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**“Money or Life”?**

***Masculine Employment-orientation and the New Life Model amidst Changing Labor Market Conditions***

Translation of :

“Geld oder Leben? Männliche Erwerbsorientierung und neue Lebensmodelle unter veränderten Arbeitsmarktbedingungen“, to be published soon in: *Boekle, Bettina und Ruf, Michael (ed.): Der Gender Reader. Eine Frage des Geschlechts (A Question of Gender), Opladen 2004*, transl. by Brian Frank, Berlin.

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The October 21, 2003 edition of the *Hamburger Abendblatt* newspaper contained the following report: “Osnabrück resident Georg Marszalkowski (51) has been named ‘Househusband of the Year 2003.’ Yesterday at the downtown Hotel Steigenberger, eight out of a total of 2000 participants faced off in the finals of the cleaning and cooking competition.... Marszalkowski broke away from the pack early on, scoring the highest in plant repotting, omelet making, and mirror cleaning. Among the jury members was actor Hannes Jaenicke (43): ‘I have the utmost respect for the househusbands’ performances’.... (Hamburg resident) Torsten Renken had problems with chair assembling. ‘Somehow at the end I was missing two screws.’ His wife, Iris, and his daughters, Katharina (13) and Larissa (11), were nevertheless convinced: ‘Our dad is a super househusband!’“

On the basis of gender-focused literature and of empirical methods employed in one’s everyday life, it can be concluded that the ‘the average man’ does not feel very well in a world in which omelet making and mirror cleaning are part of the required program. Whether a product exhibition can change the situation is doubtful. The Berlin artist Funny van Dannen—himself a part-time husband--sums up the dilemma as follows (not without adding a touch of self-irony): “Househusband, househusband, in the end you gotta admit, a built-in kitchen ain’t no cockpit.”<sup>1</sup> What’s lacking—according to the message—is the thrill, the challenge. Why else would a guide to fatherhood book be entitled, *Oh Man, Dad! Become a Father! The Last Adventure. A Man Tells*<sup>2</sup> (Schlenz 2002)?

It also appears that young German women do not like seeing men in the role of househusband. According to an Emnid survey done on behalf of the women magazine Marie Claire, “70% of women between 14 and 29 expect from a man that he can provide for his family.” (Buchner, Muschiol 2003: 61) It’s not only men who expect this from themselves and for their lives; the belief in a gender designated responsibility for earning money appears to be unbroken and deeply rooted in society.

A large section of the population in capitalist societies is in some way integrated into both the employment and the private sphere.<sup>3</sup> According to Claudia Honegger’s (1991) impressive account, the development of modern industrial societies has brought with it the division of these two spheres, each with its respective, specific responsibilities and attributes.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Funny van Dannen: Hausmann, self-titled, Melody Star, Munich (Trikont) 2000.

<sup>2</sup> “In this book Kester Schlenz describes in a superb, dry and humorous way the last adventure for real men.” (Truebswetter, M., review for this book at [www.amazon.de](http://www.amazon.de))

<sup>3</sup> This includes that section of the population which is not currently employed, who are either pre- or post-employment (school, retirement), live on support from the state (which again is connected to the employment sphere), or are financially supported by an employed family member.

<sup>4</sup> Even if the masculine production tradition can be proven to have a long history (Dörr 1997: 73), it is still the case that the breadwinner model is in fact a modern concept, which developed with advent of middle class society and the emergence of the industrial system. In this context, Peuckert (1996) emphasizes the development of the middle class family ideal and a “normative orientation” (ibid.: 23) to it that extended to all levels of middle class society in the 20th century. The essential element of this process was and is the partial continuance of gender-related division of spheres and labor (and the claim of their “naturalness”, cf. Honegger 1991). The completely new formation of the production spheres in this time period was accompanied by an increasing masculinization of the core proletariat, which previously had still been comprised, to a significant extent, of women and children (Holter 2003: 67): “As industry was normalised, it also became masculinised.” (Ibid: 77) On the basis of a social-historical investigation of Ute Frevert, Meuser/Behnke (1998) outline the development of the model of middle class masculinity in the 19th century and conclude: “Commitment to one’s job, social success, and a solid, materialistic orientation characterized the middle class man as a worthy representative of his class.” (Ibid: 19). This social pattern continues to exert itself in the middle class milieu up to the present day. In contrast to this is the working class milieu, where women being employed is more predominant, the

In this article, we will focus on social structures and the space of individual possibility. Social labor organizations as well as the predominant images of masculinity predetermine the space of individual possibility by virtue of their “objective“ structure. As we will show in what follows, the societally and culturally structured conditions of gender-specific responsibilities and attributes are increasingly eroding. Nevertheless, the acquisition processes of men in relation to their masculinities are still occurring within these structures. In demonstrating this, we assume that gender socialization always has two aspects: The social place is, on the one hand, constructed through structural conditions and allocations from without and, on the other hand, through the individual acquisitions of collective social attributes.

By applying the theory of “double socialization“ and the concept of “everyday lifestyle“, we will present two theoretical approaches that treat gender-specific positioning in social structures. In our view, both theoretical approaches lack a relation to the process by which gender is constructed and thus an important point of reference for its individual acquisitions. Following the current research on men, we will seek to open a perspective on this construction process in order to describe men on the basis of our own empirical findings and to gainsay, at least in part, the dominant image of masculinity.

In our conclusion, we offer a proposal for a rethinking of various areas, one designed to prevent men from being forgotten or omitted in the discourse concerning the equality of the sexes.

## 1. Social Changes

A look at the employment conditions of all men capable of gainful employment shows that less than 50% of German men aged 15-65 are in a normal employment situation, as viewed in terms of the traditional, masculine outline of employment: about 50% of those capable of being gainfully employed are unemployed, self-employed, are in training, work part-time, or work in temporary positions (Oschmiansky, Schmid 2000: 24). Most importantly, there has been an increase in forms of employment such as self-employment without employees, temporary positions, and part-time work (Mikrozensus 2001).

