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I am most pleased to introduce The Men’s Studies Press’s fifth scholarly periodical, entitled *Culture, Society & Masculinities*. CS&M proposes a wide angle focus on men and masculinity, engaging with the full spectrum of social, cultural and international studies. The Men’s Studies Press specifically invites papers discussing questions and problems of scale and context in research and theory formation. This purview is to resonate with the endurably transdisciplinary as well as increasingly cross-contextual scope of “men/masculinities” as a research area. Indeed this resonance is likely to partake in the area debate that has characterized the theme from the late 1970s to date, as well as in the qualitative, reflective, and critical momentum of most of its theorizing.

The nation state as well as international relations, particularly, have been central dimensions in the study of male genders. Specifically, social geography, transnational institutions, international conflict studies, and anthropology have become well-established academic frameworks within which the particulars of male genders have been pursued. This academic dispersion in part suggests, in part requires, that gender questions are to be asked across many different settings worldwide, if a healthy querying of the transatlantic genealogy of many of these questions is to be achieved. A recent bibliographic exploration (Janssen, 2008) suggests this critical work is now well under way. However, with *transatlantic genealogy* we do not mean to say that there have not been fundamental dissonances between and within West-European and American ways of *thinking men*; indeed, here lies an ongoing historical project falling securely within the scope of CS&M.

How questions of scale relate to theoretical mobility remains a highly interesting topic for discussion as well. Raewyn Connell, one of the leading theorists of masculinity as a plural formation, has proposed a macro-sociological appraisal that would have to move “beyond” what had been the field’s “ethnographic moment” in the 1990s, and “proceed” with increasingly global topographies of institutions and networks—exemplified by the transnational corporation of late capitalism. Yet globalization, or more broadly the *worlding* of ideas, narratives and opinions, continues to intrigue sociologists, anthro-
pologists, and economists of gender, thus inviting ongoing dialogue and critique on how it should or may relate to theoretical ambition. Connell’s recent work on *Southern Theory* (2007) in fact caters very well to this question of theoretical plurality, and Connell agrees there is “no single formula that accounts for men and globalization” (2005, p. 1805). Others including Charlotte Hooper (2000) signal that internationalism necessarily translates to “multiple masculinities.” To anthropologists, moreover, “masculinity” pertains to profound as well as subtle variability in how local semantics of gender are thought to coagulate with global political discourses around and about genders. To proceed, then, may require an enduring attempt to map theory formation and mundane identity practices onto each other, to see at what scale both may (and perhaps: should) operate. That is to say, querying masculinity will refer as much to theories of culture as to cultures of theory. “Rather than assuming that universal theories can be translated across different cultures, we need to appreciate within a globalised world that we must engage with cultural, religious and spiritual traditions,” writes Victor Seidler (2006, p. 104).

Our inaugural issue lives up to CS&M’s internationalist scope, with contributions on Japan, India, Ghana, and Europe. Chris Forth, Romit Dasgupta, and Michael Meuser provide synoptic reviews of men/masculinities as a regionalized nexus of academic reflection and public concern: against the background of circum-Atlantic modernities, as challenged by the economic malaise of late modern corporate Japan, and within post-WW II German-speaking Europe, respectively. Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Michael P. K. Okyerefo and Michael Pervarah explore notions of biological paternity among urban Ghanaian men, relating ideas of manhood and virility to local metaphors and discourses of male performance, productivity, and ownership. Radhika Chopra explores why an analytic appraisal of the Indian figure of the *ghar jawai* (co-resident son-in-law) as a “househusband” is deficient, even though both are shamed figures of *ectopy*, of men out-of-place. Instead Chopra locates the *ghar jawai* within North Indian kinship and residence structures, but also examines how these structures hold up in migration communities. Her paper, thus, exposes translation problems at the level of sociological theorizing specifically where this theorizing is concerned with a mapping of gender onto other architectural elements of domestic sociality. Concluding this inaugural issue, Jeff Hearn and Keith Pringle sketch the contours of comparative critical research on men in Europe, with an eye on notions of “European-ness,” as well as on “continuities and discontinuities between cultural formations and (trans)national systems.”

To conclude, The Men’s Studies Press hopes CS&M will provide a stimulus to diverse and inclusive scholarship on themes involving men/masculinities. Moreover, we hope to honor research that engages critically with issues of “voice” and with the caveat of theoretical contraction, as briefly referred to above. Starting with two issues per year, we are looking forward to work with authors in sharing their research with their colleagues and wider academic audiences.
REFERENCES

SURVIVING OUR PARADOXES?
MASCU LINITY, MODERNITY, AND THE BODY

ABSTRACT This article contends that, as a complex experience with definite implications for the body, modern civilization exercises a double logic that promotes and supports the interests of elite males while at the same time threatening to undermine those interests by eroding the corporeal foundations of male privilege. This argument is developed by examining: 1) those places in the West where localized concerns about the declining power and fitness of male bodies have reflected transnational engagements with modern civilization; 2) the ways in which tensions between masculinity and civilization are played out in time and space; and 3) how these anxieties about bodies in the modern world have contributed to fantasies of “new men” since the eighteenth century.

KEYWORDS  MASCULINITY, CIVILIZATION, MODERNITY, CRISIS

Men here of the secret
they pass in upholstered silence
they only exist in crisis
they only exist in silence
past territorial piss-posts
past whispers in the closets
past screamin’ from the rooftops
we live to survive our paradoxes
we’ll live to survive our paradoxes


“Crisis” is perhaps the most common term used to describe the state of masculinity in the West today, with journalists, novelists, sociologists, psychologists and other scholars in numerous countries offering various accounts

a University of Kansas.

The author is grateful to the Editor for his invitation to contribute this article, and to Karen Downing and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions. This essay is based on a more encompassing analysis offered in Forth (2008).

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of the disquiet which many men have registered in recent years. As one might expect, the causes of this presumed diminishment of male status and confidence vary according to context. In certain countries, economic disruptions and financial insecurity are sometimes offered as reasons for male malaise; in others, observers point to the challenges posed by the moderate advances made by women, homosexuals and people of color since the liberationist movements of the 1960s and 70s (Faludi, 2000; Hearn & Pringle, 2006; Robinson, 2000; Savran, 1998). Yet as most scholars concur, problems relating to masculinity are not adequately resolved by using terms like “crisis.” After all, if there is no stable or non-critical period to be found prior to the disturbance in question (and historians have not found one), then the very idea of a crisis makes little sense (Connell, 1995, p. 84).

Nevertheless the discourse of gender crisis is a durable one. Some have approached alleged gender disruptions in a linguistic way, arguing that the rhetoric of crisis functions as a performative strategy seeking to bring about the very upheaval being described, whether as a reactionary attempt to shore up male privileges during periods when male authority is challenged (Robinson, 2000) or as an exercise in misandry by those who “want such a crisis to exist because they wish to redefine the male role and masculinity itself out of existence” (Phillips, 1999, p. xiii). This attention to language has the benefit of demonstrating the power of discourses to shape our views of the world; yet its usefulness for understanding how crisis rhetoric functions in different countries and periods is not entirely clear. In the United States, for instance, claims that manhood is in trouble have been mounting in recent decades, no doubt as a partial reaction to the modest gains made by women, homosexuals and people of color since the 1960s (Robinson, 2000; Savran, 1998).

Yet if crisis alerts are only reactions against the social and economic challenges posed by marginalized groups, how do we account for references to gender disturbance during periods when elite white men seemed to enjoy social, economic and political power with little or no serious challenges from women and men of other groups? For instance, in eighteenth-century Britain, debates about boxing crystallized ongoing disagreements about whether men should be polite and refined or aggressive and robust. While these differences reflected class-based views of the ideal body, each camp believed that the good of the nation depended on the quality of its men (Carter, 2001; Downing, 2008; Kuchta, 2003). In such cases, crisis-talk is not reducible to challenges mounted against “patriarchy,” but reflects tensions among different kinds of men competing to represent the authoritative version of masculinity.

Others engaging with gender crisis employ poststructuralist theories of subjectivity to argue that, given the constructed nature of the self, instability is endemic to any attempt to form a coherent and unified identity (Butler, 1990). There is much to be gained from viewing identity formation itself as being always unstable, incomplete, and perpetually open to challenges and disturbances. However (partly due to their reliance on psychoanalytic models), such
analyses often risk seeming ahistorical and thus not especially useful for those concerned with changing historical contexts. We still need to sketch the historical conditions of possibility that have made the discourse of gender crisis (whether or not this precise term is used) such a recurring component of modern life.

Beginning with the long-standing assumption that bodily difference is what undergirds and authorizes ideas about male supremacy, this article suggests that one reason the language of crisis recurs in the West is because the material and experiential circumstances that provide the framework through which certain men assert their dominance over women, children and other men are themselves fraught with contradictions that gnaw at the corporeal basis upon which androcentrism stands. In other words, the very male body that has been viewed as the bedrock of normative masculinity is subject to conditions that diminish its capacity to generate properly “masculine” practices and habits. In historical terms these conditions have developed in the Western world since the sixteenth century, and are often included under the umbrella term “modernity.” In its basic sense, this term denotes the rise of secular forms of political authority, large-scale monetary economies, the decline of religious world-views and the emergence of a secular, materialist and individualist ethos. With the end of the feudal order, traditional societies with fixed hierarchies gave way to more dynamic social relationships organized around class- and sex-based divisions of labor, particularly in countries where capitalism dominated.

Masculinity’s relationship to modernity is not as straightforward as some have claimed. Feminist scholars have rightly pointed out the ways in which modernization processes have often worked to the advantage of white male elites, creating social, political, economic, and representational structures that have historically allowed them to subjugate, control and marginalize women, proletarians, and people of other ethnic and racial groups (Traister, 2000). That modernization is intimately bound up with these “patriarchal” structures of domination is well supported and not disputed in this article. Indeed, the bourgeois association of manhood with reason and reduction of women to sheer corporeality has validated numerous exclusivist social discourses, of which the doctrine of “separate spheres” is one of the best known (Okin, 1979; Pateman, 1988). Yet to equate masculinity with male domination—and thus with the disembodied rationality privileged by bourgeois intellectual discourses—is to assume the relative stability of these features of modernity, as if the complexity of masculine identity can be exhausted in the socioeconomic control that men often perpetuate and from which they benefit. It is to assume that the bourgeois projection of disembodiment is a stable basis for masculinity as well as “patriarchy,” when in fact anxieties about the male body continue to haunt bourgeois manhood.¹

¹ Judith Butler (1993) captures the internal contradictions of disembodied masculinity:

This is a figure of disembodiment, but which is nevertheless a figure of a body, a bodying forth of a masculinized rationality, the figure of a male body which
The relationship between masculinity and modernity is better understood if the latter is approached in more complex terms. Many scholars agree that the changes generated by modernity and modernization processes have always been attended by resistance and ambiguity, not least because they threaten traditional institutions and habits while displacing people who are unable or unwilling to adapt (Bauman, 1991; Giddens, 1991). Like other vectors of difference including class and race, gender and other modes of identification are operative in a complex web of social relationships, institutional frameworks and representational schemes that have undergone a series of dislocations connected to the general experience of modernity. Modernization thus disrupts at the same time that it creates.

This understanding of modernity as being capable of generating complex and ambiguous effects has not gone unnoticed by social theorists and cultural critics. In fact, such responses have been registered since the earliest days of modernity itself, notably among those who perceived in the march of development the seemingly inevitable disruption of traditional practices, lifestyles and ideals (Bauman, 1991; Giddens, 1991). Attentive to the complex and contradictory ways in which people have engaged with the structural and perceptual changes effected by modernity, Marshal Berman (1995) provides a succinct and often-quoted description of this paradoxical situation: “To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are” (p. 13). To be sure, Berman’s work focuses on conventionally “masculine” activities and generally excludes women’s experiences (Felski, 1995). Yet his emphasis on the simultaneity of modernity’s diverse effects makes it difficult to conclude that masculinity can be so comfortably aligned with modernity-as-development as to remain unaffected by the experience of modernity-as-disruption. As I will outline in the pages that follow, a focus on the male body reveals just how fragile masculinity could be in relation to the lifestyle changes that effected and accompanied modernization, contributing to an almost structural instability about manhood in the modern world.

Put differently, the recurrence of “crisis” as a means of describing masculinity at various historical moments is to some extent made possible by the paradoxes that lurk at the heart of modernity’s relationship with a variety of ideals, including those pertaining to masculinity and the male body. After all, modernity is continually troubled by what Ulrich Beck (1997) describes as “counter-modernity,” a discourse that “absorbs, demonizes and dismisses the

is not a body, a figure in crisis, a figure that enacts a crisis it cannot fully control. This figuration of masculine reason as disembodied body is one whose imaginary morphology is crafted through the exclusion of other possible bodies. (pp. 48-49)
questions raised and repeated by modernity” by positing “constructed certitudes” in the face of the liquefying tendencies of modernization. Arising with and in reaction to modernity, counter-modern impulses seek to renaturalize many of the things that modernity sends into motion, often by imagining a new modernity purged of its unhealthy or “feminizing” components (Griffin, 2007). As Beck suggests, a more complex view of modernity would discover “the simultaneity of contradictions and dependencies of reflexively modern and counter-modern elements and structures in the image of ‘modern’ society” (pp. 63, 67). Insistence upon an elemental, embodied and recuperable masculinity lurking beneath the veneer of civilization is one of the most durable examples of a counter-modernity that asserts itself within and against modernity.

If masculinity is approached as a contingent norm “constituted by ever-present possibilities of abnormal deviation” (Surkis, 2006, p. 12), then the shifting contours of modern life provide some of the corporeal conditions of such deviation. This article contends that, as a complex experience with definite implications for the body, modern civilization exercises a double logic that promotes and supports the interests of elite males while at the same time threatening to undermine those interests by eroding the corporeal foundations of male privilege. This argument is developed by examining: 1) those places in the West where localized concerns about the declining power and fitness of male bodies have reflected transnational engagements with modern civilization; 2) the ways in which tensions between masculinity and civilization are played out in time and space; and 3) how these anxieties about bodies in the modern world have contributed to fantasies of “new men” since the eighteenth century. While space considerations permit no more than a very general overview of these issues, my hope is that, by considering the relationship between male bodies and modernity, we might be in a better position to contextualize the seemingly endless recurrence of gender crisis in the modern world.

Civilization and the Male Body

In most Western countries, bravery, strength, endurance and sexual potency have figured prominently in most lists of ideal male bodily attributes, as have grace, beauty and harmony of form. Yet this body has also been expected to perform more subtle functions. Historically speaking, the bodily and emotional boundaries of men and women have been often considered to be different, with the male body typically imagined as being more capable of resisting external influences, whether physical or moral. Saddled with the expectation of being capable of enduring discomfort, whether due to a harsh landscape, inclement weather, physical ailments, enemy armies or just irritating people, the male body is conceptualized as an ideally bounded entity, equipped with psychological and physical resources that maintain a sharp distinction between self and other while containing (or at least channeling) dimensions of emotional life, which in the case of men often include the feelings of fear, sorrow,
love and aggression. This emphasis on the ideally enclosed state of the body has increased since the early modern era, as Norbert Elias (2000) demonstrates. Under the best circumstances, the body functions as both the material foundation of moral qualities as well as a kind of armor for males in their dealings with the world. If the bounded male ego can be likened to a fortified “castle” or “tower of self,” then the body constitutes its psychosomatic stones and mortar (Easthope, 1990, pp. 35-44).

Concepts as slippery as “modern” and “modernity” are notoriously difficult to pin down (Friedman, 2001), and any interrogation of their implications for gender, sexuality and the body risks becoming a virtually endless task. The concept of “civilization” also eludes easy definition. Frequently connected to conceptions of the modern, almost as a synonym for intellectual, industrial and material development, it too has been defined and employed in numerous ways and to various ends (Bederman, 1995; Mazlish, 2004). Amidst all of this complexity, though, certain recurring themes emerge. Insofar as “civilization” is a term that cannot be separated from the development of cities and the distinctive styles of life made possible there, one may look for the deep beginnings of the tension between masculinity and civilization in the prehistoric shift from nomadic tribes during the Paleolithic era to the development of agriculture and settlements during the Neolithic. The myth of the rootless nomad as a male ideal has never ceased to fascinate and haunt more settled versions of masculinity, even though the practical opportunity and need for the hunter has receded as societies have grown more complex, not least due to the differentiation and specialization of tasks that the establishment of settled communities facilitated. From the perspectives of early settlements as well as more complex societies, wanderers often represented a suspicious and even dangerous existence beyond the reach of civil society (Alonso, 1994; Silverstein, 2002).

Despite these misgivings, the fantasy of becoming itinerant oneself has not ceased to captivate the imaginations of settled groups, especially among males. The spatial difference between the settled and the nomadic is paralleled in corporeal and psychological matters: at heart the difference between the villager or city dweller and the “wild” nomad pertains to vastly different perceptions of the management of bodily urges and comportment. One of the West’s most vivid and enduring myths pertains to the wild men (homo sylvestris, homines agrestes) whose imagined presence on the margins of civilized society has served as a counter-point to the customs promoted in the earliest human settlements. Like the physical urges and bodily excesses that had to be channeled or repressed for the sake of sociability and decorum, a continuing fascination with uncivilized and unsettled men has shadowed the civilizing process. As Robert Bartra (1994) suggests, “The man we recognize as civilized has been unable to take a single step without the shadow of the wild man at his heel…. The very idea of a contrast between a wild natural state and a civilized cultural configuration forms part of an ensemble of myths serving to sustain the identity of the civilized West” (pp. 3, 147).
Whereas a very general distinction between “civilized” and “primitive” or “savage” peoples has been around for millennia, “civilization” did not become a noun until the 1750s. As Jean Starobinski (1993) points out, this new term drew together the diverse expressions of a preexisting concept [i.e., the civilized]. That concept included such notions as improvements in comfort, advances in education, politer manners, cultivation of the arts and sciences, growth of commerce and industry, and acquisition of material goods and luxuries. The word referred first to the process that made individuals civilized (a preexisting term) and later to the cumulative result of that process. It served as a unifying concept. (pp. 3)

It also functioned as a durable concept that “could take on a pluralist, ethnological, relativistic meaning yet retain certain implications of the most general sort.” This broad definition of modern civilization not only acknowledges the interplay of continuity and change over time, but reflects some of the recurring complaints about the softer, more polite and seemingly more “effeminate” lifestyles that have become a common feature of “developed” countries throughout the modern era.

While Starobinski does not consider gender as informing the idea of civilization, closer examination yields some interesting tensions. Insofar as it functioned as a moral ideal, civilization was implicitly patriarchal: by insisting on the domestication of women it transformed mothers and wives into the moralizing agents of society while refusing them access to the world of politics, the professions and ideas (Bullard, 2000). It thus contributed to the restrictive doctrine of “separate spheres” that has structured much gender thinking in the modern era. Whereas civilization’s implications for the body have been characterized by both progress and decline, its effects on gender relations and representations are not so easily categorized. Elite males may have enjoyed almost exclusive access to the “public sphere” of politics, ideas, and the professions in a way that allowed them to marginalize women, proletarians, and men from other ethnic and racial groups. Yet the “masculinity” that was seemingly secured by this structural dominance was widely proclaimed to be diminished by distinctively “civilized” habits and lifestyles that weakened the body even as they facilitated male domination. Corporeal masculinity was not vouchsafed by the socio-economic power of elite males, but potentially undermined by the lifestyles that made such domination possible.

