

Abstracts

Martin Dinges, Changes in Men's Health as an Indicator of a Masculinity Crisis? Germany 1850–2006

This paper highlights changes in male life expectancy in Germany during the past 150 years. The life expectancy of women grew much faster during industrialisation and continued to do so until ca. 1980. This finding is consistent with results from other industrialised countries. The growing differential of life expectancies in favour of women can be interpreted as a (hidden) crisis of masculinity.

The two phases of the largest growth of this differential are the time of industrialisation until World War I and the years of reconstruction after World War II. During these periods a specifically high and dangerous workload of men coincides with a dominance of the traditional model of hegemonic masculinity which focused on work. Major changes in the gender-specific labour market became effective only from the 1970s onwards. Risky health behaviour of men can be considered as quite stable during the sample period. The “vanishing” of risks linked to giving birth contributed only half a year to the female life expectancy after 1910.

During the 19th and 20th centuries physicians and statisticians noted the differential, but never made it a major topic of their considerations. Their idea of the strong and healthy male biased their focus of research systematically towards issues of women's health – mainly those linked to motherhood. The history of the gender differential in life expectancy suggests a revised interpretation of the gendered gains and losses since 1850. The concept of masculinity crisis should focus more on changes in the long run.

Christa Hämmerle, “Forty months ago we were soldiers, half a year ago we were still men ...”. On the Historical Context of the “Crisis of Masculinity” Discourse in Austria after World War One

Initially based on the war memoirs of Fritz Weber, a well known Austrian officer who observed a deep crisis of masculinity due to the soldiers' war experiences, this article asks whether such a view may be generalised, and in which historical context it had

been generated. By answering this, the author critically discusses one-dimensional and oversimplified assertions on the post-war “crisis of masculinity”, stated not only by officers like Weber, but also by several historians.

She outlines that a set of political and social activities of the new state, as well as a dense discourse on genuine female roles and tasks, targeted to ‘normalise’ the post-war gender order. This was more or less successful, not only concerning a newly segmented labour market. Thus the “crisis of masculinity” discourse promoted and supported the re-installation of a dichotomised and hierarchical gender order. Although it covered at least some perceptions of returning soldiers, the war memorial culture after 1918 was an officers’ discourse. Only this group could publish influentially about their loss of honour, status and profession – which were defined as a loss of masculinity – whereas family ties and relations to women, and also male comradeship, were stated as more or less stable and very helpful in the disaster after the war.

With regard to such antagonistic tendencies, the article argues that we have to differentiate within a set of aspects of masculinity when stating its crisis, and to look in detail for differences and similarities between officers and common soldiers – both of whom later gathered again, due to the quick re-militarisation of a deeply polarised Austrian society.

Martin Lengwiler, Small Steps: Changing Masculinities in the 20th Century

The article examines how concepts of masculinity changed over the 20th Century. Two exemplary dimensions of masculinity are studied more closely: sexual orientation and membership of a generation. Both are crucial factors for the transformation of masculinities in the era examined. The history of homosexual masculinity for example reveals a gradual ontologising of concepts of identity, in particular after 1945. The generational influence is illustrated by a series of popular youth cultures, from the homo-social hiking societies of the *Lebensreform* movement to the rock’n’roll culture of the 1950s and 60s. The article also proposes a revised model for the mechanisms of changing masculinities. It argues that the common notion of a discontinuous change in 20th Century gender history – driven by cataclysmic events such as the two world wars – has to be amended by a model of gradual, incremental transformations. Four factors were particularly influential in changing 20th Century masculinity: changes in popular culture, in scientific discourses and in the social and material environment. Most of these factors transformed masculinities only step by step, such as the new social networks made possible by the rise of the automobile after 1945 or the changing opportunities of self-perception based on the transformations of the medical and psychological discourse on sexuality.

