

Scene on Radio
Warriors (MEN, Part 6)

<http://www.sceneonradio.org/episode-52-warriors-men-part-6/>

John Biewen: Celeste, have you seen the movie, *The Magnificent Seven*? The 2016 remake, with Denzel Washington?

Celeste Headlee: Yeah I've seen it. I thought it as well-made, it was a good cast. Pretty forgettable.

John Biewen: I think I might have had a similar reaction, if I'd just watched it for fun on any old Saturday night. But I happened to watch it while I was doing research for this series on men and masculinity. And ... I gotta tell you. This movie just shouted at me. For people who haven't seen it...

[Movie: background music:]

Guy: What kind of man are you?

John Biewen: It's the story of a little town in 1870s America, somewhere in the west.

[Movie audio]

Guy, continued: What'd these people ever do to you?!

Celeste Headlee: Right, an evil robber baron and his henchmen have taken over the town of Rose Creek, extorting people out of their land and labor. And killing people with no hesitation.

[Movie: Booming gunshot. Hubbub, woman cries out.]

John Biewen: A young woman from the town, played by Haley Bennett, seeks out Sam Chisholm – played by Denzel Washington.

[Movie audio]

Bennett: Mister! Mister!

Celeste Headlee: Denzel's character is a kind of government bounty hunter, and of course he's good with a gun. The young woman asks him to get rid of the robber baron, to free her town, and she offers a satchel of money.

[Movie audio]

Denzel: What's this?

Bennett: Everything we have. It's what it's worth to us.

Denzel: Been offered a lot for my work, but never everything.

Bennett: That man murdered my husband. Killed him dead in the middle of the street.

Denzel: So you seek revenge.

Bennett: I seek righteousness, as should we all. But I'll take revenge.

Celeste Headlee: It's an old-fashioned morality play. Good guys versus bad guys.

John Biewen: Yep. And it's gonna be a war. Denzel's character puts together a team of highly-skilled killers.

[Movie audio]

Denzel: We're lookin' for some men, Mr. Horne. Some good men, like yourself.

Celeste Headlee: And here, the 2016 update really stands out from original, the classic 1960 version. That one featured Yul Brynner and six other white guys.

John Biewen: Yeah, quite a collection of manly Hollywood white dudes of the time. Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson, James Coburn.

[MUSIC]

Celeste Headlee: In the new version it's a rainbow coalition. The African American Denzel Washington is in charge, and he recruits three white guys but also a Mexican, a Chinese man who's a wizard with knives, and a young Comanche, in war paint, shooting arrows.

John Biewen: It's not very subtle, it's kinda ham-handed. But the filmmakers are clearly saying, on race and ethnicity, this is not your granddaddy's *Magnificent Seven*. We are celebrating diversity in the Old West.

Celeste Headlee: Right. But I think I see where you're going with this. On *gender*, in the new version, it's still pretty much 1960. For starters, you basically have a damsel in distress, asking men to solve her problem.

John Biewen: And to solve it with violence. The young woman, Emma, returns to the town with Denzel's seven guys, and after the dream team has wiped out the first batch of the robber baron's men...

[Sound: gunfire, mayhem]

John Biewen: ... Emma explains to her fellow townsfolk what she's done.

[Movie audio]

Bennett: Come on. Don't be afraid. I have assembled these men, and offered fair pay.

Old man: Who picked you to deal on our behalf?

Bennett: Seems I was the only one with balls enough to do so. So I did.

Celeste Headlee: Just to make it explicit that standing up for yourself, or fighting back, is a thing that *men* do. Men with balls. Then again, this is the 21st century version of the movie, so the young woman is fiery. Spunky, to use one of those words that a sexist culture uses to describe tough women. Emma even takes a rifle and joins the fight when the time comes.

John Biewen: Yes. Although she's the only woman in town who does that. The rest hide in a cellar with the children.

Celeste Headlee: Of course.

[Sound: Shooting, horse whinny, groans, dramatic music]

John Biewen: The last half hour of the movie is a war – the seven heroes and the townspeople who’ve decided to fight with them, against the robber baron’s small army.

Celeste Headlee: It is mayhem. People are shot, cut up with knives and hatchets, pierced with arrows, blown up with dynamite, mowed down with a Gatling gun.

John Biewen: Bodies everywhere. Four of the seven heroes are killed, too, but of course they win the war – in another little nod to feminism, Emma actually fires the shot that takes out the robber baron to save Denzel. The heroes restore the town to the people – those who’ve survived, anyway.

