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# BRING ME MEN

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MILITARY MASCULINITY AND THE BENIGN  
FAÇADE OF AMERICAN EMPIRE 1898–2001

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Facade of American Empire, 1898–2001*



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## INTRODUCTION

### THE EMERGENCE OF MILITARY MASCULINITY IN MODERN AMERICAN CULTURE

*Military masculinity is not what it seems to be*

Professor George Brown, who has studied and counseled transgender veterans for more than two decades at the Johnson City, Tennessee, Veterans Administration hospital, has found that some pre-operative male-to-female (MTF) transgender service members in the U.S. armed forces have volunteered for dangerous missions to prove their masculinity. Brown says that prior to reaching a stage of acceptance, transgender persons often seek to prove to themselves that they are not transgender, a phenomenon he refers to as the “flight from transgender.” Pre-operative MTF transgender veterans told him that during the Vietnam War, they sought to demonstrate the correctness of their given, biological sex by affirming their masculinity beyond doubt. To do so, they volunteered as “tunnel rats” who infiltrated underground enemy complexes, pistol in hand, to kill as many Vietnamese as possible. They believed that if they lived, they would prove their masculinity, which in turn would confirm their biological status as men and hence not transgender, and that they would not need to go through the painful and stigmatized sex transition from man to woman. And if they died, that would be an acceptable price to pay for achieving the status of a real man. Brown told a journalist that “They’re so uncomfortable with who they are that they’d rather have it beaten out of them or die trying.”<sup>1</sup> While Brown’s observations about the pursuit of masculinity in military settings may seem relevant to just the small minority of service members who are transgender, similar narratives are ubiquitous in accounts about join-

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ing the military, as service members often explain their willingness to risk their lives in terms of a desire to cement their masculine status, even when they have no desire to confirm the correctness of their biological sex.<sup>2</sup> For a non-transgender man, or woman, demonstrating masculinity may not be about confirming the suitability of their given sex, but masculine status can still be important enough to risk death to attain it.

While many troops believe that service in the armed forces proves their masculine status, they are not the only Americans who have perceived a powerful connection between masculinity and the military. When George Bush famously landed on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in 2003 and then emerged from the cockpit wearing military gear, he was following a long line of politicians who have used visual and other maneuvers to demonstrate their masculinity in a militarized context—sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Former Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry stepped onto the stage in Boston to receive his party's nomination in 2004 and began by saluting as he declared, "I'm John Kerry and I'm reporting for duty."<sup>3</sup> Hopeful that their candidate could, unlike Al Gore, muster sufficient masculine credibility to prevail at the ballot box, the audience erupted en masse. During the 1988 presidential campaign, Michael Dukakis was ridiculed widely for riding in a tank. The problem was not that he sought to prove his masculinity in a military context, but that his effort to do so was unpersuasive. His body seemed tiny in comparison to the larger-than-life tank; his facial expression suggested that he was not in control of the armored machine beneath him; and his pressed shirt and tie were visible under his uniform. The failed demonstration of masculinity sustained a perception of Dukakis as incompetent and exposed the artifice of military masculinity as something that *could* be appropriated with a more compelling performance.

The staging of a photo opportunity may seem trivial, but warrior identities can be so closely aligned with ideas about masculinity that some American presidents have been motivated to wage war to demonstrate their masculinity.<sup>4</sup> Presidents may believe that wearing military gear, addressing graduates of service academies, visiting troops at the front, saluting Marines who guard the presidential helicopter and other emulations of masculinity in military contexts convey the message that they are competent and able leaders. At the same time, and without reducing motives for war to a single factor, presidents have realized that wielding military power effectively can enhance a masculine reputation, while military defeat can invite critiques of their masculinity. Hence when President McKinley opted initially for a diplomatic response to news of

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Spain's sinking of the USS Maine in 1898, the *Atlanta Constitution* wrote that, "At this moment there is a great need of a man in the White House." When Woodrow Wilson declined at first to involve the U.S. in World War I, former President Theodore Roosevelt said that he had "done more to emasculate American manhood... than anyone else I can think of." Historians, psychologists and political scientists have argued that in one form or another, all modern American presidents have understood decisions to use force through a gendered lens.<sup>5</sup> Lyndon Johnson claimed that after the bombing of North Vietnam, "I didn't just screw Ho Chi Minh. I cut his pecker off."<sup>6</sup> Presidents and presidential candidates often appear to believe that they cannot win elections or govern effectively unless they can show that they are masculine by waging war successfully.