Modern civilization’s effects on the body have been many and varied. Just as new medical knowledge and initiatives have helped to ameliorate health problems, cure diseases, improve nutrition and extend longevity, the poor ventilation, inadequate sunshine and fresh air, sanitary problems, adulterated food and pollution that have accompanied urbanization and industrialization constitute negative indices of modernity’s impact upon health and well-being. While these issues broadly pertain to males as well as females, three developments implicit to the original concept of civilization have had profound impli-
cations for the male body and the vexed notions of masculinity that are attached to it. Refined manners and self-control, education and culture, and material comfort and luxuries: these three developments have continued to characterize the cultural trends of those developed urban societies commonly associated with the “West.” Sedentary lifestyles constitute a fourth development pertaining to the body that has haunted the concept of civilization, less as a value to be celebrated than as an unsavory fellow traveler of the other three.

The effects of these four developments have been cited, if to a variable degree, in most countries that consider themselves or aspire to be “modern.” The refined manners that greased the wheels of sociability have been frequently contrasted to the more “natural” or “authentic” expressions of simpler times, sometimes resulting in calls for a return to rougher forms of male behavior that might prevent excessive sensibility, weakness and cowardice. Men so beholden to the niceties of convention that they lose touch with an allegedly primal aggression have often been denigrated for their lapse into “effeminacy” (Cohen, 2005; Vila, 2007). The cerebral regimens that constituted the training ground for most modern professions have for centuries been contrasted to more physically active and risky male pursuits, leading to associations of excessive intellectuality with any number of feminizing habits, from masturbation to same-sex vice (Forth, 2008). The consumer indulgence that tends to accompany the accumulation of capital has been denigrated since the consumer revolution of the eighteenth century as fostering an “effeminate” submission to appetite, appearances and vice supposedly absent in earlier, simpler times (Kuchta, 2002). Finally, the sedentary existence that seems implicated in this polite, cerebral, and consumer-oriented society is almost always condemned as the exact opposite of manly action and health, the root cause of the muscular atrophy, obesity and weakness that were meant to be “cured” through sports and military training (Forth, 2008).

That such misgivings about declining bodies are not wholly novel must be readily acknowledged: warnings about the physical and moral consequences of lives devoted to an excess of soft and luxurious pursuits have been articulated since ancient times (Davidson, 1997), and many of these anxieties have been appropriated and repackaged since the early modern era. Yet it is only since the late seventeenth century that these conditions have become lived realities for larger numbers of Westerners. Although capable of being articulated in a variety of ways and inflected by the specific experiences of different national contexts, one or more of these aspects of modern civilization tend to be cited when men seek to explain the main reasons for their physical deviation from more robust and bellicose masculine ideals. Despite their origins in elite circles, they have become relevant for larger segments of the population as Western societies and economies shifted toward mental and largely sedentary “service” industries during the nineteenth century and especially since World War II.
Critiques of civilization’s effects on masculinity thus tend to emphasize physical deviations. This is not to say that every complaint about civilization amounts to a wholesale rejection of everything that civilization entails; critiques more often demand infusions of more “natural” ways of thinking and living to offset civilization’s excesses. In critical discussions civilization is said to be haunted less by “barbarism” than by a perceived lack of “authenticity” in relation to the capacities and needs of the body. Without intervention, in other words, civilization and feminization tend to march hand-in-hand. Yet intervention is key. If polemical writings often cast the relationship between civilization and masculinity in oppositional pairs of surface and depth or present and past, reform discourses that target gender usually defend civilization insofar it is purified of its negative elements, often through the infusions of the “primitive.” To borrow Beck’s (1997, p. 64) words once more, we might view this “true” masculinity as a form of counter-modernity that allows the “conscious allowing of questions to disappear in constructed, sometimes even scientifically fortified certitude [that] makes the anti-civilizing impulse the possible victor over the self-restraint of civilization.” More succinctly put, modern masculinity is rarely free of reactionary impulses (on the concept of “reactionary modernism,” see Herf, 1984).

As the intersection between physically robust ideals of masculinity and the more polite, sedate and comfortable realities of modern existence, the body offers a useful perspective on the paradoxes that perennially haunt representations of Western manhood. If, as Connell (2000, p. 59) suggests, the “materiality of male bodies matters…as a referent for the configuration of social practices defined as masculinity,” then we need to pay special attention to the relationship between the enduring fantasies of less restrained, physically vibrant and even aggressive definitions of manhood and the more sedentary conditions of modern life that have emerged since the sixteenth century. Despite the plurality of masculinities that co-exist at any given time, whenever critics engage with the gendered paradoxes of modernity a quite specific form of essentialized and embodied (if usually absent or submerged) masculinity becomes the object of loss and grief.

**Masculinity in Time and Space**

Given the way in which the body is shaped in the modern era, the four implications of civilization for the body described above have had consequences for how masculinity has been viewed, both spatially and temporally. Likening civilization to a “veneer” has the effect of relocating the signs of “true” masculinity from the surface level of manners and sociability to the depths of biological manhood, especially in “drives” toward sexuality and aggression that are often said to be “repressed” by social constraints. At various moments throughout modern history, masculinity is typically represented as an inner “essence” that is submerged, but never fully concealed, by the surface play of
civilization. Yet this displacement of male ideals from surface to depth is overwritten by a temporal discourse consisting of extended and updated versions of classical warnings about the dangers of becoming “soft” in an increasingly commercial society (Dudink, 2004).

This forward-looking reconnection with the past has a long history, and has been inextricably bound up with changing perceptions of the male body. Since the beginnings of historical writing in the West, discussions of the apparently cyclical nature of political change and beliefs in the rise and decline of political constitutions have borrowed liberally from medical concepts of health and illness, as evidenced by Thucydides’s reliance on Hippocratic thought and the proliferation of organicist imagery to describe social organizations ever since (Koselleck, 1985). As was the case in medical discourses, the “body” that provided the model for understanding the strength and vitality of political systems was implicitly understood by the ancients to be male, an assumption that smuggled into the apparently gender-neutral domain of political theory a preoccupation with the vicissitudes of male corporeality. Even the concept of “crisis” has roots in ancient medical terminology that was imbricated over the centuries with legal and political ideas (Koselleck, 2006), revealing the durable yet implicit association of socio-political change with models of the male body.

If the concept of crisis emerged during the eighteenth century to become a “structural signature of modernity” (Koselleck, 2006), anxieties about the body politic may have been implicitly understood as disruptions of the presumably “natural” manifestations of male corporeality. Anticipated responses to such crises in the form of rejuvenation movements were similarly perceived in terms of bodily health and energy, and these movements have gained momentum throughout the modern era. Shifting from meanings that were narrowly theological (rebirth through baptism and resurrection) or medical (the regrowth of tissue), the concept of “regeneration” expanded throughout the course of the eighteenth century to encompass all manner of “rebirth,” moral, physical and political (de Baecque, 1997). Operative in Britain and America as well as in France, Germany and the Netherlands, in the eighteenth century a discourse of ancient civic republicanism provided a potent means of criticizing many of the “softening” aspects of commercial society as instances of “effeminacy” (Dudink, 2004). Critiques of this softness were often informed by the use of neo-classical artistic styles depicting muscular and heroically bounded male bodies made famous by Jacques-Louis David and others around the time of the French Revolution (Mosse, 1996). If many critics urged men to adopt a more austere “republican” stance in relation to such factors as luxury, manners, education and physical activity, this prescription for health and morality was undermined through the cyclical nature of political time that classical republicanism entailed. Indeed, ever since antiquity republics had been considered inherently unstable political forms that would inevitably degenerate through luxury and vice into ever more abject associations.

Appeals to the superior virility of classical manhood were thus always rather tentative propositions. As Stefan Dudink (2004) suggests, the trope of effeminacy implied that
masculinity—and the political liberty it supported—could never be assumed but always had to be guarded or regained, and therefore it called for permanent vigilance and constant action. Effeminacy was an “intimate other,” a danger residing in the history of the political community and the individual citizens themselves, a danger that could always return and the blame for which could not be securely projected onto other communities. (pp. 89-90)

Informed by a neoclassical concern with the life cycles of civilizations, the specter of effeminacy has continued to structure male subjectivity to the present, even though explicit references to masculinity are often euphemized in the seemingly more inclusive and gender-neutral categories of “the people” and “the nation” (Dudink, 2004).

Of course, classical ideals are not the only framework for thinking about masculinity and time. In more generic terms the temporality of masculinity is often structured around a tension between an imagined virtuous past, a corrupt present, and a future that, depending on one’s point of view, is cast either as refreshingly improved or depressingly worse. When viewed in terms of male bodily concerns, modern masculinity is conceptualized through a narrative of absence that is almost inevitably identified with lack and loss. This creates nostalgia for an imagined corporeal plenitude that has become less practical (yet nevertheless fantastically celebrated) as modernization has proceeded (LaCapra, 1999). This nostalgic longing is played out in complex ways. With the corrupting city standing at the center of civilization, it is not surprising to see many insist that rugged manhood only exists elsewhere, notably in villages, forests and mountains, or at sea. However, to the extent that the city is also represented as a space partly inhabited by the “savage” masses and their dangerous pleasures, the so-called urban jungle has often functioned as a liberating zone of wildness within civilization itself. As we have seen, though, for the malcontents of civilization “true” masculinity is quite often located elsewhere, imaginatively projected either into the halcyon days of yore or a post-apocalyptic future where it crawls from the wreckage of a moribund society. And if some idealized masculinity does appear in the here and now, it must bear the residual traces of these other times and places. The future tends only to be viewed positively when male bodies are tempered by the values of old.

Many of these tensions developed over time and became more prominent as Western societies modernized themselves; yet the uneven way in which these tensions have been played out reflects an important geographical dimension. Historically the discourse of modernity has implied a cultural topography where the relative “center” of civilization has implied a cultural topography where the relative “center” of civilization (in the early modern period this was Western Europe, particularly France and northern Italy) re-

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2 There is a massive body of literature in Western culture associating “true” masculinity with the supposedly superior virtues of non-urban experiences in a range of “natural” locales. For an overview see Forth (2008).
lated in complex ways to a range of cultural and geographic “peripheries,” be they national cultures (Russia, the Germanic states), settler societies (North America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa) or overseas colonies (India, Indochina, etc.). As the concept and practices of civilization expanded and engaged with traditional customs across the West, countries that aspired to possess polished manners, consumer goods or industrial power necessarily looked beyond their borders to assess the extent or excess of modernization among their own populations. Just as conduct books, fashion guides and dueling manuals were disseminated, translated, debated and emulated wherever elevated manners were considered worth cultivating, so too were the medical, social and political discourses that tirelessly warned of the dangers of modern lifestyles. Similar ideas were expressed in the novels, plays, artworks and films that also migrated across national boundaries throughout the modern era. Here too the endless games of emulation and distinction played themselves out against a backdrop of the inter-articulated categories of gender, race and class. However much we must attend to the specificities of national differences, notions of masculinity, like the very concept of civilization, were and remain part of a largely transnational conversation.

The gendered topography of Western masculinities is loosely informed by the variable degree to which “civilized” behavior is believed to be “advanced.” This topography has proven relatively durable despite obvious changes. France, widely viewed as the epicenter of civilized behavior, has been stereotyped by Anglophone countries since the eighteenth century as being marked by refined manners, culture and education. French culture is routinely cast as “effeminate” by comparison with the rougher, populist, and/or more plain-spoken behaviors that are often promoted in these countries (Cohen, 1996; Forth, 2007). A recent example of this is the identification of cultural refinement and military defeats of France as reasons for its refusal to take part in the U.S.-Iraq War. This tension between a refined “France” and more robust Anglophone countries has a parallel within France itself, where internal critiques of the nation’s “effeminacy” have enjoyed constant presence from the eighteenth century through the Vichy era and into the present (Forth, 2004; Forth & Taithe, 2007).

Imperial adventures extended and renegotiated metropolitan anxieties about manhood and city life, even as they promoted and consolidated the “superiority” of white male civilization. In Australia, New Zealand and North America, settlers were often seen as representing the potential for moral and physical regeneration through the encounter with harsh and physically taxing new conditions (Adair, Nauright, & Phillips, 1998; Phillips, 1987; Slotkin, 1973). This subjection of the body to harsh conditions and tensions with indigenous peoples is an example of what Richard Slotkin (1973) calls the “regeneration through violence” of older, decadent and “effeminate” societies. Through such ordeals the polish of civilized decorum would understandably be rubbed away. Yet as much as colonists were denigrated by metropolitan elites as “the white trash of their time” (Cannadine, 2001, p. 125), their coarseness could be read-
ily transformed into a virtue by laborers, convicts, frontiersmen and others for whom hard work, a harsh landscape and a difficult climate rendered refined manners, comforts and sensibilities as irrelevant, or rather, potentially dangerous. Many overseas colonies could thus represent themselves as more virile and authentic than their “mother” countries by periodically turning the gendered logic of civilization against an effete and decadent Old World, which is precisely what happened in Australia, New Zealand and the United States. This almost never meant a wholesale rejection of that old world, of course, but rather an obsessive tendency to move back and forth between these somewhat contradictory ways of representing manhood.

One of the enduring paradoxes of modernity and manhood is that even those seeking to escape civilization have experienced difficulty going without it for long. Hence the importation of women into colonies in order to temper the itinerant tendencies of men (Edwards, 2003; Stoler, 1989), as well as the creation of oases of European luxury and refinement in the higher elevations of colonies like India and Indochina, the famous hill stations and resorts that tried to emulate the comforts and temperatures of “Home” while providing a space in which fragile white bodies might overcome some of their vulnerabilities (Collingham, 2001; Jennings, 2006). It is thus unsurprising that, as settlement unfolded, many colonies reproduced metropolitan tensions between the refined and unhealthy city and robust country lifestyles, thus embarking upon the path toward an urban modernity that sought to approximate the culture and conveniences of European cities while relocating their most distinctive national myths in rural contexts (Kroes, 1996; Ward, 1958). While the tense relationship between civilization and its malcontents is always inflected by local differences, the double logic of modern civilization has tended to reproduce itself across these variations.

As the boon and bane of “advanced” societies, the double-edged nature of modernity highlights the complex ways in which Western elites engaged with other peoples in the world. We know that the imperialist imagination selectively cast various indigenous peoples as “primitive” and “effeminate” when compared to their Western conquerors. Whether this effeminacy was explained with reference to environmental, cultural or biological differences, if we look closer at the content of that effeminacy we see many of the same corporeal shortcomings that Westerners bemoaned in their own societies, notably self-indulgence, sedentariness and physical weakness (Sinha, 1995). Ann Laura Stoler (1995, p. 75) rightly notes that “external colonialism provided a template for conceptualizing social inequities in Europe and not solely the other way around,” and the constant problematization of the white bourgeois male body reveals an ongoing anxiety about the West’s ability to preserve boundaries even within and around the bodies of its most privileged representatives, and not merely those internal populations of proletarians, criminals, women and the insane. Despite ethnocentric rhetoric presenting Western civilization as a shining beacon to the rest of the world, what the French called their mission civilisatrice thinly concealed European ambivalence about the potentially feminizing con-
sequences of their own culture, especially when travelers’ reports and guidebooks condemned in colonial peoples the same character flaws widely bemoaned in the metropole.

By the same token, white Westerners have also been increasingly ready to appropriate those aspects of subjugated groups, both at home and abroad, which seem to be “primitive” in salutary and even therapeutic ways (with “primitive” implying a spectrum of qualities from the raw, simple and unrefined to direct expressions of aggression and sexuality). White male appropriations of the “savagery” of Native Americans and Africans have been well documented (Deloria, 1998; Fanon, 1970). To borrow Alastair Bonnett’s (2003) provocative phrase, when couched in global terms the perceived tensions between masculinity and civilization contributed to a “crisis of whiteness” that, since the eighteenth century, seems to have been implicitly a crisis of (white) masculinity.

Examining the history of male bodies in light of the problem of civilization provides an illuminating means of approaching distinctions based on sexual difference, sexual orientation, race and class. That women are integral to representations of male identity has been amply demonstrated, with much important scholarship demonstrating how localized “crises” of masculinity often coincide with changes in the social, political and economic location of women. Yet women have also been associated with civilization through the privileged place they have had in the inculcation of manners, culture and propriety, modes of sociability periodically resented by men as a form of “feminization” that has allegedly allowed women to dominate at certain times. Deployed in helping to raise men from savagery to civility, women have been at once celebrated and resented for their efforts, and in some cases have even been blamed as the central cause of whatever men find repugnant about civilization. Women thus stand at the heart of many anxieties about the male body, often as rivals and parvenus, but also as symbols and agents of the very civilizing/feminizing process that elite males have both encouraged and resented since the early modern era. From this perspective the sharp distinctions that have often been made between male and female bodies (and the mental and moral qualities attributed to each) seem like reaction formations against a counter-discourse that views civilization as a process of feminization that, by seeking to reform male behavior according to a female standard, threatens to collapse the strict sexual dimorphism that has been so highly prized in the modern West. Male ambivalence about women is thus a complex phenomenon closely related to ambivalence about modern civilization.3

If the conditions of modern civilization have made categorical distinctions between two sexes hard to sustain, maintaining the existence of three “sexes” has posed even more difficulties. After all, same-sex relationships have been

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3 As Sarah Watts (2003, p. 16) reminds us, “Fear of women is not fear of women as such, but a metaphorical reduction of many other fears that signal the loss of singularity and independence (p. 16).
widely considered to be closely associated with urban modernity, even though some nineteenth-century sexologists sought to harden sexual orientation into facts of “nature.” Many historians have highlighted the centrality of the city to the formation of gay subcultures, sometimes arguing that one is simply not possible without the other. Whereas some claim that homosexual communities only thrive in urban settings, the sociologist Henning Bech goes so far as to claim that “homosexual existence is a phenomenon of the city and not just something occurring in the city” (quoted in Aldrich, 2004). To the extent that “civilization” is a term that cannot be separated from the development of urban centers and the distinctive styles of life made possible there, since the eighteenth century many have argued that the conditions of city life have fostered same-sex relationships as forms of desire as well as distinct communities. Just as moralists and doctors warned of the connection between the city and a spectrum of sexual and physical dangers, they also contended that the origins of “deviant” sexuality could be readily traced to the “feminizing” conditions of modern life, with special attention paid to sedentary lifestyles devoted to appearances, study or imagination, and luxurious self-indulgence (Oosterhuis, 2000).

When we consider the interplay between civilization and masculinity, race and class are far more problematic categories than sexual difference and orientation. It is by now widely recognized that white Westerners have employed the concept of civilization as a yardstick of socio-economic advancement, technological innovation and cultural refinement, both in relation to non-Western peoples and the lower orders of their own societies. After all, the circulation of the concept of civilization encouraged Westerners to think more clearly about its opposites. As Starobinski (1993, p. 5) explains, “the use of the same term, civilization, to describe both the fundamental process of history and the end result of that process established an antithesis between civilization and a hypothetical primordial state (whether it be called nature, savagery, or barbarism).” Historically this has resulted in an ongoing envy of men of indigenous and non-Western cultures—but also men from working-class or rural milieus within the West—whose apparent “primitivity” stokes middle-class fears about muscular weakness and sexual shortcomings. Middle-class appropriations of African-American cultural forms and proletarian styles (as in the “New Lad” culture of Britain) connote an ongoing need to inoculate “civilized” men with doses of “primitivity” (Bederman, 1995; Fanon, 1970; hooks, 2004; Jackson, 2003).

