War Fought and Felt: The Influence of Interpersonal Relationships on Confederate Soldier Motivations in the American Civil War

by

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Abstract

The field of American Civil War soldier studies has witnessed a revival over the past forty years. Scholars have zeroed in particularly on the motivations of soldiers, couching their reasons for fighting as either ideological or socio-cultural. This dissertation stands at the nexus of these two explanations. While drawing elements from both, it primarily examines Confederate soldiers through the lenses of masculinity, emotion, and their interplay through the lens of relationships. For white southern males in the pre-war period, masculinity was an ideal to which they aspired. It dictated that men had to be masters of their emotions as well as of their relationships. The ideal man was emotionally staid and a master and head of his family, which for some at least rhetorically included their slaves. The foundations of this ideal were slowly eroding in the years leading up to the American Civil War, however. The origins of its decay were in the broad swath of cultural, ideological, and religious movements that swept the national landscape from the mid-eighteenth century through the outbreak of war in 1861.

When white Southern men initially marched off to war, they took with them masculine and martial ideals that undergirded their romantic notions of war and the importance of their service. Soon, the astonishing brutality and bloodletting of the war broke men and eroded the stoic and self-reliant masculine ideal. Soldiers turned to their comrades, their wives and sweethearts, and their children for emotional strength and support. Those individuals provided an emotional bulwark for Confederate soldiers which helped buffer the corrosive effects of war on soldier morale, self-worth, and even national identity. Furthermore, they kept the soldier tethered to his humanity and often kept him from losing his sense of self and individual identity within large Civil War armies.

This dissertation argues that the American Civil War represented an emotional and masculine epoch in the history of Southern men, one that compelled them to both receive and express intimacy with their families and comrades on a level which ran contrary to the prevailing pre-war cultural dictates. It does so specifically by examining three major concentric rings of human relationships ranging from the least to the greatest level of intimacy: friendship (relationships between soldiers), familial relationships (primarily between soldier-fathers and their children), and romantic relationships (between husbands and wives, or beaus and sweethearts). It is based on the careful study of 1,790 letters exchanged between 200 soldiers and 366 family members, fifteen friends, and seven sweethearts. Primary sources also provide a statistical analysis of the number of expressions of emotion, descriptions of battle, religious declarations, inquiries and references to children, and expressions of ideology, in order to understand what was most prevalent and most important to the common soldier.

This dissertation finds that contrary to prevailing historical assumptions, Confederate soldiers were *very* emotionally expressive. As the war progressed, they did not seem concerned with maintaining the masculine ideal of emotional stoicism. Confederate soldiers expressed emotion or affection over twice as much as they made inquiries or references to their children, four times more than they made religious declarations, eleven times more than they provided descriptions of battle, and nineteen times more than they expressed ideology or spoke of duty. Furthermore, the primary source base for this dissertation provides written historical evidence from periods during and after the war and compares these sources with the more common historical interpretation of white Southern males during the war. During the period of Reconstruction, the emotional stoicism, rigid patriarchy, and desire for dominance that pervaded

the masculine consciousness in the years leading up to the war made a virulent reappearance, one that would forever alter the course of the United States.

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In writing a dissertation, one is struck by how much such seemingly individualistic endeavors require the help of a village. Throughout the frustrating, grueling, and seemingly endless process of producing this body of work, I have lived the bizarre paradox of writing on the history of emotions while also experiencing the entire gamut of human emotion from intense frustration to joyful feelings of elation and discovery. Alone, the production of this monograph was impossible, but with the help, encouragement, and patience of my family, friends, professors, and God, this dissertation is now presented in its final form.

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Introduction: Toward a New View of Soldier Motivations

In 1996, sociologist Michael Kimmel published his controversial *Manhood in America: A Cultural History.* His provocative argument that "American men have no history" seemingly represented a paradoxical counterpoint to three decades of scholarly research that had made "gender studies" popular. The idea that American men were somehow underrepresented in the field of historical inquiry was almost laughable considering that since time of Herodotus—considered to be the "Father of History"—men have been the primary focus of historical writing. On its face, Kimmel's assertion does not make historical sense until one realizes that he is not actually arguing for an underrepresentation of men in history, but rather that traditional historical "works do not explore how the experience of being a man, of *manhood*, structured the lives of the men who are their subjects, the organizations and institutions they created and staffed, the events in which they participated. American men have no history of themselves *as men*." In other words, men may have been the traditional focal point of male historians--at least until the mid-twentieth century--but scholars have done relatively little work on understanding the history of what it means to be an American male.

Kimmel further maintains that at least part of the reason for this discrepancy is that the history of American manhood was written primarily by women who approach the subject through the eyes of female historical actors and their experience with societal ideals of masculinity. Borne out of the feminist movement, he maintains, they defined "masculinity" as "the drive for power, for domination, for control" while arguing that "men's relationships with women were the pivotal relationship in the lives of both women and men." In other words, manhood was always defined by one's relationship to both males and *particularly* females throughout America's relatively brief history. Kimmel eventually painted a somewhat different

picture. American men, he asserts, did not so much want to dominate others as much as they were motivated by the *fear* of being dominated themselves.[1]

On this point, psychologist and neuroscientist Ralph Adolphs argues for a "functional concept of fear" which defines the "emotion in terms of being caused by particular patterns of threat-related stimuli and in turn causing particular patterns of adaptive behaviors to avoid or cope with that threat." Fear in this sense is not only a response to a perceived external threat, but also an internal motivator to act in response to it. The idea of fear as an incentive to action represents an important component to understanding the totality of the impulses and movement of actors throughout history. Historians usually attempt to understand external stimuli as well as their concurrent behavioral responses without explaining the bridge of emotion between them. "Fear," as Adolphs writes, "is what links sets of stimuli to patterns of behavior."[2]

Recently, the history of emotions such as fear has gained more credence among historians, and the nexus between external stimuli and behavioral responses has garnered more attention. In 1941, French Annales historian Lucien Febvre "appealed to fellow historians to place emotions at the centre of their work, encouraging them to overcome any hesitation concerning the discipline of psychology when studying feelings of the past." Fabvre further argued that historians had long included emotions in their studies only in an anachronistic manner, by imposing "ideas of emotion drawn from their own time on former periods, without considering whether there might have been a shift in conceptions related to any one feeling in the meantime." Fabrve argued for the analysis of the change over time of representations of feeling

1. Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 1-4.
2. Ralph Adolphs, "The Biology of Fear." *Current Biology* 23, (2013), 79-80.

over the centuries, and he would be the first to outline the contours of what would later become the scholarly study of the history of emotions.[3]

In the period following the Second World War, as psychoanalysis and psychotherapy took a much more entrenched role in western society, scholars sometimes sprinkled the history of emotions among works of economic, social, labor, and gender history. The history of emotions was not a specific subfield of history until much later. In the 1970s, "psychohistory" emphasized the importance of emotions, but the profession at large generally viewed it and the wider history of emotions with skepticism. It was not until 1985, when historian Peter N. Stearns and historian and psychiatrist Carol Z. Stearns proposed "a strict distinction between the individual experience of emotion and emotional norms, making the latter the prime object of study"—what they called "emotionology"—that historians began to take greater notice of the history of emotions.[4]

Surprisingly, Al Qaeda's terror attacks in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001 provided the greatest impetus to broader acceptance among historians of the history of emotions. The intense emotional communication surrounding the attacks, questions about the motivations of the terrorists, and the deaths of almost 3,000 Americans accelerated the American academy away from its linguistic post-structuralism of a subjective reality of emotion toward a psycho-biological, "life-science"-based explanations for emotions. As historian Jan Plamper noted, "If one adheres to the fiction of a zero hour, and seeks a history that starts with a clear beginning, if therefore we are to look for the birthplace of today's history of emotions, then it is in Manhattan on the morning of 11 September 2001." Ever since, the history of emotions has

3. Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 40-41.

4. Ibid., 53-58.

become its own subfield of history as well as an important tool used by economic, social, political, and social historians.[5]

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One subgenre of history that has seen little research on the influence of emotions, however, is the field of military history—even among socially-oriented military historians. The roots of this omission stretch back to the fifth century Greeks who were responsible for the emergence of history as a discipline. According to historians Stephen Morillo and Michael Pavkovic, the "Greeks saw history as…a search for causes of current events…and also as a rhetorical art for conveying its findings comparable to drama, philosophy, and poetry." As the Greek city-states were in a state of near constant warfare, early works of history from Herodotus to Thucydides studied the intermingling of politics and warfare. In his study of the Persian Wars, Herodotus also described entire peoples (Greeks, Persians, Egyptians, and Scythians) whom he portrayed "ethnographically and anthropologically, analyzing the effect of their geographical setting and climate, mining a range of oral and written sources including drama and poetry that offer insights into what the essential traits and motives of a people were." From the beginning, Herodotus took a greater *cultural* approach to the study of warfare. In contrast, Thucydides examined war through the framework of cold political analysis, rejecting Herodotus' use of poetry and mythology in preference of eyewitness reports. In terms of content, Thucydides "set high standards for the analysis of how strategy must fit political goals and available resources, of the difficult moral choices that face individuals and states in wartime, and of the interaction of individual psychology and the dynamics of battle."[6]

5. Ibid., 60-62.

6. Stephen Morillo and Michael F. Pavkovic, *What is Military History?* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2006), 13-14.

Future Greek historians followed the path beaten by Thucydides by focusing on the technical elements of military history, such as strategy, tactics, military organization, and drill.[7] The field of military history practically alternated between the more poetic approach of Herodotus and the more scientific and critical approach of Thucydides—a dialectic which continues today in the "popular" versus "academic" approaches to the study of history. By the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the field became less concerned with actual events and more devoted to theoretical analyses of war. The nineteenth century paradigmatic approach to military history presaged an "eclipse" in the post-World War I period. Popular military history and official operational histories continued to be written, but academic military history waned as it was seen as "the province of a small minority who found little respect in academia generally, and the three sorts of military history—popular, professional, and academic—became more separate." Anti-war sentiment in the wake of World War I and World War II, as well as the growing popularity of "pacifism, anti-militarism, and socialist and populist ideologies antithetical to the outlook of the contemporary military history tradition," especially in post-Vietnam US academic circles, ensured military history's increasing academic marginalization.[8] At the same time, in the period following World War II, increased attention was given to understanding the psychology of soldiers as the need for psychological services increased after two world wars and an increasingly hotter Cold War.

Often distant from the academe, military historians were slow to examine the soldier's inner world, even as social historians over the past six decades heartily embraced the non-battlefield experiences of the *individual* historical actor who was not a "great white man." Traditional military historians continued to focus on meta-narratives of war as an outgrowth of

7. Ibid., 22.
8. Ibid., 30-33.

political and social struggle. The Clausewitzian dictum that "War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means" rang true.[9]

Military historians' intense focus on broader currents of history to the detriment of the individual soldier was glaring. Wars are instructive of all societal levels and understanding the individual soldier helps elucidate the larger social, political, economic, and spiritual world of the individual. For example, to understand the history of the American Civil War, historians must immerse themselves in the ideology of the nineteenth century to truly understand the individual soldier's cultural, ideological, and psychological milieu. The question of motivation can only be answered by understanding the mores of the time in which these individuals lived. By doing so, historians bring the symbiotic push and pull of societal norms on the individual's experience into greater focus thus further elucidating our understanding of the constellation of meta- and microscopic motivations that spurred a soldier's willingness to fight.

According to historian Mark Barloon, most analyses of Civil War combat motivations until World War II emphasized "the physical conditions and circumstances surrounding men on the battlefield" taking "an 'environmental approach' to understanding combat." With the growing prevalence of psychology in American society in the post-war period, historians increasingly emphasized "the motivations, emotions, and reactions of soldiers on the battlefield" by taking "a 'behavioral approach' to understanding combat."[10] This transition in our

9. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. J.J. Graham (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2004), 17

10. Mark C. Barloon, "Combat Reconsidered: A Statistical Analysis of Small-Unit Actions During the American Civil War" (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2001), 1-2. For noted examples of the environmental approach in Civil War studies, see Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987); and Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson, *Attack and Die: Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1982). For leading examples of the behavioral method, see James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring The Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997).

understanding of soldiers came about in part through the American military's attempt to create better warriors by studying the combat experiences of the individual soldier. After 1945, the Federal Government invested an immense amount of money and effort in the attempt to meet "the psychological demands of the war" through " the development of the science and profession of psychology."[11] A veritable explosion in interest, research, and funding in the field of psychology bled over into other disciplines such as history.

One of the defining works on soldier psychology to come out of this period was S.L.A. Marshall's 1947 book *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command.* Serving as the chief US Army combat historian during World War II, Marshall conducted hundreds of interviews with combat veterans, arguing that 75 percent of combat soldiers in World War II never fired their weapons in combat. Of the remaining twenty-five percent of those who did fire their weapons, Marshall argued that they were "well trained and campaign-seasoned troops," thus hinting that there was a behavioral component to their greater willingness to fight. "A revealing light is thrown upon this subject through studies by Medical Corps psychiatrists of the combat fatigue cases in the European Theater," he argued, "They found that fear of killing, rather than fear of being killed, was the most common cause of battle failure in the individual, and that fear of failure ran a strong second."[12] In other words, at the root of a soldier's motivation for pulling the trigger and thus ending the life of another was the emotion of *fear.* If the US military was going to increase the lethality of its fighting force, it was going to have to train soldiers to override the emotion of fear and somehow inoculate them to their natural inclination to preserve life. Though Marshall's findings have been extremely controversial among military historians,

11. Ludy T. Benjamin Jr., "A History of Clinical Psychology as a Profession in America (and a Glimpse at its Future)," *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* 1 (2005): 15-16

12. S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command* (1947; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 50, 78.

they nonetheless represented the new movement towards understanding the mind of the common soldier as well as the consequences of his psychological state.[13]

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The influence of social historians within military circles is seen in the evolution of the study of the common soldier in the American Civil War over the past four decades. The initial works that authors—often veterans themselves—produced during the period of Reconstruction and memorialization consisted primarily of memoirs and regimental histories more concerned with providing the institutional history of a unit rather than the soldier's individual experience. Privileging description over analysis, these works represented an uneven focus upon the battlefield exploits of regimental units or individual officers. They represented the first "drum and trumpet" approach to the study of the war and they became the progenitors of future studies through the twentieth century. Likewise, the next generation of historians used soldiers' diaries and letters to piece together battlefield tactics and maneuvers rather than reflecting on the *experience* of the individuals who took part in these battles.[14] Historians and veterans focused their energies on producing rhapsodies of battlefield heroics to preserve and promote the memory of their collective accomplishments—thus mirroring the wider trend towards Confederate and Union memorialization in the postwar period.

Until World War II, historical works on the American Civil War predominately focused on telling interesting stories rather than taking an analytical or academically rigorous approach to the conflict. This changed when historian Bell Irvin Wiley published the two seminal books in

13. For more information on the debate over SLA Marshall's findings, see F.D.G. Williams, *SLAM: The Influence of S.L.A. Marshall on the United States Army* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1990) and Kelly C. Jordan, "Right for the Wrong Reasons: S.L.A. Marshall and the Ratio of Fire in Korea," *Journal of Military History* 66 (January 2002): 135-62.

14. Sheehan-Dean, "Blue and Gray," 10-11. See also David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) and Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

the burgeoning field of "soldier studies" in 1943 and 1952, examining both Confederate and Union soldiers respectively. Both took a serious look at the life and contributions of the common soldier by going beyond published memoirs to include letters and diaries as source material. They provided for a complex and tangled web of motivating factors that impelled men to fight, including hatred of their opponents, the desire for adventure, or because enlisting was the prevailing vogue.[15] Reflecting his experience with soldiers in World War II as well as post-war sociological studies, Wiley also argued that ideology was not a factor in enlistments and that men's reliance upon each other—called "primary group cohesion"—was what enabled the common soldier to endure his time in service. Wiley's methodology and conclusions became the first and last stops for understanding the psyche and motivations of the Civil War volunteer.

By the 1980s, however, military historians in the post-Vietnam era were calling for greater research of the common soldier. Reflecting the exposition of the soldier's plight in Vietnam through television and movies, as well as the commercial success of historian John Keegan's book *The Face of Battle*, the 1980s witnessed the beginning of a new era of soldier studies that emphasized the duality of the volunteer as a soldier and a citizen. Historians now contended that a soldier's experience as a civilian fundamentally shaped his outlook and psyche as much as his military experiences. As historian Aaron Sheehan-Dean noted, historical research on the common soldier now tended to "reinforce factors such as political philosophy and family relations as being central to soldiers' conception of the conflict." The field's earliest work in this area was on Union soldiers, most likely because of their greater number and the greater

15. Bell I. Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), 15-18. See also Bell I. Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952).

availability of reliable records as compared with that of Confederate soldiers. Only over the past decade and a half has this trend begun to reverse.[16]

The most dramatic representation of this burgeoning perspective was provided by historian Gerald Linderman in his controversial 1987 book *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War*. Linderman examines the psychological changes wrought by the war among the initial wave of volunteers from 1861-62. He argues that both Union and Confederate soldiers were motivated to enlist by a constellation of non-ideological values that included manliness, godliness, duty, honor, and even knightliness. At the center of these stood the most important value: courage. On both sides, soldiers conflated "courage" with "manhood" and collectively believed that losing one's nerve in battle was indicative of the loss of one's manliness. "Godliness" meanwhile provided a special source of bravery, based on the belief that a person's goodness and the righteousness of his cause meant that God was on his side even on the firing line. Furthermore, "duty"—whether to one's nation, home, or state—provided an impetus to persist in soldiering. Shirking one's duty was detrimental to a man's honor, thus the principle way to satisfy duty was to act courageously. Finally, the idea of "knightliness" was an extension and an exaggeration of honor that saw warfare as a joust and the soldier as a knightly warrior, fighting and dying for civility.[17] The preservation and promotion of courage brought the common soldier into the war, but faith in these values soon gave way to the ugly realities of battle and random death. The result was disillusionment.

At about the same time that *Embattled Courage* appeared, a competing school of thought emerged that challenged Wiley and Linderman's findings by placing "ideology" at the core of

16. Sheehan-Dean, "Blue and Gray," 12-13, 18.

17. Gerald Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 7-8, 11-12, 16.

soldier motivations during the war. The forbearer of this new school of thought was historian Reid Mitchell. In his 1988 book *Civil War Soldiers*, he argued that Northerners and Southerners saw themselves as the exclusive inheritors and defenders of the ideals of the American Revolution. The Civil War was a conflict over the differing interpretations of this shared past that tore the nation apart and yet sustained each side through four years of conflict. Mitchell believed that Confederate soldiers enlisted to protect the agricultural, white-centric, and traditional Jeffersonian values of the Revolutionary generation as well as out of a sense of personal racism, latent fears of slave insurrections, the defense of the slave-economy, cultural differences with the North, and simple hatred towards their Yankee opponents. *Civil War Soldiers* represented an expansion upon Wiley's three main tenants while providing an additional interlocking ring of ideological explanations that were not mutually exclusive.[18]

Throughout the 1990s, scholars built on Mitchell's insistence on the importance of ideology while simultaneously pushing back against the socio-cultural explanations of Wiley and Linderman. In 1997, historian James McPherson's book *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* became the most influential book in the field of Civil War soldier studies. Unlike Linderman and Mitchell, who saw little difference between Union and Confederate soldiers' values, McPherson argues that there was a far greater cultural and ideological chasm between the two sides. In presenting his case, McPherson provided a more complex analysis by borrowing the framework of military historian John A. Lynn's three categories for understanding soldier motivation: initial motivation—why men enlisted, sustaining motivation—what kept them in the military, and combat motivation—what sustained them in combat.[19]

18. Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking, 1988), 4-15.
19. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 12.

Unlike Wiley and Linderman, McPherson also asserted the primacy of ideology as both an initial and sustaining motivator while placing the socio-cultural factors as secondary explanations that exist in symbiosis with ideology. According to *For Cause and Comrades*, the chief motivator for soldiers enlisting in 1861 was the great patriotic fervor (or *rage militaire*) that swept across the Union and Confederacy in the weeks following the bombardment of Fort Sumter in April. Rooted in this initial patriotism were cultural concepts of duty, honor, manhood, and community that impelled many men to join with pride rather than stay home in shame. Like Mitchell, McPherson believes that Union soldiers saw themselves as the inheritors and protectors of the values of the American Revolution who paid little early attention to the issue of slavery. As the war progressed, however, Union soldiers became soured on the barbarity of the institution and began to push for a grassroots expansion of the war's aims to include emancipation. Meanwhile, Southern men went off to war to fight for their own conceptions of Revolutionary liberty for the protection of the institution of slavery as well as a fear that its loss would mean becoming the proverbial slaves of the North. Confederate soldiers therefore saw their service in terms of the protection of their hearths, homes, and families against an invading enemy that was trying to usurp their regional power by politically and economically dominating their less populated and less industrialized homeland.[20]

The same year that *For Cause and Comrade* was released, historian Eric T. Dean Jr. published Shook *Over Hell: Post Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War.* It compared the psychological scars left on Civil War veterans with those of Vietnam veterans, largely in an attempt to tear down the popular belief that veterans' highly publicized post-Vietnam psychiatric

20. Ibid., 13, 17-21, 114-16.

issues were exclusive to that war.[21] Although Civil War soldiers were dispirited by seemingly endless marching, harsh weather, and mud, even more deleterious to the psyche of the common soldier was the impact of infectious disease. Surrounded by rampant sickness, soldiers watched their comrades broken down to the point of death by a mysterious and insidious force that seemed to be no respecter of men. The greatest psychological trauma, however, was wreaked by the terror of combat. The result of these interlocking factors brought about widespread cases of what would later be termed Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Although Dean does not echo Linderman's argument that the brutality of war eroded the will to fight, he does find a progression in each soldier's life from an initial carefree optimism about soldiering to a growing weariness and sense of vulnerability.[22]

Like McPherson, Dean also found that soldiers developed an intense devotion to their unit, were fascinated with exposure to battle, and generally expressed satisfaction with their life in the military as a result of the deep camaraderie felt between the men who suffered and fought together. It was this deeply held devotion and attraction to life that frequently helped soldiers to overcome their own fears and apprehensions, thus imbuing them with what historian Earl Hess would call "moral courage." While McPherson argued that much of this was undergirded by continued contact with family and loved ones back home, however, Dean agrees with Mitchell that over time there was a growing feeling that the individuals back home could never understand the privations and horrors of army life. This growing psychological distance between loved ones along the home front and soldiers in the field only served to strengthen bonds between comrades who served and suffered together.[23]

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21. Eric T. Dean Jr., *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 4-5.

22. Ibid., 51-53, 74-75.

23. Ibid., 87-90, 92.

As scholars increasingly focused on the psychological trauma of war, they began to also turn their attention towards the issue of desertion. Only two significant books had ever been written on the subject until historian Mark A. Weitz published *A Higher Duty: Desertion among Georgia Troops during the Civil War* in 2000. His books argued that Civil War desertion among Georgia soldiers was far more complex than a natural reaction to brutality, exposure, disease, and malnutrition. Rather, he asserts that most soldiers did not desert as Linderman argued because of eroding ideology, or as Dean argued because of psychiatric illness, but rather in response to the deteriorating economic conditions and the encroachment of Union invaders on their families and loved ones back home. Weitz again pushes back against Linderman's thesis that Confederate troops became demoralized and deserted as their deeply-held values crumbled in the face of combat and carnage. Rather, the protection of their families impelled many soldiers to willingly betray their own sense of honor for what they saw as a higher duty to protect and provide for their loved ones. In the latter two years of the war, as Union soldiers penetrated the heart of the Confederacy and in particular, began marching towards Atlanta, Confederate soldiers from lower economic classes faced with the galling prospect of their family's starvation as over two years of war and marauding Union troops stripped the countryside bare. Worse, they believed that both the government in Richmond and the state of Georgia had not held up their end of the bargain by protecting and maintaining order along the home front.[24]

Weitz takes a more nuanced approach by examining both sides of the "push" and "pull" between soldiers and their families by analyzing the distinctive responses between economic classes. Other men, he asserts, stayed in the field and continued to fight out of the belief in their personal responsibility to defend the honor and safety of the women back home by *remaining* in

24. Mark Weitz, *A Higher Duty: Desertion Among Georgia Troops During the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 1, 8-9, 106-18.

the field. Letters from women back home bolstered this sentiment, most prominent among Georgia's more wealthy volunteers. Elite women initially scorned any man who either stayed home or refused to fight. They saw desertion as dishonoring of both the individual soldier as well as his family. Furthermore, some men were genuinely motivated to stay in the army out of devotion to the Cause and a shared sense of honor and commitment with one's comrades. Finally, the lofty economic station that these men held meant that they did not need to worry about deserting to provide for their families and this reflects the fact that their wealth helped to bolster their moral support of the Confederacy.[25]

Although the average recruit in 1861-62 has proven a durable and enduring subject for soldier studies over the past thirty years virtually no scholarly attention was paid to the late enlisters (i.e. post-1861) of the war. In 2010, historian Kenneth Noe published *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined Army After 1861* which explores why Confederate late enlisters hesitated to join and what ultimately compelled them to continue to fight. Their somewhat advanced age, desire to wait and enlist with friends, sense of Christian duty, and the greater demands of home, he asserts, were some of the many motivating factors that kept Southern men from joining up in 1861.[26] Yet if notions of honor and duty were as deeply entrenched as Mitchell and McPherson would lead us to believe, then how could these men continue to linger at the expense of their own honor? The answer, Noe believes, is that the late-enlisting Confederate soldier was far less ideological in terms of his politics and far less concerned with conceptions of honor or duty than the initial enlisters of April 1861.

25. Ibid., 143-44, 149-53.

26. Kenneth Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army After 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 2-3, 9.

Additionally, he notes that the younger men who joined up early in the war were often inculcated with romantic notions of war and the need to protect southern womanhood, but the older group that made up late-enlisters fought mostly to protect their loved ones and their hard-earned property. Although these late-enlisters did believe that the protection of the institution of slavery was paramount—this proved to be both an initial and sustaining motivator for these soldiers—Noe believes that late-enlisters saw Union soldiers as barbaric invaders bent on the destruction of a system upon which their livelihood and social standing depended. This motivation arose out of a larger whole that was centered in the homes and neighborhoods that they felt would be endangered by Northern invaders and the social upheaval that would be invariably caused by liberated slaves. Thus, Noe argues that the late-enlisters felt that they had a higher duty to their families than to the larger political cause. In fact, he notes, relatively few late enlisting Confederates could be classified as "nationalists" to any degree.[27]

The works cited above represent just a handful of the dozens of monographs that have been published in the field of soldier studies over the past three decades. Unlike their predecessors, however, all these works privileged analysis over description—what Sheehan-Dean believes is "the primary marker of difference between soldier studies from the end of the war and into the 1970s and those from the 1980s onward." At the same time, they also reflect the use of techniques of quantitative and social history to shed new light on a war that has traditionally been the purview of military historians. One offshoot of this approach that increasingly found its way to prominence in the field over the past decade is the attempt to understand the role that socio-cultural explanations of gender played in understanding soldier motivations during the war. The earliest and still most emphasized thrust of the field of gender

27. Ibid., 10, 26, 59-60.

studies in the American Civil War focused upon women along the home front. Ever since the publication of Bertram Wyatt-Brown's seminal work *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* in 1982, however, scholars such as Stephen Berry, James Marten, Aaron Sheehan-Dean, and others have sought to understand the influence of ideals of masculinity on soldier motivations during the war. According to Sheehan-Dean, more recent work in this area has demonstrated "that Confederate soldiers were motivated to fight as much by love as by fear or hatred."[28]

In 1998, historian James Marten became the first scholars to examine the story of children and their involvement in the war. He argues that children North and South "saw themselves not merely appendages to their parents' experiences but as actors in their own right in the great national drama." He seeks to understand how the war changed children's lives and how they interacted and took part in the war through their formative years, including how they "became a part of the struggle, not just as victims or spectators but as politicians and home front warriors." His work is important in that it also notes how affectionate Southern parents were with their children by emphasizing the close emotional bonds that existed between them which were developed in the decades leading up to the war.[29] He frames children within the larger political and social struggle of the war while also examining their place as emotional centers of the Victorian family.

In 2003, historian Stephen W. Berry II published one of the first books to examine the masculine and emotional experience of Confederate soldiers in his book *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South*. In a society that outwardly considered emotion

28. Sheehan-Dean, "Blue and Gray," 11, 23.

29. James Marten, *The Children's Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 5, 22, 149.

effeminate and untrustworthy, Berry argues that Southern men were driven by the duality of ambition and love—an ambition to fulfill an ideology of "civilizing manhood" which advanced the course of civilization and the love for a woman who would validate and make meaning of his struggle to accomplish this work. At their root, patriotism and ideology were the result of a combination of men's romanticized notions of women and their ambition for everlasting fame which, as the war progressed, became diluted and left many Confederate soldiers disillusioned with pursuit of ambition. The same masculine pursuits that brought these men into the war eventually broke them, leading eventually to their disillusionment.[30]

More recently, historian Peter Carmichael's 2018 book *The War for the Common Soldier: How Men Thought, Fought, and Survived in Civil War Armies* argues that "Union and Confederate soldiers navigated the war with a spontaneous philosophy that can best be described as a hard-nosed pragmatism." Unlike many of his predecessors, Carmichael eschews broad sampling for deep immersion into the lives of selected soldiers. Rather than holding tightly to rigid ideological explanations for soldier motivations during the war as posited by McPherson's *For Cause and Comrades*--nor presenting soldiers as the helpless victims of a brutal conflict--Carmichael also focuses on the common soldier's adaptability and pragmatism which "gave them the flexibility to act in ways that actually helped them preserve their faith in ideas." Steeped in the nineteenth century ethos of sentimentalism—the idea that sacrifice and growth in one's character could engender right feelings to overcome the dehumanizing effects of war—sentimentalism could not adapt to brutality and polarizing nature of war.[31] Carmichael notes that though idealism may have bent under the weight of war, it did not break and the common

30. Stephen W. Berry II, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 12-18, 34, 171-173, 191-192, 224-226.

31. Peter S. Carmichael, *The War for the Common Soldier: How Men Thought, Fought, and Survived in Civil War Armies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 7-9.

soldier's pragmatism "never left Northern or Southern soldiers standing on the barren ground of nihilism."[32]

Along the lines of Stephen Berry's *All That Makes a Man* and Carmichael's *War for the Common Soldier,* historian James J. Broomall published his pathbreaking book *Private Confederacies: The Emotional Worlds of Southern Men as Citizens and Soldiers* in 2019. It draws most fully on the field of the history of emotions and gender to understand the inner emotional world of the Confederate soldier. Broomall argues that Southern men were "raised in an antebellum Southern culture that demanded self-control, struggled to understand their wartime experiences." Because of this, "they responded by creating emotional communities composed of fellow soldiers who crafted a common language of uncertainty. Soldiers relied on each other for psychological support, physical comfort, and personal security." The cessation of hostilities led Southern men to recreate the emotional communities that they had forged during the war in the form of veteran reunions and paramilitary groups. Their collective anger and resentment toward the Union in the war's wake, coupled with these military bonds, led to communal attempts to restore a Southern social order built upon white supremacy.[33] Like Berry's *All That Makes a Man*, Broomall's book incorporates analysis of soldiers' emotions into the Civil War while linking their emotional responses to ideals of masculinity and gender as well as their inability to live up to the lofty standards set by Southern society.

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In the same vein as Berry, Broomall, and Carmichael's approach to understanding the inner-world of the Confederate soldier, this dissertation seeks to provide some balance to the

32. Ibid., 99.

33. James J. Broomall, *Private Confederacies: The Emotional Worlds of Southern Men as Citizens and Soldiers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 2.

field of military history by analyzing the influence of emotions through the lens of interpersonal relationships on soldier motivations in the American Civil War. It does this primarily through an analysis of masculinity and emotional expression, as well as consideration of how relationships between husbands, wives, parents, and children provided an emotional bulwark that helped to sustain the common soldier in the Confederate Army from 1861 to 1865. From husbands and wives, beaus and sweethearts, friends at home and in camp, parents and children, and even between individuals and their extended family, the emotional "push and pull" of these relationships fundamentally shaped and transformed the common soldier's motivations.[34] For some, the emotional pain caused by the physical distance from loved ones intensified their feelings of affection, but for others it strained and sometimes broke them. In the process, men were forced to build new relationships to fill the human need for intimate connection, often turning to their comrades to maintain their emotional stability in a conflict that tore at the very fabric of their sanity. These relationships, and the emotions that underlay them, were fundamental to understanding why men gave up their homes, stability, and security for the discomfort, instability, and insecurity of military life during the American Civil War.