But if American troops have risked their lives and presidents have waged war to prove that they are masculine, this does not necessarily mean that scholars understand military masculinity or how it has operated in the modern American context. In this book, I map a critical flaw in scholarly understandings of military masculinity, address consequences of that flaw, and offer an alternative understanding of masculinity's contours and operations. In doing so, I develop a story about what masculinity means in the U.S. armed forces, and I connect that story to a broader narrative about the relationship between the politics of scapegoating and how American imperial power works. Before pursuing this project, I begin by offering a summary of my argument and then tracing military masculinity's emergence as an important paradigm in modern American culture.

I conceive of military masculinity as a set of beliefs, practices and attributes that can enable individuals—men and women—to claim authority on the basis of affirmative relationships with the military or with military ideas. For some individuals, power may depend on their own or others' beliefs that military service certifies one's competence, trustworthiness, or authenticity. For others, authority may depend on practices that include serving in the military, referencing one's military record, or promoting martial values. Yet others may depend on physical attributes or embellishments such as muscles or tattoos to enhance their authority. Military masculinity consists of these and other beliefs, practices and attributes which enable individuals to legitimize their claims to authority by associating themselves with the military or with military ideas. In most cases, military masculinity has been more available to men than to women for sustaining claims to power but, as I note below, women have harnessed it as well. By conceptualizing military masculinity as I have

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done, I situate it as a potential property of bodies, institutions and cultures, as well as a performance of gender. As sociologist Carolyn Turnovsky observes, “gender is not simply located within the body or one body, but found between bodies in practice, structured into rules/laws, in history...”<sup>7</sup> Military masculinity can be as intimate and precise as the proportions of a particular soldier’s body, but can also include an entire nation’s beliefs about whether war is an occasion for service members to demonstrate toughness. Less important than the scope of the belief, practice or attribute under consideration is whether it legitimizes individuals’ claim to power on the basis of a connection to the military or martial ideas.

In the particular modern American context that is my focus, military masculinity has consisted of beliefs, practices and attributes that often have enabled individuals to claim a great deal of authority, perhaps more than any other form of masculinity, on the basis of their relationships with military institutions and ideas. In modern American culture, the relationship between masculinity, authority and military institutions and ideas has, more often than not, been privileged and even glorified during the past century.<sup>8</sup> That glorification, in turn, has obscured scholarly understanding of what military masculinity is and how it works. Most scholars argue that the achievement of masculine status requires warriors to disavow, and even crush, any unmasculine aspects of themselves. As Susan Jeffords argues in her study of the remasculinization of America after the Vietnam War, “While the composition of the masculinity can vary from time to time, it remains consistently opposed to the ‘feminine,’ those characteristics that must be discarded in order to actualize masculinity.”<sup>9</sup> Warriors attain masculine status by showing that they are not-feminine, not-weak, not-queer, not-emotional.

In contrast, my argument is that during the roughly century-long period from 1898 to 2001, when the U.S. established and consolidated its global reach, the production of masculine warriors has required those who embody masculinity to enter into intimate relationships with femininity, queerness and other unmasculine foils, not just to disavow them. The military has motivated service members to fight by forcing them to embody traits and identifications that have been framed as binary oppositions—masculine/feminine, strong/weak, dominant/subordinate, victor/victim, civilized/barbaric, clean/dirty, straight/queer, legible/illegible, stoic/emotional—and to deny those embodiments at the same time. As such, the troops have found themselves entrapped in dense webs of double binds that confuse them and sustain a penchant for obedience and conformity. The pursuit of masculine status has produced conformity and obedience not just through the disavowal of the unmasculine, but



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via the compelled embrace of the masculine/unmasculine and other oppositions which have been constructed as irreconcilable.

But it is not just any contradictions that have served to structure American military masculinity. More specifically, military masculinity has been structured by irresolvable contradictions associated with U.S. empire. The expression of imperial contradictions in, on, and through service members' bodies and identities has served to camouflage and contain them. Hence, military masculinity has become a site where irreconcilable political contradictions have been smoothed over, almost as if there were no contradictions at all. When they conflate virtuous depictions of the troops with unproblematic understandings of U.S. empire, Americans make any contradictions associated with the global deployment of American force seem unproblematic. Cleaning up the troops has, simultaneously, cleaned up empire. By conceptualizing military masculinity exclusively in terms of a disavowal of the unmasculine and overlooking contradictions that structure it, scholars have become implicated in political and social processes that sanitize the operation of U.S. power at home and abroad.

