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CULTURE, SOCIETY & MASCULINITY

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RESEARCH ON MASCULINITIES IN GERMAN-SPEAKING COUNTRIES:
DEVELOPMENTS, DISCUSSIONS AND RESEARCH THEMES

ABSTRACT This paper focuses on the development and the “state of the art” of masculinity studies in the German-speaking countries (Austria, Germany, Switzerland). It concentrates on social sciences, with further attention to historical and pedagogical studies. First it is described how men’s studies (Männerforschung) developed: starting as a mélange of male (therapeutic) self-reflection and scientific analysis before becoming part of “normal science.” Second, it discusses two central theoretical frameworks and their interrelation, Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity and Bourdieu’s analysis of male dominance. Third, the paper reports on current focal concerns of German-speaking masculinity studies: fatherhood, changes in males’ occupational relationships, migrant masculinities, educational underachieving, and changing military masculinities. The paper shows how these concerns are influenced by societal and political developments in the region.

KEYWORDS GERMAN-SPEAKING COUNTRIES, HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY, HABITUS, FATHERHOOD, EMPLOYMENT, MIGRATION, EDUCATION

It is very often difficult to determine exactly when a new field of research emerged. New questions develop out of existing discourses, and the notion of a new field “emerging” pertains more to an observation made in retrospect rather than to an intentional launching. Concerning the field of masculinity studies, another difficulty is that no general consensus exists on, first, what is to be labeled as scientific research on masculinity or masculinities and, second, whether the term “masculinity studies” is to be used in a wide sense, encompassing all research dealing with men, or, more narrowly, critical studies on men and masculinities.

As in other countries, research on men and masculinities developed in relation and reaction to women’s studies. In 1978, ten years before discussion of men’s studies took place within German women’s studies (see below), the first German survey about men was published by sociologist Helge Pross. This...
study was funded by the best-selling German women’s magazine *Brigitte*. Pross did not consider her study to be part of feminist research, the research frame being the sex role paradigm. Pross (pp. 9-10) criticized the “double one-sidedness” or double bias of the scientific as well as the popular gender discourse: a concentration on “women’s questions” as “discussed by women for women with women only.” Therefore, she continued, “we know a lot about how women live and about changes in women’s lives, but little about how these changes affect men.” The study, dealing with men’s self-images and their images of women, appeared when German women’s studies was in its founding years. This might be the reason why the recommendation to add men to the agenda of gender research remained unheard for the time being. A 1986 follow-up survey, also funded by *Brigitte*, was published by Sigrid Metz-Göckel and Ursula Müller, this time explicitly located within the frame of women’s studies.

At the same time when the first study by Pross appeared, Klaus Theweleit (1977, 1978) published the two-volume work *Männerphantasien* (translated as “Male Fantasies,” 1987, 1989), about men’s images of women, their body images, and interdependencies between masculinity, violence, fascism, and misogyny. Theweleit’s study was widely recognized in the emerging public discourses on masculinity, which included the publication of a series of books on masculinity, located between social analysis, guidance and self-reflection. Masculinity indeed became a subject of public discourse, which was, until the end of the 1980s, predominantly a discourse of male deficits (Meuser, 2006). This is expressed in titles like *The Misery of Masculinity* (Vinnai, 1977) and *Men Let Love—The Addiction to Women* (Wieck, 1987). The bulk of this literature belonged to the genre of pop psychology, but it helped pave the road for establishing men’s studies as a scientific endeavor.

**BECOMING NORMAL SCIENCE:**

**WOMEN’S STUDIES, MEN’S STUDIES, GENDER STUDIES**

First steps toward establishing the field of masculinity studies in academia were made at the end of the 1980s. In 1988, sociologist Walter Hollstein published a book about the “future of men.” Although not a social scientific work in a strict sense, this book informed about the state of Anglo-Saxon research on masculinity. In the 1990s research on masculinity slowly grew. In 1993, a book on “Male Socialization” was published by educationalists Lothar Böhnisch and Reinhard Winter (1993) and became a main sourcebook for German men’s studies in the 1990s. From 1993 to 1997, I was in charge of the first research project on masculinity, which was funded by the German Research Foundation—the leading funding organization for scientific research in Germany. This qualitative study entailed a discursive analytic analysis of emerging popular discourses on masculinity, based on group discussions with men across age groups and the socio-economic spectrum (Behnke, 1997; Behnke & Meuser, 2001; Meuser, 2003, 2006).
In 1994, a survey about Austrian men was published by Paul Zulehner and Andrea Slama. In 1998, Paul Zulehner and Rainer Volz (1998) published a report about the results of an additional survey focusing on changes in men’s lives in Germany. With the three surveys by Pross (1978), Metz-Göckel and Müller (1986), and Zulehner and Volz (1998), we have data on men’s lives in Germany spanning three decades, enabling a comparative analysis of continuities and changes. Data, however, are limited to attitudes and opinions, the main focus of the surveys. Consequently, it remains debated whether the considerable attitudinal changes encountered—away from hegemonic masculinity toward more egalitarian understandings of gender relations—have resulted in a change of everyday practices. Additional qualitative research on a general level (Meuser, 2006) as well as across various social fields (see section 3 below) allows a discussion of this topic on empirical grounds.

