

The Sport/War Metaphor: Hegemonic Masculinity, the Persian Gulf War, and the New World Order

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Sport/war metaphors during the Persian Gulf War were crucial rhetorical resources for mobilizing the patriarchal values that construct, mediate, and maintain hegemonic forms of masculinity. Theory is grounded in an analysis of the language used during coverage of the war in electronic and print news media, as well as discourse in the sport industry and sport media. Various usages of the sport/war metaphor are discussed. It is argued that sport/war metaphors reflected and reinforced the multiple systems of domination that rationalized the war and strengthened the ideological hegemony of white Western male elites.

Les métaphores sportives/guerrières utilisées pendant la guerre du Golfe persique ont été des ressources rhétoriques cruciales pour la mobilisation des valeurs patriarcales qui construisent et maintiennent les formes hégémoniques de masculinité. La théorie émerge de l'analyse du discours présent dans l'industrie et les médias sportifs ainsi que du langage utilisé lors de la couverture médiatique (électronique et écrite) de la guerre. L'usage varié des métaphores sportives/guerrières est discuté. Il est suggéré que les métaphores sportives/guerrières ont reflété et renforcé les systèmes multiples de domination, lesquels justifient la guerre et solidifient l'hégémonie idéologique des élites masculines occidentales.

“A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world.”
(Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 1955, p. 5)

The mixing of metaphors of sport and war played a historically unique social, rhetorical, and ideological role during the Persian Gulf War. The traditional homologous relationship between sport and war provided government, the military, the sport industry, and mass media with an easily mobilized and highly articulated semiotic system and set of cultural values to advance and justify their respective plans, actions, and interests.

We maintain that sport/war tropes are crucial rhetorical resources for mobilizing the patriarchal values that construct, mediate, maintain, and, when necessary, reform or repair hegemonic forms of masculinity and femininity. The prominence of sport/war-based rhetorical devices in mass-mediated discourse

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during the Persian Gulf War resonated with values in the larger society that legitimated the practices of the military, sport, and media. In the process of doing this ideological work, these rhetorical practices also valorized and reaffirmed many of the structured inequalities that comprise the American gender order.

Our analysis is situated in what McKay and Rowe (1987) called the "critical paradigm" of sport and media studies, in which strands of structuralism, political economy, and cultural studies find theoretical confluence in an effort to show how "media operate in some way to reproduce and legitimate relations of domination in patriarchal capitalist societies" (p. 259). We also use feminist frameworks in order to emphasize gender relations as central in radical theories of sport (Birrell & Cole, 1990; Critcher, 1986; Messner & Sabo, 1990). Gender is viewed as a key linking concept that holds together a broad configuration of structural, ideological, institutional, semiotic, and psychological processes that formed the basis for the brief, but extraordinary, hegemonic unity that was present in government and media representations during the Persian Gulf War. We do not, however, in any way discount the role press restrictions and military censorship played in generating this unity; to the contrary, we see them as integral structural features of the configuration that created this unity.

Some words about method. Like many Americans who depended on electronic and print media for information about events in the Persian Gulf War, we watched CNN news, scanned the major networks for routine and special coverage of the war, and combed a wide range of print media. Even before the Allied Forces initiated their attack, the prominent use of the sport/war metaphor in presidential rhetoric, Pentagon pronouncements, and reportage was evident. For us, the key question was why the sport/war metaphor was such a salient feature of the military, government, and media interpretations and explanations of events in the Persian Gulf War. How could such a humble metaphor occupy a place in center stage? Where did it derive its symbolic power? What purposes were being served by the sport/war discourse? Whose interests were involved and upheld? We did not conduct a systematic content analysis. The essay that follows is grounded in a substantial amount of documentation. It is intended to raise issues and invite more systematic lines of inquiry in critical schools of sport and media studies.

The architecture of our argument is supported by the following structure. First, we offer some examples of the ways the sport/war metaphor was framed and cultivated within mass media and related institutional contexts and formations during the war. Second, we develop the argument that the sport/war metaphor is embedded within a "deep structure" of patriarchal values, beliefs, and power relations that, in turn, reflect and advance the agendas of hegemonic masculinity. Third, we briefly identify and explore some of the semiotic constructions and operations of hegemonic masculinity. Finally, we examine several processes through which sport/war metaphors reflected and reinforced the multiple systems of domination that not only enabled the Persian Gulf War to be rationalized and fought, but also extended and strengthened the ideological hegemony of white Western male elites.

