Reciprocal Relationships between Men and Women: A Critical Issue

In all seven countries the invasiveness of paid work and the increasing sense of identity derived from it, have reduced the time for – and sometimes the value attached to – care and connectedness in families, communities and other domains of life. Given the consequences for equity, well-being and sustainability, we argue that workplaces and other institutions need to change. Yet another critical and connected part of the picture is that men and women's roles and relationships and their particular attachments to work and family spheres need to evolve further in reciprocal and dynamic ways. This is not easy. The separation of paid work and family life, one associated with men and the other with women, has perpetuated particular assumptions about 'ideal' workers as well as 'ideal' carers. Women often face – and are expected to face – psychological, emotional and practical pulls and demands from the domestic sphere and men from paid work. So assumptions about what it means to be a 'man' or a 'woman' are deeply ingrained in individuals' identities and wider societal expectations about what these identities should be. These assumptions are not static. Individuals and societies are at different stages of evolution in terms of men and women's identities and relationships. In this chapter we highlight the need for various kinds of reciprocal changes between men and women in the context of harmonising paid work with family and personal life. We then explore barriers and resistances to these varying changes at multiple levels, including the very personal individual level and the ways this interacts with barriers in families and workplaces in different societies.

BRINGING MEN INTO THE PICTURE

Many women's roles have changed dramatically in all the countries in our study over the past half century, as discussed in Chapter 2. There is also some change in men's behaviour in all the countries, although there are variations in the way that this is discussed, for example in terms of men 'helping' women or as doing a more equal share of family work. This reflects stages of evolution in men and women's identities and relationships.

> Men are definitely more involved in children. When I was young you never saw a man in the playground or pushing a carriage or anything. Now you see it all the time. (American woman, academic)

> Men are changing and they have changed significantly . . . in my own family, I don't think my father would ever have been able to make a cup of tea for himself . . . but

> today, seeing a daughter who goes out to work, I notice he is doing more . . . and fathers are more aware that they have a role to play with children . . . men want to spend more time with their families. (Indian woman, executive)

> I have always taken the view that you have to include men. And I am seeing some change in their behaviour. They are helping more in the home. (Japanese woman, government advisor)

> Men are experiencing a loss of time with their families and there is a ground swell of feeling and concern about this. (South African woman, academic)

However, the degree and level of change amongst men has been much slower than change amongst women, everywhere.[1] One factor holding back change is prevailing assumptions about 'ideal' carers – a role and identity associated with women. This not only underpins the tendency for employed women to retain the major responsibility for childcare or other care, but can also exclude men from becoming more involved in parenting or other forms of caring activities. For example, researchers have long examined the effect of maternal employment on children, but rarely consider the impact of fathers' employment on their children,[2] even though there is recent evidence that paternal care involvement – and shared care by mothers and fathers – can be beneficial for child development and well-being (Burgess & Russell, 2003).[3] If men are often excluded from discussions about parenting and other forms of caring roles and, if they perceive discussions about harmonising or combining various parts of life as focused solely on combining paid work and care responsibilities, they may see this as a woman's issue, not relevant to them.[4] They can then absent themselves from discussions. 'You go along to these work–life balance events and how many men do you see there? Often I'm the only one' (British man, small business owner).

Yet men are as central to these challenges and debates as women.

> Women have run God knows how many laps of the equality race . . . if men aren't engaged it will just go round and round in circles. (British man, journalist)

> As long as we talk in terms of women and childcare it remains a woman's issue. So I firmly believe that this is something we have to broaden to include men. And this is beginning to change. (British woman, trade union)

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[1] For example, Hobson and Morgan (2002, p. 3) note that 'time budget studies show that, while men's involvement in unpaid care work has increased slightly in some countries, it is a drop in the bucket in relation to the loss in women's full-time care work', which they note is often characterised as a care deficit in the context of child, elder and disability care.

[2] Gornick and Meyers (2003, pp. 242–245; 249–255) synthesize evidence about the effects of maternal employment on child well-being, finding that children whose mothers are employed during the first year may fare worse than children whose mothers are not employed and that for children in formal childcare, the quality of provision matters greatly. However, while they are also interested in assessing policy provisions on gender equity, they highlight that little research has focused on the impacts of paternal involvement on child well-being.

