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THE HISTORY  
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## CHAPTER 11

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# VIOLENCE AND MASCULINITY

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JOACHIM EIBACH

## INTRODUCTION

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WITHIN the context of the history of crime and criminal justice, the dual aspects of violence and masculinity are without doubt of great significance. From the late Middle Ages onward, courts in Europe dealt with tens of thousands of cases that involved men as perpetrators and/or victims of violent crimes. Even in today's society, the overwhelming majority of violent felonies are committed by men. Since the emergence of the interest in crime as a historical phenomenon and, more generally, in deviant behavior during the 1970s, numerous books and articles have been written on the topic. Obviously, this is closely connected to the history of murder (see Chapter 5 by Mc Mahon). Clearly, one cannot write about masculinity and violence without reflecting on the role of women in interpersonal conflict (see Chapter 12 by van der Heijden) and on the manifold aspects of gender. The topic is complex and calls for interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological reflection. Thus, there has been considerable mutual influence between social science theories and historiography on violence. Recently, some historians have advocated the application of evolutionary psychology to historical analysis.

Although classical methods of quantification cannot be lightly dismissed, over the past years the historiographical research on masculinity and violent crime has been dominated by cultural historical approaches. It has become clear that, in the course of history, male violence has taken very different forms, functions, and meanings. This fact is partially concealed by the rather simple categorization of violent offenses in historical and current criminal codes. From a cultural historical perspective, violent action by men or women cannot be interpreted as contingent, individual acts, but rather as practices embedded in sociocultural contexts and accompanied by informal norms that mirror prevailing notions of gender and are often summarized in a specific

code of honor. Many studies focus rather narrowly on physical violence as defined by criminal law. However, with regard to gender, one has to consider the fact that in predominantly oral societies, including Europe in the Middle Ages, verbal violence such as defamation and blasphemy was regarded more severely than in today's society. This is important, since female defendants often accounted for the majority of verbal crimes. Sexual crimes, which were mostly committed by men, appear to be much less well-researched than homicide and assault (Loetz 2012).

From a broad perspective, the topic of interpersonal violence and masculinity finds itself trapped between two contrary assumptions. As will be delineated in more detail later, we can observe a constant, quasi-unhistorical overrepresentation of men in recorded violent crimes and thus a certain disposition of male aggressiveness. Often after spectacularly violent incidents, reports in the media tell us that men, in particular young men, have always been inclined to turn violent and just seem to be more violent than women. This viewpoint has become "a cliché of criminology" (Wiener 2004, p. 1) and finds support in the analysis of pathological types of aggression by neurobiologists (Buckholtz & Meyer-Lindenberg 2008; Siever 2008). On the other hand, several influential historians of crime, social scientists, and psychologists, many of them equipped with Norbert Elias's (1982) theory of the civilizing process, have emphasized the scope of a general evolution of manners in the history of the Western world (Johnson & Monkkonen 1996; Spierenburg 2008; Pinker 2011). However, this optimistic perspective remains highly controversial and greatly contested. Not only historians, but also social scientists from Europe and the United States with very different approaches deny that there is a general progress in modernity toward a more peaceful society (Wieviorka 2005; Sofsky 2005; Roth 2009).

Elias's work does not specifically address the gender aspect. Nevertheless, it is evident that the thesis of the civilizing process applies first and foremost to those who needed to be civilized—namely, men! Several underlying assumptions of Elias's theory appear questionable (Mc Mahon, Eibach, & Roth 2013) and have caused intense methodological debate among historians of crime (Spierenburg 2001; Spierenburg 2002; Schwerhoff 2002). All societies, not just modern Western ones, take measures to control human aggressive behavior. The medieval feud was regulated by characteristic rituals, and the containment of violence in the premodern cities of Europe was a joint venture of the citizens and the town council (Pohl 1999; Eibach 2007a). However, we can detect several types and major shifts in the history of interpersonal male violence in the Western world. The appearance of judicial courts in medieval towns in Europe was rooted in the wish by the developing urban authorities to contain men's violent actions.

While, on the one hand, the capacity to act violently against other persons belongs to the basic equipment of humans, on the other hand, violence occurs in sociocultural contexts with many facets and very diverse meanings. Consequently, one grand theory can hardly account convincingly for the entire history of violence and masculinity. Instead, an array of approaches is more likely to shed light on specific aspects of male violence in its historical dimensions. Interestingly, shifts in the history of violence often correspond with changes to and sometimes crises of prevailing notions of masculinity.

The essay will be organized as follows. Section I provides an overview of historiography, sources, and methodology, as well as an example of male-on-male group violence from 1756. Section II explores the leading theoretical approaches. Section III examines relevant types and shifts in the European history of male violence since the early modern period.

