

Caring Fathers

Addressing Domestic Violence and the Care Gap with Male Care Work

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Traditional divisions of household labor have contributed to power dynamics and gender norms that exacerbate family violence and place the responsibility of care on women. As a result, American families today face separate but related problems in the care gap and the domestic violence epidemic. Using feminist economics as a theoretical framework, this paper examines policy responses to both the care gap and domestic violence that seek to address the common problem of unbalanced gender relations, with the shared solution of increased male care work. It specifically focuses on family and paternity leave programs and care work-oriented domestic violence prevention initiatives, arguing that male care work has the potential to help repair the damaged gender relations that contribute to the overlapping problems of the care gap and domestic violence through the creation and promotion of more respectful, egalitarian relationships.

Introduction

In this paper, I explore the role of men in addressing two important challenges in gender relations: a crisis of care, as women move into the workforce while still bearing the bulk of domestic labor, and the age-old problem of domestic violence. The connection first occurred to me as a public policy graduate student studying feminist economics, a developing branch of economics that applies a feminist perspective to traditional assumptions.

In recognizing women's contributions to formal and informal economies, feminist economics sheds light on the "care work" that women have traditionally performed and the "care gap" that has resulted from their collective move into the labor market over the past 40 years (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2000).

Care work, according to feminist economics literature, refers to tending to the physical and emotional needs of others and can include child care, household labor, or other caregiving tasks performed by a family member or a professional, such as a nurse or nanny. The care gap, a societal care shortage, stems from the fact that women's transition to paid market-based labor has not been accompanied by a government response in the form of mandated paid parental leave, on-site child care, or other family-friendly workplace policies (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2000). This has meant that working women have had to address the care gap individually by employing solutions like purchasing child care in the market, assuming the responsibilities for household labor on top of paid employment, or instituting a more equal division of care work between spouses (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2000; Folbre 2001).

The idea of increased male care work as a care gap solution reminded me of an innovative program that had been of great interest to me while working part-time in the public policy office of the Family Violence Prevention Fund, an advocacy organization committed to preventing abuse with campaigns that challenge many of the social norms that condone domestic violence. Their Coaching Boys into Men program enlists men, specifically athletic coaches, to assume roles as mentors and teachers in order to promote violence-free relationships and address the fact that one in four American women will be a victim of domestic violence at some point in her life (Campaign for Funding to End Domestic and Sexual Violence 2008). It was not until the feminist economics course, however, that I thought to attach a label to the task of the program's participants. It became clear to me then that by contributing time and energy to instill positive, nonviolent values in their athletes, Coaching Boys into Men participants were performing a form of community-based care work.

The fact that male care work is being utilized as a strategy to address

both the care gap and domestic violence is not a coincidence, but instead the likely result of a common root cause: a lack of respectful, egalitarian relationships in some American homes. Domestic violence is related to socially accepted beliefs about gender roles and gendered behavior. For example, a study of middle school children found that 65 percent of boys and 57 percent of girls believed that a man had the right to force sex on a woman if the couple had been dating for more than six months (Koss et al. 1994, 10). Traditional gender roles also contribute to the care gap through gendered household divisions of labor. The University of Wisconsin's National Survey of Families and Households reveals that the average American wife does 31 hours of housework a week, more than double the average husband's 14 hours. This inequality is greater still with regard to child care. In families where both parents are employed, mothers spend 11 hours each week performing child care and fathers spend three (Belkin 2008b).

In this paper, I will examine policy responses to both the care gap and domestic violence that seek to address the common problem of unbalanced gender relations with the shared solution of increased male care work. Feminist economics will provide a theoretical framework for arguments in favor of increased legislative support for policies that encourage men to do more care work at home and in the community. I argue that family and paternity leave policies could entice men to play a larger role inside the home and that domestic violence prevention policies could engage nonviolent men to participate in care work outside the home. In addition to helping to resolve the target problem, a policy response to one issue would likely have external benefits for the other, as both policy approaches use male care work as a way to encourage the development of healthy, respectful relationships.

