Scholarship on the Wars of Empire and Expansion has generally followed the larger trends in the historiography of U.S. diplomacy/foreign relations, as well as military history. Initially, historians began with examining the U.S. empire in Puerto Rico, Cuba (to a lesser extent), and the Philippines. This was a narrow construction of empire, which limited analysis to those areas that were under formal U.S. military control, and in which scholars focused on military engagements and colonial institutions, from a largely top-down perspective. With the emergence of cultural history and a “new” military history that privileges consideration of culture and social issues, combined with an increasing awareness of imperial and transnational power dynamics, scholars have expanded their view. Historians have worked to extend the definition of imperialism beyond occupation of physical colonies (boots on the ground), and under this broader definition, we can see the ways that the United States and the U.S. military have sought to advance and protect U.S. interests abroad. This perspective allows for a much greater field of inquiry, however there is still a tremendous amount of work yet to be done.

Gender and Soldiers in Colonies

If we think of the topic of gender and the military in U.S. wars of empire and expansion in its most limited sense—soldiers in the Philippines and Puerto Rico, during the period of roughly 1898 to the 1930s—the field is essentially non-existent. The work that comes closest to this definition is Mary Renda’s Taking Haiti, which deals with the 1915–1934 occupation of Haiti, in which Haiti did not become an official colony of the United States. In this vibrant and interesting book, Renda uses diaries, letters, and memoirs from military personnel to analyze the gendered dynamics of the U.S. military occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1940. She discusses the initial reaction of some of the Marines to landing in Haiti, the ways that they used concepts of paternalism to justify the occupation, and the problems that this mindset created. Renda then turns to the ways that the U.S. occupation was internalized by the American people, particularly through news articles, memoirs, and public arts projects during the Great Depression. Taking Haiti is particularly valuable for Renda’s use of personal and private materials from soldiers themselves. Few scholars have used these types of sources when addressing U.S. imperialism from a military perspective. Yet these records allow us to see the ways that gender informed both their self-perceptions and their actions vis-à-vis the local people. Renda’s use of public/popular
sources for the United States is also innovative, particularly in the chapter “Mapping Memory and Desire.” Here, she uses travel narratives and the accounts of journalists imbedded with U.S. troops to demonstrate that “white Americans grappled with the cultural and material implications of occupation” and didn’t simply replicate the types of paternalism that government officials espoused.3

In addition to Renda’s work, historians have also examined the ways that gendered rhetoric shaped U.S. engagement in colonialism during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Notable here is Kristin Hoganson’s Fighting for American Manhood.4 Hoganson contends that concerns about masculinity—both individual masculinity and the strength and vitality of the nation—provided a basis for politicians to advocate for imperialism. Masculinity included the chivalrous “saving” of a feminized Cuba and a paternalistic “civilizing” of a childlike Philippines. Hoganson also demonstrates, however, that anti-imperialists similarly marshaled manliness to their cause by emphasizing diplomatic and military restraint.

Like Hoganson, Gail Bederman’s Manliness and Civilization is also important for those working on U.S. imperialism.5 Although Bederman does not directly address gender within the military, the book provides an excellent overview of racial and gendered discourse during the 1890s and early 1900s. Manliness and Civilization has influenced many scholars of imperialism and gender by providing a glimpse into the ways that politicians, activists, and public thinkers within the United States wove race, gender, and civilization together. Chapters 3 and 5, which deal with G. Stanley Hall’s work on racial recapitulations and neurasthenia, and Theodore Roosevelt, respectively, are of particular interest. Bederman’s and Hoganson’s works are useful to historians of military/wars because they address the ways that gendered rhetoric and concepts of masculinity led to the wars of empire and expansion from a domestic perspective. The desire of politicians not to be seen as “weak” or “cowardly” on the political home front fundamentally shaped the way that the United States engaged in foreign affairs.