An appreciation of military masculinity's structuring contradictions opens up another area of understanding, in particular the longstanding tradition of scapegoating in the U.S. military. Scapegoating has been a central element of American military culture because military masculinity's unproblematic appearance has required the abject half of each structuring contradiction to get projected onto outcasts who were then blamed for contamination and excluded from the warrior community. Demonization and scapegoating that sustained military masculinity have depended on factual distortion and leaps of imagination to convey the impression that abjection characterizes members of outcast groups, but not normative warriors. Thus, it is no accident that throughout modern American history, as each demonized outcast group has gained admittance to the community of warriors, other outcasts have taken their place as targets of scapegoating. An understanding of military masculinity's structuring contradictions is thus necessary for explaining why the smoothing over of empire's abject underside has gone hand in hand with the demonization of minority groups at home and abroad. Military masculinity is often portrayed as a central element of the American melting pot, a site where citizens come together, become soldiers, and defend the nation so as to minimize foreign threat. Quite to the contrary, I show that military masculinity is a site where domestic fears of the other have been exaggerated and then implicated in the smoothing out of imperial responses to exaggerated foreign threats.

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Military masculinity can enable women to claim authority on the basis of their relationship to the armed forces or to military ideas. As scholars such as Jack Halberstam, Brenda Boyle and others have argued, both men and women can attain masculine status.<sup>10</sup> In the American political context, Hillary Clinton's successful efforts to portray herself as hawkish on matters of defense and national security illustrate how military masculinity can legitimize women's claim to authority. Women can exploit and embody masculinity, but I argue in this book that in the minds of most scholars and most Americans, the *ideal* of military masculinity has been predicated on a rejection of the unmasculine. Paradoxically, however, women as well as members of minority communities who often have been prevented from serving in uniform on an equal basis with white, heterosexual men have played a central role in sustaining the ideal of military masculinity. Cynthia Enloe and other scholars have demonstrated that militarized, masculine authority requires women to play various roles as mothers, camp followers, soldiers, victims of sexual assault, and sex workers among others.<sup>11</sup> As Enloe shows, women often pay the costs associated with sustaining masculine power in militarized contexts. My argument is that women and minorities have not just sustained the power of specific individuals or institutions, but have played an important role in maintaining the ideal of military masculinity as an archetype of what a citizen should be. By helping to conceal contradictions which structure military masculinity and purifying some of its most abject elements, women and minorities have preserved military masculinity as an unproblematic identity that many Americans seek to emulate.

Americans have been encouraged to understand military masculinity as an archetypal expression of democracy. But there is something profoundly undemocratic about military masculinity and the way in which public adulation of it is premised on a disavowal of its blemishes. As I argue throughout this book, willful ignorance about military masculinity's abject underside is not just a metaphor for the suppression of American empire's nastiest warts, but is implicated in that suppression. Thus, the undemocratic aspect of military masculinity is not just the soldier's propensity to obey uncritically, but the broader system of civilian and military disavowals that enable and reflect that inclination, thus sustaining simplistic ideas about American empire.

### *A new masculine paradigm*

My narrative begins approximately a century ago, when American military masculinity consolidated as a dominant paradigm for male authority, a para-

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digm that came to model normative citizenship for civilians, not just soldiers, and that valorized toughness on the one hand, and obedience and conformity on the other. Americans have glorified warriors since the earliest days of the republic, and late-eighteenth-century treatises on the revolutionary war lionized George Washington's martial heroism as a critical determinant of the British defeat.<sup>12</sup> Civil War veterans served as U.S. presidents for a generation, and "The epitome of honor and the model of manly character in the post-Civil War period was the veteran."<sup>13</sup> While reverence for American warriors is a long-standing tradition, military masculinity did not emerge as a dominant paradigm until the end of the nineteenth century, when imperialists advocated American involvement in the 1898 war against Spain as an opportunity to remedy the nation's feminization. That war marked a turning point in how soldiers and soldiering were represented in popular culture such as literature for juvenile audiences. Before the turn of the twentieth century, magazines and books written for juvenile audiences did not epitomize soldiering as the most privileged demonstration of masculinity.<sup>14</sup> After the Spanish-American War, however, the literature changed, as authors began representing soldiering as paradigmatic of what it meant to be a real man.