Understanding these motivations requires a complex examination of three sets of overarching relational categories: friendship, romantic relationships, and familial ties. Within each of these broad categories, some soldiers felt an emotional "push" which spurred them to enlist, endure, fight, and sometimes die in the military, while others endured a "pull" that either

34. Though many slave-owning Southerners viewed slaves as their "family," this dissertation does not address this aspect. The feelings between slaves and their masters were often not mutual as it is doubtful that many slaves ever felt a connection of kinship to their masters or their families. As the war illustrated, when slaves were given the chance to leave the plantations that had circumscribed their lives, they did so with great glee, often leaving white Southerners bewildered at the "betrayal" of individuals that they saw as family. Furthermore, there are almost no written records left by slaves which would provide a statistically significant insight into their feelings towards their masters and their families. Though many letters exist in which Confederate soldiers referred to their slaves as "family" or wanted updates on how their slaves were "getting along," this author has not uncovered any letters written directly to slaves with said responses from those slaves.

kept them from enlisting or drew them away from their military service through desertion. Most soldiers, however, felt both push and pull concurrently, creating an internal tension that sometimes strained the soldiers' psyche and forced them to turn again to their closest relationships for succor. The emotional "pull" of these relationships has been the object of critical examination by scholars over the past fifteen years as they examined desertion during the war. This dissertation builds upon this existing literature by concurrently examining the "push" factors and comparing them with the "pull" factors in order to gain a deeper understanding of the complex emotions engendered by these relationships and their influence upon decision-making by soldiers.

The dissertation also adds to the existing literature by arguing that friendship, romantic, and familial relationships provided an emotional bulwark that enabled soldiers to endure an insufferable war, demonstrating that much of the emotion underlying the traditional ideological and socio-cultural explanations for soldier motivations rest in understanding the soldier's connection with his friends and loved ones. It thus stands at the nexus of historians' traditionally rigid and mutually-exclusive ideological and socio-cultural explanations for soldier motivations, drawing upon elements from each. Finally, the dissertation will argue that the brutality and toll of the American Civil War represented an epoch in the emotional and masculine history of Southern men that forced them into a level of intimacy with their families and fellow soldiers that ran contrary to the prevailing cultural dictates of southern society in the nineteenth century.

The source base for the statistical analysis used in this dissertation consists of 1,790 letters exchanged between 200 soldiers from Alabama and North Carolina with 366 of their family members and fifteen friends. By using one state from the Upper South and one from the Lower South, it is hoped that any socio-cultural differences existing between the two regions will

become apparent. Many other letters from soldiers outside of these two states were also read but were not used in the statistical analysis. Rather, their voices reflect the statistical findings of soldiers from North Carolina and Alabama and are thus used in this project to provide context and clarity of the statistical findings. Statistically, of the one hundred soldiers from North Carolina, seventy were privates (70 percent), five were corporals (5 percent), seven were sergeants (7 percent), thirteen were officers (13 percent), and five were of unknown rank (5 percent). Forty-one out of one hundred were married (41 percent) and twenty-eight out of one hundred (28 percent) had children. None of the soldiers from North Carolina were courting sweethearts back home. The 759 letters written by the soldiers went to 188 family members, including wives, parents, and children as well as ten friends. Fifteen out of one hundred soldiers became prisoners of war (15 percent). Of the one hundred soldiers from Alabama, fifty-eight were privates (58 percent), three were corporals (3 percent), eleven were sergeants (11 percent), twenty-four were officers (24 percent), and three were of unknown rank (3 percent). Seven soldiers were courting (7 percent) while forty were married (40 percent) and thirty-nine had children (39 percent). The 1,031 letters written by these soldiers were sent to 178 family members including wives, parents, and children as well as five friends. Ten out of one-hundred Alabama soldiers in the sample were prisoners of war (10 percent).

This study counts not only the number of soldiers but also the number of letters that express emotion or affection, descriptions of battle, religious declarations, inquiries or references to children, and expressions of ideology or duty. Emotional expressions include affections of feeling such as declarations of love, anguish, expressions of thoughts of another, and expressions of affection. Letters were chosen as the main primary source base for this project as they were often written for private consumption. As Private James R. McCutchan of the 14th Regiment

Virginia Cavalry charged his wife, “Don't let any body see my letters, if that want to know what is in them read it to them, the part you want them to hear.”[35]

Secondary source materials for this project consisted of a variety of books published over the past thirty years in the field of military, social, emotional, sensory, and gender history as well as a plethora of books published on soldier motivations, family relations, and southern masculinity during the war. To buttress this primary and secondary literature, the most recent scholarship on soldier psychology and interpersonal relationships emanating from the fields of combat and social psychology, sociology, and even philosophy provide a psychological framework for understanding the mind of the common soldier. While the statistical base is drawn from soldiers from Alabama and North Carolina, the voices of the soldiers used otherwise in this dissertation are also drawn from letters from soldiers representing other Confederate states.

Ultimately, this dissertation examines the emotional impact exerted on the common soldier through his relationships with comrades/friends, wives/sweethearts, parents, and children. Their emotions and the inability to stifle them according to nineteenth-century standards of masculinity exerted an immense influence upon a soldier’s willingness to fight and even die. Historians often view the American Civil War as a struggle over ideology, politics, or socio-cultural factors that are more historically concrete and easily divulged from a primary source base. Too often they neglect the emotional tethers to ideologies, politics, and socio-cultural factors that provided the impetus for Confederate soldiers to march off to war. Undergirding friendship, romantic relationships, and familial relationships are the emotions, intimacy, and love that bound these individuals together. It was this “togetherness” that provided the elastic that pulled or pushed individuals into or out of military service. The emotions that soldiers felt for

35. James R. McCutchan to Rachel Ann McCutchan, Camp Near Fairfax C.H., September 22, 1861, James B. McCutchan Papers, Leyburn Library, WLUSC.

each other and for their loved ones back home thus are not tangential to understanding how and why Confederate soldiers fought in the American Civil War. Rather, emotions are *fundamental* to understanding how human beings (with all of the intangibles and contradictions that they embody) came to endure a war whose "cardinal characteristic became its stunning bloodiness" according to historian Michael Adams, and which was "neither sharply delineated nor fought by combatants bonded together in defense of clearly enunciated positions and universally held ideologies."[36]

To be sure, examining interpersonal relationships and the emotional push and pull that they engendered represents just one aspect of a soldier's emotional makeup and motivational makeup. Using historian John Lynn's framework for understanding soldier motivations, including initial sustaining , and combat motivations, this dissertation then will consider the subject of interpersonal relationships and their influence on soldiers' willingness to fight through an interdisciplinary approach which utilizes selected elements of military, social, sensory, and emotional history, as well as certain methodologies and conclusions from the fields of psychology, sociology, and philosophy. It will exist within the context of the modern sociological and psychological studies of soldiers which have increased exponentially since the beginning of the Global War on Terror in 2001. Studies like these shed new light on our understanding of the psyche and interpersonal dynamics of the common soldier and represent an

36. Michael C.C. Adams, *Living Hell: The Dark Side of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 5-6.

opportunity to understand the deeper intellectual and emotional makeup of the average Confederate soldier.[37]

Although historians have traditionally been uneasy with attempting to examine the emotional interactions between historical figures as a result of the field's emphasis on a purely "scientific" and "reason-based" approach, the evolution of the field of emotional history over the past decade has provided an increased acceptance of this field of study as well as new methodologies for understanding the emotional makeup of historical actors As historian Barbara H. Rosenwein pointed out: "Despite a generation's worth of social and cultural history, the discipline has never quite lost its attraction to hard, rational things. Emotions have seemed tangential (if not fundamentally opposed) to the historical enterprise."[38] This trend is only now beginning to reverse itself and this dissertation rides the crest of that transformation.

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37. See also: Arni Ahronson and James E. Cameron, "The Nature and Consequences of Group Cohesion in a Military Sample." *Military Psychology* 19, No.1 (2007): 9-25; Bret A. Moore, and Jeffrey E. Barnett, eds. *Military Psychologists' Desk Reference* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Carrie H. Kennedy and Eric A. Zillmer, eds. *Military Psychology, Second Edition: Clinical and Operational Applications*. 2 ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2012); Cristian Tileaga and Jovan Byford, eds. *Psychology and History: Interdisciplinary Explorations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Desiree Verweij, "Comrades or Friends? On Friendship in the Armed Forces," *Journal of Military Ethics* 6 (2007), 280-91; Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn, "Health, Wartime Stress, and Unit Cohesion: Evidence from Union Army Veterans." *Demography* 47 (February 2010): 45-66; Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn, "Surviving Andersonville: The Benefits of Social Networks in POW Camps." *The American Economic Review* 97 (September 2007): 1467-87; Eric T. Dean Jr., *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War*(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Eric T. Dean Jr., "'The Awful Shock and Rage of Battle': Rethinking the Meaning and Consequences of Combat in the American Civil War," *War in History* 8, (2001): 149-65; Janice H. Laurence and Michael D. Matthews, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Military Psychology (Oxford Library of Psychology)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Jesse Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle (*New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959); Judith Pizarro, Roxane C. Silver, and JoAnn Prause. "Physical and Mental Health Costs of Traumatic War Experiences Among Civil War Veterans," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 63 (February 2006): 193-200; Katherine Fleming, "Living Casualties of War: Civil War Soldiers as Victims of Psychological Trauma." *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* 66 (January 2014): 66-80; Kelli Vaughn-Blount, Alexandra Rutherford, David Baker, and Deborah Johnson. "History's Mysteries Demystified: Becoming a Psychologist-Historian," *The American Journal of Psychology* 122 (Spring 2009): 117-29; Nancy Sherman, *The Untold War: Inside the Hearts, Minds, and Souls of Our Soldiers*. Reprint ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011); Simon Wessely, "Twentieth-Century Theories on Combat Motivation and Breakdown." *Journal of Contemporary History* 41 (April 2006): 269-86; Thomas A. Kolditz, Raymond Millen, Terrence Potter, Leonard Wong. *Why They Fought: Combat Motivation in the Iraq War* (Washington DC: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003).

38. Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107, (June 2002): 821.

It is hoped that this project will add to the plethora of studies on Southern masculinity that have proliferated since the publication of Bertram Wyatt-Brown's *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* in 1982. His study, along with works from Stephen Berry, Peter Carmichael, James Broomall, Aaron Sheehan-Dean, Michael Kimmel, and James Marten (among others), will be compared with the information gleaned from the primary source base of this project to see if correlations exist. In the process, it will be seen whether men's masculinity was itself bound up in their relationship to women, as Berry asserts, or whether it was bound up inextricably with cultural norms, as Wyatt-Brown asserts. Finally, this project will attempt to understand how socio-cultural expectations of male masculinity changed during the war as well as how this change was produced.

Finally, this project is important because it attempts to bring a new understanding of a facet of the common soldier that is all too often ignored by historians. Although it eschews the traditional approach of understanding soldier motivations through the mutually exclusive lens of either ideological or socio-cultural norms, it instead seeks to wed the two into an analytical motif that provides a more nuanced and complex understanding that will inform the conclusions of existing historiographical schools of thought. By building upon this systemic knowledge base, it will hopefully extend the field of soldier studies into other areas of historical and interdisciplinary inquiry to more brightly illuminate the heart as well as the mind of the common soldier. Johnny Reb was more than a man who simply wielded a musket—he was a human being of flesh *and* mind, reason *and* feeling. This approach will add one more color to our prismatic understanding of the soldier who willed himself to trade a life of comfort and safety for the insecurity of military service to protect all that he cherished most.

Chapter 1 examines the growth and acceptance of emotional expression by American males from the country's nascent beginnings into the antebellum period. It considers attachment theory and how society, parents, and other intrinsic motivators influenced the development of ideals of manhood. Specifically, it seeks to understand how those ideals of American manhood changed over time, how those ideals were reconstructed in the south, and how attachments between men, parents and children, and husbands and wives shifted over time in the colonial and antebellum periods. By examining this evolution, we can establish a baseline with which to measure the changing nature of attachments during the war and thereafter establish how those attachments emotionally sustained Confederate soldiers when nationalism and societally induced ideals of honor and courage eroded in the caustic cauldron of war.

Chapter 2 examines the emotional push and pull of interpersonal relationships between soldiers throughout the war. It argues that camaraderie and emotional tethers between men, which had their origins in the pre-war period, provided an emotional bulwark against the emotionally and physically deleterious effects of war. These ties became more immediate and tangible than those provided by family members back home. Furthermore, it examines how the changing nature of pre-war ideals of masculinity and homosocial relationships reached a dramatic climax during the war years, which allowed for the open display greater emotional intensity than that before and after the war. Comrades became a sort of fictive kin that, in the physical absence of blood family, enabled one to continue to function even when war threatened to destroy the individual's identity and humanity. Confederate soldiers did not become "standoffish" or emotionally distant as a result of war, but instead became more emotionally pointed and expressive as the war's brutality eroded traditional ideals of masculinity and emotional expression.

Chapter 3 examines the importance of romantic relationships in sustaining soldier motivations during the war. It primarily looks at how romantic love undergirded a soldier's willingness to enlist and continue to fight even as war psychologically and emotionally eroded the male self-confidence so highly emphasized in pre-war masculine ideals. Fewer than half of the 200 soldiers sampled for this project were either married or courting, and yet they represented the overwhelming majority of soldiers who expressed emotion in letters during the war. The argument that white Southern males were emotionally reticent is refuted in this chapter. Men instead turned to their wives and sweethearts for emotional and physical succor. Through an emotional pragmatism along the lines of what Peter Carmichael describes, they eschewed traditional notions of masculinity when war threatened to psychologically, emotionally, and physically become their undoing as men. Simply put, white Southern males could not have emotionally or physically endured the war apart from the support of their loved ones back home.

Chapter 4 looks at the importance of emotional intimacy between Confederate soldier-fathers and their children. It argues that white Southern males were not emotionally distant from their children, nor did they grow hardened by the war to the point that they no longer had the possibility of feeling deeply for their children. To the contrary, the emotional tethers that connected soldier-fathers to their children through letters prevented the dehumanization of many soldiers and kept them in contact with a world that was not as cataclysmic or apocalyptic as their own. Soldiers looked to their children for indirect motivation to continue to fight a war which only increased in its bloodletting as it progressed. As a result, Confederate soldier-fathers came to define the war much less in terms of ideology or duty and much more in terms of the protection of their homes, hearths, and their children's futures. Wives, husbands, parents, and children grew to depend upon each other to shoulder the burden of war which reached beyond

the battlefield and into the home of every individual who gave their husbands and fathers to the war effort.

Finally, the conclusion synthetically addresses the postwar period and specifically how the new relational dynamics constructed during the war evolved during Reconstruction. Pulling from more recent works on demobilization and Reconstruction, it argues that the period represented a return to the pre-war masculine ideals of mastery that had not only helped to plunge the nation into war, but also forever altered the trajectory of the postwar period and modern America.

1: Relationships, Intimacy, and Masculinity in the Antebellum South

In *The Idea of History*, philosopher and archaeologist R.G. Collingwood sought to answer a timeless question: *what is history for?* "History is for human self-knowledge," he surmised, "Knowing yourself means knowing first, what it is to be a man; secondly, knowing what it is to be the kind of man you are; and thirdly, knowing what it is to be the man *you* are and nobody else is….The only clue to what man can do is what man has done." "The value of history," he added, "is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is."[1] In the field of psychology and counseling, therapists calls upon patients to examine their past in order to understand their present state of psychological, emotional, and spiritual being. In this same vein, history calls upon collective groups of individuals to examine *their* pasts with the same goals in mind. At its core, history is the study of human beings, and it is reasonable to conclude that it is primarily a study in how human beings relate to and interact with one another.

From one's earliest moment of existence, relationships shape the contour and direction of a human being's life, including how they view themselves and their place in the world. This perspective is most represented in the modern theory of "attachment," which psychologist Jean Mercer defines as the "emotional ties that exist between human beings and guide their feelings and behavior." These emotional ties include "attachment emotions" such as love, devotion, grief, jealousy, and anxiety in relationship to other human beings, as well as "attachment thoughts" which include various ways of thinking about relationships with others. Attachment emotions and thoughts "combine to form an *internal working model* of emotional and social relationships,

1. R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 10.

a set of feelings, memories, ideas, and expectations about people's interpersonal attitudes and actions."[2]

These internal working models in turn shape an individual's respond to external stimuli such as societal norms and gendered ideals, which are passed down from parents to children and generally reinforced through social interaction and education. For soldiers of the American Civil War, ideas of what constituted a "man" and how relationships should be lived out did not arise *ex nihilo*. Who they were and how they saw themselves was as much of an outgrowth of their past as it was a response to their present circumstances. In other words, soldiers during the American Civil War, both Union and Confederate, were imbued with ideals of manhood and relationships fundamentally shaped by their fathers and mothers, grandparents, distant ancestors, and others around them. They also were the product of generations of definition and refinement which—as it turned out—could not live up to the exigencies of their present circumstance of war. There is much debate on how to describe that culture and its values. While some historians and cultural anthropologists characterized the antebellum period as a "feminized" culture of sentimentalism and the war as a period of "masculinized" anti-sentimentalism, historian Alice Fahs noted that "the Civil War as a 'masculinized' war only coalesced in the 1880s and 1890s."[3]

Moreover, Confederate soldiers did not adhere to a rigid form of masculinity but instead embraced "flexible models of masculinity grounded in the antebellum era that encouraged mutual dependence among men while maintaining elements of antebellum independence." Recent scholarship has begun to address the need for a more complex representation of Southern masculinity "based on the principles of Christian gentility, ideological expression, and emotional

2. Jean Mercer, *Understanding Attachment: Parenting, Child Care, and Emotional Development* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 2-3.

3. Alice Fahs, "The Sentimental Soldier in Popular Civil War Literature, 1861-65," *Civil War History* 46, (June 2000), 122.

communication." That scholarship couches the Confederate soldier as an individual with two distinct "public" and "private" personas. A man's "public" persona represented his attempt to control how others viewed him while maintaining his standing within the larger community. His "private" persona was more representative of his true self and the more emotionally expressive part of his being. Antebellum Southern society burdened white men with the societal expectation to suppress their emotions, but historian Broomall has noted that these same men "felt joy and sadness, love and anxiety. Southerners' fluid masculinities and emotional lives were written on the pages of their diaries and seen through their relationships with and letters to women and family. Once the public and private faces of Southern manhood are combined, men appear at once pugilist and antagonist but also introspective and vulnerable. They were entirely prepared for war but less ready for its consequences." In other words, Southern men on the eve of the American Civil War existed within the tension of living in a world which demanded public displays of emotional repression as an expression of their manhood while also confining them to private emotive outpourings through the written word.[4]

Examinations of these secret written words and inner worlds represents a modern archaeological dig underneath the public persona into the inner private world of the Confederate soldier. Masculinity and gender norms were inextricably linked to the boundaries of emotional expression. The emotional outpouring of Southern men during the war thus is not representative of an emotionally anomalous period, but rather is the blooming of decades of emotional budding among Southern men in their secret gardens. In effect, the war brought men's private worlds to the fore as a result of its overwhelming brutality and the resultant erosion of the need for a public mask.

4. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, esp. 14, 34, 154.

The allowance for this transference is the result of the evolution of ideals of American manhood and masculinity over the century leading up to the American Civil War. During this period, men increasingly learned new ways of expressing emotion in their private world and the war itself forced this private world into public view. These changing ideals and the increasing allowance for emotional expression shaped attachments between men and their wives, sweethearts, parents, and children from the colonial period and into the antebellum period. By examining these changes over time, we can establish a baseline with which to measure the evolving nature of these attachments during the war, as well as how those attachments sustained Confederate soldiers when ideological and socio-cultural ideals eroded by the war. To more fully understand the Confederate soldier in his totality we must first examine the myriad of influences that shaped his perspective and his sense of self leading up to the outbreak of America's deadliest conflict.

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One of the most important of those molding influences was gender. "Gender matters because the disparate situations of the sexes cause them to experience or perceive events or circumstances differently," historian Nancy F. Cott notes. "The differences, similarities, and overlap between men's and women's experiences and viewpoints must be systematically investigated if we are to understand the fullness of human culture, development, and society."[5]

When soldiers in the American Civil War uprooted themselves from their homes, their wives, their children, and their communities, they often did so with a deep sense of purpose rooted in nineteenth-century norms of gender and masculinity. Those norms were lived out quietly before 1861 in the daily lives of both Northern and Southern men who found their public

5. Nancy F. Cott, "On Men's History and Women's History," in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, ed. Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffin (University of Chicago Press, 1990), 205.

lives circumscribed by societally acceptable ideals of man's relationship to his family and his community. During the war, nationalism mingled with older masculine norms to create a unique wartime ideal of manhood that was often unachievable. Historian Craig Thompson Friend maintains that "Confederate manhood was a momentary manifestation of masculinity, formed out of the gender and race relations of the Old South and shaped specifically in relationship to wartime Confederate nation-building." White Southern males saw themselves as being marginalized by the modernizing and industrializing United States and thus "willingly fought a war because they sought to create a nation in which their imagined marginalization would be transformed into an unquestioned hegemonic masculinity." As Southern men increasingly felt that their masculine ideals were being overshadowed by what they saw as a soulless Northern industry, they were willing to fight a war to establish their Southern version of masculinity as the dominant norm.

Southern white masculinity slowly evolved over the decades leading up to the American Civil War from an earlier period of "colonial gentlemanliness to republican patriarchy to antebellum paternalism," which Friend noted "had always contributed to the region's political and cultural structures." The relationship between masculinity and the political and cultural structures of the South manifested in four ways. First, like Stephen Berry, Friend noted that Southern men sought women's emotional support and appreciation to "justify their national cause and to verify their own manhood" and thus offered a way to create a new Confederate manhood. Secondly, surviving the war was unnecessary to achieve the ideal of Confederate manhood, as death in war represented a gift of masculine immortality. A third manifestation was the sharp delineation between the masculine and the feminine, with Confederates mocking Northerners as effeminate and comparing them (along with Southern deserters and shirkers) with

women. Finally, there was the sharp contrast between free white men and subservient African Americans. As Friend wryly noted, "White men, white patriarchy, white nationhood—the relationship was irrefutable."[6] It was in their relationships—between husbands and wives as well as parents and children—that gendered differences came to the fore in the century leading up to the war. The push and pull of these interpersonal relationships reshaped gendered norms. In the process, they came to define a new era in attachment between lovers and families.

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Historically, the Southern male's intense focus on his relationship to his family and his community was grounded in the early American masculine ideal of the "traditional patriarch" who "devoted himself to governing his family and serving his community." Mirroring their British brethren, American society was hierarchical, with men as the primary representatives of their families who deferred only to the symbolic heads of their "communal family"—church and civic leaders. The broader cultural ideal was enforced within the family as young men learned, in the words of historian Mark Kann, to "discipline desire, marry early, sire legitimate offspring, and mature into traditional patriarchs." Emotionally, men were expected to control themselves and to display little emotion. As father and husbands, the male's primary contribution to the community was a disciplined and virtuous family made by restraining the disorderly conduct of their wives and guiding sons to becoming virtuous citizens.[7]

From the first permanent English settlement in Jamestown, Virginia in 1607, this British-based model of manhood dominated much of the Atlantic landscape. Higher survival rates and

6. Craig Thompson Friend, "'The Crushing of Southern Manhood:' War, Masculinity, and the Confederate Nation-State, 1861-1865," in *Masculinities and the Nation in the Modern World: Between Hegemony and Marginalization*, ed. Pablo Dominguez Andersen and Simon Wendt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 20-21. See also Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 12.

7. Mark E. Kann, *A Republic of Men: The American Founders, Gendered Language, and Patriarchal Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 5-8.

greater life expectancies for children, coupled with increased wealth from pro-business British mercantilist policies, began to produce homes in which children became the center of parental attention and indulgence. Colonial traveler and diarist Janet Schaw recounted the day that she brought the children of a Mr. John Rutherford to Wilmington, North Carolina on her travels. Upon arrival, she noticed that Rutherford—a plantation owner and royal officeholder—was "as much in love with his daughter as I expected…and so fond of the boys, that I fear they will be quite spoiled."[8]

The principal unit of British colonial society was the family with the father at its head. In his study of colonial North Carolina, historian Alan Watson broadly defined the colonial "family" as "an independent economic entity that resided either within the same house or near to one another and who submitted to the authority of the unit (i.e. the male) and which consisted of fathers, mothers, daughters, and sons, as well as extended family, nonrelations, wards, apprentices, servants, and slaves."[9] Historians James and Dorothy Volo divide colonial families into four main categories: nuclear families, extended families, stem-nuclear families, and clan-like families. The "nuclear family" consisted of a married couple with children living under one roof which was set apart from all other relatives. An "extended family" was a kinship network involving blood relatives who lived in separate households within the same community.[10] "In every Anglo-American culture, the nuclear family was the normal unit of residence," historian David Hackett Fisher noted, "and the extended family was the conventional unit of thought."[11] "Stem-nuclear families" consisted of married children who lived within their parent's home and

8. Janet Schaw, quoted in Alan D. Watson, *Society in Colonial North Carolina*, (Raleigh, NC: Office of Archives and History North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1996), 27.

9. Watson, *Society in Colonial North Carolina*, 19-20.

10. James M. Volo and Dorothy Denneen Volo, *Family Life in 17th- and 18th-Century America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 41.

11. David Hackett Fisher, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 482.

who had their own children. Finally, "clan-like families" were essentially nuclear, but each member of a clan "claimed a common ancestry, usually carried a common name, and most importantly, recognized a common identity beyond the bounds of the nuclear family that was largely unaffected by any daily living arrangement." They could reside in different households in the same village or even in different colonies, yet still claim a common identity. The kinship ties between these four categories of families provided social support and economic security for each member of a family or clan.[12]

Likewise, Watson notes that colonial families "brought order and stability to emerging settlements, transmitted and maintained cultural traditions, and served as the focus for the mainly agrarian, small-enterprise, preindustrial economy."[13] Colonial ideals dictated that a man's world was made more complete by the addition of a wife and children. Colonial North Carolinian James Iredell noted that "in this County, a young Man without the joys of a private Family leads a very dull, and I may add, a less improving Life."[14] Increasingly, society became more accepting of the idea that men and women, through a companionate marriage, could improve their economic, physical, or emotional well-being.

This gradual evolution towards companionate marriage stands in striking contrast to the rigid hierarchical notions of marriage that were still prevalent in England and most of British North America. Traditionally, English common law dictated that men were the legal heads of household with a married woman's legal status subsumed by that of her husband. On the other hand, single women were independent in the eyes of the law and could therefore sue in court, act as guardians, and execute deeds. Like other colonies, as North Carolina evolved from a frontier

12. Volo, *Family Life in 17th- and 18th-Century America*, 41-42.
13. Watson, *Society in Colonial North Carolina*, 19-20.
14. James Iredell, quoted in Watson, *Colonial North Carolina*, 22.

outpost towards greater civilization and economic stability, women increasingly lost legal opportunities and saw increased separation between their public and private spheres of influence. While their influence was still felt within the home, outside of the home, women found far fewer opportunities to assert themselves economically, politically, and socially.[15] Famed Spanish explorer and future "Father of Venezuelan Independence," Francisco de Miranda, toured America in 1783 noting that "The married women maintain a monastic seclusion and a submission to their husbands such as I have never seen…Once married, they separate themselves from all intimate friendships and devote themselves completely to the care of home and family." He then dryly observed that "During the first year of marriage they play the role of lovers, the second year of breeders, and thereafter of housekeepers. On the other hand, the unmarried women enjoy complete freedom and take walks alone wherever they want to, without their steps being observed."[16]

Outwardly, a woman's nobility lay in her service to her family rather than the wider community. For men, the reverse was true. Underlying this familial focus of colonial women was the belief that by serving their families, women were serving their communities by extension. According to Watson, the family was the "linchpin of colonial society" as it "was a key to orderly settlement, the conduit of cultural transmission, the seat of education and religion, and the center of much of the economy activity in the colony." In his view, "the family endured as the most viable element of society in North Carolina and early America."[17]

The cracks in the foundation of these traditional social, political, and economic mores were beginning to show by the outbreak of the American Revolution. In part, these cracks

15. Watson, *Colonial North Carolina*, 22-24.

16. Francisco de Miranda, *The New Democracy in America: Travels of Francisco de Miranda in the United States, 1783-84*, trans. Judson P. Wood, ed. John S. Ezell (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 6.

17. Watson, *Colonial North Carolina*, 30.

formed out of broad sweeping changes in intellectual thought due to the Enlightenment as well as changes in emotional expression wrought by the First Great Awakening. One of the period's foremost thinkers, Immanuel Kant, defined "enlightenment" as "*man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity* is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another."[18] The Enlightenment as period sat at the confluence of a burgeoning empiricism, rational challenges to authority, skepticism, humanism, secularism, and scientific inquiry which created "an intellectual environment in which a new-found confidence in the ability of man to understand his past, improve his present and establish a blueprint for his future was the key to unlock a vision of indefinite perfectibility." Although periodization of the Enlightenment is notoriously difficult, it can be said with certainty that it lasted roughly from the 1670s to the 1790s.[19]

Among other things, the Enlightenment gave birth to new ideas of childhood and parental relationships. Influential philosopher John Locke argued that since childhood was a temporary stage of development, parental authority rested upon a child's temporary incapacity and weakness. However "the primary purpose of parenthood was not to impose obedience," historian Steven Mintz noted of this period, "but rather to nurture children's powers of reason in order to prepare them to become self-governing adults."[20] Likewise, Scottish moral philosopher Francis Hutcheson argued that "The child is a rational agent, with rights valid against the parents; tho' they are the natural tutors or curators, and have a right to direct the actions, and manage the goods of the child, for its benefit, during its want of proper knowledge."[21]

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18. Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: "What is Enlightenment?,"* trans. H.B. Nisbet (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 1.

19. Williams, David, "Introduction: The Enlightenment," in *Cambridge Readings in the History of Political Thought: The Enlightenment*, ed. David Williams (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 7

20. Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004), 57-58.

21. Frances Hutcheson, *A System of Moral Philosophy* (London: R. and A. Poulis Printers, 1755), 2:192

Between 1763 and 1787, the thirteen mainland colonies erupted in a revolution that profoundly altered the relationship between men, their families, and their communities. The Revolutionary Era witnessed the beginning of the erosion of the "traditional patriarch" in American society and, according to cultural and literary historian Jay Fliegelman, slowly gave way to more affectionate and equalitarian relationships, particularly between parents and their children. Although the ideal of the "traditional patriarch" did not disappear from American society, alternative ideals based more in equality of relations began to filter into the collective *zeitgeist.*[22]

The masculine ideal of emotional stoicism and patriarchal authority was likewise increasingly honored more in the breach than the observance. Historian Kenneth Lockridge noted that Revolutionary period witnessed men "caught between the exaggerated imperatives of domestic patriarchy as they constructed it—that they must control sexuality and indeed all things in their households—and the fact that both in and out of households women had substantial power."[23] The relationship between men and women was not one of the complete or total imposition of male authority over women, as colonial women increasingly asserted their own authority. On October 25, 1774, for example, fifty-one women in Edenton, North Carolina organized a boycott of tea and other British products in response to the passage of the Tea Act in 1773—one of the first instances of political action in the British colonies. Across the Atlantic, British men ridiculed the so-called "Edenton Tea Party."[24] British citizen Arthur Iredell captured the derision of his fellow Britons in a letter to his brother James Iredell—a resident of Edenton

22. Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1; Kann, *Republic of Men,* 8.

23. Kenneth A. Lockridge, *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage: The Commonplace Books of William Byrd and Thomas Jefferson and the Gendering of Power in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 88.

24. James M. Volo, *The Boston Tea Party: The Foundations of Revolution* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2012), 61.

and later the first North Carolinian to serve on the US Supreme Court—when he mockingly asked, "Is there a female congress at Edenton too? I hope not, for we Englishmen are afraid of the male congress, but if the ladies, who have ever since the Amazonian era been esteemed the most formidable enemies; if they, I say, should attack us, the most fatal consequence is to be dreaded."[25] While ridiculed in England, however, the women of Edenton were praise throughout the colonies.[26] "The battle of the sexes was fought on uneven terms, but women made it perhaps more of a contest than we have realized," Lockridge noted, "that it was often real *economic* power in the hands of women that excited a not-always-successful misogyny in men."[27]

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Historian Gordon Wood noted this change in the post-Revolutionary period between husbands and wives as well as parents and children, attributing it to the rhetoric of equality of the Revolutionary period. The laws of coverture still governed relationships between husbands and wives—giving husbands' full control over their wives as property—yet Revolutionary ideology imbued women with a sense of themselves as independent persons. "The family," Wood noted, "was becoming a much more republican institution."[28] Likewise, historian Mary Beth Norton noted that "If one word could be said to epitomize the republican conception of matrimony, that word would be 'mutual.'" While wives were expected to submit to their husbands, men were also encouraged to treat their wives reasonably and to take upon themselves the characteristics of a good husband.[29]

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25. Arthur Iredell to James Iredell, January 31, 1775, Charles E. Johnston Collection, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC.

26. Volo, *Boston Tea Party*, 61.

27. Lockridge, *Patriarchal Rage*, 109.

28. Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009): 495-96.

29. Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 234-35.

