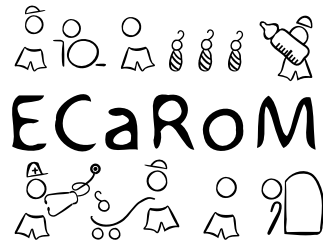


Fostering Caring Masculinities in early childhood education and primary schools

**A manual for childcare pedagogues and
teachers in primary schools**



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A manual for childcare pedagogues and teachers
in primary schools

September 2022

To download this manual, visit the *ECaRoM* Homepage:
<http://ecarom.eu>

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This handbook has been edited by Elli Scambor and Daniel Holtermann.

With contributions by Virginija Aleksejūnė, Erika Bernacchi, Antonio Raimondo di Grigoli, Raffaella Pregliasco, Mojca Frelj, Majda Hrženjak, Živa Humer, Margarita Jankauskaitė, Tatyana Kmetova, Monika Orechova, Gesine Pfautsch, Daniel Holtermann, Nikolas Becker, Elli Scambor, Veronika Suppan and Lisa Wagner.

Design by Ringailė Jurgelevičiūtė

Proof reading by Jason Kirkpatrick

Project partners (more information see the end of the handbook):

Coordinator: Dissens – Institut für Bildung und Forschung e.V. (Berlin, Germany)

Centre for Equality Advancement (Vilnius, Lithuania)

Centre of Women's Studies and Policies (Sofia, Bulgaria)

Institute for Masculinity Research & Gender Studies (VMG, Graz, Austria)

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Peace Institute (Ljubljana, Slovenia)



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01 Introduction

Welcome to the *ECaRoM – Early Care and the Role of Men manual*. With this manual, we present a practical guide for educators on how to implement gender-sensitive pedagogical approaches in early childhood education and primary schools. Hereby we aim to strengthen the awareness for the role of boys*¹ and men* in care activities as well as care work in European societies. Our needs analysis in early childhood education showed that pedagogical initiatives and concepts rarely tackle Caring Masculinities in early childhood education.²

This manual has been developed in the course of the European project *ECaRoM*, whose goal is to support care friendly and gender equal environments in early childhood education, in kindergartens as well as in primary schools. Based on needs analysis results, gender sensitive material as well as methods have been developed which will help to strengthen boys* care involvement on a daily basis and contribute to a safe environment, in which boys* and men* can be caring without having to expect negative reactions. Furthermore, starting in early education lays the track for further educational choices.

As a European funded and on national level cofounded project, the *ECaRoM* manual is the result of a diverse and strong partnership, which is based on a geographic balance to include diverse European perspectives as it includes partners from central (Germany, Austria, Slovenia) Europe, southern (Italy) and eastern parts (Bulgaria, Lithuania) of Europe.

The manual includes a transnational European perspective as well as national needs analysis perspectives from each partner country - therefore this manual is slightly different in each partner language.

Background

Usually paid and unpaid care work is highly unequally distributed in European societies: it is mainly done by women* and poorly paid people. So how could gender equality be reached and care work distributed equally? To reach gender equality, it is fundamental to deconstruct gender stereotypes. These are laid and consolidated in a very young age, especially in early education. *ECaRoM* is focusing on working with gender stereotypes and Caring Masculinities at an early age which could eventually increase the percentage of men* involved in care and the value of care.

1 Throughout this handbook we use the asterisk* when writing about boys*, girls*, men*, women* or trans*. We do so to point out the constructivist character of gender and gender identities and to show that more than two of these identities exist. By doing so we want to emphasize that not all persons who are perceived as boys*, men*, women* or girls* also identify as such. The asterisk* also indicates the openness of gender identities and that these are ongoing and never-ending processes. Exceptions are fixed terms (e.g., Boys' Day).

2 All reports and material in all languages of the partner countries and English can be found on the *ECaRoM* website: <https://ecarom.eu>

The *ECaRoM* project continues the work based on the outcomes of the EU funded projects *Boys in Care*³ and *Gender Loops*⁴, and the *Study of the Role of Men in Gender Equality in Europe* (Scambor et al., 2013), whose members of the consortium coordinated and cooperated as partners and national experts. The project *Boys in Care* focused on the strengthening of boys* in choosing care professions. The results showed a need for gender sensitive approaches directed towards Caring Masculinities already in early education. *The Boys in Care* project highlighted explicitly the lack of gender sensitive materials in general and especially under the age of 12 years (Gärtner, Scambor & Bernacchi, 2018).

Therefore, *ECaRoM* is based on the results and on the profound expertise of the European *Boys in Care* project starting at an earlier age. Gender stereotypes are produced and reproduced from birth on. To tackle these stereotypes, one needs to start as early as possible. *ECaRoM* is the missing link for an overarching gender sensitive approach towards education and Caring Masculinities. The promotion of gender equality within the educational field has been a priority at EU level⁵. To achieve this objective *ECaRoM* focuses on the pedagogical practices and pedagogical material of work with children in ECEC (early childhood education centres) and primary schools.

About the Manual

This manual summarizes the results of the *ECaRoM* project in a way that will help professionals to improve their everyday pedagogical practice. It offers methods and information for self-education as well as for the pedagogical work of primary school teachers, childcare pedagogues and students working with children.

It contains definitions and background knowledge on gender roles and expectations, care work and the role of men* and boys*, pedagogical approaches and self-reflection methods which help to overcome traditional concepts of male power as well as recommendations on how to create a Culture of Care in early childhood education. It portrays various methods for the use of our *ECaRoM* gender sensitive pedagogical materials, focusing on the care involvement of boys* and men*.

Five thematic modules are structured along the concept of Caring Masculinities, based on Fraser's (1996) notion of 'care' as a human norm and therefore an obligation for all genders. Albeit men*'s involvement in care is often reduced to fatherhood in European societies (Fernández-Lozano & Jurado-Guerrero, 2021), the perspective has to be widened: care means a deeper kind of attention to the needs of others, children, dependent people, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and it also includes attitudes towards gender equality, towards a rejection of male dominance and violence and the ability to care for oneself.

3 <https://www.boys-in-care.eu>

4 <https://genderloops.dissens.de/>

5 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/strategic_engagement_en.pdf.

Based on this definition of Caring Masculinities, five modules are thematically differentiated in this manual. Each module contains a short basic knowledge and theory transfer section, a description of suitable *ECaRoM* methods as well as references to appropriate material for the work with children:

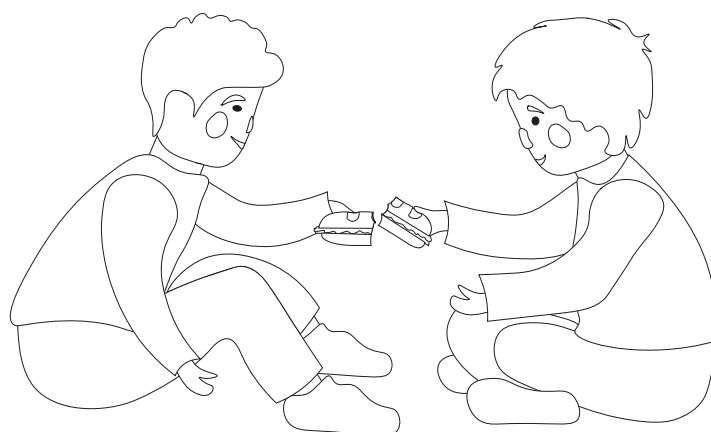
- ✓ Individual aspect: self-care in working with children, incl. setting boundaries, vulnerability, gender-based violence prevention
- ✓ Relational aspect: empathy, friendship and dealing with emotions
- ✓ Social network aspect: care for family and social environment
- ✓ Occupational aspect: gender and occupations
- ✓ Social solidarity and ecological aspect: care for community

After this introductory chapter, the second chapter sets the context for gender sensitive and care-oriented aspects of masculinities in early childhood education.

In the third chapter of this manual, the five modules are presented. Apart from the description of knowledge, tools and materials, we also focus on three cross-cutting topics that are covered in all of the modules:

- ✓ Care work
- ✓ Gender stereotypes
- ✓ Masculinity

Furthermore, the module descriptions are framed by short sections. These describe aspects of self-reflection for pedagogues (chapter 3), recommendations to work with parents (chapter 5) and the development of a Culture of Care in early childcare education (chapter 6). The questions of how to confront one's own bias about gender stereotypes and how a Brave Space for Caring Masculinities can be created are of central importance. In working with families, dynamics of *one step forward two steps back* are to be expected if parents do not support but hinder the process.



02 Setting the context

02.1 Gender norms, stereotypes, expectations and Caring Masculinities

Care activities are mainly provided by women* and they are either poorly paid or not paid at all. This is a prime example of gender inequality and gender norms are one of the root causes for this unequal distribution of rights and resources. 'Gender norm' is a sociological term and refers to everyday practices. All possible characteristics, traits, professions, etc. are divided into two categories (male and female) and each person is assigned to one of those two genders at birth (based solely on their genitalia). Traditional gender expectations refer to men* as strong and brave, while women* are expected to be beautiful and caring. There is also a clear hierarchy in this binarity: female-associated traits and areas are regarded as less important than those ascribed to males. For example, caring professions (e.g., nursing) are interpreted as less important than technical professions. This is reflected, among other things, in wages.

Gender norms and stereotypes are the basis for the gender expectations which are placed on people in everyday life. They influence how people behave, tell them what to like, how they should look like, etc. based purely on their actual or ascribed gender. They restrict children, young people and adults and prevent them from developing their interests, opportunities and abilities freely. Those who do not fit into one of these categories are usually ignored, ridiculed, aggressively corrected or suppressed. Gender expectations represent strong cultural and social attributions, not laws of nature. By talking about gender expectations, we acknowledge that the ways men*, women*, and non-binary* people are perceived, can be changed.

Masculinity expectations do not include the whole sum of what boys* or men* do or are. They denote a requirement that all those who are perceived or feel as boys*/men* have to deal with (Stuve & Debus, 2012). Acting like a "real man" is a masculinity expectation. This implies being successful, in control, less empathetic, asserting oneself, devaluing femininity and interpreting care as an area that is primarily assigned to women*. One concept that tries to change this is Caring Masculinities, which will be described further below.

Caring Masculinities

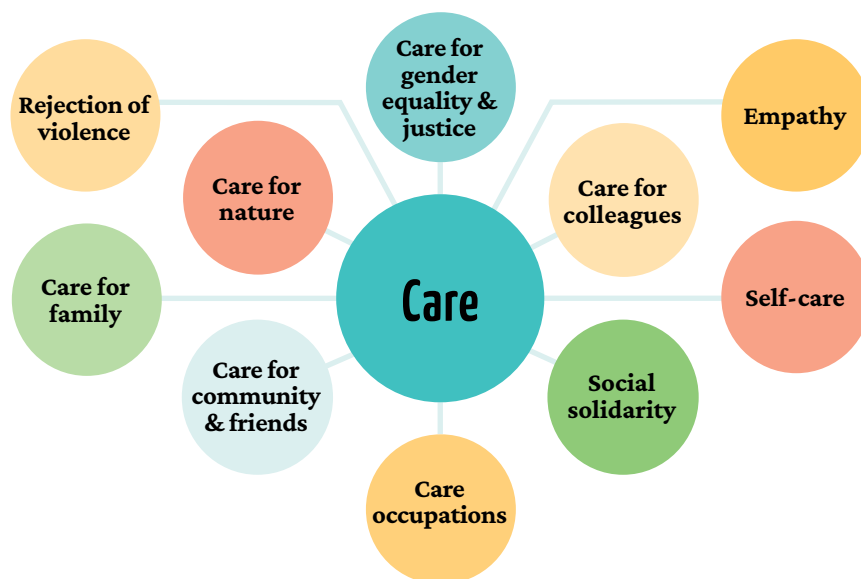
Joan Tronto proposes a broad definition of care:

"On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web."

(Tronto, 1993: 103)

In the *ECaRoM* project, the complexity of Tronto's definition is taken into account and extended to include the dimension of masculinities. For this purpose, the concept of Caring Masculinities is used, which has been increasingly addressed in research and European policy in recent years (Hanlon, 2012; Scambor et al., 2014; 2015; 2016; Elliott, 2016). Elliott (2016) proposed the rejection of dominance and the integration of values of care, such as positive emotions, interdependence, and relationality, as central features of Caring Masculinities. To account for this complexity, the concept of care used in the *EcaRoM* project includes several aspects:

- ✓ **Individual aspect of self-care:** maintaining personal health and well-being.
- ✓ **Family aspect or social network:** work necessary to ensure the daily physical, social and emotional well-being of family members (and also friends, neighbours, other relatives and close people), especially that of dependent people (children, elderly, sick and disabled people). This includes household chores (cleaning, shopping, cooking, etc.).
- ✓ **Professional aspect:** professional care work in the fields of education, health and social care (kindergarten and elementary school teachers, nurses, social workers).⁶
- ✓ **Social aspect:** community work and social engagement as a whole (volunteer work, social and political activism, empathy and solidarity towards excluded and marginalized groups).
- ✓ **Equality aspect:** all genders working for gender equality in their daily lives.
- ✓ **Ecological aspect:** caring for nature and the planet we live on.
- ✓ **Attitudinal aspect:** rejection of violence and societal male privilege.



⁶ Care professions are understood as professions in the fields of education, health and social welfare. This definition is identical to the EHW (Education, Health, Welfare) professions category of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE, 2017). For the social, educational, and nursing professions, it is important to note that caring is primarily about people.

Two aspects of Caring Masculinities should be explicitly mentioned. On one hand, they have a preventive effect against gender-based violence and, on the other, they promote the protection of nature. The foundations of potential later violence, especially by men*, are countered at an early stage by raising awareness, strengthening emotional competence and equal relationships as well as relieving them of masculinity requirements. This increases the competence to deal with inner crises which otherwise can lead to violence. An awareness of the social environment and the consequences of one's own actions is created. When boys* do not have to fulfil traditional aspects of masculinity, there is more room for alternative non-violent ways of conflict solution. Furthermore, against the backdrop of the current ecological challenges, protecting the planet has an important role to play. By increasing the sensitivity and sustainability of men*'s own responsibility, a different approach to nature is made possible, one that is not only based on exploitation and value creation but on recognising the importance of nature and the consequences of human overexploitation.

Since the focus of the project is on childhood education, it is important to name how caring by children can look like. Examples of caring practices with children include: tidying up toys, preparing and cleaning up after meals, comforting friends, gardening, taking care of animals, offering/giving support to solve conflicts non-violently, considering other opinions and not only one's own, integrating children who are "outsiders" and supporting other children in everyday practical actions (e.g., tying shoes). The project partners are sure that children, independent from gender, are caring human beings (Fraser, 1994). The *EcaRoM* project aims to strengthen the caring aspect in early childhood education, especially focussing on boys*, and provides ways to involve it in everyday interactions and activities.

02.2 Gender-reflective pedagogy with a focus on Caring Masculinities

All children and adolescents are under pressure to be accepted as a "proper"/ "normal" boy* or "proper"/ "normal" girl* by peers, educators and parents: boys* who are not interested in sports or like to wear "feminine" clothes run the risk of being devalued. Girls* who are loud or not interested in their appearance are often considered unfeminine. Children who are non-binary are usually not noticed or taken seriously. Gender-reflective pedagogy aims to counteract these socialising constrictions and the accompanying devaluations and discrimination. Gender-reflective pedagogy therefore means explicitly and implicitly keeping gender in mind in pedagogical work and initiating processes of change – both on the part of the pedagogical staff and on the part of children and parents. In doing so, it is important to be aware that even (gender-)reflected pedagogical professionals can reproduce gender norms. Reflection is therefore a continuous process. Central goals of gender-reflective pedagogy are:

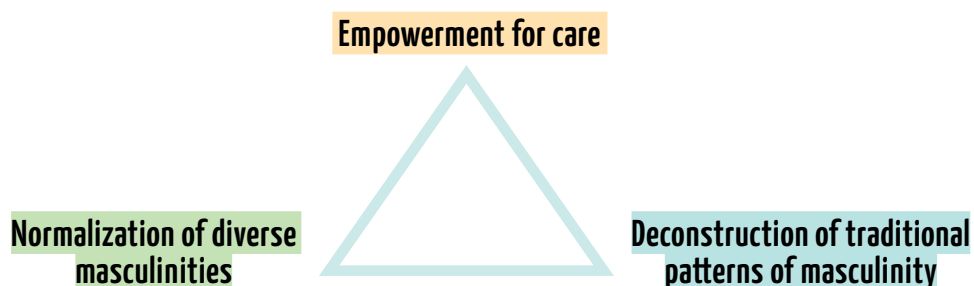
- 1) the promotion of diverse interests, competencies and behaviours without gendered constrictions;
- 2) the alleviation of gender expectations;
- 3) intervening in and reducing discrimination and violence.

On the one hand, gender-reflective pedagogy can explicitly deal with topics such as gendered socialisation, masculinity and femininity expectations, sexism, gender and sexual diversity, by focussing on unequal gendered structures in societies. On the other hand, pedagogical professionals can use gender as an analytical frame, based on which individual diversity and self-determination is addressed – without explicitly using gendered markers. Gender-reflective pedagogy plays an important role in this process of change. For this, the pedagogical professionals need knowledge (about gender dynamics and socialisation processes), analytical competence with regard to pedagogical action situations and pedagogical needs, adequate methodology and a variety of tools as well as good working conditions.

Caring Masculinities in pedagogy

For gender-reflective pedagogy with a focus on Caring Masculinities, two approaches are brought together: the three levels of boys* work according to Könnecke (2012) and the trilemma of inclusion by Boger (2017). In gender-reflective boys* work, at least three levels are addressed: boys* work relieves boys* in relation to masculinity requirements, promotes diverse life plans and critically sets limits to discriminatory or violent actions (Könnecke, 2012). A reduction of gender requirements leads to more opportunities for caring to be lived by boys*. Boys* are caring, but masculinity requirements lead to qualities read as feminine being devalued and lived less. At the same time, boys* deal with masculinity demands differently and caring is lived differently.