[Somber, noble music, horse snort]

John Biewen: As Denzel and his two surviving buddies ride out of town, he touches his cowboy hat as he passes the young woman.

[Movie audio]

Denzel: Miss Emma?

Bennett: Thank you.

Celeste Headlee: Oh, and it ends with that voiceover by Emma.

John Biewen: Yeah. It's the first and only time she speaks to the audience.

Bennett: Whatever they were in life, here, at the end, each man stood with courage and honor. They fought for the ones who couldn't fight for themselves, and they died for them, too. All to win something that didn't belong to them. It was ... magnificent.

[Music: Theme from The Magnificent Seven]

Celeste Headlee: Yeah. It really is a celebration of violence, though not just violence for the sake of it. These guys were fighting injustice, standing up for what's right.

John Biewen: Absolutely. You might be detecting some snark in the way I'm describing this and setting it up. But if I said I was completely unmoved by the idea of men putting themselves on the line, and even sacrificing their lives, to fight and defend a community, I'd be lying.

Celeste Headlee: I mean, it's central to the way our culture, and almost all cultures, have defined manhood and the role of real men: The willingness and the ability to go to war. To fight and die to defend your people – your tribe, your nation. Women! There's nothing more manly than that.

[MUSIC: Theme]

John Biewen: From the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University and PRX, this is *Scene on Radio*. Part Six of our series, MEN.

Celeste Headlee: A season-long exploration of gender, masculinity, patriarchy. I'm Celeste Headlee.

John Biewen: I'm John Biewen. In this episode: men, women, and war.

Celeste Headlee: So, sure, the military has traditionally been one of the purest male domains, one that has often excluded women, except in support roles. But besides pointing that out, what else is there to say, for the purposes of this project, anyway? What can we learn about the nature of masculinity, as it's been constructed up to now, by looking at military life and warfare?

John Biewen: It turns out, I think, one way to see masculinity in a fresh way is to look at it in the military context, including through the eyes of women who enter that world. Which of course is happening more and more. For this episode, I asked Barry Lam if we could borrow something he produced for his podcast. Barry is a philosophy professor at Vassar, and he makes this very good show, Hi-Phi Nation. It combines storytelling with ideas, and it seemed to me this piece he made would fit right in to our MEN series.

Celeste Headlee: Barry's episode sheds light on the role of gender in war, and the role of war in gender. So let's turn things over to Barry Lam, and then we'll talk some more.

Barry Lam: The 2016 class at West Point got some surprising news halfway through their senior year. Ashton Carter, the previous Secretary of Defense under President Obama, opened up the combat arms, infantry, armor, and field artillery, to all genders. The women of West Point, part of the leadership class of the army, suddenly had options open to them they didn't think they had, even though combat arms was always part of their training. 2016 was looking like an important year of progress for women, and all of West Point's women had important decisions to make.

[SOUND: Skype call dialing, getting answered]

Zoe Crichtonburg: Hi, I'm Lieutenant Zoe Crichtonburg. I graduated from West Point in May 2016. I'm an air defense artillery officer. We had a three-star general come in and speak to the class about his principles of leadership. He had all thousands of us print out a handout with like his main speaking points. number one on the page, nothing else had to be read before reading this. Number one, be a man. And actually at the bottom of the page in a footnote, "I don't mean be a man in a gendered way, I mean it as like be responsible or be an adult." Well the fact that you like pointed out that there's a problem with that phrase indicates that there's probably a problem with that phrase.

Barry Lam: Zoe tried her best to conceal our displeasure, but that military skill was still a work in progress.

Zoe Crichtonburg: He asked me directly, "what did you think of my talk?" I

told him that I understand his point about being a responsible adult and I think that like perhaps that would be better received if that's what he said, but that's not what he said and that you can't throw a footnote on the phrase "be a man" and say that it's not gender because "be a man" is inherently gendered.

Barry Lam: Zoe was with a female classmate at the time who asked the general during the talk about that very issue.

Zoe Crichtonburg: His response was, "the Army is a male-dominated organization. It always has been. It always will be. It's the laws of physics." and "the laws of physics" was a direct quote, I distinctly remember that.

Barry Lam: That's one perspective of why there aren't more women in army leadership: it's a law of nature. There's another possibility.

