

# Gender Troubling the Tradition of Women in Service to the Nation's Military

Annotated Bibliography for 2016 NEH Summer Institute on Veterans in Society

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De Pauw, Linda Grant. *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998.

Though somewhat dated, De Pauw's examination of women in relation to war remains relevant for its balance of broad scope and engaging detail. In keeping with feminist theory of the late twentieth century, De Pauw opens by exploring the definitions of both "woman" and "war." In doing so, she engages the issue of gender and its performance by military women from the ancient Middle East to the guerilla and terrorist threats in the post-Cold War world order. The most important part of this broad examination lies in the twenty-five page listing of source materials that informed her lifetime of research.

Demers, Anne L. "From Death to Life: Female Veterans, Identity, Negotiation, and Reintegration into Society." *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 53, no.4 (2013): 489-515.

Demers' research indicates that gender norms in the U.S. military complicate both the integration of women into military units and their later transitions to veterans in civilian communities. Forced to decide how to conform to masculine behavior norms at even the beginning of their military service, women tend to be denied acceptance as equals in these military units; men simply do not view women and their service in positive ways. One of the consequences of this lack of acceptance is that women veterans' experiences of transition to civilian remain more problematic than those transitions experienced by their male peers since these women must negotiate the performance of femininity and remake their identities in terms of gender. The feeling of isolation or alienation—common among all veterans—seems to be intensified for women due to the lack of belonging that they experience in traditional veteran communities, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion.

Hacker, Barton C. "Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe: A Reconnaissance." *Signs* 6, no. 4 (1981): 643-671.

Hacker maintains that women were essential parts of European armies from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Instead of the rare woman warriors, such as Joan of Arc, women's essential services took the form of free or underpaid labor. These essential services included nursing, sewing, cooking, and cleaning for the soldiers and sailors; in the nineteenth-century British Empire, these tasks came to be performed by civilian contractors. Hacker locates the erasure of women from the military as coinciding with two events: the rise in civilian contractors for logistical support of armies and the development of military history as a field of study in the universities that prepare young officers for the conduct of war. This formal study focuses on battles instead of the support roles performed by women, and this privilege informs the study of military history and arts even today.

McKelvey, Tara ed. *One of the Guys: Women as Aggressors and Torturers*. Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2007.

Opening with Barbara Ehrenreich's forward, this collection of feminist essays and interviews explores the stories of often high profile women service members and veterans involved in abuse of enemy detainees at several installations in Afghanistan and Iraq, including Abu Ghraib. The individual authors represented in this collection range from established theorists, such as Angela Davis and Eve Ensler, to female veterans involved in the events, such as Janis Karpinski, then commanding general of the military police unit at Abu Ghraib. Overall, these examinations disappoint the essentialist theories of women's inherent moral superiority or nurturing and find fault with the military institution as one of masculine violence.

Strong, Jessica D. et al. "What Is War? Female Veterans' Experiences of Combat in Iraq and Afghanistan." *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work* 30, no. 4 (2015): 489-503.

Limited by a small sample size, Strong's exploration of women's self-identification as "combat veterans" begins by categorizing and characterizing the experiences of women service members. In addition to IED and ambushes of combat support missions, women's "combat" experiences include a range of activities outside of direct engagement. One such subset of the combat experience is the experience of witness, which includes exposure to human body parts, the image of wounded and dead service members and civilians, and radio transmissions from those in direct contact with enemy forces. The last characterization of combat includes all deployed service members in theater, where they experience overwhelming and constant awareness of the threat of violence.

Suter, Elizabeth A., et al. "Female veterans' identity construction, maintenance, and reproduction." *Women and Language* 29, no. 1 (2006): 10-15.

Interviews with members of a WAVES veterans organization that expanded its membership to include women veterans from all subsequent wars revealed a consensus that military service changed women veterans gender identities, and this change impacted their civilian lives in positive ways. These women retained a sense of community, reinforced by use of military jargon, and service through their interactions within the veterans organization. Suter and her team found, however, that the women veterans experienced feelings of isolation from the general population that began with their difficulty in transitioning to civilian life.

*The Minerva Center*. N.p., n.d. <http://www.minervacenter.com/>.

From 1983 through 2002, this educational nonprofit organization published *Minerva*, a scholarly interdisciplinary journal that examined issues of women and war across cultures and time. The journal was revived in 2007 as *Minerva A Journal of Women and War*; however, only three issues seem to be available. The active email listserv H-Minerva continues to serve as an interdisciplinary community that addresses women and war in addition to women as military service members. This listserv facilitates contacts among researchers, community driven answers to research questions, and information about relevant academic job postings and opportunities.