Furthermore, the unemployment rate of men has almost doubled in the past 15 years, and the proportion of men who are neither employed nor unemployed has continually increased. In 1985 this group comprised 14.5%, in 1998 18%.

On the other hand, a comprehensive shift has taken place in the movement of employment from the industrial sector to the service industry.<sup>5</sup> With that, there has been a change in the place where traditional masculine employment is situated. This has meant a corollary change in the demands placed upon employed men.

Additionally, a look at the statistics for households and family life in the German population makes it clear that the form of the family has become differentiated, and the ‘head of the family’ or ‘breadwinner’ family figure has lost relevance in life practice. The number of one-person households in the 25 to 45 age groups has significantly increased in the past 12 years as has the number of single fathers (63% increase in the time period from 1991 to 2000<sup>6</sup>). At

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consequence of which is “a rather egalitarian practice in everyday life in comparison with the middle class milieu.” This does not imply a break with the orientation toward hegemonic masculinity models—in Connell’s sense—but rather a correspondence to the model of “complicit masculinity” (ibid).

<sup>5</sup> Thus production in the former Federal Republic of Germany in the industrial sector in 2001 was 78% of its 1980 value (in the new states [Länder] the decrease was 59%), while the service industry grew 199% in the same time period (in the new states [Länder], 110%) (Mikrozensus 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Mikrozensus 2000

the same time, there has been an increase in the number of non-married living arrangements.<sup>7</sup> Men (and women) are spending a longer period of their lives doing training, are non-employed for longer periods, have children later, and live less frequently with children. Not surprisingly, the amount of (further) training and free time has increased for both sexes. In the current discourse of gender relation, the image of the opposed, complimenting gender polarity is being guardedly put into question. This has become visible in, for instance, advertisements where men too are featured caressing babies and changing diapers, or in the Gender-Mainstreaming policies of the EU<sup>8</sup>.

Neither labor market policies nor state institutions are taking this development into account. The legal-fixed state institutions lag behind the development of society and are less and less in a position to adequately secure or support individual lifestyles. Although, for instance, the German marriage law has changed in the past decades toward one that bears more equality, the tax laws in cases of divorce are still such that one can assume the policies proceed from the basis of a breadwinner marriage model. The German social law has done more to shore up the normal employment situation than to undermine up (Oschmiansky, Schmidt 2000) and thus, in the process, has also cemented the image of the gender-specific role allocation. Both on the level of political discussion as well as in the practice of unemployment offices (and in their legal basis) the point insisted on is the professional employment of men. Thus in the current discussion surrounding unemployment, the topic which never fails to be mentioned is the East German woman and her employment inclinations. Nothing is to be heard or read about concerning an increased employment tendency among men--this is simply assumed to be the case. Insecure jobs (for men) are regarded as mere transitions to secure positions; unemployment measures are understood to be aimed at reintegrating the jobless into normal work arrangements. Many regulations base their assumptions on a rare species: the 'normal' male worker of the past. At the same time pressure is exerted and a contrived image is summoned up, featuring the man who is unemployed and lazy.<sup>9</sup>

**Familial- und relationship orientation as 'laziness':**

Georg H. who has been working part-time for over 10 years in order to be able to have a satisfactory living arrangement between his employment and long-distance relationship, describes here the opinions of his colleagues and superiors:

*No, you're branded. You're branded. Because it's like—it is, strangely enough--the thinking is that if someone goes part-time, then they're allergic to work. That's simply the way it is. You can't get people to change their thinking about that. Yeah, and you can prove a hundred times a day that you are not at all like that. I'm someone who has a tremendous amount of fun at work. I have a lot of fun. I enjoy my profession because I get fulfillment out of it. It's the daily experience of success. It's really great, nevertheless.*

Additionally, the German unions and representatives of business interests (e.g., personnel department representatives, as well as women- and equal opportunity representatives) support

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<sup>7</sup> Roommates living in apartments and/or communal living arrangements not constituting a common household are (unfortunately) still not recorded by the Mikrozensus and so is far too incomplete to allow for a characterization of the differentiation of living spheres.

<sup>8</sup> Gender Mainstreaming in Europe is defined as "the (re)organisation, improvement, development, and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making and in practice" (Council of Europe, 1998) Term and idea were developed at the Beijing UN Women's Conference in 1995. Men are explicitly supposed to be included in this policy, but one must be cautious since there are a lot of measures to be found that are more directed at the requirements of women.

<sup>9</sup> This recalls the "Loafer Debate", raised by Gerhard Schröder in May 2001.

this depiction of 'normality'. Equal opportunity measures undertaken in businesses and government are still aimed by and large at women and their place in society. Measures like the compatibility of family and work for men rarely come up, and the majority of actors in business and government do not feel called upon to discuss or initiate measures targeted at men.

**Parental leave for men is not an issue for those representing business interests:**

Andreas D.: *When I enquired at the personnel department and told them I would really like to have some parental leave time after the birth of my first child, the first question they asked was actually: 'How does that work? You're the first one. Hmm, we'll have to look into that.'*

It is clear that social changes are marked by a contradictory dynamic. On the one hand, there have been far-reaching changes in the labor market and in forms of living over the past three decades; on the other hand, current social policies reinforce a traditional understanding of gender roles.