While Renda, Hoganson, and Bederman offer valuable assessments of gender and the military in the official U.S. colonies, there are two critical concepts that have tended to limit the field in which they are writing. The first is that imperialism only occurred in formal colonies (a legacy of the rhetoric of American exceptionalism), and the second is that military history is limited to troops in combat operations (a legacy of “old” military history). Some scholars have begun to push the boundaries of both of these fields individually, and yet there is still relatively little historiography on their intersection: a “new” imperial history that would also encompass “new” military history, particularly featuring gender as a main category of analysis. However, there are some scholars who are engaging with issues of empire, gender, and the military in new and promising ways, which is evident in less conventional time periods and geographic areas.

**Looking Beyond 1898 and the Formal Colonies**

Scholars from a variety of temporal fields have begun to question the idea that imperialism only occurred from 1898 to the 1950s. As scholars have demonstrated for earlier time periods, the same imperial processes occurred in the expansion of the United States in North America, in both the dealings with Native Americans and ideologies such as Manifest Destiny. Three studies of early relations between Native Americans and Anglo-European settlers in the northeast colonies stand out for their discussions of gender and war. The first is Jill Lepore’s The Name of War, which focuses on King Philip’s War in New England during the 1670s.6 Lepore examines the extensive writings of English combatants in order to illustrate the ways that the English constructed their identities in relation to the “savage” Native Americans. Here, gender—what it meant to be masculine or feminine in war and captivity—was one part of how Algonquin and New England
colonists defined themselves and each other in the face of a brutal war. These interactions set the

tone for U.S./Native American relations for more than two hundred years. The second work,
Ann M. Little’s Abraham in Arms, examines roughly the same period as Lepore, but places gender
squarely at the center of analysis. Little argues that gender and masculinity were foundational to
claims to self-rule. She also extends her argument to later relations between New Englanders and
Canadians, where New Englanders used the same types of gendered rhetoric to attempt to
discredit Canadians from controlling U.S./Canadian borderlands. Both of these works demon-
strate that gender played an important role in the ways that settlers and Native Americans
constructed categories of civilized and savage in the very early wars of U.S. empire and expansion.
R. Todd Romero offers a slightly different perspective from Lepore and Little in Making War and
Minting Christians. Romero focuses specifically on masculinity and warfare as the backbone of
both native and English men’s identities. Native American masculinity was formed in part by
men’s physical prowess—sports, hunting, warfare, and healing. For the Puritans, masculinity was
less physical and a more spiritual sense of godliness. Like Lepore and Little, Romero addresses
King Philip’s War, but he emphasizes material culture, such as when Indian men adorned the
handles of their weapons with sacred beads. This perspective adds another “archive” to the study
of the military and gender, and it allows us to consider how dress, adornment, and décor factored
into masculinity and war.

In considering the early colonial period, it is also helpful for scholars to look at the Spanish
influence in what would become the U.S. Southwest. Just as the colonial powers came from
different cultures and assumptions about gender, so too did the native peoples. Richard C. Trexler’s
Sex and Conquest focuses on Spanish military and colonial officials and Native Americans, and
notions of sex and gender. He examines notions of masculinity, particularly the complex con-
struction of masculinity as Spanish conquerors encountered native peoples, especially those groups
whose gender norms incorporated “two-spirit” people (whom the Spanish saw as male transvestites
or the pejorative “berdache”). Within this context, gender played a central role in the military
conquest of native peoples, as conquistadores imposed patriarchy and property rights over women,
used sexual behavior to dominate younger men, and cast native men as weak and effeminate.
Trexler’s work demonstrates that historians must also take into account different notions of gender
in the communities with which the military and settlers came into contact.

The intersections of war, gender, and empire were also central to the U.S. conflicts with
Native Americans and westward expansion in the early- and mid-1800s, although there is not
much scholarship that combines these three areas of focus (most scholars fall into only one of the
three). Of interest here are works on the ways that U.S. conquest shaped Native American
gender relations, particularly the status of women as seen in Theda Perdue’s Cherokee Women.
Perdue finds that while U.S. settlers attempted to assert patriarchy, Cherokee women retained
their power, including key wartime roles such as raising men to be warriors and serving as “war
women” who had power over the fates of captives. Perdue’s work therefore reminds us that while
contact and war did bring cultural changes, U.S. power was not hegemonic, and many gender
practices remained the same.