Appropriately, in the first decade of the 21st century, masculinity became more and more an empirical conundrum in sociology, history, educational science, cultural studies, literature and other humanities. Anthologies provide another indication that a new field of research was emerging and growing. The first German anthology on Critical Men’s Studies appeared in 1996 (BauSteine-Männer, 1996). The book contains contributions of German authors (all male) and translations of key Anglophone texts, among them the programmatic article by Carrigan, Connell, and Lee (1985) Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity, which introduced the notion of hegemonic masculinity, and situated critical men’s studies at the interface of social science and political commentary. Men’s studies would have to be critical of gender, social science, patriarchy, feminism and of itself (Beier, 1996, pp. 333-334).

In the same year the first German historical anthology on men’s/masculinity studies was edited by Thomas Kühne (1996). This book comprises articles of German and Swiss historians (men and women) dealing with changing masculinities in modernity. Contrary to the anthology mentioned above, it is strictly located within social history. It seems not to be incidental that, during this founding phase of men’s studies in the German-speaking countries, the discussion was more politicized in social and cultural sciences than in history; keeping a distanced perspective on pertinent subjects proved easier when not part of the researcher’s contemporary world. In the following years further anthologies appeared in history (Dinges, 1998a, 2005a) and social sciences (Bereswill, Meuser, & Scholz, 2007a; Bosse & King, 2000; Döge & Meuser, 2001; Luedtke & Baur, 2008), containing contributions by Austrian, German and Swiss authors.

Research on masculinity is now a growing field, but hardly institutionalized in academia (Martschukat & Stieglitz, 2005, p. 51). Looking back at twenty years of German men’s studies, we can observe an ongoing (social) scientification: research on masculinity was progressively disengaged from male self-reflection and men’s “movement” and made part of “normal” science, open to
male and female researchers. This development was substantially promoted by the founding of the “Study Group of Interdisciplinary Men’s and Gender Studies—AIM Gender” in 1999, by historian Martin Dinges.

In the beginning, men’s studies were sceptically received within women’s studies circles. Before men’s studies properly emerged, a debate took place in the new “women’s studies” chapter of the German Sociological Association about whether men and masculinities should be a theme in women’s studies, whether research on men could be guided by methodological principles of women’s studies, and whether to acknowledge male researchers. These questions proved highly controversial (Hagemann-White & Rerrich, 1988), and the discussion produced major tension within women’s studies (Bereswill, Meuser, & Scholz, 2007b). At this time, German women’s studies scholars were quite sceptical of men’s studies, if not dismissive. It was not until the mid-1990s that the relation between women’s and men’s studies began to ease off. An international congress, titled “New Horizons,” held at the University of Bielefeld in 1994, was a major factor in this process. It brought together feminist scholars and protagonists of men’s studies, among them Raewyn Connell, Rosemary Crompton, Jeff Hearn, Victor Seidler, Mary Maynard, and Sylvia Walby.

In women’s studies discussions, controversy characterized sociology more than it did historical studies. At the beginning of the 1990s, resuming earlier discussions from the mid-1980s, Karin Hausen and Heide Wunder (prominent German feminist historians) stated, that “a men’s history designed analogously to women’s history, is still missing” (1992, p. 11). Both women’s and men’s history would be indispensable parts of gender history. This view was shared by Hanna Schissler (1992) reporting on the state of U.S. men’s studies in the journal Geschichte und Gesellschaft (History and Society). The focus on masculinity was easier to integrate in historical gender studies than in sociology; in the beginning integration was mainly promoted by female historians (Dinges, 1998b, p. 8).

From 2000 onward, the research on masculinity became more and more a self-evident part of gender studies. Masculinities were examined in two special issues of Feministische Studien (Feminist Studies, 18[2], 2000, and 24[2], 2006). The legitimacy and the necessity of research on masculinity was no longer

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1 In the beginning of German Men’s Studies, a number of scholars, self-identified as partial to the men’s movement, claimed that, at least in the founding phase, women should not be permitted to join men’s studies’ conferences, working groups and other meetings. However, within the purview of social science, this was a minority position.
2 Arbeitskreis für Interdisziplinäre Männer- und Geschlechterforschung (http://www.ruendal.de/aim/gender.html).
3 For a comparable scepticism addressed at Anglo-Saxon men’s studies, see Canaan and Griffin (1990).
4 Some of the contributions are documented in Armbruster, Müller, and Stein-Hilbers (1995).
questioned (Erhart, 2005, pp. 157-158). According to Andrea Maihofer (2006), “men’s studies contribute significantly to widening the scope of gender studies (p. 69).” The integration of men’s studies into gender studies was facilitated by the fact that the “women’s studies” chapters of several professional organizations were renamed to “women’s and gender studies.” According to Rebekka Habermas (2002, p. 236), the term gender was conducive to the development of men’s history and, we can add, of men’s studies generally (Meuser, 2004). From 2000 onward, dialogues between women’s studies and men’s studies took place across a variety of disciplines (compare for example Aulenbacher et al., 2006; Janshen, 2000; Wacker & Rieger-Goertz, 2006).