**The traditional understanding of gender roles: The woman is responsible for emotional support, the man for economic support.**

Frank S., an unemployed father whose daughter stays with him for half the week, was required by his caseworker at the unemployment office to apply for jobs countrywide. When he objected to this, saying that he cared for his daughter several days per week and thus had to remain in the city, he received this answer:

*Other fathers would change their residence for their children in order to be able to work and support their families.*

For many men, coping with these social changes is difficult in many respects and is still premised upon a self-image based upon career and/or the role of breadwinner—and thus on the idea of a stable professional environment. The limited opportunities for men to enter into full-time work are increasingly shaking this model:

In times of rapidly changing normal working conditions, men are struck on their Achilles heel: masculine life as defined mainly through employment loses its principal foundation when employment is increasingly devalued or disappears altogether. (Lenz 2001)

In various studies and in our research it is clear that coping with these new demands on masculine identity is essentially structured through available resources and risks (cf. Meuser 1998; Brandes 2000)

Such resources can be comprised of biographical experiences as well as an egalitarian-oriented environment. An important question in this context is whether a man's masculinity is treated with recognition or exclusion by his social milieu. It appears sensible

[T]o assume in principle that every man, presupposing a certain amount of latitude for forging arrangements (*Ausgestaltungsspielräume*), lives out a masculinity that corresponds to his milieu and his place in his generational structures. To that extent, masculinity is presumably much more dependent on the structure of social conditions and contexts than on the will and desires of the individual. (Brandes 2000: 108)

Juggling the new and often contradictory demands is easiest for young men (around thirty) with good social or financial resources or for men with a high level of education. These men are better able to make productive use of the altered social framework and effect a satisfying compatibility between work and other interests.

## 2. Lifestyle and Gender

Since the 1980s, several theoretical and empirical investigations of social structures and individual lifestyles have been undertaken. Employing the theory of “double socialization”, Regina Becker-Schmidt focuses on how gender is specifically integrated into the social areas of family and employment, while the researchers of the special research project 333 at the University of Munich have been using the concept of “everyday lifestyle“ in analyzing effects of present-day socio-economic structural transformation in the lifestyle of individuals.

Regina Becker-Schmidt opposes one-sided views that place women in the sphere of private reproduction and locate the socialization as well as the development of a “female labor capacity“ (cf. Ostner 1990) primarily in the area of housework.

It is clear from Regina Becker-Schmidt’s empirical investigation that women work in both social spheres—professional employment and housework. This means that both the socialization process as well as “female“ abilities and qualities must be geared toward both of these areas. This orientation is not to be understood as an external orientation of the individual however, but rather as a process of “inner socialization“ in the sense of a “modeling of the psychic and mental personality structures in a collective dimension“ (Becker-Schmidt 1991: 387). Becker-Schmidt addresses here two aspects of socialization: the first consists of the social location or integration of the individual on account of her sex; the second, of the individual appropriation of this collective gender-specific location.

Later there is an attempt to apply this theory to men. Two observations appear to be crucial:

- 1.) For men, the compatibility of family and profession does not contain any contradictory factors. The requirements necessary for being good in the field of work are one and the same as those for being a good father: in both spheres action is guided by the acquisition of the family income.
- 2.) Apart from employment, free time is another important area for men. This is where men relax or pursue further professional training and interests (such as hobbies). The family is subordinate to this area.

Research results tend to affirm that men are either not double socialized or are so in a way that is completely different from women. For men, being integrated in various areas of social life represents more of a supplement or continuity but not a contradiction.

The researchers of the special research project, 333, take up a similar position. The members of 333 are critical however of the theory of double socialization, arguing that it imposes a limitation on the duality of family and profession and makes lifestyle distinctions only in terms of the conceptual framework of men and women. Furthermore, they add, socialization in several areas of life (or at least in two) is only considered with reference to women (Voß 1991:45ff). Despite this criticism however, the researchers in 333 come to this conclusion:

[A]t first glance...in view of the lifestyles of women and men, stubborn differences still predominate. The structures of gender-specific differences and the disadvantages for women in view of everyday life, division of work, and in family life continue to persist, even if they are beginning to ‘unravel’ at the edges. (Jurczyk/Rerrich 1993:270)

Although the findings indicate to the researchers that change has occurred at the level of consciousness and that opinions are more oriented toward equality and partnership, these still do not result in a corresponding practice (cf. Jurczyk/Rerrich 1993). Thus, employed women still ensure that their husbands are not troubled with having to do (non-professional work) and take on the greater proportion of work involving the family, etc. The researchers are reluctant to see this as a “confirmation of the theory of female masochism, but rather as a completely rational form of coming to terms with the socially contradictory demands placed upon women.” (Jurczyk/Voß 1995:394) Jurczyk/Voß draw the conclusion that the newly structured labor market does not inevitably lead to a new division of labor with regard to men and women.<sup>10</sup> Apart from the structuring of the labor market, the authors also cite the divergent distribution of responsibility as a cause for this new pattern. While women are still assigned and/or take on the responsibility for everyday work in the family, men are still responsible for the material well being of the family.

What is interesting in this context are the causes for this “unraveling at the edges.” Apparently, the socio-economic structural transformation did not comprehensively change the gender-specific role attributes, division of labor, or the unequally allotted chances in social participation. Masculinity (and femininity) are not absorbed by these structures. Although both of the theoretical approaches presented above cite the individual appropriation of social structures, they do not go far enough in our opinion. The focus of the investigations lies in the social location and thereby in the allocated structural possibilities lived out by men and women in modern society. Obscured from view are the cultural patterns of interpretation, gender models and thus an essential pattern in the construction of gender.

As mentioned above, men find themselves in a relationship of tension between altered socio-economic structures and a culture that tends to reinforce conventional models of masculinity rather than putting them into question. Thus, in what follows our gaze will turn to the construction of masculinity, so that we may finally present some examples of ‘dissidence with regard to dominant masculinity.’

### **3. Masculinity as Embodied Productivity**

The Australian Men Researcher Connell sees production relations—aside from the distribution of political power and the emotional bonding patterns—as the essential aspect of gender order. (Connell 1996: 106 f). The respective configuration of this order stands in a changing relation to the respective, predominant models of gender that guide identity and action and to which the individual orients himself. This social structural capacity of models leads Connell to the concept of hegemonic masculinity:

Hegemonic masculinity does not have a rigid character, which remains unchanged over time and space. It is much more that form of masculinity that acts out a certain position within a given structure of gender relations...(Connell 1999: 97)<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>On the contrary, it promotes a new pattern of labor division among women (cp. Jurczyk/Rerrich 1994:210).