[3] See Flouri (2005), who offers a comprehensive analysis of fathering and child outcomes and concludes that the impact of fathering depends on what is meant by 'good' fathering, what child outcomes are considered and what groups of parents and children are looked at. See also O'Brien (2005), writing in a UK context, who explores motivations for and impacts of paternal involvement in child care; discusses the contentious notions of what care and shared care may imply; and suggests a number of potential policy developments and challenges.

[4] In terms of male exclusion from discussions about their caring roles and activities in the context of harmonising paid work with other parts of life, illuminating insights are offered by Hawkins and Dollahite (1997), who discuss the continued emphasis on the inadequacy and resistance of fathers' involvement in care roles without paying sufficient emphasis to the constraints that exist. They thus discuss the need to move beyond these deficit perspectives by exploring the attachment, desires and skills that men can bring to childcare. See also Burgess and Russell (2003), who discuss deficit perspectives, and negative discourses, about the ways in which assumptions about fathers' 'non-interest' or competency can be implied across a range of government and workplace policies and discourses. This can encourage researchers, practitioners, policy makers and family members (including men themselves) to form negative opinions concerning fathers' motives and behaviour in the context of care involvement.

> Women tend to immediately take up on care when children are born. Both parents should work part-time and divide child care tasks as well . . . women should lay back some more, so men are forced to make the next move. (female participant, The Netherlands country meeting)

The need to bring men into debates about strategies for harmonising paid work with other parts of life is recognised in some countries more than others (see Chapter 2). For example, in Norway government policies and initiatives such as the 'daddy month' of parental leave are designed specifically to encourage change in men's roles, at least as fathers, and to enable some reciprocal change in women. 'The best way to somehow improve equality is where men do more family and women can also do more of what they would like to do . . . you have to move in both directions. I think that is where we are really ahead in Norway' (Norway, woman manager).

The nature and extent of change amongst men in the different countries and the ways in which this is discussed – for example as 'helping' women or as deeper reciprocal change – are influenced by historical and evolutionary contexts.[5] This in turn influences the possibilities of further reciprocal changes in women's roles and relationships.

THE NEED FOR RECIPROCAL CHANGE IN MEN

As women are more involved in paid work, there is a need for men to change their behaviour and orientation towards family and paid work. Without such reciprocal change, 'ideal' worker and 'ideal' carer assumptions continue. Many women will continue to be penalised in workplaces and it will remain difficult for men to be more involved in family life and other non-paid activities. This reciprocity of change is an ongoing and dynamic process, again influenced by historical and evolutionary contexts. If men do change, women are enabled or required to change further, for example, by relinquishing their roles as main carers and this can feel difficult.[6] Yet without these ongoing reciprocal changes, the evolution of men and women's roles and relationships with each other and the ways in which they can harmonise paid work with family and personal lives will remain stuck.

There is a need to emphasise the reciprocal opportunities men and women can gain from evolving roles and relationships. Reciprocal change can offer women more opportunities for inclusion and advancement in paid work and it can bring men greater opportunities for involvement in family and other non-paid parts of life.

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[5] To use the example of fathering again, Hobson (2002) includes chapters on the different ways in which fathers are viewed and constructed within particular policy contexts in a range of countries. For example, in a chapter on the Dutch situation, by Trudie Knijn and Peter Selten (2002), a new emphasis has been placed on fathers and their caring role including media campaigns, joint custody laws and innovative policies to encourage and enable both mothers and fathers to reconcile paid work with family life. However, the authors also note labour market demands and expectations can result in many constraints for fathers to change their behaviour. In contrast, in a chapter on the UK context, Jane Lewis (2002) argues that in comparison to Scandinavian countries in which there is more emphasis on fathers' caring roles, the debate in the UK puts more emphasis on fathers' cash providing roles particularly in relation to absent fathers and their 'flight from commitment'. She notes that the importance of the caring role of fathers has only recently begun to receive more policy attention. Since the time of writing, increasing emphasis – or at least lip-service – is placed on father's caring roles in the context of policy developments we document in Chapter 2, including growing attention to actively enabling fathers to care (see Stanley, 2005). So here we see evidence of some evolution.