Up to this point I have described the development of German men’s studies as an internal academic affair. But it is also a reaction of social science to the changing position of men in society. Research on masculinity emerged when men’s positions in the gender order were increasingly questioned, which reflects that male dominance is no longer taken for granted. In this sense men’s studies can be considered a “crisis science.” Incidentally, for ten years it has been common in German newspapers to speak of a crisis of men. Recently, the public focus is particularly on boys’ underachievement in school, on male adolescent violence and on changing father roles. Whether these phenomena and developments amount to a crisis in the sociological sense of the term (i.e. lacking essential continuity) remains to be seen. It is important to note at this point that “crisis” in media and political discourse may be importantly implicated in the race for research funds. This is instrumental in establishing the field of masculinity studies, but it is not an unproblematic instrumentality, because it could hamper a research agenda grounded in scientific structures of relevance, rather than strictly in political ones. Regardless, it seems, men as gendered beings have come into political focus.5

GERMAN VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES ON THEORY

In establishing an agenda for academic research on masculinities, concepts initially developed in Anglophone men’s studies were appropriated in German-speaking countries. I will analyze this for a number of concepts below, tracing the ways they were importantly criticized and elaborated in the process.

HEGEMONY

As in many other countries, hegemonic masculinity is the most discussed concept. It is a major concept in sociology and pedagogical sciences, with a further important role in historical studies (compare Martschukat & Stieglitz, 2005; 5 Illustratively, a 2004 issue of the weekly newspaper of the German parliament focused on “men in society” for 15 of its 24 pages (Das Parlament 54, No. 46, November 8, 2004).
Schmale, 2003, and contributions in Dinges, 2005a). When German men’s studies emerged, the mentioned article by Carrigan, Connell, and Lee (1985) and Connell’s Gender and Power (1987) had been published. Thus, from early on, the discussion was focused on the concept of hegemonic masculinity. The German translation of Connell’s Masculinities (1995) in 1999 remains one of the best-selling books. The concept of hegemony is widely used in sociology as well as in the humanities (Dinges, 2005a). According to Christa Hämmerle (2005, p. 103), the notion of hegemonic masculinity is at present a widely noticed concept also in historical studies: “It is clearly the most frequently used framework for conceptualizing masculinity as a relational and a processual category—at least superficially, i.e., as a postulate.” But this success story implicates that the concept tends to be used in an inflationary way—perhaps comparable to the ethnomethodological notion of doing gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The distinction between hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization, conceived as different modes of masculinity, is often neglected. Sometimes all forms of male domination are identified as “hegemonic” masculinity. It has been suggested that this conflation is caused by conceptual blurring; however, this discussion is not specific to Germany and has accompanied the concept from its inception (compare for example Donaldson, 1993; Hearn, 2004). Historian Martin Dinges (2005b, p. 12) assumes that the vagueness of the concept is in fact the reason for its becoming the leading paradigm in (German) men’s studies.

A debate arising especially in the German-speaking countries, especially among historians (Dinges, 2005a; Schmale, 2003), questions whether hegemony befits descriptions of formations of masculinity in pre-modern societies as well as in modern societies. According to Dinges (2005b), Connell’s assumption that hegemonic masculinity arose in the 15th century, when the modern individual entered social consciousness, is a challenge to historians. This assumption raises the question how to name dominant masculinities in pre-modern times. Dinges asserts that Connell overgeneralizes the West-European way to modernity. In his History of Masculinity in Europe, Wolfgang Schmale (2003) argues that what may be called hegemonic masculinity structures social praxis only from the 19th century onward. The time from the late 18th to mid-20th century can consequently be viewed an “era of the model of hegemonic masculinity” (p. 9). According to Schmale, to become hegemonic a cultural figuration must have a specific structure; “systemic thinking” and communication across frontiers can accordingly be seen as preconditions of hegemonic masculinity (p. 153).

Referring to the point that hegemonic masculinity is constructed not only in relation to women and femininity, but also in homosocial relations and in contradistinction to other masculinities, Michael Meuser and Sylka Scholz

6 3rd ed., 2006. The German title, Der gemachte Mann (Connell, 1999) is a play on words. Literally it means “the constructed man,” but as idiomatic expression it denotes an economically successful man.
(2005) have argued that two conditions must be met to legitimize use of the term hegemonic masculinity—first, a socially stratified society with relations of inequality between male members. This was surely prevalent in medieval and also ancient societies. But these societies miss a second condition: substantial degrees of social mobility. Only when this additional condition is met, one kind of masculinity can become hegemonic to other masculinities. If we adapt “hegemony” from Antonio Gramsci’s work on economic classes, as Connell does, hegemony does not simply denote domination of one group over another; it rather refers to a culturally accomplished implicit accordance of the subordinated group with its subordinated position. This is only possible in societies where some interpenetration between social strata exists, so that values and perspectives of the dominant class are at least partially adopted by the subordinated ones. It remains open to debate whether this was the case in pre-modern societies. Historian Andrea Moshövel (2005, p. 63) observes a “variety of medieval sketches of masculinity” but hesitates fully adapting the concept of hegemony to pre-modern masculinities. Inquiring into these masculinities, she argues, contributes to a better understanding of present ideas of hegemonic gender. In feudal societies, estates were not only separated legally, but corresponding ways of living were also clearly contradistinguished. From the perspective of historiography, Dinges (2005b, p. 29) differentiates between “dominant” and “hegemonic masculinity,” the latter denoting a specifically modern dynamic.