<sup>11</sup> Hegemony is not only based on direct structures of violence and their means or the threat of their use. Instead it is based too on a high degree of (unconscious) agreement and consensus among those upon which it exercises power, that is, both men and women. It is based on differentiated cultural and dynamic processes in which hegemony does not necessarily appear in an open or violent form (cf. Männerforschungskolloquium Tübingen: 50). Acceptance is reached as positively conceived gender concepts within one’s own real or assumed field of power. Even though the hegemonic model is in fact lived out by only a few men, it is, nevertheless, lived out by a large proportion of men through imagination or transferred aggression (Carrigan, T., Connell, R.W., Lee, J.

The correspondence with dominant models of masculinity can be decisive for their bearers with regard to success or failure in, e.g., professional life.<sup>12</sup> Ralf Lange (1998) shows this on the basis of hegemonic masculinity among management elites: “The closer the correspondence between the managers of the firms being researched and this image or discourse of masculinity, the more likely were they able to implement their claim to leadership, definition power, and hegemony“ (ibid: 52). In this process, it is most important to obtain or claim control through individual competence, efficiency, and implementation capacity. Conversely, the aspects standing in contradiction to hegemonic masculinity are excluded. “This leads to a situation where women in particular, but also men who cannot or will not adopt a form of competition-oriented masculinity, are at a disadvantage or face discrimination“ (ibid).

### **The costs of deviation**

Georg H. has worked part-time for over ten years. Upon being asked about his career opportunities, he answered as follows:

*Good question. The chance is zero. I knew that the moment I decided to do it. The moment you decide to go part-time, you are—career-wise—dead. And you mustn't have any illusions about that. It would be naive to think about it in any other way, to think you still had a chance.*

In his experience it is not acceptable

*if you still have personal interests. And someone who dares to bring their personal interests out into the open, he is, in the eyes of the company...in the company, you only get anywhere if you say: 'I'll sleep in the office' or 'I'll come in the morning with my tooth brush and pajamas.'*

The linking of predominant masculine ideas to power, control and productivity is, however, in relation to the politico-cultural hierarchy that issues from them, not only problematic for women and men with marginalized masculinity, e.g., gays or “failures”, but also for the protagonists themselves of this acquisition process. Böhnisch (2003) analyzes as the basic constant of masculinity in the modern age “the problem of being set apart, of the availability and shaping of men within the economic and technological apparatus of industrial capitalism“ (ibid: 11).

In the process of the socialization of boys and men, masculinity is conceived of as a “problem to be dealt with.” (Cf. Böhnisch/Winter 1993); the psycho-emotional paradigms of this process are externalization (“standing still is moving backward!”) and separation (“only what is productive counts!”).<sup>13</sup> Böhnisch argues that this pattern of dealing with maleness is, at the same time, a fundamental motif of capitalism. Men are formed in the current of industrial capitalist exploitation according to these basic motifs. Böhnisch assumes an existential connection of man to capitalism (Böhnisch 2003: 51).

The popular discourse, which Michael Meuser calls “men’s self-understanding literature“ (Meuser 2001: 220f), presents in an extremely vivid way the negative consequences of

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1996: 62f). The above quotation is a translation of the German and is not a direct quote of the English version of Connell’s book.—tr.

<sup>12</sup>Cp. here also: Böhnisch/Winter (1993), Höyng/Puchert (1998??), Schnack /Gesterkamp (1998), Holter (2003).

<sup>13</sup> The components of economy left behind and separated out in the movement scheme of externalization are not by coincidence—as is the case with the whole area of reproduction—connoted as female. The accompanying devaluation explains the fact that the corresponding tasks are either done for no pay (e.g., house- and familial work) or for little pay (e.g., education).

masculine employment orientation for men in the context of family. Schnack/Gesterkamp (1998) refer to the lack of contact of men with their children, family, and to the familial space. The man becomes a stranger in this space, a consequence which weighs heavily upon him, since it is in fact the family that constitutes the core reason for his labors. In relation to his family, a man

...may by means of his professional career benefit from being the responsible one in a higher sense. He is thus a meaningful figure within the family on account of his commitments outside the home. (Meuser/Behnke 1998: 20)

On the other hand, Schnack/Gesterkamp offer the following qualification: “Men are in jeopardy of losing connection with their own lives” (Schnack/Gesterkamp 1998: 107)—and of becoming victims of a loss in meaning, which will provide their conception of themselves with little benefit.<sup>14</sup> Touching on the remarks of Schnack/Gesterkamp, Creydt (2001) sums up as follows:

These efforts contain, however, a degree of exhaustion, which in turn makes it almost impossible for a ‘competent’ person to participate in family life. The capitalist-founded social ordering of priorities within the sphere of work prevents both women and men from rendering work and life compatible in a beneficial way. It means an overload for both sexes to accommodate living together between different generations and being employed. (Ibid)

For a long time one has been able to claim that there are two stabile employee types: the “good breadwinner” in the middle position, who is connected to his family (where he is almost always the sole earner), and the “overachiever”, management’s ideal man, the man whose life is structured through work to a great extent (cp. Höyng/Puchert 1998). A break out scenario often occurs here, since different areas of life cannot always be harmonized and the pressure to be continually productive always leads to crisis. In this case, it is not the simultaneous compatibility of work and life that is sought, but an exit out of the vicious circle of availability.

### **The Atlantic Crossers**

The Hamburg consultant for work and time, Dirk Mescher, characterizes men who develop such break-out scenarios as Atlantic Crossers: They often formulate unfulfilled dreams (of their youth), but in this way do not stabilize their overwhelming work life. On the contrary, means of lessening their workload and being better able to cope with the tasks of everyday life (as by reducing their working hours) do not occur to them.