Sportspeak and Institutional Formations

Convergence and conflation of the vocabularies of sport and war in both official briefings and reportage of the Persian Gulf War attracted widespread commentary and some analysis during the war (see, e.g., Berkow, 1991; Booth, 1991;

Capuzzo, 1991; Edelson, 1991). Football was the favorite sport of most of the participants in this language game. The language of football has always drawn heavily on military (and sexualized military) argot: *attack, blitz, bombs, ground and air assaults, offense, defense, penetrations, flanks, conflicts, and battles for territory* are standard terms in sportscasters' vocabularies. When the game/conflict is over, coaches/generals publicly glory in their *victories*, lament their *defeats*, and mourn their *casualties*. Thus, for example, after a particularly difficult game, one National Football League coach told an interviewer, "Our boys were out there fighting and dying today on the frontlines" (Capuzzo, 1991, p. D2).

During the Persian Gulf War, sport/war metaphors and synecdoches gained wide currency in several institutional contexts including the government, military, war journalism, and sport media. The specific forms that "sportspeak" assumed in each of these institutional contexts and some of the interests expressed and served by the sport/war metaphor are explored next.

Sportspeak in the Government and Military

Conflation of the metaphors and specialized vocabularies of sport and war provided the U.S. Government and its military wing, represented by the Pentagon and military briefers in the theater of operations, with a vehicle for mobilizing support for the war that possessed what Barthes (1972, p. 114) has called an "imperative buttonholing character." This vehicle was used to communicate the military rationales and objectives of the Western coalition to the American public as well as to the world community.

Sport/war metaphors have had currency in U.S. politics at least since the Civil War (Taylor, 1991). By the time the Watergate tapes were produced during the Nixon administration, football imagery had become the root metaphor of American political discourse. Indeed, Richard Nixon mixed football and political metaphors to the point where the boundaries between the two realms blurred. He selected *Quarterback* for his code name as president and developed the habit of regularly telephoning the coach of the Washington Redskins to discuss strategy before big games.

One of the most compelling and widely quoted examples of sport/war imagery during the Persian Gulf War was provided by General Norman Schwartzkopf when he characterized the strategic plan of the ground war as "the Hail Mary play in football." By the time Schwartzkopf offered this simile, however, sport and gaming analogies had become the salient metaphors in both official government statements and media representations of the war, with expressions drawn from football achieving special prominence. The first pilots returning from bombing raids on Baghdad described the action to reporters as "like a big football game," "like a football game where the defense never showed up." The general and his pilots, moreover, were echoing their Commander-in-Chief, George Bush, who had accused Saddam Hussein of "stiff-arming" the pre-war diplomatic negotiations.

Military training exercises and battle simulations are, of course, routinely called "war games." During the war, the Pentagon public relations officers seemed to consciously cultivate vocabularies and images of sport. The press briefing room in the field closely resembled the sets used by producers of television sport media for pre- and postgame analyses and interviews with coaches of professional football

teams. Equipped with video instant replays and chalkboards for reviewing the “game plans” of the invasion, the sets as well as the choreography of briefings themselves possessed what media professionals describe as “high production values.” Ironically, entertainment-based props and protocols of presentation not only enhanced the drama of the briefings, but also seemed to enhance their authenticity. The dramaturgical effect was further heightened by the persona of General “Stormin’” Norman Schwartzkopf, whose on-camera presence bore an uncanny resemblance to some of the mythic tough-talking coaches of football/entertainment legend: Buddy Ryan, Vince Lombardi, even Pat O’Brien playing the lead in the film version of the Knute Rockne story.

Gaming—sport and entertainment—metaphors were so deeply embedded in the cognitive maps for military public relations protocols that even when their extravagant use began to attract some criticism, they were not abandoned. Thus, for example, in rejecting characterizations of the war as a video game, General Schwartzkopf nevertheless contended such comparisons were not useful “at this stage of the game” (Cable Network News, January 26, 1991). In a briefing a few days earlier, a Defense Department spokesman prefaced a showing of videos of air attacks by cautioning, “This is not a video game,” but also qualified his statement by saying, “This is a serious game” (National Public Radio, January 21, 1991). Some analysts believe the military origins of “infotech,” which naturalize models of total control, not only conflate but also confuse simulation and reality (Heath, 1991; Levidow & Robins, 1989, cited by Heath).

Sportspeak in War Journalism

News producers and war correspondents reinforced and embellished the sport/war metaphors of the President and the men in the field. They used metaphors as vehicles to mobilize and promote their own war efforts in the competition for audience shares. In the early hours of the war, for example, CNN anchor Patrick Emory touted his organization’s achievements in these terms: “Last night was about as close to the Super Bowl as you can get. It was as though we had Montana, Marino and Hostetler in together.” Steve Friedman, executive producer of NBC news, also described his “team’s” efforts in a rather fully articulated football metaphor: “Jack Chesnutt . . . he’s our defensive coordinator. Cheryl Gould, our senior producer, talks to the correspondents in the field, in the Middle East. She’s our offensive coordinator.” Friedman described himself as the “head coach”: “I send in the plays. Tom [Brokaw] is the quarterback. . . . He makes the ultimate decision on the field, and the field to us is the screen” (Capuzzo, 1991, p. D2).