Oliver Optic's 1865 book, *The Young Lieutenant*, or, *Adventures of an Army Officer*, is a case in point.<sup>15</sup> Optic (William T. Adams) was a prolific author whose fictional "Army and Navy Stories" followed two brothers, Tom and Jack Somers, who fought in the Civil War. In *The Young Lieutenant*, eighteen-year-old Tom Somers sneaks through enemy lines and collects valuable military information about Rebel tactics and troop movements before enemy forces capture him and his friend, Captain de Banyan. Somers and de Banyan escape by outsmarting their captors and then return to Union lines, where they are welcomed as heroes. According to James Marten, a scholar of nineteenth-century children's literature, Optic "set the standard for exciting and patriotic war fiction" among nineteenth-century authors writing primarily for a juvenile audience. As such, his fiction is a "most-likely" site for the appearance of heroic images of soldiering and military masculinity.<sup>16</sup> But while *The Young Lieutenant* does glorify Tom Somers's bravery, cunning, and aversion to vice, the book does not position Somers as an archetypal embodiment of a real man. Somers acts naively in a saloon (33), blushes "like a maiden" at the mention of his girlfriend (57), and is "sensitive" about being held in low esteem by peers (195). In an era when self-control was an important component of manliness, Somers boasts about his battlefield exploits (278), talks excessively (278), loses control of his temper (66), cries (235) and exhibits giddiness and excitability (76;

277). In the presence of his girlfriend, he “trembled and blushed... like the veriest coward in the world” (279). Having already led a number of dangerous military missions, Somers nevertheless says of himself that, “I’m only a boy” (162).

Contrast Optic’s 1865 portrayal of Tom Somers to H. Irving Hancock’s 1910 depiction of Dick Prescott. Hancock, a war correspondent in Cuba and the Philippines during the Spanish-American War was, like Optic, a prolific author of juvenile fiction. His books about military heroes include a four-volume “West Point Series,” which traces the experiences of two cadets, Dick Prescott and Greg Holmes, as they make their way through the U.S. Military Academy. The first volume in the series, *Dick Prescott’s First Year at West Point*, or *Two Chums in the Cadet Gray*, was published in 1910, and documents their tortuous plebe (freshman) year on campus, a time when sophomores haze newcomers constantly and violently.<sup>17</sup> Prescott clearly is meant to model the masculine ideal. Whereas Somers, even after displaying heroism on the battlefield, remained “only a boy,” Hancock situates the journey through West Point as transforming “the boy fresh from home” into “splendid specimens of physical and mental manhood” (47). Prescott is nominated for class president, an office he does not seek, because, according to his friend, he “stands more closely than any of us to all the grand old traditions of intelligence, daring, loyalty, leadership, good fellowship and unflinching good judgment” (193).

When a disciplinary officer is on the verge of making an unannounced inspection of Prescott’s dorm room during a prohibited hazing incident, Prescott immediately reconfigures the scene so that it appears that the two sophomores who are hazing him are providing academic advice about a math problem. The sophomores avoid punishment for hazing, and Prescott develops a reputation for selflessness. When, on another occasion, Prescott discovers a civilian intruder in his dimly-lit dorm room, only to realize after bloodying his nose that the intruder is just a sophomore prankster, he apologizes profusely. The enraged sophomore challenges him to a boxing match, but Prescott is more concerned about the intruder’s welfare than his own. He reluctantly accepts the challenge and alerts the sophomore that he has just enough time to return to his room before curfew. Prescott has the right to avoid the fight by appealing to a committee that resolves disputes among cadets, and he predicts that “Of course I shall be thrashed” by the much stronger sophomore. But he believes that the beating “probably won’t do me any permanent harm.” Prescott prevails in the boxing match by outsmarting his challenger, but takes no pleasure in victory (92–109). Whereas Optic’s hero was unrestrained, even secondary and unnamed characters in Hancock’s book are models of stoicism:

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“As the young men marched, erect and perfect in carriage, and with a rhythm of step like the tap of drums, nothing in their soldierly, expressionless faces betrayed the anxiety that gnawed at their hearts.” (246) Prescott never deviates from his commitment to obedience, cleanliness, strength, endurance, modesty, bravery, loyalty and honor.

The point, however, is not just that Optic’s hero exhibits unmanly traits, while Hancock’s is portrayed as a masculine archetype. Of greater importance is that Hancock positions military masculinity itself as an archetypal expression of manhood and what a real man should be, while Optic portrays military masculinity as a mixed blessing and one of a range of alternatives for becoming and being a man. In Optic’s *The Young Lieutenant*, military masculinity is not necessarily superior to civilian masculinity. During a barroom encounter with a drunk civilian, Somers and de Banyan react with chivalrous restraint. That said, the episode ends in a draw when the two officers simply walk out of the saloon. Somers’s avoidance of additional provocation is not intended to signify confidence, but rather that Somers “was prudent enough not to give any further cause of offense.” At a later point, Somers enacts military subservience to civilian authority by appealing to a U.S. senator for a favor, and his peers urge him to do whatever he can to remain in the senator’s good graces. In Hancock’s account, by contrast, cadets scorn civilians. One of Prescott’s friends says that, “For me there isn’t anything on earth but a soldier. Oh, at least, there are only two kinds of people—soldiers and those who don’t count” (207). At another point, cadets march across parade grounds as “hundreds of girls” await them. Says Hancock: “It was an awe-inspiring moment to one who could feel the thrill of patriotism” (137). Hancock’s cadets are objects of civilian deference and envy, and there is no question that military masculinity is preferred to its civilian counterparts (242).