Theoretical Background: Feminist Economic Theory

The field of feminist economics examines traditional economic assumptions and methods through a feminist lens, questioning the ascription of gendered traits to people, sectors, and ideas, and expanding the scope of economic thought to include issues that disproportionately affect women (Ferber and Nelson 2003). This literature is helpful for the examination of

the care gap and the domestic violence epidemic in that it offers insight into the family dynamics that contribute to both problem areas, and, in turn, uncovers ways in which policies, programs, services, and incentives could help foster an approach that targets the unbalanced gender relations that contribute to both issues.

Household Power Dynamics

Feminist economics critiques many core economic assumptions about the family unit. In “Not a Free Market: The Rhetoric of Disciplinary Authority in Economics,” author Diana Strassmann (1993) highlights several “stories” that economics assumes in modeling and theory. The story of the “benevolent patriarch” encompasses the idea that families are headed by men who work in the market to provide for their wives and children, and therefore assume responsibility for family decisions and the well-being of individuals under their care. This story treats the family as an economic unit with collective utility, which is maximized by the patriarch’s ability to make trade-offs that allocate resources most efficiently for the entire family (Strassmann 1993). Though operating under the classical assumption that individuals are self-interested, rational actors in the market, the story of the “benevolent patriarch” ignores the possibility that breadwinners might also display self-interest within the home or that they might not have the knowledge or drive to maximize their family unit’s collective utility.

The assumption of altruistic breadwinners also assumes the existence of altruistic homemakers, creating a specialization of labor that can contribute to unequal power dynamics in relationships (Ferber 2003). Feminist economic models of bargaining power expand on this idea by drawing a parallel between the amount of capital acquired in the market and the amount of bargaining power, or influence, in the home (Ferber and Nelson 2003). Financial dependence is often implicit in a stark breadwinner/homemaker divide, and victims of violence, who are often isolated from friends and family as a result of the abuse, may be left with few alternatives due to their lack of financial and social independence. The concept of threat points, defined as the resources and utility found outside the relationship that determine the point at which one is likely to leave it, helps to clarify this point

and support arguments for egalitarian relationships (Ferber and Nelson 2003). For women in traditional gender roles, bargaining power is limited and threat points are low, which increases the possibility of subordination, exploitation, and, in some cases, violence.

In addition to contributing to imbalanced power dynamics in individual relationships, traditional gender roles also help to reinforce societal attitudes that condone and possibly exacerbate violence. A study by the American Psychological Association's Task Force on Male Violence Against Women found that "on the societal level, male violence against women is seen as a manifestation of gender inequality and a mechanism for the subordination of women" (Koss et al. 1994, 4), pointing to the economic, legal, and physical power inequalities that contribute to violent behavior. The authors cite studies linking traditional relationship attitudes in men to sexual aggression, domestic violence, and marital rape (Koss et al. 1994). This is not intended to suggest a causal relationship between traditional gender roles and abuse, but instead to point out the ways that gendered social norms and power inequalities contribute to the acceptance of and engagement in abusive behavior on both individual and social levels.

Tracing the Care Gap

In addition to fostering unequal and potentially dangerous power dynamics, the traditional division of labor in many households set the stage for the creation of a societal care gap when women left their homemaker roles to take advantage of opportunities in the workforce. The care shortage created by this movement into the market has been well documented in feminist economics literature. In *The Invisible Heart*, feminist economist Nancy Folbre (2001) examines the state of care in the United States, exploring market connections to caregiving norms and tracing the construction of care as "women's work," which seems to be rooted in arguments of efficiency, biology, and altruism. According to Folbre, "the growth of competitive markets for labor helped to disrupt and destabilize patriarchal power" by creating increased opportunity costs for women who chose to stay home (2001, xiv). For other women, the declining earning power of their partners and the inability to sustain their families on one income was the push into paid

employment (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2000).