[6] Allen and Hawkins (1999) find evidence of maternal gatekeeping in historical and contemporary contexts by synthesizing literature and conducting a contemporary analysis of American data on a number of factors. Although they discuss limitations with their analysis, they find that significant factors including the extent to which women redo household jobs done by men, the feeling that women like to be in charge of the domestic arena, and a belief that others make judgements about how good a wife/mother they are on the basis of how well cared for their homes and children.

> 'I almost visualise it now as men and women are sitting across the table from each other each has a gift for the other, neither, neither is quite prepared to hand over the gift because they aren't sure if they're going to get the other one back, and in many cases, we might not know what we're going to get from it' (British man, researcher).

Yet, simply to demand that men change misses many of the particular complexities, uncertainties and resistances that are evident across all the countries in our study at their different stages in this dynamic evolutionary process. These uncertainties and resistances are manifested in different ways. Central tensions include: whether men actually want to change; whether men will be enabled to make reciprocal changes at workplaces and other levels; and whether women will accept men entering domestic and care realms that have been so closely associated with female identity.

BARRIERS TO RECIPROCAL CHANGE AMONG MEN AND WOMEN

Many of the apparent barriers to reciprocal change in men and women's identities and relationships can be explained in terms of experiences of power and competition. The role of power in holding back change is discussed from a number of different perspectives. Pay differences between men and women are one example that contributes to assumptions that it is more 'rational' for men to concentrate on paid work and women on family care. Another example comes from men and women's potential uneasiness about making fundamental changes to ways in which they combine different aspects of life – because of the status and power paid work can offer men or the power that involvement in family life can offer women.

> What's the incentive for men to change? That's the kind of big question that doesn't have a satisfactory answer . . . to do so, would mean losing power, and this is seen as a crap deal. (British man, researcher)

> There is always money and power involved. Trying to find equitable solutions means you have the problems of empowering women, which is often seen as disempowering for men . . . sometimes this can lead to conflict or even violence. (South African woman, trade union)

> Women use the children as a power institution. They say the child is more connected to them . . . they build a kind of fortress around the child and the men often stays scratching on the outside, wanting to come in. The woman only opens the door when it suits her and that is unfair on the men. (Norwegian woman, scientist)

Men and women may fear giving up things that are important to them without receiving anything in return. Reciprocal change requires moving away from competition between men and women towards providing both with a wider range of opportunities for equitable relationships. Yet people in the seven different countries, in the meetings and individual interviews, discuss competition that often exists between men and women, which can discourage reciprocal change. 'Women have been so assertive about the need for them to be in high positions . . . and doing that makes men afraid, because it becomes competitive. We have to work around this and talk with men about how we can work better together instead of competing and respect the differences' (Norway, government official).

These barriers contribute to resistances to change.

RESISTANCES TO CHANGE

Resistance to change in men and women's roles and relationships occurs at the level of individual identities, as well as within families, in workplaces and wider societies. When people try to change the ways in which they behave or think, this can challenge personal identity and beliefs about what it means to be a 'man' or a 'woman'.[7] There can also be interpersonal tensions amongst couples trying to adapt to change, intergenerational conflicts of expectations, and tensions arising from persisting workplace cultures and practices, government policy and wider societal assumptions. Conflicts and tensions in relation to male and female roles and relationships in the context of harmonising work with other parts of life are experienced differently by men and women within and across the different countries in our study. For example, in Norway, where there is much consensus and support for men to change, discussions amongst our participants highlight the difficulties women can feel in further reciprocal change about sharing care with men.

> 'We are talking about a transition not just for men, but for many women. A lot of women are unprepared in practice to take the full implications of it, which means actually giving up some control over how things are done in the home and relationships with children. This is a division that has to be reworked . . .' (Norwegian woman, IT consultant).

In the UK, where there has been less support for men to change, current discussions often focus on ways to get men more involved in family life. However, there is also growing recognition of the need for reciprocal change in women.

> 'A man wanting to be more involved in children and the home is a huge challenge for women, because they have to give up control of these issues and accept that men won't do things in the same way . . . this is an enormous challenge for women who are steeped in a culture of their own superiority in this area' (British man, researcher).

However, in South Africa, where race equity has dominated much recent discussion, we hear equity between men and women remains much more silenced and marginalised.

