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MILLENNIAL MEN, GENDER EQUALITY AND CARE: THE DAWN OF A REVOLUTION?

Abstract. *The article aims to discuss selected aspects of the relationship between generational turnover, gender equality, masculinity and care, with particular attention to the millennial generation, a group of young people whose birth years range from 1982 to the late 1990s. Based on a literature review and a secondary analysis of available survey data, the analysis produces contradictory results. On one hand, studies show that millennial women and men are challenging traditional gender roles. On the other, contrary to common expectations (we often believe that each generation is more egalitarian and tolerant than the last), some studies show that millennials seem to be characterised by less egalitarian gender ideologies compared to older generations.*
Keywords: *care, gender equality, men, masculinity, generations, millennials*

Introduction

The aim of this article is to discuss selected aspects of the relationship between generational turnover, gender equality, masculinity and care, with particular attention to the Millennial Generation, a large group of young people whose birth years roughly range from 1982 to the late 1990s (today aged 22 to 38 years). Millennials are mostly the children of Baby Boomers (born between 1945 and the early 1960s) or Generation Xers (mid 1960s to the early 1980s). Today, the Millennial Generation is old enough to create their own families and have children. There is no consensus on how to define Millennials: the exact dates of the Millennial generation vary among researchers. Moreover, a number of scholars have warned against attempts to generalise about an entire generation (Furstenberg, 2017). While it is not easy to define a whole generation, at the same time Millennials display certain unique traits and are in many ways different from earlier generations due to the specific socio-historical location they find themselves in (Howe, Strauss, 2000; Wyn, Woodman, 2006). Generations are influenced

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by significant events during the formative years of their life courses (Mannheim, 1928). Young adults born between the early 1980s and late 1990s are the first generation to have experienced the benefits and deficiencies of globalisation. As regards gender, Millennial women and men are challenging traditional gender roles: they have grown up in families with two working parents, where the mother and father have started to share caring responsibilities and received the message that gender equality is possible and important. Some research suggests that Millennials are pushing the boundaries by not only rejecting the traditional distinctions between the sexes, both at home and at work, but also by refusing to accept gender categories altogether (Risman, 2018). Other research indicates that Millennials are idealising traditional roles where mothers are primarily responsible for the children (Cotter and Pepin, 2017; Fate-Dixon, 2017). However, as Risman (2018) explains, Millennials vary greatly in how they understand and position themselves with reference to the gender structure as well as in the strategies used to negotiate the ongoing gender revolution.

Based on these premises, this paper focuses on the relationship between Millennial men, gender and care, arguing in favour of the use of a generational perspective for understanding attitudes and choices. The main questions addressed in this paper are: Is there a trend of Millennial men being removed from the traditional gender roles? Is the Millennial generation a major turning point in the social construction of masculinity? Are Millennial men more likely to take on housework and childcare than in the past? Are Millennial men tackling parenting differently than the generations before them? What is the role played by technologies? In order to answer these questions, the paper presents and discusses empirical and theoretical studies on Millennial men and fathers, gender equality and care. The data and studies relied on come from different regions: Australia, Europe and North America, while some global surveys were also used. The availability of global surveys is today growing, making it possible to overcome one limitation seen in existing studies that tend to consider mostly white youth from western countries, neglecting the experience of migrants, minorities, non-western Millennials.

The Generational Perspective: Understanding the Millennials' Attitude

The notion of "generation" is used widely to locate persons within historical time (Pilcher, 1994). The generational dimension is crucial for understanding expectations, experiences, lifestyles and motivations. The cultural, political, economic, and ecological environment in which Millennials grew up during their formative years impacts their values, attitudes, interests and behaviours (Howe and Strauss, 2000; Wyn and Woodman, 2006). Like any

other generation, Millennials share a common location in historical time, shaped by the events and experiences of that time (Gilleard, 2004). This conceptualisation of a 'generation' is rooted in Mannheim's (1928; 1952) theory that recognises the implications events hold for individuals/groups within a specific context. In Mannheim's view (1928), a generation is not only a birth cohort: members of the same generation share more than the same birth year. Historical events (especially if they occurred during the formative period) may determine a whole generation's capacity for cultural elaboration, stimulate a common worldview and, thereby, encourage the development of the consciousness of being a socio-cultural group. According to Mannheim (1952: 291), generational location in history points to "certain definite modes of behaviour, feelings and thoughts".