Stephan G.: *I'd like to be able to go away for a year or more with my family, a year long in a bus. Travel, travel, travel—that's my biggest wish, to leave behind this hectic life and these conditions. Sometimes I wish I had a completely different life, but later, not now-- at some point to do something different.*

Jörg V.: *My dream is to be a freelance writer, to have complete control over my time. I don't mean control just over my free time but all of my time.*

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<sup>14</sup> The popular Australian men author Steve Biddulph also places his diagnosis of a “crisis of masculinity“ in the context of modern employment. In a romantic transfiguration of pre-capitalist gender and family arrangements,

The effectiveness of this system and its apparent resistance to any realistic change can be explained by its deep historical anchoring in modernity. One might even say it inheres in the very foundations of modernity. Böhnisch (2003) sees a “culture of irresponsibility“ in the wake of the wage and socio-political erosion brought about by globalization, which has decisively changed the life worlds of men and women:

The winner/loser logic of globalization no longer concerns the sexes.... [T]he masculine principle of externalization...has become disattached from individual men, and the mass embodiment through the mass man is no longer necessary. It has become a virtual principle. (Ibid: 30f)

Where traditional industrial capitalism once made men its protagonists, now digital capitalism is approaching a point at which “capital ‘seeks’ its social forms straight through the masculine and feminine worlds.“ (Ibid: 32) Being released from traditional, gendered settings is a mixed blessing, especially for men: Although the increased amount of freedom permits the feasibility of various masculinity concepts, it also leaves in place many hierarchies—global winners vs. the masses—that now affects both sexes to an even greater extent

Despite this prognosis, one must not lose sight of the staying power of the handed down gender order. The deeply habitual embeddedness of masculine ‘productivity pressure’ is demonstrated very clearly in situations where ‘deviant’ decisions are made. Hence in the analog of the division of spheres in modern life, the caring for children or relatives—instead of dedicating one’s life to employment—contradicts the dominant depictions of masculinity: “Just as ‘unmasculineness’ illuminates traditional and hegemonic masculinities, so crossing over this boundary illuminates the provider/sole earner model.” (Holter 2003, 27)

Holter’s concern lies in enabling the development of a “caring model of masculinity” (ibid: 25). For a long now, the prevailing division of most masculine employment and feminine reproduction has been sustained by a system he dubs the “sprinkler system”. Gender-designated income differences<sup>15</sup> constitute a system in which the masculine employment model suggests or even leads to the scenario where men, when they become fathers, work more in order to maintain their income level. Holter quotes a Norwegian union member: “Married men are regarded by employers as stable employees.“ (Ibid: 25). The “sprinkler system” functions normatively, which means that it is only partly based on the economic gains of the actors. It also contains dimensions such as the social sanctioning of crossing boundaries and patterns of emotional orientation. “This perspective helps to explain why many men still make decisions as if they were breadwinners when they are objectively distanced from this position and subjectively state that they prefer caring goals.” (Ibid: 26).

#### **4. New Life Plans of Men as Gender-related Dissidence?**

The ubiquitously established process of individualization affects not only decisions concerning the form in which the individual attempts to live, but also affects the self-conception of masculinity (and femininity). Collective re-thinking processes such as the gay movement are rather rare occurrences. In general, men must rely upon their own individual resources in acquiring other forms of masculinity, the costs of which—at the moment—

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he criticizes the phenomenon of fatherlessness and the de-emotionalizing of men that has arisen since the beginning of industrialization (Biddulph 2003: 42ff).

<sup>15</sup>A Swedish study shows that fathers own 5% more than men without children. Conversely, mothers earn 7% less than women without children (Holter 2003: 25).

appear to be high: exclusion, lack of recognition, and crises must all be reckoned with. A further difficulty here is that the costs of dominant masculinity are rarely mentioned and are frequently seen as natural and a given.

Based on the basic pattern of masculine socialization mentioned above (externalization and separation), one can regard the following examples as meaningful breaks:

- Systematic integration of those areas that are traditionally separated out and placed in the feminine sphere
- Break with externalization at any price

#### **4.1. Integration of Different Areas**

The discourse concerning masculinity is slowly changing and, in doing so, is offering “outsiders“ the possibility of orienting themselves on different models. Hence the journal, “paps – Die Welt der Väter” (“Dads—The World of Fathers”), published uninterrupted since 1998. Featured in the journal are communal father initiatives that hold “father get-togethers”<sup>16</sup>, church organizers who advertise a “Family Fest for Fathers, Daughters and Sons”.<sup>17</sup> The working man now has twice as much competition: in the work place women are staking out their claim, and masculinity models—though deeply rooted in the masculinized culture of the work place—are giving ground to “new fathers,“ who possibly mark a change in group formation.<sup>18</sup> „Many men no longer want to occupy a threshold position in the family; they want to *be* a family, and not only *have* a family.“ (Holter 2003: 121)

##### **Fatherhood as a masculinity concept**

A model that views masculinity as adequately defined in terms of employment is woefully incomplete. This applies both to sphere of action and practice as well as well as to the way individuals define themselves. Admittedly it is seldom that one encounters men who develop such a self-definition in relation to fatherhood as in the following:

Uwe E.<sup>19</sup> *Being conscious of being a man is something I haven't lost awareness of.... For me it's completely adequate for my feeling of self worth that, as a man, I live out my father role intensely.*

In an ongoing study commissioned by the Hessian Ministry for Social Affairs, research is being conducted on partnership arrangements that are not comprised of a sole earner or a “one and a half person“ model.<sup>20</sup> It is clear that these arrangements are sharply differentiated by regional and familial integration as well as by professional and educational milieus. It is also clear however that the couples being studied take on, in different ways, professional risks—doing without current income or long-term careers. What is striking in what has thus far come out is that the men are highly motivated about their family lives and are, at least in part, willing to refrain from pursuing a career. Career threatening risks are part of the “compatibility problem“ of a “feminine“ biography. The authors speak of a differentiation and pragmatic change in fatherhood models.

