Marginalized Masculinities and the Nation: Global Comparisons, 1800-1945

Veranstalter: Simon Wendt, University of Frankfurt; Pablo Dominguez, Humboldt University Berlin
Datum, Ort: 15.03.2012-17.03.2012, Heidelberg
Bericht von: Pablo Dominguez, Humboldt University Berlin

Held at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies, the international conference „Marginalized Masculinities and the Nation: Global Comparisons, 1800-1945" sought to provide fresh perspectives on the interrelationship between gender and the nation. Focusing on the role of marginalized masculinities in nation-building processes between 1800 and 1945, the conference brought together scholars from Europe, South America, and the United States.

In his introductory paper, co-organizer SIMON WENDT (Frankfurt) explained the conference's focus and its main theoretical concepts. As Wendt pointed out, the existing feminist literature on the relationship between nationalism and gender focuses almost exclusively on women and thus neglects the role of masculinities in nation-building processes. Wendt stressed that Raewyn Connell's concepts of hegemonic and marginalized masculinities could serve as a useful theoretical framework to explore this role. He concluded with stating the conference's two major questions: 1) What is the relationship between hegemonic and marginalized masculinities in nation-building processes and how did this relationship change between 1800 and 1945? 2) How did marginalized men resist their marginalization in the nation? The latter question implied a critique of Connell's original concept, which focuses primarily on the hegemonic norm and has often led to a neglect of marginalized men's agency and resistance.

The keynote speech was given by MICHAEL KIMMEL (Stony Brook, NY), one of the leading scholars in the field of masculinity studies. His talk focused on contemporary masculinities on the extreme right. Based on interviews with Neo-Nazis in the United States, Sweden and Germany, Kimmel employed an intersectional approach to explain how the often downwardly mobile middle-class members of white supremacist groups envision themselves as marginalized by both women and non-white men. Kimmel also analyzed Neo-Nazi publications with regards to their representations of the white male's „other," finding that these often oscillate between the two poles of „hyper" and „hypo:" Nazi cartoons, for instance, frequently represent non-white men as hypermasculine and as perversely effeminate at the same time. The two terms were eagerly taken up by discussants during the following days.

The first panel explored the relations between martial masculinities, war, and the nation. DENIS GAINTY (Atlanta, GA) problematized the clear-cut division between hegemonic and marginalized masculinities in his paper on martial masculinities in late Meiji Japan. While American commentators often described Japanese men as feminized, Japanese sources often reversed such ascriptions, emphasizing the strength and virility of martial Japanese men. As Gainty emphasized, rather than simply adopting Western models of masculinity, multiple notions of masculine identity intersected and competed with each other in Japanese constructions of modern nationhood. ANDREAS BEER (Rostock) analyzed the imagery and rhetoric of filibuster missions to Middle and South America during the 1850s as forerunners of a particular „roughrider masculinity" that is usually associated with the presidency of Theodor Roosevelt and American Imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century. Beer showed that concepts of martial masculinity were well underway in the 1850s. Contradicting the dominant Victorian ideal of manly restraint, filibusters became a focal point of competing concepts of masculinity in the United States. CRAIG THOMPSON FRIEND (Raleigh, NC) provided another example of the mutability and fluidity of the conference's key theoretical concepts of hegemony and marginalization. Friend's paper on the self-images of white southern men in mid-nineteenth century America showed how confederate manhood was constructed as marginalized de-

© H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved.

spite the hegemonic patriarchy wielded by white southern men. During and after the Civil War, Friend emphasized, this rhetoric of marginalized manhood evolved into the reality of marginalized manhood as southern men lost their mastery over women and slaves.

The following panel discussion debated the question of women's complicity in the creation of martial masculinities. Women's relationship to hegemonic and marginalized masculinities emerged as a reoccurring point of controversy in the conference's panel discussions.

The second panel centered on the role of „deviant" sexualities in nation-building processes. STEVE ESTES (Rohnert Park, CA) showed how the American press routinely referred to the practice of polygamy to question the masculinity of Mormon men in the late nineteenth century. Polygamy, which became virtually synonymous with the Church of Latter-Day Saints in public discourse, served to feminize and racialize Mormon men as „other." As Estes emphasized, this symbolic marginalization of Mormon men contributed to the construction of hegemonic masculinity and national identity in the United States. In a similar manner, NORMAN DOMEIER (Stuttgart) analyzed how the scandalization of homosexuality during the Eulenberg scandal led to the masculinization and militarization of German politics before World War I. While the homosexual practices associated with the Eulenburg circle were deemed effeminate and unpatriotic – turning them into a threat both to the sexual and the national order – commentators commonly called for an invigorating war to end the shameful discussions of German homosexuality that the press was leading all over Europe. Finally, NORBERT FINZSCH (Köln) analyzed the relationship of homosexuality, masculinity and the French Nation between 1871 and 1945. Finzsch situated the emerging medical discourse on homosexuality during the Third Republic within a larger crisis of the nation and of hegemonic masculinity. Drawing on Michel Foucault's work on the history of sexuality, Finzsch showed how the homosexual panic was inextricably linked to widespread eugenic fears of national and racial decline. As Finzsch stressed, homophobic stereotypes constructed a counter-image to the healthy, economically as well as sexually productive heterosexual man. Taken together, the session's three papers emphasized how the marginalization of men on the basis of sexual practices deemed „perverse" or unmanly served to create a more stable sense of national cohesiveness and of hegemonic masculine identity.