Today, a majority of American women are in the workforce and both partners are employed in about one-half of married-couple families (Levine 2008). Despite social pressure to adhere to traditional roles, there is evidence that some men are increasingly participating in care work, especially with regard to child care, as their wives move into the market. This claim is supported by the approximately 160,000 stay-at-home dads in the United States (a number that has tripled in the past 10 years), an increase in the number of men requesting paternity leave and family-friendly work schedules, and the growing sense that men are just as capable as women with regard to care work (Belkin 2008a; Gornick and Meyers 2003; Folbre 2001). A 2001 Kaiser Women's Health Survey reports that 30 percent of working fathers recount missing work to care for sick children. Though less than the 50 percent of working mothers who say they have taken days off for the same reason, it is still a striking figure (Kaiser Foundation 2003). Research indicates that many fathers would like to do more. A Families and Work Institute survey found that 70 percent of fathers felt as though they did not get to spend enough time with their children (Gornick and Meyers 2003).

Still, as the University of Wisconsin survey indicates, there is evidence that across the board men are not equal participants with regard to housework or child care. In a June 2008 *New York Times Magazine* article, family life writer Lisa Belkin examined the ways in which certain couples are making sincere efforts to share care work and considered the reasons that unfair divisions of household labor persist in most American homes. The article, "When Mom and Dad Share It All," gave descriptions of a few couples that, by both stepping off the career track and putting family first, were able to find an egalitarian work-life balance. Still, as Belkin points out, these couples are far from the norm. She reported that 58 percent of women feel that the division of household labor is unfair to them, while only 11 percent of men believe that they are suffering from an unequal divide (2008b). In order to encourage men to assume a more equal share of care work, this inequality will need to be addressed on both a personal and political level.

Male Care Work: A Common Approach

Family and Paternity Leave: Incentivizing Male Care Work

Family and paternity leave policies provide men with the time to be increasingly involved throughout their children's lives and therefore may be well suited to encourage men to play a more equal role in caregiving. Currently, the United States is one of the few industrialized countries that does not mandate paid leave for workers (Levine 2008). Federal employment-based benefits in the United States include unpaid family-medical leave through the *Family and Medical Leave Act* (FMLA), which Congress passed and President Clinton signed into law in 1993 (Levine 2008). FMLA provides eligible employees (determined by firm size and length and type of employment) with up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave without pay to attend to personal and family matters like bonding with a new child, caring for a family member, or attending to one's own health. Still, only three in five workers are eligible to take this leave due to occupational restrictions, employment conditions, and job tenure (Phillips 2004).

The Need for Paid Family Leave

It is critically important that fathers looking to spend more time with their children have access to paid family leave. Though 80 percent of working parents ages 18–54 report having access to paid leave and being eligible for maternity or paternity leave, only 8 percent of employers in the private sector offer paid family leave (Phillips 2004; Levine 2008). This means that parents who have exhausted their paid vacation or sick leave often have to rely on FMLA leave, which is unpaid, for the time needed to care for family members (Phillips 2004). According to a Labor Department survey, 49 percent of people who used FMLA benefits from 1999 to 2000 did so to attend to their own health—a category that includes giving birth—and about one-quarter used FMLA leave to care for a new child (Levine 2008).

Three-fourths of employees in the private sector have access to some form of paid vacation or holidays, though paid leave varies by occupa-

tional sector, level of education, marital status, parental status, age, and sex (Levine 2008). Generally, employees who work full-time in high-paying, white-collar occupations are more likely to have leave with pay than those in other sectors (Levine 2008). Only two in five welfare recipients receive paid leave, and men are more likely than women to have such benefits (83.5 percent and 76.2 percent, respectively), illustrating both class and gender differences in leave access (Phillips 2004; Levine 2008). The implications of the current state of family leave are that “parents who are likely to need leave—those with young children and working welfare recipients—are less likely than their counterparts to have access to leave, especially paid leave” (Phillips 2004, 6). Even when unpaid leave is available, it is often not enough, especially for those who do not have the financial means to take time off work without pay.