## I. SOURCES AND ISSUES OF METHODOLOGY

Formulating the problem of male violence in these terms, the sources relevant for the history of violence and masculinity are broadly similar to those used for the history of crime in general. A distinction needs to be drawn between normative source genres such as conduct books, moral treatises, and instructions for organized paramilitaries on the one hand, and judicial records on the other. In early research from before the late 1980s, not least that carried out by Elias, normative sources often were misleadingly read as mirrors of social practice. Furthermore, normative sources were studied in order to examine changing attitudes to and perceptions of violence. By contrast, since the 1980s, a younger generation of scholars, inspired by micro- and cultural history, have turned to the bulk of handwritten court records found in judicial archives. In particular, the minutes of court sessions that include the accounts of plaintiffs, defendants, and witnesses have proved to be a rich source of information leading to a more thorough understanding of the practices, meanings, and roles of violence in everyday life (for an overview, see Schwerhoff 2011, pp. 40–71). As for the early modern period, violent acts are frequently mentioned in reports by administrative officials or travelers about local customs, even if they were very often not recorded as crimes. These sources, just like newspaper articles, can be interpreted in two ways. While they can be used to gain additional information about the practice of violence, they also contain certain topoi, stereotypes, and thus a specific discourse on violence, such as those about the "primitive populace," "uncivilized" men from minority ethnic backgrounds, or "the rough" from the working class (King 2009; Emsley 2005, p. 75). Novels and ego-documents can offer further insights into contemporary notions and attitudes on issues such as gender roles and male honor. This is especially true for the elites who produced most of this type of sources. With regard to the United States from the mid-nineteenth century onward, newspapers are regarded as the best source (Roth 2009, pp. 477–87).

One significant advantage of analyzing series of court records is that they allow the researcher both to count the number of cases focusing on the participants' gender and to reconstruct hermeneutically the "how and why" of violent action. As for methodology, there is a crucial difference in the scope of quantitative and qualitative analysis of crime. According to the quantitative evidence from multiple micro-historical studies collected by Manuel Eisner, the imbalanced gender ratio regarding assault, robbery, and homicide has remained relatively stable throughout the centuries. In Europe from the late Middle Ages until the 1990s, female perpetrators rarely made up more than

15 percent of recorded offenses (Eisner 2003, pp. 109–12). Exceptions may be due to different categories of classification, especially those regarding verbal defamation. Crime figures since the 1990s may indicate some change. According to Eisner, in Europe and the United States during the 1990s, men were still responsible for at least 85 percent of all violent crimes, both assaults and homicides. One example of the most recent trends can be seen in Switzerland, where between 1984 and 2008 the proportion of male suspects of homicide remained fairly constant, at 89 to 90 percent. However, the percentage of male perpetrators accused of assault fell consistently over that twenty-four-year period, from 92 to 86 percent (Eidgenössisches Department des Innern 2011, p. 16). Still, by comparing these figures with the proportions of the early modern period one gets the impression of a historically constant phenomenon.

Throughout history, men seem to have acted in aggressive ways much more often than women, or at least their violent actions have been registered more frequently. The crucial questions are: What does the consistent imbalance between the genders indicate, given the significant overrepresentation of males as violent offenders? With what degree of certitude can we take these figures, based on recorded crime, as a reliable mirror of long-term consistency in actual gender distribution? Finally, in more general terms, what caused this static gender distribution, and to what extent was it a product of certain biases in recording? Eisner concludes “that sex is not a relevant variable in explaining the decline in overall levels of serious violence.” He goes on to assert that “neither increasing economic prosperity, historical variation in female participation in the labor market, nor changing cultural models of the family and gender roles appear to have had a significant impact on male predominance in serious violent crime” (Eisner 2003, p. 112). Obviously, the stability of the recorded ratio does not reflect the overall transformation of society. Referring to the same figures, Pieter Spierenburg makes a different point, that “the level of female violence” is “a function of the power balance between men and women.” He argues, “This balance has consistently been uneven throughout the centuries and it has changed only slightly in recent times” (2008, p. 117).

While there can be no doubt about the fact that the contents of court records intertwine with social and cultural conditions at large, it is nonetheless helpful to closely examine different types of courts and the mechanisms behind the construction of these sources. This is especially apparent in the differences emerging from the practice of crime reporting and the logic of final judicial rulings. Detailed studies of the minutes of court sessions have revealed characteristic notions of violence and gender. A further consequence of such study is that the seemingly obvious link between masculinity and violence, which appears to be deeply embedded in structures of patriarchal domination irrespective of period, becomes less convincing. To illustrate this point, I will refer first to a recent study on the use of justice in Dutch towns and then to examples from Frankfurt on Main in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Manon van der Heijden’s comparison of the records of higher and lower criminal courts in Dutch towns from 1600 to 1838 reveals that the extent of gender balance depends on the type of court under observation. While the proportion of female defendants in assault cases before the higher criminal courts of Amsterdam, Leiden, and

Rotterdam remained fairly low (6–16 percent) and thus fits well with the ratio noted previously, the analysis of records from the Protestant consistories and the correctional courts reveals a different picture. These courts mostly dealt with violent acts in the domestic sphere or among neighbors. Women made up 44 percent of the defendants in cases of violence brought before the consistories. The proportion of individuals brought before the court of correction in Rotterdam for fighting who were female was just slightly lower, at 42 percent. Very often these fights took place in the neighborhood. The author concludes, “Women’s violent behavior may remain invisible in the early modern higher criminal court records of Holland, but it becomes more apparent in the records of the lower courts which particularly handled fights and aggression within neighborhoods” (van der Heijden 2013, p. 95).

