

MODERN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE TEACHING OF
MILITARY HISTORY

A Master's Research Project Presented to
The Faculty of the College of Education
Ohio University

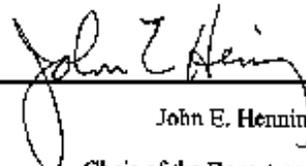
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

Military history has long been taught as an integral part of any fair accounting of events of significance that have happened in the world. This approach extends back at least as far as the histories of the ancient Greeks. How could one give a fair accounting of the decade of the 1940's, for example, without examining not just the causes and effects of World War II, but what actually happened on the ground, in the air and on the sea. A significant segment of the population at large recognizes the importance of this history, as evidenced by book sales and cable television viewership of popular accounts of precisely this kind of military history. However, academia has gone in a different direction. Military history courses are disappearing from college campuses, despite their popularity, and the coverage of military history as part of the high school history survey courses seems similarly to be dying on the vine. It is not clear whether this shift is the result of pacifism in the faculty, some brand of political correctness, or perhaps inaptitude and lack of preparation to teach the subject. At a time when a lack of student interest plagues high school classrooms, the strong narrative structure of military history invites interest, especially among boys (Showalter 2012).

War is a frightening, awesome thing. It is not likely to end as a historical force in the foreseeable future (Showalter 2012). It seems wrong to hand a high school diploma to a student who may be considering joining the military but who has not been exposed to the most powerful images of war and its effects that can responsibly be shown. Perhaps this too is part of the modern problem, a squeamishness among teachers to risk the wrath of parents by bringing to the classroom images of dead bodies that are prone to litter the battlefields, and which, in many ways, serve as the ultimate symbol of warfare and its costs.

This is one area where perhaps parents know better than teachers. At the least, their views are worth considering, as one thinks about the extent and manner of military history education in the high school classroom. This project sought out those views, and the results allow the drawing of limited conclusions.

Statement of the Problem

The modern popularity of military history in bookstores, on television and at the movies runs counter to the recognized trend among academics. This trend appears to exist not just of college campuses, but in high school curricula as well, which require students to study war's causes and effects from 40,000 feet, without ever teaching the narrative of what actually happened during the war at ground level. This seems wrong-headed and an example of academic aloofness from the real world. This case seemed an appropriate one to invite in the opinions of parents who are, generally speaking, untainted by such aloofness. Many observers are of the opinion that the general academic trend is out of touch with the importance of the topic and lay opinion about what is important. (Spector 2007). It is time for teachers to hear what parents think should be taught, and in some ways, how it should be taught. Along with technological change and ideology, warfare is one of the great pillars of history --- how it is that we came to be as we are -- as Americans and as human beings. Its teaching is too important a subject to be left to the side, or captured in an academic cloister.

Research Questions

1. How many hours of military history do parents want taught in a 180 hour modern history course. ?
2. What battles, if any, do parents want lessons devoted to?

3. What sorts of images of the horrors of military history do parents think should be shown to their child?

Purpose/Significance

While the academic literature has noted a decline of military history on college campuses and, to a lesser extent, in high school classrooms, nobody seems to have thought to ask parents their opinions on the matter, at least in any systematic way. This project sought to remedy that omission and, to a limited degree, has done so.

Delimitations

I was unable to find any scholarly research on the question of parental attitudes toward the amount of military history they want their children taught, or their views about the types of images of war to which they want their children exposed.

Limitations

This study was limited to the parents of 9th and 10th grade students at two high schools in Southeast Ohio. The larger of the two serves a rural population and the smaller primarily serves a small township. Virtually every student at these schools was white, and that is reflected in the all-white pool of respondents. Thus, this study cannot reflect the views of urban or even suburban parents or minority parents, who could not practicably be studied, given the locus of the study and resources at hand. Also, of the 485 surveys sent home to parents, only 21 were returned. This low return rate significantly exacerbates the risk of bias. However, the greatest risk (that only relatively “militaristic” parents would return the surveys) appears to be refuted by the survey results.

Definition of Terms

Military history- The study of “military institutions and practices and of the conduct war in the past.” (Lynn, 2008).

Methodology

All of the literature used in the writing of this paper was found using the Internet. I primarily relied on ERIC and EBSCO as academic search engines. I looked for academic sources and tried to limit my search to articles written in the last twenty years. I searched key terms such as “military history,” “parental attitudes” “surveying parents” and “violence in media.” A complete description of the methodology will be set forth in Chapter 3.

Summary

This introduction has pointed out the academic movement away from teaching military history (Showalter 2012), particularly as it concerns high school curricula. As historian Carol Reardon (2008) has pointed out, “...especially since the Vietnam era – and despite significant popular interest in the subject – [military history] has slowly lost its place in the nation’s primary classrooms. The current National Standards for United States History include little instruction on some of the most transformative events in American history.” (p. 5). This academic shift seems to run counter to the high popularity of military history in the media and both traditional and common sense notions of what it is about wars that is important and should be taught. This introduction has also questioned whether there is a squeamishness about showing images that depict dead bodies, be it of soldiers or other victims of war. As to both of these problems, the introduction has posited that it is appropriate to step outside the academic circle and bring in lay opinions from the stakeholders whose interests are paramount, the parents of high school students.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews literature pertinent to understanding both the historiography and modern views of military history. This chapter has sections centered on the following four topics: 1) the importance of military history; 2) a brief historiography of military history; 3) violent imagery as a cause of violent behavior in children; 4) the benefit of gathering parental opinion regarding curriculum.