There is some evidence that state governments have been more active in addressing family leave issues than the federal government. Five states have established Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) programs to compensate workers taking time off to recover from injuries, and both California and New Jersey have extended TDI benefits to leave taken to care for family members (Levine 2008). In 2002, California mandated paid family leave by establishing Family Temporary Disability Insurance or Paid Family Leave Insurance (PFL) (Levine 2008). New Jersey followed suit in 2008 (Levine 2008). Both state programs are funded by wage deductions and allow employers to mandate the use of up to two weeks of any accrued paid leave before accessing TDI benefits and insist that TDI leave be taken concurrently with the applicable family leave policy, such as FMLA (Levine 2008). Other state programs, like California’s Family Sick Leave (Kin Care), require that employers who offer paid sick leave allow their employees to use the leave to care for family members (Levine 2008).

At the federal level, a few bills introduced in the 110th Congress sought to enable workers to take time off to attend to their family and caregiving responsibilities. Thus far, two approaches to family leave have been offered: employer mandates and temporary disability insurance programs, similar to the aforementioned state programs. The employer mandate approach has taken the form of mandated paid sick leave (H.R. 1542/S. 910), family

leave for executive branch employees (S. 80), and paid parental leave for all federal employees (H.R. 5781). The other approach would provide family leave insurance to employees taking time off to care for family members (S. 1681/H.R. 5873) (Levine 2008). With the exception of the *Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2008* (H.R. 5781), which was passed by the House, but stalled in the Senate, none of these bills garnered enough support to progress through the legislative process.

The Importance of Paid Paternity Leave

Though men are more likely than women to receive paid leave, men are less likely to have access to parental leave (71.9 percent compared to 89.3 percent), and only 13 percent of employers offered paid paternity leave in 2008. (Phillips 2004; Holt 2008). This lack of access, coupled with traditional gender norms, has resulted in men taking parental leave far less often than women. In fact, a Monster.com survey found that only half of eligible working dads take paternity leave, due to financial barriers or heavy workloads (Holt 2008). One study found that of fathers who took time off after the birth of a child, 64 percent took one week or less and only 36 percent took two weeks or more (Nepomnyaschy and Waldfogel 2007). The study, which controlled for preexisting paternal interest in child care, also reported that those who took longer paternity leaves were significantly more involved in caring for their children nine months post-birth, indicating the potential impact that paternity leave can have in facilitating emotional bonds and encouraging care work (Nepomnyaschy and Waldfogel 2007).

Paid paternity leave offered by employers or mandated by the federal government would address the lack of leave available and help entice men to utilize these benefits. Cross-country analyses of paternity leave programs find that the most effective strategies include high levels of wage replacement and “use-or-lose rights and benefits” that cannot be transferred to female partners (Gornick and Meyers 2003, 242). In Denmark, men are entitled to 100 percent wage compensation during their paternity leave, and the use of such benefits is frequent. In Norway, the implementation of use-or-lose benefits improved the rate of use from 5 to 70 percent among Norwegian men (Gornick and Meyers 2003). Similar results have

been found in Iceland, where since 2000 the government has offered three months of nontransferable paid parental leave for both mothers and fathers and an additional three months of paid leave that can be transferred between parents. In 2004, 90 percent of Icelandic fathers took advantage of leave benefits (O'Brien et al. 2007).

In the United States, state programs provide useful models for other states and federal policymakers interested in improving paternity leave options or encouraging men to play a more active role in care work. Beginning in 2004, Californians could take up to six reimbursed weeks off to bond with a new child or care for family members through the PFL program (Levine 2008). New Jersey's TDI program also allows workers to take up to six weeks off upon the arrival of a new child (Levine 2008). In Washington, beginning in October 2009, workers employed by firms with more than 25 employees are eligible to be partially compensated through the state's family leave insurance program for up to five weeks of job-protected leave coinciding with the arrival of a new child (Levine 2008). Though none of these programs specifically targets men, they do make it easier for them to take time off work to bond with a new child. Until paid paternity leave is federally mandated or incentives are offered at the state or federal level, the job of encouraging men to take paternity leave may fall to employers who are in a position to offer paid benefits and create a culture in which men feel comfortable taking advantage of them.