Following from the so-called “cultural turn,” most studies in the field include short sketches of individual cases with the names of the individuals involved. Such micro-historical details appear even in studies for which the main argument is based on quantitative evidence. The purpose of the following example from eighteenth-century Frankfurt on Main is to briefly demonstrate the potential of micro-historical analyses of court records for the study of crime, and moreover to shed light on the gender-biased mechanisms of crime reporting and prosecution. The legal and administrative framework of the inquisitorial trial procedures produced extensive source material. A clerk had to take notes of all questions by and answers from anyone interrogated in court. In practice, the application of the procedures varied from territory to territory and from court to court. While in some courts, the clerk only summarized the most important testimonies and the final sentence, in other courts, we find long dossiers including witnesses’ reports, supplications, and legal statements of advocates. An example of this all-encompassing type of dossier are the “Criminalia” of Frankfurt on Main, a free imperial city with around 35,000 inhabitants (Eibach 2003, pp. 29–35). I will focus on one dossier out of more than 1,000 cases from the eighteenth-century city records in which men stood accused of violence.

The case concerns a typical after-tavern fight between two groups of men from neighboring quarters that turned into a confrontation with soldiers and guards (IFSG).<sup>1</sup> Like many other confrontations of this kind, the conflict started in the context of jolly pub sociability from apparently insignificant banter. On a Sunday night in March 1756, five young fishermen from Unterhausen had assembled in the tavern of Hermann Klingler to drink the typical light alcohol *Äppelwein* (cider) from the Frankfurt region. As Klingler reported in court, the arrival of another group of young men, gardeners from Oberhausen, immediately resulted in tensions between the men. The argument began when 25-year-old Georg Geyer from Oberhausen allegedly “just for fun” (*aus Spaß*) stole a piece of cake from 24-year-old Friedrich Heister from Unterhausen, which Heister answered with verbal insults, calling the gardener “a rascal” (*einen Spitzbuben*).<sup>2</sup> According to some witnesses, Geyer threw the cake on the floor and stepped on it. After Klingler had managed to contain the dispute, the gardeners from Oberhausen left the tavern, only to equip themselves with clubs, knives, and hatchets and wait for their opponents to come out. The brawl started when the fishermen left the tavern around

closing time and armed themselves with poles and rudders. A little later, when night watchmen and soldiers arrived, the fight between these men from two neighborhoods turned into a battle against the city's police force, which in the end included more than sixty men. Although the battle lasted for several hours and was fought in the dark with fists, knives, and stones, only two severe injuries were recorded. One night watchman and the wife of one gardener and fish trader suffered nonlethal head injuries. By the judicial standards of the time regarding nonfatal violence, the sentence was rather harsh. Sixteen men were sentenced to severe prison and work on the city's fortification wall for periods of two weeks to three months. The tumult had threatened urban stability and demonstrated the weakness of the town council's police force, thus challenging the honor of the patrician town council. Without a doubt, the town council, as the city's principal criminal court, also considered the fact that the disturbance had taken place in Sachsenhausen, the poor people's quarter of Frankfurt on "the other side" of the river Main, an area composed of the two neighborhoods where the fishermen and gardeners lived.

Many aspects of this case remind us of typical modern-day weekend violence. The participants were largely young, unmarried "boys" (*Purscher*) from two neighboring communities, who, according to the testimonies, were of low social status and had a long-standing rivalry that had resulted in hatred between the two groups. Moreover, they had been drinking. The fight arose in a social context, and the incident that sparked it appears rather ridiculous to observers. Nonetheless, even the combined police force of city soldiers and burgher watchmen only regained control over the tumult with extreme difficulty. In the end, both Frankfurt's burghers and the city's advocates complained about "the nuisance and the godlessness" (*der Unfug und die Gottlosigkeit*) of "the wild youths from Sachsenhausen" (*wilde Sachsenhäuser Jugend*).<sup>3</sup> However, in many respects the case is rather typical of interpersonal male violence in the eighteenth century. I will return to this point in more detail in section III.

One major advantage of detailed court minutes is that they allow us to follow not only the sequence of violent confrontations, but also the mechanisms of crime reporting and prosecution. It is clear that physical violence in the public sphere was perceived and treated as a male domain. Interestingly, in the previous case, one officer declared in court that the soldiers and guards had been viciously attacked not only by the gardeners and fishermen, but "especially by their women and mothers" (*insonderheit deren Weiber und Mütter*), who had thrown heavy stones upon them.<sup>4</sup> Although this statement was highlighted in final reports by the advocates, not one woman was prosecuted. In the same vein, several other cases from Frankfurt could also be cited. In 1742, several women were involved in a tumult in the market.<sup>5</sup> In 1801, upon the announcement of an increase in the price of bread, a crowd of several hundred people, incited and led by impoverished women from Sachsenhausen, devastated eight of the town's bakeries (Eibach 2007b). Although in both cases, several women were taken to court, they were never sentenced. Certainly, this micro-historical analysis does not entirely repudiate the overall evidence that men turned to physical violence more often than women. It does, however, provide evidence to support the assertion that the violent behavior of

women was taken less seriously, was less likely to be taken to higher courts, was rarely punished, and was generally less frequently recorded than similar behavior by men.