The pulling down of this sacrosanct hierarchy which marked British society for centuries—and which was now repulsive to patriots—surged through American society. From the mid-1770s onward, the egalitarian impulse began to bear tangible fruit among individuals who partook in the bonds of matrimony.[30] In a 1784 edition of the *Gentleman and Lady's Town and Country Magazine*, one author asked, "Wherein does the happiness of the married state consists?" to which another replied, "In a mutual affection, a similarity of tempers, a reciprocal endeavor to please, and an invariable aim to each other's comfort."[31] Likewise, essayist Judith Sargent Murray wrote in 1789 that "Mutual esteem, mutual friendship, mutual confidence, *begirt about by mutual forbearance*—these are the necessary requisites of the matrimonial career."[32] As Mintz noted, the era "popularized an antiauthoritarian ideology highly critical of patriarchal authority, social hierarchy, and defense."[33]

Marriage thus became more egalitarian and companionate in the post-Revolutionary period, emphasizing "love, not property…reason and mutual respect…and one in which wives had a major role in inculcating virtue in their husbands and children."[34] Increasingly, ministers and moralists placed upon women the burden of instilling in their children "self-discipline, a respect for authority, and a deep regard for civic virtue."[35] One signer of the Declaration of Independence, Dr. Benjamin Rush, noted that "Mothers and school-masters plant the seeds of nearly all the good and evil which exist in our world. Its [America's] reformation must therefore

30. Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 238.
31. Quoted in Norton, *Liberty's Daughters,* 235.
32. Judith Sargent Murray, *The Gleaner: A Miscellaneous Production* (Boston: I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1798): 133
33. Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 54.
34. Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 497.
35. Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 71.

be begun in nurseries and in schools."[36] The twin historical forces behind the primacy of early experience among children included John Locke's philosophy of the *tabula rosa,* or the idea that the human mind at birth is a "blank slate" which can only be shaped through sensation and reflection provides the necessary building blocks for more complex thought. Enlightenment philosophers like Locke were drawn to egalitarianism as they witnessed the destructive nature of hierarchy in European societies. Locke thus believe that the only way to achieve equality "was to subscribe to an epistemology wherein all infants are equally skilled or unskilled at birth and to place experience in the role of unbiased tutor to all." Society could then make the experience of its children equal and thereby make the minds of its children "equally pure and alert."

Another historical force was the Protestant belief in the necessity of preparing for the next life through proper action in this one. "The writings of America's intellectuals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, influenced strongly by Protestants with an egalitarian ideal," developmental psychologists Jerome Kagan, Richard B. Kearsley, and Philip R. Zelazo noted, "urged mothers to care for their young children, implying that such care was not unlike gathering wood in August to prepare for December's frigid winds."[37]

While the colonial period was marked by the near absolute power of the husband over his wife and the father over his children, in short, the period of the Early Republic witnessed the growing shift of parental influence over the family towards the mother. Though much of the early childrearing literature was directed towards fathers—who were considered the disciplinarians and primary caregivers of their families—the Revolution shifted responsibility for

36. Benjamin Rush to George Clymer, "The Amusements and Punishments Which are Proper for Schools," in *The Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush*, ed. Dagobert D. Runes (New York: The Philosophical Library Inc., 1947), 114.

37. Jerome Kagan, Richard B. Kearsley, and Philip R. Zelazo, *Infancy: It's Place in Human Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 135-136.

the shaping of a child's character to mothers who were now expected to both embody and transmit republican values to vulnerable and malleable children.[38] "Virtue" was no longer synonymous with masculine self-sacrifice either, but now included such qualities considered "feminine" such as love and benevolence. Observers argued that the female's perceived superiority in stimulating feelings of sympathy, morality, and their ability to develop affectionate relationships made them better qualified to bind the new republic together by diminishing conflict in a society built upon the competition of ideas. Preparing husbands and children to assume the mantle of republican citizenship became the first and most important obligation of American women in the post-Revolutionary period.[39] In 1796, Samuel Harrison Smith noted that "virtue or the vice of an individual, the happiness or the misery of a family, the glory of the infamy of a nation, have had their sources in the cradle, over which the prejudices of a nurse or a mother have presided."[40] Likewise, Noah Webster noted that "Youth is the time to form both the head and the heart…the seeds of knowledge should be planted in the mind while it is young and susceptible and if the mind is not kept untainted in youth, there is little probability that the moral character of the *man* will be unblemished."[41]

"The Revolution," Gordon Wood explained, "had released egalitarian and anti-patriarchal impulses that could not be stopped. The republican family was becoming an autonomous private

38. Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 71.

39. Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 502-503. For more information on Republican Motherhood, see Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), and Rosemarie Zagari, "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother," *American Quarterly* 44, (June 1992): 192-215.

40. Samuel Harrison Smith, "Remarks on Education: Illustrating the Close Connection Between Virtue and Wisdom: To which is Annexed, a System of Liberal Education," in *The Founding Fathers, Education, and "The Great Contest,"* ed. Benjamin Justice (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 207.

41. Noah Webster, "On the Education of Youth in America," in *The American Museum or University Magazine, Part II: July to December* (Philadelphia, PA: M. Carey, 1792), 173

institution whose members had their own legal rights and identities."[42] Elderly congressman Paine Wingate lamented in 1788 that "Fathers, mothers, sons & daughters, young & old, all mix together & talk & joke alike, so that you cannot discover any distinction made or any respect shewn to one more than to another. I am not for keeping up a great distance between Parents & Children, but there is a difference between staring and stark mad."[43] As Wingate noted, parents increasingly eschewed corporeal punishment in favor of exerting their influence upon their progeny through reason, argument, and personal example.[44]

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Here, one must be cautious. Even as a egalitarian ideals began to upset traditional gender hierarchies, men remained at the top of a predominately patriarchal social hierarchy in the United States. Yet these were not the men that their fathers and grandfathers had been before the war in terms of their willingness to express emotions. To understand these emotions and their changes over time, it is first important to define "emotion"—a surprisingly controversial subject within the realm of the social sciences. According to psychologist Klaus R. Scherer, "emotion" is best understood as a spectrum which includes "feelings" (which are a subjective interior reaction) but also a process of appraising situations or events which can evoke physiological responses, such as tears, a racing heart rate, sweating, or heavy breathing. Reactions can also include facial or verbal expressions. These emotions and feelings are elicited by "stimulus events" in which "something happens to the organism that stimulates or triggers a response after having been evaluated for its significance." These stimulus events can either be internal—such as memories

42. Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 498-502.
43. Paine Wingate, quoted in Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 74.
44. Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 236.

or thoughts—or external—such as witnessing or participating in an activity. These internal and external events are appraised by an individual as being of importance, thus eliciting emotion.[45]

Historians who have examined myriads of men's diaries from the colonial period have noted that relatively few recorded their personal motivations or feelings. Unlike the more modern use of diaries as tools for self-reflection and the processing of feelings or thoughts, colonial men primarily used their diaries for recording economic transactions. In her study of pre-Revolutionary Virginians, historian Jan Lewis noted that colonial men "did not live in a psychological realm. They did not examine motivation, nor did they muse about the complexities of human behavior. They neither had the taste nor the skill for self-examination. They did not probe the depths of the human heart."[46] More likely, these men were attempting to fulfill the societal expectation of emotional stoicism which circumscribed their willingness to *express* their emotions.

The post-Revolutionary American family increasingly became a locus of emotional expression and growing intimacy between husbands and wives as well as parents and children. What then helps to explain this shift in emotional expression? If the Enlightenment promoted egalitarianism as an increasingly acceptable *modus operandi* among familial relations, the growing intellectual influence of the Romantics helped to reshape how individuals acceptably expressed their emotions within those relationships. The Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution was a period of empiricism, reason, and intellect that leaned heavily upon logic, privileged reason, and distrusted emotion. The emerging Romantic movement in philosophy and the arts blossomed in the nineteenth century in response to the trend towards hyper-rationalism

45. Klaus R. Scherer, "What are emotions? And how can they be measured?," *Social Science Information* 4 (December 2005), 697-701.

46. Jan Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 214.

taking hold among the intellectual elites. It sought to turn the Scientific Revolution's emphasis upon the external world on its axis, shifting human attention back towards one's interior. "It was into this transcendental vacuum," historian Tim Blanning wrote, "that the romantics moved. In doing so, they were initiating a new phase in long-running dialectic between a culture of feeling and a culture of reason."[47] As theologian Ernst Troeltsch wryly noted, "Romanticism too is a revolution, a thorough and genuine revolution: a revolution against the respectability of the bourgeois temper and against a universal equalitarian ethic: a revolution, above all, against the whole of the mathematico-mechanical spirit of science in western Europe, against a conception of Natural Law which sought to blend utility with morality, against the bare abstraction of a universal and equal Humanity."[48]

Unlike the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, the Romantic movement represented a period of intense "inward" focus, which the German philosopher of history Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel described as a period of "absolute inwardness."[49] While Enlightenment philosophers emphasized reason, balance, order, harmony, rationality, and intellect, the Romantics emphasized "the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental." The Romantic movement was also a response to the movement towards mechanical mass production and perception of humans as cogs within a larger machine. To the Romantics, the Enlightenment and industrialization denied the "other half" of the human existence that was necessary for a good

47. Tim Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2010), xv-xvi

48. Otto Gierke, *Natural Law and the Theory of Society, 1500 to 1800; with a Lecture on the Ideas of Natural Law and Humanity by Ernst Troeltsch*, trans. Ernest Barker (Cambridge University Press, 1934), 203.

49. Blanning, *Romantic Revolution*, xvii.

life: emotion. They thus eagerly elevated "emotions over reason, the senses over intellect, and the emphasis on the importance of exploring one's inner self and personality."[50]

In terms of child-rearing specifically, Romanticism exerted a profound new influence on how parents and society viewed children. In contrast to the Enlightenment's emphasis upon children as "blank slates" or "empty vessels" that had no predetermined traits of human nature, the Romantics argued that children had predetermined natures that they needed to both discover and express on their own. Parents were "to allow the child to find its inner voice, true soul, or flash of genius untrammeled by the noxious institutions that constitute society." According to the Romantics, feelings were paramount to judging a child's behavior along with an enduring belief in the virtually limitless capacity of children.[51]

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The Romantic movement thus helped to legitimate the expression of emotions along with the exploration of the inner-self. In the secular realm, the movement brushed against the cold and mechanistic perspective of life and relationships characterized by the colonial and Revolutionary periods which, through inertia, laid the groundwork for greater intimacy and emotionality among American males. The most tangible evidence of the Romantic movement's influence on American emotional expression would emanate from a budding religious movement that swept the nation in the first half of the eighteenth and second half of the nineteenth centuries: the Great Awakenings.

With the outbreak of the First Great Awakening around 1730, American revival preachers sought to evoke passionate responses from their listeners in the belief that a

50. *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*, (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Incorporated Publishers, 1995), 964.

51. Albert Karson and Martha Karson, "The Influence of American Parenting Styles of Puritanism, Rationalism, and Romanticism," Institute of Education Sciences, (1976): 4, 6-7.

relationship with God began with an emotional response to His offer of salvation—a belief which still courses through modern evangelicalism. This movement took greater root among lay preachers and many established pastors and preachers throughout the thirteen British colonies look askance at the emotional extremity of these revival meetings. One such was Congregationalist pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards who worried that the "revival debates rested on a unitary conception of the human self as intellectual and effective." Seeing a perceived flaw in this approach, he sought to strike a delicate balance, arguing that an "idea was a unit of affective response as well as intellectual content." Most religious British Americans eschewed Edwards' middle ground, however, and fell into one of two major camps. The "Old Lights" were anti-revivalists who argued that ideas should be divorced of emotional influence and should instead rely upon reason while "New Lights" instead celebrated the emotional enthusiasm of the revival meetings.[52]

The First Great Awakening represented a "a new elaboration of the Reformation," which was distinguished from earlier Protestantism by "dramatically increased emphases on *seasons of revival*, on *outpourings of the Holy Spirit*, and on *converted sinners experiencing God's love personally*." Emotional acceptance of the Romantic movement may have heavily influenced New Light evangelicalism, but it was also influenced by the egalitarianism of the Enlightenment. Compared with the rigid and hierarchical Calvinist churches that dotted the early British North American landscape, evangelical churches increasingly allowed for women and nonwhites to take positions in church administration such as deacons and elders. The poor, rich, parents, children, whites, and non-whites comingled freely in many evangelical churches. Historian

52. Michael McClymond, "Jonathan Edwards" in *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*, ed. John Corrigan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 407. For a greater understanding of Jonathan Edwards and his emotional and religious influence upon American history, see George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

Thomas S. Kidd noted that "In the revivals, the world seemed to turn upside down as those with the very least agency in eighteenth-century America felt the power of God surge in their bodies."[53]

In the South, however, religious leveling presented a problem. Economically beholden to the institution of slavery, Southerners looked with suspicion upon the social levelling endemic to northern evangelicalism during the First Great Awakening. Nonetheless, the institutional weakness of the Anglican church and a scattered but spiritually hungry population created a vacuum which was filled by northern evangelicals who saw the South as a godless, backwoods mission field in need of salvation. Throughout the Carolinas and eastern Georgia, New Light Evangelicalism spread like wildfire. The arrival of Methodist missionaries after the American Revolution led to another radical shift in the religious makeup of the South. According to Kidd, "what once had been viewed by northerners as a godless mission field was now beginning to turn into an evangelical stronghold." In time, evangelicalism in the South would reflect the image of the surrounding rigid, hierarchical, and pro-slavery society.[54]

Over time, these Old Lights and New Lights found a common enemy in the growing movement of Deism which was taking root among the intellectual elite. Deism was an attempt to meld the intellectual discoveries of the Scientific Revolution, the philosophy of the Enlightenment, and Christianity into a cohesive whole. It denied the supernatural, the doctrine of Christ's deity and His resurrection, and instead emphasized Biblical standards of morality. Contrary to evangelicalism, which emphasized one's personal relationship with God as evidenced by feeling and enthusiasm, Deism painted God as aloof and unwilling to intervene in

53. Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), xiv-xv.

54. Ibid., 265-66.

the world through direct action. In the eyes of Deists, God was only approachable through the use of reason. Though popular among American intellectual elites, Deism never held the same power over lower- and middle-class Americans that New Light evangelicalism did.

By the mid-18th century, the religious enthusiasm of the First Great Awakening had already petered out, eventually giving way to the Second Great Awakening from 1790 to the late 1840s. Like many of their predecessors, revivalists like Charles Finney sought to stir within their listeners an emotional reaction to the Gospel. Going beyond the idea that humankind were sinners in need of salvation, revivalists of Finney's ilk now expounded more upon God's *love* as well as His desire to rescue sinners from hell.[55] Both religious Awakenings were thus outgrowths of the emphasis upon enthusiasm, emotion, and the supernatural by the Romantics. However, the Second Great Awakening witnessed more intense religious revivals that emphasized one's *personal relationship* with Jesus Christ. Mere intellectual assent to the Christian faith was no longer enough. One now needed to accept Jesus into his or her *heart*.[56]

It was in the west that the revivals of the Second Great Awakening took a much more emotional turn. Preachers there created an atmosphere of religious fervency through evangelistic call-and-response meetings.[57] The naturalistic and mechanistic approach to the world that had been endemic to the Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution, as well as the intellectual approach to faith common in Calvinist circles, were seen by many evangelicals as elitist, undemocratic, and undermining of genuine religious feeling. Revivalists like Finney downplayed the value of the intellect in having faith. In response to Calvinists who held firmly to religious

55. Barry Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 1-5.

56. Claudia Stokes, *The Altar at Home: Sentimental Literature and Nineteenth-Century American Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 41-42.

57. Hankins, *Second Great Awakening*, 7.

hierarchy, rigid doctrine, and the experience of God through the intellect, Finney argued that this system of thought "had not been born again, was insufficient, and altogether an abomination to God." His emphasis on outward emotional signs as evidence of salvation was palpable after preaching in a small town of mainly Dutch Reformed Calvinists. After taking the stage and unleashing a torrent of emotion, he noticed among the crowd that "a deep and universal feeling seemed to pervade the whole assembly. Those that were truly pious among them, poured forth their tears of mingled joy, gratitude, and deep solicitude for their anxious and distressed neighbors."[58]

Other noted revivalists including Francis Asbury and Lorenzo Dow even went so far as to excise theology from their sermons, relying instead upon the universal, innate, and cross-cultural medium of emotion to make their message more accessible to those who they believed lacked the education to understand more complex theology. Grief, joy, ecstasy, fear, delight, sorrow, and rejoicing all demarcated the experience of the Christian convert during this period. Finney, Asbury, Dow and other revivalists believed, in the words of historian Claudia Stokes, that "mere words or verbal professions of faith can be easily counterfeited," and that "tears, as outward excretions of the unseen workings of the heart, metonymically affirmed the sincerity of these private convictions."[59]

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The Enlightenment, the Romantics, and the First and Second Great Awakenings deeply affected generations of antebellum Americans in terms of their literary, artistic, religious, political, intellectual, and emotional evolution. White southern males in particular found their

58. Charles G. Finney to the Female Missionary Society of the Western District, September 30, 1824 in *The Eighth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Female Missionary Society of the Western District* (Utica, NY: William Williams, 1824), 17-19.

59. Stokes, *The Altar at Home*, 42-43.

identities shaped and rooted in these movements in the first half of the nineteenth century, which pulled them taut between the traditional old-world ideal of the emotionless male and the developing new world ideal of a more emotionally expressive male who now led a family now increasingly defined by greater emotional intimacy and shared input. No longer simply a unit of economic advancement, family was now supposed to meet the emotional needs of each member. As wives and mothers turned inwardly towards their families to devote themselves to their families, husbands and fathers looked outwardly as they became the link between the family and the larger community. Masculine ideals of stoicism, rigid headship, and the weight of public and private masks became burdensome as men sought to fulfill their masculine roles while also meeting the emotional needs of their families. Ultimately, one of the greatest struggles of white Southern men leading up to the war was understanding, proving, and maintaining a masculinity that gave them a sense not only of themselves but also their place (and their family's place) in society.

Historians of the American South since the 1980s often have viewed the link between men and their communities through the lens of "honor"—the product of historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown's seminal work on the subject. As he defines it, "honor" was a pre-Christian system of behavior that was "essentially the cluster of ethical rules, most readily found in societies of small communities, by which judgments of behavior are ratified by community consensus."[60] An honorable man was one recognized by his community as fiercely brave, masculine, honest, and generous and it was the relationship between the individual and his community that shaped the contours of male honor and, by extension, the cultural expectations of masculinity. As Wyatt-Brown went on to note, "At the heart of honor…lies the evaluation of the

60. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics & Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), xv.

public…Honor resides in the individual as his understanding of who he is and where he belongs in the ordered ranks of society." Honor was reputation.[61]

While honor in this sense is a product of relationships on horizontal plane, it also was part and parcel of relationships on a vertical plane as well—particularly through the lens of patriarchy. Whites of all social classes had their form of honor and the poorest patriarch was still a master within his home. The existence of slavery underscored white honor. South Carolina politician and future Confederate States Secretary of the Treasury Christopher Memminger noted in 1851 that:

> The Slave Institution at the South increases the tendency to dignify the family. Each planter is in fact a Patriarch—his position compels him to be a ruler in his household…Domestic relations become those which are most prized—each family recognizes its duty, and its members feel a responsibility for its discharge. The fifth commandment becomes the foundation of Society. The State is looked to only as the ultimate head in external relations, while all internal duties, such as support, education, and the relative duties of individuals, are left to domestic regulation.[62]

Likewise, in her study of white yeoman farmers in Low Country South Carolina, historian Stephanie McCurry noted that both yeoman and planters shared "a definition of manhood rooted in the inviolability of the household, the command of dependents, and the public prerogatives manhood conferred. When they struck for independence in the fall of 1860…lowcountry yeomen acted in defense of their own identity, as masters of small worlds."[63] But Wyatt-Brown disagrees. Patriarchy in the form of the rule of the aristocracy over landless poor whites and yeomen, he maintains, at least publicly embodied "a more democratic outlook, one that still stressed hierarchy, but the old, rigid style of an earlier day were generally blurred,

61. Ibid., 15.

62. C.G. Memminger, "Lecture Delivered Before the Young Men's Library Association of Augusta, April 10, 1851" (Augusta, GA: W.S. Jones, 1851), 14-15.

63. Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 304.

almost beyond easy recognition." In other words, patriarchy was not the stiff, ridged, and impenetrable hierarchy that historians have often made it out to be. Its hard edges were softened by the flow of ideas and the changing nature of relationships in the first five decades of the nineteenth century when elites needed the allegiance (and sometimes the votes) of more modest men.[64]

Historian Michael P. Johnson meanwhile noted that patriarchal ideology created tension within families which, by the decade preceding the American Civil War, began to undermine and challenge the legitimacy of patriarchy. Patriarchal ideology "placed various kinds and degrees of coercion and inequality in the context of family relationships," which were legitimated through reciprocity and were "tempered by affection, between the patriarch and his dependents." In other words, emotion was at the center of familial patriarchy. Johnson added that "Planter families were not cold and emotionless like the 'restricted patriarchal nuclear family' that prevailed in England between 1550 and 1770…Instead, the planters combined patriarchal ideas about authority with deep personal and emotional ties to their wives and children."[65]

White manhood and masculinity were both defined and redefined through interactions between men, their families, their communities, and sometimes their slaves. Only through *relationships* could individuals imbibe, process, and repackage masculine ideals while striving to find their sense of self-worth in their ability to meet the white community's ideals of honor and manhood. Through this relational process, white men learned to examine themselves and more clearly define their feelings. According to historian James Broomall, "Self-examination,

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64. Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 68-69.

65. Michael P. Johnson, "Planters and Patriarchy: Charleston, 1800-1860," *The Journal of Southern History* 46, No. 1 (February 1980): 46-47. He also noted what may be a problem with her choice of geographic study as he noted that "It is doubtful if any planters were more self-consciously patriarchal than the rice planters of the South Carolina low country…It is difficult to think of other Americans of the era who came closer to being ideal-typical patriarchs." For more information on patriarchal families in England, see Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

emotional release and control, and demonstrations of manliness became processes by which Southerners learned the contours of manhood and explored themselves and their place in society."[66]

Antebellum white southern men thus found themselves hamstrung between a public world in which their ideal manhood was increasingly defined through societal consensus and the private world wherein they felt a nagging sense that they could not or would not be able to meet these standards. Sociologists have argued that the relationship between self and society in a close-knit community required the individual to measure themselves and their self-worth according to the reputation that they held among members of that community. White southern men lived in bifurcated world split between the "private" and the "public" self. The private self was the truer self—the aspects of one's personality, being, thoughts, dreams, hopes, and faults, kept hidden away from the public. Marked by intense vulnerability, only individuals with whom one holds the most intimate of relationships find their way into another individual's "private self." The "public self" refers to the exterior self that one creates in order to align the self with social and community standards and was thus marked by performance and façade. Men's diaries became a reflection of this demarcation between the inner and outer world of Southern men in the years leading up to the American Civil War. In her study of Virginia, historian Jan Lewis noted that men in the first half of the nineteenth century continued to use diaries as account books for their economic transactions, much liked their colonial forbearers. Nonetheless, "They also began gradually to write diaries to explore and to soothe their feelings. Sentimental religion,

66. James Broomall, "Personal Confederacies: War and Peace in the American South, 1840-1890" (PhD dissertation, University of Florida, 2011), 28.

by holding that purity of heart was more important than correctness of action, encouraged Virginians to record and examine the emotions of their hearts."[67]

In the prewar years, diaries became "tools of introspection and self-development." Although diaries and letters both could be written for either public or private consumption, the distinguishing feature between the two approaches lay in the depth of emotional exposition. As Broomall noted, "In writing and within the domestic sphere, feelings ran more freely, and private exposure was more expressive."[68] The act of writing allowed men to interact with the parts of themselves over which they held no sense of mastery—their emotions. These emotions could not be overcome by logic, reason, or even a sense of power.[69]

Nagging doubts resulting from a man's inability to achieve the masculine ideals of his community—upon which one's reputation depended—created uncertainty and insecurity that often drove white southern men toward obsessive achievement and competition with other men. The desire to project *individualistic* power kept southern men from relating well to each other. Historian Stephen Berry maintains that while these men often grew up together and developed deep friendships, these relationships were often marred by constant self-assessments of their standing among their peers as well as a consistent alertness towards any perceived slights to their personal honor. "Even in friendship," Berry noted, "there was a standoffishness, an unwillingness to appear weak, vulnerable, or emotionally needy."[70] In effect, white southern males often defined, redefined, and protected their masculinity primarily in relationship to each other which sociologist Michael Kimmel calls the "homosocial enactment of masculinity." These

67. Lewis, *Pursuit of Happiness,* 214.
68. Broomall, "Personal Confederacies," 42, 39.
69. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Hearts of Darkness: Wellsprings of a Southern Literary Tradition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), xiii-xiv.
70. Berry, *All That Makes a Man,* 39.

relationships between men *most often* came to shape, define, and repackage ideals of manhood and masculinity for broader consumption. From the early nineteenth century onward, American men's quest to prove their manhood has had at its core the element of homosociality which could take the form of camaraderie, fellowship, and intimacy—all of which were celebrated in male culture.[71]

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Thus, long before the American Civil War, white men defined their masculinity through emotion and interpersonal relationships. Such relationships had a profound influence upon their understanding of themselves as well as the world around them and they would continue to influence white southern males through the American Civil War—particularly in terms of their relationships with women. Unable to reach the impossible social standards of white masculinity in the nineteenth century, men turned to the only socially-approved source of strength in achieving a sense of their manhood: women. Although white southern women did not *define* masculinity, they nonetheless served as an impetus to its achievement through their socially-predisposed role in supporting, encouraging, sacrificing, and being a source of quiet strength that enabled white men to fulfill their grand visions of themselves and their future.[72]

The softening of the rigid boundaries of patriarchy in the decades leading up to the American Civil War meant that white husbands and wives theoretically became partners in a shared endeavor—albeit one mainly centered on the grand visions of the husband. The archetypal white female of the early nineteenth century was one who supported a man's economic, social, or political endeavors while simultaneously elevating his own self-importance and standing in the community through her own purity, piety, domesticity, supportiveness, and

71. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 5-8.
72. Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 46.

submissiveness. And yet this romanticized feminine ideal was also sometimes eschewed by men who instead favored women who were "open-tempered, compelling, and reasonable, engaging and unguarded, human and whole, mischievous and lively, interesting to talk to and diverting to spend time with." Nonetheless, whether a woman met the feminine ideal or not, men wanted to find spouses whose public lives would mesh well with their own masculine ideals.

Historian Stephen Berry noted this pattern, writing that white women "were supposed to bear witness to male becoming, to cheer men to greatness, and to comfort them along the way. Every free white man had a personal empire to build…. And each man had another empire to build in a woman, through whose eyes he could see himself succeed." Male aspirations—including accomplishments in business, life, or in fulfilling cultural mandates—could only be achieved through the succor of a woman.[73] During his grand tour of America, famed French traveler Alexis de Tocqueville noted this expectation, writing that "It is not uncommon for the same man, in the course of his life, to rise and sink again through all the grades which lead from opulence to poverty. American women support these vicissitudes with calm and unquenchable energy: it would seem that their desires contract, as easily as they expand, with their fortunes."[74] This reciprocity was woven into the very fabric of antebellum romantic relationships from initial attraction through courting and into marriage.

Victorian courtship took on a markedly different tone than that of the colonial period as the Enlightenment's emphasis on the individual, the egalitarianism of the American Revolution, and the emotional emphasis of the Romantics represented a tectonic shift in interpersonal relationships between white southern men and women. Romantic love now held full sway in the

73. Ibid., 85-86

74. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875), 2:183.

realm of male-female relationships which included the awkward, yet exciting, period of courtship. From the early nineteenth century onward, white women could court as many suitors as they pleased and were free to make their own decisions about whom they married. Rather than seeing marriage as an economic decision (i.e. as a method of seeking financial provision) or a method for climbing a social ladder or fulfilling social proscriptions of the period, the emphasis became the "felt" need of emotional connection and interpersonal suitability. Marriage transitioned away from an economic and social institution to a less patriarchal, more emotionally-driven enterprise fueled by physical attraction and emotional appeal.[75] Since relationships were increasingly based upon compatibility and mutual affection, these feelings were fueled by communication of a verbal and written nature—a continuous and consistent probing of one another's psyches.

Written correspondence during the period of courtship laid the foundation for the emotional tethering of the written word during the American Civil War. The rural nature of the south meant that courting couples, who were hampered by the limitations of technology and travel, overcame these geographic distances through the art of writing letters. Additionally, men and women often grew up in separate spheres with less contact, often creating a sense of insecurity and fear when interacting with the opposite sex. "Men and women had a vast psychic distance to close," Berry noted, "distance that could seem overwhelming when they met face-to-face."[76]

The growing reliance on written correspondence during a period of courtship was attributable in part to the increase in white literacy rates in the years leading up to the war.

75. Victoria E. Ott, *Confederate Daughters: Coming of Age during the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 26, 100-101.

76. Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 89.

Between 1799 and 1809, the illiteracy rate (the inability to sign one's name) among American army enlistees (with an average age of 25.1) was 42 percent—a number which dropped to 25 percent by 1850.[77] As noted earlier, diaries became tools of self-reflection in which men recorded their private feelings in the antebellum period. Letters, particularly during the period of courtship, conveyed these emotions to potential partners and drew them into an individual's private world. In the process, men slowly emotionally surrendered themselves to women without diminishing their culturally-mandated ideals of masculinity or manhood.[78]

On the surface, the idea of "surrender"—or losing oneself within another and yielding to that other—seems antithetical to the vein of virile masculine independence that ran through southern society in the pre-war period as it signified a man's incompleteness and reeked of masculine inadequacy. Yet men were allowed and even expected to surrender in certain areas of their lives such as to God and their romantic partners. The First and Second Great Awakenings emphasized the importance of a personal relationship with God which, coupled with a culture imbued with Christian morality, created a society with a steady tradition of male surrender to God and His ways. This language of religious surrender translated to romantic pursuits as well. In a society marked by Republican Motherhood and which celebrated women's contributions through their piety, servitude, and quiet strength, men virtually worshipped ideal women.

Romance in no way replaced organized religion, however. Rather, this new perspective on romantic relationships was the result of the influence of the Romantics and the more emotionally and relationally-driven theology of the Great Awakenings. In effect, romance and organized religion bled together, becoming virtually indistinguishable as Southern men looked to

77. Edward Stevens Jr., "The Anatomy of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century United States," in *National Literacy Campaigns: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. R.F. Arnove and H.J. Graff (New York: Plenum Press, 1987), 101

78. Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 90.

their wives as reflections of God's softer, kinder qualities as well as their own hopes for personal redemption.[79] Victorian women did not necessarily seek this reverence, but romanticized men turned courtship into a spiritual quest by making women the spiritual lodestars of their lives. Women became the key to unlocking the door for a man's future greatness and eternal bliss as they bore witness to, cheered on, and rewarded male sacrifice.

Within the context of marriage and domestic life, Southern women theoretically wielded greater power through their emotional influence over their husbands and children. This narrow space in which women could wield power often required the restraint of their own ambitions as they expended themselves in aiding their beloved's endeavors. To compound their woes, many wives lived in rural areas where contact with neighbors or friends required much more effort. Rarely did their social circles extend outside of their own families and communication with those outside of their family was often accomplished through the written word rather than face-to-face. Gender norms of the period dictated that a woman's role was to look after her family's physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Family, then, became their focus.[80]

Much like Francisco de Miranda earlier in the 1780s, Alexis de Tocqueville noticed a glaring difference between women in Europe and United States in the 1830s. In Europe, unmarried women were unable to move about freely beyond the boundaries of home, while unmarried women in America were free to go where they wished. Tocqueville added, however, that a woman in America surrendered her independence once she married and was bound inextricably to the domestic sphere. This was no surprise, Tocqueville argues, as "No American woman falls into the toils of matrimony as into a snare held out to her simplicity and ignorance. She has been taught beforehand what is expected of her, and voluntarily and freely does she

79. Ibid., 92.
80. Ibid., 94-97, 107.

enter upon this engagement. She supports her new condition with courage, because she chose it."[81]

Although wives and mothers represented the locus of moral and spiritual goodness in the family, fathers embodied the family's ambitions and aspirations. Family provided men with physical, emotional, and spiritual support for their fulfillment of their grand visions and ambitions. At the same time, a woman's influence tempered the ambition of the family patriarch when it threatened to go outside of the bounds of societally-prescribed moral boundaries. In these ways, the relationship between a husband and wife was complementary as they assumed socially-acceptable roles in a common pursuit. This is not to say that these roles were willingly assumed, as they often were not, and the sometimes constraining nature of these roles could become a source of tension between married couples. Yet this experience in pursuing a common goal would prove invaluable during the American Civil War, as husbands and wives moved from the pre-war pursuit of lofty economic ambitions to simple survival. Even as wives assumed new roles and husbands witnessed the diminishment of their familial influence due to the physical distance from their families during the war, this common goal proved to be a source of stability in an extremely unstable time.