Naomi Mercer: West Point artificially kept their admissions of women at fifteen percent for many years. If they did gender-blind admissions, I think that it'd probably be more like seventy percent women.

Barry Lam: Lieutenant Colonel Naomi Mercer was an English professor at West Point. She's now at the Pentagon, overseeing the integration of women into the combat arms. Colonel Mercer taught at West Point many years ago, then spent years on various other assignments including a deployment to Iraq before getting a PhD at the University of Wisconsin and returning to West Point to teach for another three years.

Naomi Mercer: I had to fly to Baghdad twice to take the GRE subject exam in literature and then the general exam. One time, we got shot at.

Barry Lam: During, while you were taking the GREs?

Naomi Mercer: No, while I was on the helicopter on the way to Baghdad, so I was like the badass graduate student in my program at the University of Wisconsin because I'd been shot at on the way to the GREs. In the cadets' minds, I'm the feminist, scare quotes around that: "the feminist." I've told my classes that the average male cadet is less qualified to be here than the average female cadet. And so the ones that are kind of average are kind of like, "you mean I wouldn't be here if admissions were gender-blind?" and I'm like, "yeah," because the women who apply here are really good. The women who apply to West Point want the challenge. They want something different.

Barry Lam: Really? Is it possible that if the military academies were a true meritocracy that we would be getting close to seventy percent women officers? What about the larger army in general? Could it be that there are a lot more women warriors out there who are better than a lot of male warriors and they're kept down? Or is it the laws of physics? You should take Colonel Mercer's numbers with a grain of salt; admissions at any college, let alone an elite military academy, are black boxes. All kinds of things are taken into consideration besides academic achievement, but here's what's definitely true: military service has been, traditionally, in just about every culture, considered to be for men and not women, so it wouldn't be surprising for gatekeepers at the premiere military institutions

of this country to think that men make better soldiers and military leaders, while at the same time, recognizing that coming out of high school, women show higher achievement at all levels. Maybe there's something unfair about the fact that there aren't more women in the army, but there's another way to look at it: maybe preventing more women from fighting is a way of keeping men down. Why should men be the sole bearers of the burden to engage in violent conflict on behalf of their country?

[Song: "Men," by Loudon Wainwright III: Every man's a general, men go off to war, the battlefield's a man's world, cannon fodder's what they're for....]

[BREAK]

Joshua Goldstein: I'm Joshua Goldstein. I'm an emeritus professor of international relations at the American University in Washington, DC.

Barry Lam: Joshua Goldstein wrote a book called *War and Gender*, which was considered book of the decade in international relations for the decade 2000-2010. The central question of the book is why war is divided so neatly and absolutely along gender lines across all cultures. The first explanation people usually reach for is biology; men are naturally bigger, stronger and more violent than women. But this explanation has its limits. For one, it cites a statistical fact, not an absolute one.

Joshua Goldstein: The puzzle here isn't why most war fighters would be men. If you want the best army, it's going to be more men than women.

The puzzle is, if you take the strongest, fastest, most aggressive women, they'll be way stronger, faster, more aggressive than the bottom end of the men's curve. Why don't you use the top end of that woman's bell curve, the fastest, strongest women, and instead, draw deep into the bad end, if you will, of the men's curve and exclude women?

Barry Lam: Lieutenant Zoe Crichtonburg.

Zoe Crichtonburg: My whole cadet career, from freshman year to the end of junior year, I didn't see myself as embodying what the army saw as a personality to go combat arms. I didn't see myself as, like, the drink Monster, chew tobacco, drive an F-150.

[Ford truck clip.]

Zoe Crichtonburg: Summer into first year, senior year, I did CLDT, which is the hardest field training that West Point offers and I like really got into it. I remember on our first rock march, someone chose me to be the point person, the person who leads the rock march and does land-nav and we were carrying all of our stuff for eight days, but I guess that I was going kind of fast and didn't realize it, so then the first sergeant who was with us, he came up to where I was at and called halt so he could come let the people who were struggling take a break. There were a few guys who were like clearly not pleased to find out that they couldn't keep up with a girl. Ultimately, that experience was important for me because it helped me appreciate that I can do it and that I was better at it than a lot of the people who I had previously envisioned doing that.

Barry Lam: Now we have a fuller picture of Zoe's encounter with the general. We have a young cadet who discovered she's a good leader in infantry training; it's the very first year women are allowed to opt into infantry and she's having a conversation with someone at the top, telling everyone that you need to be a man to be a military leader.