> 'We see a total unawareness and trivialisation of gender as an issue in South Africa, and a lack of understanding and skill to identify and challenge gender issues . . . race has been much more of an issue' (South African woman, human resource manager).

These differences relate to particular historical legacies, ideologies and debates.

Individual Identities

Assumptions about what it means to be male or female are internalised from a very early age. Notions of masculinity and femininity become ingrained in the identities of boys and girls from the moment they are born. The first question asked when a child is born is usually whether it is a boy or a girl and this affects the ways in which people relate to and treat the child. The assumptions made are then reinforced but sometimes challenged through experiences and interactions across the life course. The feminist movement has

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[7] See West and Zimmerman (1987), who argue that gender identity and behaviour is not only imposed on individuals through structured forms of socialization but that individuals actively participate in the construction of their gender identity and behaviour. Gender identity is then seen as being actively worked out, revised, and sustained by individuals immersed in socially and historically constructed webs of power relations (see Sabo & Gordon, 1995). Gender, then, may be seen as 'something that one does, and does repeatedly in interaction with others' (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 140). See also Woodward, 2000.

created clear challenges to 'traditional' assumptions about male and female roles and identities, as have practical pressures women have faced in combining work with family life (see de Beauvoir, 1953; Friedan, 1963; Greer, 1971; Oakley, 1974). More recently, discussions of the ways in which notions of masculinity also limit opportunities and well-being for men have emerged in certain contexts (see Burgess & Russell, 2003; Connell, 1987). Yet assumptions about what it means to be a man or a woman are remarkably resistant to change. Change is not just a question of unlearning old patterns. Behaving in ways that go against deeply held assumptions about 'appropriate' male and female behaviour can be uncomfortable, threatening and painful. For example, many men struggle to adapt their identities to evolving roles and expectations and this is also related to the reactions of others around them.

> Men seem to be struggling with their identity and they have mental blocks over how they see it as possible to feel like a man. Their identity remains very closely identified to paid work . . . (Japanese woman, manager)

> It's like society does not recognise it, so I mean, for example, by any chance if we had the kind of money we wanted and he did choose to stay at home, my God, everyone would say 'Oh my God, what is he trying to do. I mean, he's such a loser', you know. (Indian woman, counsellor)

Similarly, behaving in ways that go against deeply held assumptions about 'appropriate' behaviour for women can also feel uncomfortable or threatening.

> I think women have been socialised over the generations to the nurturing role of the family. No matter how achievement orientated the woman is, she still feels obligations to children, to the family, to the partner. I think that's very powerful. Intellectually, women might think no, no, no, no. But deep-down, I think this motivates her. (British man, psychologist)

Interestingly these quotes above are either women talking about men's experiences or men talking about women's. They may well relate to stereotypes. However, these anxieties can engender fear and guilt and these feelings can make it difficult for men and women to talk about their own dilemmas. Often they become silenced and taboo.[8]

> I think it takes women to help acknowledge men's abilities as fathers and as carers. But the response from women to this is like walking into a minefield . . . men involved in thinking about these issues are so aware of equality and political correctness, that it can hold them back or inhibit them from saying things they think. A lot of things are thought but not said. (British man, journalist)

> I'm an active feminist, and I know it is important to share responsibilities with men in the home . . . but, if I'm being, well, really honest, it's not easy . . . I guess I feel it's my body, I'm the one who had children, I feel a sense of ownership in a way . . . I also find it difficult to fully trust him when he is looking after the kids . . . I worry that he is doing other things and not giving them enough attention . . . there are so many contradictions . . . those have been really big tensions throughout my life, but its

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[8] Gender can often be a taboo issue in itself, which was raised implicitly or explicitly in all the countries in our study. To talk about gender relationships raises issues of identity which people find hard to do, and this can be linked back to fear. To operate within existing gender identities and frameworks can provide meaning and rationality to people which, according to MacInness (1998), became increasingly important during the enlightenment period when so many other meaning systems were challenged. To challenge gender roles, identities and relationships can disrupt people's internal meaning systems as it can unearth many deep-rooted – but socially constructed – personal assumptions about who people are and why they behave as they do. These fears prevent open and honest dialogue between women and men, which impede changes within men and women's identities and relationships between them. For gender equity to be a reality it needs discussing at all levels of society. But whilst it remains taboo and seen as difficult to raise, inequities will persist. This will affect the extent to which people can achieve equitable, sustainable and satisfying harmonisation of paid work and personal life.

hard to be honest about this when you are fighting for change. (British woman, trade unionist)

We also hear of another fear: that moving too far away from stereotypical male or female behaviour may make them less sexually attractive, although this was not a widely articulated view.