The importance of military history

Leon Trotsky famously said that “[y]ou may not be interested in war. But war is interested in you” (Spector, 2007). “Just war” is an appropriate recourse in international law which has played a major role in the formation of states and societies (Kuehner, 2007). William Murray, professor emeritus at Ohio State University, has written that “war, not peace, is human’s natural order of things” (Kuehner, 2007). War has played a central role in the development of societies and in the formation and survival of states (Showalter, 2005). It was a part of prehistoric cultures and is still a dominant form of interaction among peoples and governments to the present (Showalter 2005). Warfare “reaches into the most secret places of the human heart, places where self dissolves rational purpose, where pride reigns, where emotion is paramount, where instinct is king ... War embraces much more than politics ... it is always an expression of culture, often a determinant of cultural forms, in some societies the culture itself.” (Lee, 2007, p.1117).

Dennis Showalter, a professor of history and past president of the Society for Military History, states that, “[i]n order to cultivate the citizenship and community so essential to the nation’s well-being, it is imperative that one include an understanding of the United States’

military experience as well as its wars” (Showalter, 2005, p. 1). He points out that war is not going to “vanish from the world in any calculable time frame, nor can the U.S. avoid conflict by sealing itself off politically or psychologically” (Showalter, 2005, p. 2). He continues, “[s]tudents correspondingly need to understand the causes and conduct of past wars – why the U.S. has asserted itself in arms, and how it has reacted” (Showalter, 2005, p.2)

It is difficult to understand the present without knowing what came before, and “much of who and what we are as a nation and a people has undeniably been formed by conflict.” (Przybylek, 2011, p. 1). Studying military history helps to understand concepts such as “service, dedication, devotion to duty larger than oneself, cooperation, conflict and conflict resolution, and sacrifice. A quick glance at current events on the national and international stage suggest such skills are sorely lacking and much needed in our contemporary society” (Przybylek, p. 1-2).

“Military history gives center stage to events that are profoundly and immediately consequential: the lives of hundreds – or hundreds of thousands – can rest on decisions made under great stress” (Biddle, 2007, p. 1143). The outcome on the battlefield can matter “terribly” (Biddle, 2007, p. 1143). The military history of the United States has been called an “essential thread” in the “full cloth of American history,” without which the whole cloth might unravel (Reardon, 2008, p.5). Moreover, the U.S. is “almost certain to remain in the shadow of war for a long time to come. Given this fact, surely a broader, more rigorous intellectual knowledge of war itself is a matter of some civic interest” (Bell, 2007, p. 17). Historian John A. Lynn II stated:

For me, war – no matter how regrettable – is of obvious importance in history. Its costs in lives and fortunes are undeniable. It can determine regimes, borders, and economies; it can decimate or destroy peoples. The conduct of war can have incalculable human and cultural effects, as both world wars demonstrate.

The benefits of teaching military history, rests not just in the importance of the subject matter, but in the natural interest which many students show for the subject. (Lynn, 2009, p. 19).

As Dennis Showalter explained:

Given that students are naturally attracted to the history of war and warfare for its action and narrative, and that we are in a time when apathy and alienation are of increasing concern to educators at all levels, a subject that engages interest should by no means be dismissed out of hand. ... And while interest in war is in no way gender specific, disengaged boys, a growing concern in secondary education, are more likely to be drawn into participation by the chance to study that subject than by most other elements of the curriculum (Showalter 2005, p. 1).

This appeal to students mirrors a broad appeal of the subject in the population at large. Military history topics are common on television, at the movies and atop booksellers' best seller charts (Showalter, 2012). This appeal is natural. As Tami Davis Biddle explains:

Americans seem to have a great appetite for history, and every year the sale of trade press books on military topics is brisk. The reasons are not hard to discern. Military history gives center stage to events that are profoundly and immediately consequential.... Those who write in the discipline can work on a vast canvas full of movement and energy; they can simultaneously, draw attention to the details shaping the choices made by those in command of the events. The pace, scope and urgency of war tend to telescope time and change, and to illuminate those human proclivities and characteristics – including character flaws – that can assume an importance far greater than they ever would in peacetime.

(Biddle, 2007, p. 1143). In 2008, Josiah Bunting III, concluded that public and popular interest in military history is as strong now as it has been at any time since World War II (Bunting, 2008). But as we shall see in the next section, this trend is the opposite of the modern academic trend, which is away from the teaching of military history.

A brief historiography

In the nineteenth century, history was predominantly a literary, narrative art. There was no more dramatic subject than military history (Bell, 2007). Thus, in the formative years of the American history profession, prior to World War I, military history held an influential position. (Reardon, 2008). However, in the twentieth century, history moved away from its traditional narrative form and toward the social sciences. The leaders of the influential “*Annales* school” of history, which developed in France in the early twentieth century, downplayed “event history,” by which they most particularly meant military history, in favor of “deeper” social and economic factors (Bell, 2007, p.17). In December 1939, two years before the U.S. entry into World War II, General George Marshall said that “military history, since it deals with war, is unpopular, and probably more so today than at any other time” (Bunting, 2008, p. 12).