<sup>16</sup> An event put on by the Väterzentrum Hamburg e.V..

<sup>17</sup> Organized by the ecumenical learning establishment Ibbenbühen.

<sup>18</sup> That other fields based on a traditionally valid form of masculine order were removed or modified represents a partial success, as does the growing visibility of the gay movement or the examination of issues such as violence, sexuality and health. A good overview of men- and masculinity is offered can be found in the Hamburg journal “Switchboard”.

<sup>19</sup> The quote is from the Referat für Frauen und Gleichstellung (2002):13.

<sup>20</sup> Rühling/Kastner 2003.

(I)n terms of house- and familial work, they lose their status as “eternal interns“ and take on obviously ‘unpleasant’ tasks and chores—cleaning, laundry, ironing—rising to the assumption of total responsibility for what goes into the daily routine of family life. In contrast with other fathers and colleagues, they see their intimate relationships with their children as a source of personal enrichment. (Rühling/Kassner 2003<sup>21</sup>)

**Parental leave time as an opportunity for compatibility:**

Andreas D: *The way I see it at the moment is that I’m very happy working 80% (of a full schedule) and when the parental time is over, I’m thinking about permanently keeping it at 80%.*

Some of the men interviewed by us took up working in part-time positions ten years ago in part because they wanted to spend more time with their partners. Pressure exerted in the direction of family orientation is not traceable here to a desire to care for children, but rather to a conscious awareness that relationships with people require sharing time with them.

**Part-time in order to have a content relationship<sup>22</sup>**

Georg H.: *And I have to say that the nice thing about working part-time is that it gives us the chance spend so much time with one another.*

Through this, an integration of traditionally feminine-encoded areas and tasks can take place and become a part of the regular course of everyday living practice in some men’s lives. This is not ineluctably accompanied by a rejection of the (masculine-encoded) performance principle but more than likely by a reevaluation of feminine encoded tasks. At least at the individual level, there is a breaking up of the separation of reproductive areas, something which affords opportunities for equality or even makes them appear obsolete.

**The integration of different areas of living becomes an integral part of a new self-consciousness**

Upon being asked how Johannes M. (Hausmann) would respond to being called a “softy“ or a “wimp“, he answered:

*Johannes M: I would respond very calmly, because at bottom these macho expressions—I have to honestly say—leave me honestly feeling cold, because he has to first prove the converse, that he can do it too. Then he can use those kinds of expressions. I have to say—in quotation marks—that house (women’s) work and professional work—you can’t say that one is easier than the other. Both are equally difficult and both are equally easier for the one person or for the other. So I think that there are women who can do it easily because it suits them, because—I don’t know how—it’s easy for them. And then there are women who can’t do it. And then in exactly the same way there are men who find it easy and men who find it difficult. So it’s not like there is one type or another. You can’t judge someone because both are necessary and both have to be done. I think the only difference is maybe that you don’t get any money for housework.*

<sup>21</sup> Lecture notes without page numbers.

<sup>22</sup>To note here is that in our selection of men we were very deliberate in not excluding men who were not fathers. Some men were explicit in mentioning that they were willing to do the interview because they and their lifestyles are not typically considered by research/policy and that they wanted to contribute something which would broaden the scope of the latter.

## 4.2 Breaking with Externalization at any Price

Externalization as a fundamental pattern of masculine socialization means burning out, a continual, goal oriented, forward-pointing movement that forms a referential framework for individual and social recognition. This movement outwards implies not only disattachment from society but also emotional self-alienation, leading to a “vicious circle: the more a man strives in the external world, the less remains for him in his inner world, which in turn spurs him to strive further in the external world.” (Schnack/Gesterkamp 1998: 112)

In the case of Georg H., it became clear that he was able to clearly sense the “costs of externalization” because he had previously witnessed its consequences on a colleague of his. This experience alone definitely was not enough for him to turn against the dominant principle of masculinity. The decision not to put his life on hold still lacked the impetus of a failed marriage (which, he says, failed because of overtime hours and professional ambition) and a partner who demanded time for the relationship.

### **Simultaneity of different areas of society:**

Georg H.: *There is something important that I want to tell you--a story that left its mark on me early in life...and also contributed to the fact that I'm completely for working part-time work. It happened during my first job, when I was with this company and there was an employee, a department director with whom I did a lot of work and whom I found extremely nice. He was always in a good mood and I tried to follow in his footsteps because he was always in a good mood. So he said one day: "Listen, I've planned my whole life for my life after I retire. I've bought myself a cabin in Allgäu, a cabin in the mountains, and I'm already preparing myself mentally for my life there. When I begin collecting my pension, that's when my life really begins." And he really looked forward to it, yeah. The day came nearer and nearer and then it was just five days and his farewell party had already been arranged. And he was--you really felt it—he really had this enthusiasm for his life after retiring. It was a source of joy for him...so what am I telling you? He died two days before his retirement. That really shocked me, because this person had looked forward to this time his whole life and he never got to experience it. And then I said: "No!" Only just waiting and saying: '...life begins at 65.' Who knows if you'll make it? And I said: 'No, You have to do something in life beforehand.' That really left its mark on me. It was a shock for me. Such a shock. And so I tell myself that I always have part of my life before me and these are days that no one can take away from me. They are just lived. I would advise any one to do it, if it's doable for them, to live this kind of life.*

Men who break out of this vicious circle are confronted by a lack of understanding from other men but they also form a new relationship with their inner world.

### **Work is not the only thing in (a man's) life:**

Andreas D.: *It's just something that's fun for us. For us, it's just more that social contacts—if you want to call them that—are more important than sitting at work and earning money. That was something I'd already talked to my colleagues about, how we'd already got on to talking about the Boy Scouts. That came about when I just showed up one day with a back pack or something similar and at that point there was this real lack of understanding, the kind that goes: 'Huh, you invest so much time there. What do you get for it?' And then the answer comes, real softly, 'nothing' or 'I just have fun doing it.' Then they always come back with: 'No, I couldn't, I don't want to do it.'*

Being content with life and not money is what prompts social action here. At the same time, a boundary is set with regard to the pressure to perform and the amount of time dedicated to work, because it turns out to be difficult to establish a different productivity concept within the sphere of employment and to create free time.