The “classic three-step of boys* work” are brought together with the three dimensions of Boger’s (2017) “trilemma of inclusion”. In the theory of trilemmatic inclusion, Boger distinguishes three dimensions: empowerment, normalization, and deconstruction. The dimensions systematize the different theoretical paradigms on inclusion, which are always in a contradictory relationship with each other. Adapted for this context, the three named dimensions can very well illustrate the simultaneity needed to empower Caring Masculinities in gender-reflective childhood and elementary education: the empowerment of caring, the normalization of multiple masculinities, and the deconstruction of traditional patterns of masculinity. The contrasting nature of the dimensions may also be reflected in pedagogical implementation. Empowerment, normalization, and deconstruction cannot usually be considered simultaneously within a method, but can each come into focus at different points during the course of a pedagogical unit. The dimensions include the following content:



(Individual) Empowerment for care

Contents of empowerment for caring include: learning empathy, listening, boundary awareness, and self-care. Furthermore, the admission and handling of emotions, coping with crises and the failure of masculinity requirements, recognition of one's own needs as well as thinking about others, and the consequences of one's own behaviour for others should be taken into account. A framework should be created in which boys* are relieved of masculinity demands and in which caring is reinforced and its positive effect clarified. In pedagogy, this can mean addressing emotions, encouraging children to help, involving them in caring activities, establishing mentorships of older children for younger ones, and similar.

Normalization of diverse masculinities

Themes of normalization occur, including equal relationships, vulnerability, acceptance of (gender) diversity, dealing with the unknown, and creating spaces where boys* can share their experiences and relief from masculinity demands. In addition, the value and visibility of care should be made clear, as well as the recognition of the care already provided primarily by women*. Pedagogically, this could be done by providing and using material that shows masculinities in many roles, e.g., in picture books, films or by acting them out.

Deconstruction of traditional patterns of masculinity

Deconstruction involves interrupting familiar habits and assumptions, questioning dominance, risk-taking, competition, violence, discrimination, devaluation of femininity and care, and the performance and production paradigm. Pedagogically, play corners could be irritating if there are also dolls and horses in the building corner, if the female educators also work there, and the male educators work in the dress-up corner, for example.

An interviewed expert in the field of ECEC summarises the approach to strengthening the caring of boys* (Holtermann, 2022: 91):

“We have to talk about what is not visible: the ways that boys don’t go in terms of caring, because they learn very early that this is unmanly, we don’t see them, because the boys* don’t go there ... We can only get there if we make them diverse offers and the mental permission is there to be a caring ballet dancer.”*

02.3 Men* in ECEC and primary schools

The EIGE Gender Equality Index (2020) points out that EU countries face high gender segregation in caring occupations related to the education, health and welfare (EHW sector), where 30% of all women* in employment work, and only 8% of all men*.

Findings from the *ECaRoM* transnational report show clearly that male educators are a minority in all countries involved, and a need is expressed to raise their presence in

pedagogical work with children. However, contradictory reflections emerge on this subject. For some educators an increased presence of men* as educators can convey the message to children that men* can do this job and can perform a caring role. For others this does not necessarily lead towards more gender equality. On the contrary, it can lead to a reinforcement of traditional gender roles, for instance when men* are expected to be the ones who play football with boys* or guide them in more adventurous activities. Also, male educators themselves are not necessarily endorsing the concept of Caring Masculinities in the sense of rejecting dominance and violence and being committed to promoting equality. Another issue is the persistence of social prejudice against male educators who are seen as potential abusers. This is linked to the hyper-sexualisation of men* in care work, and this is a deterrent for men* to choose this profession (Cremers & Krael, 2012).

During our trainings and in the expert discussion we are regularly confronted with the anxiety of men* concerning possible accusations of sexualized violence. In institutions and places where men* work with children they are often considered potential perpetrators of sexualized violence against children. Often parents, employees and institutions are reproducing this general suspicion, which is based on a heteronormative concept of violence (male perpetrators and female victims) and a gender traditional concept of care, in which women* serve as natural carers. In this picture men* are not considered appropriate to care for young children and if they do it, they only do it to get closer to the children. This concept is widely spread but highly problematic and lacks in reasoning. There are two important blind spots: first, it must be considered that fathers in families usually care for their own young children too without automatically being considered a threat to them. Secondly, sexualized violence can include very diverse gender constellations, meaning that women* and other genders can also be perpetrators.

Sexualized violence unfortunately happens in working with young children. All institutions as well as people working with young children are well advised to take a closer look at the subjects of generalised suspicion and sexualised violence. There is a need to address sexuality and sexualised violence preventively and to establish a child protection plan in every institution that includes protocols how to deal with general suspicion. The concept should include professional educational practices, guidelines and procedures in institutions, especially in terms of body contact, how to deal with the sexuality of children and protections against sexualised violence. An important basis for these practices is a child protection policy, namely a policy as increasingly requested also by the European Union, the Council of Europe and UN bodies dealing with children's rights. Such a policy should include the following elements: the safeguarding measures to protect children; rules on how to behave when working directly with children; how to protect children from abuse and harm; whom to report to if any issues arise; how to respond to the situation in an appropriate manner.⁷

Often the general suspicion is not explicitly addressed but it can have a long-term effect on all involved. Young men* wanting to work with young children are influenced by the generalised suspicion of sexual abuse from men*. Affected are, next to other things, the

7 <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/666497>

job orientation as well as perception of young men* working with young children. For this reason, it is important to address the topic with men*, employees, institutions and parents.

02.4 Caring Masculinities in Europe: results from the transnational report

The transnational research report summarises the results of research by the individual partner countries involved. It shows that gender-reflective pedagogy is not carried out in a systematic way in any country. A focus on Caring Masculinities is even rarer. Legislation and policy documents address issues of gender equality, diversity and caring to some extent, but these issues are often only addressed in general terms without specific guidelines.

Some countries emphasize that in recent years increased gender sensitivity can be observed in kindergartens. For instance, in relation to toys and activities (all children are offered the possibility to carry out the same activities regardless of gender), play areas are more inclusive nowadays. Gender-sensitive colours are also being used, and teachers are more equipped with mechanisms for self-reflection, including on hidden curriculum and gender bias. There is also some production of gender sensitive material. Nevertheless, many limitations are still visible. First of all, the attention to a gender sensitive education depends largely on individual ECEC educators' interest and engagement in dealing with gender equality and gender stereotypes in their work with children. Secondly there is a general absence of a focus on care and masculinities.

The availability of training on gender sensitive pedagogy is not formalised throughout the countries involved. In general, the academic offering on gender sensitive pedagogy is much diversified: while some universities systematically offer courses on gender related issues in education, in other cases gender is only touched upon or it is considered as too complex of a subject and is therefore avoided. The overall offer is not consistent and relies on the individual interest and engagement of professors.

There is a lack of systematic national research on gender sensitive education. Instead, there is small scale, fragmented research produced within different, often EU funded action projects by associations or universities and in diploma, master and doctoral thesis. There are fewer studies on early childhood education compared to primary/secondary school because of the 'too early bias'⁸; however, in primary and secondary schools, gender is conflated with sexuality and then also deemed a taboo topic in fear of 'sexualising the children'. There is a lack of interdisciplinarity (prevalence in sociology) and a lack of gender expertise if produced within educational discipline in existing scholarship. Most available studies focus on girls* and STEM (Science, technology, engineering and mathematics) skills, while masculinities and EHW (Education, Health and Welfare) skills are backslidden. Practically no existing research focuses specifically on masculinities and on gender stereotypes about masculinity and care in ECEC. The limited existing research on Caring Masculinities shows that boys*

8 This bias is closely connected to adultism, the systematic discrimination of young people by adults. In this context the bias means that the younger the children are, the less important the pedagogic field is seen, and likewise the research of the pedagogic and their funding.

are caring from a very early age. This caring contradicts masculinity requirements with corresponding gender normative pressures. Such pressure increases as boys* age, and is stronger in primary school than in day care centres.

Most of the existing gender sensitive materials target primary schools, while there is lack of this kind of materials in ECEC services. Materials are also difficult to find as they are produced within specific projects and by non-governmental organisations, and are fragmented across different resources. Most gender sensitive materials are based on a binary conception of gender and mostly address girls*. There is very little focus on masculinity and on the relationship between masculinity and care. Materials aimed at occupational orientation generally concentrate on the promotion of STEM subjects for girls* while materials introducing boys* to EHW professions are rare. The majority of didactical tools that focus on gender stereotypes take the form of card sets and memory games which represent different professions and activities in a gender inclusive way. Another site of deconstructing gender stereotypes related to masculinities and care are picture books and fairy tales, also using the logic of counter-stereotyping.

Topics of care are included in ECEC activities in the context of self-care, getting to know different occupations and activities related to the topic of division of labour in the families. The research shows an almost complete lack of addressing the issue of men* and care in ECEC policy contexts and in gender pedagogy. Exceptions are found in school education in Austria and Germany (*School Act of Bavaria in Germany, and Reflexive gender pedagogy and gender equality in Austria*).



03 Self-Reflection for pedagogues

As a preparation for gender sensitive pedagogy, one's own attitude and awareness of gender socialisation is important. For this purpose, two self-reflection methods are presented in the following, the first one is "What messages have I received" and the second one is "Gender Diary".

03.1 What messages have I received?

This self-reflection method⁹ is for educators for biographical self-reflection of one's own gender formation. The method consists of questions from which the person can choose and answer for themselves. These questions cannot all be worked through and only serve as suggestions. Please be aware of your limits and only work on questions that you feel up to.

- ✓ When did you first perceive yourself as a girl*, boy*, trans* or inter*?
- ✓ Was your gender identity important to you? Was it important to others when dealing with you?
- ✓ Were there situations in which you perceived yourself particularly strongly as a girl*, boy*, trans* or inter*? Have you ever wished you had a different gender? Have you been told that you can't be a boy* or a girl*? Were you sometimes read differently than you perceived yourself and how did you react to that?
- ✓ Have you ever been told that you are "a real girl"/"a real boy" (alternatively princess, lady, gentleman, bitch, mack, etc.)? Have you been called particularly "feminine" or "masculine"? In which situations and by whom? Was there a value attached to it? How did you feel about it, how did you react to it?
- ✓ Were you ever told that you were NOT a "real girl"/"real boy"?
- ✓ Were you particularly encouraged to use certain behaviours/toys/clothes? Were you told (more or less subtly) that certain behaviours/toys/clothes were not appropriate for your gender?
- ✓ What were you praised for?
- ✓ What were your favourite toys to play with? Which ones did you get as a present and from whom? Did you have to fight for them or were you denied them? What leisure activities did you pursue?
- ✓ What kind of relationship to your body was taught to you by people of the same and other genders? How did people of the same and other gender talk about their own bodies and those of others in your environment? What relationship have you developed to your body? (e.g.: performance, beauty, enjoyment, feeling good, working out, testing your limits, self-criticism, optimisation techniques).

⁹ Source: edited extract from: What messages did I get? Self-reflection. Developed by Katharina Debus. An early version of the original method is available at:
https://vms.dissens.de/fileadmin/VMS/redakteure/Selbstreflexion_-_welche_Botschaften_habe_ich_bekommen.pdf

- ✓ How have differently gendered or sexually oriented people in your environment dealt with feelings? Which ones were suggested to you? What were you supported in, what were you criticised for? Which practices in dealing with feelings have you developed?
- ✓ Accordingly, for dealing with strength and weakness, superiority and powerlessness.

03.2 Gender diary

The gender diary is a way for you to reflect on gender and gender constructions in everyday life. In the notebook, you can write down experiences in your private or professional life in which gender plays a role.

Possible topics could be:

- ✓ Relationship with others
- ✓ Portrayal of people in the media
- ✓ Striking or irritating perceptions in everyday life
- ✓ Insights about myself
- ✓ I am a woman*/a man*?
- ✓ I have seen beautiful examples of gender diversity
- ✓ Perceived gender diversity in professions that are segregated by gender

The notes do not have to be long, short remarks will do. Examples:

- ✓ Sexist joke I heard
- ✓ I was (not) recognised in my gender identity
- ✓ They always come to me to be comforted - maybe also because I am a woman*/ a man*?

After a month, it would be good to reflect on the results and see what has been learned during the month. The learning diary can be continued for as long as desired. A detailed description of the method can be found in the method collection of the Boys in Care project.

03.3 Reflection for the pedagogical work

Self-reflection is not only important for teachers on an individual level, but also for their pedagogical work. Among other things, it is important to clarify whether there are official and hidden curricula. Usually, an official curriculum includes the idea of equal opportunities for all genders. A hidden curriculum, on the other hand, is full of implicit messages (such as the portrayal of women*/girls* and men*/boys* in school texts) that do not support the same message of the official curriculum. Instead, they promote the idea of traditional stereotypical gender roles. To identify implicit and explicit gender stereotypes in relation to boys*, the

following checklist can help,¹⁰ and can also provide you with ideas for activities to be carried out with children in fostering their caring capacities.

- 1) Are boys* offered the same toys/games/books/activities as girls*?
- 2) Do you use books where people are shown working together for change (rather than acting as individual (male) heroes?)
- 3) Do you engage boys* in tidying up toys?
- 4) Do you engage boys* in preparing tables for meals and cleaning after meals?
- 5) Do you involve boys* in consolation of a friend if needed?
- 6) Do you involve boys* in assisting in (un)dressing to a friend?
- 7) Do you encourage children to play in gender mixed groups?
- 8) Do you invite girls* to play football and boys* to play with dolls?
- 9) Do you react differently to boys* and girls* behaviours?
- 10) Do you interpret feelings of boys* and girls* differently (sadness, anger, joy, fear)?
- 11) Do you have different communication styles (e.g., tone and volume of voice, body language, words used) when interacting with boys* or girls*?
- 12) Do you pay attention that all children are equally involved and receive your attention?
- 13) Do you involve supporting school/kindergarten personnel like cooks, cleaning staff, or janitors in interaction with children?
- 14) Do you use role models/examples of men* in caring roles (like involved father, male nurse, eco activist)?
- 15) Do you discuss/play caring occupations with children?
- 16) Do you present men* as examples of nurses, kindergarten teachers, social workers, elder carers in books, videos or other resources?
- 17) Do you engage male care workers in a group to discuss their work with children?
- 18) Do you visit a nearby eldercare home with kids?
- 19) Do you invite disabled persons in a group to talk with children?
- 20) Do you offer examples of how children can care for their grandparents?
- 21) In your work with families, do you also engage fathers, grandfathers, brothers?
- 22) In case the child gets sick, whom do you usually call?
- 23) Do you pay attention to the gender equality in the classroom?
- 24) Do you discuss films, videos, books, or cartoons from a gender equality perspective too?

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A second, more detailed check-list can be found on the *ECaRoM* website.

- 25) Do you foster empathy and solidarity in the group and in society and general?
- 26) Do you discuss the situation of marginalised groups (people of colour, Roma, refugees, migrants, low-income-families) with children?
- 27) Do you discuss different forms of families (LGBT, single parents, reconstructed, multigenerational, transnational) and how care is divided within them?
- 28) Have you received any training on gender equality?
- 29) Have you received any training on men* and masculinities?

Once you have gone through the question, you can check where you think changes are necessary to strengthen Caring Masculinities in your institution. It is useful to evaluate the progress after some time and go through the checklist again to see what you have managed to change and where there is still the need to act.



04 Modules

04.1 Cross-cutting topics

Before we turn to the individual modules for implementing a gender-sensitive approach in pedagogical work with children, we will briefly discuss the cross-cutting topics that run through all the modules. In the modules, we try to open options for caring agency, particularly for men* in early childhood education. We refer to gender-sensitive material and tools which should be used in early childhood education in order to support men*'s caring activities and strengthen the role of men* in gender equality. We were particularly interested in the translation of theoretical concepts around care, gender sensitivity and Caring Masculinities into the practical context of early childhood education, and thus we will present very concrete tools for pedagogical work with children, which were developed in the *ECaRoM* project.

04.1.1 Let's talk about care!

Care is fundamentally important because it is a universal human need, without which an individual cannot grow, and our society and economy cannot function. Nancy Fraser (2016) underlines that care is about the creation and maintenance of social bonds. One part of this has to do with vertical ties between generations, i.e., raising children and caring for the elderly. Another part is about sustaining horizontal ties among friends, family, neighbourhoods, and community. This sort of activity is absolutely essential to society. At the same time, with affective attitudes and practical tasks, care provides the 'social glue' that underpins social cooperation. Without it, argues Fraser, there would be no social organisation – no economy, no polity, no culture. This view of care bears on the goals and purposes of the educational system (including ECEC), namely, how it contributes to stimulating caring and responsible citizens, supporting egalitarian relationships, creating communities, and sustaining social organisation.

One of the essential lessons about care is that it is work. Care work is often differentiated from other forms of work because it is considered to be intrinsically motivated. Care work is considered as labour undertaken out of affection, a sense of responsibility for other people, with no expectation of immediate reward. Nevertheless, it requires time, effort, resources, and coordination. It demands attention and investment; it is complex, intricate,

and interdependent; mundane, necessary, and arduous. Caring work takes place in formal and informal forms, in the public and private spheres, in state and market services, as paid and unpaid work. In personal relationships and in the family, care work is done without remuneration. It includes the array of domestic work that is often disproportionately performed by women*. The slow pace of change towards more gender equal division of care work is an obstacle to women*'s equal participation in the labour market, their access to economic resources and their equality in career advancement.