Yet just as myths of the wild man have fascinated people leading more settled lives, this hypothetical “natural” state was never an entirely abject category. Rather it has often been employed as a springboard for critiques of “effeminate” luxury and refinement considered almost inevitable consequences of civilized society. Every pompous celebration of the white man’s modernity may be viewed as another “constructed certitude” that circumvents the shadow side of this privileged concept (that is, a narrative that posits civilization as a process of physical and moral decline or instinctual repression that threatens to constrain or destroy masculinity). Like many yardsticks, then, “civilization” features two units of measure that assess either the degree of a people’s
progress or the extent of their deviation from “nature.” Conflicted readings are inevitable when one applying such a yardstick to modern masculinities.

**MODERNITY AND THE “NEW MAN”**

The double logic of a modernity that encourages both nostalgic longings for the past as well as optimism about the future has naturally given rise to diametrically opposed images of “new” men: a “soft” kind whose refined gentlemanly behavior supposedly reflects the polishing tendencies of civilized life, and a “hard” form whose forward-looking orientation is crafted from older ideals and usually positioned in opposition to the seemingly artificial or “false” men of the present. Novelty is less important for this latter ideal than the authenticity it alleges, usually by referring to “essential” traits supposedly ingrained in the male body and capable of being tapped through the right techniques. Modern history reveals a seemingly endless interplay and alternation between these competing ideals, and contemporary attempts to promote the “Ubersexual” (Salzman, Matathia, & O’Reilly, 2005) or the “retrosexual” (Besley, 2008) as correctives to the supposedly more refined, effete and sensitive “metrosexual” may be viewed as the latest iteration of this quasi-structural tendency.

In this final section I offer a very general and selective overview of how rejuvenation movements in Russia, Australia, Turkey, Spain, and Italy have imagined the creation of “new men.” I have chosen these examples because they demonstrate how even countries that were at some point situated on the margins of the modern world sharply registered these tensions between manhood, the body, and modernity. They did this with explicit reference to the creation of bodies that might remain unaffected by the physical and moral pitfalls of modern existence so that, by reconnecting with values of old, they would be well positioned for collective attempts to purge modernities of their degenerative elements.

Across history, attempts to create “new” forms of people, whether male or female, recurrently if partially spring from concerns about the plight of bodies and minds in environments perceived to be decadent or degenerate, at least when contrasted to the supposedly superior virtue and austerity of imagined pasts. In a model prefigured by ancient ideas and repeatedly updated since the early modern era, the perceived health or sickness of the political body is intimately bound up with the condition of personal bodies, which must be rejuvenated if any change is to be wrought in the broader collective. The recur-

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4 Of course not all that is called “new” has been welcomed. Not only was the New Woman of the early twentieth century condemned as a symptom of a degenerate culture, and thus something to be “corrected” by a return to female “nature” in a properly rejuvenated world (Roberts, 1994), but her pleasure-seeking and narcissistic male consort could be similarly disparaged as a sign of modernity’s corruption of the world. The same applies to various forms of manhood disparagingly described as “new” by those who see them as deviations from what men “should” be like.
ring figure of the “New Man” is quite often an implicitly male being, which is not to say that he does not often require some rejuvenated form of womanhood, usually as his partner and breeder. Thus the regeneration promised by many modernist social programs often entails a restoration of traditional gender roles—the (re)creation of “real” men and women—in a social order that has jettisoned the degenerative elements of modernity while remaining recognizably modern. This is an example of the kind of heroic rebirth (or “palingenesis”) that Roger Griffin (2007) views as integrally bound up with modernism and modernity and which figures prominently in many fascist ideologies. Building upon a “primordialist” definition of modernism, Griffin demonstrates how social, political and aesthetic modernisms often recommended forward-looking reconnections with “lost” sources of spirituality and body culture in order to imagine purified forms of modernity for the future. Thus Griffin hopes to overcome the apparent antinomies that some scholars have drawn between modernism and fascism, but in the process he provides ways of thinking about what fascism has in common with other political and aesthetic movements that engage with the paradoxes of modernity.5

What is less developed in Griffin’s account is what some might see as the implicitly gendered nature of the various forms of rebirth imagined by aesthetic and political modernisms. Yet it is difficult not to see, for instance, the explicitly virilized male exemplars of the French Revolution as prime examples of heroic rebirth, not least because so much of the rhetoric surrounding them was replete with grandiose images of regeneration of bodies and a restoration of “natural” gender roles (de Baeke, 1997). Both the homo sovieticus imagined in Russia after 1917 (Clark, 1993) and the “anthropological revolution” (Gentile, 2004) proposed by fascist theorists may be viewed as further extensions of this deeply ingrained modern response to modernity’s excesses. Revolution, regeneration, rejuvenation: all presuppose a future that has been reconnected to the most “healthy” and admirable models of the past, and all seem preoccupied with the heroic reconstruction of masculinity in body and mind.

This engagement with the tensions of modernity has been commented on by numerous scholars, but usually with reference to developments in individual countries rather than the transnational proliferation of these tensions (Forth, 2008). Yet countries on the peripheries of Europe have sought in Western culture lessons in modernization as well as techniques for preventing the excesses of modernity. This seems to have been the situation in Russia, where, in the wake of Peter the Great’s efforts to “Westernize” the country, complaints about luxury leading men and women into vice were commonly heard toward the end of the eighteenth century. These concerns were expressed most famously by Prince Mikhail Shcherbatov in On the Corruption of Morals in Russia (1768/...

5 Thus if one views bodily ideals and projections of masculinity as being inextricably bound up with any attempt at “anthropological revolution,” one cannot categorically assert, as Alain Badiou (2007) does, that Marxist models of the “new man” are “envisioned in opposition to all enveloping forms as well as to all predicates” (p. 66).
1969, p. 259), who condemned the profligacy of nearly every court and ruler since the reign of Peter I. Speaking for the old service nobility that had been displaced by the Petrine reforms, Shcherbatov hoped for a more virtuous future when the morality of old will return and “trade will flourish with the decrease in the import of foreign goods which give rise to voluptuousness, and with the export of Russian goods” (Kelly, 2001).

Many reformers recommended that Russians take a more rigorous approach to the body, as Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1863/1989) illustrated in What is to be Done? with his physically tough professional revolutionary Rakhmetov. Although a combination of Prussian and Swedish gymnastics was attempted in Russia, it was the Czech Sokol (or Falcon) system that became dominant during the 1860s, mainly because it aimed at fostering panslavic sentiments amenable to the tsarist state (Riordan, 1977). As more and more Russians registered concerns about urban modernity, they too began to judge lifestyle according to traditional hygienic principles. Even etiquette manuals reflected a concern with exercise, and one guide from 1911 explained that “people who spend most of their day sitting or hunched over—bureaucrats, clerks, students, etc.—must spend their free time in motion, doing some sort of physical activity—gymnastics, bicycling, billiards, playing skittles” (Komfil’do, 1911/1998, p. 104).

As in other countries, Russian physicians took special interest in the sexuality of schoolboys, and for nearly a century had reprinted the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the influential Swiss physician Samuel-Auguste Tissot before generating home-grown books about sexuality. After the Great Reforms of the 1860s attention was focused on the sexuality of cadets at military academies. Here the propensity to masturbate and to visit prostitutes was traced to the typical array of urban upper-class vices: idleness, luxury, rich food, soft beds, and other comforts (Engelstein, 1992). An obsession with exercise in fresh air, even if it consisted only in walking, was one response to the sedentary, indoor lifestyles of Russia’s elite. The daily constitutionals of Tsar Nicholas II were emblematic of this new concern, as was the widespread enthusiasm for cycling, organized sports and bodybuilding that Russians manifested by the end of the century (McReynolds & Popkin, 1998; Riordan, 1977). In its broadest meaning, Russian physical culture aimed at creating a new kind of man, a “man with a backbone,” capable of mastering himself, the city, and the world beyond it. Well into the Soviet period, self-restraint and kulturnost’ were frequently positioned against the coarseness and drunkenness associated with traditional masculinity, however much these traits would continue to be valued among some men. Emerging ideals about homo sovieticus would extend and rework many of these earlier developments (Kelly, 2002).

If Russia provides a useful example of manhood poised between “Westernized” effemineness and traditional Slavic toughness, settler societies reproduce similar tensions in different ways. Australia and New Zealand are illustrative cases of convict/settler societies finding themselves torn between desires to measure up to the advances of modernity while displaying continuing am-
bivalence about doing so. Heralded as a “working man’s paradise” where mateship and hard work promised to rejuvenate the pasty-faced clerks of England, Australia vacillated between being one of the most heavily urbanized of Western countries and a harsh environment in which manhood was restored through strenuous encounters with nature. For many Englishmen the economic opportunities the frontier offered in the colonies were enhanced by the possibilities of physical and moral rejuvenation that such a hard life held out (Windołz, 1999). In the 1850s Charles Hursthouse wrote and lectured widely on the benefits of migration to Australia or New Zealand. Such a move could do for other men what it had done for Hursthouse himself years before: “to achieve a happy escape and good deliverance from that grinding, social serfdom, those effeminate chains, my born and certain lot in England.” Of course, it was implied, Hursthouse was already properly “manly” before he left, otherwise he wouldn’t have responded so readily to the lure of adventure in the first place. He explains, as a rule the

feeble-minded, the emasculate, the fastidious, the timid, do not emigrate; they bow their necks to the yoke, ply the distaff, and spin wealth for the great at home. It is the strong and the bold who go forth to subdue the wilderness and conquer new lands. (quoted in Phillips, 1987, pp. 4-5)

To the many manual laborers who made their way down under in the nineteenth century, life on the frontier demanded physical strength and dexterity that validated their manhood while underscoring the distinctiveness of their new home in gender terms. Although some contended that all men could be transformed through such an experience, others suggested that clerks and shop men would simply not be able to cope with life as sheep shearers or gold miners, a life that, as E.W. Elkington revealed in his own experience of felling trees in New Zealand, was inescapably corporeal: “it makes the life-blood tear through my veins and I feel that there’s something in me, after all” (quoted in Phillips, 1987, p. 17). Many concurred that it was the strong rather than the weak that were most likely to leave Britain for the colonies, and, to the eugenically-minded, the prospect of a mass exodus of able-bodied men was most worrying. In the decade leading up to World War One, several hundred thousand departed the mother country per year for the colonies, supposedly leaving behind the weak, elderly, and defective who continued to breed (Soloway, 1990).

British worries about the loss of able-bodied men were compounded by the challenges posed by life down under. Indeed, modern Australia’s sporting obsession springs in large part from an explicitly racialized gender anxiety within “white” civilization. Ever since white settlement in the late eighteenth century, the continent’s hot and often humid climate was suspected of debilitating the bodies and minds of all its inhabitants (including Aborigines), and thus of visiting special damage upon the constitutions of Europeans. This climatic factor was aggravated by the presence of indigenous peoples whose robust and hardy bodies elicited self-consciousness among white settlers;
otherwise there would have been scant need to “prove” oneself against Abor-
ginals. This concern about physical exhaustion was coupled with concerns
about the quality of the white Australian racial stock which, thanks to the large
number of convicts who peopled the country, was considered inferior and per-
haps even degenerate when compared to the British (even though Britishness
in itself was no proof of manliness). This is one reason why sporting prowess
became a central means for Australian men to position themselves vis-à-vis the
mother country, thus representing a sort of “litmus test” for the state of colo-
nial society generally. When Australians starting winning cricket matches
against the visiting English team in 1877, journalists proudly declared that, “in
bone and muscle, activity, athletic vigour, and success in field sports, the Eng-
lishmen born in Australia do not fall short of the Englishmen born in Surrey or

This pride in measuring up to the standards of English manhood also con-
tained a growing critique, for once it became clear that Aussies could excel at
sport there was a temptation to inquire into why the English may have failed
in the first place. For many, the effeteness of English “civilization” was itself a
source of physical decline, and the “modernity” it represented something to
be avoided or at least taken in small doses (Walker, 1987). This insistence upon
the superior hardiness of the Australian male continued most famously
through the First World War, with the ANZAC soldier being eulogized as more
heroic and self-sacrificing than his softer English counterpart. The defensive
nature of such pretenses necessarily begs some comment. “What distinguished
Australian preoccupation with warrior manhood,” notes Stephen Garton
(1998), “is its persistence after the war. Manhood framed the meaning of Aus-
tralia’s achievements in the war, to such an extent that suggests some earlier
anxiety about its quality” (p. 88).

The concerns about bodily decay that worried metropolitan elites during
the colonial era were more widespread by the end of the nineteenth century,
when fears of biological degeneration were rife throughout the Western world
and many nations looked to bodily rejuvenation as a key to national survival.
The considerable amount of scholarship on how degeneration discourses were
manifested in Britain, France, Germany and the United States (Mosse, 1996;
Nye, 1993; Pick, 1989; Soloway, 1990) should not distract us from the extension
of such ideas in countries less engaged in modernization. For much of the cen-
tury largely agrarian Spain was viewed as a “backward” nation; yet in the last
quarter of the century Spain too experienced an economic boom and a prolif-
eration of new industries that implicated the country more directly in the prob-
lems of modernity. The drive toward physical and moral Regeneracionismo
gained momentum after 1898, when Spain lost the rest of its overseas posses-
sions amidst what many critics denounced as the country’s political, economic,
and even spiritual decadence. As was the case in other Western countries, “cure-
ing” the Spanish body politic was conceptualized in organicist terms replete
with metaphors of health and disease. Not surprisingly, the perceived lack of
national vigor was identified as a deficiency of virility in Spanish men that, ac-
ccording to the regenerationist Lucas Mallada, was typified by “the individual, nervous and apathetic, who is weakened by an excess of carnal pleasure” (quoted in Clemlinson, 2000, pp. 68-75). The virile body thus functioned as a political trope as Spain entered the twentieth century, and was pivotal during the Civil War of the 1930s. Whether republican or fascist, Spaniards on both sides of the conflict represented themselves as virile fighters for their cause, and subscribed to a common pool of images about ideal masculinity (Vincent, 1999).

If Spain was often viewed as lagging behind other European states, most observers agreed that no country was quite as backward as the Ottoman Empire, widely considered the “Sick Man” of Europe whose death was widely thought to be just a matter of time. It is hardly surprising that the rising tide of Turkish nationalism after 1908 was accompanied by a pronounced obsession with physical fitness, manifested first in the short-lived Turkish Power Association (1913), the Committee of Union and Progress (1914) and associations for adolescents as well as adults (1916) aiming to cultivate brave, robust, agile bodies able to defend the country in times of strife (Okay, 2003). Rather than being aimed at countering the effects of a modernity that few Turks experienced, fitness initiatives sought to craft a warrior ideal that was already well-established in the modern West (even if most other Westerners fell short of this ideal). These initiatives were continued with the eugenic and nation-building experiments of the Turkish republic from 1923 through the 1950s (Alemdaroglu, 2005).

The revitalized male body was central to the ideals of heroic rebirth that promised to rejuvenate a decadent Western civilization, and it was also central to many variants of fascist ideology that emerged since the 1920s (Mangan, 2000). For instance, a recent study of eighteen novels written by former members of the Italian fascist squadristi (paramilitary squads) shows how some early proponents of fascism described their adoption of a hard new lifestyle as a profound transformation that was not unlike a conversion experience. Regardless of their social origins, most squadristi heroes were depicted as having wallowed in material pleasures and unheroic professions before transforming themselves into fascist warriors. They chose squadrismo out of love of country and, above all, a fascination with the black-shirted shock troops from the Great War, the Arditi, who seemed to personify virility itself. Acknowledging their previous habits and lifestyles as essentially “feminine,” these writers described the process of becoming fascists as a form of masculinization otherwise thwarted by ordinary society. In the novels of squadristi who originated from the urban middle classes, fascist redemption is usually framed as a transcendence of bourgeois existence that finally gives birth to the “new man” (Valli, 2000). Fascist gender politics is thus a particularly noxious version of a general cultural dream of male rebirth predicated on a strategic rejection of modernity’s most softening tendencies. It is

one permutation of a phenomenon that was taking place throughout the Western world wherever fault lines opened up between modernity and
“traditional” culture once the combined scientific, capitalist, technological, liberal revolutions gathered pace. (Griffin, 2007, p. 140)

Most importantly, this phenomenon persists in the present. In contemporary talk of a masculinity crisis in Europe, North America and Australia/New Zealand, it is striking to see that some of the most scathing attacks on Western culture emerge from belief systems that continue to value traditional warrior codes and conventional gender roles that defiantly flout the equalizing tendencies of modernity. Indeed, woven into geopolitical and religious critiques of American interference in the Middle East we find a familiar analysis of modern civilization as a feminizing process that leaves men soft, complacent and cowardly. It is for these reasons that fundamentalist Islam explicitly offers itself as a form of “rescue” for the identity problems faced by modern men (Castelein-Meunier, 1988), and thus dovetails with Christian (among other) fundamentalist movements whose critiques of modernity often seek a restoration of antiquated gender roles as part of the “new world” they envision. With what are for women oppressively traditional gender roles high on the list of desirable social transformations, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and their fellow travelers have launched their own critique of civilization in the name of warrior values, with a family resemblance to the self-critique that has recurred in the West since the eighteenth century. Claiming that “true” manhood has disappeared in Europe and North America, these fundamentalist warriors set themselves up as New Men ushering in a heroic New Age (Buruma & Margalit, 2004).

CONCLUSION: SURVIVING OUR PARADOXES?

Many who study the social construction of gender today may subscribe to Elisabeth Badinter’s (1995) reasonable observation that “If masculinity is learned and constructed, there is no question that it can also change.... What has been constructed can therefore be deconstructed in order to be reconstructed anew” (p. 27) The academic study of historical masculinities certainly supports this general idea; yet, without some further qualification, statements such as these risk minimizing the entrenched and durable nature of certain dominant images of manhood in Western culture, which—because they are continually counter-posed to the gender-blurring tendencies of civilization—necessarily haunt late modern manhood.

However diversely masculinities may be lived and represented in everyday life—and regardless of the extent to which males have materially, politically and symbolically benefitted from the development of modernity—our culture has yet to divest itself of the entrenched notion that modernity and “real” manhood also exist in a state of tension. How can one undo deeply ingrained ideals of the rough and hardy masculine when the very conceptual structures of modern society seem geared to invoke such imagery whenever aspects of the “civilizing process” seem to go too far? How can the allure of male violence and risk-taking be dissipated when it continues to be represented as
having been unfairly “repressed” by modernity along with such vulnerable feelings as love, fear and loneliness? How can we extend the benefits of “civilization” when many representations of “freedom,” “reality,” and “life” are so resolutely opposed to it? One might agree with Klaus-Michael Bogdal (2001) that the apparent blurring of genders in contemporary culture masks a simultaneous tendency toward the reactivation of traditional gender behaviors…. Only when we are presented with proof that the “symbolic” construction of masculinity today corresponds to altered gender and power relations and obeys different discursive rules than those that emerged in the eighteenth century will we be able to speak of “New Men.” For the moment, I see few reasons for doing so. (pp. 13, 38)

Perhaps it is precisely modernity’s perennial disruptions that open spaces within which new approaches to gender and other relationships can be imagined and tested. Gender scholarship that fails to address the complexity of modernity not only risks oversimplifying the instabilities at the heart of modern masculinity, but has little way of accounting for the fact that feminism too has been viewed as the fruit of a civilization whose internal contradictions incessantly propel it toward gender trouble. Founded upon the central paradoxes of modernity, a “crisis of masculinity” may be a recurring, even structural feature of Western life. For men as well as women, surviving these paradoxes, with a prospect of eventually overcoming them, may be one path to a more genuinely egalitarian future.

