Europe is a multi-nation continent. Although most of Europe is a contiguous landmass, there is a great amount of historical, cultural and linguistic diversity amongst and within European countries, and thus among both men and studies on men across these localities. National contexts often bring their own national ethnocentrism and over-emphases on an assumed, taken-for-granted or overstated homogeneity. This is, however, being challenged, especially in the “centres” of the former European empires, with their increasingly confident postcolonial black and minority ethnic populations.

The roots of studies on men lie with feminism and men’s responses to feminism, but the form of feminism varies, both in comparison with other parts of the world and between European countries. In Europe, feminism, and men’s responses to it, has in many national contexts been more closely aligned to the state than the market. This would seem to follow from the relative development of state intervention and the welfare state in many European countries. This is most clearly seen in the Nordic countries, as in the phenomenon of state feminism, and, in a very different way, in the countries of the former Soviet bloc.

At the same time, feminists have often mobilized against the state, importantly so, for example, in Germany, Ireland, and the UK. This is seen in the no-
tion of the autonomous women’s movements and in feminist organizing against men’s violence in those parts of the women’s shelter movement operating outside the state, or against state curbing of reproductive rights. State policy reform has been a key part of feminist theory and practice in many parts of Europe. These matters provide key political contexts for studies of men, which are thereby relatively closely aligned to state policy, especially social policy reform. This is clearest in the Nordic case, where there has been a close relation to equality politics and broad societal surveys, as well as attention to the more positive aspects and potentials of men for change, and the diversity of men’s practices and positions, for example on fatherhood.

These features are in keeping with differing structures and ideologies in relation to state, market and civil society. Gender politics in Europe, even with the very large national and regional variations noted and compared with some other parts of the world, often involves a rather close engagement with the state, state reform, social policy and welfare issues. This is even though in some of the former Soviet bloc countries there is now a clear distrust in the state and faith in the market’s ability to solve social problems. This thus highlights again the complexity of gender politics.

**European Contexts**

Our focus here is on the position and impact of men in the context of changing societal dynamics within Europe (Hearn & Pringle, 2006). This builds on earlier work on women’s gendered relations to culture(s) in European contexts. Our perspective regards “cultures” as relatively stable, but nevertheless contested, dynamic configurations of beliefs and practices. We seek to rectify the relative neglect and yet gradually growing analysis of gendered economic, political, cultural, welfare and state regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. A similar relative neglect applies to Southern regions of Europe, compared to attention paid to Northern and Western regions.

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1 This article arises partly from the work of the Research Network on Men in Europe, a 14-nation network of feminist and profeminist researchers researching collaboratively on the study of men’s practices. The Network has led to the creation of Critical Research on Men in Europe (CROME) (http://www.cromenet.org). Though the planning began much earlier, the Network formally began under the title “The Social Problem and Societal Problematisation of Men and Masculinities,” funded 2000-2003 by the Research Directorate of the European Commission Framework 5 Programme (Hearn et al., 2004). It continued as part of the Coordination Action on Human Rights Violation within the EU Framework 6 Programme (http://www.cahrv.uni-osnabrueck.de). The Network comprises researchers, initially from Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, and the UK, and subsequently also Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain and Sweden. Various research and publishing collaborations continue.
The notion of culture has been deployed in many ways within European contexts, often to explain “other” cultures as well as European ones. These include: characterizing the social life of nation-states as supposedly “gender-neutral,” even though it is men who are often foregrounded, and explaining and justifying men’s actions, especially men’s negative actions, such as violence to women. In all such uses, we can ask—whose culture is being invoked, and how are these references gendered, implicitly or explicitly, in relation to men and masculinities? More precisely, do “national” or “regional cultures,” in fact, refer to (particular) men’s cultures?

There are many complex ways in which gendered power relations associated with dominant forms of masculinity are entering the processes whereby the European Union (EU), its member states and associated countries are seeking to redefine what is “Europe” and what it is to be “European.” Research attention in Northern, Southern and Western Europe has focused far more on “the problems that men endure” compared to the attention devoted to “the problems that men create.” The EU research and policy approach to men’s practices has largely mirrored this imbalance in concerning itself more with issues such as reducing limitations on men as caregivers and improving men’s working conditions and health, rather than on topics such as men’s violence to women and children.