Caring occupations performed in public and market organisations are fundamentally important for society, because they provide services that help people develop their capabilities, or the ability to pursue the aspects of their lives that they value. Examples of these occupations include child care, care for the elderly, cleaning, all levels of teaching, health care, social work etc. Also caring occupations are deeply burdened by gender stereotypes that these are 'women*'s jobs'. They are often associated with low social and economic status and performed by ethnic minorities and migrants. These can be seen as the main reasons why boys* avoid these occupations (Dill et al., 2016).

An equally important insight is that care is affective – through caring and being cared for, feelings are mobilised and expressed. These feelings include love, gratitude, reciprocity, obligation, connectedness, and solidarity, as well as pain, anxiety, and fear. One has to be aware of patronising and abusive behaviours in interdependent caring relationships, which often involve unequal power relations and dependency, in order to be able to recognize and dispel them.

Wendy Luttrell (2020: 206) devised the term “choreographies of care” to describe the many complex components involved in caring. It means that care is a result of concerted effort nested within social relations (intimate, close, and distant) that are effectively linked, coordinated and set in motion according to the rhythms and demands of family life, workplaces, kindergartens and schools, and a constellation of both private and public resources. Social units and spaces such as family, kindergarten, friendship circles, workplaces, and communities are all participating in the choreography of care. Luttrell (ibid.) says, that it is the invisible choreography of care that puts the 5Bs (Be Here; Be Mindful; Be Safe; Be Respectful; Be Responsible) in lived practice.

Promoting an equal share of care, such as caring for children, the elderly, the sick and daily household chores in a society, as well as encouraging boys* for caring occupations is a priority for achieving (gender) equality. Tronto articulates a vision of society in which equality in care work and its economic and social value should be promoted, saying:

“A truly free society allows people the freedom to care for each other. A society of true equality allows everyone an equal opportunity to be the recipient of care when they need it and to engage in caring relationships. A truly just society does not hide inequalities behind a mythology of free choice in the marketplace.”

(Tronto, 2015: 38)

The *ECaRoM* needs analysis study highlighted that gender-sensitive pedagogical tools such as toys, games, visual images, etc., which would focus on gender equality in care work, caring images of masculinities and on the relationship between masculinities and care work, are extremely rare. To fill this gap, we have developed a set of pictures and a workbook with playful tasks that in a sparkling way visualise care work as human connectedness, empathy and solidarity. The material can be found on the *ECaRoM Homepage*. For children, especially for boys*, they promote the perception of care work as a gender-neutral and socially important field, and open up spaces for imagination of egalitarian and non-hegemonic models of masculinities. For children in general, doing well in caregiving is a way of building self-esteem along with empathy, social solidarity, and active citizenship.

04.1.2 Gender stereotypes

While gender stereotypes have a negative connotation, they are actually a representation of the natural cognitive process of perception. Since we do not have enough processing resources to take in all the information we are exposed to, we use somewhat generalized categories and allocate the people we encounter into them based on broad differentiations, for example, race, gender or sexual orientation. In order to lighten the cognitive load and simplify the decision-making process, the brain assumes similarity within the categories which can then lead to the attribution of the qualities of one particular individual to the entire category and the creation of stereotypes. However, stereotypes get a bad reputation for a good reason. Negative stereotypes lead to prejudice and discrimination and have a direct impact on people's self-identification (Torino & Sue, 2010). In a telling experiment, when given an equally difficult math problem, women* scored lower than men* in the case where participants were led to believe there were gender differences on the test; when gender differences were not expected, women* scored equal to men* on the test (Spencer et al., 1999). This shows that stereotypes are not only able to cause external discrimination but also substantially influence self-perception, which can then lead to devaluation of one's own capabilities.

Current developments in neuroscience and social sciences show that gender differences are overwhelmingly societal and not biological. That is, the way women* and men* behave is determined largely by the patterns of gendered behaviour prescribed by the society they live in (Fine, 2010). However, the formation of gender identity in children takes place very early and often occurs simultaneously with the formation of gender-based stereotypes. The first notions of gender are conceptualized at around 24 months and by the age of 3 most children know if they are a boy* or a girl*. Almost immediately after becoming aware of their gender, children begin to develop stereotypes which they apply to themselves and to others in order to understand their own identity. These simultaneous processes take place between the ages of 3 and 5 years. The stereotypes are fairly well developed by year 5 and become rigidly defined by year 7 (Martin & Ruble, 2004). This makes early education an extremely important time to counter gender stereotypes and foster educational practices that allow for the development of a less stereotypical gender identity of the children.

Rigid stereotypes that perpetuate gender norms limiting boys'* and girls'* self-expression have far-reaching consequences. Stereotypical masculinity is associated with a limited range of emotions that is available to boys* and men*: anger is more acceptable than sadness, pain or affection (in opposition, girls*' anger is less tolerated, they are more often expected to be soft-spoken and obedient). This leads to men* struggling with expressions of vulnerability, hurt or grief. Habitual suppression of such emotions cause men* to revert to the emotional expressions that are permitted by the rigid gender norms which, in its most extreme forms, result in verbal and physical aggression. Since empathy and care at large are stereotypically understood as feminine, men* also struggle to have deep and meaningful relationships, especially with other men*. All of this compounds into poor mental health and higher rates of suicide among men* than women* (EIGE, 2021).

As noted previously in this manual, care work tends to be stereotyped as exclusively female. This stereotype influences the undervaluation of care work, which results in low wages for care professionals and exacerbates the feminization of early education in particular. Furthermore, as care work is understood to be the “woman’s calling”, men* are discouraged from active participation in care activities even as parents. Whereas women* are expected to take up the majority of care work, men* often face resistance from employers or co-workers when reducing their work hours to take on more care responsibilities at home (EIGE, 2021).

Once deeply ingrained, stereotypes are difficult to tackle. Therefore, education is an important domain to work on countering gender stereotypes. As we have observed in the needs assessment of the *ECaRoM* project, educators and teachers believe that they do not use and reproduce gender stereotypes on purpose in their activities with children. Moreover, research shows that even when adults express non-limiting attitudes, children evaluate the subtle, often subconscious cues and correctly perceive the adults to be less tolerant towards stereotypically gender non-appropriate behaviours (Freeman, 2007). That should not be surprising as we are all influenced by the societies we live in and are not immune to the stereotypes that permeate them. Therefore, the role of the educators is two-fold. First, we have to actively engage children in freely expressing different aspects of their identities, including gender, and counter stereotypical norms that can limit their perception of what is acceptable and expected of boys* and girls*. And second, we must engage with our own thought processes to unveil the internalized stereotypes that can influence our work with children. This manual aims to cover both aspects of this work in offering the self-reflection tools to work on our own attitudes and behaviours as educators as well as suggesting various methods and tools that follow gender-sensitive pedagogy and allow for active engagement with different aspects of a child’s gender identity via the notion of care.

04.1.3 Pay attention to caring masculinities

In recent years, the topic of Caring Masculinities has increasingly been addressed in policy, research and also education in European countries (Hanlon, 2012; Scambor et al., 2014; Elliott, 2016) – mainly targeting gender equality, a critical reflection of traditional male expectations, and already changing practices in men*'s present life patterns. Some researchers based the concept of Caring Masculinities on Nancy Fraser’s (1996) model of

gender equality and care as a human norm, turning it from a task for female ‘natural carers’ into an obligation for all genders. Paying attention to complex life requirements, the concept of Caring Masculinities has to be understood in a wide sense:

“... men are not just fathers, and care should not be limited solely to childcare tasks (like feeding babies, putting them to bed, helping children with their homework). Care encompasses more; emotional support, showing affection, and is a deeper kind of attention to children’s needs and the needs of others, such as friends, the elderly, neighbours, work colleagues and family members.”

(Scambor et al., 2013: 151)

Elliott (2016) further suggested to include certain values of care as central aspects of Caring Masculinities, such as emotions, relationality or interdependencies. The dimension care for (meaning duties and tasks for which men* take care) and care about (“the affective, emotional aspects of care”) was distinguished by Elliott (2016: 249). Men*’s ability to reduce risk-taking behaviours and care for themselves, their rejection of violence as well as their connection with others are relevant issues for which men* can care about.

Growing up in our societies implies a role making process (Mead, 1987), which means a continuous confrontation with the fulfilment of social norms. Through this process, traditional male characteristics may have to be confirmed again and again: taking over a symbolic place as a ‘real boy*/real man*’ (Kimmel, 2008) goes along with distancing from “sissy stuff” (Brannon, 1976), meaning mainly feminized fields of life (including care), confirming the “boy code” (Pollack, 1998) characterized by invulnerability, glamorization of muscles and unattainable ideals of assertive, fearless and courageous strong men*. These ideals of Hegemonic Masculinities (Connell, 2000) set the bar unattainably high. This may lead to boys* insecurity, experiencing a sense of inadequate masculinity.

“A male identity that remains focused on such insecurities can lead to an endless loop of self-assurance struggles that constantly cause men to feel the need to reassert their manhood time and again, sometimes taking risks that may threaten their livelihood. For others, and not least of all for their relationship partners, this cycle becomes threatening if this ultimately fragile and hardly positively determined self-concept of masculinity is called into question ...”

(Scambor et al., 2019: 68)

The fear of living one’s own needs and showing vulnerability is high under the frame of traditional male expectations. Furthermore, the pressure to fulfil traditional masculinity expectations can contribute to a lack of skills to care for oneself and others. Some boys* are unable to ask for help and to build sustainable relationships.

Integrating the concept of Caring Masculinities into early childhood education can open a Brave Space (Ali, 2017; read more in chapter 6) for boys* to follow their diverse needs and interests and approach their futures as carefully and as openly as possible. Research about the impact of boys*' work has shown that boys* who have learned to live their care needs do not pose a threat to other people's lives (Bissuti & Wölfl, 2011).

In the following modules the concept of Caring Masculinities is addressed as a cross-cutting issue – all the modules and tools practically create a space where the issue of care but also masculinities is conceptualized in its diversity. Some of the tools, presented in the following module descriptions deal with norm, images and experiences of masculinity in everyday life. Some of the tools intend to counteract the socialization effect that arise from excluding care components and prioritize emotional parts of identity that threaten to fall apart in traditional concepts of masculinity.

04.2 Module 1: Selfcare - setting boundaries, vulnerability and GBV-prevention

In a traditional vision of masculinity, boys* are taught to be strong, independent, dominant and in control. There is no space for emotions, vulnerability and listening to one's own needs, in other words there is no space for self-care. Yet, this is a central aspect for the promotion of non-hegemonic forms of masculinities and the concept of Caring Masculinities includes self-care as a starting point to care for others and the external world.

The relationship between masculinity and self-care is a topic recently addressed by Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities (CSMM). In research conducted by Promundo, it was found that a high percentage of men* between the ages of 18 and 30 live in what researchers call a 'Man Box' (Heilman et al., 2017). The Man Box is the example par excellence of the expectations that push masculinity to put aside its emotional dimension, educating it to show itself as 'strong', 'brave' and, in general, moulding male children from an early age to be 'real men'. But as educators we have to ask ourselves what are the costs of a cultural model that guides children, boys* and men* to socialize their gender identity in that direction? In 2018, the American Psychological Association (APA) (2019) produced a study entitled 'Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men' in which the negative impact of hegemonic and heteronormative norms on boys* is highlighted in the link between violence (gender-based violence, homotransphobic violence) and toxic masculinity.

In recent years, special attention is being paid to the creation of gender-sensitive educational models that frame children, boys* and young men* as priority subjects for the resolution of gender discrimination, gender-based violence, homo- and transphobia. Much has been written on the process of emotional suppression in masculinity, particularly on boys*' emotional disconnection from pre-adolescence onwards (Way, 2011; Way et al., 2018). Starting from the international research and scientific literature (sociological, psychological, pedagogical) highlighting the impact on the male population of 'malecode' and, above all,

'brocode'¹¹ in adolescence, what can be the pedagogical and educational strategies to be activated with boys* already from early childhood for the prevention of toxic male roles?

In order to prevent boys* from becoming violent at a later age, it is fundamental to strengthen their emotional competences from an early age because when boys* do not have to play men*, and when they learn to take care of themselves and their emotions, there is more space for non-violent solutions to conflicts.

If the costs of normative masculinity education affect the emotional dimension of men* from childhood onwards, the work of care and self-care by educators and teachers becomes an essential component in educating boys* and men* free from the burden of stereotypes and norms of masculinity. The category of self-care has its roots in Greek-Hellenistic and Roman culture understood as an 'ethical relationship', as a way through which the subject constructs itself, activating a process of self-inquiry that is not limited to the self, but also involves the other and the world (Cambi, 2010).

Among the theorists of care, understood as care for the self, the other and the world, Foucault identifies this dimension as essential in the educational relationship between educator and learner in order to free the former from the control that power exerts over the subject's body and will (1978).

In the educational relationship, starting from self-care is functional to the work of self-reflection on the subject's identity. An identity is heavily influenced by society and its norms, which is an obstacle in the process of constructing the 'true' (masculine) self. This self remains blocked due to the expectations from others to perform in a certain way.

The model of Caring Masculinities discusses the specificity of self-care work from a gendered perspective, considering it a fundamental component in the process of constructing the self. As Elliott (2016) argues, if gender stereotypes direct female and male behaviour along two binary models in polarized dimensions and with the latter's prerogative to reject caring for the other and the world in favour of dominance over them, Caring Masculinities impose a change of course on the boys*' relationship towards the others but also towards themselves.

Educators have an important and difficult role to play in finding gender sensitive educational strategies. In this regard, it may be useful to refer to adapt Boger's model, of the "Trilemma of Inclusion"¹². When applying the concept on gender pedagogy with focus on Caring Masculinities, there should be a triangulation of "empowerment of care", the "deconstruction of traditional patterns of masculinity" and the "normalisation of diverse masculinities". In relation to self-care, especially the first dimension linked to empowerment is central as it includes: learning empathy, recognizing and handling emotions, listening, embodiment and boundary awareness. This aspect is also based on the recognition of one's

11 The concepts of "malecode" or "brocode" are synonyms indicating the set of cultural codes underlying male friendship socialisation. Specifically, brocode comes from code between "brothers" that regulate boys*' behaviour. In *Critical Studies on Men and Masculinity*, brocode is referred to as the element that influences homosocial bonds and spaces.

12 Compare chapter "Setting the context".

own needs and vulnerability which is in direct contrast with a traditional view of masculinity based on strength, independence and self-sufficiency.

In order to counteract the hegemonic view of intra- and intergenerational relations on the part of masculinity, education for self-care is necessary, the first step in the subject's formative process, which imposes a self-reflection on the dominated and dominating self. Educational work on the promotion of self-care aims to work with boys* on the enhancement of their emotions and empathy through the 'normalisation of behaviours' that are culturally not attributed to boys*. For example, teaching the ability to externalise feelings of joy, pain and emotions involving the self. The ability to self-reflect becomes an essential point that can be summarized with the principle expressed by Socrates 'know thyself'.

Communication with others starting from the externalization of one's own states of mind is an aspect of masculinity education that is generally not considered, since gender expectations lead educational professionals to value aspects of masculinity linked to action (e.g., in the organization of play activities, in the choice of games and toys) and little to self-reflection. Based on Boger's model, the starting point for self-care education is the educational intentionality on the part of educators and teachers aimed at deconstructing traditional models of masculinity. In ECECS and with greater intensity in primary schools, this intentionality in the educational relationship gets disrupted by the "Pygmalion Effect" or "self-fulfilling prophecy"¹³. It is beneficial to promote readings and activities that emphasize alternative ways of being male and that strengthen the idea that boys* too are sensitive to others and the world. A responsible and ethical education of boys* must include, as a first step, supporting boys* in the continuous "maieutic" exercise of drawing out their emotions from within themselves. This comprises recognizing and processing these emotions. The aim of such a process is to free boys* from the social pressure of a traditional and hegemonic model of masculinity.

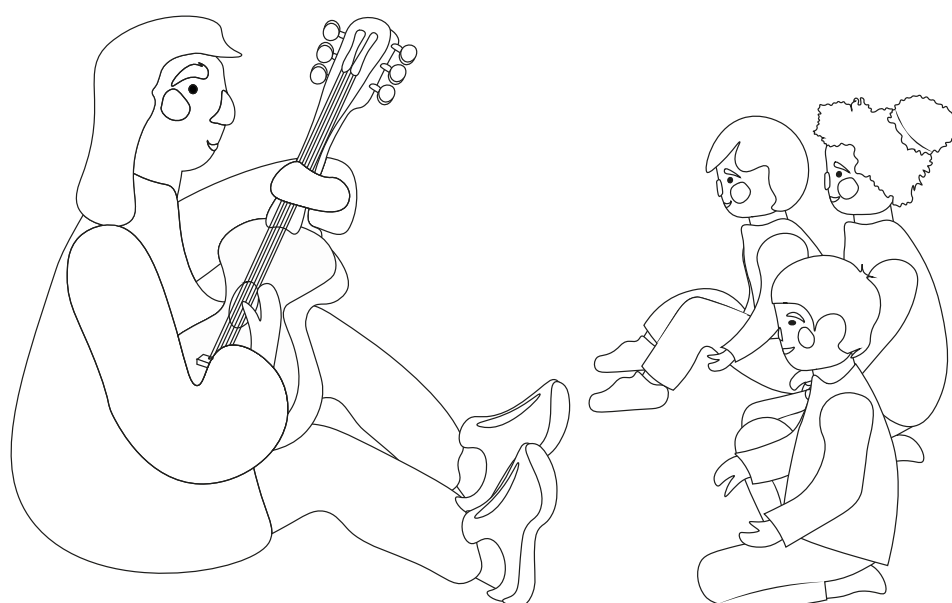
Below are two methods developed for *ECaRoM* which can be useful in the educational work on self-education for the promotion of plural and care-focused male models. The first method helps children to reflect on how they may take care of themselves when they don't feel well by sharing their feelings with their peers. The second method uses symbolic play in order to develop children's creativity in elaborating models of Caring Masculinities.