It is also important to remember that there were a variety of gender roles and sexual
orientations on the frontier. Susan Lee Johnson’s Roaring Camp illustrates that gender and
nationality intersected in the homosocial environment of the Gold Rush, as groups of men
from different nations took on what had been traditionally defined as women’s roles. For
example, the Anglo-American men stereotyped French men as being good cooks—a feminine,
although valued, skill set. While the military had more structured allocation of tasks, a similar
gendered analysis could yield very interesting results in the role of class and racial hierarchies
within the category of masculinity.
In addition to the ways that notions of masculinity helped shape U.S. involvement in the War of 1898, masculinity also shaped the idea of Manifest Destiny, as Amy S. Greenberg illustrates in *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*. Greenberg examines the ways that Manifest Destiny influenced masculinity and the notion that land and the peoples on that land should be violently subdued in the mid-1800s. She distinguishes between two types of masculinity during this period: restrained manhood and martial manhood. Restrained men were more paternalistic and "grounded their identities in their families, in the evangelical practice of their Protestant faith, and in success in the business world." They were temperate and generally did not participate in the blood sport culture of the time. In contrast, martial men tended to take pride in heavy drinking and their prowess in blood sports. They "believed that the masculine qualities of strength, aggression, and even violence, better defined a true man than did the firm and upright manliness of restrained men."  

Greenberg traces these two concepts and the ways that men and women dealt with gender and national identity (through Manifest Destiny) in their military dealings with people in Latin America and the Pacific.

One of the valuable contributions of Greenberg’s book is that she explicitly deals with filibusters—groups of private U.S. citizens and mercenaries who invaded or formed units of troops that were parts of military exercises in other nations (these tended to have the support of the U.S. public, even if formal support from the U.S. government was not forthcoming). There were a significant number of these types of military exercises in the antebellum period. For example, William Blount, Governor of Tennessee, and former Vice President Aaron Burr were both accused of attempting to mount military expeditions to take land for themselves in the late 1700s and early 1800s. There were also filibuster exercises to Ontario in the 1830s, Nicaragua in the 1850s (where U.S. Southerner William Walker would briefly serve as President), Cuba in the 1840s and 50s, and Sonora and Baja in the 1850s. One could also consider the U.S. invasion of Florida in the early 1810s and the revolution in Texas in the 1840s to be filibuster exercises, as were the military campaigns into Mexico (Tamaulipas and Coahuila) in the 1850s. Greenberg’s work is the most nuanced of examinations of the filibusters’ notion of gender, in which aggressive white masculinity justified aggressive U.S. geographic expansion, although Robert E. May’s *Manifest Destiny’s Underworld*, Charles H. Brown’s *Agents of Manifest Destiny*, and Frank L. Owsley and Gene A. Smith’s *Filibusters and Expansionists* are also good resources for more information.

Nicaragua, and in particular William Walker’s military exercises there, have been the subject of several scholarly works, although Michael Gobat has the most sustained gender analysis of the impact of U.S. involvement in Nicaragua in his book *Confronting the American Dream*. Gobat examines how the United States intervened in Nicaragua, and how Nicaraguans reacted to this intervention, including the Sandino Rebellion of 1927–1933. Most notably, Gobat examines the ways that Nicaraguans (particularly elites) dealt with the tensions between wanting prosperity and development like the United States while eschewing North American cultural imports, such as the “modern” woman. While Gobat does examine some aspects of gender from both the U.S. and Nicaraguan perspectives, his focus is generally upon class differences. Still, his analysis should be useful for examining the love-hate relationship that many people in Nicaragua had with the United States (particularly in terms of military intervention) during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Given the U.S. “soft power” imperialism of the twentieth century, and the military occupation of Germany and Japan after World War II, we must also consider gender and U.S. imperialism after the 1930s. In addition to the works discussed above, we need to therefore add the existent scholarship on the post-war occupation of Japan and Germany. For Japan, Yashuhiro Okada examines the race and gender relations of African–American soldiers with the Japanese at Camp Gifu, Naoko Shibusawa looks at the ways that U.S. occupiers recast Japanese as an
American responsibility instead of an enemy, and Mire Koikari discusses the spread of feminism under the U.S. occupation.16 For post-war Germany, Maria Höhn’s *GIs and Fräuleins* and Petra Goedde’s *GIs and Germans* examine the interactions between U.S. soldiers and Germans.17 Both works place gender centrally in their analysis. For example, in *GIs and Germans*, Goedde argues that as U.S. soldiers formed relationships with German women and feminized the defeated Germany, Americans transformed the way they saw Germans, from enemies to victims of the Nazi regime.