Bernd J.: *This one (extra) day off is holier than holy for me.... and if you want to have free time, you need a day off—working an hour less per day doesn't do anything for you.*

Despite recurring doubts—or, to be more precise, the doubt arising from the continual presence of the “inner voice of hegemonic masculinity”—the men interviewed showed a high degree of contentment with their lives. For all of the interviewees, a reduction in work hours lead to a higher level of contentment with their general arrangement of work and life.

### **Being content with life**

Andreas D.: *When I was young, sometimes I thought along the lines of: 'Oh, you have to make a career for yourself and earn great money.' I know that but I think at some point I realized that there are other things which are more important and I think they are really more important nowadays. Sometimes you think: 'Ah man, it would be nice to make some real money or to win the lottery or something like that.' But then you always think it over and realize: 'You are in fact very content. What do you want to do with that really?' So, I can always say that we are content and we have developed in that way together and that's good, I think. It has turned out well, yeah.*

The change in masculinity is not representable as a fixed concept. Breaks with and deviations from the dominant forms of masculinity occur slowly and in specific parts of men's lives. 'New masculinity' is only feasible for an individual man if he has the chance to acquire new interpretative patterns.

New models of masculinity have yet to establish themselves in society. On the contrary, the current labor market and social policies tend more toward promising a reproduction of traditional gender attributes. This is a reason why we did not find any 'new men' in our investigations, but rather men with new strategies aimed at meeting social changes and their effects on the still current dominant model of masculinity. To some extent, the interviewees also exhibited traditional masculinity concepts. Perhaps what Jurczyk/Voß (1995: 394) confirmed about women also holds valid for men: this new, contradictory acquisition of masculinity is “a completely rational form of coming to terms with socially contradictory demands placed upon...” men.

## **5. What to Do?**

*That which is, is not everything to the extent that it can be changed.*

T.W. Adorno

On account of changing conditions, masculinity is now in a field of tension between change, dissolution and persistence. In this situation, men often remain, admittedly, stuck in old models that are sharply divorced from social reality or, at the very least, are unclear. Thus, masculinity is distinguished by differentiation and, in relation to the real lives of individuals, by prominent aspects of everyday discontinuity and differing requirements.

In particular, the genderized requirements in the sphere of employment, with which men are confronted across milieu boundaries, function as an inhibiting factor against change.<sup>23</sup> For this reason, Rühling/Kassner (2003) identify employment risks as the essential risk in the long-term practicality of new couple arrangements. Holter speaks of a “glass ceiling”<sup>24</sup>, which also applies to those men whose masculinity concept does not correspond to the one that is culturally predominant (Holter: 2003).

Dangers also abide in the agenda of labor market reforms. Klopp (2003) refers to the right to a breadwinner-supporting form of politics in connection to Agenda 2010<sup>25</sup> and emphasizes in particular the entailing disadvantages for women. It is important here to keep in mind that it is not only one-sided discrimination that is taking place but rather an implicit and commensurate re-establishment of the traditional couple arrangement and the traditional concept of masculinity. The cultural developments of the nineties immediately suggest the conclusion that with the undermining of security, there is, in the course of the deregulation, a falling back on a purported basis of security that tends to rely on anti-modern concepts. Examples here are the boom in esotericism, nationalist ‘sentimentalism’ (‘Rückbesinnungen’) or gender representations that are based on a romantic critique of capitalism.<sup>26</sup>

Based on the analysis above, it would foolish not to see that solutions to this dilemma cannot be exclusively tied to a sex; they must always keep in view the structural nature inhering in different areas and thus the specific involvement(s) of the actors.<sup>27</sup>

On socio-economic levels this means beginning with structure of the work sphere and the exclusion mechanisms.

At this juncture, unions should step in and strongly demand a policy that reduces working hours across the board. Only this will allow for the work outside of professional employment to be done—namely, for the carrying out of the socially and individually necessary work of raising children, caring for the sick, and aiding the elderly. This would mean a shaping of the conditions of employment in accordance with their compatibility and coping with the vicissitudes of caring for those in need as well as dependents. The shaping of employment must not lead to a situation where discontinuous participation automatically relegates one to a career deemed to be inferior. Included here are measures that reduce the gender-related division of labor as well as the hierarchy of separate spheres of work, and put into question the genderized world of career choice presented to youths.<sup>28</sup>

Overtime hours should be cut back on or—contrary to current trends—made significantly more costly. Expenditure for children must be socially compensated so that financial losses are not made up for through more work (overtime, extra shifts, second jobs, etc.), which deny the employed ‘individual(s)’ an active presence in the family.

As we have shown, men continue their search for part-time or family compatible solutions without having any contact persons within the workplace. Equal opportunity representatives

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23 We assume that the social division of the production and reproduction spheres, and the predominant organization of employment render compatibility impossible for both sexes. The deeply anchored, genderized attribution of tasks is, on a cultural level, deeply rooted in the gender-encoded separation of spheres.

24 As a rule, this concept refers to company structures that hinder or prevent women from being promoted in general and, in particular, from rising to management positions.

25 The agenda 2010 is the reform program of the social-democratic and green government, criticized by unions and social movements as social cutback.

26 Biddulph (2003) has already been mentioned (p.8). Probably the most popular example is Robert Bly’s *Iron John, A Book about Men*, published in 1993.

