

Traumas, Cultures, and Veterans

Annotated Bibliography for 2016 NEH Summer Institute on Veterans in Society

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Wool, Zoe. 2015. *After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed*. Durham. Duke University Press.

During the height of the military conflict in Iraq, Zoe Wool spent a year at Walter Reed Army Medical Center with recovering veterans who had been grievously wounded in combat. Her work reveals the complexity of the situation faced by the “wounded warriors” of the conflict known as the “Global War on Terror.” Rather than focusing on the trials of combat or the politics surrounding the war, Wool’s scope focuses on the local world of recovering wounded soldiers who have to balance the challenges of recuperating from severe injuries with the pressures of military family dynamics, financial precarity, a culture of normative masculinity, a wounded-warrior industrial complex, and a civilian populace that seems fanatically driven to thank them for their service.

Kleinman, Arthur. 2006. *What Really Matters: Living a Moral Life Amidst Uncertainty and Danger*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

Arthur Kleinman’s exploration of ethics and trauma considers the stories of several individuals who had to deal the consequences of making difficult moral decisions in very dangerous situations. In the first chapter, Kleinman recounts the story of a veteran of World War II who for decades has carried the burden of knowing that he intentionally killed a noncombatant Japanese doctor while in battle. Unlike the stereotypical image of the victorious “greatest generation” World War II veteran, Kleinman’s subject is burdened with guilt and a sense of being judged by the spirit of the man he killed.

Messinger, Seth. 2013. “Vigilance and Attention *Among U.S. Service Members and Veterans After Combat*.” *Anthropology of Consciousness* 24(2): 191-207.

As a medical anthropologist conducting fieldwork at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Seth Messinger observed distinct cultural patterns among combat wounded veterans that run counter to contemporary narratives about trauma. In particular, he highlights the “wounded warrior identity,” which is ascribed and embodied by combat wounded veterans. Amidst the barrage of “wounded warrior” merchandise and the ubiquitous PTSD diagnosis, traumatized veterans wear their hypervigilance as a badge of pride and identity rather than a symptom of pathology.

Hautzinger, Sarah and Jean Scandlyn. 2014. *Beyond Post Traumatic Stress: Homefront Struggles With the War on Terror*. Walnut Creek. Left Coast Press.

The PTSD diagnosis has come to define the post-service life of veterans, within veteran culture and the civilian population that receives them when they return from combat. Other combat traumas that have become common during the contemporary wars, such as TBI (traumatic brain injury) are obscured by the hegemonic ubiquity of PTSD.

Macleish, Kenneth. 2013. *Making War at Fort Hood*. Princeton. Princeton University Press.

Ken Macleish conducted an extended ethnographic fieldwork project at Fort Hood, Texas, which has been one of the largest training and deployment centers in the United States during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Macleish adds his voice to the growing list of scholars who challenge the hyper-medicalized PTSD narrative. He provides detailed humanistic portrayals of the soldiers he spent time with (between their deployments) and describes their trauma as the culmination of a number of complex experiences and cultural contexts rather than a pathologized neurological illness.

Rosaldo, Renato. 1980. *Ilongot Headhunting, 1883-1974: A Study in Society and History*. Stanford. Stanford University Press.

During Renato Rosaldo's fieldwork with the headhunting Ilongot tribe in the Philippines, it became necessary for him to resolve the dissonance he felt towards the violence he perceived in them. Over time, he discovered that a significant portion of the Ilongot tribe was killed in the crossfire between American and Japanese soldiers during World War II. As the Ilongots described that experience to him, along with their observations about how such armies fight, he realized that there was something unusually violent in the way that his own culture conducted wars.

Gutmann, Matthew and Catherine Lutz. 2010. *Breaking Ranks: Iraq Veterans Speak Out Against the War*. Berkeley. University of California Press.

Gutmann and Lutz tell the stories of six veterans who have come to oppose the war they participated in. This book walks through the biographical details of these six veterans, including their decision to join the military, experience of service, and homecoming. All six participants challenge the veteran stereotype and provide clear narratives that walk the reader through their respective decisions to serve.

Gardiner, Steven. 2013. "In the Shadow of Service: Veteran Masculinity and Civil-Military Disjuncture in the United States." *North American Dialogue* 16(2): 69-79.

Steven Gardiner argues that the gulf between civilians and the military/veterans has increased since the end of the draft in the 1970's, though society has militarized more in this same period. Three years of fieldwork with veterans organizations in the midwestern United States during the early part of the "Global War on Terror" demonstrates this divide, as well as how the military/civilian relationship has been gendered as male/female. There are also generational dynamics that are shown in this work, as older veterans (especially those who served their entire careers in peacetime) express their lack of faith that the younger generation will be able to handle war and they say "they should send us."