Gender relations between U.S. military officials and enlisted men and local women continued during the Cold War, as Katharine H. S. Moon illustrates in her study of the U.S. occupation of South Korea. In *Sex Among Allies*, Moon argues that U.S. and South Korean military and governmental leaders sought to use prostitutes as “political ambassadors.”18 Moon draws on the work of Cynthia Enloe, who argues in several works that gender, sex, and the family were central to the U.S. military and government.19 Of particular note is *Globalization and Militarism*, in which Enloe questions how different ideas of femininity and masculinity have been used by the United States to justify military intervention to “protect” “vulnerable” populations abroad.

In addition to the works above, Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore’s *Close Encounters of Empire* is particularly useful for those beginning to work on U.S. activities in an imperial context. The essays within the anthology provide an example of “new” imperial history, in which the U.S. role in foreign relations was neither hegemonic nor uncontested. This is an important consideration for those studying U.S. military history, in which the U.S. military was often far technologically superior to its targets. The essays in the first and third parts provide a good introduction to the theoretical concerns of empire, particularly Emily S. Rosenberg’s “Turning to Culture.”

Several other anthologies will be helpful for those beginning to wade into imperialism as a subfield, even though many of the essays address gender or the military, but not both.20 Scholars will find the essays in “Part 7: US Military” in *Colonial Crucible* particularly useful because they illustrate the connections between the United States and other countries as military personnel traveled to fight, and the myriad problems of occupation (including colonized peoples gaining citizenship through service, and the treatment of subaltern military personnel). These types of issues are foundational to understanding imperial contexts and will help scholars understand some of the gendered dynamics of colonial encounters.

### Looking Beyond Combat

The second way that scholarship has been limited is that historians tend to use a narrow definition of the military, which only encompasses troops who were actively engaged in combat or its direct support. This is reflective of a persistent tension within the field of military history itself. For example, in his 2007 overview of military historiography, Mark Moyar defends the productivity and relevance of work within “the traditional realm of military history.” In the process, he excludes any works that he sees as not having “a connection to armed force,” which he argues “should be characterized solely as cultural or social history, for nothing of substance differentiates them from other works of cultural or social history.”21 However, despite his narrow definition of military history, there are historians who have demonstrated that governmental and military personnel played an important role in non-combat operations and were involved in a variety of functions that were key parts of extending U.S. influence and control.

Building from Renda’s work on U.S. Marines in Haiti, one way that military personnel aided in the expansion of U.S. control was through their role in setting up local police forces and even governments. For example, the United States established constabularies based on the U.S. model
in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In Nicaragua, the U.S. military not only formed the basis of the constabulary, but military officials also served as election officials. Gobat argues that these election boards were specifically geared to try to decrease the power of the caudillos (the landowners). He argues that the caudillos presented themselves as paternal figures and enjoyed a type of patronage relationship to the local population, particularly the poor. To U.S. officials, there was very little possibility that the caudillismo system could be democratic, and U.S. administrators sought to minimize caudillo influence by regulating the electoral process. In the process, the military personnel appear to have placed themselves as the interveners and protectors of the poor.22