Domestic Violence Prevention Programs: A New Role for Men

Until somewhat recently, family violence was seen as something that occurred in the private sphere and, therefore, did not require a public response. The landmark 1994 *Violence Against Women Act* (VAWA) represented an unprecedented change in federal domestic violence policy in that it systematically addressed violence against women for the first time by creating new penalties for gender-related violence, improving the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence, and funding prevention programs and services for victims (H.R. 3355). Since 1994, the rate of non-fatal violence against women has decreased significantly, indicating the legislation's success, though domestic violence still presents significant costs to society

(more than \$5.8 billion annually) and to the hundreds of thousands of individuals who are victimized each year (Catalano 2007; CDC 2003).

The 2005 reauthorization of VAWA included the “Engaging Men and Youth in Prevention” program, which is intended to fund efforts to involve nonviolent men in violence prevention (H.R. 3402). Historically, men have committed the vast majority of domestic violence and are estimated to have perpetrated at least 85 percent of current domestic violence cases, which is why many advocates view men as a necessary part of the solution (Campaign for Funding to End Domestic and Sexual Violence 2008). The 2005 reauthorization of VAWA included \$10 million for the Engaging Men and Youth in Prevention program for each of fiscal years 2007–2011, though the program was funded for the first time in fiscal year 2008 at only \$2.82 million, limiting the efforts that the grant program could support (OVW).

These federal funds will support programs similar to the Coaching Boys into Men campaign. The Family Violence Prevention Fund, which was described by the Prevention Institute as “a national leader in policy advocacy to end violence against women and children” (2006, 36), launched the campaign in 2002 with the intention of using sports as a medium through which men could teach boys about healthy relationships in an effort to counter societal images and messages that condone family violence (FVPF). Endorsed by famous coaches like the Los Angeles Dodgers’ Joe Torre, University of Southern California men’s football coach, Pete Carroll, and M.L. Carr of the Boston Celtics, *The Coaching Boys into Men Playbook* engages coaches in the dialogue by providing specific instructions for talking to players about relationship violence (CBIM 2005). The program, which received a mention in a Prevention Institute report recognizing promising violence prevention initiatives, indicates not only the willingness of some men to involve themselves in this sort of community care work, but also speaks to the role that men can play in teaching boys that violence against women is wrong and preventing abuse from occurring in future generations (Prevention Institute 2006).

In addition to trying to prevent adult domestic violence, Coaching Boys into Men also combats dating violence among adolescents. A study by the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 10 percent of students surveyed reported being physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past year, and research indicates that youths who experience dating violence are more likely to be in violent relationships as adults (OVW; Theriot 2008). By targeting young men, Coaching Boys into Men focuses on a group that is at a higher risk for violent behavior due to their age and gender and responds to recommendations from stakeholders like Jeffrey Edleson, director of the Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse, who has called for prevention programs for young men that involve "mentoring and educational programming that focus on young men's individual and group knowledge, attitudes and behavior" (Edleson 2000).

Though Coaching Boys into Men's focus on young male athletes is a new approach, prevention programs targeting adolescents of both genders in school and community environments are well established. On the whole, evaluations of youth-based prevention programs find that they are effective in raising awareness of dating violence, combating destructive beliefs about gender norms and abuse, and actually reducing instances of violence (Theriot 2008; Edleson 2000). A 14-school study of Safe Dates, a school- and community-based violence prevention program that targets adolescents of both genders with a 10-session curriculum, found 25 percent less psychological abuse, 60 percent less sexual violence, and 60 percent less dating violence in treatment schools than in control schools one month after the five-month study had ended (Foshee et al. 1998). Though a formal evaluation of the Coaching Boys into Men program has not been conducted, the Family Violence Prevention Fund reports that since 2000, the rate of men who report talking to boys who are not their children about violence has risen from 29 to 55 percent (FVPF). An independent evaluation of the program would help to determine if it is producing similar effects to those that target youth of both genders and could inform decisions about replicating the model.