While some shifts are occurring in the EU’s approach, EU policy and research priorities still remain tilted in favor of the “problems that men endure.” Even EU attention to the trafficking of women, pornography and the sexual exploitation of children betrays these priorities. In the past that attention largely focused on the activities of EU citizens (mainly men) outside EU territory, typically in parts of Central and Eastern Europe, and South and East Asia. This emphasis obscured the systematic abuse and exploitation of women and children within the EU-15 (Pringle, 1998). Now that some countries in Central and Eastern Europe are themselves EU members, the development of EU policy on these issues is of considerable interest.

In the past, the EU and its member states frequently separated the issue of trafficking women and children from prostitution and pornography; moreover, policy debate around trafficking has often been dealt with in the broader context of policies on inward migration. This association, even confusion in policy

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2 The EU-15 comprised Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom. The 2004 accession countries to the EU-25 were Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania joined in 2007. The current candidate countries are Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the potential candidate countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo. Following the financial crisis of 2008 there have been, as yet unofficial, reports of possible “fast-tracking” of Iceland to EU membership by 2011.
terms, along with the allied topic of racism, demonstrates how power relations associated with dominant forms of masculinity enter into constructions of “Europe” as an idea. Racism is widespread throughout Europe, even if its precise configurations vary from one national context to another. Yet, the issue of dominant forms of masculinity is remarkably absent in debates on racism in Europe; the relative silence about men’s practices and racism in European academic and policy debate is particularly noteworthy. Often central to the issues of racism and how EU member states treat migrants are questions about what “Europe” is, who is “European,” and who “more European”—who is “other”? Such questions may often be partly about “whose masculinity” is “purer” or “superior.” Yet both the pre-2004 member states of the EU and the European Commission itself have largely avoided facing those highly gendered issues in their policies in combating racism and addressing migration. The role of power relations associated with dominant forms of masculinity in the “creation of Europe”—including both pre-2004 and more recent member states—has thus been obscured and ignored.

In recent years the position of Moslems has become especially problematic for many in the Christian, white, western supposed “centre(s)” — even though Moslems comprise a large and long established set of communities in some regions of “Europe.” As with other taken-for-granted dominant “centres” (Hearn, 1996), Europe or Europeans rarely deconstruct themselves in reference to the discourses of eastern “elsewheres”: the Orient, Asia, Africa, and so on. However, collective framings, discourses and memories on a European scale across national borders are becoming more clearly articulated, whether in terms of the Holocaust, the EU as a legal entity, “parliamentary democracy” or difference from other powers and continents. Paradoxically, at the cultural level, Europe is both affirming a coherent identity in relation to “others” and blurring its own divisions of “east” and “west.”

Historically, European nation-states have developed divergently, establishing differing civil societies and so constructing and re-constructing different men, masculinities and men’s practices. Within the rapidly changing and gendered configurations of Europe there are multiple variations, and moreover complications and contradictions. Some clear differences exist in recent political history between the following: the countries of the EU-15; those of Western Europe outside the EU (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland); those ten countries that have joined the EU-25 in 2004; those awaiting accession; and

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3 On its own website, the EU is described as: … a family of democratic European countries, committed to working together for peace and prosperity. It is not a State intended to replace existing states, but it is more than any other international organization. The EU is, in fact, unique. Its Member States have set up common institutions to which they delegate some of their sovereignty so that decisions on specific matters of joint interest can be made democratically at European level. This pooling of sovereignty is also called “European integration” (emphasis in original) (http://europa.eu.int/abc/index_en.htm).
those not in the accession process. These last three categories include both the previously communist regimes and those that were not—in sum eight different geopolitical areas (Pringle et al., 2006).

However, there remains over-generalizing about men’s practices within the complex context of political, economic and social restructurings. In considering regional comparisons, it is important to minimize “Western European-centrism” so as not to make Western European nation-states or welfare states the reference point against which to compare experiences and outcomes elsewhere in Europe. A recent World Economic Forum Report (Lopez-Claros & Zahidi, 2005) concluded that the five Nordic countries lead in women’s empowerment, in terms of economic, political, educational, and health and wellbeing measures. Yet, at the same time, major dominations of men persist in these countries, for example, in business, violence, the military, academia and religion (Balkmar, Iovanni, & Pringle, 2008; Hearn, 2002, 2003; Hearn & Pringle, 2006; Pringle, 2005). Similarly, while Trifiletti (1999) offers a thoroughly persuasive feminist analysis of gender relations within the welfare structures of Southern Europe, she cautions against over-simplistic assessments using purely north-west European frames of reference.

**CONTRADICTIONS**

Various contradictions, both within gender relations, and between gender relations and other social relations, persist; these are major barriers to generalization. Various trajectories in economic, religious or cultural power are part of the production of not just complications but indeed contradictions in gender relations around men and masculinities.

