



Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars

Kristin L. Hoganson

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This groundbreaking book blends international relations and gender history to provide a new understanding of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American wars. Kristin L. Hoganson shows how gendered ideas about citizenship and political leadership influenced jingoist political leaders' desire to wage these conflicts, and she traces how they manipulated ideas about gender to embroil the nation in war.

She argues that racial beliefs were only part of the cultural framework that undergirded U.S. martial policies at the turn of the century. Gender beliefs, also affected the rise and fall of the nation's imperialist impulse. Drawing on an extensive range of sources, including congressional debates, campaign speeches, political tracts, newspapers, magazines, political cartoons, and the papers of politicians, soldiers, suffragists, and other political activists, Hoganson discusses how concerns about manhood affected debates over war and empire. She demonstrates that jingoist political leaders, distressed by the passing of the Civil War generation and by women's incursions into electoral politics, embraced war as an opportunity to promote a political vision in which soldiers were venerated as model citizens and women remained on the fringes of political life. These gender concerns not only played an important role in the Spanish-American and Philippine-American wars, they have echoes in later time periods, says the author, and recognizing their significance has powerful ramifications for the way we view international relations. Yale Historical Publications

Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars Details

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Eleanore says

This original and interesting interpretation of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars through the lens of gender is refreshingly modest in its claims ("... adding gender to the existing framework buttresses a variety of current explanations and offers some thematic unity for the whole melange. It does not, however, fundamentally change our understanding of the conflicts..."). Kristin Hoganson thus unusually liberates herself from the scholars' first book peril - that of stretching methodological or theoretical claims far beyond the bounds of causal inference and readers' credulity - and is free to focus on presenting her research in an insightful, entertaining and well-organized fashion. Structured around the US domestic policy debates surrounding both wars, this book is well-written and readable. And while the approach and conclusions of her gender analysis are consistently repeated and reinforced throughout the chapters, the narrative is crucially saved from monotony by the ample provision of contemporaneous political cartoons embedded with brief and succinct analysis. If one is searching for a solid example of gender interpretations of international relations or warfare, this book provides an excellent benchmark.

Ty Hendricks says

By far one of my favorite books. Hoganson's examination of the causes of Spanish-American War and gender will force historians to reconsider culture in leading to the Spanish-American War. Hoganson employs numerous examples to reinforce her thesis. Although her argument is very straightforward she weaves narrative into her evidence to capture the attention of the reader.

I would recommend this book to any student seeking to understand how culture can effect world events.

stephanie says

surprisingly good for a book i thought i would loathe from the thesis. however, hoaganson is so thorough in her argument, it's very hard to poke holes. my one complaint is that i don't think she really acknowledges that crises of masculinity happened many times during war, and influenced politics - even taking europe out of it (which, hello, WWI and then the interwar years?) - and maybe the crisis happened earlier in the US than Europe because the US didn't have colonies in the same way - but you can't say that masculinity/lack thereof wasn't part of JFK's presidency, or vietnam.

also, she does an excellent job of putting her argument into context - so many americans overlook the spanish-american and filipino american wars - i mean, i'd bet you could survey the public and the majority would say there was no such thing as the filipino-american war, and if they DID remember the spanish-american, it would be all about the Maine and TR.

so while i think she argues her point very clearly, and extremely well (it's been so long since i've read such

good cultural history!), i think she could have taken it a step further. then again, maybe she's planning a sequel.

Amanda Johnson says

Fantastic use of gender studies. I highly recommend it for the political cartoons alone.

Hotavio says

Hoganson, Kristin L. Fighting for American Manhood. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998.

Dyer, Thomas G. Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1980.

The United States realized a big shift in domestic and foreign policy the turn of the 20th century. Thirty years after the Civil War, domestic issues such as labor, women's suffrage, the post Reconstruction role of African Americans in the country, and the US currency debate occupied headlines. With impressive economic growth, US citizens experienced the urge to reassert themselves on the global scene. The fight for Cuban independence in 1895 provided the United States the opportunity to become a global force militarily. The failure of the United States and the Spanish to obtain a peaceful solution to Cuba altered the trajectory of US history and refashioned the American as an empire with territorial possessions near and far and a new canon of war heroes like Theodore Roosevelt. Many historians and text books glamorize the Spanish-American War, the resulting empire, and Theodore Roosevelt's ascendency to president, but few stop to ponder the nature of these phenomena. In Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender-Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Phillipine American Wars and Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race, scholars Kristin L. Hoganson and Thomas G. Dyer revisit the cause and effect of the Spanish American War and the resulting Phillipine-American War and one of its major heroes Roosevelt respectively. They aim not to retell the events of the war or rehash Roosevelt's biography, but desire to shed new light on the subjects through the specialized lenses of gender and race. While the two books have fundamental differences, they are linked together through their specialized take on a common historical subject. They also feature common themes such as the existence of unique political convictions which contribute to their respective subjects, the use of aggression as an instrument of foreign policy, and the American crisis of degeneracy.