External Benefits from a Shared Strategy

Though there has been little research examining the effect of family and paternity leave programs on domestic violence prevention and care work-

oriented domestic violence prevention efforts on the care gap, I argue that, in addition to addressing the target issue, each policy response would likely have external benefits, or positive side effects, for the other issue as all of the policies and programs discussed facilitate the development of healthy, respectful relationships through increased male care work. Due to the complex nature of both problems and the fact that domestic violence perpetrators should not be recruited for care work, it is unlikely that a sole care work initiative could address both issues. However, if family and paternity leave programs and care work–oriented domestic violence prevention programs were implemented simultaneously, they would likely be mutually reinforcing due to the external benefits discussed below.

Family Leave, Domestic Care Work, and Domestic Violence Prevention

Concentrated efforts to engage men in domestic care work through family and paternity leave programs would help continue the reworking of traditional roles and promote equality in the home. Additionally, such efforts may have external benefits for domestic violence prevention through the disruption of the unequal domestic power dynamics that contribute to cycles of violence. According to feminist economic theory, as the household becomes more egalitarian, threat points for both sexes may become more similar as shifts in bargaining power contribute to increased equality. With this in mind, policies protecting the economic independence of victims of abuse have become popular in both the advocacy community and among policymakers. Existing federal legislation addressing domestic violence in the workplace addresses the challenges of keeping a job while facing domestic and sexual abuse or stalking by providing victims with leave options and protecting them from discrimination (Laney 2008).

Though financial independence for victims is viewed as a crucial step in breaking cycles of violence, there has been less attention paid to the idea that involving men in care work might also help to shift power dynamics in the home. According to Cheryl Doss, “both economic factors, such as income and wealth, and institutional factors, such as laws and social norms, may be sources of bargaining power” (2003, 47). A division of labor in which men increase their participation in caregiving and women increase their

participation in the market would help to shift bargaining power in favor of women by contributing to economic factors on a micro level and institutional factors on a macro level. Though women have entered the market in large numbers, which has presumably increased bargaining power and raised threat points, most men have not decreased their labor market participation or increased their care work, which has, in theory, done little to adjust their bargaining power or threat points. A more equitable division of labor would, theoretically, give women more power as male bargaining power decreased comparatively through the adjustment of social norms and, in some cases, economic factors. However, an economic adjustment would only occur if men's market participation decreased and was replaced with increased care work in the home.

Family leave programs have the potential to make men more available for domestic care work, which could, in turn, positively affect the power dynamics that contribute to family violence. This is not to say that involving men in care work would end family violence or to presume that unequal power dynamics are the only contributors to domestic abuse. However, it is possible that increased male care work has the potential to alter factors that feed cycles of violence and perhaps contribute to an adjustment of the patriarchal social norms that sanction such behavior. Additionally, as men become increasingly involved in care work, their presence in the home could set an example of egalitarian behavior that, like the Coaching Boys into Men program, may have a positive impact on the behavior of their children.

Domestic Violence Prevention Programs and the Care Gap

Domestic violence prevention programs involving male care work could also have external benefits for domestic care work and equality. Programs that call on nonviolent men to teach boys about healthy relationships intend to prevent domestic abuse in future generations by challenging the societal messages that condone violence and creating new norms with regard to romantic relationships. If effective, the messages and values conveyed from one generation of men to the next could help to reduce or eliminate violence in future relationships by fostering attitudes of respect toward

women. Assuming that there is a connection between healthy, respectful relationships and balanced divisions of household labor, these programs could have a positive impact on household gender relations in future generations.