The wedding of sportspeak and newspeak predated the war. Team imagery has had currency in promotional and advertising campaigns for broadcast news organizations, especially television, for some time. Thus, for example, one widely used format for local television news is known as “first team news.” Moreover, television has been largely responsible for making football a national and increasingly international sport, as well as one of its most lucrative profit makers.

Warspeak in Sport Media

With the action on real battlefields packaged in sports imagery for domestic consumption, the language and framing conventions of sport media faced special

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challenges during the Persian Gulf War. In the early days of the war, sportspeak continued unabated. While covering the January 19 Hula Bowl (4 days into the war), for example, Charley Jones described a flanker reverse as “weaving through a minefield.” By the time of the Super Bowl (January 26), however, the language of war no longer seemed to have a place on the playing field. Yet, sport/war metaphors are so deeply entrenched in the narrative structures of sport media that sport commentators for the NFL playoff games and the Super Bowl were sometimes at a loss for words because they had been instructed to respect the sensitivities of audience members with loved ones who might actually be “fighting and dying” on the “front lines.”

Self-censorship of warspeak by sport media was, however, very short-lived. Shortly after the war, *Sports Illustrated* ran a story “Big D Day: The Dallas Cowboys Went on the Attack in the NFL Draft and Took All the Right Prisoners” (King, 1991). Moreover, the 1991–92 football season witnessed the full recuperation and restoration of the pre-war cadences, resonances, and hyperbolic excesses of warspeak.

of course sports writers use war metaphors

Warspeak in the Sport Industry

During the war, sport organizations used sport/war metaphors to further their own cultural and corporate agendas. On the eve of Super Bowl 25, 11 days into the war, National Football League Commissioner Paul Tagliabue said, “We’ve become the winter version of the Fourth of July celebration” (Berkow, 1991, p. 8-6). In response to some public pressure to postpone the Super Bowl, Tagliabue announced he would make the “best business decision.” The game between the Buffalo Bills and the New York Giants was ultimately staged as a war spectacle involving a barricaded stadium, X-ray security searches of 72,500 fans, antiterrorist squadrons in the stands, hand-sized American flags distributed to every seat, a rousing rendition of the national anthem by Whitney Houston, and a half-time speech by President Bush. The drama was heightened by the probability of interruptions of the game coverage for news bulletins about new Scud missile attacks on Israel or Saudi Arabia or other combat action.

The live domestic audience for the event was in excess of 100 million viewers with a worldwide audience of three-quarters of a billion including about one-third of the troops in the Persian Gulf (Eskenazi, 1991). Patriotism, helmet thumping, and profit taking combined to make the silver anniversary celebration of the Super Bowl an extravaganza of unprecedented scale—one that attracted television advertising revenues of \$800,000 for a 30-second spot (Elliott, 1991).

The links between sport media, profit seeking, and displays of patriotism were also evident in intercollegiate athletics. Malec (1993) surveyed the sports information directors of 152 randomly selected colleges and universities in order to discover whether a patriotic symbol was worn on uniforms during the Persian Gulf War period. While 58% of teams wore patriotic patches of some kind, 42% did not. Crosstabular analyses revealed that most “of the schools that did wear a patch were the larger schools which belonged to NCAA Division I and which, therefore, were more likely to appear on regional and national television” (p. 105).

Globalization of the Sport Industry: Exporting Sportspeak

The institutional border crossing of sportspeak reflects and reinforces the increased structural integration of sports and mass media in North American cultural industries (Sabo & Runfola, 1980). Sport has been used to promote newspaper sales, to sell advertising space, and to win lucrative contracts for television and radio airtime. In turn, sport media have helped to sell spectator sports and attendant sports-related consumer products to the public. The Super Bowl itself was wholly an invention of network television, and it now draws much of its revenues from the companies that make up the multibillion-dollar sport marketing industry.

In recent decades, the integration of sport and media industries has become more complex as well as more global. For example, Maguire's (1991) analysis of the development of American football in England and Europe since 1978 documented the growth of interdependence between sport organizations, media, and marketing organizations within the "media/sport production complex" (1993; see also Jhally & Truchil, 1984). Maguire pointed out that sport organizations now depend on media exposure to gain followings which, in turn, allow them to attract corporate sponsorship. Reciprocally, athletic events provide the television/news media with large audiences at low production costs. Sport, relying on action rather than language and plot development, is also easy to export, once a market for it has been cultivated where it can serve as the advance guard in the globalization of the U.S. sport marketing industry.