27 The following proposals are deeply inspired by the work of Creydt (2001) and Holter (2003).

28 By way of example, the educational organizations LIFE e.V. und Dissens e.v. in Berlin have been developing educational concepts that make gender dichotomized professions more accessible to boys and girls.

and supervisory boards often are not (or do not feel) responsible for the lack of support in the collective representation of men's interests. This must—in problems related to men in various living circumstances—first be constructed and wedded to workplace structures via equal opportunity representative and supervisory boards. Although union representations of equal opportunity in relation to men are not sufficiently concrete or are marked by omissions,<sup>29</sup> their compatibility problems are increasingly being revealed in GM processes.<sup>30</sup>

Since gender models are a decisive factor for how men and women act and define themselves, it is not sufficient to limit initiatives to the socio-economic level. Normative questions concerning the family, parenthood and role behavior (just to name a few areas) and corresponding measures aimed at degenderization are necessary to render new and egalitarian models of gender effective.

As in the past, German marital, familial and tax laws still support the image of the traditional housewife and female role model. This is clearly demonstrated in the case of divorce or the prohibition of marriage and adoption for homosexual couples. Beyond that, it is necessary to re-think German custody laws, which emphatically favor the mother over the father, something that was reaffirmed to a considerable extent over the past year. To the disadvantage of both sexes, handed-down attributes (motherhood and inactive fatherhood) are being reaffirmed.<sup>31</sup>

Raising children is—as is the case with employment—not a personal pleasure but instead a socially necessary form of work. Based on these premises, it is important to make more funding and support available for child care facilities and all day schools and to construct the system of child raising along collective lines.

In order to disseminate a model pertaining to everyday life and to provide men with a role opposed to that of the breadwinner, the following could be developed: special training courses offered by groups/organizations specializing in professional development and, in particular; by unions. These courses would focus on men and men's issues and would be aimed at improving social competence or work-life balance as well as health aspects particularly relevant to men.

Research can yield further contributions in the construction of a social world marked by gender equality.

Scientific research should especially focus on dismantling the static image of men and demonstrate deconstructively the cultural involvement and historical differentiation of men. (cf. Holter 2003:197). Through this process, further and also purposive change will become conceivable, feasible and implementable. This also frees up gender research from the traditional feminist discourse about men, which is by and large static and in which men are

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<sup>29</sup> Cf.: Equal Opportunity. A Programm for Action of the DGB (German Trade Union Federation) and the Member Unions 2003/2004. Under 1. (field of action, occupational training/initial training) the culture of gender-specific career choice goes unmentioned and the perspective of an equality-oriented occupational preparation is totally unspecific. In advanced and additional training (2.) there is also no connection made to the area of men's problems. In any case, men are mentioned—albeit in a very general way—in connection with work schedules (3.) and (company) restructuring (5.).

<sup>30</sup> The department in the service industry union Ver.di that is responsible for questions concerning gender and equal opportunity is working together with Peter Döge, a social scientist, on a study entitled: "Men Too Have a Compatibility Problem", Cf., Gesterkamp 2003.

<sup>31</sup> Here too the northern European countries could serve as models.<sup>31</sup> Since 1993, 1 in 10 parental leave months has been "reserved" for fathers; since 1995, 30 of 450 days in Sweden; since 2000, 3 of 9 months are set aside for fathers in Iceland (ibid: 53). The parity model was widely supported by the population at the time of its introduction (ibid: 56).

designated as the problem. This traditional discourse—although a historically important impetus—opens up too few possibilities of change and does not offer enough movement and mobilization potential (cf. *ibid*: 93-101).

Without supporting anti-feminist backlash, investigations should be carried out focusing on the price of dominant masculinity concepts for men: Masculine socialization should also be perceived as a process of separation and repression; the theme of men as victims of violence should be taken up.<sup>32</sup>

Based on the development of survey methods, a new approach is necessary. Only a fraction of men and women live in a traditional nuclear family. Both families as well as employment have become differentiated. Unfortunately, a large part of empirical sociological research is still working with survey methods that presuppose a “normal family”.

Critical modernization theories in gender research (e.g., Böhnisch 2003) can make visible the discontinuities in the work lives of men and women.

Gender research also implies that connections between structures in the work sphere and caring work<sup>33</sup> should not be restricted to women. Men too are caught in this compatibility dilemma and pay a high price for it.

In the search for possible changes, we recommend that the title “Money or Life” be taken in its fully literal sense: Men ruin their health; their life expectancy rate in 1996 was 6.2 years less than women (Eurostat, Demographic Statistics 1997). The suicide rate for men in the main employment age group was three and a half times higher than for women (German Government Department of Statistics 1998). During a series of conferences in Hamburg called “Men’s Health” (1997), Jürgen Lüthje, president of the University of Hamburg, noted that men between the age of 30 and 50 are six times more likely to suffer a heart attack than women (*Men’s Health* 1997). The connection between the general effects of men’s habitus—and what’s more, precisely risky behavior—in the context of externalization and separation is closer than assumed. Beginning to take hold is the notion that sustainability and resource orientation are both individually and economically a very promising approach, or as our interviewee Georg H. put it:

*Yes, work and free time. When work and free time are proportioned in a healthy way --I can recommend that to anyone. Nothing is worse than when the people come here in the morning and are grumpy. They say: ‘Ugh, I’m here again already.’.... If you say however: ‘I’m here for three weeks and after that I have two weeks to live my own life,’ that, that’s so much more satisfying. It’s because the end of this period of work is foreseeable. It’s not just endless. People count: ‘Ugh, my next vacation is in six or seven months! Until then I have to come here everyday, ugh. Only some kind of illness can save me.’ That’s a really shitty perspective on life.*

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<sup>32</sup>Here, in particular, the northern European men research projects that are connected to NORFA (Nordic Research Academy) can serve as point of attachment and point of reference. The men research in the countries where it has been carried out shows just how political practice is characterized by a strong orientation toward equality.

<sup>33</sup>It is important to point out here that “caring work“, in the narrow sense, means working with dependents (children, the elderly, the sick, handicapped people) and, in the broader sense, it also includes emotional reproduction, communication, relationships and partnerships.

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