References


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. The paper shows how these concerns are influenced by societal and political developments in the region.

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

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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.¹ 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.²

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.³ 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.⁴

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

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;

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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.6 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...
(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 accordace 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 premodern 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 (Armbruster, 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 figured 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 homosociality 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, respectively) and became a main point of reference in German-speaking masculinity 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 scholars in German social sciences generally. There are three aspects in Bourdieu’s analysis of masculinity that proved to be highly influential: the notion of masculine habitus, the idea of incorporation, and the thesis that masculinity is constructed 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 incorporation, it would explain how individuals become disposed to acting according to the given gender order (Brandes, p. 22). I have proposed elsewhere to connect the approaches by Bourdieu and Connell and suggest conceiving hegemonic 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 confounded. Not all dominance of men constitutes hegemonic masculinity. According 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.” Engaging 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 (Bohnsack, 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 (Möller, 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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Among sociologists masculinity studies gained ground in the 1980s, particularly in the area of gender studies where feminist researchers pointed to the importance of understanding the ways in which men experience and enact gender. Since the 1990s, this area of enquiry has grown in Africa and the importance of recognizing masculinities, rather than masculinity, has been underscored to reflect the diverse and complex contexts in which masculinity is performed. This emergent body of work has been influenced by discourses in the global north, particularly Connell’s (1987) notion of “hegemonic” masculinities which implies that at any given moment a dominant—or hegemonic—form of masculinity exists in relation to other forms resulting in a complex array of interactions and performances at various levels. The appreciation of these complexities led to a meeting on “Boys and Masculinity” that took place at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa in January.
2005 and culminated in the book *Fom Boys to Men* (Schefer et al., 2007) that acknowledges the multiple versions of masculinity in southern Africa, as well as resistances and challenges to “hegemonic” forms.

Few men fully conform to “hegemonic” forms. Messner (2007) notes that it is “nearly impossible for an individual man to consistently achieve and display the dominant conception of masculinity” and adds that, “this is an important part of the psychological instability at the center of individual men’s sense of their own masculinity” (p. 463). Ratele (2008) argues that intervention work with males intended to make them more sensitive to gender issues has failed to produce the desired impacts “because analyses of boys and men’s lives have tended to be blind to the imbrication of the experience of maleness with the experience of other significant social categorisations” (p. 515). In this paper we observe, with Messner, that so-called hegemonic masculinities are symbolically displayed as an “exemplar of manhood” around which power coalesces, not just over women, but in relation to other men (p. 463). We argue that an especially important anchor of the experience of maleness is that of biological fatherhood—not only because of the authority and control fatherhood portends, but also because of the symbolic significance of a competent, heterosexual, performative phallus. The absence of evidence for the competence of the phallus, in cases of infertility, can lead to a questioning, or anticipatory questioning, of a man’s masculinity.

While family studies in Africa generally, and in Ghana particularly, have highlighted the importance of the family, and the value of children, the emphasis has been on their practical and economic value and it has been argued that as our societies “modernized” and these instrumental reasons for childbearing declined, people would prefer smaller families. Today, popular notions of womanhood among most Ghanaian societies continue to center on the mother role, usually read in terms of biological motherhood (Anarfi & Fayorsey, 1995). There is an understanding that women will be engrossed with thoughts of childbearing, and that no normal woman would give up motherhood voluntarily, except, perhaps, for religious (whether permanent or temporary) reasons. For instance, there are Ghanaian women who, since the introduction of Christianity have become religious nuns in the Roman Catholic Church, giving up motherhood voluntarily and permanently. In Ghanaian traditional religion, we find some women in the service of the deity who observe chastity temporarily, at least for the period of their training or in following the rota of religious service. An individual who is dedicated to a deity is normally chaste and allowed sexual union only after first seeking the deity’s consent.

However, outside of the foregoing examples, Ghanaian society generally looks down on childless women, and barrenness is held to be a curse (Sarpong, 1977). Such are the pressures on women to achieve biological motherhood that, unlike what has been the development in the global North, “modern” professional women who want to advance in their chosen careers, even if unmarried, do not consider giving up motherhood for a career (Adomako Ampofo, 2004).
Further, where a married couple remains childless, it is typically the woman who bears the brunt of pressure, taunts, and even abuse, both from her husband’s family as well as, sometimes, her own. It may therefore seem unsurprising that contemporary literature on childbearing and parenthood (especially sociology and demography/population studies) has centered primarily on female fertility, particularly women’s contraceptive practices, and has paid less attention to men’s needs and their desires around fertility and fatherhood. Both scholarly and activist feminist critiques of the ways in which women’s gendered social roles confine or limit them have also assumed that since it is women who suffer the most from social stigma in cases of childlessness, fertility studies should focus on them (Afonjo, 1990). However, this limited focus seems inadequate given that population research in Africa since the 1980s has shown a discrepancy between women’s fertility desires and their contraceptive practices, as well as high levels of couple discordance when it comes to fertility choices (Dodoo, 1995). It is now commonly understood that family planning programs have not worked as well as they might have because they failed to acknowledge men’s fertility desires by focusing almost exclusively on women’s “unmet need” (Adomako Ampofo, 2004).

Demographic and Health Survey data from Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 1994, p. 73; 1999, p. 75; 2004, p. 115) show that over the 1999-2003 period there has been a relative increase in the number of men who want to have no more children irrespective of demographic characteristics. Urban residence, higher education and belonging to a higher wealth quintile generally increase the likelihood of men wanting no more children. However, when these data are analyzed for husband-wife dyads, men generally continue to either want more children than their wives do, or have greater say in the couple’s reproductive career plans (Dodoo, 1995, 1998; Ezeh, 1993). Where some attention has been paid to men’s fertility practices it has been argued that because men bear fewer of the costs of childbearing they experience less of a need to invest in limiting family size than their wives (Blanc & Lloyd, 1994). While this is true, we argue that an important reason why men have children is that this enables them to be viewed as real men, by proving their phallic competence to father offspring. Hence a failure to acknowledge and understand the link between men’s identities and the pressures women face to bear children will minimize the value of any discussion of gender, power, fertility, sexualities, and even HIV/AIDS. Indeed, work carried out by Sarpong (1977) and Nukunya (1969, 1992) among the Asantes and Ewes, respectively (two of the three most populous ethnic groups in Ghana) provides evidence that barrenness among both women and men was abhorred. The fact that barrenness was, and generally still is, easier to ascertain among women meant that women bore the brunt of

1 Clearly there is a history to this perspective given that in reality many women were having children at the behest of their partners, their family and society at large.
society’s displeasure. However, this did not free men from the pressures to produce offspring, a pressure compelling men to divorce and re-marry, marry an additional wife, or have children outside marriage (Adomako Ampofo, 2004).

The current study seeks to investigate the meanings and significance of fatherhood and its relationship to constructions of masculinity in a sample of urban Ghanaian men. Specifically we examine what biological fatherhood means to these men, and the lengths they would be willing to go to in order to ensure that they achieve it. We are also interested in the associations men draw between biological fatherhood and marital stability, as well as questions of remarriage and extra-marital relationships. Below we review pertinent anthropological and sociological factors, followed by observations from the current study.

BECAUSE OF CHILDREN THE FAMILY TREE IS NOT CUT²: PATERNITY AND MASCULINITY IN GHANA

Kinship Structures

The Ghanaian population is made up of a number of distinct ethnic groups, which are usually made up of clans; therefore, a great deal of variety exists in the way family systems are organized. Yet many of the underlying principles in corporate descent groups are similar among the different ethnic groups. Members of a lineage “trace common descent from a known ancestor” (Nukunya, 1969, p. 25), either imagined or putative, and who can be a person or an animal, the latter constituting the clan’s totem, or protector. The descent system determines succession, property inheritance, control over resources, and residence patterns, to name but a few rubrics. Lineage members have both rights and obligations. Their rights include a place to live, care of others when in difficulty and access to land for cultivation. The lineage is, therefore, “almost always a corporate group ... it has a leader ... owns property ... and members meet regularly to discuss matters of common interest” (Nukunya, 1992, p. 16). Obligations of lineage members include helping needy members, upholding the lineage’s good name, promoting its unity, deferring to ancestral wishes, and obedience to the lineage head and other elders (Gyekye, 1997; Nukunya, 1969; Sarpong, 1977).

Above all, it behooves members to ensure the very survival of the lineage through marriage and procreation. Thus, childbearing is central to both matrilineal and patrilineal ethnic groups in Ghana. However, marriage and childbearing have different implications for matrilineal and patrilineal peoples.³

² Akan proverb.
³ Even though intermarriage will mean that these data are not precise, we can glean from the 2000 census that about 49.1% of Ghanaians are matrilineal while 50.9% are patrilineal (Ghana Statistical Services, 2001). Among these the largest cluster of groups belong to the Akan (matrilineal) and the Ewe and Ga-Adangbe groups (patrilineal).
Among the Akan, it is the woman who is obligated to produce descendants for her lineage, however, her family will publicly acknowledge her husband for giving them children since he makes the fulfillment of this obligation possible. If there is a suspicion, for whatever reasons, that the husband is incapable of having children (say, it is known or rumored that he is impotent) a woman’s (maternal) family is likely to suggest that she divorce him. Among patrilineal groups this obligation to beget offspring for the lineage rests on the man and a husband will bestow special public honor on his wife at the time of the “outdooring” of a baby.\(^4\) Generally, prolific childbearing was honored among all groups, and mothers of twins, triplets, and a tenth child were held in special esteem (Sarpong, 1977). Fertility is so important that most ethnic groups had special ceremonies to commemorate a girl’s “entry into womanhood” and a good portion of the female initiation period was taken up with instructions regarding the secrets of sexuality, how to be a good wife, and elementary aspects of mothering.\(^5\) Nonetheless it is noteworthy that although initiation rites are common across much of Africa for both females and males (frequently including circumcision), comparable rituals for boys are limited to a few smaller ethnic groups in Northern Ghana.\(^6\)

Thus, the need for children to continue the family pedigree implies that procreation is one of the most important reasons for marriage. Kyei (1989), for example, asserts that among Ghanaian Asante, “a man and his wife owe it as a duty to themselves and to their lineage to have children” (p. 49). Further, since in traditional Ghanaian metaphysics procreation is meant to perpetuate the lineage, and the “lineage is made up of the dead ancestors, the living members of the community, and even those yet unborn” (Okyerefo, 2001, p. 107), men and women who refuse to marry and procreate are perceived as self-centered and greedy. And since it is a man who generally asks for the hand of a woman, among patrilineal people a man who refuses to marry and procreate calls forth the extinction of the lineage and, therefore, of the clan or ethnic group. However, even where such scorn is reserved for the woman among the matrilineal Akan, a man who refuses to marry and/or have children is viewed with suspicion. Among the prerequisites of ancestorship is adulthood, which one generally reaches only when one marries and assumes responsibility for a family. This means that bachelors are equally disqualified given an implied refusal to help increase the number of his relatives. Such a person is useless, “his name should be blotted out of memory” (Okyerefo, 2001, p. 110; Sarpong, 1974). Sarpong (1977) documents the practice of sticking thorns into the soles

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\(^4\) New babies are “outdoored,” that is, presented to their parents’ lineage members, a week after they are born. Although the outdooring of babies is virtually a universal custom, such ceremonies are particularly festive among patrilineal people.

\(^5\) The performance of female initiation rites has declined markedly over the last few decades.

\(^6\) The majority of ethnic groups in Ghana do not “circumcise” females.
of the feet of the corpses of the childless so that they could not return to the land of the living as ancestor spirits.

FATHERHOOD, SENIORITY AND MASCULINITY

Ghana today generally remains a “patriarchal” society in which the father wields, or is expected to wield, ultimate authority over the household, which includes his wife (or wives), children, and other relations or tenants. Indeed, not too long ago the fathers, the older males, determined not only who could marry but also when marriage was to take place (Akyeampong, 1997). The father could thus augment his social, political and economic influence through the biological daughters and sons he could marry off. Since the man usually had economic control over his entire household, including his wife, he also exercised social control over his family.

It must be acknowledged that fatherhood is but one aspect of Ghanaian masculinity. Apart from fatherhood, seniority is another important aspect of masculinity. Based on his study of the paradigmatic concept of ɔpanyin (literally: elder) among the Akan, Miescher (2007) observes that in “many African societies, gender has a close relation to seniority” (p. 253). Two groups of meaning of the term ɔpanyin should be understood. First, ɔpanyin denotes “an old person” or “an adult,” as opposed to “a child.” In this instance ɔpanyin also refers to “status and achievements” marking one as “a gentleman, respectable man” or “person of rank.” The second meaning relates to ɔpanyin as “a figure of authority” such as “a chief or one who belongs to a chief’s council of elders.” The position of ɔpanyin demands maturity and honor. It is not a permanent position; one has to prove worthy of it through good conduct, generosity, sound reputation, and rhetorical proficiency. A misbehaving elder can lose people’s respect to the same extent that a chief who misbehaves can be “destooled” for bringing dishonor to his office. As a generic term, ɔpanyin above all subsumes gender. Miescher argues that “seniority has been crucial to the construction of identity as gender” in Akan societies in Ghana where both men and women have “a different understanding of how they wield power” (p. 254) and that for males wealth, generosity, and wisdom are critical in defining masculinity. However, Miescher also contends that fatherhood “is important in

7 Not everyone who dies and maintains some contact with the living is an “ancestor.” Ancestor spirits are venerable, and welcomed, and people name new members of the lineage after them. For a spirit who was not an ancestor to return was seen as a bad omen.

8 Kings in Akan and Eweland, as in most of Southern Ghana, sit on stools that are imbued with the spirits of the state/kingdom. Among the Akan when a man becomes king he is literally assisted to sit on the throne three times, supported on each arm by an elder. His regalia include a staff, sandals and so forth. Destoolment involved the literal removal of the chief’s sandals from beneath him to reflect that he would now go “barefoot” like a commoner.
reaching both adult masculinity and senior masculinity” (p. 255). Thus, a man without children could not aspire to become a respectable elder, that is, the ultimate man in many ways.

Men in Ghanian society today continue to assume enormous control over their families, particularly because they are “the main controllers of money” (Oppong, 1981, p. 109), whether in matrilineal or patrilineal societies. But even more, biological fatherhood augments a man’s status as he can lay claim, not only to the labor of, and authority over, his wife or wives, but also with respect to the children of his own loins. While these rights extend to kin beyond biological children, including nieces and nephews among the Akan, the preference for biological fatherhood extends beyond obligations to the lineage and status prescriptions.

**Phallic and Reproductive Performance**

Biological fatherhood is encoded by lineage expectations but lineage and power do not exhaust its cultural semantics. Fatherhood is also about identity because it contributes to the package that makes up the individual man’s completeness as a man. One sure sign of manhood is the ability of the male organ, which in Ghanaian social discourse is often referred to as “manhood,” to perform. And since not everyone can enter a couple’s private space to see what goes on there, children become the direct manifestation of such performance abilities. To “be a man” in Egypt, comparably, means to be “a virile patriarch who begets children, particularly sons” (Inhorn, 2002, p. 344) and men will go to great lengths to mask, rather than address, eventual impotence.

Widespread reports in 1997 in Ghana of the vanishing sexual organ (that is, penis) reputed to have been caused by some spiritually powerful men and the fear this episode aroused, underscores the importance of potency for manhood. Yamba (2001) describes the anxieties surrounding this emphasis on performance in his discussion of “shrinking penises” in which a mere rumor that some people were going around causing the penises of other men to shrink led to pandemonium and the lynching of some alleged perpetrators. Reportedly, evil persons were able to curse a victim’s penis and make it shrink merely by coming into contact with him. Yamba observes, through research he conducted in Ghana, the Sudan and Zambia (with reference to HIV/AIDS prevention) that “African men’s perceptions of their sexual identity affect and shape their sexual behaviour” (p. 2). He asserts that the preoccupation with the phallus, epitomized by fears regarding “penis shrinking,” reflects that the phallus is “the quintessential symbol of manhood” (p. 2).

This preoccupation with the phallus is, however, closely linked to men’s reproductive concerns, Yamba observed among West African pilgrims in the Sudan on their way to Mecca. Among this group sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) were prevalent because of frequent visits to prostitutes as a means of sharpening their virility. Keeping the phallus agile, for these men, in spite of
dreaded consequences, “has to do with men’s sexuality and sexual identity, which is connected to men’s potency and therefore their ability to reproduce.” Thus, the real fear that would stop them from going to prostitutes and seek treatment was that they might be unable to reproduce if that potential was devastated by STDs. When “that ability is taken away … some men might feel they have stopped being men” (p. 3). So while “being virile and potent” is cherished as “the very symbol of maleness,” Yamba asserts that “the risk of not being able to get children seems socially a more terrible prospect” (p. 5).

Sackey (2006) concurs that “the male sexual organ ... is a most important component of the Ghanaian man, which he would do anything to protect and vitalize” (p. 293). Consequently, the vanishing sexual organ episode epitomizes “the masculinized self-construction of sexual and gender superiority and domination” making any idea “that impinges on this powerful ideology” a humiliation of “masculinity” (p. 300).

**MALE INFERTILITY**

While the concepts father and fatherhood are often used interchangeably it is important to distinguish between a man who is a biological father and one who undertakes the “fatherhood role” (Morrell, 2005, p. 86). Formalized forms of fostering have always existed, and been encouraged, to allow families to train and care for the children of kin. Indeed much has been made of the value of the extended family in Ghana through which individuals who might otherwise have not had a leg up in life are brought up by maternal or paternal relations. Among the matrilineal Akan, the fact that maternal nephews and nieces belong to a man’s family while his own children do not, meant that many young people could count on prosperous uncles to look after them and guarantee their education.9 Nonetheless formal adoption has not formed an important part of discourses of parenthood in Ghana and even today is frequently discouraged if it is perceived by others that one is considering this as an alternative to biological parenting.10 For example, according to Nukunya the Anlo Ewe “insist on biological paternity” (Nukunya, 1992, p. 39) and Giwa-Osagie (2001) relates the obsession to be a biological father and the unacceptability of strictly alternative forms of achieving fatherhood among many societies in Sub-Saharan Africa. He describes the practice of making social arrangements through male relatives to allow an infertile man to father surrogate children as

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9 A popular Highlife song, “Wɔfa (uncle) wɔ hɔ,” literally, “Uncle is there” was composed to reflect the tendency by some young people to sail idly through life knowing someone was obligated to care, and provide, for them.