John Updike wrote that World War II was the 20th century’s central myth, “a vast imagining of a primal time when good and evil contended for the planet, a tale of Troy whose angles are infinite and whose central figures never fail to amaze up with their size, their theatricality, their sweep” (Atkinson, 2009, p. 5). But this dogmatic view of who we are and what we are about on the battlefield lasted just twenty years, swept away by the war in Vietnam. Especially since the Vietnam era, the study and teaching of military history on the college level has dropped off dramatically. “To some extent this reflects the emergence of the new social and cultural history with an emphasis on interpretive frameworks stressing race, class, and gender

that seemingly did not mesh well with the organizational and institutional approaches usually applied in military history. Another explanation for military history's decline in the academy is the concern, rejected by most military historians, that teaching and studying the topic necessarily glorifies war" (Reardon, 2008).

"Vietnam called into question many of the most widespread assumptions that Americans held about their country: that the U.S. was a special nation, that it adhered to a unique set of values, that its foreign policy was designed to promote freedoms and safeguard democracy, that American soldiers were always good-hearted and patriotic...." (Spector, 2009, p. 1). The prevailing view portrays Vietnam veterans as perpetrators of horrible actions during the war and as psychological wrecks after the war (Moyar, 2008). In his book, *Stolen Valor*, B.G. Burkett revealed that several hundred supposed Vietnam veterans in the public spotlight were frauds. Many had appeared on TV and in books to recount stories of atrocities and psychological injuries, providing the evidence desired by anti-war historians (Moyar 2008). The problem of "memory's overpolishing war was reversed in the case of the Vietnam War. Popular memory initially identified the veteran as part of the problem (the soldier as baby killer, etc.). Beginning in the 1980's, popular representations transmuted the soldier into damaged goods ..." (Lee, 2007).

When Professor Gunther Rosenberg retired from the Department of History at Purdue University, he was told that no military historian was being hired to replace him because, "there was no social purpose to the study of military history" (Lynn, 2008, p. 31). This latter viewpoint has increasingly taken hold in academia over the course of the last 100 years. Victor Davis Hanson claims that the public ambivalence about the Iraq war

... is due to generalized ignorance of military history. Without guidance from the past, too many people are shepherded through the experience of war by nothing deeper than the rollercoaster emotions whipped up by 24-hour news coverage of explosions and suicide bombings

Inversely, as news coverage expands and saturates our days, the reading and understanding of history – which alone could put such information into context – withers and wanes. Had Americans been more familiar with prior wars, then little in today's Iraq conflict would have surprised us. Indeed much would reassure us that the United States has so far done extremely well in a difficult fight. (Hanson, 2006, p. 28).

The fading of military history from the curriculum in the modern world has been noted by many. Many teachers dismiss war as primitive and irrational, and contend that its study is immoral “patriotic gore” and “lust of the eye,” “legitimizing xenophobia” and distorting U.S. history by focusing on violence (Showalter, 2012, p. 1).

“In the American academy, few academic disciplines occupy a lower caste than military history. Few candidates for doctoral degrees in military history present themselves, fewer military historians are hired, much less given tenure. And few are the course options in military history provided undergraduates, history majors or not” (Bunting, 2008, p. 13). In the *New Republic* in May 2007, military historian David Bell laments:

At Harvard this spring, ... only two of 85 history courses focus mainly on war.

This is not surprising, because Harvard does not have a single specialist in military history among the 58 members of its history department. ...The current issue of the *American Historical Review*, the flagship journal of the profession,

includes reviews of no less than 194 new history books, only 15 of which, by my count, qualify as military history.... [M]ost historians pay scant attention to military history, particularly the part that concerns actual military operations. (Bell 2007).

Advocates of teaching military history at times argue that we have a duty to remember the sacrifices of those who bled and died for our nation. As Rick Atkinson put it in discussing World War II, “[t]he most critical lesson for every American is to understand, viscerally, that this vast host died one by one by one: to understand in your bones that they died for you.” (Atkinson, 2009, p. 6). This almost religious argument seems to run aground, however, when the focus shifts from World War II to Vietnam or Iraq. “Teachers who introduce discussion of contemporary military engagements by the United States risk community blowback. Antiwar talk can be perceived as unpatriotic” (Finley, 2010, p. 1). This risk is likely part of the reason why military history has found itself at the margins in American classrooms since Vietnam.

Lt. Gen. Josiah Bunting III has argued that this current trend against teaching military history reflects a gulf between the U.S. military and academia:

The decline of military history in universities reflects an indulged hatred of war and armies ... and of military people as not clever or, if clever, perverse in the vocation to which they devote their intellectual talents. It reflects the wide cultural chasm between academia and the American military, a chasm never deeper or wider than now, in the thirty-fifth year of the all-volunteer military.

What this means, of course, is that no professor under the age of fifty-five, roughly, has ever worn the uniform of his or her country, unless as a volunteer --- and few academics have volunteered (Bunting, 2008, pp. 14-15).

Suffice it to say that there may be many causes, but the trend away from teaching military history is undeniable as the 20th century (and now the 21st) has developed.