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Just as important as the relationships between husbands and wives, the relationships between parents and children also took on a new hue in the wake of the American Revolution, the First and Second Great Awakenings, and the Romantic period. American democracy altered the relationship between parents and children with the growing demand for egalitarianism in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. "I think that, in proportion as manners and laws

81. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2:202.

become more democratic," Alexis de Tocqueville noted, "the relation of father and son becomes more intimate and more affectionate; rules and authority are less talked of; confidence and tenderness are oftentimes increased, and it would seem that the natural bond is drawn closer in proportion as the social bond is loosened."[82]

The importance of this growing intimacy between parents and children in the Victorian period cannot be understated. According to modern Attachment Theory, the first year of an infants' life is when he or she develops deep emotional ties to their primary caregiver—i.e. their mother or father. During this period, how a parent response to the infant's needs—such as when they feel stressed or threatened—helps to define how the infant will respond to situations and other individuals in the future. Consistent emotional responsiveness to the infant's needs creates "secure attachments," while unemotional or inappropriate responses generally create "insecure attachments." These attachments shape how individuals seek comfort and support from others whether through secure and healthy means or insecure and unhealthy means.[83]

Within parent-child relationships, children further develop their sense of self identity and their relationship to their primary caregivers, which in turn creates "internal working models" that unconsciously guide how one processes information, approaches new situations, and develops attachments to others throughout life. These internal working models are largely resistant to alteration unless major life events (either positive or negative) or the construction of new and meaningful relationships alter the quality of caregiving. These events can include the loss of one or more parents, serious physical impairment, parental separation through divorce, and more.[84]

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82. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2:195.

83. Ronit Roth Hanania and Maayan Davidow, "Attachment," in *Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology*, ed. Charles Spielberger (San Diego, CA: Elsevier Academic Press, 2004), 192.

84. Ibid., 198-99.

Primary caregivers thus set the parameters for how children understand themselves as well as how they relate to others in the first year of the child's life. Parents continue to model predefined and culturally-approved ideas of masculinity or femininity throughout the child's life through repeated modeling and interpersonal interaction. The antebellum period was a time of intense emotional intimacy between parents and children and, much like husbands and wives, parents and their children often formed deep emotional bonds that lasted throughout their lives. For young women, the narrow prescriptive nature of a woman's familial role meant that children looked to their mothers for emotional succor. Mothers also modeled domestic duties and femininity for their daughters and young women inevitably felt a deep devotion to their mothers and obsequence to their domestic authority. Because the father's gaze held one eye on their family and the other on the community, the father's presence in the workplace and their absence from the home meant that young women often did not form as close of bonds with their fathers as their mothers, at least among the upper classes.

In the familial hierarchy, the most egalitarian relationships between family members were typically between siblings. Historian Victoria Ott notes that "in many ways, the closeness between sisters surpassed that between husbands and wives and between children and their parents." Relations to members of the opposite sex, however, was often trickier. Men and women in the pre-war period generally operated within separate spheres defined by different culturally appropriate activities. The sharp delineation between these separate spheres shielded young men from exposure to feminine characteristics while also repeatedly reaffirming masculine characteristics. Young boys were expected to pursue traditionally masculine activities that emphasized individualism, competition, community responsibility through pastimes such as hunting and fishing as well as intellectual exercises such as debate and participation in literary

societies. In much the same way, separate spheres shielded young women from exposure to masculine characteristics while also reaffirming feminine and domestic characteristics. Young women were expected to spend their time sewing, corresponding, and reading. When men and women came together in matrimony, these separate spheres were meant to coalesce into a cohesive and complementary whole. In effect, they were trained for this marital dance their whole lives. The line of demarcation between these separate spheres became sharper the higher one was up the economic and social ladder as the children of yeoman farmers were forced to work alongside their parents and siblings to support the household.

Though the separate spheres of cultural expectations between men and women were impermeable, young boys and girls learned to relate to the opposite sex within the context of those separate spheres through play and social engagements with their siblings. Even when apart, brothers and sisters corresponded regularly through letters which provide a valuable insight into the influence of patriarchy among young men as brothers often offered advice and direction to their sisters with a sort of fatherly tone.[85] Though often tinged with tenderness and affection, letters between siblings of differing genders often demonstrated a depth of feeling that was not as present in those between sons and their fathers. Expressions of emotion between sons and mothers, however, came closer to matching the depth of emotional intimacy between brothers and sisters.

This is not to say that the Great Awakenings and the Romantic movement somehow created greater emotional intimacy. Rather, they simply made emotional expression more socially acceptable. By doing so, white southern males were more likely to privately express themselves more often and to make greater attempts to understand their emotional state. This

85. Ott, *Confederate Daughters*, 22-24.

altered how men understood themselves and how they related to each other and their families. Furthermore, the growing egalitarian impulse sweeping through American society altered familial relationships by creating a system of interpersonal reliance in which wives and children depended upon their husbands and fathers and vice versa for emotional and economic support during the American Civil War.

In the antebellum period, however, differing ideals of masculinity across geographic lines reflected the growing schism between North and South. Indeed, the war sometimes was as much of a clash between two competing ideals of manhood as it was between two disparate political and social visions. According to sociologist Michael Kimmel, in the North the "Self-Made Man" replaced the "Genteel Patriarch" and the "Heroic Artisan," reflecting his deeper inclusion in the industrial marketplace. In the South, however, the "Genteel Patriarch" continued to represent the beau ideal of masculinity. The coming war represented the clash of manhood between the old model of the agricultural Genteel Patriarch and the new model of the industrial and capitalist Self-Made Man.[86]

In 1855, the "Orator of the South" William Lowndes Yancey politicized this difference, stating that:

> The Creator has beautified the face of this Union with sectional features. Absorbing all minor subdivisions, He has made the North and the South; the one the region of frost, ribbed with ice and granite; the other baring its generous bosom to the sun and ever smiling under its influence. The climate, soil, and productions of these two grand divisions of the land, have made the character of their inhabitants. Those who occupy the one are cool, calculating, enterprising, selfish, and grasping; the inhabitants of the other are ardent, brave, and magnanimous, more disposed to give than to accumulate, to enjoy ease rather than to labor.[87]

86. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 19, 29, 50.

87. William Lowndes Yancey, Speech at Columbus, GA, 1855, in John W. DuBose, *The Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey*, (Birmingham, AL: Roberts & Son, 1892), 1:301.

To say that the southern planter class was not grasping and enterprising is to vastly understate the case. Yet southern men viewed the Northern ideal of the "Self-Made Man" as a threat to the permanent nature of southern manhood which, like their colonial forebearers, rested on the ownership of land as well as one's service to the community. According to historian Eugene Genovese, southern conservatives "questioned the assumptions of liberal society, denounced the hypocrisy and barbarism of the marketplace, and advanced a vision of an organic society and a collective community."[88] The individualism and perceived selfishness of the "Self-Made Man" threatened to dissolve the glue that held society together while also undermining the economic hierarchy which brought order to southern society. In the eyes of many Southerners, Yankees "had abandoned honor for money, morality for nobility, community values for self-improvement." The American Civil War would thus represent the final stand of the Genteel Patriarch.[89]

Although the antebellum period represented a period in which men learned what it meant to "be a man," the war would become the crucible for the validity of these ideals.[90] And yet, Confederate soldiers wrote relatively little about manhood, honor, duty, or ideology, particularly to their loved ones and family members. Though the concept of honor will be discussed in the chapters that follow, Confederate soldiers' letters tended to focus on how things were at home, whether their families were safe and healthy, the often humdrum nature of camp life, their present emotional states, and reminders of their continued love and concern for their family members. Though the mundane minutiae of camp life filled more pages of soldiers' letters than any other subject, the imminent prospect of death meant that worries about manhood and

88. Eugene Genovese, *In Red and Black: Marxian Explorations in Southern and Afro-American History,* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971), 318.

89. Kimmel, *Manhood in America,* 51.

90. Berry, *All That Makes a Man,* 9-10.

masculinity would take a backseat to the expression and reception of emotional intimacy between soldiers and their loved ones.

Letters thus represented opportunities for soldiers to express their emotions towards their loved ones rather than becoming a tool by which men could validate their manhood or sense of honor. This is not to say that men did not try to assert their patriarchy. Endless reams of soldier letters demonstrate that men were often obsessed with exerting control over their homes and their families. Yet the physical distance and emotional toll of war loosened, but did not break, the grip of patriarchy as well as the constraints of traditional ideals of Southern manhood. In the end, this was a war that erupted over social and political issues which had been simmering underneath the surface of American life for decades. Yet it stretched on for four, long, brutal years because of the emotional tethers which kept men connected to each other and their loved ones. Those ties provided the emotional stability soldiers so desperately craved and which was found to be increasingly lacking in the world around them.

2: Soldier Friendship and Camaraderie in the American Civil War

Twenty-two-year old James R. Montgomery was a promising young law student at the University of Mississippi when the Civil War began. Not long after the Confederate guns ringing the harbor at Fort Sumter cooled, Montgomery and his classmates eagerly enlisted for twelve months of service in the Confederate army. Swept up in the *rage militaire* of the early war period, Montgomery and his classmates mustered into Company A of the 11th Mississippi Infantry Regiment, the University Greys, where their lives would be woven together through the shared experience of suffering and loss. In less than two years, the idealism that drove Montgomery and thousands of his comrades faded in the wake of war's stark reality. Rather than achieving battlefield glory, Montgomery found himself withering away in the Old Capital Prison in Washington. His only salvation lay in the fact that prison exchanges were still commonplace. He was soon paroled and sent back to his unit just in time to participate in the Battle of Gettysburg, where the University Greys suffered a staggering casualty rate of 100 percent killed or wounded.[1]

Throughout his enlistment, service, capture, and return, Montgomery was never alone. Those with whom he enlisted and those with whom he built new relationships in the army were, until death or desertion, linked with young private as they faced the greatest psychological, physical, and spiritual struggle of their lives: surviving war. All of that changed in May 1864 after the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse, when Montgomery's friends had to go on without him. As the young private lay prostate in agony from a shrapnel wound in his shoulder, Montgomery's emotions rolled between the shifting tides of fear and resignation as the prospect of returning home faded. "This is my last letter to you…I know that death is near, and that I will

1. "Soldier Profile: James Robert Montgomery," *Civil War Voices: Soldier Studies*, http://www.soldierstudies.org/index.php?action=soldier_profile&Soldier=489 (accessed September 11, 2018).

die far from home and friends of my early youth," he wrote his father back in Camden, Mississippi, "but I have friends here too who are kind to me. My friend Fairfax will write you at my request and give you the particulars of my death." As pen scratched paper, rivulets of blood dripped down his arm, permanently staining the fragile paper. The cruel hand of war had snatched from him all that he had once known or hoped for—his bright future as a lawyer, the friendship and camaraderie of his fellow classmates, the comforting presence of his parents and loved ones. "My grave will be marked so that you may visit it if you desire to do so, but it is optionary with you whether you let my remains rest here or in Miss. I would like to rest in the grave yard with my dear mother and brothers but it's a matter of minor importance. Let us all try to reunite in heaven," he wrote before his final agonizing goodbye: "My strength fails me. My horse and my equipments will be left for you. Again, a long farewell to you. May we meet in heaven."[2]

Four days later, Private Montgomery succumbed to his wounds. Heartbroken over the loss of his friend and comrade, Private Ethelbert Fairfax wrote to his own mother of Montgomery's death, "I don't think I ever witnessed such an exhibition of fortitude and Christian resignation as he showed. Although so far from home (he lived in Missippi) and his early friends, no words of complaint escaped his lips. He wrote a beautiful letter to his father soon after he received his wound. I have just completed a letter to his poor father enclosing it to him, announcing his death."[3] Fulfilling both the wishes of his friend as well as the cultural dictates of the day, Fairfax wrote to Montgomery's father, "In this sad bereavement you will

2. J.R. Montgomery to A.R. Montgomery, May 10, 1864, CSA Collection, ACWM.
3. Ethelbert Fairfax to Mother, May 15, 1864, Fairfax Letters, ACWM.

have the greatest of all comforts in knowing that he made peace with God and was resigned to his fate."[4]

The letters of Montgomery and Fairfax represent a broader emotive archetype that characterized homosocial relationships between the approximately 800,000 and 1.2 million men who enlisted in the Confederate Army between 1861 to 1865.[5] Most had never traveled more than a few miles from home before war wove their individual lives into the broader tapestry of strangers among whom they would eat, fight, drill, live, suffer, and in some cases, die. This physical proximity bred emotional connection as soldiers' identities and affections, previously rooted firmly in their families and communities, became inextricably bound to their comrades. The men beside them were more immediate and tangible emotional shelters at the battlefront than their distant family and friends.

These emotions between men—the feelings that they had for one another and the intimacy that undergirded those feelings—are not tangential to understanding how and why Confederate soldiers fought in the American Civil War. Rather, understanding their role is *fundamental* to understanding how soldiers endured a war whose "cardinal characteristic became its stunning bloodiness," according to historian Michael C.C. Adams, and which was "neither sharply delineated nor fought by combatants bonded together in defense of clearly enunciated positions and universally held ideologies."[6] The traditional motif of soldiers bound together through political ideology, shared cultural heritage, or military training provides many answers for why soldiers fought. Beyond those, however, the soldier's experience included an emotional

4. Ethelbert Fairfax to Parents of J.R. Montgomery, quoted in Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 17.

5. Mark A. Weitz, *More Damning Than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 303.

6. Adams, *Living Hell,* 5-6.

component to their interpersonal bonding which was born out of a mutual burden of suffering. The experience of violence "often shakes the very foundations of a person's beliefs and can create, in individuals and whole communities, a sense of living in a meaningless and threatening world," according to psychologists Ervin Staub and Johanna Vollhardt. Individuals who face violence, they noted, often "reclaim meaning and turn toward others, becoming caring and helpful, a phenomenon that has been referred to as *altruism born of suffering*."[7] Union and Confederate soldiers alike exhibited this altruism toward their comrades and even their enemies throughout the war. In the postwar period, they again exhibited this behavior by creating a myriad of soldiers' societies and fraternal orders designed to care for veterans and their families. By tracing the genesis of these wartime friendships from enlistment through their development in camp and their actualization in battle, this chapter demonstrates that comradeship and friendship filled an emotional void left by the separation of men from their families. Furthermore, it argues that these relationships provided an emotional bulwark against the demoralizing effects of war and gave another layer of meaning to their struggle on the battlefield.

This chapter—borne out of the plethora of soldier studies that have dominated the social history of the Civil War since Bell I. Wiley's pioneering studies after World War II—fills a gaping hole left in the voluminous historiography of the war. It specifically seeks to understand how friendship between soldiers—a relationship which went beyond mere camaraderie or group cohesion—sustained men in war while also examining how these relationships developed over time. Since most of the historiography surrounding soldier motivations in the Civil War centers on either ideology motivations or group cohesion, relatively little work has been done on the importance of *individual* relationships between men. Strikingly less work has been done on the

7. Ervin Staub and Johanna Vollhardt, "Altruism Born of Suffering: The Roots of Caring and Helping After Victimization and Other Trauma," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 78 (July 2008): 267.

emotional bonds which developed between these men. This chapter seeks to correct this imbalance by examining the emotional, psychological, and physical importance of the relationships between soldiers which developed during the war.

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As noted in the previous chapter, the century preceding the outbreak of the American Civil War witnessed a growing, though certainly not complete, acceptance of heightened emotional expression among men. When the dominate pre-war ideal of masculine stoicism butted up against a war that engendered immense emotional, physical, and psychological trauma, restraint soon gave way to a more unfettered expression of emotion between men as well as their families. The suffering endemic to war took rigid pre-1861 ideals of masculinity and homosocial relationships and softened their contours until they became more fluid in response to their present needs. Historian James Broomall observed that Civil War soldiers "could and often did change their feelings over time, thereby demonstrating fluidity in their personal responses to war."[8] The war thus marked an important turning point in the cultural expectations of emotional expression within inter-male relationships. According to historian Stephen Berry, men went into the war with a "prickly sense of self" as they were "constantly on their guard, watching each other for signs of respect and disrespect, competing with each other for mates, honors, and distinctions. Even in friendship, there was a standoffishness, an unwillingness to appear weak, vulnerable, or emotionally needy."[9] The evidence for this dissertation demonstrates that Southern men increasingly abandoned this standoffishness while simultaneously becoming more emotionally vulnerable. The overwhelming powerlessness of witnessing the death of comrades while also facing the prospect of one's own seemingly inevitable death often broke open the hard

8. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 3.
9. Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 39.

exterior of men who were forced to look to each other for strength and their own survival in their hours of greatest emotional and physical need. "War caused men to feel emotion and vulnerability which was previously only the domain of women," Broomall noted, and it "changed the attitudes, perceptions, and emotional disposition among men."[10]

Southern white males who became Confederate soldiers were not as emotionally "standoffish" as historians have been led to believe. Examining 1,790 letters written between 200 soldiers and 366 family members and 15 friends between 1861 and 1865, the overwhelming topic of conversation was not battle, religion, children, or even ideology or duty. Rather, it was the daily minutiae of a soldier or family member's life. However, nestled within many of these utterly mundane letters were bold declarations of feeling and affection which indicated soldiers' willingness and *need* to express their feelings. Of the 1,790 letters for this project, 1,182 include emotional or affective expressions towards the letter's recipient. Similar references to children came in second with 525 letters, religious declarations third with 332 letters, descriptions of battle in fourth with only 104 letters, and only 62 letters which expressed ideology or duty. In other words, soldiers who Stephen Berry argued "could never fully abandon the idea that it fell to them to deal with the difficulties and dissatisfactions that beset them," found themselves intimately connected to their comrades with a depth of feeling that many would later describe in letters, diaries, and memoirs as "womanly."[11]

In August 1863, not long after participating in the Battle of Gettysburg, Private W.L. Jones of the 26th North Carolina Infantry Regiment described the emotionally jarring effects of combat:

10. James J. Broomall, "'We Are a Band of Brothers:' Manhood and Community in Confederate Camps and Beyond," *Civil War History* 60 (September 2014): 271.

11. Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 39.

> Just staying out here to fight Just for the fun of the thing if that is the case I can say for myself that I never have seen any fun in it but to the reverse for God knows that I saw enough of at Gettyesburg to make any man shed tears hundred being wounded some dying other bleding to death other crying and saying oh cant you do something for me or I shall die. I shall have to stop saying any more about that bloody field for the thought of it allmost makes me shed teares.[12]

Jones' description is telling in that his description of the battle—and the feelings that cascaded from his recounting of its devastation—were not inscribed in a diary for private consumption, nor were they intended for future historical study. Rather, his words represented the cracks in his emotional dam from the overwhelming weight of his own powerlessness. Neither emotionless nor overwhelmed to the point of losing control, Jones sought to stem the rising tide of despondency by refusing to go further into describing the gory scene. Not only was his attempt to control his emotions clearly failing, what is most telling is the fact that he was openly describing his feelings (and his inability to master them) to his friend R.B. Paschall. In the sample for this study, many soldiers' descriptions of battle included asides about their emotional reaction to the bloodletting—often with very little heroism or descriptions of martial glory.

What is also striking about Jones' description is that after two years of fighting, he did not seem to lose his sensitivity towards the suffering of his fellow human beings. Often bearing witness to and participating in the destruction of human life made soldiers more emotionally effusive as they sought to process and make sense of what they had seen and done. Almost like clockwork, soldiers' letters written after battle were intensely expressive of emotions such as fear, anger, loss, and grief—particularly when they were written immediately after combat. This observation flies in the face of historians such as Gerald Linderman who argued that "courage

12. W.L. Jones to R.B. Paschall, August 14, 1863, Civil War Collection, Military Collection, NCDAH.

served to detach the soldier from the sights that might otherwise unnerve him."[13] Many of these same historians argue that these soldiers underwent a process of "hardening" which over time inoculated them to the discomfort of war and enabled them to become emotionally inured to taking life as well as the death of comrades or themselves. In this vein, historian Reid Mitchell noted that "part of masculinity was achieving a self-discipline within the institutional discipline of the army" and that "part of the transformation necessary to become a soldier was hardening."[14]

Linderman and Reid's approach was not necessarily wrong in that human beings can over time, through repeated exposure to suffering or inhumanity, become detached from their emotions. According to psychologist Bessel van der Kolk—one of the foremost experts on trauma—there are three responses to a perceived threat. The first stage is when the Ventral Vagal Complex (VVC) or "social-engagement system" of the brain, which is responsible for registering and responding to other's actions (i.e. smiling in response to other's smiles or nodding one's head in agreement with others), is triggered in face of a threat to safety or social connections. In this stage, human beings' facial expressions become reflective of their inner turmoil and one's tone of changes to beckon others to come to one's assistance. If no one responds, the limbic system kicks in and begins mobilizing the muscles, heart, and lungs for a fight or flight response. In a case in which there is no hope of staving off the inevitable, however, the Dorsal Vagal Complex (DVC) begins to "disengage, collapse, and freeze." Individuals often become unresponsive to their environments.[15]

13. Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 65.
14. Reid Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7.
15. Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 85.

Trauma also can be inducive to a phenomenon called "alexithymia," which is characterized as lacking words for one's feelings. Often, those who have undergone traumatic events cannot correctly identify the physical sensations that they feel. "They may look furious but deny that they are angry; they may appear terrified but say that they are fine," van der Kolk notes, "Not being able to discern what is going on inside their bodies causes them to be out of touch with their needs, and they have trouble taking care of themselves, whether it involves eating the right amount at the right time or getting the sleep they need." Individuals suppress their "once overwhelming emotions, and, as a result, they no longer recognized what they were feeling." It is reasonable to argue that the experience of alexithymia may have stymied an even broader expression of feeling among soldiers during the war.

More than alexithymia, however, Linderman and Reid may have in fact been referencing a phenomenon called "depersonalization" in which an individual loses a sense of self. In this state, victims of trauma feel disconnected from their bodies.[16] In 1928, German psychoanalyst Paul Schilder gave the most succinct description of this phenomena, writing that:

> To the depersonalized individual, the world appears strange, peculiar, foreign, dream-like. Objects appear at times strangely diminished in size, at times flat. Sounds appear to come from a distance…The emotions likewise undergo marked alteration. Patients complain that they are capable of experiencing neither plain nor pleasure…They become strangers to themselves.[17]

Human beings over time—often through repeated exposure to suffering or trauma—often become detached from their emotions or, in the words of Linderman and Mitchell, "hardened." Yet like Private Jones, many others either never become hardened at all, or instead found themselves softening as the war progressed. What explains the ability of these individuals to remain tethered to their feelings and their sense of humanity? While historians have uncovered a

16. Ibid., 100-02.
17. Paul Schilder quoted in Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 102.

constellation of explanations, one of the most important and yet understudied factors is the relationship of one individual to another. Van der Kolk argues that "Trauma victims cannot recover until they become familiar with and befriend sensations in their bodies…In order to change, people need to become aware of their sensations and the way that their bodies interact with the world around them. Physical self-awareness is the first step in releasing the tyranny of the past." To do this, victims of trauma must find a way to relax and feel safe, so that with practice they can connect the physical manifestations of trauma to psychological events and thus reconnect with themselves. "The most natural way for human beings to calm themselves when they are upset," he notes, "is by clinging to another person."[18]

Historian Peter Carmichael recently noted that even many hardened veterans "never lost their ability to feel for all men who were subjected to the cruelties of war," since they had experienced many of the same traumas and difficulties of soldiering.[19] Likewise, Broomall argues that "it is easy to exaggerate these sentiments [of hardening]" and that "a hardened veteran often remained a feeling man, and individuals' reactions varied."[20] "The bluster and apparent ruggedness of a veteran," historian Eric T. Dean Jr. surmised, "should not always be taken at face value, however; when one carefully examines accounts of men professing to be unconcerned about the dangers and terrors of war, one often discovers that these stoic declarations of indifference hid a deeper fear and horror, held at bay for the time being, but lurking within nonetheless."[21] In other words, even among those who seemed to be hardened by war, their exteriors may not have matched their interior feelings. The research for this project confirms the assertions of Carmichael, Broomall, and Dean. Many soldiers remained "feeling

18. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 102-03.
19. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 32.
20. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 84.
21. Dean, *Shook Over Hell*, 72.

men" who did not become hardened or emotionally inured to war. In fact, many of the supposed emotional "stoics" may have been trying to fulfill pre-war masculine expectations which dictated that a man should stifle his emotions. In this regard, many of them failed.

Of the two hundred soldiers sampled in this study, only fifteen recipients of their letters were friends who were not then actively involved in military service. The reason for this paucity may be two-fold. First, paper and pencils/pens were in short supply in the Confederacy and were relatively expensive. Confederate soldiers tended to expend these precious resources on their immediate and extended families—people with whom they were more emotionally close and for whom they had a responsibility to stay in touch. While only fifteen friends received letters in this sample, the two hundred soldiers in this study wrote to 366 family members—primarily their wives, followed by their parents, and then their children. The second reason for the lack of letters between soldiers and their friends back home is that many enlisted with their friends. From 1861 to 1865, the Confederate States of America mobilized more than 80 percent of its draft-age military men. Soldiers from the same hometown were usually mustered into the same company or regiment and were often within walking distance of friends from home in the camps. There was simply no need to exchange formal letters.[22]

Because of the critical lack of letters exchanged between soldiers in camp, however, modern historians' best sources of information on male relationships in the military are found in the plethora of diaries published both during and after the war. Extant letters and diaries indicate that the American Civil War was a catalyst for the development of male friendships which, at least for those four years, reached a depth of intimacy that ran contrary to prevailing socio-cultural norms. The intensity and the intimacy engendered by these emotional bonds provided a

22. Adam I.P. Smith, *The American Civil War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 130.

bulwark against the erosion of individual identity, human value, and a sense of prevailing individual worth.

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Definitions at this juncture are crucial. Historians of the American Civil War who study the common soldier make sharp distinctions between two words that seem almost interchangeable but are in fact much different in historical parlance. The difference between the terms *comradeship* and *friendship* is of vital importance, although the average soldier in the American Civil War often experienced them concurrently and in overlapping ways. Philosopher of war Jesse Glenn Gray roots this distinction "in a heightened awareness of the self in friendship and in the suppression of self-awareness in comradeship." He continues, "Friends do not seek to lose their identity, as comrades and erotic lovers do," he argues, but rather "friends find themselves in each other and thereby gain greater self-knowledge and self-possession."[23] In other words, "comradeship" involves the absorption of one's identity into the greater whole of one's company or regiment, while "friendship" conversely makes a person more self-aware through a growing intimacy with another individual. .

In the same vein, philosopher Desiree Verweij argues that "Strong bonds are of the utmost importance in the context of war…The mutual love of comrades and their dedication towards each other are necessary for survival….Friendship gives comradeship an extra dimension…it contributes to a flourishing life, and in doing so it helps the friend to refrain from behavior that will disrupt his/her humanity and thus his/her human flourishing."[24] In other words, the relationships between men in war is not one of *preference* but of *need.* In order to

23. Jesse Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 90.

24. Desiree Verweij, "Comrades or Friends? On Friendship in the Armed Forces," *Journal of Military Ethics* 6 (2007), 289-90.

remain attached to their own humanity and in order to physically survive, men simply needed each other. The individuality reinforced through friendship provided soldiers with internal strength to resist the social pressure of the larger group to deny empathy for others.

The depth of intimacy that developed between men during the war reached levels which would have seemed unmanly in earlier times of peace. In the sample, 164 out of 200 soldiers expressed emotion towards their family and friends in their letters, often referencing family members or friends who were in active military service. Often, soldiers wrote home with great poignancy in illustrating the emotional development that took place between soldiers who had shared experiences which were almost incommunicable with civilians back home. Lieutenant Wayland Dunaway of the 47th Virginia Infantry Regiment, for example, later recounted that during the Second Manassas campaign in August 1862, a "Lieutenant Ball" and "[Ball's] most intimate friend Mordecai Lawson" were found dead from mortal wounds to the head. "With bayonets and hands a grace was dug," Dunaway wrote, "in which we laid them side by side, and spreading over them a soldier's blanket, we heaped above them the turf and clods. In neither army could there have been found two braver men. Boon companions in life, in death they were not divided."[25] Emotions generally ran much higher in the days and weeks after battle. After losing his brother at Gettysburg, Private John Futch Jr. of the 3rd North Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife at the end of July 1863 that "I am at very great loss since the Death of charley I am so lonesome I do not know what to do."[26]

Such feelings continued throughout the war. After watching a friend take a mortal bullet to the head early in June 1864, First Lieutenant George Booth of the 1st Maryland Cavalry

25. Wayland F. Dunaway, *Reminiscences of a Rebel* (New York: Neale, 1913), 41.

26. John Futch Jr. to Martha Ramsey Futch, Camp Near Madison Courthouse, VA, July 31, 1863, Futch Letters, Private Collections, NCDAH.

Regiment (CSA) tenderly recounted that before taking "the last leave of this dear friend," he "stooped to kiss his brow, now covered by his life's blood." Years after the war, Booth noted, whenever his mind drifted back to this loss, he and his comrades felt "an overpowering sense of the great personal loss we had sustained. Few men were ever so loved, none more deservedly."[27] The fact that Booth wrote of these personal feelings over thirty years after the end of the year indicates that his relationship with his friend went much deeper than simple homosocial camaraderie.

The emotional depth of these wartime relationships are attributable to a variety of causes, including their creation in the most impressionable period of life, the length of time over which they blossomed, and the shared suffering that bound these men together. Yet the emotional potency of these relationships was also rooted in pre-war socio-cultural expectations of manhood which in times of peace were acceptable and largely attainable. "Beginning in the early part of the nineteenth century," Kimmel notes, "the idea of testing and proving one's manhood became one of the defining experiences in American men's lives."[28] Many of the men who flocked to recruiting offices in the South in the early months of the war were the grandchildren of patriots who served in the American Revolution as well as the sons and nephews of veterans of the more recent Mexican-American War. Many grew up listening to fanciful stories of dashing exploits and fanciful reminiscences, so it is not surprising that waves of wide-eyed teenage boys and young adults swept through Union and Confederate recruiting offices in 1861. Not only were they leaving behind the boredom of stability and peace, but they were also enlisting to prove to themselves and to others that they were, in fact, men.[29]

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27. George Wilson Booth, *Personal Reminiscences of a Maryland Soldier in the War Between the States, 1861-1865* (Baltimore, MD: Privately Published, 1898), 117-18.

28. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 2.

29. Joseph T. Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 36.

Honor was system of rules by which the rightness of one's behavior was created, judged, and enforced by the surrounding community.[30] Masculinity and honor were inextricably linked, and the connection between the individual male and the approval of the broader community was often a motivating factor in the male's attempt to fulfill masculine mandates. The same was true in military service. According to James McPherson, "for Civil War soldiers the group cohesion and peer pressure that were powerful factors in combat motivation were not unrelated to the complex mixture of patriotism, ideology, concepts of duty, honor, manhood, and community or peer pressure that prompted them to enlist in the first place."[31] The relationship between the individual and those around him were thus of immense importance, and in the pre-war period the community consensus was almost dictatorial in its influence over the behavior of white males. When that community was transposed from the peaceful confines of the home front to the confines of the battle front, it was not surprising that soldiers adopted a more pragmatic approach to surviving the war. "Circumstances controlled army life," historian Peter Carmichael asserts, "and adaptability, more than any other trait, best describes how Union and Confederate soldiers navigated their world on a daily basis."[32] Reflecting this pragmatism, Private Carlton McCarthy of the Richmond Howitzers recounted the adaptability of the recruit, writing that "The romance of war charmed him, and he hurried from the embrace of his mother to the embrace of death. His playmates, his friends, and his associates were gone; he was lonesome, and he sought a reunion 'in camp.'"[33]

30. Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor,* xv.
31. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrade*, 13.
32. Carmichael, *The War for the Common Soldier,* 7.
33. Carlton McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia, 1861-1865* (Richmond: Carlton McCarthy, 1882), 3.

The same rigid masculine ideals prevalent in the pre-war period were slowly relaxed as soldiers learned to navigate the new world of life in camp, the horror of combat, and the painful absence of their families. The foundation for greater emotional intimacy which was awoken during the war was lain during the antebellum period and as the war progressed, there was a greater acceptance for display of emotional affectation between men. For many, to love one's comrade or friend was no less important than to love one's wife, sweetheart, parents, or children. There is an important caveat. The ideals of courage, masculinity, honor, and duty which seemed so prevalent among earlier enlisters, however, may not have applied as much to those who enlisted after 1861. In his study of "later enlisters," historian Kenneth W. Noe found that "as a group, late enlisting Confederates were less ideological politically than the men who went before them…Nor were they much concerned about conceptions of honor and duty."[34] Yet it may be that those who enlisted later may have taken a less romantic view of the war because they were typically older, a higher percentage were married, and many had already been exposed to the less romantic view of war through newspaper accounts and correspondence with those who had already enlisted. Without experiencing the real cost of battle, either through others' accounts or their own involvement, those who enlisted in 1861 had no basis for understanding what the war would take from them. Later-enlisters did not have the same privilege.

Yet for both early and later enlisters, their relationships with other soldiers would become paramount to their emotional and physical survival. The increased importance placed on these relationships provided the impetus for a subtle shift in homosocial relationships. It did not happen all at once. In an antebellum period defined by growing individualistic competition, Kimmel noted that "American males struggled to build themselves into powerful, impervious

34. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 9-10.

machines, who were always capable of victory.[35] Historian Stephen Berry concurs, arguing that "men fought because, if in nothing else, they believed in themselves. They believed they could face death, and so they did."[36] Through their own character and moral will, many men believed that they could overcome whatever war held in store for them. It would not be long before they discovered the profound hollowness of their romantic idealism.