Over the past years, several studies on interpersonal violence in European cities have highlighted the phenomenon of female violence against men and other women (Dinges 1991; Dean 2004; Warner 2008). The finding of a gendered bias does not apply only to violent acts in the public sphere. Similar to the lower courts in Dutch towns, the litigation of neighborhood and domestic violence by the Frankfurt courts underlines the fact that women did use physical violence in conflicts. However, in the case of domestic conflict, and, in contrast to the treatment given to the responsible male heads of the household, they were rarely accused. Against the backdrop of the "double-edged" code of honor, women could take their men to court for drunkenness and wife beating, but a husband was expected to settle conflicts in the domestic sphere himself using moderate forms of castigation. A man who went to court saying he had been beaten by his wife ran the danger of making a fool of himself. "Effectively," Gowing observes, "only men could be guilty of violence" (1996, p. 180; cf. Nolde 2003, pp. 153–58; Eibach 2007c). Needless to say, the mechanisms of crime reporting and the biased construction of gender in court did not always work in favor of women. While physical violence was perceived as a kind of male prerogative, fornication, prostitution, and child murder were seen as the female domain.

## II. THEORETICAL APPROACHES

There are numerous macro- and micro-sociological theories available to explain the differences in deviant behavior of men and women in general and in interpersonal violence in particular (for an overview, see Messerschmidt 1993; Archer 1994; Franke 2000; Zitzmann 2012). No single theory can convincingly explain all the relevant aspects of the multi-faceted relationship between violence and masculinity. Instead, the topic has been covered by an array of different approaches in the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences. Neuroscience examines violence as a result of "the complex interactions between genes, biological signals, neural circuits, and the environment" (Nelson & Trainor 2007, p. 536). So far, no clear evidence has been found that testosterone—a commonly suspected catalyst of male aggressive behavior—has an impact on impulsive violence. Another objective of neuroscience is to detect genetic variations that determine pathological aggression. In this sense, men seem to be more inclined to certain antisocial behavior: "Among violent offenders, 47 percent of men and 21 percent of women have antisocial personality disorder" (Siever 2008, p. 430; cf. Buckholtz & Meyer-Lindenberg 2008, p. 125). Although these findings need to be taken into consideration, they cannot account for changing social environments and cultural contexts that have shaped the gendered aspect of violence in history (Muechembled 2012, p. 13).

Drawing on evolutionary Darwinist psychology and Steven Pinker's (2011) theory of an evolution of human cooperation based on an increase in the capacity for empathy

and self-control since the Enlightenment, recently “a post-cultural history of violence” (Hanlon 2013, p. 395; cf. Wood 2007) has been suggested. The underlying assumption is that “biology and culture coexist in everyone” (Hanlon 2013, p. 396), or, more specifically, “all behaviors, in all humans, are mediated via universal mental and emotional systems based on neurochemistry and hormones, although there are significant universal variations between the sexes, and a significant range of behaviors across individuals” (p. 395). So far, the consequences of this approach in terms of historical method remain to be explored (see also Chapter 5 by Mc Mahon). As for the link between violence and masculinity, insisting on such a connection can only serve as a first step toward observing a male “competition for social resources” across time (Wood 2007, p. 104) or pointing at “the defense of status” (Wood 2011, p. 487). More precisely, in the modern era, men seem to be inclined to use physical violence and to defend their reputation of masculine toughness, particularly when other socioeconomic resources such as employment prospects, regular income, or education are not available (Adler 2003, pp. 553–54; Wood 2007, p. 105).

For historians, the categories of labeling and gendered social control, subcultures, and male bonding are particularly promising. Because of the overarching interest of the social sciences in explaining modern society, however, considerations of historical change, if included at all, do not go back beyond the emergence of modern class-based bourgeois society.

The dissimilar social control mechanisms applying to male and female violence, as analyzed previously, fit well into the labeling approach (Becker 1963), which has been advocated by leading German researchers (Schwerhoff 2011, pp. 35–39; Dinges & Sack 2000) and more recently applied to studies on sports-related violence (Tsoukala 2009). These studies argue that historically, it was the interplay of social perceptions, crime reporting, and prosecution that produced male delinquency. In contrast to violent acts by females, male violence was both expected and perceived as dangerous. Men found themselves in a highly ambivalent position. As peasants, guild members, and heads of households, they had to live up to an informal code of honor that required them to react to certain challenges with physical violence. At the same time, they had to respect the limits set by the authorities (Roper 1992; Pohl 1999). Moreover, the social profile of impoverished men from poor neighborhoods, such as Sachsenhausen in the late eighteenth century or districts of Chicago in the late nineteenth century (Adler 2003), was reinforced by the labeling of outsiders and further confirmed by deviant behavior that corresponded to their generally bad reputation. Aggressive behavior thus could be interpreted as a self-fulfilling dynamic in their response to the continued experience of marginalization, often termed “secondary deviance.”

From the late 1920s onward, many sociological studies on juvenile delinquency have worked with concepts of “subculture” (Thrasher 1947 [1927]; Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1982 [1967]). This concept argues that in modern, complex societies, underprivileged or marginalized groups develop norms and codes that to some extent differ from the values of the hegemonic middle-class culture. In particular, deviant subcultures in big cities offer adolescent males social resources that the monotonous and

strictly hierarchical professional sphere and their private lives cannot sufficiently provide: appreciation and respect, status, thrill, and the emotional experience of belonging (“*Gemeinschaft*”). In terms of national differences, research in the United States has focused on gangs in inner-city ghettos that have been abandoned by the state, while British sociologists in their analysis of skinheads and hooligans have tended to rely on concepts of class, and their German counterparts have analyzed the subcultures of hooligans and urban gangs with non-German ethnic identities (Knöbl 2002). Juvenile gangs—one important type of subculture among many—often exert strict social control over their members and have a clear hierarchy, with males at the top. Collective identities are strengthened in repeated conflicts, including physical violence among members as well as between rival groups (Muchembled 2012, pp. 274–300). Some subcultures place high value on rough and aggressive behavior as a sign of true and unspoiled masculinity that is understood as an integral part of male bonding. The explanatory framework of sociological studies ranges from rational choice theory, with an emphasis on instrumental violence, to notions of male honor (Bourgois 2003).