This trend affects not only colleges, but also high schools, and perhaps to an even greater degree:

The news scholastically is dismal, especially in public schools. Military history has all but vanished from America's educational mainstream. What was once regarded as a core subject in a classical education has become irrelevant.

Teaching military history requires instructing students there are times when wars are justified. It requires defining traitors and heroes by academic guidelines. The politicizing of patriotism has neutered the subject. Sterile ideologies developed to avoid professional jingoism have proven to be as responsible as anti-American ones in the demise of military history.

...

This absence trickled down to public schools generations ago. Gone from U.S. textbooks are the commanders and the battles; the stories of remarkable citizen soldiers who walked away from the safety of their fields, stores and factories and stepped into history's pages are forgotten. The sociological impacts of armed conflicts or political movements relating to U.S. wars now dominate classroom instruction. (Hooper, 2010, p. 2).

The military history that is taught is now more often of a personal nature (Lynch, 2008). "Despite the popularity of the History Channel and the Military Channel, many students find campaigns, battles, and strategy confusing or uninteresting. Those same students often willingly engage the subject if it can be personalized through individual veterans' stories" (Lynch, 2008, p. 37). This personal approach also has the benefit of giving students primary sources to study

(Bruce, 2008). Resources can include war museums, photographic, film and/or tape archives. Students can also record history themselves with veterans or people who lived through wars (Kuehner, 2007).

This new military history is sometimes called the “war and society” approach. It has “begun to open up newer and more complex questions about values, motivations, and expectations” (Lee, 2007, p. 1117). Lee wrote that while military history continues to “deal with hard-nosed realities of power politics, imperial design, weapons technology, and national resources, ... the best scholars now are injecting humanity into the story, and many are using that humanity to *explain*” (Lee, 2007, p. 1141).

Carol Reardon, a professor of military history at Penn State, explains:

Military historians have begun to draw freely from the methods and interpretive frameworks of social and cultural history to learn more about the American military past. As a consequence, teachers no longer must rely solely on confusing maps marked in profusion with blue and red rectangles and squiggly arrows to teach about the nation’s major armed conflicts. While this “moving block” method for teaching about campaigns and generals always will prove useful, a shift in focus to the individuals comprising those blocks – a “war and society” approach that occasionally is still called the “new military history” – offers a particularly compelling way for students to learn about the millions who served in the ranks of all the American armed forces during eras of both war and peace. (Reardon, 2008, p. 11).

Thus, likely for many reasons, the military history that was taught 100 years ago has been shrunk considerably, and where it is still taught, transformed to a large degree by a more personal approach.

Exposure to violence as a cause of violence

Ph D. student, Josh Wolf, recalls images of war he viewed as a preteen:

One of the first books on the Civil War that my parents purchased me was a volume of Matthew Brady's battlefield photographs. They made me take a long, hard look at the images of the battlefield dead. They hoped to drive home the point that while it is well and good to read about the courageous stand of the 20th Maine at the Battle of Gettysburg or the genius of "Stonewall" Jackson in the Valley Campaign of 1862, there were real consequences to these actions.

Casualties of war were more than just statistics in a book (Wolf, 2009, p. 1).

In a short time, high school students may be deciding whether, upon graduation, to join the military. It seems natural and beneficial that in teaching about war, high school teachers should expose students to images of war which bring home its essential violence, including the reality that many die gruesome deaths on the battlefield.

However, there is a countervailing consideration, namely that the research literature is compelling that children's exposure to media violence plays an important role in the causation of violent behavior. (Beresin, 2010). Meta-analytic studies have shown that aggressive or antisocial behavior is heightened in children and adolescents after watching violent television or films (Browne & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005). The American Academy of Pediatrics claims that more than 3,500 studies have been performed to assess the negative consequences of violence in the media, and that in the overwhelming majority of studies, violent media were found to have a direct effect on the increase in violent behaviors in children (Hawkins 2011). The mechanism appears to be desensitization (Beresin, 2010).

According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry the American child will watch 200,000 acts of violence, including 16,000 murders, by the time he or she is 18 (Hawkins, 2011). It would seem that against this backdrop, the showing of a relative handful of violent images in the classroom to link war and its most serious consequences in the mind of the child is probably just a drop in the proverbial bucket. Still, one can argue that classroom teachers should set good examples, by eschewing damaging violent images.

The Bush administration banned film or photography of flag-draped coffins returning to the United States, though that policy was later changed by the Obama administration. In 2008, a freelance photographer in Iraq, Zoriah Miller, was barred from covering the Marines after he posted photos on the Internet of several of them dead. (Kamber & Arango, 2008). The New York Times reported in 2008 that “after five years and more than 4,000 American combat deaths, searches and interviews turned up fewer than a half-dozen graphic photographs of dead American soldiers.” (Kamber & Arango, 2008, p. 1). The article continues:

While the Bush administration faced criticism for overt political manipulation in not permitting photos of flag-draped coffins, the issue is more emotional on the battlefield: local military commanders worry about security in publishing images of the American dead as well as an affront to the dignity of fallen comrades. Most newspapers refuse to publish such pictures as a matter of policy. (Kamber & Arango, p.1).