Political and social causes initially bound southern white males together in the early dawn of the war. The acceptance of communal ideology then became the delineating factor between those who served the home front and those who served on the battle front. Alfred Wilson, who could not enlist due to ill health, wrote to recent enlistee James Watson, "please reed this note address to all the friends I call you friends because you all stand in my defence as well as your own and I love and thank you all for it like wise all the good soldiers in the sothern confederacy."[37] Wilson could afford to maintain his patriotism. For those who actually participated in the fighting, the stark reality was that the war was exhausting and overwhelming, leaving little room for the idealism espoused those nestled in their comfortable homes. In May 1863, Private Hezekiah C. Ward of the 64th North Carolina Infantry Regiment reflected the exhaustion of war, when he wrote to his brother-in-law that "I would like to see you all at home once more I never was as tired of any things in my life as I am of this old war for thare is no jestus in this old war."[38]

War proved to be brutal and frightening. At the Battle of Savages Station in June 1862, Sergeant David August Dickert of the 3rd South Carolina Infantry Regiment awoke on the battlefield to "the roar of musketry and the boom of cannon, with the continual swish, swash of

35. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 44.
36. Berry, *All That Makes a Man,* 9-10.
37. Alfred Wilson to James Watson, March 8, 1862, James Watson Papers, SC-WSU.
38. H.C. Ward to John E. Morgan, May 17, 1863, Daniel W. Revis Letters, Private Collections, NCDAH.

the grape and canister striking the trees and ground." After placing his hand on his chest, he "felt a dull, deadening sensation. There I found the warm blood, that filled my inner garments and now trickled down my side as I endeavored to stand upright. I had been shot through the left lung, and as I felt the great gaping wound in my chest, the blood gushing and spluttering out at every breath, I began to realize my situation." Dickert's brother was a field surgeon who, upon hearing of his brother's wounds, helped carry him to the rear. Sitting upon a tree trunk, the surgeon pronounced his brother's wound as fatal. After probing the wound with his finger, in the words of Dickert, his brother "gave me the flattering assurance that unless I bled to death quite soon my chances might be good!" Surviving his wounds, Dickert later recounted his feelings in that moment. "Gentle reader, were you ever, as you thought, at death's door, when the grim monster was facing you, when life looked indeed a very brief span?," he wrote, "If so, you can understand my feelings—I was scared!"[39]

In his hour of need, Dickert had his brother by his side. Many others did not have that same privilege and would have to find others who could bear the burden of their survival. With loved ones sometimes hundreds of miles away, soldiers came to rely upon each other in ways that would have seemed unmanly and inconceivable before the war. This bonding process began long before any of these men saw a battlefield. For most, it began in their own hometowns.

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Years before the bombardment of Fort Sumter or even John Brown's Raid, many men who joined the Confederate Army were members of local militia units that trained and drilled regularly. While the majority of antebellum militia units acted as little more than social clubs before 1860, the fact that men had any martial training at all made militias the nuclei for the

39. David Augustus Dickert, *History of Kershaw's Brigade with Complete Roll of Companies, Biographical Sketches, Incidents, Anecdotes, Etc.* (Newberry, SC: Elbert H. Aull Company, 1899), 131-132.

burgeoning Confederate army.[40] Neither government fully trusted their militias, however, and both turned to another source for troops that had been proven in the war with Mexico. During the war's early months, both sides placed the onus for filling their ranks on the individual states, who were neither organizationally efficient nor ready for the massive influx of enlistees. The process of raising companies devolved to local or personal initiative. Recruitment rallies in small towns became pressure cookers of masculine bravado and shame where would-be officers encouraged potential recruits to "fight like men" rather than stay home as "shirkers."[41] The Reverend Randolph McKim, who enlisted as a private and later served as a chaplain in the 2nd Virginia Cavalry, recounted the irresistible pull of the period's *zeitgeist*. "Day after day the spirit of the epoch wrought in me more and more mightily," he wrote, "till I felt that I could no longer resist the call to follow the example of my kindred, my friends, and my fellow students, and enlist in the Southern Army."[42] These local recruitment efforts mean that Confederate companies were replete with men who had either grown up with each other or had at least known each other before enlistment.[43] "A unit was composed not of strangers but of friends and relations who had known each other all their lives," Stephen Berry notes, "The privates were all schoolmates; their captain was the local grocer, planter, lawyer, or alderman. They had joined up together; they would see it through together; they were comrades."[44] Even among "later-enlisters," Kenneth W. Noe found that "many relationships did emanate in peacetime" and "that kinship and neighborhood ties within units were common, and…they often strengthened military bonds."[45]

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40. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 317.

41. Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 239-41.

42. Randolph H. McKim, *A Soldier's Recollections: Leaves from the Diary of a Young Confederate with an Oration on the Motives and Aim of the Soldiers of the South* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1910), 23.

43. McPherson, *Cause and Comrades*, 80.

44. Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 179.

45. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 157-58.

After enlistment, men were mustered into companies before being sent off to camps of instruction where they would learn the basics of drill and discipline. For the teenaged youths and young men in their early twenties who made up most early enlisters, camp was their first step towards proving their manhood and becoming warriors who faced combat and cheated death. Some of them probably found themselves asking the same questions as the Reverend William Broaddus who wondered, "*Here I am,* far from home, and loving friends, and long-cherished associations: from all that makes life dear to me. And why *am I here*?" He reminded himself, among other reasons, that he had a duty to serve. "I owe all this to myself, to my friends, my country," he wrote, "and my God."[46]

Although many men had enlisted with brothers, cousins, brothers-in-law, and sometimes their own fathers and uncles, others were untethered from the familial relationships that had sustained them for years, instead finding themselves awash in a sea of relative anonymity. Since states and the federal War Department combined companies from the same state to form new regiments, camps of instruction were regional melting pots of men from differing backgrounds, education, experience, age, class, religion, and morality. Men who might never have wanted to associate with one another were now thrown together and forced to rely upon each other. The prospects were not always so hopeful. As Private George Cary Eggleston of 1st Virginia Cavalry wryly noted, "The composition of the battery in which I served for a considerable time afforded me an opportunity to study some rare characters, of a sort not often met with in ordinary life."[47]

In camps of instruction, young men who eagerly awaited battlefield exploits awoke to one the starkest and unexpected realities of life in the military: ceaseless monotony. Captain Nathaniel Henry Rhodes Dawson of the 4th Alabama Infantry provided a blueprint for his unit's

46. William F. Broaddus, "In Camp," North Carolina Collection, SHC-UNC.
47. George Cary Eggleston, *A Rebel's Recollections* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), 169.

daily routine, which was similar to most units in the Confederate army: "We are roused daily at 4 o'clock by the beating of reveille; officers drill from 4 ½ o'clock to 7. Breakfast at 7 ½. General inspection at 8. Drill for companies from 9 to 12. Recess from 12 to 2 ½. Drill from 2 ½ to 5 ½. Dress parade at 5 ½. Supper at 6 ½. Roll call at 9. Tattoo at 9 ½ when lights are extinguished, and we are all required to retire."[48]

"The first thing in the morning is drill, then drill, then drill again," wrote one Union soldier, who echoed the complaints of his Southern foe well, "Then drill, drill, a little more drill. Then drill, and lastly drill. Between drills, we drill and sometimes stop to eat a little and have a roll-call."[49] Likewise, Private Matthew Clanton of the 12th Mississippi Infantry Regiment wrote in February 1862 that "Supposition is we will have plenty of fighting to do then, I hope so, and may god speed the time. I want us to whip out the yankies and come home for I am verry tired of camp life. we have nothing to do but lye up here in camp & make fires and sit by them & that dont suit me I like something more exciting."[50] While soldiers despised the monotony of camp life and drill, their officers understood that continuous daily drill and harsh discipline were necessary in order to grind down the psychological and cultural walls between men. Learning to move in unison through close-order marching was necessary to fight mid-nineteenth century wars while also developing a sense of collaboration and belonging that melded the recruit's individual identity into a larger cohesive whole.[51]

48. Nathaniel Henry Rhodes Dawson to Elodie Breck Todd, May 10, 1861, Nathaniel Henry Rhodes Dawson Papers, SHC-UNC.

49. Oliver W. Norton to Friend, Camp Leslie near Falls Church Fairfax County VA, October 9, 1861, in *Army Letters 1861-1865*, ed. Oliver W. Norton (Chicago: O.L. Deming, 1903), 28

50. Matthew Clanton to Miss Sallie, Camp Davis Ford VA, February 2, 1862, James T. Jones Collection, JWL-UM.

51. Mark A. Weitz, "Drill, Training, and the Combat Performance of the Civil War Soldier: Dispelling the Myth of the Poor Soldier, Great Fighter," *Journal of Military History* 62 (April 1998): 271-72, 276-78.

The physical closeness of drill and camp life also encouraged psychological and emotional bonding, which at best developed *esprit de corps* among men. This collective pride was placed on what these men were accomplishing together rather than as individuals. This melding of the self into a larger group did not mean that a recruit lost his individuality. The friendships that developed between men as a natural outgrowth of their physical proximity and increasingly shared values provided safeguards against the complete erosion of one's individual identity into the larger unit.[52] Carlton McCarthy noted that "the fact that men were in the same company put them somewhat on the same level, and produced an almost perfect bond of sympathy."[53] As the days whittled away in endless rounds of drill, marching, and countermarching, recruits entertained themselves with everything from group sports, theaters, concerts, and practical jokes, to drinking and gambling. These diversions from the tedium of training not only birthed new friendships but also strengthened old ones as they created a sense of camaraderie among the men. In a letter to his wife, Private John H. Hartman of the 1st North Carolina Artillery reflected this camaraderie, referring to his "J.A. Hartman, Mosses, goodman and all that I noad in the redgiment" as his "play mates."[54]

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After being transferred from camps of instruction to "field service," where they were attached to various brigades, divisions, and armies scattered across the Confederacy, many men discovered to their horror that the monotony of military life followed them to the field. In September 1861, Private James R. McCutchan of the 14th Regiment Virginia Cavalry described his frustrations in a letter to his wife, writing that "I despise inaction, I want to be doing

52. Glatthaar, *Lee's Army*, 51.
53. McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae*, 37.
54. John Hartman to Partha Hartman, Culpepper Courthouse, June 8, 1863, John H. Hartman Papers, Duke.

something, something that my mind or hands can be employed at…This dismal routine of drilling at little going on guard occasionly & cooking day after day & week after week just kills one."[55]

Early in the war, the relationship between officers and enlisted men was largely egalitarian. This reflected the growing democratic *zetigeist* of the prewar period and often the relationship between superiors and subordinates were often friendly, despite many would-be martinets. Within this diverse mixture of ranks, George Cary Eggleston noted that "a feeling of very democratic equality prevailed, so far at least as military rank had anything to do with it…so officers and men messed and slept together on terms of entire equality, quarreling and even fighting now and then, in a gentlemanly way, but without thought of allowing differences of military rank to have any influence in the matter."[56] For those who were friends before one's promotion, relatively little would change in the relationship—even with new inequality of rank. After Captain S. Hubert Dent of the 1st Alabama Infantry Regiment helped a friend of his to achieve promotion to the rank of lieutenant, for example, he wrote of his comrade that "He dislikes the idea of leaving me himself and I think we will still mess together."[57]

The only real dividing lines that endured between white men were the familial and class ties based upon birth and lineage that had traditionally provided the social skeletal structure of the antebellum South. In some cases, war cut through the walls dividing men based upon their wealth, education, and family ties. The antebellum relational dynamics between Southern men also began to shift. Historians have not always recognized this. Stephen Berry characterized antebellum southern men as individuals imbued with a sense of "standoffishness, an

55. James R. McCutchan to Rachel Ann McCutchan, Camp Near Fairfax C.H., September 22, 1861, WLU.
56. Eggleston, *Rebel's Recollections*, 33-34.
57. S.H. Dent to Anna Dent, August 14, 1861, S.H. Dent Papers, AU.

unwillingness to appear weak, vulnerable, or emotionally needy" and "unable to hope without appearing idle and unable to seek counsel from other men without appearing weak and vulnerable." [58] Additionally, James Broomall noted that "Men commanded themselves and their feelings firmly, which bolstered an atmosphere of competition, erected barriers between men, and maintained a white social order."[59]

Yet soldiers' letters and diaries used for this project indicate a deep sense of intimacy and connection which gradually developed between soldiers. After the death of his beloved friend Colonel Henry King Burgwyn of the 26th North Carolina Infantry Regiment in 1863, J.J. Young wrote to Burgwyn's father that "the Col and myself messed together [and] we were more intimately connected than men can possibly be in civil life and I had an insight of his whole character."[60] Private Sam Watkins of the 1st Tennessee once described his friend "Berry" in intimate terms as a "A very handsome boy. He was what everybody would call a 'pretty man.' He had fair skin, blue eyes, and fine curly hair, which made him look like an innocent child. I loved Berry. He was my friend—as true as the needle to the pole."[61] Like Watkins, Private William Abernathy 17th Mississippi Infantry Regiment wrote of his friend Billie Echols, "the very thought of him brings a smile…It was a comfort and a solace ever to be near him…He was as ticklish as a woman, though I didn't know how I am going to explain to my wife how ticklish that was, but all the same when I got a little hot, all I had to do was to tickle Billie Echols, and then for the row of us got plenty of stir for a while."[62] While guarding the local camp hospital,

58. Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 39-40.
59. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 5.
60. J.J. Young to Henry King Burgwyn, Raleigh, North Carolina, July 31, 1863, William Hyslop Sumner Burgwyn Papers, NCDAH.
61. Samuel R. Watkins, *Co. Aytch, Maury Grays, First Tennessee Regiment: or, a Side Show of the Big Show* (Chattanooga, TN: Times Printing, 1900), 70.
62. William M. Abernathy, "The Confederate Memoir of William M. Abernathy," *Confederate Veteran* 3 (2003), 12.

Liberty Independence Nixon of the 50th Alabama Infantry Regiment met a "Lieutenant Vaughn" with whom he shared similar moral convictions. "From that time to this," he wrote, "we have been very intimate."[63] This intimacy was noted by Broomall, who stated that "The crisis of war called this order into question and forced the reconfiguration of prewar behavior and expression as white Southerners, now Confederate soldiers, lived with and fought in military units that together experienced the strain of combat and the effects of want—all while being separated from suffering families."[64]

Although camps of instruction taught men to meld their individual identities into a larger group, the communal nature of camps provided fertile ground in which individual identities and interpersonal relationships could flourish. Within these camps, the group dynamics that bound men to their units also engendered the creation of smaller social cliques. As Carlton McCarthy pointed out, "as time wore on, the various peculiarities and weaknesses of the men showed themselves, and each company, as a community separated into distinct circles."[65] The common soldier's primary social group was his "mess," which consisted of a voluntary squad of four to eight men with whom one ate, slept, lived, and fought. Individuals took turns preparing meals in rotation and they often dined and socialized together around the campfire.[66] Each member of the mess, moreover, fulfilled a duty that was designed to serve the other members. Henry C. Semple of Goldthwaite's Battery, Alabama Light Artillery, made note of some of these particular duties, recounting that "Elmore is the head of our mess, and we live very well. We have good beef, cook

63. Liberty Independence Nixon Diary, Liberty Independence Nixon Papers, AU.
64. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 5.
65. McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae*, 37.
66. Broomall, "Band of Brothers," 298.

Charley is cook and catches a mess of fish every day, Enoch is valet and chamber maid, dining room servant, etc. and Dick takes care of the horses."[67]

The divvying up of roles helped to keep the equanimity of the mess as men fulfilled their clearly prescribed communal expectations. In a letter to his father in November 1861, Private William Batts of the 12th Georgia Infantry Regiment recalled that:

> Last night after Supper (I say after Supper; but we frequently cook and Eat but twice a day) we called our mess together consisting of 15 men and held a meeting: in which we made a great many by laws: by which the mess all decided to be govern and if we will only carry then out we will get along tolerably well; The 1st rule was: that each and evry member of the mess must keep as clean and as neat as possible; and the cleanlyness of the hut as much as possible and a great many others too tedious to mention.[68]

In their study of combat motivation in the Iraq War, military researchers Thomas A. Kolditz, Leonard Wong, Raymond A. Millen, and Terrence M. Potter noted that "cohesion is not just developed in training. In the long, often mundane, periods of time spent neither in training or actual combat, the bonds between soldiers are often nurtured….much of the cohesion in units is developed simply because there is nothing else to do except talk."[69] The considerable time that Civil War messmates spent in conversation around the glow of campfires similarly allowed them to identify with each other through the time honored military traditions of complaining about officers, sharing news from home, and conversing about the events of the day.[70] "How good it was to be with the fellows around the fire," Carlton McCarthy wrote, "How companionable was the blaze and the glow of the coals! They warmed the heart as well as the foot!"[71] Corporal James T. Jones of the 12th Mississippi Infantry Regiment wrote to his sister in December 1861

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67. Henry C. Semple to Emily Virginia James Semple, 1861-62, Mobile, Alabama. Henry C. Semple Papers, ADAH.

68. William Batts to Father, Camp Allegany Virginia, November 30, 1861, William M. Batts Letters, EU.

69. Thomas A. Kolditz et al., *Why They Fought: Combat Motivation in the Iraq War* (Washington DC: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 12-13.

70. Broomall, "Band of Brothers," 298.

71. McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae*, 204.

that after meal time, he and his messmates "built a large fire in front of our tent for the accomodation of our friends whitch has been crowded ever since I arrived."[72] Through conversation and mutual service, men wove their identities together. Fidelity to one another provided another telling motivation for why soldiers fought in the American Civil War. "Social cohesion is what motivates soldiers not only to perform their job," Kolditz and his co-authors noted, "but also to accept responsibility for the interests of other soldiers."[73]

In his study of Union soldiers, historian Reid Mitchell noted that "by the middle of the war, many soldiers had developed even stronger loyalties to keep them in the army. These were loyalties to their fellow soldiers, specifically to the men they served with in their messes, companies, and regiments." This "small-unit cohesion" is a cornerstone of modern soldier studies in the American Civil War. As Mitchell added, "Perhaps the best way to understand small-unit cohesion is to think of the company as a substitute family. That, at least, is how the soldiers themselves came to feel about it."[74] In fact, soldiers in a mess often cared for each with a tenderness that was previously only the purview of one's family. Private John James Jefcoat of the 20th South Carolina Infantry Regiment reassured his wife Rachel in the spring of 1862 that " I never can forgit the good friends I have in my mess tha have give me such kinde attention sence I have bin sick I feel greateful toward them for their kind deeds."[75] Private Elisha Kindred Flournoy of the 46th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife a year later that "when I am sick my mess waits upon me as good as they can and far better than I could expect."[76]

72. James T. Jones to Sister, Near Manassas Virginia, December 10, 1861, James T. Jones Collection, JWL-UM.

73. Kolditz et al., *Why They Fought*, 13-14.

74. Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair*, 158

75. John J. Jefcoat to Rachel E. Jefcoat, Sullivans Island, May 20, 1862, John J. Jefcoat Papers, Duke.

76. Elisha Kindred Flournoy to Martha Flournoy, Vicskburgh Miss, April 10, 1863, E.K. Flournoy Letters, ADAH.

Camp offered men a physical closeness that did not compare to anything that they had experienced in civilian life. In a letter to his cousin during the war's first winter, Private Daniel H. Whitener of the 35th North Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote that there was a "different kind of religion that is in our regiment" which involved "some a cursen and swering some playing cards Some dansing and all kind of foolishness."[77] Through games and activities, as well as through the acts of eating, drinking, and carousing, men drew closer to each other. After the Battle of Fredericksburg, Captain D.A. Dickert of the 3rd South Carolina Infantry Regiment recalled that even in the midst of camp's ennui, "Troops abandoned themselves to base ball, snow fights, writing letters, and receiving as guests in their camps friends and relatives, who never failed to bring with them great boxes of the good things from home, as well as clothing and shoes for the needy soldiers."[78] In winter quarters, Confederate messmates built log homes when possible. "Our mess have now a nice house," Corporal F.E. Duggar of the Gid Nelson Alabama Light Artillery gleefully wrote to his mother at the end of 1863, "with a good plank floor and chimney and bid fair to live as comfortable as soldiers in the service can do."[79]

The nature of the physical closeness between Civil War soldiers has left a few historians wondering about how these relationships really went. Nineteenth century social mores permitted men to sleep in the same bed together without eliciting questions of one's sexuality, while homosexuality itself is a concept that developed only in the later years of the nineteenth

77. Daniel H. Whitener to Eliza Whitener, Camp Mangum Near Raleigh, December 14, 1861, Eliza Whitener Papers, Duke.

78. D.A. Dickert, *History of Kershaw's Brigade with Complete Roll of Companies, Biographical Sketches, Incidents, Anecdotes, Etc.* (Newberry, SC: Elbert H. Aull Company, 1899), 205.

79. F.E. Duggar to Mother, Camp Beulah, Mobile, Alabama, December 4, 1863, Duggar Family Papers, AU.

century.[80] Then again, families often controlled soldier letters in the years to come. Aside from the records of occasional court martials, historians can only guess how many men became lovers. None of the letters used in this study either directly or indirectly hinted at homosexual behavior in the camps, but many recount stories of men sleeping together platonically either out of choice or material deprivation. The inability of the Confederacy to properly clothe, feed, and equip its soldiers meant that many soldiers did not have tents or even blankets, and were at times forced to sleep in the open air, exposed to the ever-shifting extremes of heat, cold, rain, sleet, snow, and hail that has long characterized southern weather patterns. Men in winter especially 'spooned" each other for warmth and survival; the modern ideal of "personal space" was virtually non-existent in the Confederate army from its beginnings.[81] Private Robert Pressly Boyd of the 7th South Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote casually to his brother and sister in 1861 that "we have A Grat Deal off sickness hir Jams Alewine is sick he has Got the Measels & so has Jams simp son & henry Hamton and of Grat Miney outhers i expect to tak them for i Sleep with them every knight."[82] After four days of non-stop rain, Dick Simpson of the 3rd South Carolina Infantry Regiment complained to his aunt that "Yes, I have the blues so bad now that I can scarcely live. Everything seems sad and dreary…The last three or four nights have been as cold as we have down South in Nov. We suffered very much with cold, but by crowding together and keeping close we managed to keep tolerable warm."[83] Near the war's end, Private Henry Bowen of the

80. Matthew Pinkser, *Lincoln's Sanctuary: Abraham Lincoln and the Soldiers' Home* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 84. For a discussion of nineteenth-century sleeping habits that developed into intimate sexual relationships between men, see Jonathan Ned Katz, *Love Stories: Sex between Men before Homosexuality* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003).

81. Glatthaar, *Lee's Army*, 221-23.

82. Robert Pressly Boyd to Fenton and Mary Jane Hall, Viana, Virginia, August 4, 1861, Robert Boyd Papers, Duke.

83. RWS to Carolina Virginia Taliaferro Miller, Aug. 17, 1861, in *Far, Far From Home: The Wartime Letters of Dick and Tally Simpson, 3rd South Carolina Volunteers*, eds. Guy R. Everson and Edward W. Simpson, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 61.

Confederate States Marines wrote to his wife Ann that "we sleep negro fashion on a ledgeing it was too hard for my bones at first but I have got use to it now I and george sleeps to gether and maks out first rate."[84]

In the winter, soldiers in their cabins or tents also bonded over games, food, alcohol, and when they could, music and dance. Private Benjamin L. Mobley of Cobb's Georgia Legion wrote to his sister of the often festive mood in December 1861, stating that "Sis I enjoy my Self fine ly we have a dance evre night or two when the fiddle is at home."[85] Sometimes, even music between enemies could also help one feel less alone and more connected to others. Private George K. Evans of the 4th Virginia Cavalry was on picket duty one night in the later summer of 1862, when he heard music coming from nearby Union ships. "I was ¼ of a mile frome any other Videt," he recalled to a friend from a hospital soon after, "and stood two hours one very dark night and listened to the music on the Yankey gun boats which kept me frome being loansome."[86] According to psychologists Bronwyn Tarr, Jacques Launay, and Robin I.M. Dunbar, the experience of listening to music, either passively through or active engagement leads to synchrony (otherwise known as "self-other merging") or neurohormonal mechanisms (primarily in the form of endorphins) of bonding. It is "likely that some combination of endorphin release and self-other merging lead to the social bonding effects of music, although the relationship between the two mechanisms remains to be sufficiently explored."[87]

84. Henry Bowen to Ann L. Bowen, C.S. Flag Ship, Charleston, SC, December 15, 1864, Henry H. Bowen Papers, NCDAH.

85. Benjamin L. Mobley to Susan Mobley, December 26, 1861, Benjamin L. Mobley Papers, EU.

86. George K. Evans to Burnell Shephard, Hanover Hospital, September 2, 1862, George K. Evans Letters, Duke.

87. Bronwyn Tarr, Jacques Launay, and Robin I.M. Dunbar, "Music and Social Bonding: 'Self-Other' Merging and Neurohormonal Mechanisms," *Frontiers in Psychology* 5 (September 2014): 6.

As a result of this homosocial bonding, Confederate soldiers began to fashion a markedly different definition of masculinity than that which had existed before the war.[88] At its base, this redefinition of masculinity through interpersonal relationships represented a shift from primary-group cohesion—in which the individual's identity becomes melded into the larger unit—towards the small-group cohesion which is defined by relationally smaller groups which allowed for deeper and more intimate individual relationships. "The months of service that turned volunteers into veterans also created in them dependence on their fellow veterans," historian Reid Mitchell noted, "indeed even a love—any other word would be inadequate—for their fellow soldiers…The affections of this substitute family competed with the claims of the family a soldier had left at home."[89] The traditional masculine mores that had marked manhood in the antebellum South disintegrated as men increasingly took on domestic roles in the camps which were previously considered the sole realm of women.[90]

Not only did men cook for each other and attend to each other's needs, but they also cared for each other when they were sick. As a prisoner at Johnson's Island, Wayland Dunaway of the 40th Virginia Infantry Regiment noted that "The nursing was performed by the patients' more intimate friends, who took it by turns day and night." As he stayed up one night with his captain to administer medication, he remembered that "the ward was silent save for occasional groans, the lights were burning dimly, and there was no companion watching with me." At midnight, the "emaciated sufferer" died. Dunaway recounted that he "closed his eyes and remained near the body until the grateful dawn of morning. Guarded by soldiers we went to the

88. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 8.
89. Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair*¸158.
90. Broomall, "Band of Brothers," 293, 273.

cemetery without the walls, and committed the body to the ground, far away from his family and native land."[91]

Likewise, one morning after a battle, Sam Watkins' friend Sam Campbell "complained of being cold, and asked me to lie down beside him. I did so and was soon asleep; when I awoke the poor fellow was stiff and cold in death."[92] In his lonely twilight hours, Campbell sought solace in the physical closeness of his friend. Captain Charles Dobbs, a chaplain in the 12th Mississippi Infantry Regiment, related the similar story of a former druggist who fell ill to violent cramps, most likely due to withdrawals from opium. After receiving a bottle of morphine from the camp hospital, he returned to his tent but again was enveloped in pain. His companions woke the regimental surgeon as well as the chaplain, and they collectively nursed him through the night. Yet by dawn on the following day, he was dead. Dobbs wrote, "It was a sad blow to his many friends. Those who were killed in battle, or died of disease in the army, were remembered and mourned, with the consolation left to them that they died while on duty. But how sad the reflection of his comrades was that last evening, and what could they write to his friends at home!"[93]

One of the greatest impetuses for emotional expression among Confederate soldiers were bouts of homesickness. Of the 200 soldiers comprising the source base for this project, 82 were married (41 percent) while 118 were single or courting (59 percent). Of those who were married—particularly among later-enlisters—relatively few had ever lived apart from their families or hometown friends for any considerable length of time. The primary source documents

91. Dunaway, *Reminiscences of a Rebel,* 115-16.
92. Watkins, *Co. Aytch*, 52.
93. Charles Holt Dobbs, "Trying it On" in *The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains: the Confederacy,* ed. John Wesley, Jr. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 59.

used for this study indicated that soldiers wrestled almost incessantly with their longing for home and family.

While lying prostrate in a hospital recovering from sickness in July 1862, for example, Private Thomas A. Woodham of the 31st Georgia Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife that:

> I want you to tell your par to try to hire asubestute to put in my plase. I dont believe I can Stand cam[p] life I would giv all I am worth to be out of this war I [t]hort mabe you could hire William Lewis or Some other one ovr Age I hav bin sorter like I was when I had the fever I went hom & Saw some of you I thort I Saw cari & Emer Eter & Mr Lunsf I thort thir was a greate Stone wall beten us I could hear you talk but could see you I tuok a cry about it carie.[94]

The unabashed outpouring of Woodham's emotions were indicative of those felt by many of his comrades who also faced feelings of homesickness. This "homesickness" is defined as "the distress and functional impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home and attachment objects such as parents. It is characterized by acute longing and preoccupying thoughts of home."[95] Historian James I. Robertson Jr. argued that "Homesickness broke the moral fiber of countless numbers of Civil War participants," and that "absence from loved ones quickly created a pain that was at first acute and ultimately chronic."[96]

Soldiers' feelings of homesickness often had less to do with seeing their loved ones and more about their inner longing for the security and familiarity of home—a primal urge rooted in the human need for love, protection, and security. According to clinical psychologist Joshua Klapow, these feelings are most usually rooted within the home. In the absence of family

94. Thomas A. Woodham to Nancy Caroline Woodham, Lynchburg, July 3, 1862, Thomas A. Woodham Papers, UGA.

95. Christopher A. Thurber, Edward Walton, the Council on School Health, "Preventing and Treating Homesickness," *Pediatrics: The Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics* 119, no. 1 (January 2007), 192.

96. James I. Robertson, Jr., *Soldiers Blue and Gray*. (New York: Warner Books, 1991), 102.

members, men turned to each other for that same support, security, protection, and love. At least in effect, these relationships meant provided forlorn soldiers with a surrogate family.[97]

The cultural milieu in which Civil War armies functioned had little patience with soldiers' homesickness. "The culture of sentimentalism reinforced the military's notion that a man of true character could overcome the physical separation of home and find emotional resolve," historian Peter Carmichael noted, "by simply drawing on memories of mothers and wives."[98] Some of the letters for this project reinforce such a culture of sentimentalism. Though homesickness was corrosive to soldier morale, soldiers could look to each other to ameliorate, though never fully assuage, these feelings of homesickness. D.A. Dickert of the 3rd South Carolina Infantry Regiment noted the emotional resolve that came from his comrades, writing that "The soldier is not the cold unfeeling, immovable animal that some people seem to think he is…His love and sympathy for his fellow-soldier is proverbial in the army. In the lull, of battle, or on its eve, men with bold hearts and strong nerves look each other in the face with grim reliance."[99]

Beyond their emotional sharing, as the Confederacy struggled to maintain adequate provisions for its armies, soldiers took it upon themselves to support each other through the sharing of material objects as well. After receiving goods from home, eager soldiers often divided their treasures with those around them. Mail call provided a startling glimpse into the mutual affections that developed between these men. "Occasionally a whole mess would be filled with the liveliest expectations by the information that 'Bob' or 'Joe' was expecting *a box*

97. Derrick Ho, "Homesickness Isn't Really About 'Home,'" CNN Health, http://www.cnn.com/2010/HEALTH/08/16/homesickness.not.about.home/index.html (accessed June 19, 2019). Mark H. Dunkelman, *Brothers One and All: Esprit de Corps in a Civil War Regiment* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 75-76.

98. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 49.