On the second conference day, the third panel first explored postcolonial perspectives on marginalized masculinities and the nation, an important framework given the central role that European imperialism played in the emergence of the modern nation-state. MAJA HORN (New York) analyzed Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo (1930-1961) as a representative of the „tiguere," a distinctly Dominican national and masculine identity. The tiguere had lower-class roots and contradicted dominant notions of male respectability because of its emphasis on hyper-active heterosexuality and non-conformist virility. By the 1950s, Trujillo's dictatorship had turned this hitherto marginalized form of masculinity into a new hegemonic norm. As Horn stressed, the emergence of this type must also be understood as a response to US-intervention in the Dominican Republic between 1916 and 1924. KATJA JANA (Göttingen) then analyzed relations between nationalism, colonialism and masculinities in the early Turkish Republic. Focusing on the „hat law" – a 1925 bill that prohibited all headgear other than the „European hat" – Jana showed how Turkish nationalism advanced a new type of hegemonic masculinity based on Western models. Even though the Ottoman Empire was never subject to direct colonial rule, she argued convincingly that the ways in which Turkish nationalism Orientalized and thus marginalized those men who refused to abandon their traditional headdress lent itself to a (post-)colonial analysis.

The following panel discussion revolved around methodological questions. While several participants questioned whether the concepts of hegemony and marginalization were really suited to describe the complexity of historical power relations, others defended Connell's theoretical framework. As Michael Kimmel emphasized, Connell herself had re-

© H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved.

cently clarified that she wanted her concepts to be understood as fluid processes rather than as stable, solid categories.

The fourth panel focused on the relationship of marginalization and nation-building as historical processes. In the session's first paper, BRIAN BEHNKEN (Ames, IA) described disciplinary practices through which American authorities emasculated Mexican men in the new American Southwest in the aftermath of the Mexican American War. Through an analysis of criminal records, Behnken showed how state power and national formation went hand in hand with gender dominance and emasculation. His paper also emphasized Mexican men's and women's strategies of resistance to their marginalization. In his paper, PHILIP HOLLANDER (Madison, WI) objected to the dominant scholarly interpretations of Zionist masculinities as a mere adaptation of Western hegemonic models and a suppression of older Jewish traditions. In his reading of early twentieth century Hebrew literature, Hollander retraced the emergence of Israeli masculinity as a product of contestation between numerous local Palestinian forms of Hebrew manhood. Hollander's analysis revealed a largely overlooked local form of Zionist religious masculinity grounded in introspection and moral action and opposed to the hegemonic norm centered on physical aggression and vigorous nationalism.

Panel five centered on fatherhood and its relationship to marginalized masculinities in the national community. As CLAUDIA ROESCH's (Münster) paper about Mexican immigration to interwar California argued convincingly, the model of the male father and provider served as a hegemonic model through which men who failed to comply with this norm could be marginalized as pathological or unmanly. Focusing on the Americanization programs of the California Immigration and Housing Commission (CIHC), Roesch showed how Mexican men's allegedly negligent „failure to provide" became a recurrent accusation to withhold financial assistance from Mexican families. Through this strategy, Roesch argued, the CIHC established the patriarchal nuclear family as a marker of American national identity, thus defining idealized notions of masculinity as American while marginalizing Mexican men as deviant. MARTINA SALVANTE (Dublin) focused on the paradoxical position of fatherhood under Italian Fascism. On the one hand, fatherhood was central to Fascist ideology, especially given Mussolini's biopolitical goal to numerally enhance the Italian population by another ten million. On the other hand, not all kinds of fathers were seen as belonging to the national community, not least because of the racial laws that were passed in 1938. Salvante traced the contradictions of fascist fatherhood into the public image of Mussolini himself, who was both a family man and remained famous for his extramarital affairs.

The conference's last panel on Saturday morning focused on family planning, eugenics, and marginalized men. ISABEL HEINEMANN's (Münster) paper stressed the role of male social and medical experts for the construction of a „healthy American manhood" in the first half of the twentieth century. Through the collection of eugenic data, the publication of advice manuals, and the organization of „fitter family"-contests, male experts like Edward E. Ross or Paul Poponoe propagated a vision of ideal masculinity that centered on the white, middle-class breadwinner. Men who could not live up to this ideal – especially non-white and working-class men – were marginalized on the grounds of their race and class. ANNA LOUTFI (Budapest) focused on the male hysteric as a marginalized form of masculinity in Britain and Germany around 1900. Loutfi showed that medical professionals increasingly understood male hysteria as an expression of lacking male will, thus making men themselves responsible for their condition. Loutfi employed Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics to explain how the non-productive male hysteric became a threat to national cohesion and reproduction in both Britain and Germany. European imperialism, Loutfi argued, turned the healthy and productive male body into a central national resource, thus transforming the male hysteric into a threat to national reproduction. In the session's final paper, RAÚL NECOCHEA (Chapel Hill, NC) analyzed how pro-natalist physicians and eu-