The relationship between gender and authenticity is another site for registering the consolidation of military masculinity as an archetypal ideal. While one of Optic’s heroic officers (Somers) never lies or misleads, the other (de Banyan) constantly exaggerates his battlefield exploits. The exaggerations are a running joke throughout the book, and a friendship between the two men develops despite Somers’s complaints about de Banyan’s tall tales. Martial heroism and authenticity do not correlate at all, as both officers attain heroic status even though only one displays a truthful character. In Hancock’s book, however, integrity is constitutive of military masculinity. Lying is so unthinkable that Hancock’s heroes make a number of fantastic-but-truthful claims, which their superiors accept without question because a cadet would never lie.

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Hancock notes that, “truth and honor are the first essentials for the man who is to wear with credit the shoulder straps of an officer in the U.S. Army! Any man who is not the soul of truth and justice is unfit to receive a sword from Uncle Sam” (221–22). Military masculinity is thus positioned as a status that, by definition, indicates the truth about who and what a man is.

The alignment of masculinity, patriotism and reluctant militarism is another dimension for registering the consolidation of military masculinity as an archetypal ideal in turn-of-the-century America. Optic’s hero Tom Somers certainly exhibits loyalty to the Union. That said, his masculinity is neither emblematic of nor necessary for the exercise of military power. At the conclusion of the book, Somers’s physical wounds prevent him from returning to the battlefield (281–2). Instead, he contributes to the war effort by taking an administrative position. For Hancock’s heroes, masculinity is both a metaphor and a literal prop for the nation’s security. Prescott and Holmes are challenged to a number of boxing matches by stronger challengers, all of which they accept reluctantly and all of which they win. Their reluctance to fight is grounded in modesty, not fear, and echoes America’s supposed reluctance to take up arms against foreign aggressors. As one cadet observes, “Time was when we thought no one would be mean enough to hit poor old Uncle Sam. Now there are—let us see—how many nations that are suspected of preparing to declare war against the United States?” (254). The cadets’ willingness to sacrifice is depicted as critical to the maintenance of empire. Prescott laments that, “Time was when a fellow could always expect to meet all his old West Point mates some day, while on riot duty in Chicago, or at Decoration Day parade in Boston. But the old days are gone. The Army is bigger, and U.S. Army service extends all over the globe.” At another point, Hancock contrasts cadets’ “personal character” with “Milk-sops and peace-at-any-price advocates... who long for the promotion of peace through the abolition of all armies...” (177). Important characteristics of both masculinity and military power—sacrifice, stoicism, strength—mirror one another so closely in Hancock’s account that they become nearly indistinguishable.

Two additional factors mark military masculinity’s consolidation as a dominant paradigm for male authority, factors which I address in greater detail in the next chapter. Prescott’s identity is structured by confusion about a central contradiction, in particular a penchant for both sadism and masochism, both of which are coded as masculine and unmasculine. Prescott repeatedly distinguishes himself from friends by celebrating taking a beating as an occasion to build character. He says that, “I feel that the fellow who can come here and get

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the grilling a plebe has to take is the luckiest fellow on earth” and that he is “thankful for the severe handling” (250; 37).<sup>18</sup> But at the same time, once Prescott becomes a sophomore, he shows that he can give as well as he takes. Taking a beating is celebrated as manly (55; 199), but the losers of boxing matches are less manly than the victors. Sadistically administering a beating is also seen as both manly but also emblematic of a lack of character. When one sophomore tries to administer “a lesson in scientific mauling,” the reader is not quite sure if hazing and/or being hazed is a marker of the masculine and/or the unmasculine (179). But that is just the point. Confusion about contradictions which structure soldiers’ identities, I will argue throughout this book, is central for understanding how modern American military masculinity works.