In sum, the "media-sport production complex" is becoming a global formation, and sportspeak appears to be one of the export agents that package and naturalize the values of American contact sports for distribution in global markets (Sabo, 1993). The value and standards of performance within these sports not only are androcentric, they also *embody* instrumentalism, aggression, and the zero-sum concepts of competition that dominate corporate capitalism.

In the remainder of this essay, we attempt to account for the success of sport/war imagery in "buttonholing" U.S. citizenry, in rallying the troops, and in creating relatively univocal mythic and explanatory structures that cut across institutional contexts.

The Deep Structure of the Sport/War Metaphor

A number of plausible explanations for the widespread currency of sport/war tropes during the Persian Gulf War were offered in both popular and scholarly accounts. With appropriate parodic aplomb, Tom Callahan of *U.S. News and World Report* speculated whether war had become the "moral equivalent of football" in the postmodern age (quoted by Berkow, 1991). Robert MacNeil, moderator of the *MacNeill/Lehrer News Hour* and author of several books on the English language, attributed the conflation of the languages of politics and football to a decline of formal literacy in contemporary culture that had led to a "flattened use of language" by world leaders (quoted by Capuzzo, 1991). A McLuhanesque extension of MacNeil's theory would identify electronic media as the catalyst for this transformation. Fred Mish, editor-in-chief of *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, embraced this argument to explain why television has made sport a major source for the growth of new words in recent decades. As a result, he claimed, he was

not surprised that the President “has taken football words to war” (quoted in Capuzzo, 1991).

Edelson (1991, p. 87) saw the President’s rhetorical move as a propaganda technique. She maintained that “sports-language and battle euphemisms not only are inaccurate, tiresome, and unoriginal, but they sanitize the atrocities of war as effectively as any government-imposed censor.” Gridiron imagery was used to deflect the public’s attention away from the real horrors of war by rallying support for the “home team.” As a propaganda device, sport/war bandwagoning proved doubly productive: Sports were used to promote the war and the war was used to promote sports, especially the Super Bowl.

Feminist scholars conceive of the conflation of the languages of real violence and ritualized violence as involving gender politics as well as *realpolitik* (Booth, 1991; Cohn, 1987; Haraway, 1991). Within the assumptions of recent feminist epistemological inquiries, sport and war metaphors would be perceived as androcentric forms of discourse (Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1986; MacKinnon, 1982). From this perspective, the apparent intensification of such usages and their widespread acceptance during the war are interpreted as indicators of a renewal of the language, values, and practices of male dominance.

Gender Order and Hegemonic Formations

Each of the interpretations considered so far has some explanatory power. In order to comprehend the ways the border-crossing activities of the sport/war trope function to express and legitimate the increasing integration of corporate, military, and entertainment industries, however, a more comprehensive theory is needed. We can craft the building blocks for such a theory by combining some ideas derived from the new feminist epistemologies (cited previously), the so-called “strong program” in the sociology of knowledge (Bloor, 1977), and rhetoric, broadly conceived to include recent theories of metaphor and strategies for textual analysis (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Hesse, 1966; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; and others), with the theory of hegemonic masculinity developed by Connell (1987). Connell’s sociologically based approach integrates and synthesizes Gayle Rubin’s (1975) feminist analysis of “the sex/gender system” with a Gramscian (1971) approach to theorizing hegemony.

Connell uses the term *gender order* to refer to a “historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of femininity and masculinity” that emerge and are transformed within varying institutional contexts (1987, pp. 98-99). The prevailing cultural definitions of masculinity or hegemonic masculinity are essentially ideological constructions that serve the material interests of dominant male groups. Hegemonic masculinity reflects, supports, and actively cultivates gender inequality (i.e. men’s domination of women), but it also allows elite males to extend their influence and control over lesser status males within what Sabo (1986) called the “intermale dominance hierarchy.” This theoretical scheme is flexible enough to facilitate analyses of social structures in general rather than forcing the researcher to place a priority on class or gender relations (Connell, 1990).