A first set of contradictions, and a further caveat regarding generalization, concerns the multiple and complex impacts of social changes from beyond societies. Analysis of gender, men and women requires a long-term comparative historical analysis of how cultural meanings of gender have been constituted, stabilized and destabilized in specific settings. National histories represent extremely rich, yet still under-researched potential archives for the investigation of the place of men’s relations in gender orders (Novikova et al., 2003, 2005). Dominance remains a key dimension of social structures in those European countries whose gender relations have historically been part of diverse European imperial configurations characterized by large-scale inequalities. Most states and cultures of Central and Eastern Europe, together with their perceived Europeanness, have been historically shaped by forces of exclusion and marginalization, as well as by shared peripherality to various historical political blocs: German, Russian, British, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires.

Over the last two decades, labor and gender inequalities have been restructured across Europe in interdependent, often contradictory ways through the interplay of quite divergent political economic systems—most obviously, the former socialist or Soviet system and the developing capitalist, often neo-
liberal system. This has involved changing forms of transnational economic restructuring, labor migration and domestic service across shifting borders, with gender hierarchies, including those among men, produced and maintained in relation to transnational circuits of labor mobilization and capital accumulation. Transnational (trans-European) labor migration, with its gender hierarchies, confronts welfare policies. These material contexts above importantly frame the producing of gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming within national and supranational agendas in Europe, and especially in and of the EU. In Central and Eastern Europe, these intersect with and may contradict post-socialist reformist agendas, with national machineries defusing gender challenges. Issues of men and masculinities in East-central Europe, the Baltic states and the countries of New Independent Commonwealth need to be contextualised with regard to such regional and national tensions. The same applies to the way the gendering of cultures and nations has “organized” variable routes into modern formations of nation-state and citizenship. In such post-colonial contexts some categories of men have benefited markedly, whether through a reinforcement of traditional family authority or economic success, while others, for example, ex-military, ethnic minority, and unemployed men, have experienced major destabilizing changes in their lives.

Looking ahead, great gender uncertainty and contradictions continue. The pattern of alliances around the Iraq War and debates on the EU Constitution and budget may suggest new cleavages between east and west, between “Old Europe” and “New Europe.” Possible inter-societal divisions may be accompanied by growing polarization among men within some nations, tendencies toward greater marginalization of the poor and greater accumulation for the rich. The extent to which dominant power relations can be subverted in the societal transformation processes in Central and Eastern Europe will be crucial for the well-being of all living there, especially women and children, but also men.

Even more complex questions apply to rapidly changing, economic, political, cultural and gendered configurations in Turkey, the Balkans, the Middle East, the huge Asian expanses of the Russian Federation, and the Central Asian Republics, and their often ambiguous relations to more narrowly defined or more broadly defined notions of “Europe.” There are also growing attempts to redefine Europe, politically and economically in relation to China and Africa. Meanwhile, both state militarism and non-state terrorism, both heavily dominated by men, are not only being brought to the everyday life, streets, subways and airports of Europe but are also ways of defining “the West”/“Europe” and “the East,” and producing “Europe” as a new collective actor in foreign policy, as well as the ongoing production of “others.”

National Contexts

Studies on men vary greatly in volume and detail of research across national contexts, especially regarding how research has been framed as well as
Substantive differences in men’s societal position and social practices. There is huge variation in the relative position of men and women across European countries. For example, male earned income in 2005 was higher than female earned income by approximately 24% in Norway and 30% in Sweden, in contrast to 90% in Ireland and 112% in Italy (UNDP, 2007, Table 28).

The framing of research refers to the extent to which research on men has been conducted directly and in an explicitly gendered way: first, through feminist scholarship, women’s studies and gender research; second, within gay and queer theory; and third, through a focus on and presentations of the “voices” of men. Nuances stem from different theoretical, methodological and disciplinary emphases, assumptions and decisions (Connell, Hearn, & Kimmel, 2005; Kimmel, Hearn, & Connell, eds., 2005). In most European countries research on men is still relatively new yet in a state of gradual development. The overall extent of national research resources seems to be a factor affecting the extent of research on men. In some countries, especially in Germany, Norway, Sweden, and the UK, and to some extent elsewhere, it can be said that there is now a relatively established tradition of research on men, albeit with different methodological orientations. While the greatest development of quantitative studies on men has been in Germany and the UK, there have been important developments in all countries. This applies especially to Norway and Sweden, to an extent in Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Italy, less so in the transitional nations (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and the Russian Federation). In most countries, though there may not be a very large body of research focused on men, considerable analysis of men is nevertheless available when drawing on sources that do not have an intended or explicit focus on men.