99. Dickert, *Kershaw's Brigade*, 247.

from home," Carlton McCarthy wrote, "The wagon comes into camp escorted by the expectant 'Bob' and several of his intimate friends…It is evident one man cannot eat the eatables or smoke the tobacco and pipes. Call in, then, the friendly aid of wiling comrades. They come; they see; they devour."[100]

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For many soldiers, religion also played another decisive role in shaping their motivations while also providing a sense of comfort and security. Historian George C. Rable noted that "religion undoubtedly helped sustain morale and lengthen the war, a point recognized by even the indifferent and the skeptical."[101] If pre-war ideals of masculinity emphasized the ability of a man to control himself, his emotions, and others, then war represented the implosion of those ideals. Enlisting in the military meant that one's life would become highly regimented. The army forced men to submit to the almost absolute authority of their superior officers. Moreover, death struck with an almost maniacal randomness, so that one never really knew if he was going to be the next one to die. Fatal disease lurked everywhere, and it often struck suddenly. Private Alfred N. Profitt of the 18th North Carolina Infantry Regiment, for example, wrote to his sister Rachel on the death of their brother in March 1863 that "the doctor who attended him in his last hours said it was an inflamationn of the brain he had not been sick but 3 or 4 dayes and had not been bad of untill a few hours before he died he had been able to walk a bout and do his cooking untill the night before he died he complained of his head and brest."[102]

100. McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae*, 88.

101. George C. Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 8-9.

102. Alfred N. Profitt to Rachel Profitt, Camp Gregg, VA, March 11, 1863, Profitt Family Letters, SHC-UNC.

Bullets also killed indiscriminately. After the Battle of Fredericksburg, Private James C. Zimmerman of the 57th North Carolina Infantry Regiment recalled the casualties in his company, writing that "we nearly lost all our company out of fifty eight over half was killed or wounded" and that he was near death himself when "one bullet passed through my hat and one cut my blanket on my sholder."[103] Private Jesse M. Frank of the 48th North Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote the following spring of the daily uncertainty of soldier's existence, writing that "life is so un certain and deth is shure we know not when it will come some die suddenly in camp some on the battle field and others are yet on the land of the living and on mercies side of eternity so let us live each day as if we expected it to be the last." He went on to describe the succor that religion offered him, writing "We hav prayer meeting in the brigade evry day preaching evry night and preaching of Sundays it is agreate privilege we hav it strengthens me greatly against the wites of the devel and fits me more for prayer to love the name of Jesus."[104]

Many Confederate soldiers turned to God for solace and strength in the face of death. In the words of historian Douglas Southall Freeman, religion "robbed the minié of its terror" and imparted "a faith that defied the battle."[105] In the source base used for this project, 90 out of 200 soldiers sampled made references to God or religious declarations. Of the 1,790 total letters from the 200 soldiers, only 332 made references to God or religious declarations (or, 18.55 percent). This was far less than the 164 soldiers and 1,182 letters which expressed emotion or affection (66.03 percent), or the 64 soldiers who made 525 inquiries or references to their children (29.33 percent). Comparatively, religion was probably not as important to the common soldier as was their families and loved ones. Yet it was more often referenced in the sample than descriptions of

103. James C. Zimmerman to Adaline Zimmerman, Fredericksburg, VA, December 14, 1862, James C. Zimmerman Papers, Duke.

104. Jesse M. Frank to Alexander Frank, Orange C.H., VA, April 26, 1864, Alexander Frank Papers, Duke.

105. Douglass Southall Freeman, *R.E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), 241

battle or references to ideology or duty. Men such as Hiram Talbert Holt of the 38th Alabama Infantry Regiment epitomized the ideal "Christian soldier" who, in the words of historian Robert Partin, "carried his faith with him into the army, he lived by it, he fought by it, and he died by it; and unquestionably his faith had a profound influence upon Holt as a fighting man…His personal faith had always been his chief support in time of hardship and danger and—insofar as he was sustained by religion—it became after mid-summer 1863 his only one."[106]

In camp, soldiers witnessed first-hand the depth of man's moral corruption through drunkenness, theft, murder, and prostitution. Likewise, on the battlefield soldiers witnessed the random destruction of human life at the hand of other men. Surrounded by repeated reminders of man's inhumanity, many turned to religion to find meaning and hope amid chaos. Private Simeon Skinner of Cobb's Legion (GA) wrote to his sister in January 1862 of his nephews and the need for religion in the camp, stating, "tell them not to forgit to put thare truste in God and to remember that we all remember them at a throne of Gods grace who is able to comfort the soldier on th fielde of battle as well as those who are at home I see more cause for religion now than I ever have befor religion is almoste for gottan here it is almost as bad hear as a heathense country."[107]

But religion also offered another variety of friendship and camaraderie by binding together men of differing personalities and temperaments through a cohesive faith which fostered smaller hubs of intimacy and connection. The individual around whom these men found their connection was often the regimental chaplain. Unfortunately, few clerics or priests volunteered for the chaplaincy due to the low pay, physical hardship, and doctrinal issues among

106. Robert Partin, "The Sustaining Faith of an Alabama Soldier," *Civil War History* 6, no. 4 (December 1960): 434-35.

107. Simeon Skinner to Elizabeth Mobley, Camp Iverson, January 30, 1862, Benjamin L. Mobley Papers, EU.

denominations. When present, chaplains preached weekly messages and facilitated Bible study and prayer meetings that brought men together with shared religious and moral convictions. These services often included giving sacraments and singing hymns, reflecting their co-mingled feelings of uncertainty and faith in *unum unita*. When chaplains were not present, individual soldiers often took it upon themselves to lead religious meetings. Whether led by chaplains or laymen, religious meetings were often sites of intense emotional and spiritual fervor where soldiers could express their inmost thoughts and feelings, sometimes even crying in front of their comrades.[108]

In order to reach soldiers who were more apathetic towards religion, many chaplains recognized the need to go above and beyond their normal duties, becoming comrades themselves. Only by sharing in the sufferings of their flock would chaplains be able to entertain the prospect of reaching soldiers with the Gospel. As one chaplain wrote, "I am certain that the chaplain who sticks to his men through thick and thin will have tenfold influence over them for that reason."[109] Likewise, Rable noted that "What troops most valued was the human touch…In many respects it came down to a willingness to live with soldiers and share their hardships" and that "what truly cemented such bonds was shared suffering on the march and in combat."[110] This "burden bearing" was one of the most important ways that chaplains and soldiers bonded with each other throughout the war.

In her study of Italian soldiers' emotions in World War I, historian Vanda Wilcox noted that "A legitimate language for the expression of intense emotion…was provided by religion" and that "more often religious faith and practice acted as a source of metaphor and imagery."

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108. Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 107-08, 125; John Wesley Brinsfield Jr., ed., *The Spirit Divided: Memoirs of Civil War Chaplains: The Confederacy* (Macon, GA: Mercer Univ Press, 2006), 38.

109. McKim, *A Soldier's Recollections,* 226.

110. Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples*, 115.

Tension between the fear of death and promises of faith allowed men to "express feelings without compromising masculine control."[111] This was true in the American Civil War as well. While waiting for the coming battle, Private Thomas Inglett of the 28th Georgia Infantry Regiment wrote to his parents that:

> I cant tell I Pray god that I may servive it tho I may fall in the storm but I trust to god the home of earth I may never see again the music of home voices may never again greet my ears but I have a fathers home in heaven where suffering an sin shall never more be either felt of feard Lord teach me as a pilgrim here to desire this better country maney distane an beloved relations and friends are now thinking on me the reflection cheers and revives my Spirit A mightier than human friend is doing the Same An eye in heaven is watching me and a heart in heaven is feeling for me The Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.[112]

Letters such as Inglett's could represent socially acceptable expressions of emotion which, through faith in God, were tempered by a sense of control. But in another sense, Inglett's letter also represents a release of control over one's fate by trusting in God's plan for the future rather than his own wits. Either way, what is clear is that religion provided emotional solace for the suffering soldier. To Inglett, God was another friend in camp.

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While religion could impart meaning to suffering, it was one's relationships with others that helped to "mitigate the dehumanizing conditions they feared came with the military and curtailed freedom."[113] War enveloped men in an environment that was detached from many of the social mores that gave society order, decency, and security. If unchecked, this detachment could lead to disassociation and the erosion of one's sense of self as well as one's feelings of decency towards others. The deleterious effects of repeated exposure to killing would alter the

111. Vanda Wilcox, "'Weeping Tears of Blood': Exploring Italian Soldiers' Emotions in the First World War," *Modern Italy* 17, No. 2 (May 2012), 178.

112. Thomas Inglett to Father and Mother, James Island, SC, February 1, 1864, Thomas W.G. Inglett Letters, UGA.

113. Broomall, "Band of Brothers," 290.

nature of what constituted a socially acceptable and emotionally-healthy relationship. For example, one night, George Eggleston and a couple of fellow officers came across two men fighting—one holding a butcher knife and the other with a deep cut in his neck. While Eggleston and his cohort tried to bind the knife-wielding man, the victim arose, picked up a brick, and tried to bash in the head of his attacker. Eggleston asked why the man had attempted to kill his friend. Pointing to gash on his neck, the man replied: "Don't ye see I'm a dead man, captain? An' sure an' *do you think I'm goin to hell without me pardoner*?"[114]

At no point were these relationships more necessary than in the immediate aftermath of battle. After the First Battle of Manassas, Private Green B. Samuels of the 10th Virginia Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife, "The hardest trial to one's nerves is the sight of the wounded and the dead; in many cases the agony of the wounded was awful and their pitying cries for water heart-rending…some had evidently died in awful agony, with distorted faces, glaring eyes and clenched hands. I will write no more of this awful scene; it makes me sick to think of it."[115] After the Battle of Gettysburg, one in which "So many has fallen and are now realiseing eternity," Private T.J. Hodnett of the 13th Georgia Infantry Regiment recounted the moment that his file leader was shot down in front of him: "He look up in my fase and Sed Jeffy I am hit take me way, you cant tell how it made me feel to leave him thare," he wrote, "but I was a blige to do it we wasent a lowed to S[t]op to carry of[f] the wounded after we was halted." After the battle, a flood of emotion overwhelmed Hodnett, as he recalled seeing "a heap of the battlefield Oh what a Sene to See the wounded the dead the diing Oh my God how long Shal this wor last

114. Eggleston, *Rebel's Recollections*, 180-82.

115. G.B. Samuels, "Letter from Green Berry Samuels to Kathleen Boone Samuels, July 26, 1861," in Bernard Samuels, Walter Berry Samuels, and Carrie Esther-Spencer, comps. *A Civil War Marriage in Virginia: Reminiscences and Letters* (Boyce, VA: Carr Publishing, 1956), 99-101.

the lord only nows I thaut wonce that maby So it might clos this fall but now I havent no hopes of it."[116]

As evidenced by Hodnett, combat provided an impetus to emotional expression which belied a shift in the relationships between men. It does not seem that providing heroic descriptions of battle to elevate their standing in the eyes of others was of premier importance to these soldiers. The expectation of men to fulfill prewar norms of masculine honor and the belief in the importance of battle to prove one's manhood seems to be largely absent in the sample used for this project. Out of 200 soldiers sampled, 164 expressed emotion or affection about their family members and friends while only 65 recounted their experiences in battle. Perhaps these soldiers were simply trying to protect their families from the grisly details of battle. Yet in a culture in which masculinity tied to facing and overcoming the specter of death for a greater cause, it seems unlikely that so many men would forgo the opportunity to recount to their families, friends, and communities their fulfillment of the masculine mandate. In fact, many of the letters that do mention battles are extremely vivid and detailed accounts not only of the battle itself but the nearness with which the soldier came to death. Battle instead was something which was probably more comfortably shared with those who could recognize and understand the experience, such as a comrade. Shared suffering and a mutual sense of fear drew these men closer together through experiences which their civilian counterparts could not understand. "Plenty of marching, plenty of common hardships, and not a little fighting," Randolph McKim wrote, "quickly made us good friends."[117] In the smack of lead against flesh or bone, the boom of a nearby cannon, and in the horror of every fallen friend, the rigid walls of pre-war masculine

116. T.J. Hodnett to William F. Hodnett, Camp Near Darksville, VA, July 18, 1863, John W. Hodnett Letters, Duke.

117. McKim, *Soldier's Recollections*, 220.

individuality crumbled under a more pragmatic approach which allowed for these boundaries to become blurred in the interest of survival.

For Colonel C.M. Avery of the 33rd North Carolina Infantry Regiment, the loss of a friend during the Battle of Gettysburg was a moment in which the individualism and "standoffish" nature of Southern men was replaced with a deeper, more intimate *feeling* for those with whom he shared an experience that other simply could not understand. Writing to the soldier's father, Avery recounted that "We advanced to within forty yards of the Enemys work and it was here that my little friend Jonny fell. I saw him but a few moments before we were ordered to fall back discharging his whole duty. You cannot imagine my feelings after reforming my Rgt to find him absent and upon being told that he was seen to fall forward on his face." He went on to tell his father that "The loss of my little friend is to me one of the most distressing incidents of the war. His noble nature in a short time had won from my bosom the warmest affection."[118]

During another battle, Private Sam Watkins had just finished killing two men and was reloading when a Union soldier suddenly rushed upon him and exclaimed, "You have killed my two brothers, and now I've got you." Stunned, Watkins could only watch helplessly as the Union soldier leveled his musket at Watkins and began pulling the trigger. Just then, Watkins' friend William Hughes grabbed the muzzle of the gun and as smoke and fire poured forth from the musket, Hughes received the full force of the blast, which shredded his hand and his arm. Later, Watkins recalled Hughes as "my old mess-mate and friend, who had clerked with me for S.F. & J.M. Mayes, and who slept with me for lo! These many years, and a boy who loved me more than any other person on earth has ever done." As Watkins watched his friend's lifeblood drain

118. C.M. Avery, "C.M. Avery to Father of John Caldwell," July 18, 1863, Tod Robinson Caldwell Papers, SHC-UNC.

from his body, Hughes gave Sam his weapon and his belongings before finally succumbing to his wounds. “He gave up his life for me,” Watkins lamented, “and everything that he had. It was the last time that I ever saw him.”[119] Remembering his dear friend “Spratling,” Private Louis J. Dupre of the 62nd Alabama Infantry Regiment recounted that they relied “upon the other as confidently as upon himself, and each having often imperiled his life that the other might live; inseparable as Spratling and I had been from the hour that Jefferson Davis lighted the match at Fort Sumter that set a nation aflame; made friends by common toils and dangers and by indestructible confidence.”[120]

The “standoffishness” and avoidance of emotional neediness which had characterized pre-war ideals of masculinity thus melted in the presence of combat. In fact, for many soldiers, the horror of combat and the randomness with which life was snuffed out sometimes gave birth to a remarkable outpouring of affection for each other and for their loved ones back home. The idea that they would never again speak to those they loved provided a great impetus to open communication of their feelings with others. After the Battle of Shiloh, Major James M. Williams of the 21st Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife, “I must confess that the thought that I had left no word to the absent friends that I love next to you, my dear wife, smote me on the field of battle; and I there resolved that I would neglect it no longer, and write at once upon my return to camp.”[121]

After the first harrowing experience of battle, many soldiers confronted the fact that their lives could be snuffed out on a distant battlefield, far from their families. And yet according to

119. Watkins, *Co. Aytch*, 139-40.

120. Louis J. Dupre, *Fagots from the Camp Fire* (Washington, D.C.: E.T. Charles, 1881), 53.

121. James M. Williams to Lizzy, Corinth, Mississippi, April 19, 1862, in *From That Terrible Field: Civil War Letters of James M. Williams, Twenty-First Alabama Infantry Soldiers*, ed. John Kent Folmar (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 58.

the Victorian ideal of the "Good Death," one's final moments were an opportunity for family and friends to witness the deceased's eternal direction—either to salvation or damnation. It was believed that the nature of the individual's death (whether it was peaceful or not) provided evidence of the direction of one's soul after death. Those who died peacefully were believed to be on their way to heaven while those who died with a sense of terror were believed to be on their way to hell. Either way, death was considered a family affair.

The war effectively stole the dying soldier from his family. The vast geographic distance between the soldier and his family meant that the ritual of the "Good Death" was altered by soldiers' pragmatism by replacing the role traditionally played by one's family with one's comrades. These individuals were tasked with recording the final moments of a dying soldier and then providing those details to his family in order to assure them of his salvation and peaceful passage into the next life.[122] In other words, in the absence of family, soldiers in the American Civil War found themselves becoming a sort of fictive kin.

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In his study of the common soldier, historian Peter Carmichael noted that Civil War soldiers' "devotion to each other was nearly indestructible.[123]" This powerful bond between men may have been rooted in their shared adversity that allowed them to empathize with each other's experiences. After the Battle of Cold Harbor in June 1864, Private George Robertson of the 17th Mississippi Infantry Regiment received a furlough for shooting down the Stars and Stripes in the enemy's trenches. Not long after, one of his comrades received a letter from home that one of his children had died from typhoid fever, that his other two children were on the verge of death, and that his family was financially destitute. Robertson "handed his furlough to his comrade, took his

122. Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 9-14.
123. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 48.

place behind the breastworks," and in the words of William Abernathy, "acquitted himself like a man." Robertson, was like many of his fellow soldiers who, Abernathy noted, "longed for the embrace of a loving mother and to feel the fathers hand in blessing on him," but he was willing to sacrifice those prospects for a fellow soldier with whom he had become a sort of "family" born of shared suffering.[124]

Historian James Broomall wrote that "Victorian culture could hardly account for scenes that Confederates witnessed. Southerners confronted a failure of language and used feelings as the best means for expression; soldiers were part of an extended community of sufferers."[125]After the death of their fellow comrades at the First Battle of Bull Run, Captain Nathaniel Henry Rhodes Dawson of the 4th Alabama Infantry Regiment recounted to his sweetheart the scene in camp after the guns fell silent:

> Our chaplain, Mr. Chadwick, who was in the late battle and had his clothes cut by several balls, delivered a most touching and feeling prayer, and when he alluded to our dead and wounded comrades, he was choked to suffocation, hardly able to express himself, and in the large assembly of bronzed and bearded soldiers, you could see almost every eye and cheek furrowed with big tears. It is singular how much attached we become when thrown together as we are in military life without knowing it. When I stood alone at the grave of our four killed men, I cannot express the feeling of my heart. It was akin to the feelings when I have stood at night and knelt at the tomb of one in whose existence my life has been wrapped. I prayed for the presence of the dead and desired to sink into the same grave.[126]

Once soldiers had gone into combat, they often found that they had a shared experience that few others—including their own families—could understand. As historian Eric T. Dean Jr. discovered, "the attitude of the Civil War soldier was marked by a curious transformation in which he began to look at life at home as irrelevant or boring, and longed to be or remain at the

124. Abernathy, "Memoir of William M. Abernathy," 29-30.
125. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 67.
126. Nathaniel Henry Rhodes Dawson to Elodie Breck Todd, Manassas Junction, August 4, 1861, Nathaniel Henry Rhodes Dawson Papers, SHC-UNC.

front with his unit—despite the many hardships associated with life in the military."[127] Modern sociological literature indicates that social cohesion borne of shared experience "is positively correlated with psychological well-being and negatively correlated with psychological distress."[128] In fact, this social support may provide a stress-buffering effect that enables soldiers to stand firm in high-stress conditions.[129]

This mutual identification through suffering sometimes extended to one's enemies. At the Second Battle of Manassas, Wayland Dunaway of the 40th Virginia Infantry Regiment was reconnoitering the front when he came across a wounded and dying Union officer who asked him for water. Kneeling down, Dunaway proceeded to hold his "canteen to his lips, for which kindness he made grateful acknowledgements." After the Union officer surrendered his sword to Dunaway, he told the dying man that he had "better retire, because our men will soon be here again," to which the officer warned him that he was himself in danger from a Union counterattack. "He was thirsty, and I gave him drink," Dunaway later recalled, "I was in danger, and he gave me friendly warning."[130] The two men had served on opposing sides, fought for different causes, and had only known each other through the misery of war, yet they had nonetheless shared what Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. later called "the incommunicable experience of war."[131]

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127. Dean, *Shook Over Hell*, 87.

128. Arni Ahronson and James E. Cameron, "The Nature and Consequences of Group Cohesion in a Military Sample," *Military Psychology* 19, (2007): 13.

129. S.E. Hobfolland and S. Walfisch, "Coping with a Threat to Life: A Longitudinal Study of Self-Concept, Social Support, and Psychological Distress," cited in Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn, "Health, Wartime Stress, and Unit Cohesion: Evidence from Union Army Veterans," *Demography* 47 (February 2010): 47.

130. Dunaway, *Reminiscences of a Rebel*, 40-41.

131. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. "The Soldier's Faith: An Address Deliver on Memorial Day, May 30, 1895 at a Meeting Called by the Graduating Class of Harvard University," (Boston: Little, Brown, 1895). Holmes gave an earlier version of this speech in Keene, New Hampshire on Memorial Day in 1884.

In her study of altruism and suffering, psychologist Johanna Ray Vollhardt noted that in many modern social-psychological circles, there is "a commonly held view…that altruism and prosocial behavior originate in positive experiences and processes, whereas antisocial behavior is often rooted in negative conditions and life experiences." This view may be rooted in the fact that most research in clinical psychology has focused on the negative effects of traumatic events in order to develop methods for treatment. Fellow psychologist Ervin Staub has coined the term "altruism born of suffering" which describes "how individuals who have suffered may become particularly motivated to help others—not only despite their difficult experiences but precisely because of them." [132] Based on the number of positive experiences that occur before, during, or after the time of suffering, the greater the likelihood for altruism born of suffering. This leads to a shift from seeing others through the lens of mistrust and danger to one's past becoming "a source of intense empathy/sympathy for others in need, and of an increased prosocial orientation, a central aspect of which is a feeling of personal responsibility for others' welfare."[133] In other words, trauma and suffering often led to an outward change in which an individual channels their pain into helping and caring for others.

Whether through friendship or comradery, the deepening bonds between men often helped to negate the deleterious effects of combat and suffering on the individual's psyche by dispersing the burden of success across a much broader swath of individuals. These relationships provided a sense of security in the knowledge that each man was working for the protection of the other. The emotional depth that emerged in these relationships—much of which was borne out of shared suffering—bound men together with an intimacy that soldiers often found difficult

132. Staub and Vollhardt, "Altruism Born of Suffering," 53-54.
133. Ibid., 272.

to explain to others.[134] D.A. Dickert of the 3rd South Carolina Infantry Regiment, for example, wrote "As a guard, we watched over our friends; as a picket, we watched for our foe." Just before a Union scouting part overran his camp, he wrote, "All felt a perfect security, for with the pickets in front, the cavalry scouring the country, and the almost impassable barricades of the roads, seemed to render it impossible for an enemy to approach unobserved."[135]

Soldiers recognized early on that they shared responsibility for each other's survival. The ability to trust their comrades with their own lives became paramount. When Private Billie Echols of the 17th Mississippi Infantry Regiment heard that a friend was wounded and slowly bleeding to death in a rifle pit north of his position, Echols and his friend Jim Crawford grabbed a litter and jumping over the parapet of their trench, headed north under withering fire to find their friend. As their comrades laid down covering fire, Echols and Crawford found their wounded friend and loaded him on to the litter before somehow making their way safely back to the trenches. The wounded man survived thanks to his comrades. Before regular medical details were established, the responsibility for evacuating a wounded soldier often rested, literally, on the shoulders of his friends, even though officers usually prevented men leaving ranks during battle to help a comrade. So strong were the bonds between men that rushing to the aid of friends sometimes depleted the ranks even more than men killed or wounded in battle.[136]

The deep bonds that developed between soldiers, however, could also negatively influence each other. The emotional tensile strength of these relationships sometimes drew soldiers into committing acts that would have never seemed comprehensible before the war. Soldiers who share close bonds with their comrades might take part in killing out of a fear of

134. Kolditz et al., *Why They Fought*, 10-11.

135. Dickert, *History of Kershaw's Brigade*, 47-48.136. Abernathy, "Memoir of William M. Abernathy," 15; Dickert, *History of Kershaw's Brigade*, 132-33.

136. Abernathy, "Memoir of William M. Abernathy," 15; Dickert, *History of Kershaw's Brigade*, 132-33.

letting his friends down—particularly if their mutual survival depends upon each other. This sometimes bled over into wanton killing. In his book *On Killing,* Dave Grossman discovered that by couching the act of killing in groups, members often develop a sense of battlefield anonymity that exacerbates the level of violence that they inflict upon their enemies. He found that the size of the social group, coupled with the depth of its psychological bonding and physical proximity, directly correlated with an increase in both the ability and willingness of the individual to kill.[137]

Soldiers also often lived with the fear that their unwillingness to kill could inevitably lead to the death of their comrades. Lieutenant Colonel Charles A. Derby of the 44th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his sister, "The war seems to be dormant precisely at this time. How long it will be before it rouses from its lethargy, I have no idea. My intimate friends and neighbors have suffered dreadfully. Many of them have been killed and many are dangerously wounded. It makes my heart sick to think of it."[138] Derby himself would be counted among the dead just two months later at the Battle of Antietam. Although friendship and comradery often sustained men psychologically, emotionally, and physically in combat, for others the opposite rang true. For those whose sense of right and wrong was bent by war, the power of group dynamics sometimes severed the tethers between an individual and his moral and psychological boundaries. Relationships, and the emotions that they engendered, were just *that* powerful.

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In most cases, however, homosocial relationships protected soldiers from the erosion of their individual selves and their humanity. Furthermore, the more dangerous the situation and the more desperate their survival, the more likely soldiers were to cling to one another. Nowhere was

137. David A. Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, (New York: Back Bay Books, 1996), 150-53.

138. Charles A. Derby to Sister, Falling Creek, Chesterfield, July 15, 1862, Charles A. Derby Papers, VMI.

this more evident than in the lives of those unfortunate enough to become prisoners of war. In the sample for this project, 25 out of 200 soldiers (12.5 percent) became prisoners of war. If soldiers thought that they get a respite from the tedium of camp and the terror of battle in a prison camp, they were sorely mistaken. A Civil War prison camp represented one of the most hellish experiences that a soldier could endure. The sights, sounds, and smells of prison camps were often overwhelming to the point that new enrollees vomited at the sites of emaciated bodies and the stench of feces and body odor that enveloped their senses. When sanitation deteriorated, often due to overcrowding or a lack of funding, few men bothered to use the latrines opting instead to urinate and defecate just outside of their quarters.[139] The camps themselves were crawling with lice, rats, and mice who fed off their human subjects with great aplomb. Cut off from their families and many of their friends, some prisoners lost all interest in life and surgeons began to list "nostalgia"—i.e., homesickness—as a principal cause for many deaths. Recounting his time in prison, Union Sergeant Major Francis Walker of the 15th Massachusetts reflected the feelings of many of his Confederate foe, which he recounted as "a period of nervous horror such as I had never before and have never since experienced, the memories of which have always made it perfectly clear how one can be driven on, unwilling and vainly resisting, to suicide. I remember watching the bars of my window and wondering whether I should hang myself from them."[140] Many prisoners shared Watkins' hopelessness, choosing instead to stroll across the "dead line" to be shot.

For those captured, their physical removal from the relationships that emotionally sustained them was an intensely jarring experience. "Where are my most intimate friends? Those

139. Lonnie R. Speer, *Portals to Hell: Military Prisons of the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1997), 57.

140. *A Life of Francis Amasa Walker*, ed. James P. Munroe (New York: H. Holt, 1923): 93-94.

with whom I had formed ties of friendship never to be broken," William Heartstill of the 2nd Texas Cavalry wrote in his journal as he languished in a Union prison, "I alone am left to find other; but never truer friends." One of these friends, Charlie Carter, was one whom Heartstill recalled that he "loved as a brother."[141] In a letter to his wife while imprisoned in Johnson's Island in Ohio, Private William Tilmon Bishop of the 16th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote "I have been looking for a letter from you for Some time but in vain for I have not received one from you Since I have been in prison this is the 4th one I have wrote to you you can not imagin how anxious I am to here from you. for I am verry lonesome here for there is but 2 men here that I ever Saw before."[142]

Soldiers in prison camps now found themselves facing the maddening experience of being stuck with nowhere to go. Even worse was the fact that while they were removed from combat—which at its worst would have provided a quick death—they now faced a slow and methodical withering of themselves and their comrades from either disease or malnutrition. As had been the case outside of prison, soldiers found that their survival was dependent on building strong relationships with those around them. Sometimes, if a soldier was particularly lucky, he could find himself imprisoned with hometown acquaintances or members of the same unit. After his capture at the Battle of Baker's Creek, Mississippi, Lieutenant William J. Samford of the 46th Alabama Infantry Regiment went to the Union prison camp at Johnston's Island, on Lake Erie. He was delighted when William J. Slaton—a Confederate officer and his old college professor—

141. *Fourteen Hundred and 91 Days in the Confederate Army: A Journal Kept by W.W. Heartsill, For Four Years, One Month, and One Day, or Camp Life: or, Camp-Life: Day-by-Day, of the W.P. Lane Rangers, from April 19th 1861 to May 20th 1865,*ed. Bell Irvin Wiley (1876; repr. Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1954), 113.

142. William Tilmon Bishop to Sarah Adeline Bishop, Johnson's Island, October 20, 1863, William Tilmon Bishop Letters, ADAH.

arrived at Johnston's Island as a prisoner. Under Slaton, William continued his studies until his eventual release in 1864.[143]

For most men, imprisonment represented the shattering of old relationships and the construction of new relationships with relative strangers. Without the support provided by these relationships, the individual's will to survive greatly decreased. At Elmira prison, Private Berry Benson of the 1st South Carolina Infantry Regiment complained that "The bunks were made of unplanned pine boards, and as we had no blankets, they were left bare during the day, and at night occupied simply by ourselves. Later Baxter [his friend] was given a blanket and piece of cloth by a friend, and these he shared with me."[144] Not only did the friendship of their comrades provide emotional support, but prisoners also took care of each other's physical needs. Men like William Heartsill had not lost their humanity and their concern for each other. "It is heartrending to listen to the moans and supplications of the sick during the long cold hours of the night," he wrote, "and to know that it is out of our power to relieve them." And yet Heartsill awoke one night to scene of incredible tenderness between his fellow prisoners. "About one oclock last night I was awakened by a cry of distress," he wrote, "a man was freezing to death; his comrads done all they could for their suffering fellow-soldier, but disease and cold have done their work."[145]

Those who eschewed traditional masculine notions of male separateness found themselves to be members of surrogate families that worked for each other's survival. As in combat, prisoners knew that the bonds between each other would provide security and increase

143. Thomas McAdory Owen and Marie Bankhead Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography, Volume 4* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1921), 1493.

144. *Berry Benson's Civil War Book: Memoirs of a Confederate Scout and Sharpshooter*, ed. Susan Williams Benson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962), 127.

145. Heartsill, *Fourteen Hundred and 91 Days*, 106.

their chance of survival. If one member of a social clique was assigned to a work detail, he would often ask for special privileges or obtain positions for other friends. This could be as small as "sneaking extra bread back home if he worked in the bakery, an extra stick or two of wood if he was in a gathering detail, or a clothing item if he worked in the burial detail."[146] Sociologists Dora Costa and Matthew Kahn studied the potential benefits of social networks on Union prisoners of war in Confederate prison camps. They postulated that the primitive nature of prison camps, with their lack of law enforcement, property rights, formal markets, and subsistence income, rendered social networks vital to survival. In numerous diaries they found that prisoners' friends provided moral support that helped them to avoid depression, meet material needs, care for the sick, and discourage suicide. Their study proved conclusively that friendship greatly increased one's chances of survival and that the closer the friends became, the greater their chances of surviving imprisonment.[147]

As was the case in camp, prisoners also resorted to entertainment as a distraction from their rather mundane existence. They formed makeshift debate societies, local governments, provided foreign language and religious classes, held dances, music performances, played dice, marbles, ball games, backgammon, checkers, and more. Most of all, as in camp, they wove their identities together through conversation. The "meeting of old friends and comrades, and the making of new acquaintances," wrote prisoner James Williamson—a pro-secession civilian from Maryland—"is a source of great pleasure to use and a relief from the monotony of what could otherwise be a dull routine of prison life."[148] In their conversations, men told stories, reminisced

146. Speer, *Portals to Hell*, 60-61.

147. Costa and Kahn, "Surviving Andersonville": 1467-68, 82.

148. James J. Williamson, *Prison Life in the Old Capital and Reminiscences of the Civil War* (West Orange, NJ: J.J. Williamson, 1911), 29.

about home and good food, plotted their survival, and debated the possibility of exchange, the war's end, or escape.[149]

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Whether in camps, on the battlefield, in a hospital, or trapped in a prison, Confederate soldiers looked to each other to endure the most cataclysmic war that the young American republic had ever known. In 1861, many men marched off to war with visions of battlefield glory that melted in the face of combat. Dreams of proving one's masculinity gave way to a simple desire to "outlast the war"—to simply survive. By "outlasting the war," they could return to their parents, their wives, their sweethearts, and their children—to the very people for whom they believed they were fighting. To understand soldiers' motivations, the relationships between themselves and their wives and sweethearts are paramount. Charged with an emotional potency that rivaled almost any other relationship, these romantic relationships produced the greatest of emotional expression in soldier's letters. It is to these relationships, and their effect upon the common soldier's motivation, that we now turn.