Another way that military officials were involved in wars of empire and expansion is clear from the strong links between the military and medicine, particularly for the eradication of disease and the study of tropical medicine. As Mariola Espinosa illustrates in Epidemic Invasions, the U.S. government used concerns over the spread of yellow fever to the southern United States in order to invade Cuba in 1898 (as part of the Spanish-American War) and again in 1902. Here, the U.S. occupation government concentrated not only on sanitation efforts, but also on attempting to understand the causes and transmission of yellow fever. Public health and sanitation systems were included in the Platt Amendment, passed in 1903, which stipulated the conditions for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Cuba. Among these was the demand “that Cubans maintain the public health measures instituted by the U.S. occupation government and raised the threat of U.S. intervention if Cuban sanitary conditions declined.”23 Although Espinosa does not specifically label it as such, this was a paternalist stance in which U.S. officials saw intervention as an unqualified benefit for local people.

While Espinosa’s work is valuable in terms of the military and imperialism, she does not explicitly deal with gender in the way that Warwick Anderson does in Colonial Pathologies.24 Here, Anderson examines the role of male colonial health officials in classifying and pathologizing Filipino bodies, and the fragility of the colonial officials themselves. He illustrates that colonial public health was a key part of the military, and that, with germ theory, colonial health officials shifted their emphasis from the environmental causes of disease (miasmas) to person-to-person transmission, particularly during cholera outbreaks. Here, colonial officials saw the Filipino body as needing to be contained and policed, so that it did not spread disease to white bodies. In this framework, the white body itself could be susceptible to contagion. As Anderson explains, U.S. officials also viewed their own body as potentially fragile in the tropical climate, and “The White Man’s Psychic Burden” often meant that officials had to have periods of rest in Baguio (a hill station) to recuperate.25 As this analysis illustrates, in a colonial context, U.S. officials constructed the male body (themselves) to be susceptible to the diseases of “civilization” such as neurasthenia, instead of the contagious diseases of “barbarism” and thus strengthened their own claims to rule.

Limiting the focus to just military personnel involved in active combat also obscures their connections to the domestic sphere. This is important not only for understanding the ways that male soldiers constructed gender roles, but also the role of domesticity to “normalizing” military campaigns abroad. For example, in Tender Violence, Laura Wexler examines the use of photography to capture domestic images of U.S. imperialism. Wexler focuses on six “New Women” photographers, including (most importantly for our purposes) Frances Benjamin Johnson’s photos of sailors from Admiral George Dewey’s ship, Olympia, in 1899.26 The photographs on the Olympia show the military at rest, and as Wexler states, “not only … represent it as the seat of an unassailable power, but … represent that unassailable power as a home.”27 This comfort with their own power and masculinity thus buttressed the idea within the U.S. public that U.S. military power over other peoples was natural and inevitable.
U.S. military and colonial official wives were also key parts of the imperial process. As Vincente Rafael demonstrates in *White Love*, U.S. middle-class white women in the Philippines were critical to creating “colonial domesticity in the tropics … meant to protect white men from the dangers of racial corruption symbolized by the native concubine.” As Anderson explains, gender was also a factor in cleanliness as policed by U.S. colonial official wives, who attempted to regulate, control, and contain the Filipinos—mostly male servant men—who entered their homes. Official wives could also serve as a type of domestic missionary for the local people, as Anne Perez Hattori demonstrates in her analysis of the Susana Hospital for Chamorro Women in Guam, which was founded after a fundraiser by navy officer’s wives (although as Hattori argues, native women also preserved some of their own traditions). As these examples illustrate, white colonial women who were connected to U.S. military and governmental officials played an important role in U.S. imperialism.

Interestingly, there has been relatively little scholarship by historians on female nurses in imperial military contexts, despite female nurses being a part of the military in 1898. These works, such as Catherine Cenzia Choy’s *Empire of Care* and Sujani K. Reddy’s *Nursing and Empire*, reveal the transnational links between disparate areas of the world, as well as the connections between “health,” gendered work roles, and imperialism. However, it would be interesting to examine the role that gender played in the military healthcare structure, where it appears to have paralleled the larger professionalization of medicine in which nursing became feminized in the late 1800s. For example, although professional nursing was in its infancy in the late nineteenth century, as Richard J. Westphal points out in his brief sketch “Remember the Maine! Remember the Men!,” nursing was already being gendered as a female occupation within the military. There were male nurses in the Navy in the War of 1898, but ten years later, they were excluded by law; only women could be “nurses” until 1965. Men could still be hospital corpsmen, however.