> I think a man feels it's not his attractiveness that attracts a woman but how successful he is . . . So if that's the case, if a man let's go of being achievement driven, will he lose the woman? . . . when I asked a women how she copes with a less successful man, I got the feeling that she had a lot of trouble . . . she said 'you know there is something in this, it's not just he's threatened by me, but I wonder sometimes whether, whether I need somebody as successful as me' . . . So I just wonder if men are reluctant to let go [of their primary association with paid work] because they think they won't be as attractive to women unless they are successful in whatever the hell they are doing. (British man, senior manager, public sector)

Couple and Family Relationships

These individual identity issues can create tensions in interpersonal relationships in couples and families. In heterosexual couple relationships, resistance to change tends to reflect the phase of evolution of men and women's roles and relationships in the wider society, although these can be experienced in different ways. In more 'traditional' contexts, for example, both men and women can be resistant to changes in domestic roles, and this can make it difficult for women to move beyond social expectations about 'appropriate' roles. 'My husband says "why should I deprive you of doing what you are best at?" And on making a bed, he would say, "no, I am airing it". And you end up doing it because you don't want an untidy bedroom . . . people would see it when they come to the house' (South African woman, NGO worker).

This is not limited to 'traditional' contexts, however. Powerful social expectations can perpetuate 'traditional' male and female identities, roles and relationships across more 'developed' societies. 'If I complain about how dirty the house is, he just says he doesn't mind, so I end up cleaning it. I know it shouldn't be this way, but it is very hard to let go. I worry if the house is dirty and what people will think . . .' (Dutch woman, researcher).

It is interesting that evidence suggests that the division of paid and unpaid work is more fluid amongst same-sex couples. Gillian Dunne, for example, finds that lesbian couples are able to transcend assumptions about who will be the main earner and who will do the unpaid work. She finds lesbian couples can be less constrained than opposite-sex couples in developing innovative patterns of sharing roles and responsibilities (Dunne, 2000).

Because of individual identity issues, discussed above, the relationships of some opposite-sex couples can also be threatened if women are seen to be too successful in the workplace. For example, we hear in India that some women who are given promotions at work may keep this from their husband until he has caught up in terms of workplace development. Similar stories were told by some women in the Dutch country meeting.

Nevertheless, some opposite-sex couples are also able to transcend 'traditional' role expectations. However, progress is rarely straightforward and partners face new identity issues along the way. To illustrate, we return to two of the characters who we introduced in our Dutch opening story in the Prologue, Johan and Anna's friends: Tanja and Hans.

Despite commitment to a life in line with their egalitarian beliefs, with both of them working part-time and sharing the care at home, Tanja was finding it a real struggle. It wasn't so much her pressures at work, but more from trying to deal with the fact that Hans seemed better with their children than she was. She couldn't fault him. The way they organised their lives had been something they had long discussed and had worked hard to achieve. When they married both changed their family names as a symbol of their egalitarian beliefs; they bottle-fed both their children so they could both form strong – and equal – nurturing bonds with them; and they had both reduced their hours at work. But it wasn't as easy as she thought it would be. She couldn't shake the feeling that it didn't feel quite right. She resented the ways the children responded to Hans, and she was jealous of some of her women friends who seemed to be closer to their children. She felt unneeded – Hans could do everything – conned and a little betrayed.

As men become more involved with and attached to their children, challenging 'ideal' worker and women as carer assumptions, new conflicts can emerge. Change always creates tensions, which is evident in progressive families particularly when relationships go wrong and it is no longer automatically the mother who has exclusive or privileged access to the children.