Political considerations aside, these policies make it harder to show students the kind of battlefield images of war dead in our modern conflicts, Iraq and Afghanistan, even if a teacher decides that they should be shown.

Surveying parents

We have already seen that the general public has a more favorable view of military history, on the whole, than academics. While the literature does not appear to discuss parental views, in particular, David Bell urged in the *New Republic* that historians put some trust in the instincts of the general public in favor of military history, as “those instincts are quite correct” (Bell, 2007, p. 17).

Parents have the right to choose which schools their children will attend, but have no right to control the school’s activities once chosen (Dahl, 2008). Nonetheless, “[c]urrent efforts to improve educational systems worldwide increasingly are focused on the importance of parental involvement. In fact, at the end of the 20th century, one of the Goals of the U.S. Department of Education stated: *By the Year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children*” (Goldman & Johnson, 1996). The social studies curriculum must be assessed continuously to bring in the latest research, trends and recommendations. A survey of parents (among others), “may be conducted to notice preferences” (Ediger, 2001). When parents are actively involved, rather than allowed token participation only, benefits are reported. “Community involvement at the high school level was one factor that characterized effective schools.” (Brown, 1994). Thus, surveying parental views regarding the teaching of military history seems would seem to be a valuable endeavor.

Summary

This chapter discussed the research literature on the academic use of military history. It suggests that while military history is valuable, there is a trend against teaching military history, for various reasons. This is contrary to the public popularity of such histories. The research also

raises the issue of violent content and its effect on children, which goes to the methods of teaching military history by showing graphic images of the human impacts of war on the battlefields. These issues invite parental participation, which has been regarded as important to the educational endeavor, especially as popular perspectives on the teaching of military history are arguably better than those of academics.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research and Design

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how military history is viewed by parents of ninth and tenth grade students. The review of the literature discussed the importance of military history, contained a brief historiography of the subject, discussed the showing of violent images of warfare and the importance of seeking parental opinions on matters of curriculum. Data was collected for this Master's Research Project by using a survey that queried regarding demographics and data about parental views regarding the teaching of military history. The findings of this study will add to the research about how parents view military history.

Participants

This study took place at two high schools in southeastern Ohio. One high school served a rural population, the other served a small township. The survey was sent home with all 450 ninth and tenth grade students at the two schools combined. Twenty-one of the surveys were completed by the students' parents and returned by mail. Of the respondents, 71% were mothers, 9% were fathers, and 19% were both parents completing the survey jointly. Of the respondents, 95% identified as Caucasian, 5% did not respond to this question, and none identified as African-American, Hispanic, or "Mixed or Other." The students who brought the survey home to the parents who responded were 48% male and 52% female. The parents responding had children who attended the township high school in 14% of cases. Eighty-six percent attended the rural high school. Thirty-eight percent of the students whose parents responded to the survey had a

parent who had served in the military. Sixty-two percent had no parent who had served in the military. Of the total, 81% identified as middle-class, 19% identified as “poor,” and nobody identified as “wealthy.”

Data Collection

Each ninth and tenth grade student at the two high schools was given a fifteen-question survey to take home to their parents. A cover letter asked parents to respond to the survey and return it in an addressed stamped envelope provided. The first seven questions collected demographic data. Questions eight and nine asked about the extent of military history that should be taught. Question ten asked about the nature of violent images that should be shown. Questions thirteen through fifteen asked questions about the parents’ general views concerning the American military. Open-ended questions, asking respondents to “please explain why,” were included as to these latter question. (See Appendix A.)

Data Analysis

Because of the small number of respondents, tallying the results was easily conducted by hand. Raw scores were converted into percentages. As to question eight, which asked how many hours should be spent on military history in a 180 hour modern history class, mean and median scores were calculated. Thoughtful observation of results was my primary method of analysis. This involved looking for correlations between demographics and/or generalized attitudes towards military subjects and attitudes towards the teaching of military history in the high school classroom.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

How Much Military History?

Twenty-one parents completed a survey which asked most prominently, “Assuming that a one-year modern history class will include a total of 180 instructional hours, roughly how many hours would you estimate should be spent on military history?” The range of responses was 2 to 90 (2, 30, 30, 32, 40, 40, 40, 45, 45, 50, 50, 50, 55, 60, 60, 60, 60, 90, 90). If one uses all results, the mean would be 48.9. However, because the “two” response is an outlier, it should be removed from the mean calculation. Excluding the outlier, the mean is 51.5. The median was 50. The mode was 60. The 50 hour median exceeds 25% of the 180 hours of total available instruction time posited by the question. When one compares this outcome with the authorities who claim that, in fact, military history has all but disappeared from high school history classrooms, the difference is stark. It thus appears that the parents in this study prefer more military history to be taught than is currently being offered in American high schools.

What Battles?

As part of the survey, the participants were asked to mark any battle or event they thought warranted a dedicated lesson. The percentage who marked a given battle or event are indicated in Table 1 (see p. 24).