Finally, Optic’s and Hancock’s heroes exhibit remarkably different relationships to questions of autonomy, docility and normativity. Tom Somers follows orders, but he spends a considerable amount of time improvising as he navigates lone-ranger missions that he must carry out on his own. Prescott, by contrast, is never on his own, and is subject to the constant, penetrating gaze of authority. During his entrance exam, he is ordered to strip naked, wrap himself in a blanket, and then throw his blanket on a chair. Two medical officers then measure and record his height and weight and examine his heartbeat and sounds “from several points” (23). He is then ordered to “Come here” and to run up a flight of stairs as fast as he can. His heartbeat is again measured, after which he must lie on a table “while the areas over his other organs were thumped and listened to.” He is then examined for deformities and “ordered to march around the room, to run, to jump over a low stool, and perform other antics,” all in the nude (22). One of the surgeons then nods “pleasantly” as he complements Prescott’s naked body. Serlin has shown how mid-nineteenth-century examinations of nude military recruits revealed contemporary understandings about the normative body.<sup>19</sup> Hence, Hancock’s fictional 1910 account should not necessarily be understood as an indication of a change in actual practice. Rather, Hancock’s inclusion of the scene and his framing of the exam as an optic for registering the body’s normativity indicates not only the extent to which the new military man was subject to the power of the state, but also that the military’s apparatus for assessing bodies was more avowedly authorized to draw lines that distinguished the normal from the deviant.

Modern American military masculinity that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century as a dominant paradigm of male authority was distinct from earlier variants. To the extent that literature for juvenile readers was a site where adults’ relationships to normativity were projected, military masculinity would

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model normative citizenship for civilians, not just soldiers. Even though soldiers and veterans achieved heroic status before the late-nineteenth century, civilian men who had never served in uniform did not, in general, lay claim to power or authority by appealing to military values or ideas, and proving one's manliness did not require demonstrating an affirmative relationship with the military. After the Spanish-American War, both civilian men as well as men in uniform would claim significant authority by aligning themselves with military institutions and ideas. Civilians would try to act like Dick Prescott. Related to this development, military masculinity would have a more totalizing claim on standards that distinguished the normal from the deviant. Soldiering would be seen less as one among many normative masculinities than as the paradigmatic embodiment of normativity. Normativity, in turn, would certainly be marked by toughness and strength. But the new military man as well as the civilian who emulated him would nonetheless have a greater penchant for obedience, conformity and docility. Finally, conflicts over the representation of soldiers would implicate broader notions about the legitimacy of military power, as depictions of war and soldiering would play prominent roles in arguments about the exercise of American force on a global scale. When Theodore Roosevelt and other imperialists sang the praises of American service members, they were making a broader point about the virtues of empire. The soldier would become an emblem for the state.

### *Military masculinity's emergence in modern America*

While military masculinity has enabled women as well as men to justify claims to power, it has been more available to men than to women, and it consolidated at the turn of the twentieth century as the newly dominant paradigm for male authority. What historical conditions foreshadowed that shift? How, in other words, did Americans come to believe that men who associated with the military or with military ideas deserved deference? In the late-nineteenth century, the synthesis of two overlapping trends anticipated the consolidation of modern American military masculinity as a dominant paradigm. On one hand, nineteenth-century ideals of manliness to which only some men could aspire were transformed into a more broadly applicable form of masculinity which was intrinsic to all men and whose emphasis on both self-control and ruggedness mapped closely onto emerging ideas about military professionalism. On the other hand, public glorification of the military as an institution deepened just as the armed forces came to exemplify the state and the nation in more inten-



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sified ways. While American society always has been militarized, the militarization of the public sphere became more connected to the military as an organization a century ago. Modern American military masculinity emerged as a dominant paradigm of male authority at the intersection of these two trends.

The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries saw a transformation of manliness from an idealized status that only privileged men could attain into a set of characteristics that were intrinsic to all men, regardless of their class status. The new form of masculinity, in turn, was structured by values and ideals that anticipated modern military professionalism. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Victorian standards of manliness had emphasized chivalry, self-restraint and honor, typified by the institution of the duel. Honor could be established by military service, but the duel was a civilian institution as well. Upper-class men supervised and controlled slave and manual labor, often in brutal and violent ways, but rarely involved themselves directly in dirty work. Bederman, a historian of masculinity, suggests that as a growing number of American men earned more comfortable livings in the first half of the nineteenth-century, “the middle class had begun to define itself as a class by stressing its gentility and respectability.” At the same time, middle-class men emulated the Victorian emphasis on manly restraint and control over one’s impulses as a critical assertion of authority over women, racial minorities and members of the lower class.<sup>20</sup>

The last decades of the nineteenth century were marked by economic downturns and consequent labor unrest, as well as the rise of women’s rights movements, heightened concerns about white racial decline, and an influx of lower-class immigrants who exerted increasing influence over city government. As previously self-employed men were absorbed into large-scale economic enterprises that involved mass production, concerns about dependence and the loss of autonomy became more prominent as well. Bederman says that, “Under these conditions, the sons of the middle-class faced the real possibility that traditional sources of male power and status would remain closed to them forever—that they would become failures instead of self-made men.” Hoganson refers to fears that the new class of managers would “lack the vitality necessary to keep vigorous working-class men in line.” As it became clear that manly self-restraint was insufficient for avoiding personal, economic and social failure, and amidst concerns about the decline of the white race, middle class, American men pursued multiple strategies to fend off new threats, including appropriations of rougher, lower-class codes of saloon masculinity which stressed prize fights, physical prowess, pugnacity and sexuality. So-called prim-