¹³ The Pygmalion effect or self-fulfilling prophecy is a concept coined in the 1960s by psychologist Robert Rosenthal, according to which, the expectations (preconceptions and stereotypes) of teachers, reference adults towards boys* and girls* can influence their behaviour or the outcome of a task based on their 'prophecies'. It is actually a priori judgements that can have an effect. For more in-depth information, please refer to the following texts: Rosenthal R., Jacobson L. (1968). *Pygmalion in classroom. Teacher expectation and Pupils' Intellectual Development*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

04.2.1 Method: Wishes

Method
Wishes
Topics of the method
Selfcare as part of Caring Masculinities
Target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Kindergarten children ✓ School primary level
Number of participants
No specific requirements.
Situation
Can be a good method in many situations, especially on emotionally intense days.
Framework
Necessary material
Pens, paper, helium balloons (if possible, not blue and pink).
Preparation
No specific requirements.
Time
30-40 minutes. Age group appropriate.
Rooms
Can be a smaller room. There should be access to the outdoors.
Instructions and step by step description
<p>Everyone can send a balloon with a message on its journey.</p> <p>Task for the children: When I am not feeling well: what helps me and who helps me? If the children don't want to say it out loud, they can whisper it in the teacher's ear. The balloons are let go from the yard. Of course, there can also be collective wishes of the groups.</p>

Aims of the method
The method is suitable for self-reflection of young children as well as multipliers.
Content-wise specifications
What significance does Caring Masculinities have in this method? How does the method open up to a gender sensitive perspective?
This method set the focus on selfcare, emotions as a part of Caring Masculinities.
Variations
Drawing wishes/ideas.
Aftermath
Either it can be used to talk more about feelings, selfcare, care work or reproductive work.
Comments, experiences, tips, risks
<p><i>Tip:</i> work with gender homogeneous groups.</p> <p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Participants could be emotionally hurt by other participants. ✓ Family problems could be brought forward by the participants which can be very distressing, e.g., loss of a caregiver.
Sources of the method
Based on the method of the handbook: Selbstlaut-Verein zur Prävention von sexuellen Kindesmissbrauch (o.J.): Identität, Rollenbilder, Persönlichkeit. Modul 2.



04.2.2 Method: Story box

Method
Story box
Topics of the method
Caring Masculinities; gender equality;
Target group
This method allows for storytelling, for all ages. In this specific case, the storytelling is aimed at boys* and girls* aged between 2 and 6 years. It can also be used in trainings, meetings, aimed at families, educators, teachers.
Number of participants
The ideal number of participants is a section/class group. A maximum of 25/27 children.
Situation
The ideal situation is one of readiness to listen to the narrative and possible dialogue and exchange at the end of the story.
Framework
Necessary material
<p>The method used is the narrative box method. The story used is called “Tito lupotti” (ed. Giralangolo). Tito Lupotti is the story of the son of a wolf who wants to become a florist, but this choice goes against the rules of his father Mr. Lupotti since he wants his son to follow in his footsteps and become a hunter. Mr. Lupotti will try in every way to change his son's mind, devising strategies that will prove unsuccessful, since Tito wants to be a florist.</p> <p>To make the container of our story: a medium-sized box (for example a shoe box or another one you can find at home); fabric scraps to cover the box; the characters were made as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Tito Lupotti with a small wool pompom ✓ Papa Lupotti with some stiff felt ✓ The rabbit is a pine bark <p>The rest of the materials to support the story is commonly used or made with recycled materials repurposed, for the essences of flowers were used natural colours (aniline) and water.</p>
Preparation
In order to prepare the narrative box, the following steps are recommended: reading of the illustrated book, selection of the key concepts and the message that you want to convey or on which you want to start a dialogue with the participants, selection of materials, construction of the box, characters and objects useful for the narrative.

Time
The time required for the preparation of a narrative box, having already thought and found the material, is about 2 hours. For the telling of a story the time depends on the narrative (about 10-15 minutes)
Rooms
A section/classroom or setting where those who attend may be comfortable with listening.
Instructions and step by step description
The narrator stands behind the box looking at the listeners, asking for attention and a predisposition to listen. The box is opened, the title of the story is announced and the story begins. The story is narrated by taking objects and characters out of the box, and the important points are raised by looking at the listeners. Between one scene and another, it is useful to take a few seconds of pause. At the end of the narration, put the materials back in the box, greeting the characters, and when they are finished, say "bye bye story". At this point you wait, without staring too much at the interlocutors, for someone to make a remark about it, and then you start a dialogue.
Aims of the method
This narrative technique allows to arouse strong emotions through the use of characters, places, events, key moments of the chosen story. Using a container from which to extract, with non-random times and ways, objects and characters, which will then be placed again, has a double value. On the one hand it allows for the creation of magical moments that can be ritually repeated and hardly lose their evocative power, on the other hand it perfectly represents the idea of containment. It contains real emotions to keep in order objects and materials that, protected as something precious, treated with care and attention, acquire an added value.
Content-wise specifications
What significance does Caring Masculinities have in this method? How does the method open up to a gender sensitive perspective?
<p>The use of the story box has a great impact in opening up education to a gender perspective and specifically to Caring Masculinities.</p> <p>The story of "Tito lupotti" lends itself well to the questioning of gender stereotypes, in particular of masculinity as the only accepted canon for males, proposing a different narrative on the meaning of the concept of masculinity.</p> <p>The story was chosen because within it is possible to identify a series of elements that refer to the objective of the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Father and son relationship and generational negotiation on the concept of masculinity. ✓ Relationship between masculinity and care. The interest in flowers is part of the concept of care for the environment that is often rejected by the male, since it is seen as unmanly to love flowers. <p>The positive impact is due to several reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) simplicity and replicability in implementation: materials can be produced with recyclable items and therefore can be found easily.

- 2) It allows the work on the creative dimension of boys* and girls*, promoting the development of symbolic skills". This includes the promotion of the relationship between masculinity and care.
- 3) It can be used not only by educators and parents, but also in peer-to-peer work, where older children reproduce the narrative box with younger ones.
- 4) It can also be useful to use the story box, in which stories centered on Caring Masculinities are reproduced by men* (educators, fathers, grandparents, brothers, etc.) so as to allow, through an approach to this activity that in itself represents a "caring model" of relationship, to intensify the incidence of the objective.

In the specificities of the story used to make the story box, the element of Caring Masculinities emerges already from the choice in the story to use the figure of the wolf "Tito Lupotti". In the tradition the association wolf-aggressiveness has been made and in the contemporary imaginary among the stereotyped expectations about gender since childhood, boys* are told to be strong as a wolf.

Using such a figure to deconstruct a model of "toxic masculinity" in favor of a character who instead wants to choose a profession that implies an interest in flowers and nature (care for the environment), is in line with the objectives of an education from early childhood that is attentive to the issues of a non-stereotypical masculine identity.

During the narration, it is important to avoid depicting Mr. Lupotti as a victim (by using superfluous words, tone of voice, expressions).

Variations

The narrative has not been changed, it respects the salient points of the book and the moral attached to it.

Aftermath

This method allows for direct input through animated narration. These cues can then be used to start a discussion on the subject, or the listeners themselves can voice their thoughts and observations. The narrator can pick up on these observations and use them to start a conversation on masculinity relating it to the connection between masculinity and (self-)care and respecting each other's choices.

Comments, experiences, tips, risks

The story of Tito Lupotti was told to a section group of 7 girls* and 8 boys*, aged between 3 and 6 years. During the story the attention was high, in the moments of humour present in the story brought some laughter, but immediately after the concentration returned to the story of the little wolf and his father.

At the end of the story, the boys* and girls* asked each other the question: can a wolf be a florist? After letting them discuss, the question was raised: could Tito have been a dancer? From here, the answers and the dialogue with the children made it possible to have an open discussion, dealing with some gender issues: Caring Masculinities, gender stereotypes, acceptance of diversity, freedom of others if they do not harm others. It could happen that the listening group does not initiate a dialogue, in which case it is up to the adult to name points of reflection.

Sources of the method

The idea for the story box came from an English teacher, Helen Bromley. It started with an activity in a small box set up in her classroom, based on a book they were working on at the time. The children had the opportunity to go back to it during their breaks and play in it as much as they wanted.

The teacher noticed that the pupils came in with so many ideas that it actually exceeded her expectations and she got to know how much knowledge the children had about other things, of which she was not aware. This participatory methodology based on transformative learning with children is very common in Tuscany early childhood education and care services.

Further reading

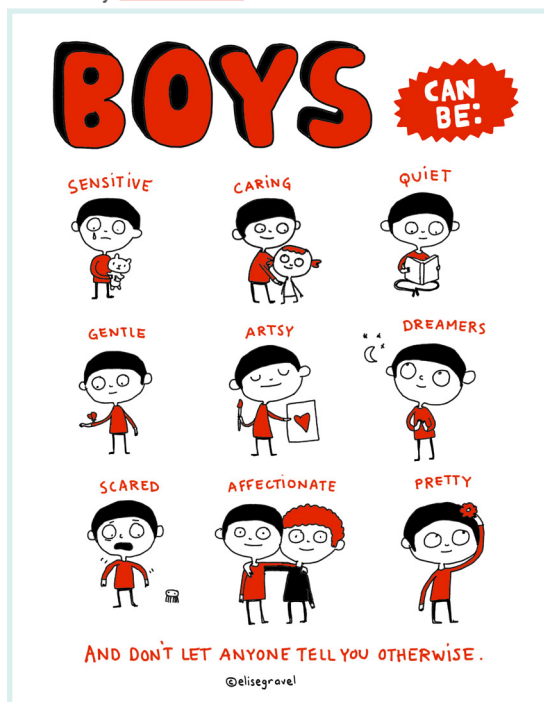
https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-assets/9851_book_item_9851.pdf

<https://www.crayolateachers.ca/lesson/my-story-box-personal-history-colour-texture/>
<https://storyboxlibrary.com.au/>

This module focuses on the importance of self-care and in particular the relationship between self-care, emotions and masculinities as an antidote to contrast the rise of toxic behaviours in boys* starting from early childhood. The aim of the theoretical reflections and the methods proposed is to show how the concept of Caring masculinities enables educators and teachers to work with boys* on their deepest emotions in order to learn how to take care of themselves. In this way it will then be possible for boys* to care of others and the world.

Recommendable material

Posters by [Elise Gravel](#)



Material and books from [Jessica Sanders](#)



04.3 Module 2: Friendship, empathy and emotions

From developmental psychology it is well known that peers and friends contribute an important role in children's development. A distinction is made between the influence of peers and the influence of friends (Siegler et al., 2016).

- ✓ **Peers** are individuals who are approximately the same age. They are relatively equal in social status and power – especially compared to non-peers. Peers communicate more openly with each other, are more critical of each other and thus develop common rules as well as new approaches to explanation and understanding.
- ✓ **Friendship** is “a close, reciprocal, positive relationship between two people” (Siegler et al., 2016: 486). Unlike peers, friendships are characterized by reciprocity (mutual compromise, give and take). Children as young as three or four years old can already form and maintain friendships. At first, friends learn to take care of each other's physical and material needs and provide support. Later on, mutual loyalty, equality and trust becomes central in friendships among children.

Friendships are an important aspect of children's social, emotional and cognitive development. Often children prefer friendships with children of similar age, gender, ethnicity and social behaviour. Friendships among young children are mainly characterized by playing together. But also, activities of caring and being there for each other play an important role. The following aspects and qualities characterize a positive relationship/friendship among children:

- ✓ **Feeling good:** friends feel comfortable in each other's presence. They want to sit next to each other, be in the same group and play together. The basic feeling of being comfortable with each other persists even in spite of arguments and minor disputes.
- ✓ **Trusting each other:** friendships among children are characterized by a strong mutuality. They trust each other with secrets and rely on their friends to stand by them in “emergency situations”.
- ✓ **Showing feelings:** young children usually show their feelings relatively unfiltered. Among friends, they also have the opportunity to act out their feelings without the need of justification.
- ✓ **Experience fantasy worlds:** together with friends, children of kindergarten and primary school age can transcend reality and experience fictional adventures and experiences together. Friends grow beyond themselves in imagined futures and fictional worlds of experience and overcome challenges together.
- ✓ **No adults:** the distance to adults promotes children's independence and self-reliance. Together with friends, children learn to solve problems, develop strategies and express and fulfil their wishes and needs. They learn to recognize strengths and to set their own limits.
- ✓ **Enduring conflicts:** on the one hand, children can solve conflicts together with friends, or they learn to solve conflicts they have with friends. This changes the still egocentric world view in young kindergarten children, and they learn to give in, compromise and assert themselves (Blank-Mathieu, 1999).

Friendships are an important part of the development as well as the building and maintaining of physical and mental health.

Developmental psychology (Rose & Asher, 2017) shows that children, and especially younger children, play more in gender-homogeneous groups and that there are gender-specific differences in friendships among children. But research often focuses on friendships between girls* and their related strengths, such as: expressing care, concern, admiration, and affection, helping and managing conflicts. The strengths of friendships between boys* fall by the wayside.

This is accompanied by the implicit statement that boys* are less interested in friendships or are not particularly good at them. Yet friendships between boys* are just as stable, valuable and satisfying as friendships between girls*. According to Rose and Asher, because of their socialization, boys* engage in different friendship activities, which are often overlooked in research.

The following three aspects are often practiced more than average by boys* and are an essential part of friendships. (1) Being a fun, resourceful and pleasant companion – Laughter and fun are important aspects of a friendship which deserve attention and are no less mature aspects of friendship than e.g., comforting each other. (2) Forgiving friends – Disagreements and disappointed expectations are inevitable in friendships. The ability to forgive these disappointments are important aspects of a friendship. (3) Maintaining and sharing friendships – Extending friendships, sharing friends with other friends, together with making and accepting new friendships without falling into jealousy are important aspects of a friendship full of trust (Rose & Asher, 2017).

Friendships between boys* and girls* may differ and may also involve different aspects. However, friendships are not based on a gender (binary) concept. Merely due to socialization and the social environment of each and every one, friendships are often influenced by different expectations of gender and the norms and stereotypes associated with it. Actively promoting and modelling Caring Masculinities is important for both boys* and girls* to have friendships free of gender stereotypes. It is also important to recognize that different forms of friendship are not more important, more developed or more rudimentary. Children can benefit from a wide range of friendship activities. When children enter into friendships with different genders, they learn to recognize and meet changing needs based on different contexts and circumstances. In doing so, children express friendship through different activities and actions. It is important to support them in the activities they already know and to show them new ways of expressing friendship and emotions.

04.3.1 Method: Alex is my friend

With the refrain “A friend, a good friend. That’s the best thing in the world”, the Comedian Harmonists sang (an internationally renowned Berlin vocal ensemble) a tribute to friendship in the 1990s.

Singing is fun and singing awakens feelings. Singing together strengthens the team spirit and invites the group to discuss the lyrics and the related topic. The following method “A song about friendship: Alex is my friend” offers an opportunity to learn about the topic of friendship with children in kindergarten. For working with children in primary school, the lesson plan “Alex is my friend” is recommended for a more challenging discussion with the children.

Method
Alex is my friend
Topics of the method
Friendship – What is it? What makes a good friendship? Why is friendship important?
Target group
Children in kindergarten and primary school. For working with children in primary school we refer to the “Lesson plan English”, which includes the song and an age-appropriate content-related discussion of the topic of friendship adapted to the learning situation in primary schools.
Number of participants
Any
Situation
The song can be used in any situation. Learning the song requires concentration from the children, as they have to remember both the lyrics and the melody. If the children already know the song, they need less concentration and it can be a fun exercise. The song can be sung for fun or used as an introduction for exploring the topic of friendship and caring for each other.
Framework
Necessary material
Accompanying instrument OR computer and speakers to play the music.
Preparation
The educator should already know the song and have aimed for initial reflections on the topic of friendship.

Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Learning the song: 20 minutes ✓ Learning the choreography: 10 minutes ✓ Singing the song: 2 minutes ✓ Reflecting on friendship: 30 minutes
Rooms
One room (classroom) – but also possible outside in the garden
Instructions and step by step description
<p>Lyrics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Alex is my friend, Alex is my friend, Alex is my friend because he cares for me. He comforts me, he comforts me, because he is my friend and really cares for me. 2) Alex is my friend, Alex is my friend, Alex is my friend because he cares for me. He plays with me, he plays with me, because he is my friend and really cares for me. 3) Alex is my friend, Alex is my friend, Alex is my friend because he cares for me. He helps me, he helps me, because he is my friend and really cares for me. 4) Alex is my friend, Alex is my friend, Alex is my friend because he cares for me. He listens to me, he listens to me, because he is my friend and really cares for me. 5) Alex is my friend, Alex is my friend, Alex is my friend because he cares for me. He shares with me, he shares with me, because he is my friend and really cares for me. <p>1st step: listening to the song, learning the lyrics and the melody</p> <p>2nd step: learning the movements to the song (better understanding through physical movement): each care-activity can be presented with a movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Comfort: hugging each other, or one self as a symbol ✓ Play: moving hands as if playing with little dolls, Lego, etc. ✓ Help: extend both hands forward helpfully ✓ Listen: put your hand behind your ear ✓ Share: pretending to break something in half with your hands (like a sandwich) <p>3rd step: reflection & discussion – reflecting upon living with others in a community (like a kindergarten class)/relations to other children; observing one's own behaviour</p> <p>The educator can discuss the following reflection questions with the children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Do you think that Alex is a good friend? ✓ What do you like doing with your friends? ✓ What do you like about your friends? ✓ Do boys* and girls* have different friendships? Why? ✓ Who listens to you when you are sad? Who comforts you? ✓ Do you listen to other people when they feel sad? Do you comfort others?