Related to the concept of hegemonic masculinity, another topic of the discussion is whether it should refer to a singular or a plural configuration (Armbuster, 1993; Scholz, 2001). This is, again, not a specifically German topic, but the history of post WW-II Germany sheds a particularly bright light on it. Due to different family politics in the communist East and the capitalist West during four decades of separation, divergent constructions of masculinity can be discerned. Particularly the male breadwinner role was, and remains, not as much emphasized in the East as in the West (Scholz, 2004, 2005a). Even two decades after reunification, there are still certain cultural gaps between the western and the eastern part of Germany. We can observe, very generally, not only an economic dominance, but also a cultural hegemony of the West over the East. Here we may have to reckon with context-specific hegemonic masculinities, that is: not a singular hegemonic masculinity defined by the West-German mode of masculinity construction, but additionally an East-German hegemonic masculinity with partially different standards of being a man (Brandes, 2002, pp. 161-190; Scholz, 2001). Hence, we may ask, does the general cul-

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7 An instructive example is found in the study of historian Ute Frevert (1991; English translation 1995) about the institution of the duel. Frevert shows how, at the end of the 18th century, masculinity codes among the gentry became hegemonic in the student milieu, at a time when formerly enforced borders between estates begun to become permeable.
tural hegemony of the West lead to a transforming of the East-German (hegemonic) masculinity according to western standards, at least in the long run? Speaking from discourse analytic perspectives we can add the question whether the discussion itself is determined by a discursive hegemony of the West.

Holger Brandes (2002, pp. 182-190) contrasted a middle-class oriented hegemonic masculinity in the West with a working-class oriented hegemonic masculinity in the East. The western type is determined “by the living conditions and aesthetic standards of the middle and upper class. Ownership of economic capital, occupational success in terms of an individual career, and nearness to political, economic and cultural power are most important” (p. 183). This description corresponds to the picture of hegemonic masculinity drawn by Connell (1993). Due to the hegemonic status the socialist ideology of the former German Democratic Republic assigned to the working class, a distinctly proletarian masculinity formed a cultural ideal that continues to have an effect. This masculinity is less individualized and more collectivity-oriented than the western one. Nevertheless, both masculinities are essentially work centered; paid work is the main focus of masculinity constructions in East and West (see also Salzwedel & Scholz, 2000; Scholz, 2005a). Broadly, the distinguishing features include individualism versus collectivity, and (middle versus working) class. In interviews conducted by Brandes, East-German men distanced themselves from the West-German type of masculinity. Nonetheless, according to Brandes, West-German shades of masculinity became more and more hegemonic after reunification.

**HOMOSOCIALITIES**

According to Connell, hegemonic masculinity is constructed in heterosocial as well as in homosocial relations. Michael Kimmel (1996, p. 7) contends that “masculinity is largely a homosocial enactment.” Discussing the significance of homosocial relations for constructions of masculinity, the notion of the “Männerbund” (institutionized forms of male bonding) has figured importantly in German masculinity studies, especially for historians and cultural anthropologists (Reulecke, 2001; Völger & Welck, 1990). According to Martschukat and Stieglitz (2005, pp. 143-144), the Männerbund is a specific German type of male bonding the historical-theoretical properties of which can not be generalized to other societies; moreover, Männerbünde played a very ambivalent role in German history. The early 20th century youth movement was organized around the concept, but also the National Socialist Party, which proposed a specific nationalist ideology of male bonding (Reulecke, 1990). For historians, but also for sociologists, the institution of the Männerbund is an instructive topic for inquiring into the relation of masculinity and nationality (Sombart, 1996).

Referring to group discussions with men, Cornelia Behnke and Michael Meuser (2001) show, how homosociality finds and maintains existential secu-
rity for men as individuals. Within homosocial settings men mutually assure themselves what a (normal) man has to be like. Usually, masculinity is not fig‐
ured through explicit discursive but rather embedded in the flow of general talk. The homosocial group has been described as a “collective agent” in the
construction of difference and of hegemonic masculinity. Especially in an epoch in
which the dominance of men is more and more questioned, male homo‐
sociality is to reinforce male hegemony. Homosociality gradually acquires the
function of refuge, where men can reinstate correctness and normality of
shared perspectives on the gender order. Thus the changing gender order can
be “normalized,” at least symbolically (Meuser, 2006).

HABITUS

Besides Connell’s work, Pierre Bourdieu’s (1990, 1998) article and book
about male dominance were translated into German (in 1997 and 2005, re‐
spectively) and became a main point of reference in German-speaking mas‐
culinity studies, and gender studies more broadly. The impact of Bourdieu’s
work is not limited to gender studies; he is one of the most widely read schol‐
ars in German social sciences generally. There are three aspects in Bourdieu’s
analysis of masculinity that proved to be highly influential: the notion of mas‐
culine habitus, the idea of incorporation, and the thesis that masculinity is con‐
structed within the serious games of competition played among men. Referring
to these aspects, the relation of Bourdieu’s understanding of male dominance
to Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity has been discussed in recent
years.