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itive masculinity called on men to go camping and hunting and acquire other “virile survival skills of primitive man” in order to preserve white power, prevent the possibility of racial decline, and achieve personal success in an increasingly competitive environment.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time that white, middle-class men came to idealize primitive codes of manhood, however, discourses of civilization were invoked to distinguish white Americans from racial minorities. African American men could not become real men, according to the rhetoric of civilization, because unlike whites, they were uncivilized. Hence, the new code of middle-class masculinity that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century was structured by two, competing visions—primitive and civilized—which emphasized ruggedness and virility on one hand and order and control on the other. Unlike the previous gender order, which had been based on competing, class-based ideals of manhood (Victorian masculinity among middle- and upper-class men vs. “saloon” masculinity among the lower classes), the new order featured a single masculinity which, although structured by a contradiction, was more widely applicable across class divides.

During the same era, the militarization of civilian society became more closely connected to the military as an organization. That alignment took place just as the military came to play increasingly important roles at home and abroad, and to be recognized as a prestigious symbol not just for the state, but for American ambitions abroad. Political scientist Neta Crawford has shown that militarism and military violence have been central elements of American culture since 1607, when an English settlement first took root in Jamestown, Virginia.<sup>22</sup> Her analysis of the “original and continued trauma of military violence that is constitutive of the United States” serves as an important response to historiography which suggests that American militarism did not emerge as a major cultural and political phenomenon until World War II.<sup>23</sup> Crawford argues, by contrast, that historians err in assuming that the militarization of the culture required a large federal military. Prior to the twentieth century, she shows, civilian culture was militarized by the violent, 300-year struggle to wrest political and territorial control from Native Americans. Despite the absence of a strong, central standing army during that three-century period, members of local, colonial, and state militias carried out a bloody, continuous war.

Throughout most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the standing army was quite small. Graham Cosmas, a military historian, observes that until the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Army functioned “mainly in police actions against rebellious Indians or striking laborers” and that among officers,

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“petty quarrels... were bred of boredom.”<sup>24</sup> In 1897, a Democratic member of Congress derided the Army as “little better than a clumsily organized National police force.”<sup>25</sup> Its authorized strength of only 25,000 men was dwarfed by the militias of the states, which, combined, totaled 114,000 men. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, those state militias, “often resembled social clubs as much as they did military units.”<sup>26</sup> The War Department’s budget of \$49 million was 13 percent of the total federal budget of \$366 million, but much of it was spent on domestic, civilian needs, such as flood relief.<sup>27</sup> Under the local unit system, regiments were often comprised of men from the same region. Hence, loyalty to the regiment tended to outweigh loyalty to the Army or to federal authority. It should come as no surprise that, prior to the turn of the twentieth century, the military was peripheral to the militarization of civilian society.

All of that changed over the next several decades. Beginning with the 1898 Spanish-American War, the militarization of the civilian realm became much more closely associated with the military as an organization. Pro-war civilians framed engagement in the conflict as an opportunity for America to restore its strength, and for men who served in uniform to revitalize their manhood. During and after the war, Washington came to rely heavily on the military to sustain American ambitions abroad. The War Department became a more savvy participant in domestic struggles over resources and status, and political and military leaders became increasingly prone to depict the armed forces as a symbol of an ever-more centralized state. As American military forces began to operate on a global scale for the first time, Americans slowly came to understand their national political project in terms of a self-imposed responsibility for protecting freedom internationally, a responsibility they could not meet without a strong, standing and federal military.<sup>28</sup> Historian Michael Sherry argues convincingly that it was not until the 1930s that Americans institutionalized a permanent national security state, when “war and national security became consuming anxieties and provided the memories, models, and metaphors that shaped broad areas of national life.”<sup>29</sup> That said, the relationship between the military as an institution and the militarization of the civilian sector began to tighten at the turn of the twentieth century when a wide range of civilian groups—including suffragists, progressive intellectuals, labor leaders, businessmen, nativists and African Americans—increasingly depicted war and service in the military as opportunities for advancing their own interests.<sup>30</sup>

Two trends, then, came together at the turn of the twentieth century: a new form of masculinity emerged, understood as intrinsic to all men, with an emphasis on self-control and ruggedness that mirrored evolving conceptions