> There is a conflict between men and women when men are more caring for the home and their children. There is often more fighting and there can be more divorce. The fighting increases because men are more attached to the children and in divorces their role is no longer simply to provide income, there are more feelings involved. (Norwegian woman, manager)

In other contexts, intergenerational conflicts can arise if younger men and women attempt to have more equitable relationships with each other, particularly if they live in joint families. In India, for example, one couple we spoke with, who lived with the husband's parents, tried to challenge the father's expectations about the role and responsibilities of his daughter-in-law. The father expected his daughter-in-law to stop or reduce her participation in paid work so as to concentrate on having children and cook for the family. The younger couple wanted to defend their own values and decisions but they were reluctant to create tensions at home. As the younger husband told us:

> There was a lot of tension in my mind. On the one hand I felt very strongly about this . . . and on the other hand I didn't want to damage permanently my relationship with my father . . . throughout our childhood he [my father] was extremely modern in his outlook and then I got married and we stayed with my parents for the first . . . six or seven months . . . all of a sudden, he became a traditional father-in-law and now he wanted Ajara to start behaving like a traditional daughter-in-law in the house and we kind of thought it was a new, new daughter-in-law syndrome . . . initially I let it go . . . he would say . . . I want [to eat] what Ajara has made. So initially my mother would try and cover up because my father has a vicious temper . . . and then, one fine day I just lost it, I said no I'm sorry [she] has not made anything and she's not going to until you and I also make something. (Indian man, business consultant)

Intergenerational conflicts about equity between men and women are not unique to societies in which joint family living arrangements are common. In Norway, for example, one leading female scientist, talked about how her mother and other women of that generation would berate her for working too hard and not spending enough time with the children. Yet nobody criticised her husband in this way.

Resistance in Workplaces and Other Institutions

Just as changes in women's behaviours and values requires reciprocal change in men, so changes within families require changes in workplaces. Many workplaces acknowledge the importance of adapting to the changing needs of women, although this is often superficial, for example involving so called 'family-friendly' or 'work–life' policies. However, despite attention to work and family issues, workplaces have been slow to fully recognise the need to adapt organisational norms, structures and cultures to reflect or enable changing relationships between men and women (see, for example, Bailyn, 1993; Lewis, 1997; Lewis, S., 2001; Rapoport et al., 2002). In South Africa, despite crises in care due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we were told that: 'It is assumed men are not involved with caring and they often get left out when it comes to opportunities to change their working practices' (attendee, South African country meeting).

The same neglect of men's family needs is true in workplaces in many other contexts. Consequently, many men remain unable or reluctant to make significant changes in paid work and other parts of their life, and many women continue to be marginalised in the workplace (Butler & Skattebo, 2004; Lewis, 1997; Smithson, 2005). In all seven countries, some men and women are openly discussing interpersonal and workplace tensions, conflicts and practical difficulties they face in harmonising the multiple parts of their lives. Yet many men are reluctant to raise these issues with their bosses or colleagues, because they feel it may be interpreted as a lack of commitment in the context of current assumptions about 'ideal' workers. Few men, in any of the countries in our study, are demanding change in the workplace to match changes in the home. When they do so, they can be penalised even in progressive contexts, as we saw in Chapter 4 in the story of Per, one of our Norwegian characters.

In many contexts women are still struggling overtly to be accepted by men in the workplace and this is particularly so in India and Japan. For example, in Japan, senior women are often asked to make the tea by male colleagues and in recruitment processes, they can be asked about their virginity and other personal factors.[9] In India, it is acceptable for men to admit to their uneasiness about accepting women in senior positions. For example, at the Indian country meeting participants talked about courses that had been run recently in Bangalore entitled 'How to Deal with your Woman Manager'. This would be politically incorrect in contexts where equal rights legislation and a plethora of 'work–family' initiatives contribute to a myth of 'post-feminism' and assumptions that these tensions no longer exist.[10] In these contexts, people often view difficulties in relationships between men and women in the workplace and beyond as isolated or individual problems.

There are also resistances to reciprocal changes in men and women's relationships and identities at government levels. Governments vary in responses to and initiatives on harmonising paid work with other parts of life, but most are resistant to intervening in the 'private' world of men–women relationships, seeking instead quick fixes for dealing with complex dilemmas. In practice, many policies do little to enable men and women to work through many tensions and conflicts that arise between them. This can perpetuate men's

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[9] See Blau, Ferber and Winkler (2002). While this study focuses on the USA, the authors include a particularly interesting and useful chapter setting these issues in an international context, in which they document experiences in a range of countries, including Japan.