The only battle which more than half the parents warranted a separate lesson was D-Day. Nearly half of all parents thought that Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima deserved to be taught as separate lesson as well. The parents indicated little to no preference for separate lessons the battles of World War I. They indicated a single lesson preference for approximately half of the listed battles of World War II, with six of the twelve listed battles scoring ten percent or less. By

contrast, the six most popular World War II battles scored selected by nearly and more than three out of ten parents were: the German invasion of the USSR, D-Day, Pearl Harbor, Midway, Iwo Jima and Hiroshima. The post-World War II battles all earned substantial scores, (29% and above), though not majorities. I did not ask parental ages. They were told to leave events blank that they were not familiar with, so there is no way to separate out what is ignorance and what is disdain at this point.

Table 1. Percentage of parents who believed battle deserved a separate lesson.

Conflict	Battle	Percentage
World War I	Tannenberg	5
	Gallipoli	0
	Verdun	0
World War II	Dunkirk	5
	Battle of Britain	10
	German invasion of USSR	29
	Stalingrad	10
	D-Day/Normandy	52
	Pearl Harbor	48
	Midway	29
	Guadalcanal	14
	Leyte Gulf	0
	Iwo Jima	33
	Okninawa	14
	Hiroshima	43
Korean War	Inchon	29
Vietnam War	Tet Offensive	33
	My Lai	29
Iraq War	Fallujah	29

War and diplomacy

Parents were asked which was more important “teaching about war,” “teaching about diplomacy,” or whether both are equally important (see Question 11). Five percent of the responding parents indicated that teaching students about war was more important, 5% thought that diplomacy was more important, and 90% thought that both war and diplomacy were equally important.

Narration v. causation

The survey asked whether it was more important to teach students about the causes and effects of war, the narrative of what happened during the particular war, or whether both are equally important (see Question 12). Ten percent of parents indicated that teaching about the causes and effects of war is more important, five percent indicated that teaching the narrative is more important, while 85% indicated that both are equally important.

Images of war

Table 2 reports the parents’ responses to which images would be appropriate to be shown students at the ninth or tenth grade level (see Question 10).

Table 2. Images to be shown in a 9th or 10th grade class.

Image	Approval Percentage
Dead soldiers	76
Dead civilians	76
Dead children	43
Mutilated corpses	14
Bleached skulls	43

These percentages suggest that the parents in this study were supportive of showing violent imagery to students, although they drew the line at mutilated corpses, which had only 14% support. One parent who voted for all of these images to be shown, wrote in the margins “They need to know that this was *real!*”

Reinstituting the draft

The survey asked parents whether the United States should reinstitute a military draft (see Question 13). Nineteen parents responded. Twenty-one per cent thought that we should reinstitute a draft, while 79 % indicated that the United States should not. Asked to explain, one parent who supported reinstituting the draft wrote, “[e]veryone should be accountable for their freedom.” Another parent, who marked that he supported reinstituting the draft, qualified his perspective by writing, “Only if there is no other way to resolve the matter.” Yet another parent who responded that the draft should be reinstated responded, “Why not? It was good enough for our ancestors to be drafted, why shouldn’t our generations be drafted?”

A parent who opposed reinstituting the draft responded, “The experience should be reserved for those who choose it and are prepared for what may come with it.” Another parent in opposition to the draft wrote, “Our military has the selection of our finest sons and daughters now as it is.” A third parent in opposition to a draft wrote, “Military is more of a career path today – technology has decreased the need for as much manpower.” A fourth parent who wrote “No, only if necessary” while a fifth parent suggested that, “[d]ue to the willingness of our youth today it isn’t necessary. Should this trend fall off, then ‘yes’ the draft would again become warranted.”

In a more extensive response, another parent in opposition to the draft wrote:

If a person doesn't want to go to war and is drafted, they have to end up shooting and killing other people on a "have to" basis, not because they feel the need to protect their country. With that in mind, I think that the people who are there because of a draft might have more of a problem adjusting to the thought of killing someone and would eventually be killed themselves (sic) or cause their fellow soldiers to be killed.

Another opponent of the draft wrote, "Should be necessary only during times of *defensive* war, not offensive, preemptive actions." Yet another said, "I think that it [the military] teaches young people discipline that they need in life but it should be a choice."

One parent objected to the question, writing:

This is a confusing question considering as far as I know the government still retains the right to draft individuals should the need arise. This is why all males have to sign up for Selective Service. I don't think you can ask should it be reinstated when it is already in place.

Military spending

Parents were also asked whether United States defense spending is too high, about right, or too low. Fifty-three per cent thought that military spending was too high, 26% thought it was too low, and 21 % thought it was about right (see Question 14). In the category of those parents who thought that military spending was too high, the mean score of 55 on the "how many military history hours should be taught" was only slightly above the 50 hour median. This tends to refute the idea that there is a correlation between how much one wants to be spent on the current U.S. military and how much military history should be taught. Once again we see

refutation of the idea that the results of this survey can be attributed to an overly militaristic sample.

Asked to explain, a parent who indicated that military spending was too high responded, “I feel like wars are often fought on the whim of a politician, and the money could be better spent to help within our own borders” while another responded, “[t]oo much waste in military spending. We are not under a direct threat.” A third parent responded, “I think that we should not spend US dollars to rebuild a place that we are not at war with. They don’t rebuild the damages in the US.”