149. Speer, *Portals to Hell*, 63.

3: How Romantic Relationships Sustained the Civil War Soldier

On the evening of September 18, 1862, Private William R. Stilwell of the 53rd Georgia took a few private moments near the blood-stained battlefield of Antietam to write a letter to his beloved wife Molly. Only weeks before, Stilwell was part of General Robert E. Lee's 55,000-strong Army of Northern Virginia, which had brought the war to the Union's doorstep. Lee's bold move was designed to help the Confederate States of America gain European recognition and to relieve some of the pressure that an entire year of war wreaked on the Virginia countryside. As Lee's soldiers marched through Maryland, some overwrought Confederate newspapers boasted of Marylanders rejoicing in the streets at the Confederate soldiers coming to "liberate" their state. "I saw in todays paper that our army have crossed the potomac and Marched by Washington and Baltimore and are now in pencilvania slaying as tha go," Private John J. Jefcoat of the 20th South Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife Rachel from the Charleston defenses, "while our army ware Marching through Mariland the Marilander flocked to them and have aded some fifty thousand to our army and the ladys of Mariland greeted our sldiers with shouts of Joy hoping that theire old state will be once more redeemed."[150]

Private James B. Painter of the 28th Virginia Infantry Regiment—a member of Lee's invading army—believed that he could see the end of the war in sight, writing that "the Maryland Boys is Joining us verry Fast we have seen verry hard times but I trust this war wont last long."[151] In reality, Maryland was a deeply divided state and the reception for Lee's army in its heavily Unionist western counties was much more subdued. Nonetheless, there was a great optimism up until the evening of September 16, 1862, that the fatal blow for the Union might be

150. John J. Jefcoat to Rachel Jefcoat, Sullivans Island, September 16, 1862, John J. Jefcoat Papers, Duke.

151. James Barnett Painter to Father and Mother, Camp Near Frederick City, September 8, 1862, James Barney Painter Letters, UVA.

struck if Confederate soldiers not only “liberated” Maryland from the Union but also turned and marched upon Washington., All that bluster was far from the mind of Private Stilwell as he penned his letter on the evening of September 18t. Over the past thirty-six hours, his eyes had borne witness to what his mind still could not comprehend: the violent and inglorious deaths of many of his dearest friends and comrades along Antietam Creek. Now, as Stillwell’s ears reverberated with the bumblebee-like buzzing and whirring of hundreds of Minié balls cutting the air—a memory of sound only occasionally interrupted by the smack and crack of lead piercing flesh and bone—his eyes welled with tears.

As the young private’s pen scratched paper, his latent emotions bubbled to the surface. As his mind replayed the deaths of his comrades-in-arms—the people to whom Stilwell clung in some of his loneliest moments—he turned his mind to his main source of emotional stability. “Molly, I think of you while the cannon roars and the muskets flash,” he declared to his beloved wife, “I have often thought of having to die on the battlefield, if some kind friend would just lay my bible under my head and your likeness on my breast with the golden curls of hair in it that it would be enough.”

While fellow soldiers were sources of immense physical and emotional satisfaction and strength, men such as Stillwell found that one of their few continuous sources of emotional stability were the wives and sweethearts that they had left back home. Men like Stilwell faced the war with one eye to the enemy and the other toward their homes. Molly was a source of solace in a world turned upside down by barbarity and senseless gore which bounded beyond the limits of human imagination. Now as he wrote, Stilwell’s pen bled his emotions onto the page—emotions which quickly swelled from a faint trickle into a roaring torrent, before he could handle

it no longer, declaring, “Molly, I shall have to close for my eyes are bathed in tears till I can’t write.”[152]

Over two years later, on November 2, 1864, as the fortunes of war turned against the Confederacy, the appropriately named Sergeant Jobe R. Redmon of the 5th Battalion North Carolina Cavalry scrawled a lengthy four-page letter to his wife and three children back home in Kinston. Over the past month, Redmon and his friend Obediah B. Jarret had deserted their unit before being captured, court-martialed, and sentenced to death. In the wake of the verdict, Redmon turned to his family as his pen became the conduit for his overwhelming fear. “I am sory to inform you that I have but 7 dayes to live,” he wrote to his wife as his heart heaved with sorrow, “I think I could die better sadesfide if I could see you and the children one more time on erth and talk with you. But my time is so short I donte exspect to ever see you and my dier little children eny more on erth.”

While Redmon languished, his unit commander Major Alfred H. Baird—the cousin of North Carolina Governor Zebulon Vance—wrote a hastily written appeal which was working its way through the Confederate mail system to the desk of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Upon opening the letter, Davis discovered that Redmon’s name was mysteriously scratched out and in its place was written that of his friend, “Obediah B. Jarret.” After Major Baird received the President’s approval of the pardon, Jarret went free but Redmon remained condemned to his fate. Knowing the bleak prospects of his future, Redmon pleaded with his wife to visit him one last time before his execution, now only days away. In his final extant letter to his family, he instructed them how he wanted them to live in his absence before he wrote to his children to be good and loving people before saying his final goodbye and declaring that “You cante see you

152. W.R. Stilwell to Molly, September 18, 1862, in *The Stilwell Letters: a Georgian in Longstreet's Corps, Army of Northern Virginia*, ed. Ronald Mosely (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2002), 49-50.

papy no more on erth." As his mind turned from his children to his mother, Redmon tried to soothe her pain by reminding her that "Since I have ben in hier I have ben ingaged in seaking the lord. Dier mother donte griev for mee. I hope we will all meate in heven so farwell mother."[153] Ultimately, Redmon's story is a historical unknown. There are no more letters from him, nor does his name appear alongside that of his family's in subsequent census records. Most likely, he was executed and buried far from his beloved, children, and mother.[154]

Stillwell and Redmon served at different times in two disparate theaters of war, yet both reached out to their wives in their hours of deepest emotional need. If pre-war Southern males, as many historians contend, were not emotionally introspective, the war certainly changed that. It witnessed an outpouring of pent-up feeling that flowed through seemingly endless reams of wartime correspondence. Sweethearts, lovers, husbands, and wives wrote to each other with a depth of intimacy and emotion which was culturally inappropriate in its magnitude only two generations before. "Confiding to their wives, Northern and Southern men showed their emotional vulnerability," historian Peter Carmichael noted, "Such admissions would have been unthinkable before the war, but the duress of soldiering forced men to adjust how they related to the women. In other words, they became emotional pragmatists out of necessity to cope with a military world that at times left them feeling lonesome and isolated."[155]

The primary source base for this project examines this "emotional pragmatism" through the letters of Confederate soldiers who were either married or courting. It does so in order to understand how romantic partners became emotional braces for men who, according to pre-war ideals of masculinity, should have been able to shoulder the burden of war on their own. Though

153. J.R. Redmond to His Wife, Children, and Mother, November 2, 1864, NCDAH.

154. Aldo S. Perry, *Civil War Courts-Martial of North Carolina Troops*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), 284-85.

155. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 45.

these ideals were honored more in theory than in practice, white southern males quickly discovered that war overwhelmed and diluted the potency of these masculine models.

Of the two hundred soldiers which make up the sample source for this project, eighty-two were married and seven were courting. These eighty-nine men represented the majority of the 1,790 letters expressing emotion or affection for this project. They equal 44.5 percent of the 200 soldiers sampled, and they composed 1,263 of the 1,790 letters used, representing 70.56 percent of all letters written. Single men represented 111 (55.5 percent) of the 200 soldiers sampled, but only composed 527 letters, or 29.44 percent of all letters total. Clearly, married men were far more likely than single men to write a lot of letters to their families, friends, and loved ones. Many young single men, particularly among early enlisters, joined the Confederate military with their friends. Their closest family members, to whom they would need to communicate, were parents, brothers and sisters, cousins, uncles, or aunts—individuals who would not have seen them as leaders or heads of households. For married men, closer emotional bonds, coupled with the prevailing cultural ideal that men were the heads and caretakers of families, may have impelled them to maintain a more consistent stream of communication with their wives and children.

This does not explain why married and courting soldiers were much more emotionally expressive than their single counterparts, however. Of the 1,263 total letters written by married or courting men in this sample, 914 letters (or 72.37 percent) were laden with emotion or affection while, of the 527 letters written by single men, 268 (or 50.85 percent) expressed emotion or affection. At the same time, of the 89 married or courting soldiers, eighty-seven (or 97.75 percent) of them expressed emotion or affection. Of the 111 single soldiers, only seventy-seven (or 69.37 percent) expressed emotion or affection. Clearly, married or courting soldiers

were far more likely to be expressive of their emotions. Perhaps romantic relationships held far greater sway and emotional potency over individuals during the Victorian and wartime period. The Romantics not only glorified romantic love but they also made the expression of such love much more socially acceptable. The American Civil War was a war that would test the mettle of these romantic ideas on a broad cultural scale while also threatening to tear apart the marital unions which they created and subsequently shaped on a much smaller, individual scale.

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A brief review of the literature on the evolution of romance, courtship, and marriage in the South is necessary at this juncture. Historians of the American South have become entranced by the belief that ambition and patriarchy were the primary motivators of men's decisions to marry. Yet these conclusions are often reached by historians' penchant to examine the wealthy and elite—individuals who had much to gain economically from their marital unions and who left behind a far larger primary source base for modern historians to examine. South Carolina planter and provocateur James Henry Hammond was an exemplar of this ideology, writing that "There are two things worth living for, love in life, immortality after death."[156] This "love sustained the immortal drive, like kindling or coal," historian Stephen Berry noted, "A bid for immortality could be cold going, and a woman warmed a man in his sacrifice and his suffering. This, then, was the male project in elemental form." Although he also surmises that the poorest white and enslaved men probably did not harbor such ambitions, the perspective of the white elite is the primary lens through which Berry and other historians have examined masculine and romantic ideals throughout the war.[157] Historian Brian Craig Miller sums up this "elite

156. *Secret and Sacred: The Diaries of James Henry Hammond, a Southern Slaveholder,* ed. Carol Bleser (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 150.

157. Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 12.

perspective," by noting that "Honor, mastery, ambition, and love all emerge as possible avenues for men to internalize and then display their manhood for all to see."[158]

As previously noted, scholarly work on masculinity in the pre-Civil War south has primarily centered on the concept of "honor," which scholars have used to, in the words of historians Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover, "explain the relationships of husbands to wives and children, sons to parents, men to men, and citizens to society…they blame it for the subordination of women, the oppression of blacks, and the extension of slavery." Central to the idea of honor is that of "mastery" which is defined broadly as the belief that "men internalized a sense of manliness through relationships to wives, children, and slaves by subverting challenges to white male authority leveled by these dependents and by heading autonomous, self-sufficient households."[159] Indeed, it is a truism in Civil War scholarship that Southern masculinity was endowed with dark overtones of duty and honor which impelled soldiers to march off to war and to plant their feet firmly in the fight.

Yet, there was a third motivator for many Confederate soldiers which has hitherto gone largely unexamined: romantic love. The idea that one's relationship to the nation was marked by duty while one's relationship to the community was marked by honor also shaped men's' relationships to their wives and children. Duty to the nation, honor in the community, and love in the home were the ideals by which Southern men lived—ideals which were often interwoven with each other. Though not a *quid pro quo* relationship, romantic bonds were strengthened by the fulfillment of societally-induced roles as men came to rely upon women as the emotional

158. Brian Craig Miller, *John Bell Hood and the Fight for Civil War Memory* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2010): 8.

159. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover, "Rethinking Southern Masculinity: An Introduction," in *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), ix.

impetus to achieving success in their masculine endeavors. This may be the result of men feeling more loved as their spouses supported their grand visions and cheered them on to their achievement. Yet during the war, duty, honor, and love became layered on a national (duty), local (honor), and personal (love) level. “I feel perfectly willing to sacrifice every thing save duty and honor (and I know my Darling will never ask me to sacrifice them),” S. Hubert Dent wrote his wife, “to give you pleasure and increase your happiness would my Love that I could be with you to show you the wealth of love that overflows in my heart for you. But you know I love you above every other and all other earthly things do you not Dearest?”[160]

In the eyes of Dent and many of his comrades, Southern men lived on a plane of existence in which circumstance pulled them towards the defense of their nation, community, and homes. Yet these three things were not seen as separate entities requiring individual attention. Part of the reason that married soldiers in the sample may have written more letters with greater emotional intensity may be because they believed that they were sacrificing much more than their single compatriots. In their eyes, losing the war would mean sacrificing the safety and protection of the very people that they had been tasked by the masculine mandate to protect. Thus, by protecting their nation and their communities from what they saw as the Union’s onslaught, the war was far more personal to these men who looked past the political ideology to see this as a struggle for the protection of their home and hearth.

Though historians have long been willing to concede that married men saw the war as a struggle for the protection of their families, most have ignored that their motivations went beyond fear to include the love of their families. Not only were they motivated by their love for their families, but they were also motivated by the love *of* their families. While historians have

160. S. Hubert Dent to wife, Chattanooga, TN, July 11, 1863, S.H. Dent Papers, AU.

been more ready to concede that love and emotion played an important role in the lives of soldiers, rarely have they incorporated these facts into their public narratives of the war.

To do so would mean preferencing what historian Page Smith calls "symbolic history" over traditional "existential history." Symbolic history is a creation of the historian's mind that has no existence outside of his or her created mental model. Scholars give names to certain individual periods or epochs which then act as symbols. They do not correspond to any particular identifiable reality, but instead come to symbolize styles, values, or ideals, such as the Industrial Revolution, the Middle Ages, or the Reformation. These themes are demonstrative of progressive developments that show human trends that encounter and then react to successive crises. Because of the intrinsic slowness and complexity of these epochs, they are beyond the immediate comprehension of the actors involved. It is this form of history, Smith believes, that raises human consciousness and reveals to the historian and society at large their own understanding of the self, as well as human nature's limitations and potential. With the resultant expansion of the consciousness and potential of individuals and societies, human progress is inevitable.

On the other hand, "existential history" consists of more sharply defined and dramatic episodes of the past, such as the American Revolution or Civil War, which exists outside of the historian's mind. In existential history, historical actors are conscious of the periods in which they live. This approach to history is heavily dependent upon historical actors' accounts and writers present them with a heightened degree of personal self-consciousness not seen in those who write symbolic history. Usually based around crises, existential histories of groups, states, nations, or classes are typically more developed and require deep introspection on the part of its participants in explaining why or how events are happening. Thus, the historian finds their

imagination fenced in by the reality presented by the historical actors. As a result, artificial constructs are largely absent and existential history is resistant to almost any type of reinterpretation because it is a form of history largely devoid of the historian's influence.[161] As the seminal "scientific" historian Leopold von Ranke remarked, this is history *wie es eigentlich gewesen* ("as it actually happened")—history devoid of the abstract definition of principle.[162]

Smith did not believe that either feeling or the "spirit of history" *alone* moved history, but he did surmise that certain "intangibles" could bridge the chasm between the distant past and the modern historian. He argued that the scientific and reason-based approach to history is only as valuable as the historian's ability to also connect with the emotional and intangible aspects of the past. Smith saw both reason and feeling as an inextricable binary that undergirded the larger meta-narrative pieced together by historians of race, class, gender, politics, and economics."[163]

One can approach Civil War letters in a manner that Page suggests. Doing so reveals that Confederate soldiers often did not view their marital unions through the lens of patriarchy or paternalism during the war. Rather, the evidence suggests that married and courting men increasingly came to rely upon their spouses to meet their emotional and physical needs. Though many soldiers enlisted out of a desire to achieve their grand visions for themselves, their idealism was subjugated to the more pressing struggle both to survive and to protect their families. The protection of the Confederacy, their state, and their homes were inextricably linked. The collapse of the Confederacy or the capture by Union forces of one's home state or home town was seen by many soldiers as the downfall of freedom, economic security, and physical safety for their

161. Page Smith, *The Historian and History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 202-16.

162. Robert Stinson, "Leopold von Ranke: History of the Popes (1834-1836)," in *The Faces of Clio: An Anthology of Classics in Historical Writing from Ancient Times to the Present,* ed. Robert Stinson (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1987), 155.

163. Smith, *Historian and History*, 142.

families. Likewise, the protection of their families gave more personal meaning to the protection of the government and the political and social philosophies that undergird the creation and operation of that government. The looming threat of Yankee invasion and subjugation gave Confederate males little room for supplanting the community good for their own personal ambitions.

Much as Confederate soldiers relied upon the government for their physical provision, they also relied upon their families for their emotional, psychological, and physical provision. This relationship was built upon a system of mutual reciprocity in which husbands and wives leaned upon each other in their respective struggles to survive and to one day be reunited. The dominant historical interpretation that paints white Southern males as emotionally distant from their families and comrades stems from two main sources. First, the acceptance by historians of the masculine ideal as the "on the ground" reality and, secondly, by privileging a more cynical approach to understanding the past that excises the importance of emotions in favor of ideological or socio-cultural explanations for human motivations. In the words of one historian, this approach only serves to "dehumanize the interior lives of Confederate soldiers."[164]

This chapter will examine the romantic relationships of white Confederate soldiers by first examining whether the masculine ideal was lived out in practice among Confederate soldiers in romantic relationships. Then, it will try to understand how these relationships exerted an emotional "pull" factor in a soldier's life through desertion as well as an emotional "push" that spurred soldiers to not only enlist, but more importantly, to continue to fight. When nationalism and dreams of battlefield glory were replaced by the stark reality of virtually endless slaughter, men turned to the women that had provided support for their grand ambitions before

164. James Marten, "Fatherhood in the Confederacy: Southern Soldiers and Their Children," *Journal of Southern History* 63 (May 1997): 269-70.

the war. Now, they would look to them to provide some sort of meaning to a conflict that threatened to crush every ounce of meaning under its unbearable weight.

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The American Civil War opened a floodgate of change in the inner emotional world of white Southern males. One of the strongest emotional tethers was that of romantic relationships between husbands and wives, or beaus and sweethearts, who openly and freely confessed their love and affection for each other. For the married soldier, the emotional strength of amorous relations meant that romantic affection colored almost every aspect of the common married (or courting) soldier's motivations for enlisting and fighting. As historian James McPherson recognized, while personal conviction, ideology, courage, duty, honor, group cohesion, and self-respect all provided both sustaining and combat motivations for soldiers, "without a firm base of support in the homes and communities from which these citizen soldiers came, their morale would have crumbled. Even the solidarity with comrades in arms was insufficient to sustain their commitment if it lacked sustenance on the home front."[165]

When scholars often have examined the relationship between the home front and the battlefield, however, the prevailing paradigm has been that the loss of morale on the home front equaled the loss of morale along the battle front. Among mainstream scholars, only historian Jason Phillips has argued that the downturn of the Confederate war effort in 1864 widened the chasm between soldiers and civilians. "When reports of civilian despair reached the front lines, soldiers felt betrayed by the millions they were fighting and dying to defend," he wrote, and "the unprecedented suffering and carnage convinced many troops that they alone sustained the nation. Soldiers from across the South believed that the armies remained hopeful and patriotic while the

165. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades,* 131.

home front sank into despondency and corruption." Phillips grounds his argument in the idea that the root of this disconnect was the fostering of intimate relationships between soldiers. He writes that "camaraderie fostered this cliquish notion that soldiers deserved more praise than civilians" and that "the milieu of army life reinforced the ethos of invincibility in ways that civil society did not."[166]

The research for this study is not primarily concerned with proving or disproving Phillip's assertions, but it does beg the question of what effect soldiers had upon the home front. In her study of Australian soldiers in Vietnam, historian Effie Karageorgos noted that the influence between the home front and the battle front in that war flowed in both directions. It was one of symbiosis.[167] On an individual level, one of the tethers of this symbiotic relationship between the two fronts was the broad spectrum of emotions that colored almost every aspect of a soldier's and civilian's commitment to duty, honor, patriotism, courage, group cohesion, and self-respect. More specifically, the act of writing letters became the primary method by which soldiers and their loved ones continued to invite each other into their inner emotional worlds. This act of vulnerability between families helped to continue to bind families together and thus firmly connected the battle front to the home front.[168]

All of this would have been impossible without the exchange of letters and a growing educational movement that swept the country in the decades leading up to the war. The American Civil War represented an important epoch in terms of education and literacy in the United States. Although a much higher proportion of women were illiterate than men in the

166. Jason Phillips, *Diehard Rebels: The Confederate Culture of Invincibility* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 88.

167. Effie Karageorgos, *Australian Soldiers in South Africa and Vietnam: Words from the Battlefield* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 149.

168. Ibid., 155.

decades after the American Revolution, this statistic changed by 1850, when girls achieved literacy rates in virtually the same proportions as boys. The United States was the only country in the world where this was true.[169] According to historian Richard F. Selcer, the national rate of illiteracy peaked in 1840 at 11 percent and thereafter fell until 1860, when the rates of illiteracy again increased until 1870 as a result of so many schools being shuttered due to the war. Nonetheless, soldiers and civilians on both sides of the conflict represented the most literate generation in American history up to that point. In terms of the sample used for this study, the percentage of literate residents in North Carolina in 1840 was 72 percent while the rate in Alabama was significantly higher at 82 percent. By contrast, the first national report on literacy in 1840 in Britain estimated that only sixty-seven percent of males and fifty-percent of females were literate for an overall average literacy rate of 58 percent.[170] As a result of this movement towards universal literacy, by the outbreak of the war, letter-writing and reading was a common and well-established practice that was open to almost every member of society regardless of their gender or age.

According to McPherson, the Union and Confederate armies that followed "were the most literate in history to that time…and more than 80 percent of Confederate soldiers were literate."[171] Scholar Christopher Hager avers that approximately half a billion letters were exchanged between soldiers and their families during the Civil War. That correspondence, he argues, was "authored by ordinary Americans who used letters to hold their families together during a time of great trial." On average, Hager concludes, soldiers on average wrote close to

169. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 35-36.

170. Richard F. Selcer, *Civil War America: 1850 to 1875* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006), 301. This statistic includes slave and free, male and female, making no distinctions by the Census Bureau. See also W.B. Stephens, "Literacy in England, Scotland, and Wales, 1500-1900," *History of Education* Quarterly 30 (Winter 1990): 555.

171. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 11.

seventy letters over the course of their service, which represented "at least triple the number, if not ten times the number, of letters the average American had been writing before the war." Those to whom they wrote—primarily their families—wrote about the same number of letters.[172]

For this project, the lowest number of extant letters per Confederate soldier was one, while the highest number of extant letters from a single soldier was 123. In this sample, soldiers from North Carolina wrote on average 7.59 letters while soldiers from Alabama wrote 10.31 letters over various periods represented in the letters. This dearth of letters no doubt is due to many factors. Some soldiers died without having spent very long in service, many letters did not survive the war, and some of the archives used only contain collections of letters from certain years of a soldier's service. Nonetheless, of the Confederate soldiers surveyed, approximately 29.5 percent wrote one extant letter, 10.5 percent left two extant letters, 9 percent three extant letters, and onward in descending order. The most prevalent topic of conversation between soldiers and their loved ones was scuttlebutt from home or camp and their own daily activities. Often, letters were virtually devoid of any real news at all, indicating that many were written to maintain an open line of communication with those whom they loved. Private William Addison Tesh of the 28th North Carolina Infantry Regiment, for example, wrote to his father and mother days after the battle of Chancellorsville that "I havent any thing new to write that will I terest You but I thought I would Write a little to Say," before asking about a pair of shirts and pants, describing his captain's sickness, and wondering whether anyone has heard from their uncle.[173] The mundane nature of Tesh's letter was by far the most striking aspect of soldiers' letters in the research for this project.

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172. Christopher Hager, *I Remain Yours: Common Lives in Civil War Letters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 3-5.

173. William Addison Tesh to Father and Mother, Camp Gregg, May 17, 1863, William A. Tesh Papers, Duke.

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In camp, life *was* often boring and mundane, and apart from battle or the death of a comrade from sickness, there was often little to discuss. And yet soldiers continued to write to their loved ones at regular and frequent rates, thus indicating that continued communication (apart from a sense of urgency or importance) mattered to soldiers. Of the 200 soldiers used in the sample for this project, only 63 provided descriptions of battles (31.5 percent) and 33 expressed ideas of duty or nationalistic ideology (16.5 percent). Out of 1,790 letters written by these soldiers, only 104 letters described battle (5.81 percent) and only 62 expressed notions of ideology or duty (3.46 percent). On the other hand, 164 out of 200 soldiers (82 percent) expressed emotion or affection in 1,182 of the 1,790 total letters (66.03 percent), with 64 out of 200 soldiers (32 percent) expressing inquiries or references to their children in 524 of the 1,790 letters written (29.27 percent). These letters represented lifelines to family members and loved ones as couples felt the security of knowing their spouse was both alive and still thinking of them. Not surprisingly, when the flow of letters ceased, individuals on the home front and the battle front began to panic. In a November 1864 letter to her husband Henry Bowen of the Confederate States Marines, North Carolina resident Ann L. Bowen echoed the sentiments of many soldiers and wives throughout the war, writing to Henry that "I want you to rite often it has bin so long since I heard from you I want to hear bad."[174] Interestingly, many of the more emotionally expressive letters pleading with loved ones to write or expressing panic over a lack of letters came from soldiers.

Widespread literacy and technological changes made letter writing possible, but those factors alone do not explain the wartime mania for letters. The devotion to letter writing between

174. Ann L. Bowen to Henry Bowen, Plymouth Washington County, November 11, 1864, Henry H. Bowen Papers, NCDAH.

romantic partners had deep historical roots. Since the Middle Ages, western Europeans viewed marriage as a tool for elevating one's social status. This impulse towards a utilitarian view of matrimony found its way to the Americas through European immigrates who streamed across the Atlantic to the New World in the 17th century. Like their European counterparts, American fathers and husbands were the primary household authorities who led their families in a quest to further community goals and who bestowed social identity and legal status upon the members of his household. By the eighteenth century, however, evangelicalism coupled with political independence movements influenced by the philosophy of the Enlightenment swept across Europe and the Americas. The outward emphasis on the community turned inward as husbands and fathers were expected to privilege the needs of their families over that of the community. At the same time, the influence of the Romantics was felt as the nuclear family was increasingly seen as the emotional sanctuary and center of one's life. The crumbling of traditional hierarchy also led to the corrosion of the individual male's power within the family as he was increasingly seen as its equal rather than its superior.[175]

As male dominance in the family began to wane, there was a growing individualism that untethered sons and daughters from the nearly dictatorial influence of their parents over their romantic lives. Before the American Revolution, parents still held sway in choosing their children's potential marriage partners. The influence of the Romantics who believed that children should be free to become themselves led to an increased focus on the individual's self-identity and the subsequent decline of parental influence over romantic decisions. By the nineteenth century, the decision to marry (as well as whom to marry) became a much more

175. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 2; Anne C. Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 147.

individualistic decision that was dictated more by emotion rather than economic gain. It was now expected that feelings of love and mutual admiration would come *before* marriage rather than *after,* as had been the case in the centuries leading up to that of the nineteenth century.[176]

In a sense, this was representative of an "emotional revolution" that dramatically altered the traditional practice of courtship in Victorian America. A couple's entire future relationship was built upon the groundwork lain during this period of courtship in which individuals explored each other's psyche and emotions through a guided process of discussion, letter-writing, and communal leisure time. The influence of chaperones marked every stage of the courtship process as they protected potential marriage partners from acts of sexual and emotional impropriety. These chaperones also acted as relational guides, but it was ultimately up to the individuals involved to make their own decisions about potential marriage partners. This represented a fundamental break from the earlier practice of pre-arranged marriages in Europe. Although parents could still handpick courting partners for their children, the ultimate decision of whether or not they would marry was left to the individuals in the process of courting. Rarely, however, did southern women seek mates outside of their social class. This unraveling of traditional courtship and marriage patterns caused immense unease among older Southerners who often blamed the upending of these social norms on virulent Yankee ideals of individualism and personal ambition filtering through the south. In the years leading up to the war, many southern elites began to go even further in distancing themselves from the bounds of propriety by eschewing chaperoned courtships and tacitly allowing courting couples to spend time alone together.[177]

176. Ibid., 3-4.
177. Ott, *Confederate Daughters,* 27-29.

Vision and romantic love—the purview of the Romantics—became intertwined to the point of being inseparable in the years leading up to the American Civil War. White southern males were expected to have expansive and ambitious visions for their future. Historian Stephen Berry called these visions "éclat," which is French for "burst" and which refers to an ostentatious display as well as applause of acclamation. Rooted in male insecurity, the grandeur of these visions meant that men could not achieve them without support. White southern males looked to women for validation and support and these women became the means for achieving their ambitious dreams. Before the war, these visions of grandeur generally took the form of economic, political, or social success. The achievement of this success required a lot of skill as well as a lot of luck and the inability of most men to achieve these goals often left them melancholic and overwhelmed with feelings of inadequacy. The only solution to these feelings was the shoring up of one's sense of worth through the tender love, affection, and support of a woman of virtue. Through pre-war ideals of masculinity dictated that men not use the aid of fellow men to achieve these dreams, men were free to depend upon women "to validate and make meaningful their struggle or success, to aid, comfort, and believe in them, even and especially when their self-belief began to fade or fail."[178]

For their part, women were expected to cultivate within themselves a higher moral virtue and, through their influence, encourage their husbands to eschew frivolity in favor of social and moral virtue as well as a higher level of economic and social accomplishment. Because of this expectation, men often sought out women who fit within circumscribed societal rules that elevated femininity and modesty over beauty.[179] When Harvey Black, a surgeon in the Army of Northern Virginia, wrote wistfully of his days of courtship, he did not recall his wife's youth

178. Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 18, 41-44, 80.
179. Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, 112.

beauty, choosing instead to remember her "maiden modesty, so much to be admired."[180] If women were to be virtuous and men were to be ambitious, then it went that men were expected to be financially dependent by the time that they considered marriage. Many willingly altered the trajectory of their careers to achieve the means of marriage, including enlistment in the military.[181]

In his study of soldiers from Virginia, historian Aaron Sheehan-Dean confirmed that one of the most important contexts for understanding the widespread support of the Confederacy among Virginians was the rise of companionate marriage from the eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Men increasingly valued intimate family relations as one of the highest goals of life. This relational "success" was on parity with political and economic success. Sheehan-Dean believes that this was based upon the emphasis of evangelical churches in sanctioning domestic families as the cornerstone of society. It was within these intimate familial circles that men made their decisions to enlist, serve, or desert. At least in Virginia, "the pressures of military service encouraged men to identify their families' immediate and future well-being as the most important reason to participate in the war."[182]

The idea of familial intimacy runs contrary to some of the prevailing historiography surrounding nineteenth century marriage and courting. "Men of the nineteenth century were encouraged to cloak their hearts and stifle their doubts," historian Stephen Berry notes, and "because gentlemen of the Old South were encouraged to swallow half of these emotions and exaggerate the remainder, we get a skewed picture of their lives."[183] Such feelings were not

180. Harvey Black to Mary Black, Brandy Station, November 1, 1863, Black, Kent, and Apperson Family, VT.

181. Rose, *Victorian America*, 148-49.

182. Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 4.

183. Berry, *All That Makes a Man*,11.

unusual. “Throughout American history,” sociologist Michael Kimmel maintains, “American men have been afraid that others will see us as less than manly, as weak, timid, frightened.” In response, he believes that “American men try to *control themselves*; they project their fears onto *others*; and when feeling too pressured, they attempt an *escape*.”[184] The war represented one of those escapes—a place in which they could not only find refuge but, more importantly, test their manhood.

The primary source base for this project presents an altogether different portrait of male emotions from that of Berry and Kimmel and one which is more in line with Sheehan-Dean’s portrayal of men as the heads of emotionally intimate families. Though Southern males were imbued with the societal expectation of emotional stoicism, the pragmatism of soldiers meant that they would easily eschew this idealistic expectation in favor of their more immediate need for emotional connection and support without losing a sense of their own manhood. As historian James Broomall noted, “individuals could and did change their feelings over time, thereby demonstrating fluidity in their personal responses to war.”[185] Historian Peter Carmichael has also noted this “pragmatism” and the evidence used for this study indicates that white Southern males were far from being emotionally distant. Although they made up less than half of the sample size for this project (89 out of 200), married and courting men wrote the greatest number of letters and were far more emotionally effusive than their unwed counterparts. Of the 1,263 total letters written by married or courting men in this sample, 914 letters (or 72.37 percent) were laden with emotion or affection while of the 527 letters written by single men, 268 (or 50.85 percent) expressed emotion or affection. At the same time, of the eight-nine married or courting soldiers, eighty-seven (or 97.75 percent) of them expressed emotion or affection. Of the 111 single

184. Kimmel, *Manhood in America, 6,* 9.
185. Broomall, *Private Confederacies,* 3.

soldiers, only seventy-seven of them (or 69.37 percent) expressed emotion or affection. Clearly, married or courting soldiers were far more likely to be expressive of their emotions. But why?

The trauma of war rubbed the feelings of most soldiers raw to the bone. Though white Southern males had marched off to war expecting to do what they had always done by controlling their own worlds and overcoming the impossible through virtue and will, the scale of the American Civil War forced many to abandon these idealistic beliefs. Instead, rather than exhibiting intense individualism, soldiers often found themselves forced to reach out to those around them as well as those back home for succor. Letters home were particularly important as they served as connectors to another world that, unlike their own, reminded soldiers of a world devoid of the same scale of death, deprivation, and inhumanity that had become their new normal. After telling his wife to send his respects to a friend back home, Cornelius Morris wanted her to tell his friend "to write often for it is a great consolation to a weary soldier to hear from those near and dear to him."[186] The absence of face-to-face interaction meant that words scrawled upon a page were *everything* to soldiers and their families.