In the mentioned article and book, Bourdieu extends the notion of habitus,
originally related to the class structure, to gender relations. Bourdieu’s term
“masculine habitus” (l’habitus masculin; 1990, p. 26) was elaborated by Brandes
(2002, p. 76) and defined as “embodied masculine praxis.” Focusing on incor‐
poration, it would explain how individuals become disposed to acting accord‐
ing to the given gender order (Brandes, p. 22). I have proposed elsewhere to
connect the approaches by Bourdieu and Connell and suggest conceiving hege‐
monic masculinity as the generating principle of the masculine habitus
(Meuser, 2006, pp. 121-134). This means differentiating between (1) hegemonic
masculinity as that kind of “masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position
in a given pattern of gender relations” (Connell, 1995, p. 76) and (2) hegemonic
masculinity as the generating principle of masculinity that is also effective in
producing subordinated masculinities. These two readings are often con‐
founded. Not all dominance of men constitutes hegemonic masculinity. Ac‐
cording to Bourdieu (1990, p. 26), the masculine habitus is “constructed and
accomplished only in connection with the space that is reserved for men, a
space in which, among men, the serious games of competition are played.” En‐
gaging with this view, my own recent research focuses on the competitive
structure of masculinity and the homosocial character of the settings in which
competition takes place. A central thesis is that competing does not separate men from each other, but also ties them together (Meuser, 2006, 2007).

In “Which Way is Up,” published 25 years ago, Connell (1983) criticized Bourdieu’s social theory for focusing too much on explaining how social structures are reproduced, and for neglecting the problem of agency. In a recent article there is only a short remark on Bourdieu’s analysis of male dominance. Bourdieu is criticized for giving “a new lease on life to functionalism in gender analysis” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 844). In contrast, the wider German discussion tends rather to underscore affinity between the approaches (Brandes, 2002; Budde, 2005; Kontos & May, 2008; Martschukat & Stieglitz, 2005; Meuser, 2006; Meuser & Scholz, 2005). The following fundamental congruencies are emphasized:

- Despite differences in observing tension between structure and agency, both approaches can be characterized as kinds of praxeology (i.e., seeing practices, not structures as the basic unit of social analysis).
- Both approaches state that masculinity is constructed according to a dual relationality: a heterosocial and a homosocial.
- In both approaches each of these relationalities is determined by structural elements of distinction and dominance; they both focus on power relations.

Illustratively, historians Jürgen Martschukat and Olaf Stieglitz (2005, p. 57) see Bourdieu’s analysis of masculine dominance as a “theoretical specification” of Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity. By combining both approaches, Silvia Kontos and Michael May (2008, p. 3) attempt “to define an analytical framework for current gender relations.” Meuser and Scholz (2005, pp. 224-225) furthermore argue that Bourdieu’s analysis of masculine dominance, by stressing the impact of incorporation, is better suited than is Connell’s approach to explain the astonishing persistence of established patterns of masculinity, which is more motivated by trusting in the impact of consciousness raising. However, in view of current developments in capitalist societies and the wider global economy, Lothar Böhnisch (2003, pp. 61-70) asks for the limitation of both concepts. He refutes the idea of a univocal masculine habitus. Masculinity becomes increasingly ambiguous because it “no longer [is] institutionally preconditioned” (Böhnisch, 2003, p. 85).8

We may conclude that the influence of Bourdieu’s work on masculinity studies seems to be stronger in the German-speaking than in Anglophone world. Especially scholars stressing the persistence of established gender relations, refer to Bourdieu in order to theorize coincidence of changes and conti-

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8 In October 2007, Raewyn Connell discussed the concept of hegemonic masculinity in a colloquium held at the Centrum Gender Studies of the University of Basel, Switzerland, and organized by Andrea Maihofer, Michael Meuser, and Katharina Pühl.
nuities. The discussion on how to cross-theorize Bourdieu’s and Connell’s work seems to be an important German contribution to the further development of masculinity studies. It helps to correct a tendency, in parts of the field, to overemphasize agency while underestimating structure. Looking through the lenses of Bourdieu’s social theory, it becomes apparent that the interest in change which guides a good deal of men’s studies scholarship often results in illusions about changing masculinities.

**Current Topics of Research**

Although masculinity studies is still marginally institutionalized in academia, the spectrum of research is quite extensive in the German-speaking countries. This section will concentrate on currently predominant focal concerns and show how some of these are influenced by societal and political developments. These focal concerns are in no way unique to German masculinity studies, but, due to specific societal and political circumstances, they require acknowledgment of a range of others dimensions.