A parent who believed that military spending was too high wrote:

I feel that the soldiers should get anything they need to keep them safe and they deserve tremendous compensation for what they are doing. But I do feel that with any govt. spending somewhere in the chain there is waste, corruption and basic stupidity. If someone with no hidden agendas, political aspirations and had a little common sense, money would be spent for the right thing & spent wisely.

Another parent who thought military spending was too high, explained the reasons for conclusions in bullet points:

- * schools and schooling being defunded,
- * infrastructure spending decreased as % of total spending,
- * exorbitant cost of current military engagement.

A parent who thought that military spending was too low, wrote, “Considering the size of our country and how many enemies we have defense should be our priority. We also do not pay our military personnel as much as they deserve for putting their lives on the line.” Another parent thought it was too low “[d]o (sic) to the last 2 liberal regimes in congress, and the many

factors requiring military attention.” A third parent wrote, “If our soldiers need something it should be supplied.”

Joining the military

Fifty percent of responding parents wrote that they would remain neutral if their child came to them upon graduation and indicated a desire to join the military (see Question 15).

Thirty five per cent indicated that they would encourage their child, while 15 percent marked that they would discourage their child.

Asked to explain, one parent who indicated that she would encourage the child to join the military, stated, “If they feel that it is for them, then they should absolutely follow their heart.” Another said, “Support all my child does. There are many benefits to being in the military, an education, travel, income, life- long friends that outweigh the bad.” A third parent wrote, “My family has been in the military careers. I would support whatever my child chooses (sic) and be proud.”

One parent, who offered a neutral response, wrote, “I feel that they are 18 by then and should be able to make their own decisions.” Another said, “It is solely their decision and I would encourage and support that decision.” A third said, “No one should be encouraged to go either way, it should come from their own mind and conscience. Persuading them either way could make them choose the wrong choice for them.” A fourth said, “I think that if that is what they chose to do then it should happen. It’s risky but there is nothing wrong with wanting to serve your country.” Another parent wrote:

It is scary to think that she would want to join the military at the present time because there are so many active duty soldiers being killed. However, in the end

it would be her decision but she would need to be aware of all of the pros and cons of joining.

Table 3. Percentage of parent response to joining the military of child by gender.

Response	Male child	Female child
Encourage	50	30
Neutral	25	60
Discourage	25	10

The findings in Table 3 suggest greater parental neutrality towards female children joining the military in comparison to male children. Traditional gender roles might suggest that female students would be more protected by parents than male students (i.e., that parents might be less willing to support a female student's entry into the military), but these numbers do not suggest that this is true.

A survey completed jointly by both parents included the following statement:

I have raised my children to be and do anything they choose in life. They have no limitations if it is something they want to do. I would encourage them if this was their choice just as I would if they chose college instead. I am from a military family and have been raised on that military pride. I have tried to instill that in my children also. I want them even if they don't choose a military life to support and be proud of those who do.

Military families had a mean score of 60 as to the number of hours military history they believed should taught in dedicated lesson. This slightly more than the 51.5 hours which was the mean for the sample as a whole. Half of the military families would

encourage military service, nearly two in five remained neutral while one in eight would discourage military service. This is in contrast to three out of ten non- military families who encourage military service, somewhat less, while half would remain neutral.

A father wrote:

As I already explained to my son; if your reason to join is sound I will stand by you 100%. Just as my reason to join was. The only reason to join is a feeling of pride in our country, and the willingness to protect our people & way of life. Not being able to find work or to get an education is not a valid reason or excuse to join the service, and shouldn't be allowed from any one.

A mother who said that she would discourage her child's entry in the military wrote simply, "too dangerous." Another mother who also would discourage noted that she was a Jehovah's Witness and then continued:

I have chosen to remain neutral politically. I do not support any gov't's military except thru lawful taxation requirements. No Jehova's Witnesses, in any of 234 countries, takes (sic) up arms against any other country. Our highest citizenship; is to God's Kingdom, which promises world-wide peace at a future date. (Isaiah 2:4). However, I think it is important that my children learn about world history & the role wars have played in the development of the modern world.

A parent who did not mark a preference nonetheless wrote in, "I have two sons in the US military; I encouraged them to go to college first. One did, one did not – yet my second one received excellent training (for employment) for life." One joint response by parents, captured their disagreement, stating "Mom – Discourage – Most of our conflicts are unnecessary. Dad – Neutral."

Twenty-one percent of the participating parents thought the United States should reinstitute the military draft, 26% thought that defense spending was too low and 35% would encourage their child if he or she was to express an intent to join the military. The main findings of this study are that the participating parents thought that more than one fourth of all class time should be devoted to military history. However, out of nineteen selected battles during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, only the battle of Normandy [D-Day] was selected by more than half the parents as warranting a separate dedicated lesson. It is unclear what parents want taught, if not these individual battles. Ninety percent of responding parents thought that teaching about war and teaching about diplomacy were equally important. In addition, more than eight out of ten parents thought that the narration of military history and discussing its causation were equally important. Seventy-six percent thought that images of dead soldiers and dead civilians were acceptable in a ninth or tenth grade classroom, though only 14% thought that images of mutilated corpses were acceptable.