10 A number of unmarried women in their 30s and 40s known to the first author narrated how their families discouraged them from adopting children and suggested that if finding a suitable husband was proving to be a challenge, they might consider having a child with a suitable married man.
though they were his biological children. For many Ghanaian men today adoption is still not likely to be accepted as replacing biological fatherhood; thus fecundity, paternity and biological fatherhood seem almost inseparable, and form a core feature in the construction of manhood.

Further, the sex of the child is also important in men’s identity constructions. In patrilineal societies male children are particularly preferred because they ensure the continued existence of the lineage, and no matter how many children one has, failure or inability to produce sons suggests a certain inadequacy even among matrilineages (Kyei, 1989). So, while it is women who must get pregnant and give birth to the children that will continue the lineage, it is the men who provide the “seed.” In Buchi Emecheta’s The Joys of Motherhood (1979) she describes the joy and gratitude that the central figure Nnu Ego eventually feels toward her second husband, Nnaife, after he enables her to bear a son. Nnu Ego had initially looked down on the short, unmanly, pot-bellied man with the pale skin and puffy cheeks. However, when proven able to give her a son, something her more handsome and muscular first husband, Amatokwu, had not been able to do, she reorients her assessment of his masculinity. Ama Ata Aidoo, the renowned Ghanaian writer, paints a similar picture in her novel Changes (1991). The back cover of the Feminist Press edition of the book notes that “Changes portrays the conflicts between professional women whose lives have changed drastically and men whose lives and cultural assumptions remain unchanged.” In the story we meet Esi, whose husband Oko is under pressure from his family to allow them to get him a “proper wife … to get him to make more children” (p. 39). Although Oko sincerely loves Esi, he is concerned that maybe he has shown his love too openly and allowed Esi too much control. Oko and Esi have one daughter and he would like more children, particularly a son. He ponders his mother’s and sisters’ suggestions that he produce some other children “outside” and feels that maybe he needs to take charge of his wife and his marriage. One morning he says to Esi, “My friends are laughing at me,” to which her response is silence. He continues, “They think I’m not behaving like a man” (p. 8). An argument ensues. Then Oko rapes Esi. It would appear that for men notions of authority, control, virility, potency, and the ability to father children are so inextricably linked that if a man is unable to show that he can make his wife pregnant this becomes an indictment on his “manhood.”

As already alluded to, male infertility (and by extension male impotence) could be treated through surrogate fatherhood and, within the family, by natural insemination (Giwa-Osage, 2001). When the family was convinced that their son was infertile, his brother or another very close relation could be called on to have intercourse with the wife and so enable her to bear children for the infertile brother/relation. Before such a relationship starts, the wife would have been counseled by her husband and/or a close relative such as an elderly uncle/father or mother-in-law. The matter would never be openly discussed outside the family and the progenitor of the children could never claim patr-
nity (Giwa-Osagie, p. 51). Obviously society’s expectations that individuals procreate “naturally” is so strong that they accede to such surrogate fatherhood so that men can be seen to have biological children. The child is valued first, perhaps, in so far as it embodies and perpetuates the genes of the family. If a man has a duty to impregnate the wife of his infertile brother, it is to save the face of the family. That way at least the genes come from the same family.

Ideally, however, a man should beget children of his own seed. Biological fatherhood is a mark of manhood; impotence detracts from manhood. “The desire to have children in any Asante home is so strong that a husband, to be worth his salt, would go to any length in order to have an issue in every union” (Kyei, 1989, p. 49). The two main driving forces in an Asante man’s urge for biological fatherhood, then, are “to prove his manhood and also to discharge a very important obligation: that of passing on the names of his forebears from one generation to the other” (p. 53).

Chinua Achebe (1994) makes a similar assertion in his novel Arrow of God: “Unless the penis dies young it will surely eat the bearded meat” (p. 143). This assertion, an Igbo proverb, “paints a very vivid picture of a patriarchal society with its social arrangements guided by unwritten rules which are, however, internalized and observed by the individual members of the community” (Okyerefo, 2001, p. 116). The novel depicts marriage as an important social institution which an individual enters into as an alliance between families and whole clans, thereby promoting peace among neighbors. The proverb, thus, portrays adequate sexual intercourse as a natural sequence in the service of the marriage institution (Achebe, 1994, p. 117).

In the light of the notion of masculinity as command over women, fatherhood can thus also be understood as a “central part of unequal and oppressive patriarchal relations, an estate opposed to motherhood” (Morrell, 2005, p. 86). We agree with Morrell, however, that fatherhood can be “woven as a desirable feature into the fabric of masculinity” (p. 86). The purpose of this paper, then, is to further explore how men view fatherhood in Ghana, and how biological fatherhood encodes masculine identity and practices of husbandhood. The definition of fatherhood we use in this paper, then, refers to “the traditional biological father ... with his own children,” that is biological fatherhood (Egbebeen & Knoester, 2001, p. 384).

**Methods and Data**

The data for the current paper come from interviews on reproductive preferences and decision making among 11 men in 11 monogamous husband-wife dyads, held following a questionnaire survey among some 265 junior and senior staff/spouses of the University of Ghana in 1997 and 1998. The University of Ghana, located in the capital city and the Greater Accra Region, has three cat-

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11 The survey was interviewer-administered, conducted in the respondents’ homes, separately for men and women, and on average lasted between 30 and 40 minutes (see Adomako Ampofo, 2004, for a fuller discussion of methods and data).
categories of staff: junior staff, senior staff (mainly technical and support staff), and senior members (teaching faculty and administrators). The categories of junior and senior staff were selected by default because the study was based on a census among staff who lived in a particular “staff village,” which did not include senior members. After the survey, 30 couples representative of the range of attitudes and behaviors (that is, including typical and infrequently occurring perspectives) were short-listed for re-interviewing from among respondents who had previously agreed to be re-interviewed, out of which 11 couples were re-interviewed.

Topics covered in the interviews included reasons why people get married; the significance of bride wealth; attitudes to polygyny; unacceptable spousal behaviors that would lead to divorce; remarriage; gender and division of family responsibilities and decision-making; conflict resolution; family planning, contraception and decision making; perceptions about the strength of childless marriages; and adoption. Each respondent was interviewed (by the first author) separately from her or his spouse; interviews generally lasted 1-1.5 hours.

Table 1 describes the characteristics of the eleven husbands in the sample. They were between the ages of 30 and 59 and had levels of education ranging from primary to tertiary, with two (a lawyer and a research assistant) holding a university degree. Only one of the husbands had no children at the time of the interview, and the average number of children for the other men was four with one man having eleven children. Four of the men had one or more children with women other than their current wives; in two cases these children were born during a previous marriage/relationship, and in the other two cases the children were born during the course of the current marriage.

In the next section we examine the following issues: 1) what biological fatherhood meant to the interviewed men; 2) men’s attitudes toward adoption; and 3) the associations the men made between biological fatherhood and the stability of marriage, including questions of remarriage and extra-marital relationships.

BIOLOGICAL FATHERHOOD

BIOLOGICAL FATHERHOOD AND BEING A MAN

All eleven men acknowledged the importance of biological fatherhood in Ghanaian society, linking this to notions of adulthood, responsibility and phal-

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12 Polygyny in Ghana is legal where a couple are married under customary or Muslim law. According to the 2003 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 8.1% of urban men, 15.9% of rural men and 7.5% of men in the Greater Accra Region have two or more wives (GSS, 2004). For a man to have more than one wife where a couple are married under the Ordinance would constitute bigamy. Nonetheless, it is not uncommon for men married under the Ordinance to have more than one wife, often first discovered, so go the anecdotes, at their funerals. Polyandry is illegal under any circumstance and there has been some advocacy to make polygyny illegal as well.
lic competence, efficiency or power. Based on several research findings, the interviewer asked the men why they thought that men seem to want to have more children than their wives, especially since all of the men felt that children were generally closer to their mothers than to their fathers. Most of the men intimated that the mere fact of having children is a sign of manhood, both social and physiological. As 47-year-old Kwame stated, men actually boast about their manhood by holding up their children as evidence thereof, “Ei! I have got five children and you have only three and you say I am your co-equal (laughs); that sort of pride!” Akwasi also referred to the appearance of masculinity by the image of several children when he said,

In Ghanaian culture ... men used to boast by the number of children they are able to produce; fifteen, eighteen. So at times when somebody dies, they will say he has 59 grandchildren and so on and so forth ... [to be proud] that they have produced and are powerful. (italics indicate authors’ emphasis)

Indeed, when one reads through the obituary announcements in the newspapers it becomes obvious from the roll call of children and grandchildren how important this legacy of descendants is. Thus marriage as a social institution is firmly associated with childbearing, as noted by Kwame who makes an implicit connection between the two:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Highest Level of Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number of Children (total/with wife)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Nortey</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>Principal admin. asst.</td>
<td>2/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Akwasi</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Lab. technician</td>
<td>4/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Yao</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Hall porter</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cudjoe</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Draughtsman</td>
<td>3/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tony</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Assistant librarian</td>
<td>0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kwame</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Administrative asst.</td>
<td>3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Gabriel</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Works superintendent</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ayittey</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>Research assistant</td>
<td>2/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Kodzo</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Wireko</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>11/7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a All names have been changed.

b “Total” refers to all the children the individual man has; “with wife” refers to children born to the couple.
Well, in Africa if you are a man or a woman and if you get to some age and you don’t marry, they don’t regard you in a society, especially in the family which you are from. Because if you grow without children, you may get sick, you may get weak, you can’t call someone’s child to help you in doing anything. And, eh, I think it’s a pride for an African to marry and get children so that if you grow, they can take care of you.

According to Kwame everyone will need help in their old age, and that help should come from one’s children, and these children one can expect from marriage. Thus the idea that anyone would get married and decide a priori not to have children was generally considered to be strange, if not outright irresponsible and selfish, by the men. Hence, a childless marriage was seen as no marriage. Nortey reflects this, arguing,

They [couple] need to raise a family, which is the most important thing because one definitely expects that at some point in time you have to marry ... one of the things that is expected of being African.

He goes on to explain some of these “African notions”:

You want to have a child [because of] the respect that goes with somebody who has a dependant. You see, if you are there and you don’t have any responsibilities, people do not respect you. And if you take a wife, and you happen to have children too, a lot of respect comes with that.

Here Nortey seems to engage with Miescher’s perspectives on becoming an ɔpanyin—the ability to marry, have children and have these be dependent on you as a sign of your power and authority. It is not just marriage and authority over a wife that makes for being an elder, but the children and dependents that become a mark of wisdom, ability to provide, generosity, and hence earn respect.

THE QUESTION OF ADOPTION

Only four of the men considered adoption a valid route to fatherhood; however, two of these stressed that adoption was not an alternative to biological fatherhood, but merely a means to augment it, or to provide support for a needy child. Two men indicated that while adoption was, perhaps, a good practice for other societies, they would not have chosen this route to fatherhood themselves. The remaining five ruled adoption out unequivocally. Adoption is “difficult” in African societies, noted 53-year-old Ayittey, because you will be “given a name”—and this naming seeks to suggest that one is irresponsible or incapable of having children, both signs that one is not a real man. Particularly problematic are the many busy bodies who will whisper to the child that “this is not your mother/father,” says 47-year-old Kwame who would only consider
adoption if it could be totally secret. And Nortey, who had his second child outside marriage argues, “I can accept adoption where you feel that you want to help somebody, so even if you have your own children you can adopt a child as a charitable decision. But as a replacement of your own children, that one I don’t accept that that should be.” Tony, who after eight years of marriage had no children at the time of the interview but whose wife had a daughter prior to their marriage, said, “Actually, I would find it [adoption] very difficult and I think it will tell on me very much.” He goes on to link his feelings to fears of having his phallic competence questioned:

I wouldn’t want the situation where maybe people will be saying that I have no child of my own, and you know in our society that is what they say, maybe I am not able to produce children, so I am bent on having my own.... It will take a man with a strong heart to cope with that situation for a long time. (italics indicate authors’ emphasis)

Akwasi, whose wife had two children prior to their marriage, and who encountered a lot of pressure from his mother and ridicule from his colleagues, also draws on similar associations with phallic potency when he says that adoption would allow people to suggest that he has “used his something [penis] to make money.” This he said with reference to the belief in, and corresponding idiom of, people spiritually “selling” something that is really precious to them, such as a child, a wife, a parent, and not infrequently one’s phallic potency, in exchange for riches. Indeed, Akwasi disclosed that since he was doing relatively well financially during the years before he had children with his wife, and especially before she bore a son, such rumors had been spread about him—“at times they tease me that I don’t know how to do the job [perform sexually] because [I] don’t have a boy.” His mother’s psychological pressure, constantly asking him if he would not “bring forth a child” before she died did not help matters either as he tried to deflect such direct and indirect questioning of the integrity of his phallus onto his wife by insisting she try harder to get pregnant.

Some men also pointed to other reasons that make adoption difficult to accept. They explained that the child will not give the “proper” respect to the parent when s/he discovers that s/he is adopted, citing examples in which adopted children who were disciplined would yell at their parents, “you are not my mother/father.”

Only two men, Kodzo and Kobla, stated they would have considered adoption, had they and their wives not had any children together. Kobla and Kodzo both had initial fertility desires that were less acute than those of their wives. Kodzo wanted two children but his wife wanted three (they eventually had three), and Kobla, who himself had eighteen siblings, would have been content without children while his wife wanted four (they eventually had three). Clearly these two men differ from the others in that they do not seem to measure their sense of being men by whether they father children or not, nor
did their children’s sex seem to matter to them. Kodzo is a successful lawyer who appeared to draw a lot of his sense of self-worth from his profession. Kobla’s ability to define a counter-cultural construction of manhood, according to him, derives from his drawing on Christian beliefs to define what marriage and parenting mean. For him, according to biblical scriptures, marriage is the union of a man and a woman and should be seen as complete even without children.

CAN A MARRIAGE WITHOUT CHILDREN SURVIVE?

The interviewed men were unanimous in their opinion that the probability of marital survival in the case of childlessness was slim in Ghana, and reflected on the pressures that a childless couple would experience from friends, family, in-laws and even people they had no relationships with. Indeed, all but one of the men indicated that they and/or their wives had experienced unwanted pressure around issues of childbearing at some point in their marriage. When the interviewer posed the question, “Some people say that a marriage, if there are no children, in our African culture, cannot work, cannot survive, would you agree?” Kwame’s unequivocal and impassioned response was, “Hundred percent!” and Tony’s reference to such a marriage as “empty” pinpointed the feelings of most of the men. Ayittey explained that since he was the only child of his mother (though one of twenty of his father) he felt a lot of pressure from her and her family to have children.

Five men were certain that had their own marriages been childless they would not have survived, three of them indicating that they would have divorced their wives and/or had children with other women in order to become fathers. Akwasi, whose wife came to the marriage with a son and a daughter was emphatic that had she not borne him children she would have had to go. In fact, in the separate interview with her she complained about Akwasi’s insensitivity to her difficult pregnancies and his pressuring her to have children, particularly a son, resulting in her going through four additional pregnancies (her sixth child—the fourth with Akwasi—was a boy) even though after her fourth child (second with Akwasi) the doctor had advised her not to have any more children.

Yaw, who believed his marriage could have survived childlessness, conceded the family pressures that would have occurred and the possibility that they could have been injurious to his marriage. He acknowledged that the indirect pressures that come from a wife, via her family, could affect the marriage because a woman too needs children and a “real” man should be able to help her achieve these—especially since women, unlike men, do not have the option of having multiple partners.

AA: [T]he family will come and say, Yaw, go and marry another woman?
Yaw: I know the pressure will be there but it depends on you.
AA: You think you can withstand the pressure? Maybe when you were younger?

Yaw: I may or may not, because maybe the pressure from my wife’s side may be too much and that will make me not to withstand [sic] it. Because not only the men are in need of children but the women too. I may not bother too much but my wife can bother because of the pressure from her relations and friends.

AA: So that can make the marriage break up?

Yaw: Yes.

Although five of the men were certain that their own marriages would have survived childlessness, three of these, Wireko, Kwame, and Nortey, indicated that they would probably have had children outside marriage or married an additional wife in order to achieve fatherhood. Both Wireko and Nortey in fact have children with women other than their wives although these children were born after the birth of children with their wives. Kwame, who has three children, all of them with his wife, noted that “people will talk, but if I love my wife so dearly and see that this is the situation, I will like to get another woman.” Tony, whose marriage had remained childless after eight years, and whose wife had a daughter prior to their marriage, lamented bitterly, and seemed to concede defeat against the battle of becoming a father with his wife when saying:

They [his family] want me to take another woman [sardonic laugh] whom I should make pregnant. I should start playing around with another woman and if she gets pregnant no one will ask this one (his wife) to go away.

Although he seemed to love his attractive young wife, he said he had given himself “two years” and then he would indeed pursue another woman. The bitterness, anxiety and helplessness he felt were evident as he tried to make sense of their childlessness. Medical tests did not provide any clues as to why they should not have children, and his wife’s ability to conceive was evident given her daughter, leaving him to contemplate his masculinity and consider a partner change (or addition) as an option to rectify this serious deficit.

The interviewer had the sense from her separate interviews with husbands and wives that the two men, Kobla and Kodzo, who said they would have considered adoption if they had not had children, had relatively close relationships with their wives. This was reflected in several observations: the fact that both spouses in these interviews spoke fondly, often smiling, about their partners; they gave similar responses on questions about their marriages; the couples did many things together and discussed issues relating to their families and personal lives. In Kobla’s case, he was very involved in the daily child care and domestic work (Kodzo lived out of town during the week but indicated that when he came home on the weekends he was not interested in domestic
chores hence they had hired domestic help). Both men also had a strong sense of their marriage being their own business (“it’s our marriage and nobody interferes”), and they both had more positive attitudes toward gender-equitable relations as expressed with reference to notions about shared decision making and women’s roles. Kodzo was somewhat derisive of people whom he considered to have several children simply to make a statement about their own identities. He narrated the story of his father, who had 19 children, and the pride he took when they all visited at weekends or on holidays, their cars lined up in the village for all to see. Sixty-year-old Wireko who has 11 children, 7 with his wife, was another man who seemed to have a very warm, close relationship with his wife saying, “I would never have left her, no matter what. I will never leave my wife, for better or for worse ... but would rather get some children outside the marriage. In fact I would not have so many, maybe two, for anyone to see that I have children. I would never leave her.”

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Our study confirms previous research suggesting that becoming a father is important to Ghanaian men, particularly for symbolic reasons: it would prove that they are responsible adults and husbands who can “take care” of a family, as well as that they can “perform” sexually as men. Men can avoid the taunts of other men able to pride themselves on pristine signifiers of masculinity (children, sons) by doing the same. While the sense of responsibility to the lineage and looking forward to becoming a respected elder can be seen to be important, anxieties about sexual performance may seem to trump lineage fidelity.

The importance of phallic performance as a signifier of masculinity is not limited to Ghanaian men. North American studies have shown that although some men are becoming more caring and involved as fathers, in order to retain their male identities they must also be seen to fit the more traditional masculine image such as in being physically muscular or athletic (Wall & Arnold, 2007). It may be that the specter of a sensitive and caring man is gaining acceptability; however, notions of a real man who has *ownership of his phallus* (Messner, 2007) persist. Such may be suggested by the Gallup polls ratings of then president Bill Clinton sky-rocketing after his sexual alliances with Monica Lewinsky (Messner, p. 472). Clinton would have morphed from “emasculated house-husband to stud muffin ... from pussy to walking erection” (Ducat, 2004, cited in Messner, p. 472).