**East and West**

A subject unique to Germany has been mentioned in the preceding section: the necessity to look at differences between East-German and West-German masculinities. This necessity extends beyond a pertinence to theory, to sociological mapping of men’s discourses. On the basis of narrative interviews with East-German men, Sylka Scholz (2004) points to differences between biographies and identity constructions. She relates specific problems of East-German men with building and maintaining a masculine identity to the crash of the labor market of the GDR after 1990. She analyzes constructions of masculinity in a system where, due to a nearly equal employment rate of men and women, the figure of the male breadwinner seemed to have lost much of its material basis. Nonetheless, the full integration of women into the employment system did not change a process well known from the history of modern masculinity construction: associating masculine identity with occupational work. A higher degree of males’ involvement into family work, compared to men in West-Germany, did not alter this pattern. Remarkably, the men interviewed by Scholz did not disclose their engagement in family work until explicitly queried on this subject. It appears that they had no other vocabulary at hand for presenting themselves as men than the semantics of occupational labor.

**Fathering**

Fatherhood is an expanding field of research in sociology, psychology, and educational science in German-speaking countries (Bereswill, Scheiwe, & Wolde, 2006; Drinck, 2005; Helfferich, Klindworth, & Kruse, 2005; Matzner,
2004; Mühling & Rost, 2007; Walter, 2002; Wolde, 2007). The new scientific attention to fatherhood is at least partly promoted by recent directions in family politics. Especially in Germany, family politics no longer strictly addresses mothers (as until recently). For example, new German legislation on parental leave (introduced in 2007) extends the time from 12 to 14 months for two-parent families if both parents participate. The new political interest in fathers as caregivers provides new research resources and venues. The bulk of this research was conducted within recent years. In 2005, fatherhood was the subject of a special edition of the Zeitschrift für Familienforschung (Journal of Family Research) entitled “Men—the ‘Neglected’ Gender in Family Research” (Tölke & Hank, 2005). It is notable that family research increasingly looks at fatherhood in terms of gender and masculinity, and that masculinity studies is discovering fatherhood as an important research site.

The new research interest in fatherhood is not only induced by new directions in family politics. It must also be seen as a reaction to and reflection of the decline of the male breadwinner model, which is challenged by two interrelated developments: growing maternal employment rates and increasing discontinuity in males’ employment contracts. The larger part of this research addresses changing attitudes toward fatherhood. It clearly reveals that the majority of men see themselves more as caretaker than as breadwinner (Fthenakis & Minsel, 2002). Inquiring deeper into fathers’ self-images, Michael Matzner (2004, pp. 339-435) distinguishes four contemporary “subjective concepts of fatherhood”: “the traditional breadwinner,” “the modern breadwinner,” “the holistic father,” and “the family-centered father.”

Research on the everyday fathering in families settings however is sparse. One exception is a study by Peter Döge (2006) about time-use-patterns of German men, based on German Federal Statistical Office data about time budgets in 5,400 households. It showed that the average time of paternal participation in domestic work and spending time with children increased 28 minutes per week within the 1991/92 to 2001/02 decade. It is difficult to interpret whether this indicates change of the division of domestic labor. Occupational work does remain the core of masculine identity formation, and there is also a strong tendency toward a more traditional division of labor among families at the time of a first child’s birth.

A special focus of qualitative research on fatherhood is on masculinity constructions of so-called “new fathers” (Buschmeyer, 2008; Kassner, 2008). These studies explore facilitating as well as delimiting factors in involved fatherhood. An important facilitating condition is a biographic trajectory beyond the “normal masculine biography”: a trajectory not revolving around an occupational career (Kassner & Rüling, 2005; Oberndorfer & Rost, 2002). Involved fatherhood challenges the hegemonic images of male employeeship, exclusively committed to his job. New forms of fatherhood must be enforced against the still prevailing expectation of an unbounded disposability of men for the labor market (Born & Krüger, 2002).
Historic research on fatherhood contributes to an increasingly nuanced image of the patriarchal father, and of the bourgeois father as “absent.” It seems incorrect, for instance, to characterize the early modern period as an undifferentiated “patriarchal epoch” (Martschukat & Stieglitz, 2005, pp. 109-114; Schmidt, 1998). Anne-Charlott Trepp (1996a, 1996b) shows that at the beginning of the bourgeois society in the late 18th and early 19th century fathers participated much more in family life as the model of the male breadwinner suggests. She describes these fathers as “affectionate fathers,” interacting equally with daughters and sons (Trepp, 1996b, p. 38). But during the 19th century the type of father whose gender role was defined “in his job and through it by his status-giving and income-earning functions for the family” (Parsons & Bales, 1955, pp. 14-15), became more and more normative.

**EMPLOYMENT**

As in many other parts of the western world, the male breadwinner model is losing ground in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. One reason, mentioned above, is increasing discontinuity of males’ employment contracts. Due to the serious transformations of the structures of paid labor and the downsizing of the welfare state (especially in Germany), however, the family is no longer the only realm where traditional constructions of hegemonic masculinity are challenged (Puchert, Gärtner, & Höyng, 2005). In contrast to fatherhood, there is as yet little research on these realms. Gender studies focusing on structural changes in paid labor and employment with few exceptions focus exclusively on women. It is suggested, however, that the growing precariousness of males’ employment implicates new uncertainties. Given that in industrial societies masculine identities tend to be anchored in occupational roles and career trajectories, it is to be expected that these uncertainties affect men’s gender identity. This is confirmed by research on indefinitely unemployed men (Eggert, 1987; Heinemeier, 1992) and by a recent study of Klaus Dörre (2005) about male temporary workers (temps) in the auto industry. These skilled workers regard their work at the assembly line as “inferior work. Some of them talk deprecatingly of ‘women’s work’” (p. 190). According to Dörre, these temps face the problem that their colleague’s respect is only temporary and must be obtained anew again and again. The occupational relationships of temps are precarious not only in an economic sense, but also concerning their social-communicative implications.