Within this framework, we were able to identify three propositions that help explain how sport/war tropes fit into current formations of the U.S. gender order: (a) the “language games” of sport and war share and are generated by

the rules of a common categorical "deep structure"; (b) this deep structure is homologous with as well as an artifact of the sex/gender system of American society; and (c) this structure preserves and amplifies male dominance in several important theaters for public performance and myth making in American society including politics, sports, and the military.¹

The theory suggests that the extravagant mixing of metaphors surrounding the Persian Gulf War not only reasserted the presence of American political power on the world stage, but also celebrated and conspicuously displayed elite male power at home. Use of sport/war tropes allowed the allied nations and white Western males to flex their muscles and, to use President Bush's own sport/war metaphor, "kick some ass."² Ironically, while elite white males made ample use of images of hegemonic masculinity in rallying around the flag (i.e., athletic and combat images of physical strength, aggressiveness, violence, hardness, emotional stoicism, and competitive zeal), they actually waged war at a safe distance through the use of computers and so-called "smart bombs" and with military forces comprised primarily of middle-class, lower class, and minority males.

Border Crossings: Metaphoric Constructions of Masculinity

Metaphors keep language alive. Davidson (1979, p. 290) claimed metaphors do "the dreamwork of language," while Stevens (quoted in Davidson, 1979, p. 39) described them as "the symbolic language of metamorphosis." Metaphors build bridges between the familiar and the unknown. They empower new visions and act as relays for transferring meaning, myth, and ideology from one pocket of cultural understanding to another (Bloor, 1977). In short, they make cultural coherence, homology, and hegemony possible.

Although metaphors make sense by making new or novel connections, the kinds of things they use to advance understanding of other things do not represent promiscuous couplings (Hesse, 1966; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). They are not simply fortuitous slips of the tongue. To the contrary, they embody, exhibit, police, and preserve the withered mythologies that create social order and make communication possible.

The "faded mythology" preserved within Indo-European languages and categorical structures is organized around what Harding (1986, p. 104) called the "totemism of gender." This totemic organizes words, thoughts, images, objects, people, and experiences into polarities that encourage binary perceptions and categorizations of difference such as male/female, human/nature, subject/object. Moreover, this process of binary coupling is weighted by hierarchical assumptions that implicitly attach primacy to the first term in the system: the male, human, subject.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity provides a tool for analyzing the ways this primitive totemic is articulated within contemporary gender relations. At the societal level, as distinct from the interpersonal level (where a wider range of behavioral variation is tolerated), portrayals of masculinity and femininity become simplified, highly stylized, and impoverished. They are the prototypes and templates for what Goffman (1979) called "gender advertisements." According to Connell, the social and semiological systems that link these "advertisements" are "centered on the single structural fact, the global dominance of men

What metaphors do

over women” at the level of mass social relations (1987, p. 183).³ Connell maintained,

This structural fact provides the main basis for relationships among men that define a hegemonic form of masculinity in the society as a whole. “Hegemonic masculinity” is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. The interplay between different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal social order works. (1987, p. 182)

Constructions of hegemonic masculinity during the Persian Gulf War were often articulated within sport/war tropes: analogies, metaphors, and narrative structures. Some of the functions these articulations perform within the U.S. gender system are discussed next.

The War Games of Hegemonic Masculinity

Sport/war tropes exaggerate and celebrate differences between men and women. They idealize and valorize men and masculinity, and, reciprocally, they trivialize and devalue women and their activities and interests. These tropes also lionize and make heroes of strong and aggressive men, and marginalize and emasculate men who appear to be weak, passive, or pacifist.

Policing the Boundaries of the Gender Order

Some critical feminist scholars maintain that sport has functioned primarily as a homosocial institution through which hegemonic masculinity has been constituted, particularly in the recent historical periods when men’s superiority has been challenged by organized feminist activity (Hall, 1988; Kidd, 1987; Messner, 1988; Whitson, 1990). That is, they suggest that sport operates, in part, as an institutionalized mechanism for venting, galvanizing, and cultivating resistance to gender-based forms of social equality. Similar arguments have been made about warfare, where male hegemony is bolstered by the association of men with power and violence in a situation that not only excludes women but also frequently portrays them as victims and politically marginalizes them (Connell, 1989; Walker, 1985).

We suggest that the tropes of sport/war help to police the borders that secure the gender system within discrete binary categories that require hyperbolic and hierarchical renderings of difference. As Edwards (1990, p. 118; also cited by Heath, 1991) pointed out, there is a “massive institutional and popular commitment to thinking of war as an essential test of manhood and [like football] a quintessentially masculine activity.” Hegemonic masculinity is, by definition, an idealization that comes into being and exists in opposition to other counterhegemonic constructions of masculinity.

Sport/War and Male Solidarity

During the Persian Gulf War, sport/war tropes and explanatory structures were also sites of and mechanisms for constructing and reconstructing intergroup

relations. As Carrigan, Connell, and Lee (1985, p. 594) pointed out, "The construction of hegemony is not a matter of pushing and pulling between ready-formed groupings, but is partly a matter of the formation of these groupings."