The concept of subculture does not work for the stratified society of premodern Europe, since group cultures in that period were based on birth, family, and honor, and were legally fixed. Perhaps the extravagant habitus of the Parisian *jeunesse dorée*, which was shaped through street fighting and aggressive behavior against Jacobins in 1794 and 1795, was the first juvenile subculture in modern history (Gendron 1979). However, it is difficult to apply a term that comes with an anachronistic, somewhat exotic twentieth-century flavor to nineteenth-century working-class or rural violence. Workers and peasants certainly had specific, rather durable cultures, but because of their relative size in population terms and their growing willingness to adopt bourgeois standards, they cannot adequately be described as *subcultures*. In studies on violence in nineteenth-century England, John Carter Wood speaks of “customary” ways of working-class violence (2004, p. 48), while Martin J. Wiener argues that certain forms of male-on-male violence in the lower classes were “entrenched in popular culture” (2004, pp. 42, 50). The concept of subculture has its strengths with regard to collective identities in the complex, highly mobile societies of the twentieth century. Consequently, Pieter Spierenburg uses the term to explain the overrepresentation of immigrant minorities involved in murder in European cities of the 1980s (Spierenburg 2008, p. 216). Earlier concepts of subculture were by and large gender-blind, which is surprising, since the vast majority of perpetrators of violence were male. Notions of tough masculinity and male bonding were and still are crucial in many of today’s juvenile subcultures. However, the concept is of limited value with regard to domestic and intra-couple violence.

In spite of many years of research, the challenge is still “to gain a better understanding of the potential link between masculinity and violence” (Taylor, das Nair, & Braham 2013, p. 776). This observation, while referring to neuro-scientific research, applies just as well to the social sciences. With regard to the continuous, cross-epochal reproduction of “*la domination masculine*,” Pierre Bourdieu assumes that crucial aspects of masculinity have become incorporated into the male habitus and are hence

passed on endlessly from generation to generation (Bourdieu 1997, p. 156; Bourdieu 1998). The male habitus is reproduced in manifold competitive "serious games" among men, games that include women only as adulating spectators (Bourdieu 1997, p. 203). According to Bourdieu, such games of dominance and honor are still played by men in present-day political, economic, and scientific life. The basic principle behind "serious games" is the competition among equal men for recognition. Though the role of women and the possibility of change appear to be underestimated, Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus—with its potential to consider both structure and strategy equally—is indispensable for a historical understanding of violent practice in its cultural context. In societies without functional differentiation, habitus is learned through imitation of "other people's action" and adopted through embodiment (Bourdieu 1977, p. 87). Habitus is a product and a producer of history. These assumptions can be useful in the observation of diversity and transformation. This also applies to the approach of the anthropologist David Gilmore, who studied rites of manhood in both premodern and modern societies. For Gilmore, young men do not inherit their gender, but have to earn their masculinity through trials of courage and physical challenges. The particular forms of the liminal ritual differ from society to society, but their function remains basically the same (Gilmore 1990). Men practice initiation rituals or violent "serious games" to strive for, respectively, masculinity and integration.

A relevant contribution to future research comes from the interdisciplinary field of men and masculinity studies. Adopting this perspective means abandoning the idea of a universal and stable notion of masculinity. Without doubt, the cross-epochal overrepresentation of men among recorded perpetrators of violence calls for an explanation. Behind this observable fact lies the sociocultural construction of masculinity and the social profile, practice, and meaning of male violence as well as changing attitudes toward violence from the early modern period to the late twentieth century. Moreover, from the perspective of deconstructivist feminist theory, it is highly misleading to take for granted the biological "naturalness" of gender (Butler 1990). Following R. W. Connell, who in the late 1980s initiated men and masculinity studies, we find in every society a specific pattern of hegemonic masculinity. This prevalent male habitus and strategy ensures cultural dominance over both women and other men. As Connell notes, "hegemonic masculinity" is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable" (2006, p. 76). Sometimes only a relatively small group of men performs a hegemonic pattern successfully, as illustrated by sixteenth-century conquistadors, eighteenth-century gentry, or today's top business managers. Popular "exemplars of masculinity . . . have very often been men of the frontier" (p. 185). Their practice of masculinity constitutes a normative model for other social groups. As with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Connell sees gender patterns as "a product of history, and also a *producer* of history" (p. 81). Although his outline of the shaping of modern masculinity since the Reformation leaves many questions open (Dinges 2005), it is interesting that his approach considers competing images and different ways of "doing masculinity." Among the subordinate and marginalized

groups we find women and nonhegemonic forms of masculinity. In daily routines we can observe "lived patterns of meanings" of masculinities and femininities, "which as they are experienced as practices, appear as reciprocally confirming" (Messerschmidt 1997, p. 11).

