

Karin Wall, Vanessa Cunha, Susana Atalaia, Leonor Rodrigues, Rita Correia (ICS-ULisboa) | *Why caring masculinity is so difficult to achieve? Reflections on the White Book Men and Gender Equality in Portugal*

Gender inequality is embedded and legitimated through gender stereotypes in many aspects of society, from family to school, from jobs to public policies. Institutional, interactional and individual practices and representations reproduce these stereotypes and make gender inequality seem natural in the day-to-day lives of men and women. One of the most powerful stereotypes, in that it legitimates gender inequality in the public and private spheres, is the notion that caring is a woman's attribute, inscribed in the feminine nature and realized in motherhood. This linear association of motherhood with caring skills has distanced men from responsibilities related to care: in the private sphere, since men are seen as secondary carers of children and dependent family members, in current leave policy systems, still mainly targeted at mothers, and in the public sphere, since employers continue to promote the ideal of the career-dedicated male employee. On the other hand, men are under-represented in professions related to care such as teaching, social service and nursing. This is a matter of vocational choice based on gender stereotypes as well as the result of male discrimination in those professions. Finally, this also impacts on men's lack of attention to their own care, visible in men's poorer health indicators and lower life expectancy.

Based on the results of the project "Men's roles in a gender equality perspective" (Wall *et al.*, 2016) this chapter analyses the main obstacles to the consolidation of a caring masculinity in Portuguese society. From generation to generation, sons and daughters, male and female pupils, boys and girls have been socialized to carry out differentiated social roles. Although Portuguese men have been reshaping their identity, in particular as caring fathers, barriers to the socialization of boys and young men for a wide-ranging caregiver role have yet to be understood in depth in Portugal.