Sport/war analogies express and contribute to male solidarity at several levels. First, the social organization of both war and sport follows a pattern of sex segregation. Military socialization and athletic socialization occur in mainly same-sex contexts, and attempts to initiate coeducational military education and coeducational athletics have met with much and very similar forms of resistance. Second, the elevation of male soldiers and athletes to the status of heroes reinforces the overall idea that "masculine" contributions to society are more important than "feminine" ones. Thus, for example, sport/war tropes frame male instrumental actions like throwing a touchdown pass or dropping a bomb as much more important than giving birth to or nurturing a child. Third, the language of sport/war represents the values of hegemonic masculinity (i.e., aggression, competition, dominance, territoriality, instrumental violence) as desirable and essential to the social order while at the same time, either explicitly or implicitly, marginalizing other types of masculinities within the culture (i.e., protest masculinities, pacifist and profeminist masculinities, weak and emotionally vulnerable masculinities). The resulting pressures toward conformity contribute to enhancing real and perceived forms of solidarity among male elites.

It's All in the Game: Football and Male Dominance

Bryson (1990) identified two ways that sport rituals cultivate male dominance: (a) by linking maleness to highly valued and visible skills, and (b) by linking maleness with the positively sanctioned use of aggression, force, and violence.

Football, especially professional football, is one of the most highly stylized displays of the contrasts between manly men and vulnerable women in contemporary American culture. Thus, for example, journalists and fans sometimes refer to the top college players drafted by the National Football League as "prime beef." When this prime beef is herded onto the playing field, it is very carefully and deliberately packaged for presentation to the consumers of the "media-sport production complex." In helmets, spiked shoes, and padded uniforms, men who are already exceptionally, perhaps even unnaturally, large appear larger than life and as menacing as comic-book villains.⁴ Similarly the teams are usually named after objects or beings that, from the perspective of the "faded mythology" of U.S. history and culture, are variously perceived as wild, savage, bestial, powerful, predatory, swift, and wily. Frequently racist and generally sexist, this mythology has given us Redskins, Giants, Jets, Chiefs, Rams, Raiders, Bengals, Cowboys, Eagles, Bears, Broncos, Chargers, Packers, and others. The primary appeals of the game itself are the physical daring and danger that it involves as well as its ritualized violence that plays at the edge of, and sometimes breaks into, real violence.

While the spotlights, cameras, and the eyes of the fans are focused on the displays of brute force by manly men, the only women allowed anywhere near the field are scantily clad, leaner than lean cheerleaders. Wearing out-of-season short-shorts or miniskirts, these cheerleaders jump up and down waving delicate pom-poms in cheering routines that are choreographed to erase any telltale signs

(1) army & sports sex-segregated
(2) soldiers / athletes 25
heroes values masc. over
Feminine
(3) Volunteering
masc. over others
↳ strong aggressive competitive

of the athleticism and training that the performances actually require. Like women, small, weak, and physically unfit men, as well as all men past their prime, are also barred from the scene; the only exceptions are coaches and attendants who serve as coordinators and officiants for the ritual itself (Sabo & Panepinto, 1990). Only the burliest men “take the field” and engage in football’s strategic battles for territory. All others—the families of players, the technicians and strategists, the coaches in their high-tech headphones on the sidelines, the fans in the stands, and the millions of television viewers—are denied access to the field. Yet, their eyes remain riveted to the field/screen as they closely follow and identify with the actions and outcomes of the “game.”

Media Representations of Manly Men and Womanly Women

The strategic “inferiorization” of females and femininity, always implicit in the framing practices and story-telling routines of mainstream sport media, became explicit in the discourses of sport/war. Linkages between masculinity, technical expertise, and applications of aggression, force, and violence were pervasive during the Persian Gulf War. Under heavy military censorship, cameras and texts focused most media coverage on “our men in uniform.” Thus, for example, a special issue of *Newsweek* (January 28, 1991, pp. 12-34) featured a subsection on the war. The visuals included photographs of 51 males and two females. The females represented were wives: first lady Barbara Bush and the wife of another government official, who were pictured praying. Similarly, Time-Life Books used the alliterative advertising hook, “The Men, The Machines, The Missions,” for its mail-order book series on the Gulf War, “From Desert Alert to Desert Storm.” Under “The Men” the copy reads, “First-person accounts give you the inside perspective of today’s electronic warrior—top guns, supercommandos, sky soldiers and silent hunters of the deep—so you can find out just how it feels.” In this marketing move, war—like football—is explicitly framed as a spectator sport.