Seventy nine percent of parents thought that we should not reinstitute a draft, with only 21% indicating we should. Fifty-three per cent thought that U.S. military spending was too high, while only 26% thought it was too low, the remaining parents indicating that it was about right. Fifty percent of parents said that they would remain neutral if their child expressed a desire to join the military upon graduation. Taken together, these responses suggest that the sample of parents responding to this instrument were not more militaristic than one would expect, and that the sample was therefore not unrepresentative.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions

The literature review showed that while the public at large values military history, it has increasingly disappeared from classrooms over the course of the last hundred years. This study found that the parents of high school students at two Southeast Ohio schools valued military history, suggesting that in excess of 25% of class time in a modern history course should be devoted to the teaching of military history. This appears to be in excess of what is actually being taught in such survey courses. However, when parents were asked which battles should be taught, only D-Day garnered majority support.

It is not clear what these parents wanted taught as part of the 50 hours of classroom time which they suggested should be devoted to military history, if not these battles. Perhaps they sense that this much military history should be taught, but their own military history education was so poor that they do not know what should be taught. This is suggested by the difference between the 50 hour median response and the almost total lack of majorities for the teaching of any particular battle. Because parents were not asked to differentiate between those events with which they were unfamiliar and those with which they were familiar but which they thought were unworthy of a separate lesson, there is no way to tell if this is the case. Future studies might profit from asking parents to draw such a distinction.

The literature review showed that there is concern with the showing of violent images to children due to believed desensitization as a cause of violent behavior. However, parents in this study seemed largely unconcerned with showing ninth and tenth grade students images of dead soldiers and dead civilians killed as the result of battle. They did draw the line, however, at

images of dead children and mutilated bodies. Parental opinions in this regard seem sound and are not surprising. The large number of violent acts that the average student is exposed to in the media makes any reasonable classroom use of violent imagery pale by comparison.

While the results of this survey must be tempered by the fact that only twenty-one surveys were returned, the concern that this sample represents an unrepresentatively militaristic cross-section seems to be refuted by the fact that a large majority of parents did not support a return of the military draft, 53% thought that military spending is too high in the U.S. (while only 26% thought it was too low), and among the parents whose child might express a desire to join the military, only 35% said that they would encourage joining. Taken together, these statistics seem to refute the idea that the subject sample was unusually pro-militaristic.

Implications

The significance of the findings in this study are limited due the low return rate of 4.7% (21 out of 450) and can therefore only represents the small sample of participants. Future studies should develop a data collection method other sending home surveys with students to solicit parent participation. Future studies may be improved by asking parents to differentiate between those battles or events with which they are unfamiliar and those as to which they have familiarity, but which they do not think should be extensively covered as part of the curriculum. Future studies might also seek to address parents' preferences about the teaching of military history as part of mandatory survey courses as opposed to making such studies part of an elective course on military history, per se.

APPENDIX A

Military History Survey

Please complete this form only if you are the parent or step-parent or guardian of the student bringing you the form.

1. Are you? Male ____

Female ____

Both parents completing the form jointly ____

2. Are you? Caucasian ____

African-American

Hispanic ____

Mixed or Other ____

3. Is your student who brought home this form?

Male ____

Female ____

4. Which high school does he or she attend? _____

5. Over the last few years what have been your student's grades in social studies?

A. Excellent ____

B. Good ____

C. Fair ____

D. Poor ____

6. Have you or any of your student's parents, step-parents or guardians ever served in the active-duty military?

Yes _____

No _____

7. How would you rate your family's economic status?

Poor _____

Middle-class _____

Wealthy _____

8. Assuming that a one-year modern history class will include a total of 180 instructional hours, roughly how many hours would you estimate should be spent on military history? _____

9. Please mark any battle or event which you think is deserving of a separate lesson. If you are unfamiliar with a battle or event, simply leave it blank.

World War I

_____ Battle of Tannenburg

_____ Battle of Gallipoli

_____ Verdun

World War II

_____ Dunkirk

_____ The Battle of Britain

_____ The German invasion of the Soviet Union

_____ Stalingrad

_____ D-Day/Normandy

_____ Pearl Harbor

_____ Midway

_____ Guadalcanal

_____ Leyte Gulf

_____ Iwo Jima

_____ Okinawa

_____ Hiroshima

The Korean War

_____ Inchon

Vietnam

_____ The Tet Offensive

_____ My Lai

Iraq

_____ Fallujah

Other(s)

10. Teachers often choose to use video or still images of warfare or its aftermath. Which images do you think would be appropriate to show students at the ninth or tenth grade level?

_____ Images of dead soldiers

_____ Images of dead civilians

_____ Images of dead children

_____ Images of mutilated corpses

_____ Images of bleached skulls

11. Which do you think is more important, teaching students

About war _____

About diplomacy _____

Both are equally important _____

12. Do you think it is more important to teach students about

The causes and effects of wars _____

The narrative of what happened during the war _____

Both are equally important _____

13. Do you think that the U.S. should reinstitute a military draft ?

Yes _____

No _____

Please explain why:

14. Do you think that the United States defense spending is

Too high _____

About right _____

Too low _____

Please explain why:

15. If, upon graduation from high school, your child were to express a desire to enter the military, would you:

___ Encourage it

___ Discourage it

___ Remain neutral

Please explain why:

Thank you for your time. Please send this form directly to me in the postage pre-paid envelope provided.

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