Drawing on the works of Bourdieu and Connell, the German sociologist Michael Meuser focused on "serious games" among men. His findings confirm that in homosocial groups, ritualized games of dominance are still played in order to earn the solidarity and "male honour" of peers (Meuser 2002, pp. 65–66; Meuser 2008). Fragile masculinity appears no longer to be restricted to a specific social class condition or to general social deprivation. Crossing the lines between delinquent and legally accepted behavior, Meuser's examples are taken from the male worlds of dueling student fraternities, football, and hooliganism. In these contexts, male sociability includes reciprocal violence, from which women are, by and large, excluded. Meuser argues that the early socialization of male youths in competitive "serious games" gives them an advantage in today's competition for high-level positions in politics, business, and science.

### III. HISTORICAL SHIFTS

From a bird's-eye view, interpersonal violence among men and by men against women can be summarized as an anthropological quasi-constant of competition for social resources. A closer historical inspection, however, reveals several shifts from the early modern period onward (for continuities, see Chapter 5 by Mc Mahon). Any account of the history of male violence in the Western world must start with "the culture of dispute," which is derived from numerous thick descriptions drawn from court records. This specific practice of violence has been highlighted in particular by German researchers (Walz 1992; Schwerhoff 2004; Eriksson & Krug-Richter 2003); Spierenburg uses the term "popular duel" in the same vein (2008, p. 81). There is general consensus that the experience of physical and verbal violence in the early modern period was a normal and widely accepted aspect of everyday life. Violence was practiced openly, often even ostentatiously, by men from all social strata, albeit within well-known culturally defined limits. Violent encounters were often triggered by notions of honor: the need to defend one's reputation or one's "symbolic capital" (using Bourdieu's famous definition). The functions and meanings of honor were embedded in the communications of face-to-face societies in which men and women could not afford to lose their reputation. Honor was understood as a "limited good" (Walz 1992). Because of this informal code of honor, men had no choice but to react to certain challenges in violent or at least ostentatious ways. In spite of bans by urban authorities, male burghers up until the seventeenth or even early eighteenth centuries carried long knives as symbols of their masculinity and full citizenship. For women, the necessity of defending one's honor in an openly aggressive manner seems to have been restricted to the lower classes. In the context of households and neighborhoods, men and women often acted together.

Through ritualized insults and gestures, conflict in any matter could be transformed into a conflict about honor. However, the social resource of honor not only triggered conflict, but also shaped and regulated the practice of violence. Thus, an honorable dispute among equal men, which must be distinguished from punishment and wife beating, was reciprocal and respected limits of fairness. Likewise, the means of the *correctio domestica* were contained by certain rules observed by ecclesiastical courts.

Conflicts about honor often arose suddenly in the course of sociability. As seen from the example from Sachsenhausen, the incidents that sparked violence point to the vulnerability of honor and the fragility of masculinity (Schreiner & Schwerhoff 1995). Interestingly, in the case from 1756, between the first verbal argument over a piece of cake and the start of the brawl after the tavern's closing lay a time span of three hours, during which one party had left the tavern and waited for its rivals to come out. A break or time lag that allowed tempers to cool down is characteristic of numerous other early modern rituals of social control and conflict regulation, such as charivari, knife pulling (Schuster 2000, pp. 95–97), and house scorning—an act in which a man walked up in front of his opponent's home and challenged him to come out (Kramer 1956; Spierenburg 2008, pp. 69–70). We may conclude that the male actors were able to control their affects and that there were ways to handle conflict other than quasi-automatic “impulsive violence.” Yet their code of honor demanded an answer to insults. The 1756 brawl between dozens of gardeners, fishermen, and several of their women reveals rules behind what at first sight seems to be chaos. The actors, though rather unsuspecting of being recipients of the civilizing process, respected the peace of the house (the tavern). Their violence was reciprocal aggression that followed a script of escalation and known limits. Strikingly, hardly any severe injuries occurred.

One has to add that the “culture of dispute” is an ideal type that refers to a specific practice of conflict. Religious violence and violence in wartime followed a completely different logic. Moreover, in the heat of the moment, and fueled by alcohol, many actors crossed thresholds of social acceptance. There is a narrow line between the identification of meaning and ritual on the one hand, and the hermeneutic trap of endowing violence with an overdose of sense on the other. It appears that during the eighteenth century, established rules and rituals lost some of their binding force.

The overall decline of lethal violence during the eighteenth century has to be seen against the backdrop of a transformation of masculinities. This observation applies primarily to the urban sphere. While in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, numerous men from the upper strata were accused of aggressive behavior, in the criminal dossiers of eighteenth-century London only a few gentlemen appear. Similarly, in medium-sized German cities like Frankfurt or Cologne we find hardly any patricians or affluent merchants, or even men from the middling levels of society (Shoemaker 2001; Shoemaker 2002; Eibach 2003, pp. 211–14, 279–82; Schwerhoff 2013, p. 40). In the course of the century, master craftsmen also refrained from participating in the popular theater of street violence. The 1756 brawl is characteristic of eighteenth-century urban violence in that the actors were legally integrated, albeit impoverished, citizens from the lower echelons. Although we can decipher the regulatory features of the “culture of dispute,”

elaborate rituals of conflict regulation are missing. In contrast, the elite duel became more ritualized during the same period. Hence, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed an increasing social distinction in the formerly common practice of violent honor conflicts (Schwerhoff 2013, pp. 40–42).