Zoe Crichtonburg: And actually, at the bottom of the page, like footnote, "I don't mean be a man in a gendered way; I mean it as like be responsible or be an adult."

Barry Lam: I actually don't think "be a man" means anything like "be a responsible adult," so I'm with Zoe on this one. True, "be a man" can be used to tell a male a lot of different things in different contexts, but "be a man" definitely means something gendered. It means, be the traits that we associate with manhood. But I'm surprised that the general didn't just concede that point; why didn't he just admit that it meant something gendered? And that it was important for him to say something gendered? At least he could have had a conversation about whether military leadership was gendered, rather than argue about whether that phrase could be used in an ungendered way. This general's attitude that being a military leader requires being a man. It's not like he's alone in thinking this.

Joshua Goldstein: What the pattern of history shows across the board is that it's really hard to get men to fight; it's not a natural thing. So, just look at the pervasiveness of conscription through history; you have to draft men into the army and then, when it actually comes time to fight, a lot of armies

have used either drugs or the rum ration in the British Army, a lot of these militias in Africa and recent civil wars giving various combinations of drugs, amphetamines and then after the fact, people are very traumatized by it. Societies, cultures have to work at men from childhood. One of the strong motivations that a lot of cultures have found effective is this appeal to gender, that you're not a real man unless you can fight in a war and so we raise boys to be tough, to not cry, and to suppress their feelings, except for anger; anger is okay, but sadness and stuff, not supposed to feel it, not supposed to show it. Man up, tough it out, soldier on, and after year after year after that, then they're ready to put into the military and they'll be able to do these unnatural horrible things and follow their orders. We could do that with women, as well, but it would undermine the appeal to men that they're proving their manhood. When women have gone in the military, sometimes the men say, "hey, if a woman can do this job, then what's that make me? I thought I was proving what a man I was."

Barry Lam: Goldstein became interested in the provocative idea that the need to prepare men for the violence of war is where our ideas of manhood come from. This idea runs counter to the view that men are in some ways, biologically or naturally, violent and aggressive and that they are the source or cause of war. Instead, Goldstein likes the view that a culture perceives a need for its members to engage in violent force on its behalf and it fulfills this need by establishing for its members that the traits that make a good man are the very ones that make a good soldier.

Tom Digby: My name is Tom Digby. I am professor emeritus of philosophy at Springfield College in Springfield, Massachusetts. The book is titled *Love*

and War: How Militarism Shapes Sexuality and Romance.

Barry Lam: In Digby's book, he finds three important norms of manhood that he thinks follow directly from the norms for being a good warrior.

Tom Digby: The number one requirement actually, of a warrior is to be able to manage the capacity to care about the suffering of others and of himself. You care deeply about the people you're fighting with, but you don't care at all about the suffering of the people you're fighting against.

Barry Lam: Selective empathy. You have controlled and marked empathetic care for those in your community, under your protection, and none at all for those outside of it. The second Digby calls a faith in masculine force.

Tom Digby: You know I describe it sometimes more broadly as just a faith in force. For example, when a man is expected to be able to unscrew the lid from pickle jar, there's this assumption that men are strong and forceful and able to do forceful things.

Barry Lam: The idea is that a real man, a good man, the norms for a man include the capacity to solve problems using physical force, but this faith in force also means that the society itself seeks out masculine force to be the solution to its problems. The counterpart to the norms for masculinity that derived from the warrior are the complementary norms for femininity.

Joshua Goldstein: The woman is going to represent the normalcy of

society; while the men are fighting wars, the women will be maintaining civilization, the kind of things that the men can feel like, “I'm fighting for my girl back home” and the whole way of life that she represents, so that's sort of how it's been structured as a way to motivate the men.

Barry Lam: If Goldstein and Digby are right and part of the very standards for being a good man are the traits for being a good soldier and built into the norms for being a woman are only complementary or supportive traits, then the disadvantages that women face in trying to be soldiers are going to be deeper than just physical ones.

[Sound: Skype calling, pick up]

Veronica Bryant: My name is Veronica Bryant or in the Army I guess, second lieutenant Veronica Bryant.

Barry Lam: Veronica Bryant was also class of 2016 at West Point.