Aims of the method

With the help of Alex from the Song “Alex is my friend” children can learn about friendship and the qualities, advantages and important features of a pleasant relationship with others. Children are led to reflect upon their own friendships and their relationships to others. They are presented with an opportunity to discover what they consider important in their connections to others and how positive social interactions can help them overcome struggles and difficult situations.

Content-wise specifications

What significance does Caring Masculinities have in this method? How does the method open up to a gender sensitive perspective?

- ✓ Men* and women* are raised to follow different gender stereotypes and behaviours from an early age on. These stereotypes also lead to boys* being granted less or little room for their emotions. This means that for example that boys* learn to suppress sensitive and caring aspects in their friendships and relationships. The concept of Caring Masculinities aims to move away from this gender stereotypical image of men* being only strong and tough towards a caring and more active member of society.
- ✓ Children are invited to reflect upon their feelings and to understand what makes their relationships with others valuable and important. This applies equally to working with boys* and all other children.
- ✓ There is a strong emphasis on the lack of equality in what is expected from boys*/men* and girls*/women* and how they are limited in their life choices. This will relate to the children’s sense of justice but also teach them about the possibility of change.

Variations

The song forms the basis. All other activities, such as the choreography or the choice of reflection questions are up to the educator.

Variation 1: choreography

- 1) By learning and integrating physical movements to the song, the aim is to achieve a better understanding and more fun.
- 2) He comforts me, he comforts me.
Hugging each other, or one self as a symbol
- 3) He plays with me, he plays with me
Moving hands as if playing with a ball, little dolls, Lego, etc.
- 4) He helps me, he helps me
Extend both hands forward helpfully
- 5) He listens to me, he listens to me
Put your hand behind your ear
- 6) He shares with me, he shares with me
Pretending to break something (like a sandwich) in half with your hands.

Variation 2: changing the name

The name “Alex” was deliberately chosen for this song because it can be used as a gender-neutral name for girls* or boys*. At the same time, this exercise wants to emphasize the need for care and attention in a friendship, especially for and among boys*, which is why the pronoun “he” was chosen.

The song can also be used in an introduction to the topic of non-binary children and serve as a point of identification for non-binary children. The teacher shows that he/she is attentive and mindful of the topic and that he/she is responsive to it.

The song can be adapted by replacing the name “Alex” with the different names of the children in the group/class. In this way, children can be sung about directly and associated with the special qualities they bring to a friendship.

Variation 3: inventing new verses

The song consists of five verses, with each verse mentioning a special quality of care (comforting, playing, helping, listening and sharing) that Alex brings to a friendship. Together with the children, new activities of caring, worrying and nurturing that are important in a friendship can be sought. These can then be incorporated into the song in further verses.

Variation 4: discussion and talk about friendship

After singing the song, the children can reflect and discuss together about living together in the community (kindergarten group)/relationships with other children and about friendship. The following reflection questions can be used for this:

- ✓ How do you feel when somebody listens to you or comforts you?
- ✓ Do you think that Alex is a good friend?
- ✓ What do you like doing with your friends?
- ✓ What do you like about your friends?
- ✓ Is it different when you are friends with a boy* or a girl*?
- ✓ Do boys* and girls* have different friendships? Why?
- ✓ Who listens to you when you are sad? Who comforts you?
- ✓ Do you listen to other people when they feel sad? Do you comfort others?

Aftermath

- ✓ After learning the song and discussing the topic of friendship, which requires concentration from the children, a break should be taken before using another *ECaRoM*-method (e.g.: “Memory game” or “When I am grown up”).
- ✓ Attention should be paid to gender stereotypical behaviour and situations. If such behaviour is noted, it should be reflected and discussed with the children.

Comments, experiences, tips, risks

The topic of Caring Masculinities might raise questions on the children’s side which the educators should be prepared to answer. For this reason, some background information is presented in chapter 4.1 Cross-cutting Topics.

Sources of the method

The song was written by Veronika Suppan and Lisa Wagner (Institute for Masculinity Research and Gender Studies/VMG Austria) in the course of the project “Early Care and the Role of Men”.

Further reading

Klischeefrei Methodenset M14: https://www.klischee-frei.de/de/klischeefrei_101987.php
Boys in Care Toolkit: <https://www.boys-in-care.eu/tools>

The module focuses on the importance of friendship as well as the understanding and dealing with empathy and emotions in early childhood. Friends represent an important part for emotional and cognitive development. Through the song „Alex is my friend“, children learn about the importance of friends and the supportive roles and functions of friendships. In the song, care and empathy activities are emphasized and limiting gender barriers about friendships are broken. In the following Superhero Method, children have the opportunity to let their imaginations run wild. The focus is on the empathic behaviour of the self-imagined superhero. With the help of these methods, children learn to interpret and understand their own emotions and those of their fellow human beings. The focus is always on a gender-reflexive approach that promotes Caring Masculinities and breaks through gender barriers.

04.3.2 Method: Superheroes

Emotions are more than feelings. They include and combine inner sensations (warmth, hunger, nervousness, excitement), one's own thoughts and the associated physical reactions (laughter, goose bumps, facial expressions). According to Paul Ekman, there are seven basic emotions: joy, surprise, fear, anger, disgust, sadness and contempt (Frech, 2008).

Children in kindergarten, and primary school age, learn to control their emotions, especially when they would otherwise interrupt the performance of an activity. Because children in the kindergarten age can express themselves linguistically, they can also express emotions in a more controlled way. With age, their ability to regulate emotions and their associated behaviour changes. Children learn different methods to control their emotions as their brains mature. They learn to focus their attention on something else, distract themselves with other activities or calm themselves down. The older children get, the easier it is for them to use cognitive coping strategies (e.g., recognizing positive aspects in negative situations) and to select situation-appropriate self-regulation and stress management strategies. These skills help children in stressful situations (Siegler et al., 2016).

To help children in their emotional development, it is important that at first their verbal and non-verbal feelings and emotions are accepted and perceived. What do I feel? What emotion could that be? The next step is to find out the cause(s) for the emotion(s). Why do I feel like this? What happened? What triggered the feeling in me? Then, it can and should be explored how to deal with the respective emotion(s). What possible solution strategies are there? Hasty comforting could lead to children not learning to deal with their emotions, to understand them and to control them. But also, the dismissal of emotions or their rash explanation by adults limits children in their emotional development (Frech, 2008).

Empathy describes the ability / the emotional reaction for being able to put oneself in the emotional state or situation of another. The prerequisite for this is that children are able to recognize and understand the emotions of others (Siegler et al., 2016). In contrast to empathy, compassion is “the sympathy and concern for another person (or animal) in response to their condition” (Siegler et al., 2016: 543).

As early as eight to 14 months, children become agitated by the discomfort of other people and especially children. They do not necessarily suffer with others, but already experience

stress through the suffering of others. At the age of two, children can already show their first prosocial behaviour, such as compassion, in which they try to comfort other children. Prosocial behaviour increases with age until adolescence (around the age of 11), although the degree to which it is pronounced varies greatly at the individual level. Both biological factors (genetic inheritance) and socialization (influences of the social environment) play an important role (Siegler et al., 2016).

Empathy and emotions play an important part in paid and unpaid care work. On the one hand, it is important to be able to understand, interpret and show emotions. On the other hand, empathy and its different ways of expression are of significance. Emotions and empathy also play an important role in learning and understanding the concept of Caring Masculinities. The effects and consequences of Toxic Masculinity or Caring Masculinities are felt by everyone in everyday life. What does it mean for me when Hegemonic Masculinity is replaced by a diversity of masculinities, which are not characterized by gender stereotypes? What does it mean for people of different genders or for society? Understanding and empathizing with others strengthens the understanding of the importance of Caring Masculinities and care activities.

The following method is a role play with many opportunities for reflection and discussions about feelings and empathy as a motivating reason for care activities. With the help of self-invented superheroes, children learn how important and cool qualities like empathy and helpfulness are. Whether superhero, nurse or friend – showing feelings, being emphatic, asking for help and providing help are gender-independent activities that everybody needs in life.

Method
Superheroes
Topics of the method
The qualities of superheroes, being caring, protective and helpful (rather than aggressive and purely destructive), understanding different emotions, being empathic
Target group
Children in the age of 3 to 6 years.
Number of participants
Up to 25 participants (depends on the size of the kindergarten room).
Situation
Any time of the day.

Framework
Necessary material
Pieces of fabrics to create their own costumes, also other already made costumes are appropriate (for example: firefighter, rescuer, doctor, but also Superman, Batman, Riddler, Catwoman), or just having possibility of wearing a cape or something similar.
Preparation
No preparations are needed in advance. It can be encouraged that children bring any of their superhero costumes from home to kindergarten, if they have any – a day in advance. The only important issue is to have a focus in discussion with children on caring, empathic, helpful, protective qualities of the superheroes.
Time
Minimum 45 minutes, better 60 minutes, but could last much longer.
Rooms
1 room with table (full of clothes, costumes, pieces of fabrics). There can be chairs for children to sit after they are dressed up, but it is not necessary.
Instructions and step by step description
<p>STEP 1: which superheroes are you familiar with? Why are they superheroes at all? What powers, talents and characteristics do they have? You are invited to take a look at some examples in the appendix to this method.</p> <p>STEP 2: who else are superheroes? Perhaps firefighters, police officers, rescuers, doctors, nurses? Discuss their characteristics and talents (taking care of other people in troubles, being helpful, emphatic, protect people, cure people, saving people's lives, etc.).</p> <p>STEP 3: encourage children to dress up or to create their superhero costumes.</p> <p>STEP 4: while playing with their superhero costumes pay attention to their behaviour (if they are acting more aggressive, less creative than usual, etc., or not). It is important to put forward all the caring, protective, helpful, empathic superhero characteristics and talents.</p> <p>STEP 5: later on, the focus should be changed to children and their characteristics, talents. Ask participants "what characteristics and talents do you have?" Encourage them to think about their own skills and qualities.</p> <p>STEP 6: finally, it is suggested to discuss the following questions with the children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Did you know that superheroes have so many different characteristics, talents? ✓ Which characteristics, talents from your superhero did you like most? Why? ✓ How do you feel when you help somebody?
Aims of the method
The children will receive the message about the caring, protective, helpful, empathic superhero characteristics (and not only aggressive or destructive). The focus will change, thus also the perspective for them will change.

Content-wise specifications
What significance does Caring Masculinities have in this method? How does the method open up to a gender sensitive perspective?
The focus of the method is on caring, protective, helpful and empathic superhero characteristics. The gender sensitive perspective is addressed by changing the focus on the superhero characteristics.
Variations
The participants might create their own costumes in pairs or in smaller groups together. The number of costumes can be increased to expand the range.
Aftermath
The children can add new superpowers to their superheroes or change their appearance. Ideally, next step would be to work more with parents around gender and their attitudes.
Comments, experiences, tips, risks
The teachers should pay attention to the diversity in the group and enable the space for equality.
Sources of the method
Handbook "Gender equal play in early learning and childcare" (page 19), available at: https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/3466/gender-equal-play-in-early-learning-and-childcare.pdf The method was adapted by <i>ECaRoM</i> team members from the Peace Institute, Slovenia.

This module focused on Friendship, Empathy and Emotions. Empathy and emotions are core skills in the strengthening of Caring Masculinities. Through masculinity, especially boys* unlearn to deal with their emotions, and emotions are the basis to empathy. If I'm in touch with my emotions like sadness I can more easily be empathic with others. The strengthening of empathy is fundamental to equal relationships which can be learned as well through friendships.

04.4 Module 3: Care for the near social environment: Family and close social networks

This module is about caring for loved ones like family, friends and close confidants. From an adult perspective two caring focuses can be roughly differentiated: the first is care in close social networks where people are often of a similar age. Here, establishing relationships, dealing with conflict, listening, acknowledging each other or just keeping in touch is most important. The second focus is the responsibility for another person like caring for an elderly person or in a family context with children. Examples are planning holidays, legal issues or cooking meals. In the second care focus, care for the relationship is important but additionally there is responsibility for another person.

Care work in close relationships often goes unnoticed, especially by men*. Women* are more often the caregivers (National Alliance for Caregiving, 2020:11). Household chores often seem to happen "on the side", or are not really noticed. There is a lot of effort which comes from caring for other people. A term which describes the invisible tasks in care work is "mental load". In addition to actual care activities, certain tasks have to be planned and prepared in advance, especially in the relationship with children or elderly people, such as shopping, doctor's visits or birthday parties, presents, etc. These tasks often go unnoticed by anyone but the person doing them as they need to be undertaken in advance, and mostly require planning, budgeting and organising. In most cases, this "mental load" is taken on by women*. Although there have been significant improvements in the last decades towards an equal share of housework between men* and women*, but women* generally still do the greater part of the care work. Bell hooks describes the care relation in terms of love: "Men theorize about love, but women are more often love's practitioners. Most men feel that they receive love and therefore know what it feels like to be loved" (hooks, 2000: XX). Through masculinity expectations, men* unlearn to value relationships with each other. Especially in relations between men* competitive behaviour plays a more important role than caring behaviour. Other ways of relating to each other and talking about emotions or problems are rare. As young men* tend to copy the behaviour of older men*, this behaviour starts to develop early on in a boy's life.

In other words, it is necessary to learn and foster caring behaviour like how to establish and uphold meaningful relationships - especially for boys*. Caring is an act of will, namely both an intention and an action. Will also implies choice. People do not have to care for each other, but they can choose to care. It is important to teach this idea to children. Caring activities are based on reciprocity. They can only work if everybody cares for each other. If children learn how to care for each other on an individual level, a more caring society could be established. It means looking for the needs of others and how to support these needs. What a person needs to feel well-cared for is defined by them, not based on what others think is good for that person.

In order to change the distribution of care, it is important to clarify what care is, what value it has and to recognise this as well as to see which care activities can be taken over by the child. Care in relationships can be seen as an activity, which means that they must be actively shaped by the people. This active effort should be learned at an early age, especially by boys*.

Another key point of learning about and understanding caring relationships can be to widen the conception of families and close networks to a circle of trust. In the further course, family, friends and close confidants are summarised in the term circle of trust. This term includes all persons whom the children trust and with whom they have a regular relationship. These can be members of the family, friends and/or other persons. This extension makes it possible to get familiar with different family structures, care and living arrangements. The pedagogical implementation within the framework of the module takes place in two methods. In the first method, the circle of trust, it is clarified which close attachment figures the children have. In the following method, we look at who of these people takes on caring

activities and how thanks can be expressed for this. The last part of the method is about looking at which caring activities the children can take over and where they can support. The focus of the methods is on making care visible and appreciating it as well as actively shaping it.

04.4.1 Method: Circle of trust

Method
Circle of trust
Topics of the method
Getting to know and emphasizing the role of people who are important to the participants of the method.
Target group
Children from the age of 6
Number of participants
Minimum 1 - maximum 20
Situation
No specific requirements.
Framework
Necessary material
One A4 sheet of paper per participant; markers in different colours.
Preparation
No
Time
20 minutes

Rooms
1 room in that the participants can do a sitting circle.
Instructions and step by step description
<p>Part 1: drawing a hand</p> <p>The children should place a hand on the sheet of paper and draw the contours of their hand with a pencil. Finally, they should draw a circle around the hand.</p> <p>Part 2: filling in the hand</p> <p>In the second step, the children should think of people with whom they have regular contact and who are important to them. These can be family members, friends or other people. One way to formulate this could be: "Write in your hand 1-5 people you trust. Think of people who you can tell secrets to or who are important to you. This can be adults, e.g., from your family, friends or teachers, as well as people in your age, or younger, cuddly toys and pets."</p> <p>Then they should write in the fingers of their hand the name of the person who is there for them or who supports them. If the children cannot write yet, a colour or symbol can be used instead. Finally, it should be mentioned that this is the children's circle of trust. The circle of trust is confidential, means that the children can share what they wrote, but they don't have to.</p>
Aims of the method
The method should make the children aware of the people in their lives who care for them and whom they trust. These do not only have to be in the family, but can also be other people or pets.
Content-wise specifications
What significance does Caring Masculinities have in this method? How does the method open up to a gender sensitive perspective?
This method teaches children about the caring relationships they have in their lives, helps them name these relationships and helps them identify the people they trust which is especially important to boys*.
Variations
The parts can also be used individually.
Aftermath
This method is the basis for the following method, as it defines the circle of trust.
Comments, experiences, tips, risks
Be aware that it can be hard to find five names. Some children don't have even one person. Don't put pressure on the children. If they don't find a person, they can just colour the hand. They can take the sheet of paper even back home and perhaps they find some person they can trust.
Sources of the method
Developed by Daniel Holtermann for the <i>ECaRoM</i> project.

04.4.2 Method: Who does care?

Method
Who does care?
Topics of the method
Getting to know care activities, make them visible and change their value
Target group
Children from the age of 8
Number of participants
Minimum 4 - maximum 20
Situation
No specific requirements.
Framework
Necessary material
2 flipcharts and paper; markers in different colours; <i>ECaRoM</i> Card Set.
Preparation
No specific requirements.
Time
30 minutes
Rooms
1 room in that the participants can do a sitting circle.
Instructions and step by step description
<p>Part 1: Collection of care activities</p> <p>Ask the children:</p> <p><i>“Think about your guardians, your circle of trust or other people who care for you: what activities do they do for you or have they done for you to care for you? These can be one-off or everyday activities (e.g., cooking or picking up from sports).”</i></p> <p>As inspiration, the <i>ECaRoM</i> cards can be shown or the song “Alex is my friend” been sung. Both contain caring activities.</p> <p>Collect the answers on the flipchart.</p>

Part 2: Discussion of the collection

Discuss with the children

- ✓ What stands out when you see these activities?
- ✓ Are these activities paid?
- ✓ Who carries out these activities more often? Men* or women*? Draw different circles around which activities men*, women* or both are doing.
- ✓ Should everybody do these activities?
- ✓ What would happen, if no one did these activities? How would your life change?