The other branches of the military had similar timing; although men could be nurses in the reserves beginning in 1955, it wasn’t until 1966 that they could join the regular Army.

One aspect of U.S. imperialism and the military that has been explored in a relatively substantial way is the connection between military occupation and religion (although much of this scholarship has not dealt explicitly with gender). For example, in the period of U.S. expansion in continental North America, both Lepore and Romero discuss the ways that British colonists used religion to distinguish themselves from the Native Americans. This had implicit gender components, as godly men and women had distinct roles and places within the New England Protestant hierarchy. Violating those roles eroded distinctions between English and Indian, necessitating the colonists’ policing of gender boundaries for both groups. Susan K. Harris addresses religion in the U.S. occupation of the Philippines in *God’s Arbiter*. Harris argues that “most speakers in the debates [over aspects of imperialism], no matter what position they defended, believed that the United States was a nation of white Protestants under a special mandate from God to represent freedom and fair dealing to the rest of the world.” Important here was that U.S. imperialists did not consider Catholics to be Christian, and as Gobat also argues, imperialists in Catholic countries talked about conversion as much as they did in non-Christian countries. Harris’s analysis, along with several others, adds a religious dimension to the paternalist qualities of imperialism, in which U.S. officials saw colonized peoples as inferior.

Christianity was also an important aspect of how U.S. military officials thought about themselves. As Clifford Putney has asserted in *Muscular Christianity*, U.S. leaders (both civil and military) were concerned about the perceived decline (and deleterious effects of civilization) of the white male body and advocated a commitment to health and manliness. While Putney has demonstrated that “muscular Christianity” was important within a domestic U.S. context, the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and Young Women’s Christian Association
YWCA have not been studied within an imperial setting (although there are several excellent works on these groups in World War I). The YMCA in particular expanded with the military into colonies, as military officials brought the organization to help provide “constructive” entertainment for troops. For example, soldiers in Manila founded the first YMCA in the Philippines in 1898, as a site for recreation and sports programs for enlisted men.

Traditionally focused scholarship has also tended to ignore are the creation of infrastructure in counterinsurgency efforts and the use of technology. Here, technological experts were often men, and their status as scientific experts formed part of their identity as U.S. men. For example, Eric Paul Roorda examines the use of airplanes by the U.S. military during the Trujillo Regime (1930–1961) in the Dominican Republic in “The Cult of the Airplane among U.S. Military Men and Dominicans during the U.S. Occupation and the Trujillo Regime.” Roorda does touch upon the masculinity of the pilots as daredevils and masters of technological machines and nature, but he does not fully explore the ways that the U.S. or Dominican pilots constructed their own masculinity.

Other scholars of technology and the military have not examined gender as fully. Steven C. Topik studies the use of what could be called military theatrics by U.S. merchant Charles Flint, who used “a twelve-ship flotilla to defend the Brazilian government of Marshal Floriano Peixoto, which was under severe attack from a naval revolt and civil war in 1893 and 1894.” Michal Adas also examines the confluence of technology and military intervention in Dominance by Design, which looks at the uses of technology in the Vietnam War and the Gulf Wars. Both of these are worth reading for the general context of the United States’ use of technology in foreign relations, and they could spark ideas for further studies that incorporate gender, particularly in examining the U.S. (male) military technological expert.

Further Directions for Research

As the above demonstrate, the field of military history in the context of expansion and imperialism contains excellent scholarship. However, much of the field is largely untapped, particularly in the analysis of gender and the military. While scholars of U.S. imperialism have engaged with ideologies and discourses of gender, they have not predominantly dealt with the military, and vice versa. This has meant that even within the subfields discussed above, there is room for new studies that explore gender and the military.

