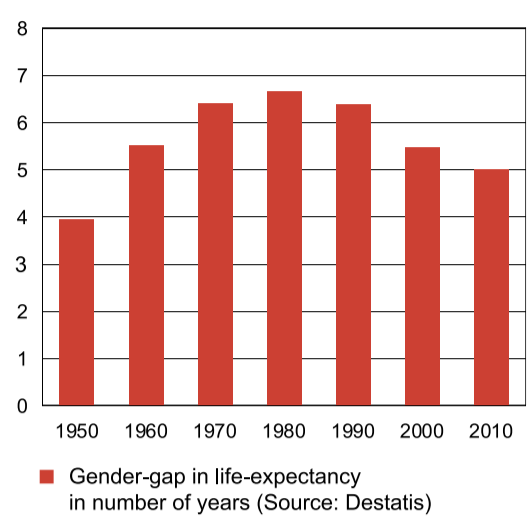


*The consequences of the Second World War in Europe were devastating for the mental health of German boys and men:*



*Even though they had not taken part in the war, young boys growing up in postwar Germany had to suffer its consequences:*

*In postwar Germany, conditions in mental healthcare were rather adverse to the needs of men and boys:*



*The treatment of men's mental disorders remained inadequate until around 1970 when a series of reforms, in the wake of the general reform of psychiatry, changed the situation:*

*The shift in values:*

86% of all male Germans had participated in the war as soldiers. One out of eight German men died, or put in absolute numbers: 4.3 million were dead or missing, 25% of all German boys grew up without their fathers. Many survivors suffered from severe emotional trauma. Some were addicted to morphine or even methamphetamine. The latter had been produced by the tons and handed out to the soldiers as „stay awake pills.“

## Changing Mental Health Through History: The Past and Present of Men with Mental Disorders in Germany

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They grew up with unacceptable male role models – or none at all. The “Nazi-masculinities“ embodied by their fathers left many boys disoriented. The sons of men who had been killed in action were expected to assume the role of their fathers in the households. They suffered severe mental trauma from this parentification. Orphans and lower class boys were faced with the danger of being admitted to „protectories.“ In those secured units, it was not uncommon to find child labor, physical restraints, physical and sexual abuse.

German psychiatrists had been particularly active in the Nazi-movement. Many had participated in the murder of ten of thousands of „lives unworthy of life.“

Rigid traditional ideal masculinities (the man as the „head of the family“) was the decisive factor in determining who was mentally sane and who was not. Men who had sex with other men were injected with testosterone or given „conversational therapy.“ Many of them killed themselves.

Established psychiatry denied recognizing the distress of traumatized former soldiers as a medical condition and simply discredited it as mere „compensating neuroses.“

The most prevalent mental disorders among men, alcohol and substance abuse, were not recognized by the public health care system as illnesses in need of treatment. These cases were treated only with abrupt detoxification („cold turkey“), providing no further rehabilitation or addiction treatment.

1967: Psychotherapy became covered by state insurance.

In 1968 alcoholism was recognized by a federal court as a disease to be treated appropriately. The first drug-counseling centers were established. The system for child protectories was reformed.

As the traditional core family increasingly came into question due to more and more women becoming economically active, many men started, at the same time, to distance themselves from rigid and aggressive forms of masculinity. Masculinities beyond the traditional patriarchal model became more and more acceptable for both men and women. Men with mental disorders became more aware of their treatment and started to gain more health-related knowledge. The life expectancy of men continues to increase – from 1980 onward the number of suicides dropped steadily until the number had nearly been bisected after the year 2000. Masculinities and men's health are not only a matter of individual responsibility but also one of historical circumstances.



*„Already his bearing reveals that the patient belongs rather to the feminine type [...] The patient is strongly advised to find himself a wife.“*

Psychiatrist's only counsel to a patient who had come out of the war as an above-knee amputee addicted to morphine and methamphetamine. Heidelberg University Psychiatric Hospital 1953

*Mental disorders – alcohol and substance abuse, suicides, male depression – contribute to the decreased life expectancy of men in Germany, which is about 5 years shorter than that of women. Media, but also state officials and some public health authors tend to blame the victims, that is, men with mental disorders for their alleged unhealthy orientation towards „hegemonic“ masculinities. A look through the past 70 years reveals, however, that these problems have historical roots and depend heavily on circumstances other than just individual gender role orientation. This in turn means that they are in principle changeable. This poster presents impressions from the research project „Psychische Störungen von Männern in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949-1990.“*

*„the boy is too sentimental, you should give him electric shock therapy“*

A former Nazi official's suggestion for the treatment of his institutionalized son, Heidelberg University Psychiatric Hospital 1963.



*„His preference for western movies reflects his antisocial orientation“*

Heidelberg psychiatrist 1953 on a patient diagnosed as a „boy difficult to raise.“ The doctor had participated in medical experiments which had resulted in the planned murder of 22 children during the Nazi-era.



*„Does he really have to move away from home?“*

Overprotective, yet unstable mother of a 25-year-old patient diagnosed with a severe neurosis. The patient was able to talk and dance with a girl for the first time in his life while being hospitalized.

*„You are not a god!“*

Patient to his psychiatrist, Heidelberg 1973



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### Images

Image 1: Pillbox for German soldiers in World War II contained methamphetamine  
Image 2: Masculinity during national socialism: Little boys in uniforms (www.dorsten-unterm-hakenkreuz.de)  
Image 3: Married ... with children. Conservative masculinity ideals before the social change of the 1970's (www.bilderanz.blogspot.de)  
Image 4: „Turn illness into a weapon.“ Manifesto of the Heidelberg Socialist Patients' Collective. Growing awareness of the social conditions of mental health fielded the reforms of the mental health care system.

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