However, the importance of the “performance” of the penis beyond the sexual to include childbearing would appear to be particularly salient for African societies where children are widely valued as an end in themselves. Considering the plethora of African work that identifies the importance of “the family,” it is important that we begin to pay more attention to the importance of children from a less functional or instrumental perspective. Needed are studies that seek to understand the “value” of children and the culture of parent-
ing in its variable guises—functionally, as sources of labor for example; culturally, as markers of identities; and socially, in terms of parent-child relationships. An appreciation of the complex connections between family responsibilities, social expectations, identity constructions and policy is needed to impact social change so that fatherhood can indeed be “woven as a desirable feature into the fabric of masculinity” (Morrell, 2005, p. 86). This has a potentially extensive impact of policy implications. For example, in 2008 the government of Ghana instituted a policy of free maternal health care including maternal insurance and access to antenatal and delivery services. While this has greatly burdened health care administration (staff employment has not increased nor have facilities been improved), there has been no discussion of the relationship of this implicit pro-natalism with the reproductive work of mothering, let alone parenting or fathering. Might men have greater opportunities to sow their seeds of phallic competence and proudly display the results thereof without fear of the immediate costs? To better appreciate the stagnation in the transformation in gender relations we must, as Ratele (2008) suggests, understand the ways in which a diverse array of social categories are implicated in constructions of masculinities. As has been argued elsewhere (Adomako Ampofo, 2004), it is only when men have available to them a larger range of acceptable scripts of manhood, including being childless, that they may become less oppressive to women and other (childless) men. These alternative “masculinities” would have to accommodate voluntary and involuntary childlessness, and the options to be a father through other than biological routes such as fostering and formal adoption.

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13 Preliminary observations in Tema General Hospital, a large district hospital, indicate that since the implementation of this policy there has been an upsurge in the number of husbands who stride into the hospital to take their wives home. Hitherto husbands were often difficult to find since if bills were unpaid they risked losing face when accosted by health personnel (Kwame Ampofo, personal communication, June 2008).


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THE “LOST DECADE” OF THE 1990S AND SHIFTING MASCULINITIES IN JAPAN

ABSTRACT  The “Lost Decade” of the 1990s, extending into the early 2000s, was a particularly crucial period in Japan’s recent history. On the one hand, these years were characterized by significant economic and social upheaval. At the same time, these years were witness to increasing challenges in the public sphere to societally dominant discourses, including those relating to gender, and in particular, masculinity. This paper provides an overview of the shifts in discourses of masculinity over these years. It contends that an understanding of the changes that occurred during the “Lost Decade” is necessary in order to appreciate the dynamics of men’s lives in Japan today.

KEYWORDS  JAPAN, 1990S, RECESSION, SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES, MASCULINITY

This paper is an overview of the shifts in discourses of masculinity in Japan at a particularly crucial period in that country’s recent history — the 1990s and the early 2000s. It contends that without a proper appreciation of the significance of these years, it is next to impossible to get a sense of the socio-cultural, economic, and political dynamics of Japan today. Japan’s “Lost Decade” (ushi-nawareta jûnen, in Japanese) pertains to a period of economic slowdown, corporate restructurings, and rising unemployment rates, coupled with a growing sense of collective socio-cultural insecurity and anxiety (Shimokawa, 2006, pp. 3-11). These years followed in the wake of several decades of consistent economic growth from the 1950s until the “bubble” economy boom years of the 1980s, during the course of which Japan had emerged as a major industrial superpower, and in many respects had become something of a global economic role model for developing nations. The bursting of the largely real estate and speculation-driven “bubble” boom in the early 1990s, however, put an end to these economic “glory years” and ushered in a period of prolonged economic

1 The stylistic and spelling conventions used in this paper include the use of macrons for extended vowels in Japanese (“jendâ” instead of “jendaa”), and for Japanese names the use of a surname followed by personal name order (“Taga Futoshi” instead of “Futoshi Taga”).

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stagnation, accompanied by a sense of social and cultural dislocation. In many respects, despite some signs of recovery in the mid-2000s, Japan has yet to emerge out of this torpor—the brutal impact the current (2008/9) global financial crisis is having on the Japanese economy being evidence of this.

At the same time, the uncertainty and apparent loss of national confidence of the 1990s and early-2000s also brought to the surface some very significant socio-cultural shifts. These had been in gestation over preceding decades, but only became significantly articulated in the public arena in the post-Bubble economy years. This included a growing visibility in the public domain of debates about societally dominant discourses of gender, specifically dominant expectations of men. It was really during these years that masculinity as an object of scrutiny really emerged, both in academic and non-academic spaces. Moreover, as a consequence of the changes occurring over these years, the equation of Japanese masculinity with the middle-class, white-collar, work-defined “salaryman” splintered, allowing for numerous different masculinities to emerge into public visibility. Today, imaginings of Japanese masculinity are increasingly likely to be signified by the stylish “funky” youth masculinities exemplified by Japan’s male pop icons, or the *otaku* “geek cool” associated with Japanese visual culture products like *anime* and computer graphics.

This paper will start off with a brief overview of the historical significance of Japan’s “Lost Decade.” It will then look at the ways in which discourses about masculinity unfolded against the backdrop of the wider social, cultural, economic, and political shifts and cross-currents of these years. The paper will then conclude by reflecting on implications for contemporary Japanese masculinities.

**The 1990s “Lost Decade” Years**

Future historians will likely interpret the 1990s as one of the watershed decades in Japan’s capitalist modernization and post-modernity. An emerging body of literature addresses the significance of the shifts and upheavals that occurred during these years (Harootunian & Yoda, 2006; Iida, 2000; McCormack, 1998; Nakanishi, 2008; Shimokawa, 2006). Significant in these various discussions is a sense of collective anxiety characterizing this decade. This stands in stark contrast to the heady optimism of the preceding decade, when, in the context of the prosperity of the “bubble” economy boom, it seemed that Japan had finally attained the socio-economic affluence it had been striving for ever since it, in the late nineteenth century, embarked on its project of nation building and modernization.

The bursting of the speculation-driven “bubble” in the early-1990s, put the brakes on the growing confidence of the preceding years, and ushered in a prolonged period of economic stagnation from which, in many respects, Japan has yet to recover—the fallout from the most recent global financial crisis of late 2008, seems to have erased any sign of the a tentative resurgence the Japanese
economy had started showing in recent years. In contrast to the corporate prosperity and close to full-employment conditions of the 1980s, the 1990s was marked by corporate bankruptcies, with even seemingly solid financial institutions and banks collapsing in succession (Yoda, 2006), as well as growing unemployment rates. In 1992, just after the economic collapse, the official unemployment rate had been 2.1 percent. However, by the end of the decade, in 1999, it has risen to 4.7 percent, reaching 5 percent by 2001 (Japan Institute of Labor, 2003).

Aside from the economic woes, the 1990s were also characterized by a lackluster politics seemingly mired in indecision and bickering, and significantly, a growing national psycho-cultural despondency that stood in stark contrast to the collective smug self-satisfaction of the 1980s. The particular historical significance of the 1990s is underscored the most by this sense of a rupture with the past, a rupture symbolized through the succession of misfortunes and incidents that plagued Japan through these years. One such incident was the 1995 Hanshin earthquake that killed several thousands and destroyed large areas around the city of Kobe, and which brought to light the ineptitude of the Japanese state in dealing with a sudden crisis (Leheny, 2006, pp. 34-38). Another psycho-culturally traumatic event, also occurring in 1995, was the poison gas terrorist attack by the doomsday religious cult Aum Shinrikyô on the Tokyo subway system. Added to these a succession of often extremely bizarre, and seemingly random acts of youth crime committed by ostensibly normal, everyday teenagers who suddenly snapped (kireru), punctuated these years. These attention-grabbing incidents occurred against a backdrop of a collective anxiety, much of it centered around youth, about the impending social and cultural collapse. Frenzied media discussions about such social issues as Japan’s falling birthrate, the growing visibility of the enjō kōsai phenomenon (“compensated dating,” teenage girls going on paid “dates” with much older men), or the growth in the freeter (“freelance” temporary/casual workers) sector of the economy (related either to the inability of young people to find permanent employment, or their lack of desire to commit to a stable job) all seemed emblematic of this impending social implosion and fragmentation.

Viewed through the lens of these successive financial and social crises, the closing decade of the twentieth century comes across as a period of economic, social and moral disintegration, as popularly reflected in the “Lost Decade” narrative. However, at the same time, the 1990s may also be conceptualized, not in terms of decay and loss, but in terms of renewal. In some respects, these were years when important socio-cultural changes, in gestation for much of

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2 According to figures from the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, youth unemployment rose sharply through the 1990s and early-2000s reaching close to 10 percent in 2003 for those in the 20-24 years age group. By 2004, the number of freeter (generally those below 35 years of age, who had completed their education, but were engaged in part-time or temporary work) had climbed to over 2 million (Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare, 2005).
the post-WW II period, set in and started to be collectively acknowledged in the public sphere. For instance, it was really during the 1990s that social and cultural diversity became visible—indeed in some situations, celebrated—in the public arena, far more than had been the case in preceding decades. This diversity was best symbolized through the growing visibility and assertion of their rights by a range of ethnic, cultural, and sexual minorities, as well as a range of citizens’ groups, NGOs, and NPOs (see Kingston, 2004).³

Foregrounding many of these changes was the questioning of the socio-cultural, political, and economic underpinnings of the postwar Japanese nation-state: the dominance of the political landscape by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP, which had governed Japan almost continuously during the postwar period); the scandal-prone partnership between the LDP, big business and the bureaucracy; an education system stressing conformity and stifling individual creativity; as well as a public discourse of gender that simultaneously discouraged women from entering the public/work sphere, and men from participating in private/family spaces. It is true that the questioning of these ideological pillars of the Japanese state had been in effect as far back as the 1960s—the anti-establishment student movement of the 1960s is one example of challenge to the status quo. However, it was really in the 1990s that a combination of factors, including demographic shifts and the emergence of a post-industrial, late-capitalist society with an increasing emphasis on diversity and individuality, not to mention the fallouts of the corporate downsizings and financial scandals of the post-Bubble years, enabled these underlying interrogations to find expression in the form of specific policies and enunciations.

THE EMERGENCE OF A DISCOURSE AROUND “MASCULINITY”

The context of contradictory socio-economic and cultural shifts and pulls highlighted masculinity as a focus for questioning and interrogation. Over much of the post-World War II period Japanese masculinity had come to be signified by the figure of the be-suited urban, white-collar “salaryman” loyally working for the organization he was employed by, in return for benefits such

³ This visibility of diversity was in turn related to conditions of a late-capitalist socio-economy. This included the rapid diffusion of new media, including the internet, cable and satellite television, and mobile telephone mediated communications (see Gottlieb & McLelland, 2003). Another consideration was the “commodification” of diversity, whereby non-mainstream identities became another fashionable “brand” to be consumed through the capitalist marketplace. An example of this was the “gay boom” of the 1990s, when a variety of mainstream media (glossy magazines, television serials, movies) featured and celebrated male gay lifestyles. This “boom” was driven primarily by young, heterosexual female consumers, rather than sexual minorities themselves. However, while there may have been elements of trivialization and tokenism at work, the “gay boom” did work toward bringing sexual minority identity into the public arena (for further discussion of the “gay boom” see McLelland, 2000, 2003).
as secure lifetime employment and almost automatic promotions and salary-increments linked to length of service. Notwithstanding the fact that large sectors of the male workforce never did have access to the salaryman model of corporate paternalism, the discourse of masculinity associated with the salaryman and his lifestyle came, in many respects, to dominate both Japanese corporate culture and Japanese masculinity, over the period from around the 1950s until the 1980s (Amano, 2006, pp. 18-24). In this regard the discourse of salaryman masculinity, premised on the notion of the male as breadwinner and provider for a dependent family, could be considered the hegemonic discourse of masculinity in Japan for these decades.4

However, in the wake of the corporate restructurings and economic slowdown of the 1990s outlined in the previous section, this discourse of masculinity started to unravel and lose its hegemonic grip. As even large elite corporations abandoned practices such as lifetime employment guarantee, leaving increasing numbers of middle-aged salarymen without job security, questions about the cost to men and their families of subscribing to a discourse of masculinity prioritizing work above all else started to become increasingly audible in the public arena. Since the 1980s there had been already considerable media attention to topics like karōshi (sudden death related to work-related physical and mental stress, in particular excessively long working hours), kita-kyōhi (inability or reluctance to go home, partly due to a lack of communication between the salaryman and his family),5 tan shin funin (workers forced to live away from their families, sometime for years, due to job transfers),6 and madogiwa-zoku (literally, “window-sill tribe”—middle-aged salarymen automatically promoted up the corporate escalator to junior management posts, but due to either personal inefficacy or a lack of available jobs commensurate with their status, being sidelined and relegated to the desks by the window, passing time staring at the outside scenery). At the same time, for growing numbers of younger men, subscribing to salaryman masculinity was not an option, either out of choice, when opting for more flexible arrangements such as working in the casual/temporary freeter economy, or as a consequence of un-

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4 As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), discussing the initial application of the concept of hegemonic masculinity point out, while “hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it . . . it was certainly normative,” in that “it embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man [and] it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it” (p. 832).

5 See, for instance, Okifuji (1990) and Itô (1996) for a discussion of this phenomenon, as represented in the popular press.

6 By 1992, the estimated number of tan shin funin men had exceeded 250,000 (Gill, 2003, p. 158, n. 3). Of the various factors causing salarymen to lead a tan shin funin life, not wanting to interrupt children’s schooling seems to be the motivating factor for an overwhelming number—85.1 percent in one survey (Fôramu Josei no Seikatsu to Tenbô, 1994, p. 21).
availability of regular, permanent employment to new graduates as corporations cut back on hiring, in response to the economic slowdown.

The corporate restructurings of the 1990s also had consequences for the men who would embody the salaryman model—fulltime, middle-aged, middle-management, white-collar employees of private organizations. Many of these men had entered the workforce during the peak years of economic growth in Japan, in the 1960s and 1970s. This was a time of rapid economic expansion, and organizations needed a large pool of young white-collar (and blue-collar) workers, who could provide the necessary backup support to middle- and upper-management. The implicit assumption was that the economy would keep growing. Hence, the expectation was that as this cohort moved up the ranks, organizations would keep expanding, and there would be sufficient middle-management positions available to absorb them once they reached the middle years of their careers. However, their transition into mid-career coincided with the economic slowdown of the 1990s with organizations now encountering excess capacity, particularly in human resources. This cohort of middle-aged, middle-management salarymen was particularly troublesome for corporations—given the seniority-based organizational structure, these men were now a costly layer of “excess fat.” At the same time (partly due to this burden), organizations were increasingly forced to cutback on their new staff intake. One of the consequences of these cutbacks was that the work load and pressure on middle management to “come up with the figures” became even more intense, further exacerbating negative dimensions of salaryman masculinity, such as karōshi and the tanshin funin phenomenon, referred to above. Furthermore, as part of the restructuring that many corporations embarked upon, large numbers of middle-management staff found their very jobs under threat. As organizations sought to cut costs growing numbers of lower- and middle-management staff found themselves being shunted off to branch offices and subsidiaries, or even being “out-sourced” to other firms. Others were asked to take extended leave, or to only come in to work a few days a week, or, contravening everything lifetime employment supposedly stood for, were laid-off (see Roberson & Suzuki, 2003).

The implications of these shifts in corporate ideology, in the discourse surrounding the salaryman and what he stood for, as well as in terms of the changed day-to-day reality for large sections of the population, were manifold. First, as mentioned above, the unemployment rate continued to climb through the 1990s as a consequence of companies being driven into bankruptcy, or as a result of corporate restructuring. While the group impacted the most was males in the 15-24 age bracket, these figures also reflected a rise in jobless rates among middle-aged men, many of whom were the victims of corporate re-

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7 The total number of “dispatched workers” (haken) for instance increased from just over 500,000 in 1992 to close to 1.5 million by 2001 (Japan Institute of Labor, 2003, p. 40).
structuring and lay-offs. The unemployment rate for men in the 45-54 age group had been a mere 1.1 percent in 1990; by 2002 it had climbed to 4.3 percent, and for those in the next age category (55-64), the rate was 7.1 percent, up from 3.4 percent in 1990 (Japan Institute of Labor, 2003, p. 44). For middle-aged men, the implications of being retrenched were particularly acute. Not only did they have to contend with the economic strain posed on them and their families, but given the centrality of work in defining their identity up until that point, their very masculinity was compromised. One corollary of this was a marked increase in the male suicide rate, particularly among middle-aged men (Itô, 1996; Roberson & Suzuki, 2003; Taga, 2006b). For a significant proportion of salarymen in this age group, even among those who had not been laid off, there was a heightened sense of anxiety, stress, and a feeling of having been betrayed by the corporate ideology and system into which they had invested so much (see for instance, Nakamura, 1996).

It was against this background of economic uncertainty, coupled with other socio-cultural and demographic shifts, that “men” and “masculinity” as a category in its own right started coming under scrutiny, both in academic and non-academic forums. As Taga Futoshi notes in his comprehensive review of men’s studies/masculinities studies in Japan, although there were some exam-

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8 As Roberson and Suzuki, drawing upon Ministry of Health and Welfare statistics, point out, the number of men killing themselves in 2000 was over 2.5 times the number in 1970. Among men in the 25–39 age bracket, suicide was the leading cause of death in 2000, and second for men in the 40–49 category (Roberson & Suzuki, 2003b, p. 14, n. 7; also Nakamura, 2003, pp. 165, 166). Significantly, from the mid-1990s, problems at work and/or economic hardship started showing a significant increase as a cause of suicide (Yuzawa & Miyamoto, 2008, pp. 196, 197).

9 The complexities at stake in discussing terminology across languages (specifically, Japanese and English) need to be unpacked a bit. As Jennifer Robertson points out, among feminist and gender studies scholars in Japan, sex, gender, and sexuality “have been distinguished in principle since around 1970” (1998, p. 18). Sex in the biological sense is denoted by the term (and corresponding kanji Chinese character) sei. As far as reference to gender is concerned, the transliterated term jendâ has become widespread in recent years (see Amano & Kimura, 2003; Itô & Muta, 1998; Taga, 2001). However, gender is also sometimes expressed using either sei, or, seitetsu or seisa (“sex difference”) particularly in formal pre-feminist academic or scientific literature. Moreover, references to specific genders continue to be linked to the word sei. Thus, the word dansei, comprised of dan, the Chinese reading for the Japanese word otoko, prefixing sei, connotes either male sex, or male gender (see Robertson, 1998, p. 18). In terms of everyday parlance, otoko is used more commonly than the more formal, academic-sounding dansei, as a noun to denote a “man.” Gender in terms of attributes is described by adding the suffix rashii, with, as Robertson points out, “its allusion to appearance or likeness” (1998, p. 18). Thus, otokorashii could denote physical appearance, or behaviour, or attributes (such as tone of voice) considered “manly” or “masculine,” measured against the hegemonic ideals of “masculinity” and “manliness.” An equivalent term for mas-
amples of writing focused on masculinity dating back to the 1980s and even earlier, it was during the 1990s that a distinct area of academic and non-academic inquiry around men’s lives and masculinities started to take shape (Taga, 2005). It was a combination of three interrelated socio-cultural and economic dynamics that worked in concert to foreground this visibility—the impact of the bursting of the bubble economy on the employment sector (discussed above), demographic changes, and, importantly, the shift toward a focus on gender at the government policy-making level, with the enactment of a series of legislative developments from the mid-1980s into the 2000s.