Part 3: who do you like to thank?

Discuss with the children who they would like to say thank you to, and how they might do this. Ideally, each child will have a person in mind and a way of expressing gratitude that suits that child. Also give them some examples of the activities (drawing a picture, saying thank you, making something, sharing food...). As the instructor, you could give an example of how you express gratitude.

"What are some ways of saying or expressing that you are grateful e.g., when someone in your circle of trust has done something for you?"

Part 4: who do you want to care for in your circle of trust?

Ask the children which of the caring activities they like to do, this could be e.g., listening or helping to unpack the shopping. If the children have an activity they like to do, you can ask, if there is somebody who they would like to support from their circle of trust. This can be the named activity or another one. Give them some time to think. If some of the children would like to share some of their ideas, that would be good. Alternatively, the whole group could think of one thing you would like to do together for other for e.g., organise fund raising for a charity project or collect trash somewhere.

Aims of the method

Getting to know care activities and making them visible. Identifying who is doing what in the actual circle of trust. Through that making gendered family structure visible.

The participants should learn about different ways of expressing gratitude and put this into practice with an example.

Content-wise specifications

What significance does Caring Masculinities have in this method? How does the method open up to a gender sensitive perspective?

This method is to start to change that care work that is usually done by women* is underestimated and not seen. It should show as well, that men* care too. The method aims to value caring activities, especially of boys*. Also, how to express gratitude for care activities and perform caring activities for people of the circle of trust.

Variations

The parts can also be used individually.

Aftermath
It should be avoided to dramatize care in one direction, for example it shouldn't be said that care is needed to be done by one gender. Care is important for everybody and so everybody should care.
Comments, experiences, tips, risks
A risk is the retraumatisation for those young people who do not have parents or guardians. Especially when asking the question, make sure that you do not mention parents, but guardians and other persons who take care of you. This leaves room for the children to choose an appropriate person.
Sources of the method
Developed by Daniel Holtermann for the <i>ECaRoM</i> project.

This module focused on children learning and practising caring activities, especially for boys* but also for all other children. The aim is to make caring activities visible and to normalise that all take on caring activities. The methods do not have to be used one after the other, but can also be used individually. Individual methods can be adapted according to the age of the children.¹⁴

04.5 Module 4: Gender and occupations

Different societies today are still not free from gender stereotypes which affect the choice of occupation, career path and the reconciliation of personal and professional life of the individual. Social role theory states (Eagly & Mitchel, 2004; Koenig & Eagly, 2014) that gender role stereotypes are dynamic and malleable - arising from role activities and characteristics and reflecting current occupational and societal trends. This theory also suggests that gender occupational segregation may not be a result of gender role stereotypes, but rather a cause of gender role stereotypes. If the distribution of men* and women* in stereotypical activities and occupations changes, then the gender role stereotypes surrounding those activities and occupations should reflect that change.

The increase in the number of women* not only entering the workforce, but also pursuing traditionally male professional careers, is leading to greater flexibility in attitudes and perceptions related to female gender roles. These perceptions now include both traditionally female (e.g., housework) and male (e.g., paid work) activities.

Applied to men* and women*, the social role theory (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000) makes two predictions about the change that has been already happening around us for decades:

¹⁴ Further Links and information: Elise Gravel's drawings can support this module:

<http://elisegravel.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Aider.pdf>

An alternative method are the household detectives of the *ECaRoM* project, the method is available online. The *EcaRoM* cards are available online there too.

(a) gender differences in activities are blurring due to the increasing similarity of the roles of men* and women* in everyday life, and (b) stereotypes about the roles of women* are particularly dynamic, due to greater change in women*'s than in men*'s roles.

However, these dynamics cannot be observed in young boys* and the male gender role (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000). This may be because boys* and men* rarely take up the occupations and activities, including like care and caring, traditionally perceived as female, or at least not at the rate at which women* have moved into traditionally male* occupations. Also, young boys* are generally not encouraged (or placed in a position to choose) to pursue activities or occupations which are commonly associated with being female (e.g. nurse, carer, primary school teacher).

The results of a study based on interviews with pre-school and primary school children report that they perceive different competences of men* and women* in occupations traditionally associated with one or the other gender as well as differences in pay of men* and women* within the framework of their gender-traditional occupations, at an earlier age than expected by adults (Levy, Sadovsky & Trosset, 2000), making the early childhood years a critical period to deal with gender stereotypes. According to the authors, children's affective attitudes toward certain professions, according to their gender preferences, actually limit their perceptions of educational and professional opportunities that are important to their lives and useful to them.

This knowledge is important for pre-school and primary school teachers. Besides parents, they are often the main points of orientation when providing children with guidance in educational activities and interventions related to the choice of a future professional occupation. Kindergarten age children only know about the relatively small number of professions they are exposed to, such as doctor, dentist, teacher, firefighter, police officer or whatever their parents and relatives do for a living. Often when asked about future career wishes they respond that they want to be a Superman/woman, to be a knight/princess or another hero from the imaginary and artistic world of fairy tales, movies, games, etc. It is important to stress that usually, children's ambitions are to be good, to be helpful to the others, to be a saviour of somebody or the person with magic skills to do good and desirable things. This attitude of doing good/caring for others might be a leading notion when discussing occupations of the adults with both boys* and girls* and when involving them in so called career-related learning.

All this is part of the everyday life of teachers and parents. Young children are generally curious and love to discover new things. The right support of this love of exploring new things provided by teachers and parents can help children at learning lessons and developing skills and abilities to use in life. Career-related learning in preschool and primary school level is a process in which teachers have a crucial role. At this level adults can motivate children to gain a wide range of experiences, show them the endless world of possibilities and encourage them to understand that they can be anything they want to be, regardless of their gender, ethnicity or where they live. At this age they can also start the process of breaking down gender stereotypes – starting with the level of aspired occupational choices.

In this regard, teachers have an important responsibility when applying different teaching

approaches and methods to help children explore the world of occupations, professions, work and other work-related choices and opportunities of adults. Kindergarten and elementary school children must be patiently guided on this journey, which requires teachers to choose the most age-appropriate, interesting, fun, unobtrusive, non-imposing, proper, fiction and non-fiction, artistic way/world, etc. to show children the full variety of opportunities they can have as future adults.

It must be pointed out that several surveys (see Dawar & Anand, 2018; Ofori, 2018) on exploring of children's perceptions regarding adult occupations conducted in different countries show different results concerning children's stereotypes related to gender. In the countries with deeper social stereotypes on gender roles both girls and boys held stereotypical beliefs about involvement of women* and men* in various occupations, and boys*, specifically, held more stereotypical beliefs about women* (India). In countries where the society upholds gender egalitarian practices, views and policies they also influence children's stereotypes. Children are generally quite gender egalitarian, irrespective of how much exposure they have to gender congruent or incongruent role models (Norway). However, moderation analyses show no significant effect of the gender of the kindergarten teachers on the children's stereotypes, but there is a significant relationship between the boys*' internalized traits and willingness to work in communal occupations.

“If the children believe that both men and women can perform most of the jobs, and they don't seem to differentiate between the (quality of) work practices between men and women in communal roles, concluded the author of the research, why shouldn't we?”

(Ofori, 2018: 34)

Methods to talk about professions during daily activities:

Teachers also need to show children what they are capable of. In this way, children will have more opportunities to learn about themselves. In addition, they will develop a deeper understanding of the obligations they must fulfil as they become adults with more responsibilities. In this process of learning related to adult occupations children can begin to learn more about their own abilities and talents.

There are several simple methods to attract children's attention to occupations and professions and to broaden their experience in discussing them:

- ✓ Teachers can show and discuss many professions when visiting a museum with children, a park, a recreation centre, etc. Teachers can talk about the work people are doing there, what knowledge and skills they might need, e.g., to make a piece of art, to grow a garden, or build a playground.
- ✓ Teachers also can support parents to talk positively about the work they enjoy doing

at home or elsewhere, which will encourage the child to develop positive work, study, and life skills. The talk might be about the different roles people have at home, at work and in the community.

- ✓ While doing something together like tidying the room, serving lunch, watering the plants, etc., the teacher or the parent can encourage children to think and express themselves about caring for the others or about certain professions related to the activity children are doing (what is the name of the profession, which professionals are doing this job, what else they are doing, etc.).
- ✓ One of the best ways to learn about a profession is to watch someone do the job. So-called job shadowing, which can be organized by the teacher provides an opportunity for the children to get a close look at a work that someone is doing and to become acquainted with the tools, skills, etc., which are needed to exercise it.

04.5.1 Method: The caring Lily and Nicky: who helps us?

This and the next following method from the same didactic game have the characters Lily and Nicky at their centre. The game can be found on the *ECaRoM* Homepage. Lily and Nicky aim to help children to develop understanding and appreciation of several professions and occupations in their close environment, to express their attitudes towards certain professions and to understand whether children already connect certain occupations with a gender. These methods provide the opportunity to discuss what skills are needed for certain professions; to recognize which are skills important in caring professions; why they are useful and important for the others, etc. They also help to appreciate the people in the child's life who work to support youngsters to grow and to learn. The methods also aim to build an attitude that children can choose and practice all professions regardless of their gender on equal grounds.

Method
<p>“The caring Lily and Nicky: who helps us?”</p> <p>Story-based role-playing game for the perception of care as well as of gender-neutral professions related to care and helping the others.</p>
Topics of the method
Care work, gender neutral caring professions.
Target group
Children in kindergarten at 4 to 5 years of age, childcare pedagogues.
Number of participants
Unlimited; children work either alone, or in small groups of 2 or 4, depending on the task.

Situation
No specific requirements.
Framework
Necessary material (ECaRoM material should be included in some tools)
Paper and colour pencils to draw pictures.
Preparation
The method is based on the use of the didactic game “The caring Lily and Nicky” (https://ecarom.eu/materials-for-children/). For the topic “Who helps us?” from the box with the game accessories two pictures are used: with the images of the heroes - Lily and Nicky, and other children dressed accordingly to present 8 different professions.
Time
About 60 minutes.
Rooms
Enough space in one room to arrange for all children to work in small groups of 2 to 4 around small tables.
Instructions and step by step description
<p>The teacher shows to the children the picture of children of different genders dressed to present 8 professions – a driver, a police officer, a singer, a medical assistant, a veterinarian, a farmer, a cook, a teacher.</p> <p>The children answer the teacher's questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Do they recognize these professions, and can they name them? Can they list other professions from the same field? For example, a medical doctor, a nurse, a paramedic, pharmacist, etc. ✓ Can children describe what people who exercise these professions do? For example - the doctor treats the children, the paramedic measures the grandmother's blood pressure, the pharmacist gives drugs, the teacher teaches the children, etc. ✓ Can children determine what qualities, skills, and abilities a person must have to practice a certain profession of those presented? For example - the vet to love animals, the policeman to be brave, the singer to sing well etc. <p>The teacher discusses with the children how these people with different professions help Lily and Nicky's family and their pets. The children are encouraged to answer the question; how is each profession useful and how it is important for the people?</p> <p>The teacher reflects on the fact that all professions are represented by boys*, girls* and other genders. The teacher explains that when growing up, everyone can choose the profession they like. For example, there are women* working as police officers and drivers and men* working as kindergarten teachers and medical assistants. The children are encouraged to give similar examples from their experience, and the teacher has the role of turning their attention to avoid stereotypical images or reactions.</p>

With the participation of the children a new story can be constructed by including all presented professions to stress on the importance they have for our lives. For example - the physician takes care of the health of Lily and Nicky and their family, including the grandmother's blood pressure and the baby's fever, etc. The teacher teaches Lily and Nicky in the kindergarten where the chef cooks for the children. The singer performs a program to the children. The vet treats their pet dog and the cow if they get sick. The farmer grows grass to feed the cow and produce milk. The driver comes with the milk tank to get the milk and to take it to the dairy farm. The police officer makes sure that the driver drives safely on the road, etc.

At the end children can draw this story, and to receive a little red paper heart for their efforts.

Aims of the method

The method aims to help children to develop understanding and appreciation of work, jobs, and occupations.

It helps children to express their attitudes towards different profession/s, and to understand how they connect it with the gender of the adult.

It gives the opportunity to discuss what skills are needed for certain professions; to recognize which are the caring professions; why they are useful and important, etc.

It helps to appreciate the people in the child's life that work to help them grow and learn.

The method also aims to build the attitude that children of all genders can choose and practice all professions on equal grounds.

Content-wise specifications

What significance does Caring Masculinities have in this method? How does the method open up to a gender sensitive perspective?

Caring professions are presented as performed by boys*.

Variations

Other caring professions can be added, especially those performed by men*.

Aftermath

The work on professional and career choice could be continued by using the other part of accessories in the game box.

An exhibition of the children's drawings can be organised and presented to the parents.

Comments, experiences, tips, risks

The teachers should avoid expression of gender stereotypes when discussing the professions and should stress that all professions can be performed by all genders on equal ground.

Sources of the method

Developed by Tatyana Kmetova and realised by the CWSP team for the *ECaRoM* project.

04.5.2 Method: The caring Lily and Nicky: I choose a profession

Method
<p>“The caring Lily and Nicky: I choose a profession”</p> <p>Story-based role-playing game for the perception of care as well as of gender-neutral professions related to care and others.</p>
Topics of the method
Care work, gender neutral caring and other professions.
Target group
Children in kindergarten at 4 to 5 years of age, childcare pedagogues.
Number of participants
Up to 20; children work in small groups of 2 or 4, depending on the current task.
Situation
No specific requirements.
Framework
Necessary material (ECaRoM material should be included in some tools)
Paper and colour pencils for drawing.
Preparation
The method is based on the use of the didactic game “The caring Lily and Nicky” (https://ecarom.eu/materials-for-children/). For the topic “I choose a profession” from the box with the game accessories are used the images of the heroes - Lily and Nicky (as paper dolls), and 8 sets of clothing of the 8 different professions to dress Lily and Nicky.
Time
About 90 minutes – the exercise can be divided in 2 sessions.
Rooms
Enough space in one room to arrange for all children to work in small groups of 2 to 4 around small tables.
Instructions and step by step description
<p>Session 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Each small group of 4 children around the table is given the task to choose a profession for the doll Lily and a profession for the doll Nicky and to dress them in the appropriate costumes that are in the box.

- ✓ After finishing the exercise children explain why they chose the certain profession for each of the two dolls. How will they be useful to others with what they do?
- ✓ The teacher draws children's attention to the fact that all professions are important and bring satisfaction to the people who practice them.
- ✓ The teacher discusses with the children, if they can write a letter, to whom would they thank for helping and caring for the others in their community?

Session 2:

After the discussions, the teacher sets the following task for independent work:

- ✓ Every child should choose a profession that they like and that can become their career when they grow up.
- ✓ Each child dresses the appropriate doll in the chosen costume.
- ✓ At the invitation of the teacher, each child explains why they chose this profession for themselves.
- ✓ If there are not enough dolls in the box, the children can draw the chosen profession and explain their choice to the others.

Aims of the method

The children can express preferences for a certain profession and can explain their motives for their choice.

The children can express appreciation and gratitude for the efforts of people from different professions who help and care for other people.

Content-wise specifications

What significance does Caring Masculinities have in this method? How does the method open up to a gender sensitive perspective?

Boy*s are encouraged to choose a caring profession.

Variations

Other caring professions might be added to be discussed with the children, depending on the teachers' preparations.

Aftermath

The box and the heroes can be used to develop other stories and to further develop the use of the didactic game in educational goals and tasks related to care.

Comments, experiences, tips, risks

The teachers should avoid working only with the most active children and should involve those who are shy or inactive, including involving different genders equally.

Sources of the method

Developed by Tatyana Kmetova and realised by the CWSP team for the *ECaRoM* project.

This module is focused on presenting to children different occupations adults have that can be performed both by females and males. The emphasis is on the opportunity to practise, as adults, the job children like even though still gender-typing of occupational goals exist in all societies. Learning about other occupations, beyond those practiced by their parents, teachers, and their close circle, broadens their view of the world of adults, the skills and abilities they must have in order to practice a given occupation and the possibilities of choice that does not depend on their gender, place of residence, etc., but only on their desire to dedicate themselves to a certain career. The proposed methods aim to show children the full variety of choices they can have, including making caring activities and occupations visible, and to normalise that both boys and girls can take on these roles. This is not a career advice, but familiarization with opportunities and the expansion of children's' choices, which increases the chances of finding a suitable career in the world of caring professions.

04.6 Module 5: Social solidarity and ecological aspect

The concept of Caring Masculinities includes an often-overlooked aspect: caring for nature and the planet. Taking current ecological challenges and catastrophes into account, there is an urgent need to change the approach to nature and make it an active part of raising children. This includes a critical perspective on the relation between gender and climate change. Caring Masculinities can play a vital role in protecting the environment once the interconnectedness of these two seemingly independent issues is recognised.

To show the connection between gender and climate change, this chapter will give some examples like the exploitation of nature and exploitation of women*, how climate change affects genders differently and how gender influences pro-environmental behaviours.

Gender imbalance and the environment

There are many similarities between gender imbalance and the exploitation of the planet, though perhaps not visible at first glance. Both are rooted in a binary system of beliefs (men-women/culture-nature, etc.), behaviours and laws that we perceive as natural and unchangeable, perhaps even necessary, both are strictly hierarchical and both benefit one part of the system by exploiting another (Ortner, 1972). Gender inequality and climate change are connected and even reinforce each other. In other words: the marginalised position of women* in society leads to them being more negatively impacted by climate change and the negative impact of climate change hits women* harder than men* (Lahiri-Dutt, 2013; Neumayer & Plümper, 2007). This is true for all marginalised or disadvantaged communities as poor people are impacted the most and the majority of poor people are women* (Aguilar, 2009). The worldwide oppression of women* and, by extension, other marginalised genders is linked to the global capitalist oppression of nature and can today be observed across almost all cultures. Both have been depreciated and oppressed by patriarchy and capitalism and this oppression and devaluation has been claimed to be both natural and necessary (Ranjith, 2017). The feminization of nature and the perception of women*'s supposed close connection to the earth have been used to explain the necessity of control over women* and nature (Ortner, 1972; Warren & Cady, 1994).