Considering the fact that in the German-speaking countries the “standard” employment scheme (lifelong employment, social security guaranteed by the welfare state), although waning, is still the basis of masculinity construction, it seems obvious that the decline of this scheme challenges hegemonic masculinity. Many workplaces in male dominated occupations lose their former homosocial character. Male bonding in the occupational sphere is an increasingly complicated affair (King, 2000). As in other social realms, in the occupa-
tional sphere masculinity tends to lose its grip on its traditional institutional territory (Meuser, 2007, pp. 33-48).

The growing uncertainties in occupational relationships are not unique to Germany. But considering that new situations of uncertainty stand in sharp contrast to former security based on the expectation of lifelong employment, it is an important task to look at national differences in coping with uncertainties. Are the consequences for masculinity constructions different in countries like the United States or Great Britain where the labor market was never as much regulated by the welfare state than in Germany?

**Migrants**

Although Austria, Germany and Switzerland are factually immigrant countries, a substantial part of the population (together with a few politicians) denies that they are. In public discussions about social migration-related problems, the “deviant” masculine style of certain male migrants was put on the agenda. In Germany, the figure of the “problematic” migrant is embodied by the young man of Turkish origin. A study of Susanne Spindler (2006, 2007) about criminalized young Turkish men shows that for these men gender figures as a major status marker, in a specific and double sense. On the one hand, from these men’s point of view, masculine excess, especially violence, is one of the few options they have in dealing with marginalization, discrimination and exclusion. On the other hand, the *autochthon* majority projects a patriarchal masculinity onto migrants who are regarded as oppressors of their sisters, girlfriends and wives. This discourse is not limited to “violent Turkish men.”

It is generalized to all those migrants whose mores, in the light of perceived cultural idiosyncracy, are regarded as antiquated or pre-modern. Autochthon hegemonic masculinity presents itself as contrastive to this: modern, enlightened and “civilized.” Thus, “the hegemonic discourse on the ‘Turkish Muslim man’ can be seen as part of the construction of masculinity in Germany” (Scheibelhofer, 2008, p. 183; italics in the original).

Hermann Tertilt (1996) offered an enlightening ethnographic study on a male Turkish youth gang in Frankfurt, the “Turkish Power Boys,” revealing how gender and ethnicity intersect. The gang typically selected young *German men* as victims of their violent acts. The gang members accounted for this by pointing to their own experiences of discrimination by the German majority and by reference to male honor, which prohibits attacking women. Research reveals that, although the ideal of male honor is important in the social milieus of Turkish immigrants, young men of Turkish origin find different ways for positioning themselves vis-à-vis this ideal. A key factor is immigrant success in the German educational system (Bohsack, Loos & Przyborsky, 2001; Scheibelhofer, 2008). Research further reveals that orienting oneself toward ideals of male honor does not necessarily result in an embodied hegemonic masculinity, but can equally sustain subordinated and marginalized masculinities (Meuser, 2006, pp. 126-129).
Research on the relation of masculinity and ethnicity is evidently centered on socially underprivileged and marginalized male migrants. Due to marginalization their masculinity is “marked,” both to themselves and to the autochthon majority; it is ethnicized (Huxel, 2008). Yet in the European Union the majority of younger migrants belongs to the middle class and can claim high educational achievement (Kreutzer & Roth, 2006, p. 9). Strikingly, there is no research about the relation of masculinity and ethnicity in this population. The social position of highly qualified male migrants is not noticeably marked by their masculinity—seemingly not ethnicized. In theorizing (hegemonic) masculinity in terms of intersectionality, it seems to be fruitful to widen the scope from marginalized underclass migrants to more “integrated” middle-class migrants. It would also be fruitful to compare ethnicized masculinities in Germany with ethnicized masculinities in countries characterized by specific migration histories, like the United States or Canada.

EDUCATION

As in other countries, masculinity has become a central dimension of German educational research and discussion during the last years. This research was initiated by what are perceived as two acute educational and social problems and as challenges to established educational praxis: growing rates of underachieving male pupils, and their “problematic social behavior” (Stamm, 2008). A common explanation for underachieving points to feminization of school-based teaching (Diefenbach & Klein, 2002). School culture would be engineered by female teachers according to “female values.” They would expect and validate typical female behavior more than they would typical male behavior, leaving boys disengaged and unmotivated. A further explanation of underachieving is the absence of male role models, especially in primary schools. This would impede boys to feel “at home” in schools and classrooms. Some scholars call for a “boy-friendly school” (Preuss-Lausitz, 2005). This discussion carries the tone of high alarm, eagerly picked up by the press, and asks whether boys are the contemporary “girls” discriminated against in schools. Not few feminists perceive this change of the public discourse on gender and discrimination as indicating backlash.