There was some media coverage of female warriors, particularly casualties and the female prisoner-of-war. The dominant framing device used to represent female experience during the Gulf War was, however, to focus on women’s roles as mothers, wives, daughters, and girlfriends—loved ones and survivors. The fact that women participated more fully in the military action in this war than in any previous American war could not be easily accommodated by the myths that secure the discourses of sport/war. While generals and congressmen debated whether women belonged in combat or whether they were as skilled at warfare as their male counterparts, many women soldiers and fliers sought greater access to battlefield roles. Although women did in fact fight and die in battle, female pilots and soldiers were marginalized by the official rhetoric and media representations of the war. The struggles over women’s rights and roles in the military have continued since the end of the Persian Gulf War. Most recently, the ideological forces that support beliefs in essential gender differences were challenged on April 28, 1993, by Defense Secretary Les Aspin, who directed Pentagon officials and Congress to lift restrictions that have barred women from a variety of combat roles.

Sport/war tropes not only marginalized women in the military, but also licensed homophobia. Gay and lesbian efforts to gain access to military careers

were officially rebuffed. Legal prohibitions that bar homosexuals from the military were reaffirmed. The military ambitions of lesbian women may have been perceived as an affront to male authority and traditions, but their activism posed no real threat to gender expectations for manly men. In contrast, the demands of gay men for equal access to positions within the intermale dominance hierarchy were a fundamental challenge to the canons of hegemonic masculinity. Homophobia and the official exclusion of gays and lesbians from the military continue to be crucial for the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity; for example, newly elected President Clinton's call for an end to discrimination against gays and lesbians in the military during the first month of his administration was met with a vigorous conservative response.

During the Persian Gulf War, the armed services and the mythos of sport/war proved flexible enough to accommodate some heterosexual women who were, at least metaphorically, willing to *act like* manly men. Nevertheless, the core values of the institutions of sport and war, as well as the rhetorical practices that support them, remained steadfastly heterosexist. Open acceptance of gay soldiers could not be tolerated within the U.S. gender order because it would have destroyed the root structure of a system of relationships and homophobic sentiments that depend upon both equations of sport and war and binary pairings of masculinity and femininity. In contrast, cultivation and amplification of the mythos of sport/war allowed hegemonic masculinity to emerge from the Persian Gulf War slightly transformed but still culturally and politically ascendant.

Framing Out Resistance

The extensive media use of and the apparent public receptivity to sport/war tropes rendered articulation of resistance to the war extremely problematic. Criticism of the war effort seemed to cut both across and against the grains of sport, gender, and patriotism. Some war resisters actively invested in the rhetorical opportunities that the language game of sport/war made possible. For example, in his address to the Washington peace rally on January 26, New York Congressman Charles Rangel accused the press of "cheerleading the military Super Bowl" (WKFW, Pacifica Radio). The pervasive use of sport/war imagery in the media and in unmediated discussions of the war made it extraordinarily difficult to express counterhegemonic interpretations of the war. As Sallach (1974) argued, the propagation of hegemony by dominant groups "involves not only the inculcation of its values" but also "the ability to define the parameters of legitimate discussion and debate over alternative beliefs, values, and world views" (quoted in Sage, 1990, p. 118).

Scott (1987) observed that "in making long overdue room for the analysis of ideological domination per se, many of Gramsci's successors have . . . substituted a kind of ideological determinism for the material determinism they sought to avoid" (p. 317). We recognize that the ideological hegemony during the Persian Gulf War was never complete. There was an ongoing struggle to resist the war effort, to challenge what some claimed was misguided patriotism, and to reveal the underlying political and/or patriarchal roots of the war process. But, it was also evident that resistance was to a large extent muted, derailed, and/or marginalized in its relation to social forces that adopted and deployed the sport/war

metaphor. Indeed, the use of the sport/war metaphor in the discourse of government, military, war journalism, sport media, and the sport industry helped to make ideological hegemony a reality by masking the ideological diversity in the American polity and curbing resistance to the war.

Conclusion: Sport Media and the Modern War System

Sports, especially team sports, are vehicles for cultivating and displaying community and national values and identities. Sport also plays a crucial role in contemporary forms of nation building by transcending social divisions and affirming political loyalties to the nation as a whole (Riordan, 1986; Taylor, 1991).

The Persian Gulf War took place in the wake of the collapse of the Cold War ruling strategy that had served as the primary means of unifying U.S. and Western policy and ideological constructions since the end of World War II. The West had lost the enemy, "world communism," that had provided it with a common purpose and basis for solidarity. American defense intellectuals, conservative think tanks, and State Department analysts were actively seeking new ways of making sense of—and thereby exercising some control over and within—the worldwide realignments of power relations (Jansen, 1992).

The reassertion and amplification of the values of hegemonic masculinity generated by the Persian Gulf War created a very timely opportunity to consolidate and reintegrate what Connell (1987) called "multiple systems of dominance": the hierarchical relations of social inequality that provide the auspices for hegemony in both national and international arenas of power.