There are also some striking contrasts between the types of topics that have been researched across these and other countries. For example, the problem of men’s violence has gained far greater research attention in Germany and the UK than has been the case in the Nordic countries. In the latter, questions of men and childcare, fatherhood and home-work relations have been more centre-stage. Such differences seem, at first, to be connected as much to differing explicit political traditions and ideologies as to the size of the problem of violence per se in the countries concerned. Having said that, seen in an historical perspective, the scale and extent of violence are certainly major determinants of national political traditions and ideologies themselves.

Studies arise in political and academic traditions in studying men varying across nations, as well as historical conjunctions distinct for the lives of men. In some cases social changes have been profound. Most visible have been the German unification process; the post-socialist transition in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia and Poland; and in Ireland rapid social changes from a predominantly rural society through a booming economy, together with the political conflicts, challenges and changes in Northern Ireland. Finland, comparably, has experienced considerable change since the 1950s when people
moved from rural to suburban areas in search of work. This has been reflected in “lifestyle studies” and “misery studies” of class-based structural change. These research traditions, while not identified specifically as research on men, predominantly address patriarchal structures and changes in men’s lifestyles (Hearn & Lattu, 2002).

An interesting paradox arises in that the more focused, “gendered” research on men is done, the more visible gaps become in both specific fields and at general methodological levels. In many countries the situation is complicated by a deficit of the relevance of research to the analysis of men, and the extent to which that research is indeed analytically focused on men. For example, in Finland there is a considerable amount of relevant research but most of it has not specifically been located within the tradition of focused, gendered explicit research on men (see Hearn & Lattu, 2002). One might also see contrasts between the UK and Ireland, in terms of the amount and focus of research, even though they share some geographical, historical, social and linguistic features, or between Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, even though historically they have shared some features of broadly similar social democratic, relatively gender-equalitarian systems (a system now undergoing some change, especially in Denmark). This way of understanding variations between and within countries is more accurate than crude typologies of nations.

While overall, relatively many studies have been conducted on some research topics, there is much variation in the interrelations between research on men and feminist research. Research on men can furthermore be related to the historical timing and development of the women’s movement, and the extent of identification of “men” as a public political issue, for example, as objects and/or subjects of change. This is clear in the UK, where feminist and profeminist research has been influential in producing a sizeable research base (Pringle, 2006). In Norway there is growth of equal status policy development that is not specifically identified as feminist (Holter & Olsvik, 2000). In Sweden the gender equality project has had a clear impact on studies on men that might assist policy development in that direction. In Germany, as in most countries, both non-feminist and feminist traditions, or at least influences, can be seen (Pringle et al., 2006). Parts of the newly emerging German studies on men refer to feminist research in limited, even a distorting, way, with sometimes overt, sometimes more or less subtle, contempt for their results and theses—a challenge that has had to be dealt with by feminist and profeminist researchers (Müller, 2006).

For instance, Nordberg (2000, 2001) argues that in Sweden and the wider Nordic region men studying men commonly neglect feminist research and underplay power relations between men and women. She suggests that this neglect may be explained by the earlier disregard for men’s experiences within some gender studies, and because many male, and some female, researchers seem to consider that men are likely to be stereotyped in feminist research (Pringle et al., 2006). While in most countries there is evidence of the positive,
if sometimes indirect, impact of feminist scholarship on research on men, there
is a frequent underacknowledgment of its findings and insights. At the same
time, there is the question to what extent critical perspectives are embedded in
social science across national contexts. In Swedish social science, class has been
addressed more critically than racism, ethnicity, age, disability or lesbian and
gay issues, while close connections of class and ethnicity remain undertheo‐
rized. In the Nordic countries, social science and public discourse are, more
generally, not culturally attuned to conflict-based approaches. How men and
masculinities are addressed, critically or not, is affected by broad cultural con‐
texts. This pertains, for instance, to the shaping of consensus in many of the in‐
stitutions associated with the social democratic welfare project, Lutheranism,
incorporation of radicalism within the state, self-satisfaction in society, and so‐
cial science as an arm of the social democratic state.