Anna Loutfi, Feminism, Biography and Cheshire Cat Stories. A Geopolitical Journey through a Biographical Dictionary

This paper explores the relevance of the biographical genre for feminist geopolitics and women's and gender history. It first attempts to outline what the term 'feminist geopolitics' might mean for those working to chart women's and feminist life stories located across the rapidly changing geopolitical 'face' of Central, East and South Eastern Europe in the 'nation-building' epoch of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The 'case study' is "A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms, Central, East and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries". Like the eerie figure of the Cheshire Cat from Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland", national identity in the lives of Biographical Dictionary subjects keeps appearing, disappearing and reappearing, only to persist in fractured and discontinuous forms. The partial-embodiment, disembodiment and perpetual resurfacing of national identity suggests that, while it is impossible for historical biographers to isolate feminist projects from nation-building ones, feminist identity has often been, at the same time, envisioned as something 'more than', or 'beyond' national identity.

In summary, this contribution attempts to interrogate the limits and possibilities for women's, feminist, and gender history provided by the genre of national biography; to examine the possibilities of the biographical narrative for feminist geopolitics, using the ambiguities, ambivalences and occasional half-heartedness of what I have called 'Cheshire Cat nationalism' as a point of departure; and finally, to make some methodological suggestions for future biographical projects.

Bea Lundt, Monk, Cleric, Scholar, Intellectual: On Change and Crises of Maleness in the Twelfth Century

The Gregorian reforms actuated a 'crisis' of maleness, that is what the medievalists Jo Ann McNamara and Susanne Wemple couched in 1973. The obligatory adoption of the celibacy for priests required new constructions regarding this group's maleness, as it could not define itself via family roles and duties in relation and opposite to women.

In fact many sources deriving from these times of radical changes in the 12th/13th centuries, present maleness (even the maleness of ruling characters) not as successful, heroic, and holy but as weak, isolated, even lunatic. Taking the figure of Merlin from the "Vita Merlini" written by Geoffrey of Monmouth (1150), the author discusses how such images are fixed in the constructions of gender in the medieval ages. Is it a clerical caused crisis of mentality which makes an emperor flee his throne, people, and wife? Does a celibate ideal of contemplation implement itself? Has this anything to do with the development of the universities, which dissipate the monopoly of the monasteries concerning education?

The text shows that Monmouth, an English cleric, was not at all just coined by the catholic model of maleness. The origin of the figure Merlin is Celtic – the continuation of the ‘pagan’ priesthood offers scope of creativity. From other traditions, such as the Arabic culture, stories are passed on which do not measure successful maleness on martial success, and not on cohabitation with a woman, but on the intellectual friendship between men or siblings. The common lopsided view on a primarily Christian orientated medieval age with its static order of the sexes does not equate with the variety of choices concerning maleness coming from various cultural and religious traditions.

While against that, the author pleads for a comparative work with the narratives received over and over again. The open and fluid imagination of body and sex/gender, which are typical for the medieval centuries, ought to be comprehended in their change and put in their social-historic and aesthetic contexts.

Claudia Opitz-Belakhal, „Crisis of Masculinity” – A Useful Concept for Gender History?

Most scholars of gender and men’s history assume today that masculinity, male identity and male roles are historically as much as culturally variable and most changeable. The question of how processes of social and cultural change affect the multilayered concept of masculinity and male role, has been discussed much more so far, though, than the question of how concepts of masculinity influence major processes of social change. This question is deeply connected with the more general project of mainstreaming male and gender history in current historical narratives.

In her introductory contribution Claudia Opitz-Belakhal argues that the concept of “crisis of masculinity” can be helpful to link not only men’s but, more generally, gender history to general history. She then discusses “crisis” as a historical concept in general, following here largely the notion of “crisis” as developed by the German historian Reinhart Koselleck in the 1980s. Insisting that “crisis of masculinity” or “masculinity in crisis” should not only be considered as a term for challenged individual identities, but more broadly as a notion for the analysis and historiography of conflict and change in groups, societies and states, Opitz-Belakhal underlines the historiographic potential of such a scientific perspective.