Millennials started to be born in the early 1980s. The decade saw great socioeconomic changes due to advances in technology while environmental issues grew in importance. The – 1990s – a central period for Millennials' formative experience – was characterised by the rise of multiculturalism and the growing importance of ICT: the explosive rise in the number of mobile phones and the public availability of the first web servers. In the 1990s, the world economy was hit by a series of deep crises, with far-reaching consequences. It has been stated (The Council of Economic Advisers, 2014) that perhaps the most important marker for Millennials is that many of them came of age during a very difficult time in the global economy. This is a generation whose hopes, dreams and needs are shaped by an economy that no longer provides the job/income security their parents and grandparents enjoyed (Martin and Lewchuck, 2018): they are less well off than members of earlier generations when they were young, with lower earnings, fewer assets, and less wealth. Because Millennials have had to cope with unemployment and precarious work, they have also had to be strategic in managing their finances: for example, Millennial parents encounter the scenario of high childcare costs (raising children has become significantly more time-consuming and expensive) and low wages. Millennial women and men are not only increasingly price-sensitive and attentive to shared-economy activities (Bernardi and Ruspini, 2018); they are also ready to compromise on their own standard of living in order to protect the environment and support social issues and causes. Millennials have grown up with more exposure to the effects of climate change and global warming than their parents and grandparents and prefer to work for socially responsible and environmentally sustainable companies (Cone Communications, 2016). A global survey (PwC, 2011)[1] shows that Millennials are looking for more in

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[1] *The online survey "Millennials at Work. Reshaping the Workplace" was carried out between 31 August and 7 October 2011. Overall, 4,364 graduates across 75 countries (1,470 PwC employees and*

life than 'just a job': they want to do something that feels worthwhile, they take the values of a company into account when considering a job, and they are not solely motivated by money. Sustainability, personal development, flexible working hours, and work–life balance are more important than financial rewards (Insead et al., 2014)[2].

Millennials constitute the most educated, most informed and most interconnected generation in history. Millennials have higher levels of post-secondary education than earlier generations, with younger women obtaining a growing share of university degrees and full-time work compared to older ones. Millennial women also have a different career mind-set: they are more confident and career ambitious than the generations preceding them (PwC, 2015). This is the first generation to have had access to the Internet in their formative years. The Millennials grew up with Web 2.0 technologies and have been shaped by the global spread of the Internet, the social networks, smartphones, and constant digital connectivity. Online technologies and advancements in digital technologies such as increasing Internet access and the proliferation of smartphones are among the defining characteristics of the millennial experience. Technology is embedded in everything Millennials do. Millennials develop their identity and form relationships through technology and social media, storing information, knowledge and experiences in cloud-connected devices (Bernardi and Ruspini, 2016). The technology of this generation sustains friendship with people of other cultures and traditions, increases flexibility, and social media use provides alternative spaces and places for identity exploration (Manago and Vaughn, 2015).

Diversity is another keyword that defines this generation. Due to increasing globalisation, population movements, and mobility, Millennials are the most ethnically and racially diverse cohort of youth in history. Millennials have also been raised in more plural family settings, characterised by the growing diversity of family forms (divorced families, blended families, LAT, lone parent families, LGBT families etc.). With exposure to more cultures, people, family forms, and opportunities than ever before, Millennials are more tolerant than adults of other generations of a wide range of 'non-traditional' behaviours related to marriage and parenting (Taylor and Keeter, 2010). They are more likely to support LGBT rights, same-sex marriage and to identify as LGBT. This may be linked to the shrinking stigma surrounding

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2,894 other graduates) responded to the survey. All were aged 31 or under and had graduated between 2008 and 2011.

2 The research study "Understanding a Misunderstood Generation. The First Large-scale Survey of How Millennials Attitudes and Actions Vary Across the Globe" conducted by the Insead Emerging Markets Institute (2014), the Head Foundation, and Universum covers 43 countries: 16,637 people between the ages 18–30 were surveyed from May to August 2014. Data were collected mainly through Universum's proprietary Millennial database, as well as through external panel providers in selected geographic areas.

an LGBT identity (Cohen et al., 2018). Millennials are also marrying in much smaller numbers. The decision not to get married is a reflection of contemporary social attitudes that consider the institution to be outdated. Millennials show one of the highest levels of institutional disaffiliation: they are not as confident as older adults when it comes to institutions like the government, religion and churches, political parties, the military and marriage. The 2016 Global Viewpoint Millennial Survey[3] shows that youth around the world feel disconnected from their governments: 67 percent feel that their government does not care about their wants and needs. They are more likely to identify as politically independent and to affiliate with any religious tradition compared with their elders today. This generation's unique attributes seem to be its technological savvy, diversity, tolerance, openness to change, aversion to large institutions, and resilience (Broido, 2004).