Veronica Bryant: We have a commandant and the nickname for the commandant is com. The nickname for the superintendent is soup. We just recently appointed our first female commandant and everyone calls her the Mamandant or mom and they follow it with mom jokes. When she does something strict, which is the commandant's place, to enforce rules for cadets, you know she's automatically a bitch. It's like those people forgot she's a one-star general.

Naomi Mercer: What I do see in the gendered language and this is across

the army is the use of the word “females.” The use of it as a noun, especially in a military setting, is particularly derogatory. When I was in a basic training companies as the XO, all the drill sergeants, they'd be like, “hey female” when they would be calling it a soldier and I was like, “you got to stop doing that” and they're like, “why? You know, that's how we distinguish them from others” and I'm like, “you say, ‘hey black’ when there's a black and a white guy standin' there?” and since half of those drill sergeants were black they immediately got it.

Veronica Bryant: I'm very very conscientious (sic) of being a woman now. I really struggled with my staff and sort of giving instructions and making sure things are getting done. And we're having this meeting with our OIC or Officer in Charge and he finally looked at one of them said, “do you think you have problems taking direction from Veronica because she's a black woman who's small?” I'm only five-feet tall. And two of them just point-blank, without even thinking, were like, “yeah, probably.”

Barry Lam: These kinds of stories are very common when you hear from women going through military training and they make a lot more sense to me now. To be a man is to be a good warrior and to be a man is to not be a woman, so it's going to be really hard for women soldiers to be seen as soldiers rather than as the very thing that defines them in opposition to soldiers: women, procreators, moms, little sisters. And this is even true in the context when you're training the woman to be a soldier, or even when the woman is your commanding officer.

Graham Parsons: So I'm Graham Parsons. I'm assistant professor in the

department of English and philosophy at West Point. Masculinity is so salient in the culture, in the mannerisms that are seen as good, what makes you seem like a leader, seem like an officer. It's undeniable that gender is playing a part in that. I don't think including women undermines the masculine character of the office. If you look at a lot of the accounts of women who have served and served well, they've done well, they've really flourished in the military, they often describe their experience as becoming one of the guys in a really deep sense. So, they describe changing how they carry themselves, how they talk, how they walk and they adopt the accoutrement of manliness. That's really interesting; it confirms my view that masculinity is a big part of it, but it also shows that there is an added barrier to gender inclusion in the military; it's not just a matter of adding women; there's some deeper change that would need to occur to be completely gender-integrated.

Naomi Mercer: There's a large population of women in the Army that, for want of a better term, are very butch-presenting and I also think that the women who have a more masculine appearance have an easier time of it with some of the men.

Barry Lam: Lieutenant Veronica Bryant.

Veronica Bryant: Pretty or feminine is seen as a weakness, so women who wear makeup are at many times, not always, but many times assumed to be lesser-quality officers, less serious, less ambitious; they call it “parade-pretty” kind of, is what they say when a woman is wearing makeup, things like that, and that a woman who is very stern-looking and serious,

not wearing makeup, and has shorter hair is obviously, you know, there for business.

Joshua Goldstein: Boys who act girl-like or generally don't conform to the norms, and I'm talking about young boys here, they will just be squashed. They're called sissies, which is short for sister, originally. They'll be taunted and teased and their fathers will come down on them. By contrast, girls who become tomboys, play with boys, dress like boys, enjoy those boy-like activities, those tomboys will be pretty well-accepted by both genders and they can come back to their girl friends and like, "oh yeah, you're still cool; you're one of us." So why is that asymmetry the case? And I think it's pretty obvious that girls that go over to the tomboy side are no threat to the society's ability to fight a war if it needs to. On the contrary, they might get in there and help with it, but boys who allow themselves to fall off the path of toughness that's going to lead to being a soldier someday, they are a threat because not only will they be unavailable to fight the war, but they could set a bad example for other boys and then you're going to start to lose your soldiers.

Barry Lam: There's one more feature of masculinity that I haven't mentioned. It's such an important norm for a warrior that it's the only one of the traits that has more than just cultural pressures pushing boys in that direction. There's actually a Supreme Court ruling and an entire legal infrastructure built around imposing it.