The first of these developments was the 1985 Equal Employment Opportunity Law, which aimed to encourage gender equality in the workplace. The enactment of this law was prompted by Japan ratifying the United Nations’ Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women marking the end of the UN Decade for Women (1975–1985). While the initial legislation lacked teeth in many respects (for instance, the lack of penalty clauses), it was subsequently strengthened in the 1990s. The 1991 Childcare Leave Law (ikuji kyôgyô hô), furthermore, allowed both male and female employees to take parental leave. This and other policies were reinforced at the grass-roots level by a series of official campaigns encouraging men to take a more active role in childrearing. One that generated particular attention was a poster campaign featuring the male partner of the popular female musician Amuro Namie holding the couple’s child with a caption declaring that a male parent who did not take part in childcare could not be called a father (Nakatani, 2006, pp. 94, 95; Roberts, 2002, pp. 76-78; Taga, 2005, p. 156).

The shift in government policy was not necessarily prompted by genuine commitments to challenge dominant gender paradigms. Rather, it was driven more by the economic and demographic realities (and projected implications) of falling birth rates and an aging population. The birthrate had been decreases

10 As Taga notes, there were some early precursors dating back to the 1970s and 1980s (Taga, 2005, p. 154). Also it was during the 1980s that some of the academic research on gender started incorporating “masculinity” as a category of problematization. There were a number of titles, but Watanabe Tsuneo’s 1986 Datsu-dansei no jidai (The post-male age) was perhaps the most noteworthy. It was Watanabe, as Taga observes, who first talked about “dansei gaku” (men’s studies) as a category for academic study (Taga, 2005, p. 155; Watanabe, 1986). For a list of some of the other early works on masculinity, see Nakamura and Nakamura (1997).
ing steadily since the early 1970s, and by the late-1990s had fallen to 1.34, well below the population replacement figure (Roberson & Suzuki, 2003b, p. 10; Taga, 2005, p. 156). At the same time, because of improvements in health, nutrition, and overall living standards over the postwar decades, the proportion of elderly within the population had been increasing steadily over the postwar decades (Yuzawa & Miyamoto, 2008). These trends generated considerable concern among government and community leaders and opinion makers about the future economic and socio-cultural implications for Japan. While there was the inevitable criticism on the part of conservative social commentators about the supposed selfish individualism of younger women (referred to as “Parasite Singles”) postponing or refusing marriage in favor of leading a carefree, consumption-centered lifestyle (see Dales, 2005; Roberson & Suzuki, 2003b, pp. 10, 11), there was also a growing recognition on the part of policy-makers that unless men were factored in, there could be no effective way of redressing the declining birth rate.

Men’s Movement

It was in this context that voices seeking to interrogate “masculinity” as a construct became increasingly audible in the public arena. There had, as pointed out earlier, been groups engaging with aspects of masculinity as far back as the late 1970s, however these earlier groups tended to be concentrated on single issues, particularly related to child rearing and the gendered division of housework (Taga, 2006a, pp. 170, 171). Groups emerging in the 1990s, while still engaging with key issues like child-rearing, were rather concerned with a broader interrogation and deconstruction of “men” and “masculinity” as categories. The first of these men’s group, Menzu ribu kenkyû kai (“Men’s liberation research association”), was established in Osaka in 1991 by a small group of academics and concerned community members, many of whom had connections with other progressive social movements. This group was instrumental in the subsequent establishment of Japan’s first Men’s Center in 1995 (Shibuya, 2001, p. 450; Taga, 2005, p. 157), which played a key role in providing grass-roots support and information, including the provision of a counseling hotline service.

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11 In 2006 the elderly accounted for 20.8 percent of the total population, putting Japan ahead of all other industrialized countries, in terms of the percentage of the population above 65 (Yuzawa & Miyamoto, 2008, p. 21).

12 It should be noted that despite the term “men’s liberation,” suggestive of a more conservative, anti-feminist, men’s rights agenda, along the lines of groups like the Promise Keepers in the United States, the Osaka group (and other “men’s lib” groups established in its wake) was quite unambiguously pro-feminist and progressive.

Over the course of the 1990s, following the example of the Osaka group, men’s groups were established in other parts of the country—starting with Men’s Lib Tokyo in 1995, and subsequently groups in Kanagawa, Fukushima, Okayama, Kyushu and elsewhere (Dasgupta, 2003a, pp. 112, 113; Shibuya, 2001, p. 450). These groups engaged in numerous activities: networking and collaborating with other groups working in gender and sexuality related areas, such as women’s organizations, as well as lgbt/sexual minority groups, like OCCUR; providing support and information services to individual men’s issues ranging from unemployment to getting men to talk about domestic violence; and providing information to and raising awareness within the general community (Taga, 2006a). This was effected by means of seminars and workshops (often in collaboration with local government authorities responsible for gender-related issues), publications such as newsletters and pamphlets known as \textit{mini-komi (“mini-communication”), media releases, online information of activities and services through websites, and the like.} For example, Men’s Center Japan put out a number of accessible booklets with titles like “Otokorashisa” kara jibunrashisa e (From “manliness” to being yourself) and Otokotachi no “watashi” sagashi (Men’s search for “own self”) containing articles on a variety of pertinent issues—self-reflection, friendship, work, fatherhood, intimate relationships, domestic violence, to list a few (Dasgupta, 2003a, p. 113; Men’s Center Japan, 1996, 1997; Taga, 2006a, pp. 175, 176).

The visibility and activism of the men’s movement, as well as the shaping of a sense of community received a significant boost in November 1996, when the first “Men’s Festival” was held in Kyoto, attracting over 160 male and female participants from across Japan (Shibuya, 2001, pp. 450, 451). These “Festivals” (akin to conference/workshops) continued to be held annually until the early 2000s, and played an important role in bringing together individuals from across the nation dealing with similar issues. This was particularly important for men outside the central Tokyo-Osaka-Kyoto orbit; regional groups were

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15 For a discussion of awareness raising of domestic violence issues among men (including among perpetrators of the violence) see Nakamura (2003).

16 Taga (2006a, p. 7), for instance, notes that according to a survey carried out by the Fukuoka City Women’s Centre, between April 1993 and July 1995 around 1, 033 workshops, seminars and public lectures on the theme of masculinity were organized across Japan.

17 The mainstream media also contributed to raising awareness. The popular men’s magazine \textit{Bart} ran a feature on men’s issues and masculinity studies in 1997, and even the English-language press picked up on the trend quite early on (Dasgupta, 2003a, p. 112). The national broadcaster, \textit{NHK}, ran a series on its education television channel on \textit{danseigaku} featuring Ito Kinio (Taga, 2005, p. 159).

18 See also the Men’s Center Japan website for details of the programmes of this first, and subsequent Men’s Festivals.
often established during periods of post-Festival optimism (Taga, 2006a, pp. 179, 180).

**MEN’S STUDIES**

The other significant outcome of the growing attention to “masculinity” was the emergence, in the 1990s, of *danseigaku* (*men’s studies/studies of/on men*, more loosely, *masculinity studies*) as a defined area of academic teaching and research. Once again, this was not an isolated development but rather followed on from the growth of research on women, and more generally on gender, in the 1970s and 1980s. Scholars including leading feminist scholar Ueno Chizuko, along with pro-feminist academics like Itô Kimio, started to focus on masculinity as a social category. Moreover, its emergence was situated within a wider global emergence of masculinities/men’s studies as a distinct area for academic research and inquiry, from the late 1980s onwards.

Consequently the 1990s saw a succession of both theoretical and empirical work engaging with the theme of masculinity, including a 1995 volume dedicated to *danseigaku*, in an authoritative multi-volume series on feminism in Japan (*Nihon no feminizumu*), edited by leading feminist scholars including Ueno Chizuko and Ehara Yumiko, as well as a number of monographs and edited volumes by leading pioneer of academic men’s/masculinity studies, Itô Kimio.19

Another aspect of this crystallizing of a distinct men’s/masculinity studies area, was its extension into the domains of teaching and community education. In addition to collaborative community-level efforts, following a 1992 course by Itô Kimio at Kyoto University (Taga, 2006a, p. 14), men’s/masculinity studies started to appear in university courses, either as a separate course or as an element of “gender studies” courses. Taga (2006a, p. 14), drawing on data from the National Women’s Education Center, notes that in 2002 across the 531 tertiary institutions in Japan, there were 2,068 classes on gender, of which 61 dealt specifically with men’s/masculinity studies. Taga himself was the first researcher at a Japanese university to complete a doctoral thesis using a men’s/masculinity studies framework. He subsequently published quite extensively in the area, in both Japanese and English, thereby enabling Japanese research to reach a wider global audience. Taga’s English-language publications (e.g., 2003, 2005) contributed to a small but growing body of international academic literature on Japanese masculinities published since the early 2000s. This includes Kam Louie and Morris Low’s 2003 edited volume, *East Asian mas-

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19 Itô’s works included such titles as “Otokerashisa” no yukue (Tracing “manliness/masculinity,” 1993), *Danseigaku nyūmon* (Introduction to men’s/masculinity studies, 1996), and a co-edited volume (with Muta Kazue), *Jendâ de manabu shakaigaku* (The study of sociology through gender, 1998). For a comprehensive overview of the various academic works published through the 1990s and early-2000s, see Taga (2005, pp, 158-163).

This emerging body of English-language scholarship on masculinity in Japan contributed in two ways. First, it provided a specific analytic lens through masculinity (and more generally, gender) for the field of global Japan studies, particularly in the West. Second, it contributed to a “de-westernization” of men’s/masculinity studies, which, at least in its initial years as an emergent field of research, had been heavily slanted toward Euro-American cultural contexts.

**OUTLOOKS: THE LEGACY OF THE “LOST DECADE”**

The discussion in the preceding section underscores the degree to which, within the space of a few years, men’s lives, and indeed masculinity as a cultural rubric, became available for scrutiny and discussion in Japanese public discourse. While, as I have argued, there were external influences at work—the emergence of men’s/masculinity studies over the 1980s-1990s in the West, and its influence on Japanese researchers and activists, for instance—the conditions foregrounding this visibility were overwhelmingly internal. The “Lost Decade” of the 1990s, as highlighted, represents a socio-economic and cultural watershed in Japan’s contemporary history and has a bearing on any discussion of masculinity and men’s lives in Japan today.

Ten years down the track, the legacy of those years continues to have implications for men’s lives and thinking about masculinity. It is, however, a mixed legacy. On the one hand, there is no doubt that the critical attention to gender in the 1990s has had a significant influence on the way increasing numbers of men (and women) think about issues such as men’s involvement in activities previously considered “un-manly/un-masculine” like housework, cooking, and childcare. The hegemonic hold of the work-focused, white-collar salaryman as the icon of Japanese masculinity, has definitely loosened since the 1990s, allowing for greater visibility of multiple masculinities in the public domain challenging and re-shaping the ideological expectations of hegemonic masculinity (for instance, the need for a father to be seen as actively involved in parenting is increasingly becoming a normative expectation).

At the same time, certain assumptions that had defined pre-1990s hegemonic masculinity continue to operate, albeit in less intense ways. Despite the compromised status of the salaryman model, *work* in the public sphere continues to be instrumental in defining masculine self-identity and self-worth, both at the collective societal level and at the level of the individual. If anything, in the context of the harsh economic and employment conditions of the past two
decades, the pressure to perform for those men who succeed in the increasingly competitive work environment seems more intense. Moreover, despite the growing *visibility* of diverse masculinities, the power gap between those men who “make it” into hegemonic masculinity (exemplified today by a new generation of more cosmopolitan, tech-savvy entrepreneurs and salarymen) and those who do not (growing numbers of *freeters* well into their thirties, even forties, unable to find stable employment) may well be getting more intense. Indeed, in the wake of the current (2008/9) global financial meltdown and its impact on the Japanese economy—in particular the large-scale lay-offs of contract and temporary workers—the gap between hegemonic masculinity and marginalized masculinities will more than likely further intensify in coming years.

Similarly, despite an apparent whittling away of traditional gender role expectations, with women no longer expected to be primarily fulltime homemakers and men seemingly more involved in household and parenting responsibilities, the situation continues to be complex. Men, especially younger men who grew up being exposed to increasingly progressive civil discourses on gender equality, may well express a desire to share household and childcare responsibilities with their partners. For instance, surveys conducted by the Office of Cabinet on attitudes to the gendered division of labor, reveal that the percentage of respondents disagreeing completely, or to a large degree, with the statement *the husband should work outside the home and the wife should look after the household* rose from 20.4 percent in 1979 to 48.9 percent in 2004 (Taga, 2006a, p. 122).

Yet, reality continues to lag behind the articulated ideal of shared household responsibilities. In 2006, even for households where both partners worked, the husband’s share of household labor was still only around 10 percent (up from slightly over five percent in 1986) (Yuzawa & Miyamoto, 2008, p. 31). Moreover, Yuzawa and Miyamoto point out that the increase in the time men spend on housework related activities tends to come from increased participation in activities like shopping, as opposed to tasks like cooking and cleaning. Similarly, while it might appear that men’s participation in childcare has increased, the nature of childcare tends to revolve around playing with children, rather than childcare tasks such as feeding or changing diapers (p. 30). This disconnection between men’s stated ideal of greater involvement in the household and reality is compounded by the greatly intensified pressures at work mentioned above—official rhetoric about family-friendly workplaces, notwithstanding (see Taga, 2006a, pp. 116-118). Indeed, work conditions seem to be getting worse for younger men. Fujimura, in a 2002 survey of gender concepts among young adult men, notes that the proportion of male employees

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20 Japan fares poorly in international comparisons—whereas in Sweden the male partner in households with children where both partners work, does an average of 3.19 hours of housework per week, in Japan that figure is just 1.18 hours per week (Yuzawa & Miyamoto, 2008, p. 31).
working in excess of 60 hours per week was greatest for men in their twenties and thirties (Fujimura, 2006, p. 209). What this points to is the need for a radical and far-reaching rethinking of the very concept of work, something which the 1990s men’s group activists and academics strongly emphasized.

Regarding the emergence of men’s/masculinity studies and the efforts of activist groups, the legacy of the 1990s/early-2000s is similarly mixed. The academic literature on men’s/masculinity studies has continued to grow and diversify. However, the fate of men’s groups and community activism has been less promising, with much of the enthusiasm and vibrancy of the 1990s dissipating in recent years. Many of the groups, established in the 1990s have shut down, or persist in name only, or consist of just a handful of individuals. This includes even groups like Men’s Lib Tokyo, which in the 1990s had been very active, but closed down in 2005. Even the Men’s Festivals, although continuing to be held regularly, have seen a drop in participants from the high-point of 500 in 1997 (Taga, 2006a).

As Taga points out, the reasons behind this tapering-off of interest are varied. Factors range from differences among members about the direction of the movement, to the reality of issues addressed in the 1990s by men’s groups, including changing attitudes toward housework and parenting, and the stigma of showing weakness and emotion, are far less relevant or urgent for younger men today. Ironically, the very success in getting men to talk about their feelings, or to re-appraise relationships with their partners, as well as the inroads made in legislation, may well have contributed to a lack of “burning issues” for group members to unite around. It may be just that, unlike for instance sexual minority status, “masculinity” may be too broad and nebulous a category to sustain a social movement around. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the important contributions made by groups and individuals during the “Lost Decade” years to changing entrenched social and cultural attitudes, and making Japan a more inclusive and socio-culturally dynamic society today. In this sense, the historical significance of the emergence of the discourse around masculinity needs to be taken into account in any comprehensive study of post-war Japan.

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21 Works published since the early 2000s, such as Abe, Obinata, and Amano (2006), Amano and Kimura (2003), Kaizuma (2004), Saitô (2003), and Taga (2006a, 2006b), have all contributed to the intellectual maturing of the discipline.


Across a transcultural spectrum of representations, the figure of the househusband is lampooned as a virtual stand up comedy act with brooms and aprons—stage props of domesticity signaling a surrender of masculinity. Humorists have had a field day with *blokus domesticus* (McMahon, 1998), nowhere more explicitly than in cartoon strips and ribald humor. In one cartoon, the caricature is completed in the burlesque counter image of the wife/feminine partner reading a financial newspaper, waiting topless for her househusband to iron her business shirt. The sexual imagery marks the loss—indeed the docile sacrifice—of masculinity and the transferral of power to the feminine “alter” ego. The semiotics of househusband cartoons naturalizes negative relations between domestic work and the slaughter of a male self. This image has arguably become the privileged representation in a global discourse of degraded masculinities (Krimmer, 2000; Wentworth & Chell, 2005).

**ABSTRACT** The term househusband is used transnationally to represent misplaced masculinity. But when applied generically to local contexts it may restrict understanding of the depth of degradation to which the “inappropriately placed” husband is subject across such contexts. The *ghar jawai* in India, for example, is the son-in-law who lives in his wife’s home as a dependent on his father-in-law, overturning norms of kinship exchange and rules of residence, and an object of sexualized insult. A focus on the *ghar jawai* within the figure of househusband foregrounds the experiential context of encounters between different formations of masculinity. This element of contextuality is reviewed both with reference to rural north India and transnational migration to the UK.

**KEYWORDS** GHAJAWAI, HOUSEHUSBAND, DEGRADED MASCULINITY, KINSHIP, INDIA, MIGRATION MASCULINITIES

Across a transcultural spectrum of representations, the figure of the househusband is lampooned as a virtual stand up comedy act with brooms and aprons—stage props of domesticity signaling a surrender of masculinity. Humorists have had a field day with *blokus domesticus* (McMahon, 1998), nowhere more explicitly than in cartoon strips and ribald humor. In one cartoon, the caricature is completed in the burlesque counter image of the wife/feminine partner reading a financial newspaper, waiting topless for her househusband to iron her business shirt. The sexual imagery marks the loss—indeed the docile sacrifice—of masculinity and the transferral of power to the feminine “alter” ego. The semiotics of househusband cartoons naturalizes negative relations between domestic work and the slaughter of a male self. This image has arguably become the privileged representation in a global discourse of degraded masculinities (Krimmer, 2000; Wentworth & Chell, 2005).
However, as a generic figure the househusband has acquired a nomadic property to occupy spaces in cultural territories where it may not altogether prove productive. In this paper, I focus on the “inappropriately placed” husband in the Indian family, more particularly on the figure of the north Indian ghar jawai—the husband who lives with his wife’s family—represented in kinship theory as a person “out of place” (Douglas, 1966; Strathern, 1987). Living in the wrong home is a source of intense shame for men and their wider kin, for shame travels beyond the individual to “contaminate” a whole set of associated others. I argue that it is not the performance of domestic work but “incorrect” residence that defines the denigration of the ghar jawai. Unfortunately, the routine translation of the term ghar jawai as “househusband” elides the cultural specificity of shame and masculine degradation, and places an inaccurate emphasis on the conjugal couple. The primary vis-à-vis of the ghar jawai, I argue, is his wife’s father, upon whom the ghar jawai is dependent. This relationship of dependence and authority between two men subverts the normative structure of kinship hierarchies that place wife givers as subordinate to wife takers and is the key to understanding the figure of the uxorilocal1 son-in-law.