Millennials and Gender Equality

As regards gender issues, Risman (2018) notes – in her study based on in-depth interviews with a non-representative sample of more than 100 young people, including the experiences of transgender and gender queer youth – that Millennials are pushing boundaries not simply by rejecting traditional distinctions between the sexes, both at home and at work, but by also refusing to accept gender categories altogether. Research concerning the 2010 round of the European Social Survey (ESS)[4] shows that responses tended to be more gender egalitarian than 6 years earlier (Van Bavel, 2017).

However, some studies conducted in the USA have found that support for gender egalitarianism has declined among young people since the mid-1990s (Coontz, 2017; Cotter and Pepin, 2017; Fate-Dixon, 2017; Tuttle and Davis, 2018). More specifically, Cotter and Pepin (2017) – while looking at data collected by the Monitoring the Future (MTF) Study[5], a survey that for nearly 40 years has asked high school students a series of questions about how

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[3] *In the autumn of 2016, the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) surveyed more than 7,600 youth aged 16 to 24 years in 30 countries in order to gain an insight into how young people see the world today and how they may continue to shape our world in the future. Published in 2017, the report presents findings on questions related to work, the economy, governance and security, values, education, and health accessible at https://www.iyfnet.org/sites/default/files/library/2016-Global-Millenial-Viewpoints-Survey.pdf, May 2019.*

[4] *The ESS is a cross-national survey conducted across Europe since 2001. Every 2 years, face-to-face interviews are conducted with newly selected, cross-sectional samples. The survey measures the attitudes, beliefs and behavioural patterns of diverse populations in more than 30 nations, accessible at http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/about/, May 2019.*

[5] *"Monitoring the Future" is an ongoing study of the behaviours, attitudes and values of Americans from adolescence to adulthood. Each year, approximately 50,000 8th, 10th and 12th grade students are surveyed (12th graders since 1975, and 8th and 10th graders since 1991); accessible at http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/, May 2019.*

men and women should be treated at work, what responsibilities at home should look like, and whether mothers' employment harms their children – found that the answers to some of those questions continue to become more egalitarian. But, with respect to other questions, the trend toward equality stopped or even reversed in the mid-1990s. Moreover, while young men have consistently been less egalitarian than young women, the relative difference between them has not narrowed in any of the attitudes covered in the surveys. Following Cotter and Pepin (2017), even though youth with more highly educated and/or consistently employed mothers were more egalitarian than their peers, and the percentages of youth with these educated and employed mothers grew over time, this population change did not fully account for the attitude trends. Millennials seem to be idealising traditional roles where stay-at-home mothers are primarily responsible for children. However, another study that relied on data from more than 27,000 respondents who participated in the General Social Survey (GSS)[6] from 1977 to 2016 (Scarborough et al., 2018) shows that gender attitudes have changed at different rates over the past 40 years. Using latent class analysis, the authors found an increase in the number of egalitarians who support equality in public and private spheres. Successive birth cohorts are becoming more egalitarian, with Generation-Xers and Millennials being the most likely to hold strong egalitarian views. These analyses challenge the notion that there has been a stalled revolution in gender attitudes in the USA.

These contrasting trends have opened a lively debate and stimulated research. According to Van Bavel (2017), one explanation of this inconsistency could be a romantic kind of backlash to the 'male breadwinner, female homemaker model'. Millennials are the first children to have grown up with two working parents, if not with a single mother, with all the stressful situations this entails, particularly in societies whose institutions do not yet support the new gender roles. The role played by generational, cultural and social factors (such as different perceptions of gender equality; if/how institutions contribute to promoting gender equality and critical studies of men's practices etc.) is indeed crucial. Following Furstenberg (2017), it also remains to be seen whether this trend represents a broader view in the general population that reflects new experiences in family life or whether it is a temporary expression of experiences or challenges occurring in a specific period of their life course. Moreover, Millennials are a very heterogeneous generation (for example, we should distinguish between 'early' and 'late' Millennials) and there is a danger of making over-generalisations