The scope of this field becomes evident when we look at the range of places and times that the U.S. military was involved overseas. For example, the United States had “protectorates” in the following countries and time periods: Cuba, 1898–1934; Haiti, 1915–1934; Dominican Republic, 1903–1938; Panama, 1903–1938; Nicaragua, 1910–1933; Japan, 1945–1952; and Germany, 1945–1955. In addition to these “protectorates,” the U.S. military has been involved in other areas of the world. One example is the “Polar Bear Expedition” force, which David E. Greenstein discusses in “Between Two Worlds: Americans and Soviets After the Bolshevik Revolution.” This recent dissertation examines how U.S. troops remained in Bolshevik Russia after the end of World War I, trying to influence foreign policy from within the new Soviet federation using consumerism, occupation, and humanitarian aid. The U.S. military was also instrumental in the expansion of U.S. trade. The most obvious example is Commodore Perry’s “opening” of Japan in 1853. However, practically from the founding of the United States, the military has been protecting trade in engagements that have tended to be ignored by scholars of imperialism, gender, or the military. A short list includes: the Barbary Wars and other actions against pirates in the early 1800s; U.S. military support of U.S. claims in the Northwest (Oregon and Washington) in the 1810s; military actions in the Pacific and Asia (Sumatra, Indonesia; Fiji;
China; and Japan) in the 1840s–1860s, including the Opium Wars; and the presence of U.S. forces in Siberia, particularly Vladivostok after World War I. Military officials and commercial agents often worked closely together for pragmatic reasons—merchants knew the local cultural and political contexts, which could be invaluable for military maneuvers. In addition to the formally U.S.-sanctioned military exercise, there were also the filibuster exercises discussed previously. William Walker’s exploits in Central America have been the most well examined of these, but the rest of them have been largely neglected. Like Greenberg’s analysis of the filibusters, the study of other geographic areas and time periods may also yield interesting results in terms of how U.S. military (and quasi-military) officials constructed gender vis-à-vis the local people.

Because imperialism can easily allow for comparative or multi-sited scholarship, there are several larger questions that can potentially lead to fruitful study of gender and the U.S. military. First is the change in the roles of different service branches overseas. Mary Renda points out that the Navy protected trade in the early and mid-1800s, but with the outbreak of war in 1898 and the acquisition of formal colonies by the United States, the Army and Marines were more involved (the Army in Panama and the Marines in Nicaragua, Mexico, Haiti, and Dominican Republic) in projecting American power abroad. We might therefore ask, how did they construct their roles differently vis-à-vis the different missions and different locations? These are Latin American/Caribbean countries, but were there differences in the ways that the military branch interacted with local gender norms? When U.S. male military personnel encountered or fought female insurgents/revolutionaries, what gendered assumptions did they bring to the interactions? Conversely, what assumptions did the women bring? For example, Gobat has an intriguing photo of “[f]emale combatants in the civil war of 1926–7” that he does not discuss. Who were these women? Were there others in other conflicts and geographic areas? How did the U.S. military men construct their masculinity vis-à-vis these local women fighters? This also brings up questions of gender and paternalism in places where the United States was establishing new regimes or protectorates. What were the gendered constructions of citizenship? How did U.S. military men see themselves and the people with whom they were interacting? What did it mean to be an “enforcer” or “enabler” of U.S. gender norms in this context, and what gender norms did they enforce/enable? How did women in or attached to the U.S. military—particularly wives and nurses—construct their own gender roles in these situations, and what goals did they aspire to?