With many ways to revisit the happenings of the era, Hoganson and Dyer choose to look through the lenses of gender and race. An Associate Professor of History at University of Illinois Champaign Urban, Hoganson's Fighting for American Manhood encapsulates her interests of gender (particularly masculinity studies) and imperialism. In her book, Hoganson lays out the domestic environment during the Cuban fight for independence. Particularly interested in American culture at the turn of the century, she uses gender as "building blocks" to understand why Americans took up the Cuban cause in their independence from Spain. Hoganson argues that romanticized images of Cuba; the jingoist cries for American interest there; the public image of figures such as Theodore Roosevelt, William McKinley, and Senator George Frisbie Hoar; and the demands to establish an empire over former Spanish possessions can be seen through a gendered perspective, most particularly through the American reassertion of gendered roles.

Similarly, in Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race, Dyer identifies Roosevelt as a man of his times, a

man who allows preconceptions of race to influence his actions in the office and on the battlefield. A retired Professor Emeritus of History from the University of Georgia, Dyer's prolific career indicates an interest in the history of higher education and in southern history. While Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race may seem a departure from these interests, Dyer spends a chapter outlining the "racial education" of Roosevelt from his early life through college and his pursuits of lifelong learning in the subject. Dyer does not hesitate to identify Roosevelt's southern roots via his maternal ancestry. This southern orientation provides a foundation in Roosevelt's thinking. These are themes which interest Dyer and make him an appropriate author of the topic. By recasting Roosevelt as a "racial thinker," Dyer addresses a familiar figure through unconventional means, just as Hoganson treats the topic of the Spanish American War and its imperial result. Further expanding on the theme of unique political convictions, Hoganson suggests that American preoccupation with a national masculine character drove the decision to intervene in the Cuban dilemma and take on colonies overseas. The 1897 Olney-Pausefort Treaty ensuring a 5 year period of arbitration on international disputes alarmed many Americans who perceived America as turning away from the masculine qualities associated with war and aggression. A campaign against arbitration, a supposed feminine idea, lumped together with a perceived feminine invasion in the political realm via the suffrage movement and women running for public office, caused many Americans to demand a return to masculine values associated with the Civil War.

Similarly, Dyer explains that Roosevelt's fascination with race greatly factored into his policies. While Roosevelt's racial education encompassed ideas of Anglo-Saxon superiority, he began to become interested in the development of social sciences. Neo-Lamarckism, the "inheritance of acquired characteristics" which explained "the evolution of human races and societies" and stressed the "power of environment over heredity," factored into many of Roosevelt's decisions in office. While Roosevelt believed in the superiority of whites, he did think that through an evolutionary process, blacks could slowly gravitate towards a state of equality. He felt that some blacks proved farther along than others and in an attempt to exemplify blacks closest to parity with whites, he gave a few higher public visibility. Examples of this in Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race include Minnie M. Cox's appointment as postmaster at the Indianola, Mississippi post office, William Crum's appointment as head of the customs house in Charleston, South Carolina, and Booker T. Washington's White House invitation. While many would applaud these attempts to include African Americans, Dyer adds that they may have been shallow attempts at endearing himself to blacks, that presidential appointment of blacks went down from 1901-1909, and that gestures towards blacks were relative to the promotion of whites.

The most obvious unifying element in the books is Roosevelt. Roosevelt's importance stems from his virility in masculinity, especially as it concerns aggression. Hoganson notes that during the war in Cuba, Roosevelt, backed by America's masculinized foreign policy embarked on a high profile military campaign intending to seek higher office upon returning to public service. In Dyer's book, aggressive policy always fascinated Roosevelt. Dyer states that Roosevelt's The Naval War of 1812, Thomas Hart Benton, and The Winning of the West recast American history as a romantic and aggressive campaign in which an "American race" fulfilled its destiny to claim land from inferior people. Both Hoganson and Dyer books highlight aggression as a productive means of serving American interests in the era.

Fears of American degeneration are a final theme common to both books. The trepidation of degenerating into a feminine nation: one where men only knew how to work white collar jobs and where women controlled politics sparked interest in the manly endeavors of going to war with Spain and colonizing the Philippines. According to Senator Jonathan Ross, "Stagnation is decay and ultimate death." Due to the success of the Spanish-American War, Americans thought that a prolonged state of masculinized dominance, the occupation of the Philippines would further advance the United States and avoid the state of deterioration it experienced after the Civil War. Degeneration obsessed Roosevelt, as Dyer indicates. In his chapter on "race suicide," Dyer argues that after seeing the American census of 1890, Roosevelt became worried that white America would be overcome by the higher reproductive capacities of inferior people, thus leading to the degeneration of America. Roosevelt advocated traditional men's and women's roles in the domestic

sphere, suggesting that Americans perform their national duty by rearing as many Americans as possible. "When quantity falls, quality falls." Roosevelt expected immigrants to Americanize and undesirable characteristics related to inferior races could either be bred out through miscegenation or be rendered extinct, such as what happened with native peoples.

While Fighting for American Manhood and Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race cover different topics, they feature common elements such as era, specialized historical treatment, political convictions through these specialized views, aggression, and the fear of American degeneracy. With these concerns in mind, the authors provide a cogent reassessment on the topics of the Spanish American War, colonialism, and Theodore Roosevelt. Hoganson's book provides a cultural and gendered approach, featuring periodicals and political cartoons from the time period, while Dyer's book is more of an intellectual history, utilizing Roosevelt's books and personal papers as primary evidence of his thought. Either way, both books compliment the historiography of the timeframe well and cast new light on political and popular thinking of the turn of the century.

Zach says

Interesting argument that Spanish-American was based off of gendered notions of manhood. Great use of political cartoons from the era.

Andrew 'Smitty' Smith says

I'm not sure that Hoganson's thesis stands up completely, but this is a compelling look at the history of American imperial thought, and the motivations for it. It is also a fantastically well done approach at getting 'gender' to be more than women in the field of history.

Starbubbles says

An extremely interesting look at gender and in the Post-Civil War Era and its role in culture, war, and politics.

Tom Darrow says

I read this book for a class on US Empire studies and I both enjoyed it and learned a bit from it. It also wasn't that tedious of a read, like some other works in this genre are.

Pros -

- She views these two wars through the perspective of gender, which, at the point of its publication, was largely ignored. She effectively uses concepts of manhood, honor and jingoism to create the glue which sticks other more extensively researched topics, like race, economics and politics, together.
- The book is very well researched and noted. Over 60 pages of citations, with a solid mix of primary and secondary.

Cons -

- She largely ignores political and economic arguments (which she admits in several places), so if you're looking for a well rounded history of the Span-Am War, this isn't it.

Bruce says

A thought provoking look at the reasons for getting involved in 'police actions' overseas (even if it is only 90 miles from our shores.) The basic premise is the idea of a person's place based on sex was integral to the debate on going to war with Spain and continuing the war in the Philippines by changing the opponent. One must keep in mind the background that women were arguing for suffrage at the time and men did not want them involved in the sordid world of politics, i.e. their place was in the domestic sphere. Each side in the debate over war used gender descriptions to portray the other as unmanly and therefore undeserving of leading the country. War was thought to be a rite of passage into manhood. One had to be tough and forceful to protect one's honor and to protect that of women. However, as the Philippine war dragged on things changed and stories came back of the maltreatment of Filipinas by Americans attitudes began to change.

Jessica says

Hoganson explores many of the same topics that Gail Bederman does in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, but not as well. Bederman presents a much more interesting and solid analysis. However, Hoganson's study was still fairly enjoyable.

Kent says

A fabulous work on how gender helps explain historical events, even those that appear in a traditional/masculine/public arena. One of the best works on how to do gender history I've read and also teaches a lot about the broader cultural outlook of the nation at the turn of the twentieth century.

Brent says

an interesting perspective on little discussed military history. on the redundant side, but engaging enough. First book down for a class on Rooseveltian history

Jerome says

:The point was a bit belabored but interesting if a person is interested in American history and our militaristic society.

Robert O Mahony says

I'm no non-fiction reader but I had to review something for my American History class so I chose this. I actually enjoyed it! The language was easy to understand and focusing on gender roles (particularly roles dictated to men) in order to explain history is something I haven't really encountered before (I feel like it's pretty rare to focus on male roles?) so it was really refreshing and different. At times it was a tad repetitive, but the sheer volume of evidence Hoganson includes made this absolutely convincing. This Vine pretty much sums up the book: <https://vine.co/v/O6vQL6U3VwI>