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6   *The GSS is a repeated cross-sectional survey drawing nationally representative samples of people aged 18 and over who live in non-institutionalised settings within the USA. The GSS gathers data on contemporary American society in order to monitor and explain trends and constants in attitudes, behaviours and attributes: accessible at https://gss.norc.org/About-The-GSS, May 2019.*

about such a diverse group. Risman (2018) goes in the same direction. She notes that both trends are probably true, and that Millennials vary greatly in how they understand and position themselves with reference to the gender structure as well as in the strategies used to negotiate the ongoing gender revolution. The four groups Risman identifies are the "true believers", the "innovators", the "straddlers" and the "rebels". The "true believers" are the most consistent supporters of the traditional gender structure; both "innovators" and "rebels" criticise the gender structure and reject sexist ideologies, and "rebels" also want to dismantle gender polarisation. Finally, the "straddlers" are confused by all the changes swirling around them and inconsistently react. Risman's research overall suggests that, while they are a diverse generation, Millennials support gender egalitarianism at home and at work. The author also argues that the fear of being stigmatised for challenging old gender stereotypes is still widespread and far more present among young Millennial men than women. The interviews show how the gender structure still dramatically constrains life in the USA.

A study conducted in Australia – within a research programme hosted by the 50/50 by 2030 Foundation at the University of Canberra[7] (Evans et al., 2018) – suggests that a growing number of Millennial and Gen X men appear to be alienated from the process of change and are backsliding into traditional value systems. On one hand, the development of traditional value systems seems linked to the gaming culture and other online behaviours. On the other hand, the study shows that moderate men want to push gender equality forward, but appear to be held back by their fear of change and greater economic insecurity. A key reason for this attitude seems to be the fact that men have been forgotten in the struggle for gender equality. The survey reveals that while nearly half of all male respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement that "gender equality strategies in the workplace do not take men into account", Millennial men (together with men born between 1925–1945) were most likely to report feelings of being left out. Millennial men were also significantly more likely (48%) to "agree"/"strongly agree" with the statement that "Men and boys are increasingly excluded from measures to improve gender equality", followed by Gen Z males at 44%.

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[7]   *Findings derive from a national survey of 2,122 Australians about their attitudes to issues of sexism and gender inequality. The survey was conducted online in March 2018, with participants recruited from a combination of online panels and via social media advertising. The survey aimed to explore: 1) the attitudes of boys, girls, men and women to equality and empowerment; 2) attitudinal differences by generation; and 3) the relationship between online activity (social media browsing, game playing and recreational browsing) and attitudes to gender equality; accessible at http://www.5050foundation.edu.au/assets/reports/documents/From-Girls-to-Men.pdf, May 2019.*

One element that supports the fact that Millennials care about gender equality has to do with their exposition to social change. Unlike the generation before them (Baby Boomers and Generation Xers), a large number of Millennials had working mothers as well as fathers who helped at home, and even those in more traditional families received the message that equality is possible and important. Social change and political movements mark the Baby Boomer era. Boomers fought against race and gender inequality, participated in anti-war protests, and supported sexual freedom. This highly politicised generation was intent on challenging the status quo. The cultural revolution of the late 1960s (itself fuelled by a post-war prosperity that allowed people to give greater attention to non-material concerns) played a key role in reconfiguring views on gender relations, marriage and family life. "Second wave feminism", that refers to the activism of the 1960s and 1970s, encompassed the best known feminist causes: equality in education and employment, abortion and birth control access, the end to violence against women, and included campaigns in support of peace and disarmament. Starting in this period, the traditional gender roles in parents and kids have undergone a major shift in most parts of the developed world. New family patterns have been paralleled by changes in gender roles, especially an expansion of the role of women to become an economic provider for the family, and the transformation of men's role in involvement in family responsibilities, mainly care for the children (Oláh et al., 2018).

Millennials Men and Care

Men and fathers find themselves today in a state of change. The number of men willing to question the stereotypical model of masculinity is growing worldwide (Pease and Pringle, 2001; Ruspini et al., 2011) and men's contribution to housework and childcare is also increasing (Pew Research Center, 2013; Crespi and Ruspini, 2016). The growing desire to (re)discover the terms and values of one's specific masculinity challenges the conditionings imposed by the static, one-dimensional model of masculinity (Connell, 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Starting in the 1990s and 2000s, research has begun to emphasise multiple masculinities in terms of ways of being men and forms of men's collective and individual practices (Hearn, 2010). Anderson (2009) argues that masculinities that are more 'inclusive' are on the rise, especially among young men. His study describes the rapidly changing world of masculinities among men in both Great Britain and the USA. University-aged men are constructing a softer version of masculinity: today's youth express less sexism, racism and masculine bullying. A second example is a latent class analysis of heterosexual young men's masculinities (Casey et al., 2016) based on 555 heterosexually active male participants in