Naturally, not all women*'s experiences are the same. Many other factors that have to be considered like country and culture of origin, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and geographical location, to name a few others (Lahiri-Dutt, 2013). An intersectional approach is needed to tackle social as well as ecological injustice.

Climate catastrophes and sustainable development

Human-induced climate change, as it is currently happening, is mainly caused by greenhouse gases (e.g., caused by burning fossil fuels, farming livestock) and deforestation. This is exacerbated by the lifestyle many people in the Global North (like Europe) lead: eating habits, over-consumption, wastefulness, mobility choices, where to go on holidays, etc. Countries that are mostly affected by this lifestyle and the climate change are mainly situated in the Global South. Climate change is a challenge to sustainable development as it impacts not only the environment but also social and economic development like gender equality (Lahiri-Dutt, 2013). Marginalised groups like religious or ethnic minorities, women* or members of the LGBTQIA+ community often have fewer resources to protect themselves against any type of catastrophe to begin with. They can be at a disadvantage due to lower income levels or levels of education, poorer housing conditions or generally poor physical and/or mental health. Resources to protect themselves against catastrophes could be money to pay for insurance, savings for times of low income or adequate housing be protected against increased heat or rainfall (Aguilar, 2009).

Climate catastrophes like excessive rain, floods, droughts, storms, etc. often act as a multiplier of already existing challenges. They can increase social, political and economic tensions and threaten the safety of marginalised or vulnerable communities. Women* who are often marginalised in more than one way (e.g., as single heads of household, women* of colour or women* from indigenous communities) are heavily impacted. They are more likely to die in natural disasters because they are less likely to leave their house in case of an emergency or know how to swim due to strict cultural beliefs around what is appropriate for them (Neumayer & Plümper, 2007). In societies where women* and men* have roughly equal rights, deaths caused by natural disasters did not affect one gender more than another. Women* bear a larger responsibility than men* for securing water and food for their families world-wide. Changes in climate patterns will affect their harvest and their access to freshwater, but also might increase food prices (Lahiri-Dutt, 2013), meaning that caring for a family will become more difficult whether you shop for groceries or grow your own food.

Sustainable living choices

A global 2022 mobility study that looked into mobility choices from a gender-binary point of view showed that men* are more or less likely to choose public transport or bicycles (Goel, Oyeboode & Foley, 2022). Wherever there was decent infrastructure, women* were more likely to go by public transport or bike, for example due to health reasons, out of concern for the environment or because of lack of access to a car or driver's license (which does not seem to be as big of an issue for men*). The opposite effect could also be observed: where women* had to fear for their safety on bicycles, or opted against it due to cultural norms, there was less infrastructure for safe biking (i.e., bike lanes or laws to protect bikers). A 2020 study looked

into how likely women* vs. men* were to engage in such behaviour considering the social consequences of gender-bending or gender-conforming pro-environmental behaviours (PEBs). The research showed that PEBs can be seen as gender-bending depending on the type of activity and the assumed gender of the actor. Public-sphere PEBs like recycling, using re-usable shopping bags or purchasing sustainable food were female-associated and more often engaged in by women* as this is considered gender-conforming for them. Public sphere PEBs that were carried out by men* and women* equally were male-associated, like activities related to energy consumption, car maintenance or political protest. The study also showed the link between an assumption of sexuality and PEBs. Participants in the study were more likely to question men*'s heterosexuality if the men* had engaged in female-associated PEBs because their behaviour was interpreted as gender-bending (Swim, Gillis & Hamaty, 2020).

There is also a strong correlation between gender and food choices. Eating meat has been linked to power and masculinity in many European cultures for a long time; it used to be a sign of wealth and power to be able to afford meat (Ruby & Heine, 2011). Meat and especially beef consumption also happen to be one of the main drivers of climate change. Studies show that men* who follow a vegetarian diet were still perceived as less masculine than men* who eat meat. The loss of status that seems to come with eating less meat, however, would be beneficial to the environment as a (largely) meat-free or even fully plant-based diet is one of the most impactful changes individuals can make to live more environmentally-friendly (Rosenfeld & Tomiyama, 2021). Being a man* seems to require constant work and validation; one way to achieve this is through the “right” diet containing a significant amount of meat which has negative consequences for the planet and the individual's health (Paulson & Boose, 2019).

Caring behaviours include care for the environment but environmentally-friendly behaviours and heterosexual masculinity do not seem to go hand in hand easily. Different areas of research have shown that women* are more threatened by climate change than men* and generally more likely to show climate-friendly behaviour. Men* are less likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviours, one of the main reasons for this being that pro-environmental behaviours are considered to be “feminine*” traits. Adopting them could threaten the men*'s image and sense of self.

Caring Masculinities

Caring Masculinities don't only include caring for the people around us. To be able to live in our world as well as possible, we need to take our whole community into account and with it, the planet we live on. Although men* live within complex hierarchies of masculinity (Paulson & Boose, 2019) they are more often in positions of power to alleviate or prevent the effects of natural calamities, be that in their local communities or on an international level. By including care for the planet into our definition of Caring Masculinities, we can encourage men* to take the consequences for nature into account when making professional and personal decisions. This awareness and foresight are something we can teach to children already today, knowing that it will be an important skill for them when they grow up.

Another vital part of Caring Masculinities is community care. Care for the immediate people around us is important, but it also means consideration for our neighbourhood or village and future generations in the decisions we take today. Are we leaving our children and grandchildren a planet they can still survive on? Taking responsibility for future generations can influence everyday details like how we eat or big decisions like where we choose to live or who we vote for. It can also mean getting involved in political protest to support causes important for future generations: climate activism has become more important in recent years exactly because people have started to become more vocal about community care and intergenerational justice. Community care also includes local action, for example by strengthening the community economically by buying goods by local producers whenever possible. A great opportunity for this would be food choices: deciding on what to eat and where to buy it is a chore that heterosexual men* often leave to their female partners. By getting involved in this daily activity, men* can develop an interest in their own health, become more equally involved in a shared household and support their local economy. Community care also challenges us to show solidarity with those around us who are less privileged than we are and lend a hand when we can.

Last but not least, Caring Masculinities also include an active stance against violence. The way humans treat the planet as an endless spring of resources often has violent elements to it. The way humans and their livelihoods in economically weak countries are sometimes brutally exploited is similar the way in which resources like crude oil or agricultural products are extracted from nature: without caring for the consequences, without considering that within a few generations, we will not only have destroyed the source of our wealth but nature around it as well. It also spans to the way animals and exploited migrant workers are often treated in the factory farms: without regards for animal and human rights and as a limitless source of cheap protein. Skipping meat in our diets is of course not a compulsory part of Caring Masculinities but the acceptance of vegetarianism in others and some consideration for the consequences of our food choices are.



04.6.1 Method: Where does all the plastic go?

Method
Where does all the plastic go?
Topics of the method
Plastic packaging (food productions, consumerism)
Target group
Primary school/kindergarten children
Number of participants
Flexible (5-30 children)
Situation
This method is rather flexible and if implemented in the most basic version, doesn't require high levels of concentration.
Framework
Necessary material
No requirements.
Preparation
If you plan these activities with primary school children, there is a handout that you can use.
Time
1-2h
Rooms
One room
Instructions and step by step description
<p>Primary school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children receive a handout with questions they should discuss with their grandparents/senior family members/neighbours. The questions are about shopping for food when their family member was a child. ✓ Children bring their handout back to school. ✓ Discuss in pairs + answer partner questions.

Kindergarten:

- ✓ Children are told that each should bring one piece of (clean) plastic packaging from home
- ✓ Once all children have brought some plastic packaging, the teacher helps them sort the plastic packaging (for example on different tables or in different heaps on the floor): what was used for wrapping fruit? What was used for dairy products? What was used for other foods? What were other items packed in plastic?

Kindergarten & Primary school:

- ✓ Teacher asks the children: what are other materials for packaging? Where is it possible to still buy food without plastic packaging? What happens with all the plastic once you throw it away? What happens if you throw a piece of plastic into nature?
- ✓ Final question: who is in charge of keeping nature clean? Answer: all of us, all children and adults of all genders alike.

Aims of the method

The children will learn about the development of plastic packaging and how adults of older generations made very different experiences when they were children. It will sharpen their awareness of sustainable packaging solutions, and it a great starting activity to talk about topics such as recycling, pollution, transport routes, etc.

Content-wise specifications**What significance does Caring Masculinities have in this method? How does the method open up to a gender sensitive perspective?**

There is no direct activity centred around Caring Masculinities. However, care for the environment and knowledge around sustainability is also a part of care work. Oftentimes, this is seen as a “female” task, as being a woman* is often associated with living sustainably. It is important to show to children that we all need to care for the environment together.

Variations

This method includes one version for primary school students and one for kindergarten students. A combination of both can be used for primary school children.

Aftermath

Suitable follow-up topics are: recycling, pollution, waste reduction

If possible, a visit to a recycling station or cleaning up of an outside area full of litter would be a good follow-up.

Comments, experiences, tips, risks

- ✓ It should be avoided to shame children for eating things that have been packed in plastic. The goal of the method is to draw their attention to alternatives to and the risks of plastic packaging while at the same time acknowledging that it is sometimes very difficult to find food that is not packed in plastic.

- ✓ There is a lot of very detailed knowledge about plastic packaging and the different types of plastic, the effect on humans, the environment, etc. It is important to do some research as to local realities (e.g., around recycling) but not to overwhelm children with details.

Sources of the method

Developed by Lisa Wagner for the *ECaRoM* Manual.

Further reading

Ideas for activities around plastic: <https://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/blog/2018/5/3/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-plastic-pollution-cartoons-books-and-activities-to-involve-the-whole-family>

Playlist with educational videos about plastic for children (in English): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kmlPzK6bFs&list=PL4pC5Um_aTFjxxAVm93DAy7W9fxsFnPJm



04.6.2 Method: What does nature mean to me?

Method
What does nature mean to me?
Topics of the method
Human-nature relationship, pollution, planetary boundaries
Target group
Primary school/kindergarten children
Number of participants
Flexible (5-30 children)
Situation
<p>This method is rather flexible and if implemented in the most basic version; doesn't require high levels of concentration.</p> <p>It can be conducted all year round but works best in spring or summer.</p>
Framework
Necessary material
Paper and pencils to draw; access to an outside area
Time
1-2h
Rooms
One room
Instructions and step by step description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children are sent outside (in a garden or park) to collect something "from nature", for example: leaves, little twigs, stones, a bit of soil, acorns, seeds, flowers, etc. ✓ The children share what they have found (e.g. sit in a circle and put things on the ground). The teacher asks: where did you find this? Do you know what it is called? Do you know what it does/what its uses are?

- ✓ Sit under a tree or show image of a tree. What do trees do for us? Answers: they give humans shade, they produce oxygen, they cool down the area, they absorb rain. What does rain do for us? It makes plants grow, it helps us grow our food, it cools the air, it fills rivers and lakes, it provides us with water that we can drink. What does the sun do for us? It warms us, it helps plants grow, it is important for our health and happiness.
- ✓ Ask the children: what happens if...? After collecting their items, stand in a circle. Children are told to close their eyes. What do they hear? What do they smell? After opening their eyes: What do they see? Are there trees or other plants? Invite them to touch the ground: what does it feel like? Do you feel grass? Soil? Stones? Invite children to distinguish between nature (e.g., view of a hill or forest, chirping of birds, the wind, smell of flowers, sunshine, insects) and things made by humans (e.g., traffic, noise of pedestrians, gravel or concrete on the ground).
- ✓ the sun shines too much? What happens if it rains too much or not enough? Can the objects we collected still exist without rain and sunshine? What will happen to the tree? What will happen to us humans? Do all humans need nature? Do men* or women* need nature more? Do adults or children need nature more? Who needs to protect nature? Why do you think some people sometimes forget about it?
- ✓ As a last part, ask the children to draw what they like best about nature.

Aims of the method

The children are taught to think about nature and how humans depend on nature for their daily lives.

Content-wise specifications

What significance does Caring Masculinities have in this method? How does the method open up to a gender sensitive perspective?

There is no direct activity centred around Caring Masculinities. However, care for the environment and knowledge around sustainability is also a part of care work. Oftentimes, this is seen as a “female” task as being a woman* is often associated with living sustainably. It is important to show to children that we all need to care for the environment together.

Variations

- ✓ For primary school students, extra questions can be added: Do you know any behaviours that can help us protect nature? Do you know any behaviours that harm nature? This can also be given as a homework task.
- ✓ For the next lunch break, you can analyse children’s lunches with them. Who is eating fruit or vegetables? Where did they grow? (e.g., on a tree or field, in the ground, in our garden) Who is eating bread? What is bread made of? (e.g., Do you know where flour comes from? What are different types of grain?) Who is eating meat or cheese? Where does it come from? (e.g., What animal does it come from? Do you know where the animal lived? Did it have to die for your lunch?) What other things are they eating? Does all food come from nature? Is there food that is bad for nature? Why?

Aftermath

Suitable follow-up topics are: plants and harvest, the forest, the rain cycle, the seasons, etc.

Comments, experiences, tips, risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Teachers should be careful not to blame children for their possibly environmentally harmful behaviour and intervene if children point out each other's environmentally harmful behaviour in an accusatory way. Instead, children can be encouraged to think about what a solution would be while keeping in mind that the adults in their lives are the ones who make most of their lifestyle choices. ✓ When talking about food, it is important to keep in mind that a lot of families manage their daily lives on a budget. Not every child has access to fresh, healthy food all the time. The activity should focus on establishing a connection between food and nature.
Sources of the method
Developed by Lisa Wagner for the <i>ECaRoM</i> Manual
Further reading
<p>TED-talk: what nature teaches to children https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dhas9OEclLk</p> <p>Free resources for outdoor learning activities: https://www.naturefriendlyschools.co.uk/free-resources</p>

Other ideas for activities that show children that they are not too small to make a difference may include:

- ✓ If your kindergarten/school has a garden, you can consider planting some bee-friendly flowers for observation (not too close to the playing area). This can be a great starting point for conversations about bees, other insects and their importance for our ecosystem.
- ✓ Another area where children can learn about the importance of their contribution is the switch from plastic bags to re-usable bags. As a crafts activity, cloth bags can be painted by the children and either given to their parents as a gift or handed out to strangers as a local farmers or supermarket.
- ✓ Children can be given the task to interview a male family member or other adult in their surroundings about their efforts to act environmentally friendly. This can raise awareness among the adults.

Men* still take most of decisions and oftentimes, these decisions mostly give consideration to financial gains and the current state of things. Policy making needs to take social aspects and gender roles into account whilst having an eye on the impact this will have on future generations. It shouldn't only be targeted at empowering women* and non-binary people but also to remind men* of their responsibility to care for their community and the planet. It is important to note that actions in the private sphere alone can't stop or reverse climate change: the change in attitude needs to spread to decision makers, politicians and global players in the economy. A part of the solution is to hold those in power accountable, but also to educate the decision makers of tomorrow.

05 Recommendations for working with parents

For the pedagogical mediation of Caring Masculinities and the well-being of children in childcare or elementary school contexts, a good relationship between pedagogical professionals and parents is essential. Against the backdrop of the thematization of gender and gender stereotypes and different positions, it can be challenging to relate to children's caregivers in an appreciative and accepting manner. A positive reference to parents can have a good effect on the child's self-esteem and the teaching of educational content such as Caring Masculinities. The following is a summary of some recommended actions for working well with parents.

Communication as the be-all and end-all

In the communication of pedagogical professionals with parents, an atmosphere of trust, respect, speaking to each other at eye level, appreciation and willingness to engage in dialogue is conducive to a good dialogue, especially when it comes to different views on what might be important for the child. Often, both pedagogical professionals and parents want the best for the child, but the ways to get there are different. Many conflicts can be prevented in advance through good communication. If, for example, the concept of the facility in question already includes a diversity-oriented approach, the parents, by signing the contract, agree that their child will deal with diversity-related topics. This requires the pedagogical staff to communicate this concept and approach in a transparent and accessible way from the very beginning. A common attitude of the facility management and the team is very important for this. In case of conflict, but also in the daily work, a political, legal and professional written basis is supportive.

Communication with parents

It can, for instance, be helpful to explain to parents why the care aspect should be promoted in the childcare centre or elementary school to children in general but especially to boys*. This can be summarized in letters to parents or at parents' evenings. In order to reach all parents, it makes sense to write the information in the respective family languages and distribute it personally. At a parent-teacher-conference, the pedagogical concept and working methods can then be explained in more detail. Sometimes it is also helpful to show materials such as children's books or methods from this manual. Professional literature as a recommendation for the parents can also serve as an important support. Parent-teacher-conferences can also be used to ask about and include parents' interests and priorities, and to take the time to calmly discuss and talk about uncertainties and discomfort, for example on the topic of care and masculinities.

Together for the child

Presumably, both the pedagogical professionals and the parents pursue the goal of encouraging and assisting a child so that it can develop a strong personality. This common ground can be referred to again and again and a solution to differing views can be worked out together. If conflicts arise, it can be a hindrance to insist rigidly on one's own position. It is not about finding either/or solutions, but about creating a so-called "third space" (Fachstelle Kinderwelten 2017: 19). The third space is a place in which everyone can find themselves again: the reaction to differences is more important than finding common solutions. According to Fachstelle Kinderwelten (2017: 17),

- ✓ it is helpful to reflect which values, feelings, thoughts and needs are behind one's own perception of the situation.
- ✓ it is worthwhile to change one's perspective into the situation, value concepts and needs of the parents, who in turn presumably have explainable reasons for their actions.