[10] Coppock, Haydon and Richter (1995) discuss the ways in which equal opportunities legislation, which is unsubstantiated by enabling factors such as funded childcare or leaves or active strategies to include men in care roles, can mean women internalize failings to succeed in paid work as their own fault rather than seeing structural or cultural constraints.

lesser involvement in unpaid work and the trade-offs women feel compelled to make in relation to employment and caring responsibilities.[11]

Even when individuals, couples, workplaces and governments are more open to change, other institutions can often lag behind. For example, legal systems tend to favour mothers in child custody cases in divorce rather than supporting joint custody arrangements, although our Norwegian participants believe that this is being challenged to some extent in Norway. Even in Europe, where there has been considerable change in family relationships, the European Court of Justice still upholds assumptions of the 'ideal' parent as a mother and can overturn and undermine progress that has been made in individual member states.[12]

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Challenges faced in the context of reciprocal change between men and women are exacerbated in all seven countries by prevailing models of global competitive capitalism and growing consumerism. Transformations in and speeding up of paid work and increasing consumer wants or desires in the global economy exacerbate assumptions about 'ideal' workers in many different contexts. Workplace demands and expectations make it even more difficult for women and men to work through conflicts and tensions about their identities and the ways this relates with current patterns of harmonising paid work with other parts of life.

> Women's aspirations and wanting to work coincided at a time when economic trends of work intensification really began to let rip. And you got this awful crunch where our aspirations went smack up against an accelerating economic trend. (British woman, journalist)
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> I have friends in the Oslo area . . . they have big jobs, big salaries, everything in order but they are stressed and their life is not so good. They want equality in the family but they can't keep it up. There are so many pressures at work . . . downsizing to keep up with world competition, you know . . . their wives decide to stop working for a while to care for the children and this is a good idea . . . but it should also be the husband of course. (Norwegian man, entrepreneur)

Many people in the seven countries feel that dilemmas about combining paid work with care responsibilities seem to have increased as the demands of paid work become ever more acute. This can reduce perceived opportunities for men and women to combine paid work with family life in diverse ways. 'There are two trends in response to the current situation of long hours. The first is a return to traditional gender roles in families, and the

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[11] Daly and Rake (2003, p. 173) discuss EU inspired work–family reconciliation policies and note that 'it is significant that these are framed as "family-friendly" rather than as gender equality measures. They do not in practice do much to increase men's involvement in unpaid work or to significantly ameliorate the trade-offs involved for women'. See also Lister (2003, Chapter 7) and Lewis, J. (2001), who argues that no welfare state has managed to fully value the unpaid work in families, which is primarily performed by women. We would extend this observation to argue that no society more generally, including those without a 'welfare state', has managed to value or seek adequate strategies to harmonise or share unpaid work done in families with employment in gender equitable ways. See also Knijn (2000), for example, who argues that welfare state cutbacks or pressures can increase the expectation that combining paid work with other parts of life requires individual strategies. Knijn notes that welfare retrenchments place more pressures on families to provide care without sufficient supports for families to do this.

[12] See McGlynn (2001), who explores the legacy of maternal attachment theories and the influence of psychologists such as John Bowlby and the ways in which judges in the European Court of Justice have often displayed support for these notions through rulings that counter certain country attempts for more fluid and equitable roles for men and women.

other is having no children. Neither is life affirming . . . it is not that people are actively choosing these options, they just don't have other options . . . especially for the low paid' (American man, professor).

Trends, such as the intensification and extension of work, can jeopardise the fragile progress that has been made in evolving relationships between men and women and in related workplace changes. This in turn can further restrict perceived opportunities to downshift or collaborate creatively with others in finding new ways to work that take greater account of diverse personal lives.

CONSEQUENCES FOR EQUITY, WELL-BEING AND SUSTAINABILITY

All these barriers and resistances, together with trends in current forms of global competitive capitalism, perpetuate inequities between men and women, at the workplace level, in families and in other social institutions as we discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

The progress made in workplaces to accommodate changes in men–women relationships and identities is uneven, even in Norway, and indeed recent trends such as the intensification of work and other ramifications of global competitiveness have created new pressures (Brandth & Kvande, 2001; 2002). In these environments men and women can feel enormous pressures to 'have and do it all', which impacts on well-being. One consequence is that women in senior positions in paid work in some countries are dropping out and rejecting the 'superwoman' image (Marshall, 1995).