the USA.[8] The study identifies four conceptually distinct masculine identity profiles based on men's endorsement of behavioural and attitudinal indicators of 'dominant' masculinity, including sexual attitudes and behaviours. Two groups, labelled "normative" and "normative/male activities", constituted 88% of the sample and were characterised by little adherence to attitudes, sexual scripts, and behaviours consistent with 'dominant' masculinity – but differed in their levels of engagement in male-oriented activities (e.g. sports teams). Only 8% of the sample comprised a profile consistent with 'traditional' ideas about masculinity; the remaining 4% was characterised by high numbers of sexual partners, but relatively low endorsement of other indicators of traditional masculinity. These findings suggest that very few young men embody or endorse rigidly traditional forms of masculinity and that Millennial men may be more rejecting of certain aspects of masculinity like homophobia (McCormack, 2012) and dominance in romantic relationships (Doull et al., 2013) than older men. However, Meuser (2003) argues that while hegemonic masculinity may not be an accurate description of the daily practices of younger men, ideals of hegemonic masculinity can still provide cultural reference points for the kinds of ideologies and expectations young men encounter in constructing their masculine identities and in locating themselves in the gender order.

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As regards fatherhood, Shirani (2011) suggests that we are currently experiencing a cultural shift away from men cultivating masculinities around public identities to cultivating them instead around their private identities as good fathers. Being a good parent is, indeed, one of the most important things in life for both Millennial women and men (Livingston, 2018). Younger fathers are spending more time with their children and taking more responsibility for caregiving than in previous generations (Doucet, 2006; Dermott, 2008; Featherstone, 2009). Findings from the Pew Research Center (Parker and Livingston, 2018) show that in 2016 US fathers reported spending, on average, 8 hours a week on childcare, about triple the time they provided back in 1965. The growing number of stay-at-home fathers and men's increased use of paternity and family leave demonstrate the evolving role of men in the provision of childcare (Hobson and Fahlén, 2012; Ruspini, 2013). Yet, research (Craig, 2006) also shows that women spend a greater proportion of their total care time in physical care activities than men do, while fathers are more likely to engage in play, talking, educational and recreational activities than in other forms of care. The global report "State of the World's Fathers: Unlocking the Power of Men's Care"

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[8] *Participants were recruited for a larger online study investigating factors that influence men's sexual beliefs and behaviour. Participants in the sample were all men: 19.8% African-American, 19.1% Asian American, 20.9% European American/white, 21.8% Latino, and 18.4% Multiracial or 'other'. The mean age of the sample was 20.6 years.*

(van der Gaag et al., 2019)[9] reveals that no country in the world has achieved equality in unpaid care work – or pay equality – between men and women and that, across 23 middle- and high-income countries, the unpaid care gap has closed by just 7 minutes in the past few decades. The report identifies a number of major barriers: the lack of adequate, paid paternity leave, and the low take-up of leave when it is available; gender stereotypes and restrictive gender norms that position care as women's responsibility, alongside the perception of women as more competent caregivers than men; a lack of economic security and government support for all parents, caregivers and families. The report calls for countries, employers and civil society to commit to accelerating action and supporting men's increased participation in unpaid care work.

The changing role of fathers brings fresh challenges. Although both the growing scientific literature and social consensus have increased awareness of the importance of fathers in the development of their children (Allen and Daly, 2002; Lamb, 2004) and that the involvement of fathers offers several benefits for the fathers themselves and their partners (Robertson and Verschelden, 1993; Clark, 2009), these changes are not without tensions. Also due to the rise of dual-earner families – in part, the result of the financial unfeasibility, for many families, of having one parent stay at home – fathers' involvement in caregiving is today a necessity. Therefore, work–life balance is no longer solely a women's issue (Crespi and Ruspini, 2016; Heilman et. al. 2016; Parker and Livingston, 2018). A study conducted by Harrington et al. in 2016[10] – aimed at better understanding the ways in