Margit Stamm (2008) proposes a nuanced view, acknowledging men’s studies insights, in suggesting that masculinity is not a uniform formation. According to Stamm, most of the German discussion about underachieving boys fails to focus on social background because it is too narrowly concentrated on school. Accordingly, discussions are misleadingly dichotomized, juxtaposing the boys and the girls and obscuring more substantial differences caused by ethnic and socio-economic status. Vera King (2005) points to the interrelation of failure in school and an emphasized masculinity among young male migrants while masculinity researchers in educational science regard the school as a central place of constructing (hegemonic) masculinity (Budde, 2005;
Michalek, 2006). The intersection of masculinity and adolescence is a fruitful subject of pedagogical research on gender (King & Flaake, 2005; Jösting, 2005). Waltraud Cornelißen (2004, p. 7), for instance, refers to the salience of boys’ images of women. Boys who devalue women would have severe problems in and with school, whereas boys with an egalitarian gender attitude would profit from interaction with female teachers as well as girls.

MILITARY MASCULINITIES

A further topic with a specific relation to recent political developments especially in Germany is the (arguably) changing construction of masculinity in military. Men’s history research reveals that, in Germany and Austria, the military was one of the central institutions of masculinity formation in the 19th and 20th century until the end of the Second World War (Frevert, 1996; Hanisch, 2005, pp. 17-98; Schmale, 2003, pp. 195-204). According to Ute Frevert (1997), it constituted the “masculinity school,” and, as Karen Hagemann (1996) shows, a main feature of the “curriculum” was the strong interrelation of masculinity and patriotism. Christa Hämmerle (2005) argues that during the First World War military masculinity was a singularized and exclusively hegemonic form of masculinity.

Traditional notions of military masculinity are challenged by two recent changes in the German military: participation in international peace keeping actions, mandated by the United Nations since the mid-1990s, and access of women to combat units, enabled by a ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Communities in 2000. Referring to the mentioned developments, Maja Apelt and Cordula Dittmer (2007) observe a change in military masculinity toward an internal differentiation and pluralization. Peacekeeping demands a disbanding of notions of the heroic warrior, as it requires political, social, diplomatic, intercultural and economic competences. Enforcing peace, this “modern” soldier must still be willing to use his weapons. The new military masculinity must integrate prosocial behavior as well as toughness and rigidity. Given inclusion of women into combat units, it is asked how this affects the military as a homosocial context. The growing rate of young men who, whether or not as a conscientious objection, do not serve military duty, is another factor in the continuity of the military’s role in gender constructions (Apelt, 2006; Scholz, 2005b; Seifert, 2002).

I have highlighted some current topics of masculinity research, which are influenced by societal and political developments in the German-speaking countries. Of course, there are further topics which deserve highlighting. As in men’s studies generally, the interrelation of violence and masculinity is an important subject. Whether violence constitutes a “male resource” requires subtle consideration of men as committers and victims (Bereswill, 2003; Jungnitz, et al., 2007; Kersten, 1997; Meuser, 2002). A specific focus here is violence among young right wing nationalist men in Germany (Mölle, 2000, 2008). The relation
between men’s health and masculinity has begun to be analyzed in areas such as medical history, medical sociology and public health care (Bründel & Hurrelmann, 1999; Dinges, 2007). Research on male sexuality remains underdeveloped (Pohl, 2004), specifically the interrelations between masculinity and homosexuality (Heilmann, 2002). Finally, with an eye on the world championship 2006 in Germany and the European Championship 2008 in Austria and Switzerland, football (soccer) has become a prominent research venue for masculinity researchers—as an “arena of masculinity” (Kreisky & Spitaler, 2006; for an overview see Meuser, 2008).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Regional overviews of the state of masculinity studies, as offered for German-speaking countries in the preceding sections, are inevitably biased by authors’ affinity with traditional disciplines (sociology, in my case). Moreover, no broad regional overview can be complete, and contributions from the purview of psychology, literature, linguistics, theology, et cetera, may in future overviews supplement the present. The selectivity of this overview cannot be justified other than by considering that social and historical sciences first promoted masculinity as a topic of research, in the German-speaking countries as well as Anglophone masculinity studies. However, in researching masculinity one can draw from a spectrum of disciplines, including, for instance, historical and pedagogical sciences.

Not all research reviewed in the third section is located in men’s or masculinity studies, nor do all authors quoted actively consider themselves as scholars in men’s or gender studies. Males’ ways of living, their biographies, the problems they encounter and the ones they cause are more and more recognized as viable research topics outside of “gender studies” proper. The new focus on fatherhood in “family-centered” research is probably the best example here. Masculinity today tends to lose the exotic glow it had to 1990s mainstream social scientists. Some scholars in men’s studies might see this as a kind of expropriation by the mainstream, “harvesting” what they “seeded.” But it is my impression that it might well indicate a beginning (German) success story, when, for instance, family research becomes interested in fathers as men, or when industrial sociology begins to inquire into the consequences of growing uncertainties in employment for masculine identity formation.

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