The "new world order," the ideological centerpiece of President Bush's January 1991 State of the Union speech, articulated the terms of the renewal of U.S. and Western power. His speech drew heavily upon the mythos of sport/war in saluting the toughness, aggressiveness, sacrifices, patriotism, and bravery of the manly men who were defending the honor of the U.S. and the Western coalition in the Persian Gulf.

Official versions of the war—the versions that were presented by the proactive public relations strategies of the Defense Department and filtered through the tightest screen of military censorship the U.S. has ever experienced—articulated a new hierarchy in which white men remained clearly positioned at the pinnacle of the pyramid. They were, however, flanked by men of color, African-American military personnel including General Colin Powell and troops from Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Bangladesh. Moreover, women were not entirely excluded from the pyramid although they were largely positioned at the margins.

Because the war involved wealthy Arab nations, the media spotlight on the Middle East deflected attention away from the dramatic structural inequalities that separate industrial nations and developing nations. The discussion of gender stereotyping, both within Arab nations and in the U.S. military, raised issues of social equality, but the war itself reinforced hegemonic definitions of masculinity. The marginalization of gays and lesbians during and after the war eroded the potential for articulations of genuinely counterhegemonic definitions of gender within the emerging structures of power relations. Moreover, the unprecedented (at least since World War II) waves of patriotism and nationalism, fueled by the

mythos of sport/war, enabled predominantly white ruling groups to effectively confuse and diffuse opposition to the war among the Afro-American population in the U.S., the group that made the greatest sacrifices during the war. In both sport coverage and war coverage, the already muted colors of race were further obscured by the bright foreground of red, white, and blue.

The multiple systems of domination that are constituted by power relations in American society are increasingly part of the emerging global system of warfare. Within the framework of the changing world order, Reardon (1985) defined the "war system" as

a competitive social order which is based on authoritarian principles, assumes unequal value among and between human beings, and is held in place by coercive force. The institutions through which this force is currently controlled and applied are dominated by a small minority, elites who run the global economy and conduct the affairs of state. These elites are men from industrial countries, primarily Western, and for the most part educated to think in Western, analytic terms. Although their relationship is competitive within the elite structures, there is a common objective that holds the elites together: the maintenance of their control and dominance. (p. 10)

The growing presence of sport programming in international communications media, including the increasing prominence of American professional team sports in European sport media, seems to indicate that sport/war tropes and scenarios, derived from the images and icons of U.S. history and popular culture, are becoming part of the semiological structure of the global "war system." Sport/war media framing devices, which were so widely used during the Persian Gulf War, appear to have tapped into and revitalized the deep structure of patriarchal meanings and values that have pervaded hierarchies of domination in all Western societies for millennia.

The "Sport/War" in the Persian Gulf not only produced, at least briefly, extraordinary levels of patriotic solidarity within the U.S. and enabled the military to achieve its immediate objectives in the Middle-East, but also demonstrated how effectively the government can control mass media during national and international emergencies. The U.S. Government provided the press with very little news at a time when the public had an insatiable appetite for it. Under these circumstances, media, especially electronic media, were forced to draw more heavily on soft/mythic framing devices and conventions in producing their news programming. These mythic frames, in turn, appear to have worked to reassert the power of white, upper class males within the changing gender order of the late 20th century.

Some of the rules of the language games and practices of hegemonic masculinity may have been slightly modified by the war. Nevertheless, the first-string players are still recruited from the same elite Western colleges that controlled the action on the fields of power before Third World nations gained their independence, or the second wave of feminism pressed its claims for equality, or the Berlin Wall crumbled. The "new world order" is one in which "manly men" still possess, assert, and control mediated constructions of agency, subjectivity, and power.

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Notes

¹The concept of "deep structure" is drawn from Chomsky's generative transformational linguistic perspective. It is used loosely, even metaphorically, here (see Chomsky, 1975).

²In what might be reconceptualized as an even more direct display of hegemonic masculinity, then Vice President George Bush was first quoted in the press using this expression to describe what he intended to do to Democratic vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro during a televised debate between vice presidential candidates in the 1984 election campaign.

³Connell (1987, p. 183) recognized that "the sheer complexity of relationships involving millions of people guarantees that ethnic differences and generational as well as class patterns come into play. But in key respects the organization of gender on the very large scale must be more skeletal and simplified than the human relationship in face-to-face milieux. The forms of femininity and masculinity constituted at this level are stylized and impoverished." And, therefore, we would add, deeply oppressive.

⁴Unnatural, because muscle mass is frequently augmented by anabolic steroids.