Graham Parsons: Soldiers don't exist in the same political and legal space as the rest of us. There's a Supreme Court decision from 1890 called the

Grimley decision and it says very clearly that to enlist in the armed forces is to change your status, your civil status, and interestingly, it finds one other contract that is analogous and that's the marriage contract, which turns a woman into a wife and she loses any civil standing she may have had before and becomes obligated to be faithful to her husband. I can imagine all sorts of other institutions who would love to offer contracts like this to their people, right, like Walmart would love to have contracts to give to their employees where they give away their basic civil liberties and they're subject to a totally different legal code, it's like Walmart law with Walmart cops and courts and stuff and I bet you people would sign those contracts if there's income involved, but we wouldn't allow that contract. What we would object to is the very nature of that relationship; something seems wrong about that kind of relationship, but in the military, we allow contracts like that. I think it's masculinity, that in large part, legitimates this unique contract, this military contract. We think men should be self-sacrificial protectors of the community and we allow them to engage in contracts that make them such a thing. Another thing that's quite interesting is that this masculinity not only makes their personal interests subordinate to the interests of the community, but their liberty, as well; they're not these free independent beings that normally we associate with masculinity. And I think this is pretty interesting because my understanding of the literature on masculinity doesn't really highlight this feature of masculinity, or doesn't even see this as a feature of masculinity, this subordination. Usually, masculinity is associated with domination, so your masculinity can be affirmed by being subordinate to the commands of another.

Barry Lam: Here's how you give up your liberty as a soldier: No speaking

against, criticizing or openly protesting your commanders, president, or government. You have to run these opinions and who you will talk to about them through the Army first, have them clear it or forbid it. Do the job you're asked to do, not the one you want or are good at. Have the haircut and clothing you're asked to have. Most importantly, for every soldier, the state, and not you, own your right to life and bodily integrity. The state determines whether you can come or go from a job, a residence, a country. Change the words in these rules as existing not between a government and its soldiers, but between husbands, fathers, brothers, men, and other women, and they look just like rules for strict patriarchies.

Graham Parsons: The household has been separated from civil society, and women as mothers, as wives have not been given equal civil standing to men. Maybe the military can be seen as similar. It's kind of the masculine counterpart to the traditional household space where men as men have been separated from civil society and used for the community's ends.

Zoe Crichtonburg: Number One, Be a Man.

Barry Lam: I'm sure the irony isn't lost on lieutenant Crichtonburg. The traits for ideal manhood in militaristic cultures include the traits for ideal womanhood in patriarchal cultures. When the general said "be a man," part of the meaning of that is "be a woman," it's actually a written opinion of the Supreme Court. And the repercussions include many pernicious side effects for men as well as for women.

Graham Parsons: But there is this kind of gendered oppression that men

have endured, and it has a lot to do with violence. And you see this not just in the military, but men are much more likely to be the victims of violent crime than women. The pressure to engage in injurious sports. I am saying that men as men have been asked to do something quite burdensome.

Barry Lam: Tom Digby.

Tom Digby: The higher suicide level, the fact that men die at younger ages. One explanation that I've sometimes considered is that men simply don't take care of themselves as well. They don't take care of their health, they don't seek medical help, and they don't seek emotional help.

Barry Lam: Which brings us to the ultimate reason why men and women have been divided in war.

Tom Digby: If a lot of men get killed you can still replenish the population one man can produce lots of offspring but a woman can produce far fewer offspring. So men are more expendable, basically.

Barry Lam: Digby thinks internalizing this sense of your life and health, being expendable in the service of your community, is what helps explain the masculine norms of toughness, and the side effects this has on men in civilian life.

Tom Digby: It seems to me that men are culturally programmed to sacrifice their health and their lives. The kind of emotional makeup that's needed for war is not something you can just turn on or off like a light

switch.

Barry Lam: I finally have a better understanding of what it is to be a man. For a couple generations now, feminists have been calling attention to how much norms of femininity have been tied to women sacrificing their self-interests and autonomy in the service of reproductive ideals like wifedom and motherhood. But manhood, derived from the traits of a warrior, also turns out to include sacrificing your autonomy and well-being, but instead in the service of violence. Which makes me see women soldiers in a new light. They have to work around and against two types of subservience, those surrounding being a woman, and those surrounding being a soldier.

[MUSIC]

Celeste Headlee: Barry Lam, of the Hi-Phi Nation podcast. That's H-I, dash P-H-I, Nation. This is Celeste and John, back again.

John Biewen: Celeste, I'm curious how it strikes you, as a woman, this idea that men are more expendable, because of how human reproduction works. In a pinch you wouldn't need a lot of men to keep reproducing your tribe, but women are more essential as child-bearers. So, the speculation is, maybe that's part of the reason men got assigned the job of fighting and dying on behalf of our tribes and nations, and women were traditionally excluded, even though some women are stronger and faster and potentially better warriors than some men.