The suggestions of prejudice-conscious education can also help the pedagogical professionals to recognize how their own thinking and perception, e.g., how one-sidedness and prejudice towards the parents can make contact difficult. For communication at eye level, it is important to think about the social integration and the context in which the participants operate.

An example from Fachstelle Kinderwelten illustrates how solution finding can be designed in the "third space" (ibid.: 98f.): a child comes to the childcare centre every day with an amulet hanging on a chain. The educator asks the mother that the child should take the amulet off because of the danger of accidents it poses. For the mother, however, it is essential that her child wears the amulet. The two parties feel unsatisfied after their disagreement. The educator then does some soul-searching and realizes that she apparently does not understand what exactly the amulet is all about. During a next conversation it becomes clear that it has a high meaning in the religion of the mother and represents protection for her child. They both realize that they are concerned with the protection of the child and agree that the child will henceforth wear the amulet on their belt or in their pants pocket.

Addressing conflictual situations

Disagreements can serve as opportunities to find new solutions based on different perspectives. However, this does not mean that discriminatory or exclusionary statements should be accepted. For example, if concerns are expressed that a child might become lesbian or gay because of certain clothing preferences, it is important to communicate in a non-judgmental and reassuring way that clothing preferences or certain characteristics do not allow conclusions to be drawn about the child's later sexual orientation (Julian is a Mermaid, 2021: 20). Taking a stance is important, but it does not always have to happen directly in the situation. It can be done in a one-on-one conversation later on or during a calmer moment. What is important is the signal of wanting to stay in contact and finding a common solution.

This way of dealing with a conflictual situation is to be shown by an example of the Fachstelle Kinderwelten (2017): when picking up his son from childcare, a father notices that his child is playing with a Barbie. He is horrified and asks him if he is a girl* and asks him to put the doll away immediately. A male educator then takes the time to explain to the father that in this childcare centre all children are allowed to play with everything, boys* therefore also with dolls. To relate to the reality of his life, he says, "Look, you're also a father who takes care of his child." The father then becomes pensive. For a further exchange about similar situations, the educator and the father agree to address gender roles at an upcoming parent-teacher-conference. During the conversation, the educator stands by the childcare centre's principles for dismantling gender stereotypes. At the same time, the educator tries to create a common space for communication at eye level.

In summary, some principles of action that can be useful when discussing discriminatory behaviour or in conflict situations with parents (ibid.: 149-152).

- 1) Provide for a calm environment for the discussion
- 2) Self-clarification in preparation for the conversation (what am I talking about, how do I feel about the statement, attitude or situation)
- 3) Show empathy
- 4) Show willingness to understand the parents' concerns and fears
- 5) Take a clear position against exclusion, devaluation and discrimination in the conversation
- 6) Argue on the pedagogical-professional level
- 7) Refer to the pedagogical concept of the childcare centre
- 8) Emphasize the common interest of parents and childcare centre



06 Implementation of Caring Masculinities on an organisational level

The successful implementation of the concept of Caring Masculinities depends on a triad of knowledge, attitude and methods/didactics. This must be done at all levels of the educational institution. This means understanding the implementation of Care and Caring Masculinities as a cross-sectional task and thinking about it in all processes and task allocations. This chapter addresses from an organisational perspective what can be done to implement Caring Masculinities, and a how to establish a culture of care.

06.1 First steps for managers of pedagogical institutions

The organisational level plays a special role, as it has more power to act due to its hierarchical position, which should be reflected upon (Fachstelle Kinderwelten, 2003). For this reason, the management should take on the initiating role and assume responsibility for the process. In particular, the initiation of a process of self-reflection (see Chapter 3) as well as the increase of knowledge and application of methods (see Chapter 4) should be actively supported by the management.

It is also the responsibility of the organisational level to think about **gender-reflective employees' development**. On the one hand, this means paying attention to representation in the selection of personnel and initiating gender-reflective training measures on the other (MIKA 2014).

Furthermore, due to the status of authority, it is the responsibility of the management to ensure a working atmosphere that is characterised by aspects of caring. This also means maintaining an actively appreciative relationship with colleagues and parents. Parents should always be involved in the process. If active parental involvement is not possible, due to limited resources, at least transparency of the pedagogical concept should be emphasised.

Developing a **guiding principle** helps to keep the fine-tuned goals of Caring Masculinities transparent and binding so they can be tracked and evaluated. Based on this, it can be helpful to formulate goals that are as concrete as possible, including a time horizon and clear responsibilities (Scambor, 2012: 27-28).

Central to a caring working atmosphere continues to be a **culture of fault tolerance**. This means to accept that mistakes are going to happen and that they don't need punishment. Rather mistakes should be taken as an opportunity to learn. This teaches children, colleagues and parents that mistakes are not synonymous with personal failure and offers relief. A suggestion of what these spaces of fault tolerance and appreciation, in which insecurities and resistances can be discussed, could look like is presented with the brave spaces following in this chapter. These spaces can be understood as a step towards a lived speak up culture. Because if the resistance of the children as well as of the colleagues and parents remains hidden, this hinders a sustainable implementation (Scambor, 2012: 29).

This also includes a well-implemented **violence protection concept**, which can be understood as a component of a lived "speak up" culture. Such a concept contains clearly regulated responsibilities and transparent communication channels. Here too, it is advisable to involve the children in the development process, as they know best which opportunities to address problems they perceive and which they do not. If this is not possible, at least a child-friendly version of the concept should be developed (UNICEF, 2020).

Last but not least, it is also important to address the **authorities and donors**, as the educational institutions must have sufficient resources to participate in further training, to procure gender-reflective material and to undergo supervision. It also takes time to re-evaluate the processes and tasks through a gender lens and to reflect on the process within the team and the parents. The management level can only free up these resources to a very limited extent but can be a big part of developing attitude in the institution.

06.2 Brave spaces and a culture of care

Integrating the concept of Caring Masculinities into early childhood education can offer a space in which all genders can follow their interests and develop skills. This will allow them to create open paths towards a multifaceted future. Boys* who learn to pay attention to their own emotional needs also find ways to live them (Bissuti & Wölfl, 2011). The question is how to create this space where masculinities can be conceptualized in plural and where emotional and relational parts of masculinity become liveable.

"Research has shown that shyness and fear levels around perceiving, showing, and living one's own needs is very high, especially under the demands of traditional concepts of masculinity."

(Scambor et al., 2019: 68)

If strong hegemonic images of masculinity (Connell, 2000) as being sovereign, powerful, secure and heterosexual characterize the environment of boys*, caring concepts of masculinities which deviate from this norm are usually perceived as powerless and are marginalized (Lenz, 2014; Rieske, 2016). Masculinity ideals of power, self-assurance and sovereignty usually stand in the way of relational and emotional aspects of masculinities because they reject inevitable emotions (fears, insecurity).

“The pressure to satisfy certain images of traditional masculinity can subsequently lead to a lack of social skills in dealing with oneself and others. This shows, for example, in the inability to build sustainable friendships and relationships, to ask for help, to admit to the need for help, to assert oneself in life according to one's wishes, and much more. In boys/men groups, arrogance and evasive behaviour is staged instead in fabricated casualness.”

(Scambor et al., 2019: 68)

How can we address relational and emotional aspects of masculinities - Caring Masculinities - in early childhood education?

Maybe we can learn by shifting the focus on concepts from anti-discriminatory education work which oscillates between moments of being protected and being brave. By moving between largely Safe Spaces and spaces where (potentially) uncomfortable topics are also discussed (Brave Spaces), learning takes place in the context of precisely this "uncertainty".

The focus here is on learning about power inequalities. This usually involves either an examination of one's own privileges or working through the perspectives of marginalized positions, e.g., of Caring Masculinities in a traditional male environment, with the goal of self-empowerment of caring aspects of masculinity. One type of these learning spaces is called Safe Spaces. The term is also a message to all group members who are not comfortable sharing their experiences and thoughts on sensitive and controversial topics (Arao & Clemens, 2013). Safe Spaces are, among other things, spaces of retreat for (potentially) marginalized people, where they can be as free as possible from discriminatory and derogatory statements and characterized by an attentive and caring atmosphere, a Culture of Care. The origin of the term Safe Space is unclear to date (Ali, 2017), but represents an established and widespread concept that is an integral part of educational concepts of care.

Practical experience has made it clear that Safe Spaces, conceptually oriented towards safety and freedom from discrimination, are de facto often not risk-free zones. Affected individuals are not protected from the derogatory behaviour of others (Ali, 2017). These experiences have contributed to the development of the Safe Space concept towards so-called Brave Spaces. The term Brave Space was first introduced by Arao & Clemens (2013), who defined five indicators for the concept:

- ✓ **'Agree to disagree & controversy with civility'** - differing opinions are accepted, there is continued debate in a dignified manner about where the differing positions come from;
- ✓ **'Owning intentions and impacts'** - the intention of an action is separated from its effect; cases are openly discussed where the emotional well-being of others is affected;
- ✓ **'Challenge by choice'** - Members choose when to enter and exit a discussion and reflect on those choices;
- ✓ **'Respect'** - members demonstrate respect for others and reflect on what active respect looks like;
- ✓ **'No attacks'** - members commit to not harming each other, while also not dismissing criticism of statements or behaviour as perceived attacks, and being open to criticism.

Brave Spaces and Safe Spaces are learning spaces with different goals. The main goal of a Safe Space is to provide potentially marginalized individuals with a protective setting to explore and organize their own position (e.g., boys* who train care activities) beyond the influences of members of a dominant group (Ali, 2017). Brave Spaces, on the other hand, focus on learning experiences in mixed groups and need to be designed by pedagogues in such a way that participants can also deal with unpleasant content and challenging experiences. Learning from each other in diversity becomes possible. Common to both concepts is a critical analysis of hegemonic structures in society, which result in people being positioned differently and having different experiences.

In a Culture of Care, the discrepancy between aspiration and reality must be acknowledged. Critical situations are not denied but made transparent as such and dealt with.

Pedagogues therefore have to be aware not only of the different circumstances but also the different vulnerabilities of the children. Accordingly, the teaching is setting a Brave Space, since here the assurance of the protection of a safe space cannot be given. All participants are aware that their boundaries might get hurt. This changes the behaviour of the participants in these spaces and opens up learning opportunities to question one's own position and to get to know and adopt new perspectives.



07 Concluding recommendations

The strengthening of Caring Masculinities is a cross-sectional task. In the conclusions of this manual for childcare pedagogues the focus is on two levels, first the management level of pedagogic institutions, and secondly on gender sensitive pedagogy in ECEC and primary schools. Presented are only the most important keywords which can be found in the corresponding chapters:

Recommendation for the management level:

- ✓ Self-reflection on the topic of gender sensitivity and Caring Masculinities.
- ✓ Development and implementation of a guiding principle which includes gender sensitivity and Caring Masculinities.
- ✓ Understanding and implementation of brave spaces and a culture of care.
- ✓ Further training related to gender issues should be provided continuously to all staff involved in ECECs and primary schools.
- ✓ Training courses and hand-out materials should also be offered to parents, potentially before starting activities with children in order to clear doubts and debunk myths of gender sensitive education on one hand and ensuring a more cohesive environment for children.
- ✓ Providing of recent gender sensitive pedagogic material which includes Caring Masculinities.
- ✓ Addressing of authorities and donors for sufficient resources to implement Caring Masculinities.

Recommendations for pedagogues:

- ✓ Self-reflection on stereotypes on Caring Masculinities/gender, family issues (differentiation between personal/professional aspects)
- ✓ Self-reflection on language when working with children (reproduction of stereotypes in spontaneous situations)
- ✓ Care and Caring Masculinities should be addressed continuously
- ✓ Putting forward care as a social value, emphasize positive aspects.
- ✓ The economic and social value of care jobs should be promoted.
- ✓ All children should be offered the possibility to carry out the same activities regardless of gender and play areas should be inclusive.
- ✓ Use of an intersectional educational approach that considers the complexity beyond the whiteness, the gender binary and complex social systems (single-parent families, lgbtqia + etc.)
- ✓ Use of gender sensitive Material and Methods which the *ECaRoM* project provides.

08 Glossary

The glossary is mainly based on the thesaurus of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus>

capacity building	Building and/or enhancing the knowledge, skills and ability of individuals, institutions, groups and organisations to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve gender equality objectives in a sustainable and transformative manner.
Caring Masculinities	Opposite of hegemonic masculinity; based on men* taking care-giving roles (as involved fathers) instead of provider roles (as breadwinners).
care work	Work of looking after the physical, psychological, emotional and developmental needs of one or more other people.
childcare	Provision of public, private, individual or collective services to meet the needs of parents and children.
diversity	Differences in the values, attitudes, cultural perspective, beliefs, ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, skills, knowledge and life experiences of each individual in any group of people.
domestic division of labour	Division of care work and household responsibilities between women and men.
gender(s)	Social attributes and opportunities associated with being female and male and to the relationships between women* and men* and girls* and boys*, as well as to the relations between women* and those between men*. Socio-cultural construction within the binarism of women* and men*.
gender equality	Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of all genders.
gender identity	Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.
gender norms	Standards and expectations to which women and men generally conform, within a range that defines a particular society, culture and community at that point in time.
gender roles	Social and behavioural norms which, within a specific culture, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific sex.

gender-sensitive	Policies and programmes that take into account the particularities pertaining to the lives of both women and men, while aiming to eliminate inequalities and promote gender equality, including an equal distribution of resources, therefore addressing and taking into account the gender dimension
gender stereotypes	Practice of ascribing to an individual woman* or man* specific attributes, characteristics or roles on the sole basis of her or his membership of the social group of women or men.
gender-based violence	Violence directed against a person because of that person's gender, gender identity or gender expression, or which affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately.
hegemonic masculinities	Cultural norm that continuously connects men* to power and economic achievements.
heteronormativity	Heteronormativity is a norm in our society. It is considered normal that all people are either male or female, that they are heterosexual and that sexual orientation and gender identity do not change throughout life. People who do not conform to this norm experience exclusion and discrimination.
housework	Unremunerated work of maintaining a household that is performed by household members.
marginalized groups	Different groups of people within a given culture, context and history at risk of being subjected to multiple discrimination due to the interplay of different personal characteristics or grounds, such as sex, gender, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, health status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, education or income, or living in various geographic localities.
masculinities	Different notions of what it means to be a man*, including patterns of conduct linked to men*'s place in a given set of gender roles and relations.
patriarchy	In its narrow meaning, patriarchy refers to the system, in which the male head of the household had absolute legal and economic power over his dependent female and male family members. Patriarchy in its wider definition means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general.
sexual violence	any sexual act performed on the victim without consent
unpaid work	Work that produces goods and services but which carries no direct remuneration or other form of payment; like housework and care work.

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10 Partners



Dissens - Institut für Bildung und Forschung e.V. is a non-profit NGO with advisory, education and social research services. The main goals of the organization founded in 1990 in Germany is to foster gender equality by promoting non-traditional masculinity constructions (e.g., Caring Masculinities), reducing gender hierarchies and preventing gender violence. These goals are pursued through activities at youth services, adult education and scientific work. Dissens acts on a national and European level and has participated in and/or coordinated European projects and networks. Dissens is the coordinating organisation of the *ECaRoM* project. Further information at: <http://www.dissens.de/>



Verein für Männer und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark in Austria has successfully been providing gender specific services concerning gender reflective work with boys, networking, education, and training for the past 20 years. The Institute has been implementing as well as evaluating Boys' Day activities in Austria for several years. Further information at: <http://www.vmg-steiermark.at/>



The Peace Institute – Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies – is an independent and non-profit research institute founded in 1991 by individuals who believed in peaceful conflict resolution, equality and respect for human rights. The Institute uses scientific research and advocacy activities aimed at creating and preserving a society capable of critical thought and based on the principles of equality, responsibility, solidarity, human rights and the rule of law. It acts as an ally of vulnerable groups and acts against discrimination in partnership with them. It acts in partnership with other similar stakeholders (institutes, universities, non-governmental organisations) as well as with residents on the local, regional and international level. With regards to men & masculinity studies, the Institute cooperated in numerous successful EU funded projects. It was a partner in the European-wide Study on the Role of Men in Gender Equality, and continuously contributes to fostering alternative models of masculinities in national and international actions. Further information at: <http://www.mirovni-institut.si/en/about-the-peace-institute/>



Istituto degli Innocenti in Italy carries out documentation, research, analysis and training on matters related to children, adolescents, and families with special attention towards prevention of child abuse and child social inclusion. Further information at: <http://www.istitutodegliinnocenti.it/>



Center of Women's Studies and Policies in Bulgaria has more than ten years' experience in surveys and research on gender equality, women's rights and violence against women, work-life balance and the distribution of care responsibilities. This work is applied in recommendations on policy implementation and law amendments on the national as well as international level. Further information at: www.cwsp.bg



The Center for Equality Advancement (CEA) aims to identify and address gender inequalities. CEA has been working towards promoting and strengthening gender equality in Lithuania as well as internationally since 2003 via information campaigns, advocacy, trainings, publications, as well as in providing expertise on gender equality issues to state actors and the general public. Our primary focus is currently devoted to the following areas:

- ✓ women's contribution to culture,
- ✓ awareness of the value of social reproduction (care work),
- ✓ responses to gender-based violence, including sexual harassment and cyber violence,
- ✓ intersection of corporeality and sexuality,
- ✓ intersection of vulnerabilities and needs of women with disabilities, migrant women, people who do not fit into the binary gender system,
- ✓ masculinity norms.

Further information at: <http://gap.lt/en/>



ECaRoM – Early Care and the Role of Men