© H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved.

genicists in late nineteenth century Peru addressed men and their reproductive potential as the future of the nation. In their attempts to formulate instructions for the achievement of ideal manhood, Necochea showed, these practitioners imagined most Peruvian men to be inherently lusty and irresponsible, in need of restraining and even intimidation. As Necochea emphasized, reformers reserved special scorn for the bachelor, whose dissolute habits and unwillingness to take on the manly responsibilities of marriage and children made him contemptible and dangerous to Peru.

During the final discussion, participants returned to some of the conference's central points of debate. The organizers Simon Wendt and Pablo Dominguez tied the conference papers' empirical findings to Connell's theoretical framework. While many papers had demonstrated the fluidity and historical mutability of male identities between hegemony and marginalization, the presentations generally confirmed the usefulness of Connell's concepts for the study of masculinities and nationalism. Participants were split over the role of the nation-state within the construction of hegemonic masculinities: While some discussants foregrounded the state's power to shape gender norms according to its own needs, others stressed marginalized men's potential for agency and resistance. Once more, participants agreed that the study of marginalized masculinities must depart from a relational understanding of gender in order to uphold its critical potential. As the organizers concluded, the conference demonstrated that empirical historical research can contribute substantially to a better understanding of the central role that hegemonic and marginalized masculinities have played in constructions of modern nation-states.

Conference overview:

Introduction
Simon Wendt (University of Frankfurt): Studying Marginalized Masculinities and the Nation

Keynote Address
Michael Kimmel (SUNY at Stony Brook): Neo-Nazis, Masculinity, and the Nation in the United States, Germany, and Sweden

Panel 1: Martial Masculinities, War, and the Nation
Chair: Simon Wendt (University of Frankfurt)

Denis Gainty (Georgia State University): Marginal Centers: Martial Masculinities in Late Meiji Japan

Andreas Beer (University of Rostock): Martial Men in Virgin Lands: The U.S.-Filibuster Era of the 1850s as a Discursive Battleground between differing Forms of Masculinity

Craig Thompson Friend (North Carolina State University): The Rise and Fall of Confederate Manhood: Marginalizing White Southern Men

Panel 2: „Deviant" Sexualities and Hegemonic Nationalism
Chair: Pablo Dominguez (Humboldt University Berlin)

Steve Estes (Sonoma State University): Mormon Manhood and Its Critics: Outlawing Polygamy and Constructing a Hegemonic Masculinity in the United States, 1862-1890

Norman Domeier (University of Stuttgart): The Masculinisation of German Politics before World War I

Norbert Finzsch (University of Cologne): Homosexuality, Masculinity and the French Nation in the Third Republic

Panel 3: (Post)Colonial Perspectives on Margins and the Nation
Chair: Pablo Dominguez (Humboldt University Berlin)

Maja Horn (Barnard College): De-Tropicalizing Trujillo and the Tiguere

Katja Jana (University of Göttingen): „Behind the hat there are warships": Nationalism, Colonialism and Masculinities in late Ottoman and early Turkish Republican Society and Politics

Panel 4: Marginalization and Nation-Building
Chair: Mathias Voigt (University of Frankfurt)

Brian D. Behnken (Iowa State University): Controlling Los Hombres: American State

© H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved.

Power and the Emasculation of the Mexican Community, 1850-1920

Philip Hollander (University of Wisconsin-Madison): Early Twentieth Century Palestinian Hebrew Literature and The Recovery of Marginalized Zionist Masculinities

Panel 5: Fathers, Marginalized Masculinities, and the Nation
Chair: Johannes Steinl (University of Frankfurt)

Claudia Roesch (University of Münster): „Failure to Provide": Mexican Immigration, Americanization, and Marginalized Masculinities in Interwar California

Martina Salvante (Trinity College Dublin): Paternity at the Core, But Some Fathers at the Margins: Italy, 1922-1943

Panel 6: Family Planning, Eugenics, and Marginalized Men
Chair: Brian Behnken (Iowa State University)

Isabel Heinemann (University of Münster): From „Social Control" to „Family Planning": American Social Experts and the Quest for „Healthy Manhood," 1900-1945

Anna Loutfi (Central European University Budapest): A Specter Haunting Europe: The Male Hysteric and Eugenicist Science in Britain and Germany, 1860-1930

Raúl Necochea López (University of North Carolina): The Scary Politics of Fatherhood: Men, Medicine, and Disease Avoidance in Peru, 1890-1940

Final Discussion
Chairs: Simon Wendt and Pablo Dominguez

Tagungsbericht *Marginalized Masculinities and the Nation: Global Comparisons, 1800-1945*. 15.03.2012-17.03.2012, Heidelberg, in: H-Soz-u-Kult 26.04.2012.

© H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved.