and bureaucratic cultures incorporated the Victorian emphasis on sobriety into new professional codes of manliness, they also encouraged a style of manhood (one viewed with suspicion by Victorians) that emphasized external impressions over inner character. Victorian definitions of manliness focusing on the outward representation of a true and unchanging inner self lost influence with the twentieth-century shift to the notion of a self that was grounded in interpersonal relations and that emphasized role playing.

Bibliography

Halttunen, Karen. *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830–1870.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982.

Kasson, John F. *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1990.

Kimmel, Michael. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History.* New York: Free Press, 1996.

Lystra, Karen. *Searching The Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Rosenberg, Charles E. "Sexuality, Class, and Role in 19th-Century America." *American Quarterly* 25 (May 1973): 131–153.

Yacovone, Donald. "'Surpassing the Love of Women': Victorian Manhood and the Language of Fraternal Love." In *A Shared Experience: Men, Women, and The History of Gender,* edited by Laura McCall and Donald Yacovone. New York: New York University Press, 1998.

Further Reading

Coontz, Stephanie. *The Social Origins of Private Life: A History of American Families, 1600–1900.* New York: Verso, 1988.

Freedman, Estelle B., and John D'Emilio. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America.* New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

Haller, John S., and Robin M. Haller. *The Physician and Sexuality in Victorian America.* New York: Norton, 1974.

Rotundo, E. Anthony. *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era.* New York: Basic Books, 1993.

Related Entries

Advice Literature; Body; Breadwinner Role; Capitalism; Class; Confidence Man; Douglass, Frederick; Fashion; Heterosexuality; Individualism; Industrialization; Male Friendship; Market Revolution; Marriage; Middle-Class Manhood; Race; Romanticism; Self-Control; Self-Made Man; Sentimentalism; Temperance; Urbanization; Working-Class Manhood

—*Thomas Winter*

Vietnam War

U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War (1965–73) reflected and shaped American articulations of masculinity. Because the figure of the male soldier has long been an icon of both national and masculine identity in America, the United States' intervention in Vietnam offered two opportunities. First, within a larger context of Cold War rivalry, it could establish the superiority of U.S. military power and American masculinity over an Asian people and the Communist powers (the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China) that backed them. Second, it could reinvigorate masculinity at home at a time when such social forces as a resurgent women's rights movement, an emerging gay rights movement, the counterculture, and the economic downturn of the late 1960s and early 1970s undercut notions of a stable definition of manliness. Although only a small number of American men eligible for the draft actually served in Vietnam, masculinity was at stake at many levels during and after U.S. involvement in the war. Since connecting manhood to the war made masculinity contingent upon a decisive victory in the conflict, U.S. failure to achieve that victory complicated cultural constructions of masculinity.

The application of masculine metaphors to the conflict by top-level policymakers suggested a broad cultural equation of U.S. military involvement and support for the war with a tough, virile masculinity. In National Security Council meetings, President Lyndon B. Johnson appeared to be greatly concerned to take a sufficiently masculine approach on U.S. policy in South Vietnam. On one occasion, Johnson expressed concern that he might compare less than favorably to his predecessor John F. Kennedy, who cultivated a youthful, virile image. Reflecting such concerns with a sufficiently masculine stance in Southeast Asia, President Johnson stated after the 1966 Christmas bombings of North Vietnam that he "did not just screw Ho Chi Minh" but "cut his pecker off" (Fasteau, 396). Johnson thus compared U.S. military action in Southeast Asia to domineering sexual penetration, culminating in the castration of allegedly inferior Asian males. Johnson's rhetoric, in particular, indicated the importance of masculine imagery in both domestic political life and in Cold War foreign policy.

Not all American men accepted the identification of intervention in Vietnam with American strength and masculinity. Conscientious objectors and participants in the antiwar movement, such as the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, formed in 1967, tended to identify their conscience-based resistance to what they perceived as an unjust and needless war as a marker of a more genuine manhood grounded in a commitment to responsible citizenship and social justice. Tensions between

the war's supporters and opponents revolved around differing conceptions of manhood and would remain powerful long after the war had ended.

Following America's defeat in Vietnam, returning veterans confronted new problems relating to definitions of masculinity. Disabilities sustained in combat forced many veterans to rethink the meaning of their manhood in light of their physical injuries and emotional suffering. In particular, veterans experiencing medical problems caused by Agent Orange, a defoliating substance used during the war, suffered physically and psychologically, particularly since the Veterans Administration and U.S. government denied for many years that the substance had any harmful effects on humans.

Wartime setbacks and the final U.S. defeat sparked attempts to reinvent (white) masculinity and to reassert America's "manly" national strength. In the aftermath of the war, American men and U.S. mass culture generated new articulations of male identity that integrated into male toughness new elements of sensitivity, male friendship, and—as was especially apparent in the POW/MIA (prisoners of war/missing in action) controversy—the white male victim. This definition of masculinity became fundamental to a cultural "remasculinization" of U.S. society in the 1970s and 1980s.

This remasculinization process was evident in several U.S. television programs and movies. The *Rambo* film series, for example, features Sylvester Stallone as a Vietnam veteran and hypermasculine American hero often adorned with heavy weaponry. Such 1980s television shows as *The A Team, Magnum P.I.,* and *Miami Vice* pivot on the homosocial male bonds carried from Vietnam into civilian life. In the films *Uncommon Valor* (1983) and *Garden of Stone* (1987), a group of Vietnam veterans form family-like bonds that transfer back and forth between battlefield and civilian life.

More recent films have carried the remasculinization process further, turning the Vietnam veteran from a victim to a heroic leader of others. In *Air Force One* (1997) the president, a Medal of Honor winner and Vietnam veteran, single-handedly protects his family and demonstrates American toughness by defeating a group of terrorists seeking to capture him and his plane. Meanwhile, Cabinet members on the ground, pushing the female vice president to assume presidential power, represent the specter of an effeminate government ready to abandon its soldiers (in this case, the president himself) on the front line. The president's triumph rescues American masculinity from the stigma of Vietnam and signifies that it remains capable of prevailing over international threats.

This remasculinization process has implications for racial definitions of manhood. In American popular cultural representations, the Vietnam veteran is usually white, but in reality disproportionate numbers of African-American draftees served in frontline units.

At a time when the African-American population hovered around 11 percent, black soldiers made up close to 30 percent of frontline units. Black men shared the burden and costs of the war, but cultural narratives excluding them from combat have in effect suggested that remasculinization—and thus manhood itself—is a white men's prerogative. While African Americans figure as soldiers in many Vietnam films, only *Dead Presidents* (1995) featured African-American men as its main characters.

The Vietnam War and the Vietnam veteran remain critical signifiers in ongoing discussions of men and manhood in the United States. Public controversy during the 1980s over the construction of a war memorial revolved around the issue of whether the memorial should commemorate heroic manliness or recognize the war's emotional costs. Similarly, a mushrooming of fabricated stories about military exploits by men who did not see combat in Southeast Asia, and attempts to make former president Bill Clinton's draft-dodging an issue during his election campaigns, suggest that many Americans continue to regard Vietnam service, or any military service as an important badge of national pride and masculinity. As recently as 2002, the film *We Were Soldiers*, which hints at the U.S. defeat in Vietnam but also celebrates the masculine bonds between soldiers forged in battle, indicated that Americans continue to view the Vietnam War through the lens of masculinity.

Bibliography

Faludi, Susan. *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man.* New York: William Morrow, 1999.

Fasteau, Marc Feigen. "Vietnam and the Cult of Toughness in Foreign Policy." In *The American Man,* edited by Elizabeth H. Pleck and Joseph H. Pleck. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980.

Hass, Kristin Ann. *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Jeffords, Susan. *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

Kimmel, Michael. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History.* New York: Free Press, 1996.

Lembcke, Jerry. *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam.* New York: New York University Press, 1998.

Savran, David. *Taking it Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998.

FURTHER READING

Appy, Christian G. *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Bates, Milton. *The Wars We Took to Vietnam: Cultural Conflict and Storytelling.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Franklin, H. Bruce. *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000.

Gibson, James William. *Warrior Dreams: Paramilitary Culture in Post-Vietnam America.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1994.

Hooper, Charlotte. *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations, and Gender Politics.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Sturken, Marita. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Suran, Justin David. "Coming Out Against the War: Antimilitarism and the Politicization of Homosexuality in the Era of Vietnam." *American Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (2001): 452–488.

Westheider, James E. *Fighting on Two Fronts: African Americans and the Vietnam War.* New York: New York University Press, 1997.

Young, Marilyn B. *The Vietnam Wars, 1945–1990.* New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

RELATED ENTRIES

Antiwar Movement; Cold War; Conscientious Objection; Crisis of Masculinity; Guns; Heterosexuality; Homosexuality; Militarism; Military; Nationalism; Patriarchy; Patriotism; Rambo; Sexual Revolution; Technology; Violence; War; World War I; World War II

—*Thomas Winter*

VIOLENCE

Violence—defined as intentional, aggressive, direct physical harm inflicted by one person on another—has long been associated with masculinity. While women can be violent, men have been the main perpetrators and victims of violence across history and cultures. While biologists have increasingly sought the biological and evolutionary roots of male violence, historians and social scientists—presupposing an evolutionary, biological basis for male proclivities toward violence—have addressed the role of society and culture in encouraging or restraining male violence. The damage caused by male violence has lent special urgency to the search for its patterns, its causes, and its historical, social, and cultural contexts.

Historical and Cultural Contexts

Historians have revealed distinctive patterns of male violence in the history of the European settlement of North America and, later, in the history of the United States. The historian David Courtwright has suggested that demographics play a primary role in these patterns. Most violence in the world is committed by young, unmarried men (from twelve to twenty-eight years old). Through much of American history, even into the twentieth century, population movement and settlement patterns meant that an unusually large proportion of the population, particularly in places such as the western frontier, consisted of young, unmarried men. The specific periods and regions that experienced this population pattern have seen higher rates of violence and disorder.

Historians and other social scientists have also grounded associations between masculinity and violence in specific social and cultural contexts. Historians specializing in southern and western history note that men who belong to cultures emphasizing honor as a component of manliness often tend to resort to violence to protect or restore their reputation. In the multiracial, multiethnic society of the United States, conditions of racism and other sorts of ethnocentrism or xenophobia (fear of the outsider) have produced instances of violence—sometimes by the men in power, who often view "alien" men as either unmanly or hypermasculine threats to social order, and sometimes by the men being oppressed or excluded, who consider protection of their communities and assertions of pride necessary duties of manhood. Alcohol and other drug consumption contribute to an inclination to commit violence, so male subcultures in which these practices are common have also historically witnessed an elevated incidence of violence. Religious-studies scholars have shown that religious beliefs sometimes help restrain violence, such as when a religion identifies peacefulness as a requirement of male spirituality. At other times, however, such as when male spirituality is associated with acts of "righteous anger," religious beliefs can be used to legitimate violence.

Public Violence

The traditional association of manhood with the maintenance of public order (brought to colonial America by European colonizers) has led to the sorts of sanctioned, structural, institutional violence evident in slavery, the penal system, and state reactions to street demonstrations or striking workers. At the same time, longstanding associations in the United States between manhood and resistance to authority, and between masculine duty and public leadership, have prompted many men to organize sometimes violent public actions in pursuit of or defense of group interests against perceived concentrations of corrupt official power.

American history has witnessed many riots, mob actions (e.g., lynchings), and other large-scale public disorders driven