> 'It's taken for granted that girls growing up should get an education and get a job, many of their mothers did it. Perhaps then, the goal was self realisation. But now . . . I talk to a lot of women who think they work too much and they think it is too much pressure on the family' (British woman, manager).

In Norway, where men–women relationships have made much progress, we hear men too talk about the pressures they feel to be 'super-beings'.

> 'Male friends say now it is a hell of a rat race; they have to have a good career, be nice lovers, nice fathers, nice friends, nice intellectual talking partners and they say the pressure is coming at them from more fields' (Norwegian woman, scientist).

Men are also experiencing these pressures in other contexts, at different evolutionary points. For example in India:

> Some men are in transition with working wives. Men don't have the physical work of cooking or looking after children but they are having a psychological transition . . . they are feeling a role erosion away from the main breadwinner and the importance they got earlier. Their own sense of self worth and the way their own family perceives them has undergone a drastic change. (Indian woman, manager)

As long as men's identities are wholly tied up with success in paid work, which is increasingly invasive and demanding, it will be difficult for men to change. Not only does this hold back reciprocal change between men and women but as one participant points out, it can have serious consequences for health and well-being.

> Men have to change. Maybe they are worried about how women will proceed if they let all the nurturing, feminine side of themselves come out. I think they are worried about that. Otherwise with all the pressures at work, the rise of heart disease in men,

> their higher mortality and morbidity rates, why, when stress is bumping them off, do they not want to change? You'd think they'd be pleased to have this opportunity and shift down in a sense. But they're not. Something is stopping them. (British man, manager)

Implications for well-being and happiness were recognised in most of our country meetings. An Indian man reflected:

> We couldn't, we couldn't [reverse the gender roles] because, because we've got used to a sort of a lifestyle where, where the kind of income that I am able to bring in helps us to maintain that lifestyle . . . , if I was to stop doing that . . . it wouldn't be enough to support the same sort of lifestyle, although I might actually be a little happier doing it. (Indian man, business consultant)

Much change in men–women relationships is held back by the need to reach or retain a certain lifestyle. However it is worth reflecting here on the recent work of Richard Layard (2003; 2005), a British economist. He argues that once incomes have risen above a certain level, so that basic needs are met, any further increases in earnings does not bring greater happiness. This amount is quite low. He calculates it stands at 15 000 pounds sterling or equivalent. However, people get used to what they have and then face pressures to maintain these standards. People also have a desire to keep up with other people in material terms which, he suggests, might explain why happiness does not rise at the same rate as income levels past a certain point. He goes on to suggest that earning too much and the 'overwork' this can entail is a pollutant, which should be taxed, and that this would encourage a better 'work–life balance'.

Consumerism and meaning derived from paid work and possessions can thus slow down, or even reverse, evolutions of men and women's roles and relationships with each other. Current inequities and well-being problems, seen in all the countries in our study, pose questions about whether current forms of harmonising paid work with other parts of life can be sustained by individuals, families, workplaces and wider societies.

In this chapter we have argued that:

- Challenges about harmonising work with other parts of life are as central to men as to women, but men are often left out of discussions and initiatives for change.
- Any change in women's roles and identities requires reciprocal change in men, which may be different in different contexts at different points in time.
- Resistance to reciprocal change in men and women's roles and relationships occurs in various ways at the level of individual identities, as well as within families, and in workplaces.
- These resistances can be exacerbated by current forms of competitive global capitalism.
- Resistance to change has consequences for equity, well-being and sustainability for individuals, and in families, communities and workplaces.

As we concluded in the last two chapters, the way *commitment* is defined in current forms of *capitalism* along with growing *consumerism* undermines *care* and *connectedness*. This has crucial consequences for equity, well-being and sustainability. As well as a need for workplaces to change, these challenges are inherently related to reciprocal change between men and women. Thus, it is important to explore the interactions and reciprocity between men–women relationships and the harmonisation of work and other parts of life, at individual, systemic and societal levels at various stages of particular country evolutions.