Without doubt, the availability of different types of judicial courts in towns had an impact on the reduced relevance of rituals and the decrease in acceptance of violence as a means of social control. Equally important were shifts of masculinity and male honor that resulted in the formation of a new hegemonic habitus. Robert Shoemaker has pointed to “an increasing intolerance of violence, new internalized understandings of elite honor, and the adoption of ‘polite’ and sentimental norms governing masculine conduct” in London since the late seventeenth century (2002, p. 525). According to Shoemaker, this fundamental cultural shift was accompanied by a new appreciation of inner virtues, domesticity, refined sociability, and more reserved public behavior (2001, p. 207). In the same vein, Spierenburg observes a “spiritualization of honor” (2008, p. 110). The example of seventeenth-century London suggests that the presence of a royal court and nobility, advanced social and economic differentiation, and the vivid discourse of the Enlightenment were guiding factors in the formation of a new form of masculinity. Yet these aspects were not of major relevance in the old-style imperial town of Frankfurt, with its merchants, artisans, and urban agriculture. Still, new bourgeois standards of behavior were adopted in medium-sized towns as well. The taming of violence over the course of the eighteenth century points to the penetrating effect of the overall macro-processes of rationalization and individualization in the sense of lessening the grip of corporate honor on the actors (Drawing on Weber and Durkheim, Eisner 2001, pp. 89–95).

In the nineteenth century, things became more differentiated and also more complicated. With the polite gentleman ideal and the self-restrained habitus of the *Bürger*, the European bourgeois societies inherited new role models of masculinity from the age of the Enlightenment. At the same time, violent behavior in the street became a marginalized lower-class habitus. The aspiration toward refinement stood in opposition to customary violence: in elite discourse, violence was now relocated “outside of society” (Wood 2004, p. 140). According to Schwerhoff, as rituals of honorable dispute lost their binding force across social boundaries, “several subcultures of violence emerged” (2013, p. 41). Nevertheless, one may legitimately question the argument that from their creation in the second half of the eighteenth century until the late twentieth century, modern masculinity—and, accordingly, modern male honor—has not changed greatly (Mosse 1996). Undeniably, the new middle class, or bourgeoisie, played a leading role in defining new forms of masculinity and femininity. In the course of the nineteenth century, under the influence of warfare and military reforms such as the introduction of general conscription in most European countries, bourgeois masculinity stiffened toward self-discipline, intransigence, toughness, braveness, and propensity for violence (Dudink, Hagemann, & Tosh 2004; Schmale 2003, pp. 195–203). However, we must not overlook the emergence between the late eighteenth century and 1848 of the bourgeois avant-garde project, which cultivated a soft, emotional, privacy-bound masculinity



that included a fondness for children and intellectual conversation with women (Tropp 1994). Nor can one overlook the introduction of a "masculine domesticity" toward the middle of the nineteenth century (Tosh 1999, p. 6).

In any case, the male elites of nineteenth-century Europe appear Janus-faced with their preference for rationality and refined sociability on the one hand, and their passion for ritualized duels on the other. The enthusiasm of many academics, politicians, and other elite men for dueling cannot simply be dismissed as the aftermath of premodern honor conflicts. The contrast between societies with reviving cultures of dueling like Germany, Italy, France, and the southern regions of the United States and societies with no dueling cult, like England, republican Switzerland, and the northern regions of the United States indicates that masculinities in the modern era could and did take different courses (Frevert 1995; Roth 2009, pp. 181, 213–18; Ludwig, Krug-Richter, & Schwerhoff 2012).

Surprisingly, despite low homicide rates, the nineteenth century saw a great diversity of recurrent forms and meanings of interpersonal violence. The emergence of a new type of violence that variously can be categorized as "crimes of passion" (Guillais 1990; Spierenburg 2008, pp. 184–92), "romance homicide" (Roth 2009, p. 251), or "fatalistic violence" (Cottier & Raciti 2013, p. 112) mirrors the spread of new ideals of romantic love and emotionalized family life. According to Cottier and Raciti (2013), this new type of violence corresponded with the evolution of modern troubled subjectivity. In contrast to traditional domestic violence and honor conflicts, the perpetrators—mostly males, but also females—acted out of emotional despair when attempting to kill their intimate partners or their own children, acts that were often combined with a suicide attempt. At the same time, old forms of physical confrontation continued and new forms of "serious games" gained popularity. Ritualized fistfighting on the street—typically outside the pub—became emblematic for working-class masculinity. In addition, older forms of prizefighting, boxing, and other kinds of sport fighting developed into highly merchandised commodities, enjoyed by spectators from all social classes (Wood 2004, pp. 72–80). Expressive public forms of working-class violence came under increasing scrutiny, not only from professionalized police forces but also from the labor movements in England and Germany, which advocated the "civilized" standards of bourgeois behavior (Jessen 1992; Wood 2004).

Already in the eighteenth century, lower and ecclesiastical courts were attempting to control domestic violence with the help of numerous complaints by battered wives (Gowing 1996, pp. 206–29; Eibach 2007c). Nonetheless, in Victorian England, social pacification through the criminal law gained hitherto unknown strength and vigor. Supported by economic prosperity and rising levels of education, criminal courts in England seem to have been successful in making the domestic sphere a more peaceful place. This initiative was supported by a new discourse on ideal manliness. According to Wiener, "the ideal of the 'man of honor' was giving way to that of the 'man of dignity'" (2004, p. 6; cf. Emsley 2005, pp. 57–75). Paradoxically, at the same time the domestication of Victorian men in their comfortable, private middle-class homes was occurring (Tosh 1999), the upkeep and expansion of the British Empire abroad required a more violent version of masculinity.