Even with these various national and regional variations, it is important to
record the presence of very diverse, sometimes antagonistic approaches within
the same country, for example between non-gendered, non-feminist or even
anti-feminist approaches and gendered and feminist approaches. These dif‐
ferences pertain especially to diverse research topics and themes, for example,
research on men’s violences, or even on non-violence, may, understandably, be
more critical toward men, while research on men’s health may be more sym‐
pathetic to men. They also to some extent represent and reflect disciplinary,
epistemological and methodological differences in the analysis of men.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Transnational comparative research on European men has taken off but
there is scope for much more work on continuities and discontinuities between
cultural formations and (trans)national systems. We conclude with some key
issues that demand further exploration.

MEN’S RELATIONS TO POWER

One of the most pervasive aspects of men’s practices revealed by the Eu‐
ropean projects in which we have been involved, is the centrality of men’s re‐
lations in articulations of power. Data on men’s practices reveal the massive
negative impact of patriarchal relations of power across all societal sectors. The
importance of ongoing challenges to these persistent gendered relations of
power and privilege across Europe cannot be over-emphasized. There is an ob‐
vvious lack of attention to men in powerful positions and men’s broad relations
to power which needs to be urgently addressed.

UNITIES AND DIFFERENCES

There are both similarities between European nations and clear differences,
in terms of the extent of egalitarianism (both in relation to gender and more
generally); economic growth or downturn; post-socialist transformation; and strength of the women’s movement and gender politics. There are also differences between men in the same country: for example, West German men tend to be more “traditional” than East German men. Future research could examine regional variations among men within nations, for example, how different cultural contexts of Northern or Southern Italy have framed social relations associated with men.

**RECENT STRUCTURAL CHANGES**

Various (trans)national restructurings across Europe raise complex empirical and theoretical issues for analysis and reconceptualization of patriarchy and patriarchal social relations. This applies especially to the transitional nations, though one should not underestimate the significance of changes elsewhere, such as recovery from the early 1990s recession (Finland), late 1990s economic boom (Ireland), and the global financial crisis emerging from late 2008. There is a need for more focused attention on social changes in Europe, and how these reproduce or challenge existing patriarchal structures and practices.

**INTERCONNECTIONS, POWER AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

There are many important interrelations between aspects of men’s positions and experiences, and their impacts on women, children and other men. These are often under-explored, for instance, those between home, work, vio‐lences, health, and social exclusion (Hearn & Pringle, 2006). Men dominate key institutions, such as government, politics, management, trade unions, religion, sport, yet some men suffer considerable marginalization as suggested by rates of suicide, psychiatric illness and alcoholism. Mapping interrelations is very difficult but deserves more extensive inquiry in policy and research development. This implies moving beyond dyadic onto triadic and more complex connections. Intersections of gender with other power relations, such as “race,” ethnicity, age and disability, in the lives of men need much more attention. With regard to interrelations between fatherhood and men’s violences, in most parts of Western Europe a striking tendency exists to treat these as separate policy issues. Indeed, countries can be found that both enthusiastically promote fatherhood and address men’s violences, however without “joining up” the two issues. There is no contradiction, of course, between positively promoting men’s caring and emphasizing the prime requirement of protecting children from men’s violences (Pringle, 1998). Yet an integrated dual approach is rarely adopted: why this seems to be so hard to do remains to be addressed by researchers and policymakers.

**THEORETICAL, METHODOLOGICAL AND EMPIRICAL QUESTIONS**

Many theoretical issues are raised by cross-national inquiry. These include: the difficulty of construing comparative grounds; the relation of studies on
men to studies on women and gender; the extent to which research on men’s practices can be separated from other social science fields; and the relation of social science research and humanities and other research areas. Such concerns may refer to epistemological, methodological and practical conundrums. The taken-for-granted a-gendered ring to “society” continues to echo in both academic and everyday constructions; the implication is that men continue to be (un)seen as agendered: not a suitable focus for research. Some research is focused on men; some gendered but not necessarily in relation to men; some not focused specifically on men, and either not highlighting that it is studying men or not providing gendered analysis of men. There continues to be opacity in men’s talk about themselves, their identities and lives. It is often unclear what it means to men to acknowledge that their experience is sexed/gendered, thus discovering their partialities (as opposed to universality) and their alterities. Interrogating this is part of gendered empirical and theoretical social analysis. Across Europe there is a need for further consideration of theoretical issues with important material implications: Has it become more or less important to be a “man”? What does “being a man” mean both in terms of practices and discourses? What is the relationship between practices and discourses in this context? What are the relations between macro-level systems of power relations and the micro-level of individual men’s everyday engagements and understandings of their worlds? There is much to be done.

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