Below I briefly look at the househusband in situ to highlight the specificity of meanings that emerge from his cultural localities. I then turn to analyze the ghar jawai of north Indian kinship structure and practice. Finally, I look at the way transnational migrations of men enable a “forgetting” of shame and the possibility of recouping masculine personhood. My concern throughout is to think through the ideas of degraded masculinities as specific to their cultural contexts and not as free floating signifiers of gender identity. Anthropological and popular translation of the ghar jawai as househusband may be a linguistic convenience, but in fact obscures the intensity of the debasement of the ghar jawai. The ribald humor of househusband cartoons is a pale reflection of the hostility implicit in the insults directed toward ghar jawai.

**Constructions and Counter-constructions: The Ghar Jawai**

Writings on the social and political economy of late twentieth century households convincingly argue that the househusband is a product of “companionate marriage” (Anderson, Bechhofer, & Gershuny, 1994; Giddens, 1993; Lasch, 1997) in a post-modern age, where heterosexual partners share the responsibilities of paid and family work. In the transformation of the household economy and the domestic sphere, the primary players are the conjugal couple. The discourse of the “new man” and his caricatured doppelganger self, the

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1 Uxorilocal residence entails a groom moving into the bride’s household. In North Indian kinship structures, the focus of my paper, the primary residence pattern is virilocal or patrilocal: the bride moves to live with the groom’s family. Virilocality and patrilineal kinship reckoning accentuate patriarchal authority.
househusband, are located within the confines of conjugality and the nuclear household, the specific ramification emerging from cartoon commentaries and writings on the post-industrial family.

The distorting framework of conjugality and the debased househusband is countered within discourses of fatherhood. Narratives of fathers in the family, not just earning for the family, represented men as simultaneously “caring fathers” and “better mothers.” Hollywood versions of “new” fathers in *Kramer vs. Kramer*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, and *Three Men and a Baby* turned satire around into a recuperation of mislaid masculinity, affirming the masculine self through the tasks of parenting. Recuperation and affirmation required the complete vanquishing—indeed in *Kramer vs. Kramer* and *Three Men* it is the virtual vanishing—of the mother figure, the displacement and substitution of the two parent family model by the father as *uber* parent (Chopra, 2001). The presence of the child restores the seminal position of men as father. Conflated with fatherhood, the ignominious househusband is reinstated with honor intact.

However, the processes of loss and reinstatement of masculinity presented by the househusband-as-father are inappropriate to the cultural circumstance and social construction of the *ghar jawai* of north Indian kinship structures. Very briefly, the structure of north Indian patrilineal descent and patriarchy rests on the transfer of women and the immobility of men. It is the wife who moves into her husband’s home of which she becomes a member, socially, morally and legally. Giving daughters/sisters away to “other men” through exogamous exchange is the basis for a fraught relationship that surfaces in sexualized slurs in men’s talk. The kinship term for wife’s brother (*sala*) also articulates an insult that asserts hierarchy among men (Hershman, 1981; Madan, 1975; Nicholas, 1965). *Bahen chot* “screw your sister” alludes to the man who forfeits his sister to other men and is commonly deployed in male public speech.

Across the Indian sub-continent the common term *ghar jawai* encapsulates various practices. Western Indian practices cast the figure of the *ghar jawai* as a “servitor.” The Bhilala “marriage by service” formalizes the underlying principle of servitude inherent in the position of *ghar jawai*. Bhilala men who cannot pay bride price offer themselves as servitors to their future fathers-in-law before becoming accepted as *ghar jawai* (Singh, 2004). Contract and servitude travel as ideas across regions and while servitude may not be as explicit in every Indian context, the position of the *ghar jawai* as a dependent and a person who “reproduces” the household of his wife’s kin rather than his own patriline through the labor of his body, surfaces quite clearly. Within such gender-hierarchic frames “giving” a son away as *ghar jawai* would be a deeply problematic inversion of the giving away of daughters, for it resembles the movement of his sister and position him as a hierarchical inferior to exactly the set of men who should be his subordinates.

In urban family firms the *ghar jawai* may not reside with his wife’s family; but his active involvement and participation in his father-in-law’s business casts him as an inadvertent *ghar jawai*, inadvertent because here the term expands be-
yond the context of residence. Anthropological studies of north Indian kinship terminology note the expanded contexts of kin terms like bhai (brother), behen (sister) or sala (wife’s brother) to non-kinship contexts (Dumont, 1966; Vatuk, 1969). The use of the term imparts a sense of the familial to an alien context, and the same time converts strangers to fictive kin members. The family firm as a site actively simulates the domestic—indeed it is an expansion of the home into the workplace. The husband who is a member of his wife’s family business is viewed as inappropriately located in his father-in-law’s domain, and therefore tainted as ghar jawai (Sonpar, 2005). The plethora of practices around the ghar jawai generates a discourse of dependence, degradation, servitude and shame assembling the position of ghar jawai.

In kinship structures that conceive the place of primary residence as intrinsic to the construction of personhood (in whatever terms location and person may be constituted), sons are highly valued members of the patrilineal family, and patrilocality is stressed in every possible way, including, though not limited to, a share in house sites and homesteads. The significance of being a son of the house informs a boy’s entire biography and simultaneously shapes the life history of his family. In her discussion of the nature of person, Strathern (1987) shows how the order of attachment and detachment varies with respect to particular kin constituting “person” and identity, which become “visible in the different ties he or she has with others” (p. 275). To detach a son from his patrilocal2 residence is to render him “out of place” (Douglas, 1966). The move from valued son in his own home, an honored guest (parohna) in his affinal home, to the decimated uxorilocal husband or ghar jawai reduces his ability to appropriately be male precisely because he is incongruously placed as dependent on his affines.

For a man the primary reason to move to his wife’s father’s home is inheritance of property, not the performance of work (though doing work might be entailed in the management of land and property). While Hershman (1981) briefly sketches the ghar jawai in the north Indian state of Punjab as a phenomenon among landed rural families that may not have sons to farm their land, and therefore invite the son-in-law to conduct family affairs, this is not a first option and distant agnates or collateral kin are usually preferred. Customary law places the ghar jawai as a conduit for the real heirs to property—his own sons—who acquire fuller and more complete rights to grandpaternal property, while a ghar jawai may benefit only tangentially. The purpose of the institution of the ghar jawai is to benefit from the daughter’s son and not leave land and property untended. The ghar jawai is “brought into the house with the sole objective that he would procreate an heir […] for the appointer (and is) merely a medium by which the son born to the daughter of the proprietor to whom he is married succeeds to the property of the proprietor” (Diwan, Jain, & Diwan, 2004, pp. 39-40; italics added). Taken together, custom and practice represent the ghar jawai as a muted category of person, effeminized by the loss of dominion, a mere instrument in the reproduction of rights in property. Jeffery, Jeffery and
Lyon (1989) describe the position of the ghar jawai as the mirror image of the new bahu (daughter-in-law) in her husband’s home: dependent on and subservient to her conjugal kin. They also suggest that precisely for this reason the status of ghar jawai is unappealing even if it entails personal economic gain for individual men and their children.

Rightly speaking and properly translated, the ghar jawai is a live-in son-in-law, not a househusband. The crucial relationship is between son-in-law and father-in-law, and the father-in-law is the key male figure against which the ghar jawai’s position is qualified. It is abuse, not the satiric, light-hearted cartoon image of the househusband, that most critically frames the ghar jawai. The markedly sexualized allusions that characterize this abuse shape the shame of the ghar jawai. The intensity of the insult draws attention to the critical differences between the househusband and the live-in son-in-law. Abuse configures the father-in-law’s phallocentric authority as absolute and the in-coming son-in-law as the “ass-licker” of a superior male, literally swinging from his father-in-law’s penis, and completely reversing the normal relations of avoidance and deference between patrilocally located sons-in-law and their wife’s fathers.’

Abuse, indeed, can be observed to continue throughout the ghar jawai life course. In part this is because he is seen as usurping the “rights” of agnates to claim coparcener property. Inheritance of ancestral land remains contested and a ghar jawai cannot alienate his father-in-law’s ancestral land even if he farms it. The compelling rights of the agnatic community of coparceners in a man’s ancestral property bear upon the ghar jawai’s right to inherit or alienate his father-in-law’s property. Property is the reason for the move into uxorilocal residence as well as the reason for the hostility and derision directed toward the ghar jawai in rural Punjab, and much of northern India.

Perhaps because a ghar jawai’s property rights, even as a “full” member of his wife’s home, are so indistinct, a fair degree of effort is spent in sustaining (and claiming) an attachment with the patrilocal home. Kinship practices and rituals observed in both natal and affinal homes preserve patrilineal identity. A ghar jawai’s children might reside with their mother’s brother but they carry their father’s name, and upon his death, members of his patrilineage mourn a ghar jawai.² His wife’s family maintain an elaborate fiction of a ghar jawai’s impermanent residence, referring to him as a paronah—an honored guest “passing through”—despite his constant presence in domestic routines and everyday work. This quotidian terminology helps positioning the ghar jawai as Janus-faced (a term often more appropriate in descriptions of the position of women in exogamous structures), creating an identity that vacillates between honored guest and dependent person. From the perspective of the ghar jawai

² These kinship practices are reminiscent of Malinowski’s account of the matrilineal Trobriand for whom the father is “tomakava” or stranger. Subsequent interpretations of Trobriand rituals reveal the sense of connection maintained between children and the father through the lifespan of both (Blu Sider, 1967; Weiner, 1976). Despite the eli-
and his patrikin, the move into degraded personhood is “explained” as a sacrifice, an obligation and a duty to renounce patrilineal property and at least in rural north India, to prevent fragmentation of landholdings. Displacement is cast as duty that sons must exhibit toward their families, justified by a discourse of necessity, or downplayed through infrequent reference. In either case, whether seen through exhaustive excuses or silence, it is considered a troublesome move.

Recouping Lost Masculinity: The Transnational Ghar Jawai

Time, space and travel however reconfigure the ghar jawai in distinctive directions. Transnational families as locations for live-in sons-in-law are crucial to an understanding of the ghar jawai in terms of personhood and masculinity. South Asian migrant communities view marital import as a way of retaining links to home and language. Older residents in settled transnational communities like the west London neighborhood of Southall rued the loss of language of their third generation3 grandchildren, or the fact that children view the homeland as a tourist site rather than a place imbued with moral value (Rapport & Dawson, 1998; Werbner, 1999). The loss of language and valued tradition are sought to be recouped by the “imported” spouse who can impart the morality seen to reside in homeland “traditions.” Migration itself imparts status to transnational families which they deploy in homeland marriage negotiations (Beck-Grensheim, 2007).

From the perspective of sending families, to dispatch a son as a migrant in the guise of a ghar jawai is viewed as a safe option compared to the risks of illegal migration, which has become the default mode for young men in the late 20th and early 21st century. Contemporary global movements are no longer supported by institutionalized safety or welfare measures, hence migration is experienced and spoken of as dangerous. The knowledge of risks entailed in migration without safety nets reinscribes the transnational ghar jawai in a more positive frame, as one of the few legitimate avenues for migration.

For the ghar jawai, however, the transnational family may in fact be an uncertain space. Helweg’s (1986) study of Sikh Jat landowners settled in Gravesend, UK, draws attention to the uncertainties of being an imported spouse. In a short illustrative sketch of Ajay Singh, brought from a Punjabi village as a ghar jawai to wed a Jat Sikh girl raised in Gravesend, Helweg outlines the nominal commitments made toward the ghar jawai by his transnational

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3 To call these children “third generation” is somewhat of a misnomer, since one of the parents including the father may be an imported spouse and therefore a first-generation migrant.
affines. Apart from an international ticket for Ajay, no other dowry—gifts to the
bridegroom—were given. Burdened by cultural illiteracy, faced with alien
household tasks like hanging wallpaper, Ajay Singh had to meekly bear the
criticisms of his wife’s wider kin who dismissed him as “useless” precisely be‐
cause he lived with his wife’s family. Even though imported spouses embody
a valued tradition, they are seen as “substitutable,” so if one marriage does not
work, another is always possible (Chambers, 2007). Ajay Singh’s father-in-law
declared that he would send him back to Punjab if necessary and marry his
daughter to another man, convinced that there were enough bridegroom can‐
didates for a daughter with a UK passport. It is clear that Gravesend Punjabis,
and others like them, perfectly understand the value of passports and deploy
this precious commodity to keep the ghar jawai in place. For the groom’s fam‐
ily, access to citizenship outweighs the loss of dowry and the shame of ex‐
porting husbands, but for the groom himself, being an imported husband
might be experienced as a frustrating burden.

Katherine Charsley’s (2005) essay on migrant Pakistani men in Bristol who
arrive as ghar damads (house sons-in-law) is perhaps one of the more detailed
descriptions of the experience of being a transnational uxorilocal husband.
Charsley focuses on the fragmented masculinity of the ghar damad/jawai and
his debased position especially vis-à-vis his male affines. In contrast to his wife,
surrounded by her own kin, the in-migrating ghar jawai is without the support
or network of his own patrikin. One of the interesting points Charsley makes
is that while a girl is literally primed from her childhood to leave her natal fam‐
ily and home at marriage, a man is unprepared to face the consequences of
such a move (pp. 95-97).

The period during which an imported husband remains dependent upon
his affinal kin is open-ended. However, conjugality reasserts itself within the
transnational context, through the efforts made by the young married pair to
set up a nuclear household, partly influenced by the wider kinship and resi‐
dential patterns prevalent in the U.K. and partly by earnings that a ghar jawai
and his wife may manage to garner. Charsley and Helweg both draw atten‐
tion to the efforts of the young conjugal couple to establish nuclear households
that represent a chance for the ghar jawai to amend his everyday dependence
and achieve the status of a household head. But success is not guaranteed and
independence may remain an incomplete achievement if the father-in-law pur‐
chases the “independent” home and retains the mortgages.

The possibilities provided by the transnational context may be enabling in
the transformation of the ghar jawai to household head primarily through es‐
tablishing a nuclear household. What is perhaps more striking is that the move
toward setting up a nuclear household also enables an expansion toward cre‐
ating an attenuated “patrilocal” context within the transnational settlement.
During the course of fieldwork in Southall in 2005 and again in 2006, I was told
of “uncles” who came as young househusbands to live in their wives homes.
An older resident told me that his father had been “brought” by his mother’s
brother who had arrived in the 1940s as a *ghar jawai*. By the time I did fieldwork, many former *ghar jawai* had set up nuclear and extended households and were instrumental in enabling the migration of younger men of their patriarch to Southall, simulating a partilineal context for themselves and for subsequent migrants. The juxtaposition of an earlier personhood and a later identity—*ghar jawai* transformed to “benefactor”—was apparent in the narratives and life histories of these men.

Lambert’s (2000) study of locality and relatedness is a particularly interesting framework to understand the creation of kinship contexts, “used to emphasize the processual and contextually determined character” of relatedness (p. 82). Lambert examines relatedness as a broader concept, to include fictive and genealogical kinship. Her understanding of locality and proximity in constituting “relatives,” is useful in thinking about the constitution of transnational patrilocality. Fictive kinship and forms of relatedness are employed by migrants in general: many come with nothing but a telephone number or an address of a distant relative and it is locality and proximity that transform genealogical distance into a basis for reckoning kinship support and relatedness. This transformative potential of kinship as processual and contextual is particularly important for the migrant *ghar jawai*. While financially dependent on affines, the possibility of a localized patriline that rests on sentiment and affect, which Lambert characterizes as a form of substance critical for creating relatedness, is of immense value to the otherwise denigrated *ghar jawai*.

The creation of a transnational patrilocal context may be considered to imply forgetting of a past as *ghar jawai*. This forgetting may be a deliberate response to damaging press reports of imported spouses among South Asian diasporas, or at least a perceived opportunity to fade away into different cultural landscapes and disavow an awkward identity. Perhaps the absence of inheritance and property further facilitates forgetting, for in such a case there is no quarrel with competing agnates about ancestral property.

**Ruin and Recuperation**

From whichever perspective or locale we look, the figure of the rural or transnational *ghar jawai* is ensnared by economic constraint and financial need.

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4 In interviews, it was clear is that these “uncles” were impelled to move by economic circumstance because village households were unable to retain them. They clearly had to go, and migrating, even as *ghar jawai* was a better option than staying on and fragmenting overburdened landholdings. Migrating was seen as their duty. Gardner (1995), on the other hand, indicates that Bangladeshi migrant men often leave their less affluent sons-in-law in-charge of the home, and while the young husband is converted to a *ghar jawai*, he also becomes the sole decision maker in the absence of his migrant father-in-law. Uxorilocal residence is seen as “a response to the practical problems posed by migration … but uxorilocal residence in the long term is also presented as a sad state of affairs…” (Gardner, pp. 167-168).
Incongruously, within kinship politics resorting to the conversion of a son to ghar jawai because of economic necessity, is an act perfectly intelligible to a wider cultural audience of interpreters who subscribe to an ideology of shame in which the ghar jawai is mired but also may represent it as an inevitable “fate,” occasioned by dire circumstance. Retrospective tolerance weakens the stigma of dependence and degradation, cloaked by a sense of restoring normalcy. In the transnational context the fact that the ghar jawai might become a conduit for future migrations of kin and village folk perhaps purges part of the shame. It is possible therefore to argue that while hegemonic discourse assigns the ghar jawai to the domain of the abject, kinship practices enable a form of collective misrecognition and a partial recouping of misplaced masculinity.

A translation that doesn’t “fit” demands we traverse a different route toward understanding. Even though it is presented as a global construction able to explain conjugal reversals in all its forms, the representation of the househusband is particular to cultural contexts. A reduction of the ghar jawai to the generic rubric of “househusband” elides the experiential context of encounter between different formations of masculinity. The predicament of the live-in son-in-law refers to negotiations within and across an elaborate and intricate kinship system. He needs to confront and overcome the violence of abuse through which other men frame him. But it is exactly the experiential context that mobilizes negotiations of loss and recuperation. The biography of a ghar jawai is not a frozen chronicle, nor can he be seen as a static figure. It is the mobility in the life cycle of the household that enables transformations in the life cycle of an individual, and it is this mobile quality that gets lost in translation.

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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.2

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.\(^3\) 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 well-being 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 re-
structuring, 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 accumula-
tion. Transnational (trans-European) labor migration, with its gender hierar-
chies, 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 con-
textualised with regard to such regional and national tensions. The same ap-
plies 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 accom-
panied 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 so-
cietal 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, polit-
ical, 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 domi-
nated 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 na-
tional 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 undertheorized. 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 contexts. This pertains, for instance, to the shaping of consensus in many of the institutions associated with the social democratic welfare project, Lutheranism, incorporation of radicalism within the state, self-satisfaction in society, and social 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 differences 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 sympathetic 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 European projects in which we have been involved, is the centrality of men’s relations 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 obvious 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, violence, 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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