In the course of the twentieth century, violent "men of the frontier" were to play a vital role in the imagery of masculinity, particularly if the light versions of the "Marlboro Man" and other popular representations in the mass media are included (Hatty 2000, pp. 159–89). However, one could also argue that the crisis of masculinity, which resulted from the emergence of an industrialized, bureaucratic, and technical world during the nineteenth century and led to challenges to traditional gender roles (Arni 2004, pp. 215–24; Fout 1992), was never effectively overcome and still endures today. The ongoing discourse on manliness serves as only one example of this theory.

Beyond that, any researcher, who strives to conceptualize modernity in linear processes will be confused by the different paths of violence over the past century. The twentieth century witnessed extreme and unprecedented collective violence, the enduring persistence of intimate violence, all-time low homicide rates in the 1950s and the early 1960s, and a surprising return of honor confrontations among young men starting in the 1970s. While it is advisable—from a methodological point of view—to distinguish carefully between types of violence (e.g., military violence in wartime and interpersonal violence in peacetime), the lines between different types of violence are often blurred. Thus, the lust for physical violence among the Italian "squadristi" or the German SA can only be explained if manifold aspects are considered: the experience of war and defeat in the First World War, the ideology of fascism, aggrieved manliness and the fierce antifeminist reaction to the crisis of masculinity, male bonding and the construction of a racially determined *Volksgemeinschaft* through collective experience, and the practice of violence against political opponents and other perceived enemies. The fascist movements of the 1920s were based on male bonding, with a radical anti-feminine and antibourgeois concept of intransigent, aggressive manliness (Reichardt 2009; Kühne 2006). The outcome of this conception—an ideal that denied individual responsibility—first brought violence to the street and in assembly halls, and then was followed by an extreme type of warfare and a habitus that enabled ordinary men to take part in genocide.

Interestingly, the experience of extreme violence in the trenches and on the battlefields of two world wars had no lasting decivilizing effect on the quantity of homicides. In most European countries during the war and in the postwar years, there was a temporary rise in the homicide rate followed thereafter by a steady decline (Spierenburg 2008, pp. 198–209; Roth 2009, p. 452). By the middle of the twentieth century, conflicts between intimate partners made up a large portion of homicides in the Western world. In contrast to the premodern culture of dispute and sociable violence among men from the working class, this type of violence was not driven by notions of honor, being neither reciprocal nor competitive, nor linked to places of leisure. Nonetheless, in contradiction to the classical sociological breakdown of historical developments that situates concepts of honor in the stratified societies of premodern Europe and places its final manifestations in the nineteenth century, honor conflicts had a comeback in the second half of the twentieth century. Concepts of honor had an obvious impact among marginalized immigrant communities of non-European descent with

features of "traditional macho honor" (Spierenburg 2008, pp. 207, 226). However, we also have to consider wider social contexts here. Over the last decades, in the economically depressed outskirts (*banlieue*) of European cities, as in the abandoned no-go areas of several American cities, new highly confrontational face-to-face-cultures have evolved. The necessity of defending personal "respect" in face-to-face relationships and the propensity to solve conflicts through violence corresponds clearly with a lack of integration into the structures of modern middle-class society, with its high degree of functional differentiation, requirement of education, and state-based institutions. Modern masculinity is still learned and shaped through "serious games," some of them legally accepted, others not. The examples of the emergence of new violent sports such as "ultimate fighting" or the revival during the fascist era of the traditional Florentine *Calcio Storico* demonstrate that the borders of legal acceptance are constantly being contested. While instrumental violence against both men and women is characteristic of organized crime, Roberto Saviano (2007) has shown with regard to the *Camorra* that the practice of Mafia violence is not founded in a purely economic logic, but is also accompanied by specific notions of masculinity and femininity. The Sicilian Mafia, which emerged as late as in the last decades of the nineteenth century, maintains a discourse of honor and honorable men that conceals their rather raw economic interests (Dickie 2004).

## CONCLUSION

Twentieth-century youth sub- and countercultures constitute a field of experimentation regarding new and diverse nuances of masculinity and femininity. In examining the affinity to violence, we can certainly observe a wide range of gendered identities. Ironically, the primarily male homicide rates skyrocketed in the United States at a time when Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Frank Zappa, and many others were inaugurating what were by the standards of the postwar era fairly un-masculine masculinities. In recent narratives of the long-term history of violence, the various cultural explanations for the rise in homicide since the 1960s appear rather incompatible. For Pinker (2011, pp. 110–16), the new thoroughly antibourgeois attitudes adopted by the 1960s' movement toward morals, self-control, and self-indulgence fostered the affinity to violence. Conversely, for Spierenburg, the peaceful character of the hippie movement was "the cultural corollary to the trough in violence" (2008, p. 205). By contrast, Roth explains the soaring homicide rates in the United States as related to a decrease of trust in the government and state institutions. Following Roth, it is typical for such time periods in history that "men lose hope of winning respect by legitimate means" (2009, p. 455). All in all, the history of violence and masculinity since the eighteenth century is a story of continuing changes, innovations, and recurrence.

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## NOTES

1. "Criminalia," 7245 (1756), Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt am Main (IfSG), Frankfurt on Main, Germany.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 52.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 72.
5. "Criminalia," 5445 (1742), IfSG, Frankfurt on Main, Germany.

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