Additionally, we might ask how U.S. military personnel’s conceptions of gender compared with that of other nations. Paul Kramer addresses part of this for colonial officials in his article “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons,” but he does not examine the military specifically. Donna Amoroso also investigates this in “Inheriting the ‘Moro Problem’: Muslim Authority and Colonial Rule in British Malaya and the Philippines.” She explores the ways that the British and U.S. imperial officials and military addressed authority vis-à-vis the local populations. In the case of the Philippines, Army officers drew upon their knowledge and experience fighting Native Americans as they encountered the Muslim Moro people. In these instances, U.S. military officials labeled the native peoples as “wild” and therefore subject to U.S. control and domination (which would presumably be by “civilized” Christian white men). One of the keys to getting at gender within these contexts is to look more at the individual experiences of enlisted men, to see how they internalized gender norms, as Mary Renda did in her study of Marines in Haiti. As has been the case for many of the scholars above, historians can also look at sources that are perhaps more the domain of cultural and social historians than operational military historians, such as command directives and other pieces of cultural production like recruitment materials and training films. María del Carmen Suescun Pozas’s article, “From Reading to Seeing: Doing
and Undoing Imperialism in the Visual Arts,” serves a useful model for how to look at non-textual sources.46

Finally, scholars can also look at the work that has been done in terms of gender, war, and imperialism for other empires. The most common (and perhaps most logical) point of comparison is with the British Empire, although as some of the articles in The American Colonial State in the Philippines demonstrate, there are also fruitful comparisons with Japan and China. Here, scholars might look to works such as Verity G. McInnis’s “Indirect Agents of Empires,” which compares the military wives, and the homes that they made, of British India and the U.S. West, and argues that the home was at the center of imperial efforts.47 Also of interest is Robert McLain’s Gender and Violence in British India and Heather Streets’s Martial Races.48 McLain addresses the role of masculinity in both the British and Indian troops, particularly in the context of Indian participation in World War I and rising nationalist movements which questioned the British characterization of native men as effeminate. Streets’s Martial Races also addresses masculinity and war among colonized people. These types of comparisons illustrate that not only was the United States far from exceptional in the ways that it interacted with colonized people, but also that U.S. officials were actively learning from other imperial administrations.

As the above works illustrate, there is a lot of really good work to be found on the issue of gender, the military, and U.S. wars of empire and expansion. However, scholars must expand their view beyond narrow concepts of the military and U.S. imperialism, in which the United States was only involved in the Philippines and Puerto Rico starting from the late nineteenth century. If we stay with this limited perspective, we are locked into a very narrow field. However, when we look beyond the wars of 1898, and the Philippines and Puerto Rico, we see exciting scholarship that is bringing interesting methodological tools and diverse perspectives to examine the issue of gender and the military. With these, we can begin to question the ways that the military impacted (and was impacted by contact with) notions of gender among a diverse range of peoples.

Notes

1 For diplomatic history, see the article series in the March 2009 issue (95, no. 4) of The Journal of American History, particularly Thomas W. Zeiler, “The Diplomatic History Bandwagon: A State of the Field.” As Kristin Hoganson points out in her reply to Zeiler, however, scholars who incorporate this “global” focus “have pushed the field of U.S. foreign relations history in new directions and not without resistance.” For military history, see Mark Moyar, “The Current State of Military History,” The Historical Journal 50, no. 1 (March 2007): 225–40.


Wars of Empire and Expansion

10 See also Chapter 5, “‘Pacified by Paternal Solitude’: Indian Wars as an Expansionist Movement” in Frank L. Owsley, Jr. and Gene A. Smith, Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800–1821 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004).
22 Gobat, Confronting the American Dream, Chapter 8.
24 Warwick Anderson, Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) primarily addresses white male colonial officials and their connection to the military. For a discussion on the white women who were the wives of colonial officials (although civilian rather than military), see Vincente Rafael, White Love and Other Events (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).
25 Anderson, Colonial Pathologies, Chapter 5.


36 During World War I, the YMCA and Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) essentially served as a United States overseas organization supporting male soldiers, female telephone operators, and nurses while providing hostel houses at cemeteries abroad. See Nancy K. Bristow, *War and Nurses While Providing Hostess Houses at Cemeteries Abroad. See Nancy K. Bristow, *Moral: Social Engineering during the Great War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).


40 David E. Greenstein, “Between Two Worlds: Americans and Soviets After the Bolshevik Revolution” (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2015).


42 Renda, Taking Haiti, 97.

43 Gobat, Confronting the American Dream, 142.