By calling on men to use their influence to change the way boys think about women and relationships, programs like Coaching Boys into Men assign them a critically important role in addressing the domestic violence epidemic. This work, which can best be described as care work, may have an effect on the men who serve as role models as well as the boys they influence. The training and information made available to program participants could help them gain a deeper understanding of the unequal power dynamics that exist in society, encourage them to fully embrace their positions as role models and teachers, and apply those lessons to their own lives by becoming more supportive husbands and fathers.

Conclusion

As feminist economic theory has highlighted, traditional divisions of household labor have contributed to power dynamics and gender norms that exacerbate family violence and place the responsibility of care on women. As a result, American families today face separate but related problems in the care gap and the domestic violence epidemic. Male care work has the potential to help repair the damaged gender relations that contribute to these overlapping problems by helping to create and promote more respectful, egalitarian relationships and, in the process, redefine gender roles and norms. Policymakers should support family and paternity leave initiatives and domestic violence prevention programs that utilize male care work, not only as an approach to each individual problem, but also for the possible external benefits for other social problems stemming from gender inequality.

Men becoming more involved in caring for children and performing household labor would take the burden off working mothers and facilitate an egalitarian approach to finding a work-family balance in households. Since there is no way for policymakers to regulate household divisions of labor, the most effective way to encourage and enable men to assume ad-

ditional care work is through family and paternity leave policies. Though most parents have access to unpaid family leave through FMLA, this option is not realistic for parents with financial or job security concerns and does not provide any incentive for men to take time off to care for family members. Paternity leave policies, if implemented correctly, could encourage and enable men to become more involved with their children from the start. Early involvement in child care would assist the development of emotional bonds that, with the help of paid family leave, could result in increased male care work throughout their children's upbringing. If these policies are successful in facilitating male care work, a positive change in gender norms and roles would likely result.

Since the majority of domestic abuse has historically been committed by men against women, men have a unique and critical role to play in stopping the cycle of violence and preventing domestic abuse from occurring in future generations. Domestic violence prevention programs, like Coaching Boys into Men, give nonviolent men an opportunity to perform care work outside the home by teaching boys about healthy relationships and working to change social norms that condone family violence and disrespectful attitudes toward women and girls. These prevention programs, if successful, have the potential to reduce violence and assist in the reworking of gender norms for both the current and future generation. This is not to say that the only cause of domestic violence is unequal household power dynamics or unbalanced gender roles, but instead to assert that these factors can worsen situations in which violence is already present and contribute to societal acceptance of such behavior. Prevention programs, therefore, have the promise to reduce and prevent violence in individual households and society at large.

As this paper has illustrated, these policy approaches are likely to have external benefits due to their shared strategy of getting men more involved in care work. Family leave policies incentivizing male care work at home could have an impact on domestic violence prevention by altering threat points and adjusting bargaining power, and therefore, changing the household power dynamics that fuel domestic violence. Domestic violence pre-

vention programs that rely on male care work outside the home could contribute to a reduction in the care gap by instilling egalitarian values in the next generation. While these policies could be implemented individually or together, the more important underlying goal is putting policies in place that involve men in care work in an attempt to change the gender inequalities that are at the heart of these problems.

While there is some evidence that gender norms are evolving and that men are becoming increasingly involved in care work, policies are needed to continue this progress. Family leave policies and domestic violence prevention programs are uniquely positioned to advance the role of men in care work and facilitate a reworking of the gender norms that contribute to both problems. Paid family and paternity leave is a necessary part of achieving this goal, and as a start, progressive state family leave policy approaches should be considered on a federal level and the failed initiatives of the 110th Congress should be reexamined. The effectiveness of prevention programs focusing on male youth should be explored and the existing VAWA program, Engaging Men and Youth in Prevention, needs to be fully funded in order to have the greatest impact. Male care work is a critical part of an effective approach to two major problems affecting American families and has the potential to improve damaged gender relations in this generation and those to come.

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