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9   *The "State of the World's Fathers" report is produced by Promundo, the co-coordinator of "MenCare: A Global Fatherhood Campaign", which is active in over 50 countries. "State of the World's Fathers 2019" includes data analyses from four sources: 1) The Helping Dads Care Research Project (2017–2019), which provides new cross-sectional survey data involving men and women (aged 25 to 45) on what factors encourage men's use of paternity leave in seven countries (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Japan, Netherlands, UK, USA). 2) Plan International Canada: SHOW Fathers' Study is a study conducted in January and February 2019 that examined attitudes and perceptions concenring the distribution of roles and responsibilities between women and men regarding household work and caregiving in Bangladesh, Haiti, Nigeria and Ghana. 3) the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) is one of the most comprehensive studies on men's practices and attitudes toward gender-equality policies, household dynamics (including caregiving and men's involvement as fathers), intimate partner violence, health, economic stress. 4) the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) is a composite measure of gender equality based on the OECD's Gender, Institutions, and Development Database; accessible at https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/BLS19063_PRO_SOWF_REPORT_015.pdf, August 2019.*

10 *This study surveyed individuals aged 22-35 with at least 2 years' professional work experience who were employed at one of five large global corporations. The study included both a quantitative and a qualitative element. The quantitative survey was conducted online. While all of the businesses were global in scope, the survey was only administered within their US operations. A total of 1,100 employees completed the survey across the five companies. Employees' participation in the study was voluntary. For this exploration of Millennial fathers, the study draws mainly from the responses given by 33% of the study subjects (327 participants) who were parents and especially the 151 fathers.*

which Millennials fathers view parenting and careers and prioritise their career-life choices – well summarises this tension. On one hand, for the majority of Millennial fathers there has been a significant movement toward greater gender equality and the need to find a way to share more equally in caregiving. At the same time, the study shows that traditional gender roles and values continue to exist in significant numbers. Another key element is that Millennial fathers experience similar levels of work–family conflict as Millennial mothers. Moreover, while the differences seem to be shrinking over time, Millennial fathers continue to have a stronger focus on career advancement and appear to be more sensitive to and impacted by the expectations of 'the ideal worker' compared to women. Millennial fathers perceive that their workplace cultures encourage thinking that includes the ideas that work should be 'priority number one', that the ideal employee is available 24/7, and that good employees work long hours. To sum up, most men face complex conflicts in trying to find and maintain a balance between work and parenting, between the desire to be engaged fathers and to pursue a career. However, not all fathers encounter the same level of conflict when it comes to the career–life challenges. *Traditional* fathers (those who think their wives should do more caregiving and they actually do) and *egalitarian* fathers (those who think caregiving should be divided equally and indeed do this) show markedly higher levels of life satisfaction than *conflicted* fathers who feel they should be doing more to share care giving but admit to not doing so (Harrington et al., 2016).

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Millennial fathers are doing things differently from any other generation before them also due to technological advancement. As the roles of fathers grow, so do expectations and information needs. A large number of Millennial fathers seek parenting information online using smartphones, desktops, tablets or laptops. Millennials turn to the Internet – not just family and friends – for fatherhood tips and guides. Websites, parenting blogs and community forums are increasingly helping fathers (and mothers) find information which is not always satisfactorily provided by paediatricians, schools and childhood experts. At the same time, parents have helped shape what is defined as 'digital parenthood', a digital space where contemporary parenting experiences, dilemmas and tips can be voiced, so as to overcome or support stereotypes and myths about being a parent (Pecorelli, 2016).

Conclusion

Today, evidence can be found of both 'old' and 'new' masculinities. Millennial men and fathers are open-minded and challenging traditional societal norms. The everyday, traditional role of providing economic support for the family now takes place alongside activities previously regarded

as 'maternal', such that the negotiating tradition and change lie at the heart of contemporary manhood and fatherhood (O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003; Miller, 2011).

Still, traditional gender norms remain strong. Millennials fathers are still surrounded by traditional gender roles and values and among Millennials the fear of being stigmatised for challenging old gender stereotypes is widespread, but far more among young men than women (Risman, 2018). Millennial fathers also perceive that their workplace cultures encourage thinking that work should take priority. Moreover, if gender roles at home have been changing for recent marriage/cohabiting cohorts and new egalitarian patterns are emerging, these may be difficult to maintain in social and institutional contexts that reward the traditional family model and traditional gender roles. Finally, Millennial men are also likely to report feelings of being left out from measures to improve gender equality (Evans et al., 2018).

To sum up, on one hand there is a rising tide of support for gender equality; on the other hand, the process still seems incomplete. Millennial men and fathers, in other words, are struggling to find an equilibrium between tradition and contemporary experiences, between global and local cultures, and between an uncertain present and a complex future. It is therefore necessary to create changes in men's behaviour and attitudes through education and social policy support and to actively engage men in the promotion of gender equality and family well-being.

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