Celeste Headlee: That kind of lends support to that womb envy theory that we talked about in Part One, right? And it really emphasizes the fact that men are often victims of patriarchy and toxic masculinity. Women were somewhat brainwashed to believe their place was in the home, and men were manipulated to believe they were born to violence.

John Biewen: It adds an interesting wrinkle to the womb envy idea, doesn't it. Maybe men were not only *envious* of women's wondrous child-bearing capabilities back in the day, but maybe guys were also resentful of being made cannon fodder because they couldn't do that thing that women do. In any case, yes, Barry's piece does start to bring up some ways in which patriarchy, as we've constructed it, comes with heavy costs for men. Those professors, Graham Parsons and Tom Digby, talked about the fact that men don't live as long, commit suicide more often, are less likely to take good care of ourselves. And they link that to men's association with a culture of violence and war. And, again, that sense of being expendable.

Celeste Headlee: So, you're a man. Does this all ring true to you?

John Biewen: Not so much for me personally, in a direct way. Military is sort of like hunting, it sort of runs in families. For better or worse I didn't grow up in a family with a recent history of military service. My dad just missed the Korean War, and my parents actively opposed the Vietnam War when I was a kid. So I never saw myself in that soldier mode. But I do see it in a lot of men, even those of us who never thought of joining the military. Sports were a big part of my life for a long time. And I'm not the first to point out that sports in some ways are often a kind of extension of military

culture for men in particular. There's a culture of toughing it out, not wanting to fuss over your health or eat terribly well or go to the doctor, and just take whatever comes. I do see that as being part of that larger cowboy, warrior mentality.

Celeste Headlee: One more thing that struck me. Professor Goldstein's argument that most men are not naturally violent or brave in the face of a horrible thing like war. So men have to be trained, and also sometimes drugged or liquored up, to go out and kill other people. And we really see the effects of that, it was called shellshock in past decades and PTSD now, but the suicide rate among veterans is 22 percent higher than the rest of the public.

John Biewen: I agree with Goldstein that warfare is "unnatural" for most humans, including most men. And that's not a contradiction with what Mel Konner says, going back to Part 2 of our series. He said the people who *are* violent are much more likely to be men than women – which is certainly true – and he thinks that's partly biological, which is a controversial point. But what Konner didn't say is that all men are naturally violent or that *most* men are naturally violent.

Celeste Headlee: So to train a man, or a person of any gender, to offer up their lives and *take* other lives in war, is not only unnatural, it's brutal. It is brutalizing to the human spirit, and it can have terrible consequences not only for those soldiers but for the people who will live with them for the rest of their lives. And because the broader culture of masculinity is so heavily

grounded in those military values, most men get some dose of it, whether they ever come close to serving in the military or not.

John Biewen: We're supposed to be tough, not feel too much, take violence in stride. In that movie we started this episode with, *The Magnificent Seven*, there are a lot of moments like this. One of the heroes, played by Chris Pratt, has just seen a man shot in a bar. Here's what he says.

[Movie audio]

Pratt: Dan, you dead? (Silence.) Pity. I had just ordered a drink from him.

Celeste Headlee: This glorification of violence is what convinces especially young men that brutality is not just cool, but necessary to be a man. Probably the most tragic aspect of male dominance is the way in which so many human societies have normalized violence and war. We treat it like it's natural and inevitable – even noble and good, because we've been taught to associate it with male virtue.

John Biewen: I'm with you. I probably don't qualify as a true pacifist. But the fact that we ever see war as anything but a failure and a tragedy, that can change. And we need to change it.

Celeste Headlee: It'll change right along with the dismantling of the patriarchy.

[MUSIC]

John Biewen: I hope y'all have subscribed, because we're only about halfway through this series. Next time: Himpathy. When men do terrible things ... and no one much cares.

Celeste Headlee: John Barth signs off on our scripts. Music by Alex Weston, and by Evgueni and Sacha Galperine, [and Blue Dot Sessions]. Music and production help from Joe Augustine of Narrative Music.

John Biewen: Keep those ratings and reviews coming, and thanks. They help us move up the charts so more listeners can discover the show. Find transcripts and other info at sceneonradio.org. The show comes from the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, and PRX.