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of military professionalism; and the deepening of the public's glorification of the military as an institution, just as the armed forces came to signify the nation and the state in more intensified ways. Several overlapping aspects of the intersection of these two trends anticipated the ascendance of modern military masculinity as a dominant paradigm for male authority. To begin, the broader applicability of the new code of civilian masculinity foreshadowed the military's emergence as an important political entity which depicted itself as a symbol of the nation and the state for all Americans, not just some. Just as the new code of masculinity could be idealized, emulated and embodied by men of all classes, politicians and military leaders depicted the military as an institution that all Americans should revere. In turn, they portrayed soldiering and war as opportunities for all eligible men to prove their manhood. Military masculinity became a marker of first-class citizenship for any American man who was allowed to embody it. Remarking on Teddy Roosevelt's embrace of military masculinity, a delegate at the 1900 Republican convention said that he embodied, "those qualities which appeal everywhere to American manhood."<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, the central place of the domestic and foreign 'other' in the new code of civilian masculinity foreshadowed military masculinity's implication in political projects which distinguished first-class citizens from everyone else. The new code of civilian masculinity consolidated around white fears of immigration and racial decline, in tandem with the assumption that only whites could become civilized. Echoing this dynamic, combat against Filipinos, Cubans and other racially inferior adversaries in the Spanish-American War was depicted as an opportunity for white, American men to become real men, and masculinity in turn was seen as necessary for survival in tropical combat settings.<sup>32</sup> Parallel to the ways in which the new code of civilian masculinity was constructed as a status that immigrants, African Americans and overseas adversaries could not achieve, on account of their lack of civilization, struggles over the right to serve in the military raised questions about who would be recognized as a first-class citizen in tandem with the right to serve.

Finally, the tension between strenuousness and civilization which structured the new code of civilian masculinity foreshadowed the way in which an increasingly professionalized War Department organized and cultivated warrior identities in terms of both toughness and discipline. The new military man was supposed to be virile, yet obedient, hearty, yet meticulous. The tensions which structured civilian masculinity were not exactly equivalent to those which military men were supposed to embody, but echoes of civilian masculine contradictions could be seen in new, idealized images of the warrior. By the time of World War I, the military launched an aggressive campaign to teach the troops

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how to survive in difficult combat conditions, but also how to bathe, brush teeth, wash hair and avoid sexually transmitted disease.<sup>33</sup> The military had always required troops to march in formation and enact other forms of obedience, but early-twentieth-century military discipline became more tightly organized around ideas and practices which mapped closely onto perceptions about what it meant to be civilized.

None of this is to suggest that military masculinity's consolidation as a dominant paradigm in modern, American culture was uncontested or instantaneous, as skepticism was apparent in anti-imperialist complaints about the creation of "a massive pool of unthinking soldiers."<sup>34</sup> In 1901, peace activist Ernest Howard Crosby published a sarcastic essay, "The Military Idea of Manliness." Narrowly framed as a response to Colonel Fredrick Funston's capture of Filipino President Emilio Aguinaldo in March 1901, the essay should be understood in terms of the broader debate between imperialists and anti-imperialists, a debate in which political arguments about the wisdom of expansion often were expressed in terms of the effects of overseas military service on the manliness of the troops. Funston, whose troops entered Aguinaldo's camp by posing as prisoners, became a national hero. Crosby sarcastically mocked Funston's conduct as "manly and creditable," and critiqued military masculinity as a dangerous form of blind obedience to authority: "Absolute obedience, readiness to obey orders, to do anything, these are necessary military qualities... Absolute obedience to orders involves, of course, the abdication of conscience and reason, but what are such trifles in exchange for the consciousness of genuine military manliness... The motto, 'My Country, right or wrong,' is the proper one for the man who does not think but obeys orders."<sup>35</sup> In a 1913 poem titled, "The Soldier's Creed," Crosby added, "'Captain, what do you think,' I asked, 'Of the part your soldiers play?' But the captain answered, 'I do not think; I do not think, I obey!'"<sup>36</sup>

American military masculinity is not a static set of beliefs, practices and attributes, as its meaning has shifted across time and space. That said, scholars' conceptualizations of how it works have been marked by a remarkable continuity.<sup>37</sup> Even though U.S. troops have not been perceived as living up to the ideal of military masculinity during every era, scholars almost always understand that ideal as a status that individuals achieve via beliefs and practices that disavow the unmasculine. As Joshua Goldstein found in a sweeping history of military masculinity, its construction as the antithesis of the unmasculine has been stable across a stunning range of historical eras and cultural settings.<sup>38</sup> It is precisely that construction that I question in this book.