which showed promise for intergenerational transfers of caring masculinities. This affirms that life cycle-dependent interventions with men and boys are vital to the promotion of more equitable power relations across all relationships, whether they involve men as partners, brothers, employers, community members, or global leaders.

5. Promoting a More Equitable Future of Care

5.1 Evidence from Men's Involvement in Gender Initiatives

The engagement of men and masculinities in care work can be informed by evidence generated from their engagement in other gender equality initiatives. To date, most development programming with men has taken place in the interconnected realm of gender-based violence and SRHR. Reflecting on recent feminist-led involvement of men in anti-violence work, Macomber (2018) identifies the following positive impacts: anti-violence messaging reaches wider audiences; violence is redefined as a 'men's issue,' rather than strictly a 'women's issue,' creating space for men to engage in difficult conversations around masculinity, power, and their relationship with violence; and men are recognized as agents of personal and cultural change which provides them an opportunity to take responsibility for their role in creating gender

equitable societies (p. 1511). This demonstrates the potential for men's involvement in GAD

work to respond to feminist concerns and affect meaningful change. Similarly, after reviewing

numerous programs that adopted a gender-transformative approach to engaging men in the

reduction of gender-based violence, Casey et al. (2018) also found promising results. Their

review highlights five studies[14] from diverse regions that showed statistically significant results

in the following outcomes: increase in gender equitable attitudes, increase in care or domestic

work, decrease in reported intimate partner violence, and decrease in the social acceptance of

intimate partner violence (ibid).

There are also many lessons to be learned in terms of the practical application of

initiatives involving men in GAD work. Of prime importance, Taylor & Barker (2013) stress the

necessity of a 'do no harm' approach that prioritizes the safety and wellbeing of women and

children. This includes ensuring that men's involvement in relational contexts has women's

informed consent. In terms of recruitment, incentivizing men's participation can be useful to

build awareness and value to their role in gender equality and women's empowerment. This

could include financial incentives or associating initiatives with activities that are known to

attract men. For example, a project in Brazil found success linking men's workshops to a

community sports league (ILO, 2014). To reiterate a final key point, programs need to include

self-reflective components that foster intentional acknowledgement of the intersectionality of

power in men's lives. This requires men to interrogate their relationships with systems of

oppression including racism, classism, and heterosexism, in order invoke the structural change in

gender norms that is urgently needed (ICRW, 2018).

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[14] Uganda (Abramsky et al., 2014); South Africa (Jewkes et al., 2014); India (Miller et al., 2014); Ethiopia (Pulerwitz et al., 2015); US (Salazar et al., 2014)

5.2 Calls to Action

Abolishing the gendered division of care work has been a demand of feminists for many decades. Over the years, there have been multiple debates on how this can most effectively be achieved. Promundo's *State of the World's Fathers 2021* report builds on the 5R's presented by the ILO, offering more specific, concrete steps to transformational change. To enable men's full participation in care work as "part of an urgent revolution to center care in economies, societies, and lives," Promundo cites seven calls to action, many of which have been reiterated throughout this analysis: (1) implement national care policies that recognize, reduce, and redistribute care work equally between men and women; (2) provide equal, job-protected, fully paid parental leave for all parents; (3) design and expand social protection programs to redistribute care while maintaining focus on the needs and rights of women and girls; (4) transform health sector institutions to promote fathers' involvement from the prenatal period through birth and childhood; (5) promote an ethic of male care in schools, media, and other key institutions where social norms are created and reinforced; (6) change workplace conditions, culture, and policies to support workers' caregiving – and mandate these changes in national legislation; and (7) hold male political leaders accountable for their support of care policies, while advocating for women's equality in political leadership (Barker et al., 2021, p. 9-13).

Each of the above actions is critical to shift gender norms and shape a more equitable future of care work. Although, the method of attaining these goals differs between feminist traditions. For liberal feminists, there is potential for societal change that supports gender equality through existing global systems and institutions (Handl & Spronk, 2022; Sardenberg, 2008). However, this approach comes with many risks. The endorsement of global systems that have proven to be inherently exploitive, including capitalism, erases intersectional experiences of

discrimination and oppression felt by hundreds of millions of people around the world. This prevents meaningful action to address systemic barriers that are built to maintain inequalities. Instead, social reproduction feminists call for a complete transformation of global systems and institutions. In this way, social change becomes not only empowering but liberating.

5.3 Conclusion

Although there is still a long road ahead to achieve gender equality for all, important progress has been made. Decades of feminist mobilization and GAD work has influenced global progress in the representation of women in political spaces, access to education, and innovations in sexual and reproductive health (to name few). While this is optimistic, Grantham et al. (2021) warn that current compounding global crises not only risk stalling this progress but put it in great danger of being reversed. However, there is still an opportunity to change course. As researchers and practitioners of GAD, we must revive the revolutionary conceptualizations of empowerment proposed by the previous generation(s). In doing so, we can support WEE programming that enables women to reap the benefits of income generating activity while also promoting social environments that allow them to build autonomy and agency; make important choices about their bodies, families, and lives; and spend their time pursuing activities that they value. We can start this process by addressing the unequal burden of care.

I opened this analysis with Barker's (2014) radical agenda for gender equality. To attain equality across the full spectrum of "political, social, and work spheres," as Barker imagines, men's engagement in care needs to occur in homes, workplaces, political offices, social movements, courtrooms, and any other space where the constructs of society are maintained. This demands acknowledgement of the exceptional value of care work. Not necessarily in monetary terms, but in recognizing that this work creates and sustains human life. The entire

world depends on it. Appropriately valuing care requires expanding the general definition of care labour to include the affective, mental, communal, and environmental aspects of care that are even more invisible than childcare and domestic work. Recognizing the enormity of care demands a drastic redistribution of the responsibility associated with it to all members of society and, perhaps most importantly, to the state. This total transformation of care will insist on the participation of men. Not only as fathers and partners, but more crucially as those in control of the majority of the world's resources, including political will.

To help ensure that the involvement of men and masculinities in care work and WEE results in changes that are beneficial across diverse groups of people, there are some areas for future research that should be considered. First, research and work in this area must move beyond a lens of heteronormativity. This requires meaningful engagement with people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Second, future researchers could conduct exercises similar to Wanner & Wadham's (2015) content analysis of gender equality action plans that considered the efforts of various development institutions to engage men. However, it would be useful to shift the focus to women's organizations. In addition to providing up-to-date data, this would provide a better understanding of how feminist leaders are working with men to change gender norms in safe and culturally specific ways that avoid reproducing male privilege. Relatedly, it is also important to continue to raise awareness of potential harms associated with men's involvement across the GAD agenda and develop appropriate mitigation strategies. Finally, future research on the transformation of norms surrounding care work requires more direct feedback from all members of the community. Using a similar process that was undertaken by Macomber (2018) and Leek (2019), interviews should be conducted, particularly with women, to ensure that changes are desired and impactful.

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