Alabamian John T. Scott demonstrated this tendency. "To you who are in the city surrounded by friends, acquaintances and admirers with pleasures and amusements to beguile the hours that otherwise might pass wearily—the frequent arrival of my poor letters can not detract much from your happiness," he wrote to "Miss Philo," "but to me, shut up within the circumscribed lines of a camp; cut off from all communication with the outside world, and with but few to think of or care for me, the protracted absences of the little messengers of my dear Miss Philo's affectionate remembrance, is some depressing in the extreme. I do hope then you

186. Cornelius Morris to Sarah Morris, Camp Davis Near Wilmington, June 9, 1862, Cornelius Morris Letters, SHC-UNC.

will not suffer anything to interrupt the correspondence, which to me is the only pleasure of a soldier's life."[187]

Such loneliness seemed unthinkable in 1861, when war provided both single and married men alike with the prospect of escaping the banality of everyday life in school or on a farm. In the camps of instruction, wide-eyed enlistees wrote endless reams of letters extolling their own martial virtues and their excitement at looming specter of combat—the first opportunity that they would have to test their manhood. In August of 1862, before ever seeing combat, Private Joseph Kinsey of the 61st North Carolina Infantry Regiment proudly wrote to his sister that "No death is more honorable than one on a battle-field, especially when waving the sword or charging the steel bayonette into the steady and advancing columns of an inveterate enemy…It makes me feel almost ecstatic when I think of being on a bloody battle-field."[188]

Such romantic ideals of martial glory were sorely lacking in letters written after soldiers tasted of battle. This was the case for Private John W. Reese of the 60th North Carolina Infantry Regiment, who in April 1863, recounted the "morning that little William og Burne died," in which he "helt him By his Rite hand while he was Exchanging worlds he seemd to fix his Eys on mee and went off that way I promest that sweet child that I wood meet him in heaven tena I in tend to make my thouts true."[189] Private John Futch Jr. of the 3rd North Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife after Chancellorsville, a battle in which he "thought that every man would be killed and there would not be enough to tell the tale," that he "thought I had seen you for the last time but God brought me through saft and I feel very thankful to him for his kindness to wards me." Rather than

187. J.T. Scott to Miss Philo, Camp Near Yorktown, April 16, 1862, John T. Scott Letters, AU.
188. Joseph Kinsey to Sister, Wilmington, North Carolina, August 12, 1862, Joseph Kinsey Papers, ECU.
189. John W. Reese to Christena Reese, Tulahoma, April 23, 1863, John W. Reese Papers, Duke.

extolling the glories of battle, Futch wrote, “I hope we will not have to fight anothe battle this year and if we do I hope I will not have the pleasure of being in it a gain.”[190]

Surprisingly, in the sample used for this project, more married or courting men provided descriptions of battle than single, unattached men, even though they tended to write fewer letters overall about battle. Of the eighty-nine total married or courting men, thirty-one provided descriptions of battle (or 34.83 percent) while of the 111 single men, thirty-two (or 28.83 percent) provided descriptions of battle. Although more married and courting men described their actions in battle than single men, only 58 out of 1,263 (4.59 percent) letters from married and courting men described battle while single men wrote 46 out of 527 letters (8.73 percent which described battle. Additionally, out of eighty-nine total married men, only eighteen (or 20.22 percent total) expressed ideas of ideology or duty while out of 111 single men, 13 (or 11.71 percent) expressed ideas of ideology or duty. However, married and courting men wrote 47 letters out of 1,263 (or 3.72 percent) which contained ideas of ideology or duty while single men wrote fifteen out of 527 letters (or 2.85 percent). In effect, more married men were willing to express notions of ideology or duty, but both married and single men were roughly on par with each other in the number of letters which they wrote that expressed ideology or duty. What is remarkable is that 65.17 percent of the married and courting sample and 71.17 percent of the single sample (in terms of the total number of soldiers) did provided a single description of their experience in battle. Even more shocking, 77.53 percent of the married sample and 88.29 percent of the single sample (in terms of total soldiers overall) never expressed notions of ideology or duty. Admittedly, the sample is skewed by the fact that every single letter written by these soldiers either did not survive the war or were donated to the archives used. Nonetheless, these statistics are suggestive of the fact that white Southern males were not as glory-seeking or ideologically driven as many historians have made them out to be. Moreover, more

190. John Futch Jr. to Martha Ramsey Futch, Camp Near the United States Ford, May 9, 1863, Futch Letters, NCDAH.

married men than single men were willing to describe battle or express ideology or duty than their single counterparts—a fact that runs contrary to much of the historiography that argues that married men were far less ideologically driven and far less willing to describe their experience of battle to protect their families.

Many married and single men who sought to escape their banal civilian lives found battle more terrifying than scintillating. The loss of security often led to a longing for what they had once readily left behind. "I never new what pleasure home afforded to a man before," Private John Cotton of Hilliard's Legion, Alabama Cavalry (later the 19th Regiment Confederate Cavalry) wrote to his wife less than a year after the war began, "If it were not for the love of my country and family and the patriotism that bury in my bosom for them I would bee glad to come home and stay there but I no I have as much to [fite] for as any body else but if I were there I no I could not stay so I have to take it as easy as possible."[191]

Much to their dismay, men like Cotton discovered that the average soldier's life was marked by alternating waves boredom, stress, discomfort, and terror. In his diary, Private Louis Leon of the 1st North Carolina Infantry Regiment recorded the sheer horror of the third day's fighting during the Battle of Gettysburg:

> "I know that our company went in the fight with 60 men. When we left Culps Hill there were 16 of us that answered to the roll call. The balance were all killed and wounded. There were 12 sharpshooters in our company and now John Cochran and myself are the only ones that are left. This day none will forget, that participated in the fight. It was truly awful how fast, how very fast, did our poor boys fall by our sides - almost as fast as the leaves that fell as cannon and musket balls hit them, as they flew on their deadly errand. You could see one with his head shot off, others cut in two, then one with his brain oozing out, one with his leg off, others shot through the heart. Then you would hear some poor friend or foe crying for water, or for "God's sake" to kill him. You would see some of your comrades, shot through the leg, lying between the lines, asking his friends to take

191. John W. Cotton to Wife, August 3, 1862, in *Yours til Death: Civil War Letters of John W. Cotton*, ed. Lucille Griffith (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1951), 14.

> him out, but no one could get to his relief, and you would have to leave him there, perhaps to die, or, at best, to become a prisoner."[192]

Defense Scientist Anthony Kellett in his book *Combat Motivation: The Behavior of Soldiers in Battle* similarly recounted a study of Israeli soldiers that found:

> That the men who suffered combat reactions tended to have interpersonal difficulties in their units…low self-esteem regarding their military performance, or problems in their home lives. All personality types appeared equally vulnerable to combat reactions; compared to the normal control, the casualties performed equally well in combat and were as often decorated. However, men with stable family and community backgrounds were to some extent protected against combat reactions and stood a better chance of recovery once such a reaction had occurred.[193]

The deep bonds of human affection—in the form of romantic love, among others—became one of the primary bulwarks against this erosion of the soldier's self, and one of the primary pillars upon which a soldier's morale depended. Romantic love for another imparted meaning to a war that slowly dissolved into a disorienting vortex of violence and animal-like brutality. After complaining about the Confederate army's demoralization and drunkenness, Captain S. Hubert Dent of the 1st Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife that "Your letters are so full of love and affection Darling that it makes the tears come in my eyes. Tears of happiness Darling when I read them and little Eddie too."[194] For married and courting soldiers, the words and love of their wives and sweethearts back home injected meaning into their lives and gave them the emotional wherewithal to stand through the gale of war.

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Initially, enlistment offices throughout the new Confederacy were overwhelmed with men attempting to transform themselves into soldiers. Young white males from almost every

192. Louis Leon, *Diary of a Tar Heel Confederate Soldier* (Charlotte, NC: Stone Publishing Company, 1913), 35-37.

193. Anthony Kellett, *Combat Motivation: The Behavior of Soldiers in Battle* (Boston: Kluwer Nijhoff, 1982), 277.

194. S. Hubert Dent to Wife, Chattanooga, TN, July 11, 1863, S. Hubert Dent Letters, AU.

city, town, hamlet, and crossroads in the Confederacy were swept up by the tornado of travail and distributed across distant battle fronts far away from those whom they loved the most: their parents, siblings, wives, and sweethearts. The desperate clamor for the succor of southern women, coupled with the growing anxiety of imminent separation, ignited an apparent wave of "marriage mania" across the South according to some contemporary observers.[195] More recently, some historians have questioned the validity of those beliefs. Drew Gilpin Faust maintains that "Surviving statistical data on Confederate marriages is incomplete at best, and population shifts during the war were so pronounced that accurate rates of marriage (marriages per hundred adult population) are impossible to determine."[196] Susan E. Barber is adamant that marriage patterns in Richmond during the war do not reveal any "marriage mania." "Evidence from the Richmond marriage register suggests that reports of marriage mania were probably overblown," although she concludes, although reports were "no doubt accurate for rural Southern communities."[197] Historians J. David Hacker, Libra Hilde, and James Holland Jones noted in their statistical analysis of southern marriage patterns that "A flurry of marriages occurred early in the war, whenever men went on furlough, and then again at the end of the war."[198] Anecdotal evidence for the period then seems to support the notion that marriage was, at the very least, prominent in the minds of many young white southern men and women outside of Richmond. "I believe that neither war, pestilence, nor famine could put an end to the marrying and giving in marriage

195. J. David Hacker, Libra Hilde, and James Holland Jones, "The Effect of the Civil War on Southern Marriage Patterns," *Journal of Southern History* 76, (February 2010): 44. Some historians dispute these claims. See Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 149-51,* E. Susan Barber, "'The White Wings of Eros:' Courtship and Marriage in Confederate Richmond," in *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South*, ed. Catherine Clinton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 120.

196. Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996): 150.

197. Barber, "White Wings of Eros," 128, 120.

198. Hacker et al., "Southern Marriage Patterns," 45.

which is constantly going on," civilian Judith W. McGuire wrote in 1863, "Strange that these sons of Mars can so assiduously devote themselves to Cupid and Hyman; but every respite, every furlough, must be thus employed."[199]

Moreover, while the antebellum period was marked by the impulse of men and women to marry *within* their social class, the travail of war and the possibility of a life cut short and alone led many to look outside of their class for companionate partners. Overwhelmingly, women preferred men in uniform, as "military service conferred cachet upon the soldier, often regardless of his class."[200] A shrinking courtship process coupled with decreasing parental influence over marriage decisions opened the floodgates for men and women to rush into marriage. Many did so, with decidedly little discernment in their choice of a spouse.[201] "An air of impending tragedy hung over many wartime weddings," noted historian George C. Rable, "the war made a mockery of dreaming and planning for the future as uncertainty and sudden sorrow made it more and more difficult for both sexes, but especially for women, to play their expected parts in the Confederate social order."[202] Not long after Fort Sumter, Elodie Breck Todd, the sister of Mary Todd Lincoln, wrote to her beloved Nathaniel Henry Rhodes Dawson, a captain in the 4th Alabama Infantry Regiment. Her parents did not approve of their potential marriage, she lamented, although:

> Ever since I can remember, I have been looked upon and called the "old maid" of the family, and Mother seemed to think I was to be depended on to take care of her when all the rest of her handsomer daughters left her, and I really believe they all think I am committing a sin to give a thought to any other than the arrangements they have made for me. But as this is the age when Secession, Freedom, and Rights are asserted, I am

199. Judith W. McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee, During the War* (New York: E.J. Hale, 1867): 243-44.

200. Hacker et al, "Southern Marriage Patterns," 46.

201. Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, 112.

202. George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 51-54.

> claiming mine and do not doubt but I shall succeed in obtaining them as I have some one to help me in my efforts.[203]

There is little evidence that the marriages studied emerged from feelings of loneliness rather than romantic interest. Indeed, the level of emotional outpouring in the cache of letters for this study demonstrates that most soldiers did *feel* a deep and intimate connection with their loved ones back home. When husbands and beaus marched off to war, the physical distance between couples initially raised feelings of profound anxiety. These feelings were further compounded by material and social deprivation as well as the terror of combat. Recruits did not expect to be away from home for long when they signed up for service in 1861. Many young men were more focused upon the excitement that lay before them than the stability that lay behind them.[204] The mass of humanity and the lack of privacy proved to be troubling to soldiers. It was at this precise moment that many of them began to look back upon—and miss—what they had left behind.

Yet this "pull factor" could also become a paradoxical "push factor," which helped many soldiers to continue to serve and fight. In December of 1861, for example, John T. Scott of the Auburn Guards wrote to his sweetheart that:

> My heart is with you, my thoughts turn to you. I constantly think of you and count the weary days that separate me from you, and as you sit to your Christmas table, loaded with the luxuries of home; and I partake of my camp rations of hard-bread and horse beef, I well turn a thought to you, and draw fresh inspiration from the reflection that while I am far away, suffering the severities of a winter's campaign, you dearest one, are sage and surrounded by the comforts of home.[205]

Loved ones back home did indeed provide, in the words of Scott, "fresh inspiration" to keep fighting. As the war's destructive power steadily increased over time, and its destructive

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203. Elodie Breck Todd to Nathaniel Henry Rhodes Dawson, Selma, May 9, 1861, Nathaniel Henry Rhodes Dawson Papers, SHC-UNC.

204. Paul A. Cimbala, *Soldiers North and South: The Everyday Experiences of the Men Who Fought America's Civil War* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 77.

205. J.T. Scott to Miss Philo, Camp Pickens, Dec. 9, 1861, John T. Scott Letters, AU.

force "prompted levels of emotionality that were once thought to be only possessed by women" soldiers expressed these emotions in letters home "as a means to convey war's suffering and confusion, thereby demonstrating resilience in the midst of hardship." As Broomall noted, "Confederates were able to adapt to the trials of military service because they continued to practice a flexible masculinity."[206]

Southern men thus developed strong bonds of emotion with their partners. As Sheehan-Dean maintains, the emotional bonds between husbands and wives, and lovers and sweethearts, served as both intellectual and emotional motivators for the average Confederate soldier. Beyond the traditional political, economic, and even national-social reasons that men chose to fight, the most immediate reason men gave was the belief that they were the first and only line of defense of their spouses, sweethearts, and children. In fact, their decision to enlist was often decided *among* members of the family as well as *for* the members of one's family. Historian Reid Mitchell notes that in a more immediate and personal sense, married or courting soldiers fought to protect their loved one(s) from what they believed to be a foreign and savage invader.[207] In a letter to his sweetheart and future wife, Private Harrison Hanes of the 4th North Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote of his fellow soldiers not long after the First Battle of Manassas that, "I think for they hav left ther homes all redy for the purpos of kepin the invaders of our soil and I think a man that will take care of his country will take care of the women."[208]

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Motivation remains the most examined aspects of modern studies of soldiers during the American Civil War, yet historians have not fully acknowledged the influence that wives and

206. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 67.
207. Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 4, 27; Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 23.
208. Harrison Hanes to Nancy Williams, Manassas, VA, September 30, 1861, Harrison Hanes Papers, Duke.

sweethearts had upon the soldiers along the battlefield. War is one of the most stressful and depressing realities of life. Death, destruction, and deprivation grind at men's physical, emotional, and spiritual health to the point that many lost their grasp on their own humanity. Historian Eric T. Dean Jr. pointed to a hierarchy of psychological suffering that almost all soldiers experienced during the war. The greatest source of psychological trauma experienced by Civil War soldiers was the terror of battle—particularly when under intense bombardment. The impact of infectious disease on soldiers and the general inability to stave off disease further threatened to psychologically upend the common soldier. Witnessing the gradual and painful deaths of their comrades (and sometimes, themselves) only compounded feelings of hopelessness and alienation. Finally, on the bottom rung of this hierarchy, the effect of marches and bivouacs in rain, snow, damp, and mud left soldiers in serious physical and psychological discomfort. Though it is debatable whether soldiers "got used" to combat, what is known is that after battle, many noted the phenomena of feeling physical exhaustion followed by feelings of depression and vulnerability.[209] Dean found a pattern in which "one often sees a progression in each life from an initial carefree optimism about 'soldiering' to a growing weariness and sense of vulnerability."[210]

Whether or not war hardened soldiers or caused them to become emotionally vulnerable and needy, in every major American conflict, war exerts a detrimental effect upon marriages. Divorce rates typically skyrocket at their conclusion. But this does not tell us as much about the relationship between combat exposure and marital dissolution. Sociologists Cynthia Gimbel and

209. Dean, *Shook Over Hell*, 51-66. Some historians have taken the perspective that Civil War soldiers got "used to combat" and experienced a "hardening" of their attitudes towards death and destruction including McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 74, Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 240-41, and Hess, *Union Soldier in Battle*, 146-49.

210. Ibid., 74-75. Other historians follow Dean's lead, arguing that soldiers' reactions varied and often they remained feeling throughout the war including Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 84, Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 111.

Alan Booth studied the effect of combat experience on marital quality—including divorce, marital separation for reasons other than divorce, infidelity, and abuse—what they call "marital adversity." Using data from 2,101 Vietnam veterans, the authors found that "combat itself does not have a direct relationship with marital quality and stability. Instead, combat creates stress and antisocial behavior, but only antisocial behavior has a direct effect on marital adversity. The effects of combat-related stress are through antisocial behavior." Additionally, they found that "combat directly increases violent and unlawful (antisocial) behavior and stress, which then affects marital quality and stability, and that this process is both mediated and moderated by premilitary stress and antisocial behavior…Posttraumatic stress symptoms play only an indirect role in the combat-marital adversity fellowship."[211] The only antidote to this antisocial behavior was connection to those in whom one found safety and security, such as comrades and spouses.

Psychiatrist Theodore Nadelson noted that "War is inherently traumatic because it dehumanizes its participants. The soldier loses meaning, that is, a sense of purpose, goals to strive for, principles (such as respect for life) to protect. The soldier cannot afford to give weight to anything outside of the immediate, which is to survive."[212] Private Jesse Hill of the 21st North Carolina Infantry Regiment provided a useful example, describing the horrible scenes which narrowed the soldier's experience to one of survival. After the Battle of New Market in 1864, he wrote to his "dear companion" that during the battle "tha was lots of our men kild I don't see how I ever com out safe for the bullets and grape and shel come so thick and tore up the men the pecs of flesh few all over me and the men fel all a round me thek dead lay thick for bout 4 miles

211. Cynthia Gimbel, and Alan Booth, "Why Does Military Combat Experience Adversely Affect Marital Relations?," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56 (August 1994):691, 701-02.

212. Theodore Nadelson, *Trained to Kill: Soldiers at War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 100.

long and 2 miles wide."[213] Such scenes had their effect. "Men were horrified to both friends and strangers mangled," historian Megan Kate Nelson noted, "Such sights left soldiers sick and despondent, almost dumb with horror. Minié balls caused 94 percent of Union injuries, yet soldiers wrote as much or more about the ways that artillery ammunition…dismembered the human body, likely because these projectiles—much larger and heavier than bullets—produced the most spectacular corporeal damage."[214] Historian James Broomall noted the result, writing that "Men's revelations of fear partly displaced the martial manhood so proudly conveyed in early war letters overladen with bravado" and that Confederate soldiers turned towards writing "notes to their kin as a means of controlling the present. By writing letters, soldiers were affirming life during periods when they fearfully wondered who was ultimately in control."[215]

In camp, the mood was often not much better than in combat. "When we lay on the ground to Sleep," Private Silas Stepp of the 7th North Carolina Cavalry Battalion recounted to his wife in June 1864, "the frogs is gumping over us when wee go through the brush wee get full of ticks when wee go to eat wee cant hardly keap the flys out of our mouth you never saw the like of such things in your life I tel you my dear you don't now how bad I want to see you."[216] Some men broke. Sergeant Horace McLean of the 59th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife, "One soldier road in to the River + Drowned himself I think he was from Pike," he wrote, "One Soldier shot another + wounded him mortally all of them belongs to the Cavalry at camp Stone. I heard that they were both Drunk Down Town at a little Eating house it seems to me that so soon

213. Jesse Hill to Dear Companion, New Market, VA, October 21, 1864, Jesse Hill Letters, NCDAH.

214. Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012): 163.

215. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 66.

216. Silas Stepp to Eleanor Stepp, June 12, 1864, Silas Stepp Letters, UNCA.

as men get in camp the they loose all manner of respect for themselves + every body Else + it is much to be regretted."[217]

Death, destruction, and deprivation threatened to harden a soldier's psyche and emotions. Yet harsh discipline could also shape their outlook on life in destructive ways. For soldiers who deserted, their punishments sometimes played upon the idea of honor and its connection to the community's opinion as they were often meant to embarrass the alleged deserter and to reduce his standing within the larger community. Private Tilmon F. Baggarly of the 5th North Carolina Infantry wrote of an example of this to his wife, telling her that "they browght in a deserter last knight a they nocked owt the head of a flower barrel an run his head threw it got him a walkin the frunt gard line bee for the gard i think it soots very weell for the wind blows very cold Mag I tell yow it look funney to see him a going along with his head sticking owt at the top of a barrel."[218]

For other men, the penalty was much more severe, and the effect upon his fellow soldiers much more demoralizing. Facing the prospect of witnessing the execution of a deserter in his regiment, Captain S. Hubert Dent of the 1st Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife that, "I do not wish to see it. Men grow callous enough at best in the army and I do not wish to witness any more of such sights than are absolutely necessary. There is a very great difference between shooting down me (enemies) (at least in one's feelings) when the blood is warm and we are excited to the highest pitch & witnessing the shooting of one of our own men by our own men."[219] The lack of contact with home underlay much of the emotional hardening that soldiers experienced during the war. It was not only good, but also *vital* that soldiers kept in touch with

217. Horace McLean to Mary, Camp Mary, May 4, 1862, Horace McLean Letters, AU.

218. Tilmon F. Baggarly to Margaret Baggarly, Camp Near Fredericksburg, March 3, 1863, Tilmon F. Baggarly Papers, Duke.

219. S. Hubert Dent to wife, Barracanas, Florida, November 7, 1861, S.H. Dent Papers, AU.

individuals who lived outside of the death, destruction, deprivation, and discipline of war—individuals who could exert a civilizing influence upon soldiers.[220]

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Before the war, letters were a more private form of interaction between courting individuals since they could express their feelings without the presence of a chaperone. After marrying, couples no longer needed a chaperone, nor did they need to continue writing letters. Now letters represented the only tangible link between two individuals who loved each other and wholly depended upon one another. The depth of emotional expression in these letters ranges from shallow expositions of the monotony of camp life to breathtaking declarations of love. The most emotionally charged letters in this study came during periods of high stress such as the first few weeks away from home, after witnessing the death of fellow comrades, the death of family members, personal sickness, material deprivation, frustration over the lack of furloughs, and the growing realization that the war had no end in sight.

Yet less emotionally charged letters—those which simply described conditions in camp or the soldier's daily routine—were not as meaningless as they may seem on the surface. One interesting pattern noted in the source base for this project was the sharing of mundane stories and facts from both soldiers and their loved ones. Many letters were simply recitations of the price of corn, scuttlebutt from home or camp, expositions of daily routines, the cost of food or clothing, humorous stories, and more. Soldiers longed to hear how their wives and their families were doing, even if it was the most boring of subjects. Private John Marcus Hefner of the 57th North Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife Keziah that "I want you to rite to me as Time may Soot things to Soot I want you to give me satisfaction I would like to hear from home the

220. Cimbala, *Soldiers North and South*, 116.

best in this world to hear from you all one time more it is great Satisfaction to hear that you are all well and doing well I want to hear how you ar getting on with your work." Upon arriving at a new camp, Hefner went on to assure his wife that "I Can State the hous is Cep in good order."[221]

Likewise, Private James W. Watkins of the 3rd Georgia Cavalry wrote to his wife that "I hav no important nuse to wright to you this time I want to you to wright to mee how you come on a geathering the corn and hoo is a geathering hit for you and whether you hav got hit geatherd or not."[222] The importance of sharing mundane activities through letters was important as it mimicked the sharing of the day-to-day in their lives together back home. By inviting each other into the boring details their lives, husbands and wives were able to mimic the routines of their lives before the war pulled them physically apart.

Soldiers and loved ones alike cherished letters whatever the subject matter as they were the only real physical links that they had with each other. Everything about a letter—from the distinctive writing style to the personal words printed on the page—reflected the individual touch of one's lover. Some soldiers took the time to trace their hands in their letters, signifying an attempt to touch the hand of their lovers. "Houdy my dear wife," Silas Stepp wrote to his wife Eleanor before tracing a picture of his hand, "when this you see remember mee though many miles apart wee bea."[223] Soldiers often spoke of how desperate they felt to touch their wives and to embrace them. This desire for touch was a reminder of the need for warmth and humanity in each of these individuals' lives. Additionally, soldiers often requested locks of their wives' and

221. John Marcus Hefner to Keziah Hefner, Richmond, VA, March 7, 1864, Marcus Hefner Papers, NCDAH.

222. James W. Watkins to Francis Maxwell Watkins, Atlanta, GA, October 18, 1863, James W. Watkins Papers, EU.

223. Silas Stepp to Eleanor, April 8, 1864, Silas Stepp Letters, UNCA.

sweethearts' hair as hair was distinct to that individual and served as a simple tangible link to their lovers.[224]

According to historian Alice Fahs, the highly sentimental nature of white southern males, as evidenced by their wartime letters, included "feminized components that late in the century would be excised from new concepts of masculinity. On appropriate occasions it was considered manly to show emotion, even to cry." She went on to note that, "At the same time, within a culture of domesticity that tightly bound not only women but also men to their homes, the soldier's imagined longings for home were also deemed highly appropriate and represented not only in poems and songs, but also in numerous popular engravings."[225] Though the desire for verbal communication was preeminent in the minds of soldiers, under the circumstances the written word would suffice. Writing to his sister, Second Lieutenant Oliver E. Mercer of the 20th North Carolina Infantry Regiment noted that "it afforded much pleasure to read a letter one more time from home, but I would feel much better to have a verbal correspondence with you, for it has been over two months since I saw you."[226]

Of the 1,790 letters studied for this project, virtually every letter followed a similar pattern, whether the author was highly literate or barely so. The greatest fear of every soldier and civilian who lived in the nineteenth century was that of sickness or disease—which killed twice as many men as deaths from combat in the American Civil War.[227] Soldiers and civilians alike often began their letters with a salutation followed by a report on their health. After that, they

224. Michael Ellis, *North Carolina English, 1861-1865: A Guide and Glossary* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), xl.

225. Fahs, "The Sentimental Soldier," 118.

226. O.E. Mercer to Sarah Mercer, Fort Johnston, North Carolina, October 13, 1861, Volume 1-1861, Wilmington, North Carolina and the Lower Cape Fear Area During the Civil War (1861-65): An Excerpted Guide to Resources Manuscript Collection No. 26, UNCW.

227. David Madden, *Beyond the Battlefield: The Ordinary Life and Extraordinary Times of the Civil War Soldier* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 235.

would often ask questions the conditions at home or in camp. The remainder of the letter was devoted to conditions on the battlefield, physical needs, camp life, religious ideas, opinions of officers and comrades, and the weather. Soldiers and civilians alike both recognized the limitations of the written communication, however. "I could rite a heap," Private John W. Cotton wrote to his wife," but when I go to rite I can think of half I want to rite if I could see you all I could tell you a heap."[228] Soldiers generally tended to be both more verbose. The feelings of detachment and distance from those that they loved often led to an outpouring of descriptive language about their current conditions and sufferings. Soldiers closed their letters with sentimental thoughts and or in some cases poetry, safe in the knowledge that such writings were exclusive and private.[229]

Soldiers rarely wrote of military matters in their letters home. As noted previously, only 64 out of 200 soldiers in this sample (32 percent) expressed descriptions of battle, while only 33 out of 200 (16.5 percent) expressed political ideology or duty. Of their 1,790 letters, only 104 described battle (5.81 percent) and only 62 expressed ideology or duty (3.46 percent). This falls in line with Christopher Hager's assertion that "rank-and-file soldiers and their families used a lot of ink writing about their health, the weather, and what milk or butter cost. They repeated themselves…because they never had complete confidence any given letter would reach its destination," and more importantly, "because the source of their feelings wasn't going away: *I wish you would come home, I wish I could come home, I can't come home.*"[230]

By-and-large, "family" and "home" were the two major themes of soldier's letters. Sometimes the exchange was so intense that it crossed the boundaries of propriety through the

228. Cotton to Wife, Tennessee, December 9, 1862, in *Yours Till Death*, 36.
229. Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, 105-08.
230. Hager, *I Remain Yours*, 9.

expression of sexual desire for one another—something which often bubbled below the surface in their letters. "You told me to prepare for kisses," Susann Cloer reminded her husband Private William Cloer of the 62nd North Carolina Infantry Regiment in 1862, "You may fix your mouth too."[231] After pining over how much she missed her husband, Mary Bell wrote to her husband in the summer of 1864 that, "if you would come riding or walking up I would give you some nice light bread, butter, and milk, for supper, and then invite you to sleep with me, do you supposed you would take the invitation as an insult?"[232] Soldiers and civilians thought of their loved ones incessantly and the thoughts of the many missed sexual encounters certainly crossed their minds. Although their letters often initially reflected the Victorian bent towards conservative communication of sexual desires, over time the continuing absence from each other sometimes loosened sexual inhibitions, at least in their communications. Soldiers' letters to their wives were often more flirtatious in nature.[233]

Soldiers letters also often contained justifications for leaving their families behind to enlist. Most often, white southern males appealed to the ideal of "republican motherhood"—i.e. that it was a woman's patriotic duty to send their husbands and sons to war to protect the republic, much as they had during the Revolutionary era. Women were expected to inculcate their children with Republican values and stoke within them a desire for virtue and sacrifice. Husbands and wives would have to constantly remind each other of the necessity of their sacrifice and the need to find strength amid that sacrifice. "Carrie let me persuade you to be a

231. Susann Cloer to William Cloer, October 17, 1862," Civil War Voices: Soldier Studies, http://www.soldierstudies.org/index.php?action=view_letter&Letter=492 (accessed April 2, 2015).

232. Mary Bell to Husband, July 8, 1864, Alfred W. Bell Papers, Duke.

233. Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, 114.

brave little woman," Sergeant Hiram Holt of the 38th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife, "show yourself one of power one that can endure anything."[234]

For both man and wife, the refusal to send one's husband to war or the refusal of a man to fight for his country would bring immense shame and dishonor upon his family. While officers had the right to resign their commissions at will, enlisted men could only leave the ranks through death or desertion. For many officers, resigning their post was considered dishonorable. Desertion was considered the most abominable sin of all, however, since it was both dishonorable *and* illegitimate. Historian James McPherson argues that desertion rates were probably higher among married men than unmarried soldiers, yet his conclusions are supported by little evidence. Historians have often argued that women's letters provoked or encouraged their husbands to desert, but this assertion too is based on scant historical evidence. McPherson notes that women who wrote encouraging letters to their husbands or sweethearts did not evoke the same sort of responses as those which threatened to dishonor or "unman" a soldier—thus arguing for the supremacy of the power of women to exert a "pull" factor rather than a "push" factor on their husbands. However, he goes on to admit that "Most evidence of women who encouraged their husbands' or lovers' commitment to duty, honor, and country is lost to history, for most collections of soldiers' letters home do not include letters coming the other way."[235]

Historian Peter Carmichael observed that McPherson's argument that deserters were deadbeats "has value," but also that "the methodology behind the conclusions is problematic. Any attempt to measure loyalty privileges the written sources of the elite over those of the poorly educated." This is problematic since the desire for desertion "possessed its own situational logic,

234. Hiram Talbert Holt to Carrie, Fort Pillow, TN April 25, 1862," Hiram Talbert Holt Letters, UM.
235. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades,* 135-40.

rooted in time and place and shaped in decisive ways by the politics and the personality of the soldier." In other words, Civil War soldiers were pragmatic individuals who shifted their notions of duty and honor to meet their immediate needs rather than adhering to a rigid political and ideological moral baseline.[236] In the letters for this project, a recurring theme was the desire to come home with seemingly little prodding from soldiers' wives. Many soldiers simply did not like military service, particularly after the first year of the war when their enlistments were automatically extended to include the war's duration by the Confederate government. Though Confederate soldiers often seemed to feel that a year of service fulfilled their commitment to their nation and their own sense of honor, many of them decided to stay in the army for the very reason that they wanted to leave: their families.

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Historian Ted Ownby argues that Civil War soldiers fell into two major categories of emotional expression: the "Stoics" and the "Romantics." The contrast between the two may have initially been strong but the lines between them tended to blur as the war stretched on. "Stoics" tended to minimize the emotional impact that separation from their families had on them. They most often stressed their devotion, and the necessity of their loved ones' devotion, to duty and patriotism. In their case, emotional expression may have represented weakness and they often looked down upon their homesick compatriots. "Romantics," on the other hand, had little problem expressing their feelings towards their family members, even if it meant that they sometimes sounded pathetic in describing their sense of loneliness or pain. "I believe I love you better and that you are dearer to me," Romantic Captain S. Hubert Dent of the 1st Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote his wife Anna, "every day you and I are separated I count the days

236. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 176.

when I expect to see you and be with you and I often speculate about how happy the meeting will be…This war has made a great change in my calculations and perhaps in some ways my feelings about these things—learning to wait is a hard lesson"[237]

Ownby argues that the brutality of war, and its inordinate length, led to an increase in the number of "Romantics" at the expense of the "Stoics" who made up most recruits in 1861. He finds that over time, the war caused men to tell family members about "the softest emotions" as "male letter writers wrote that they were changing or wanted to change due to new realizations they made during wartime."[238] This argument is in line with Carmichael's assertion that Civil War soldiers were, at heart, pragmatists who adapted themselves to meet their own individual needs during the war. In his study of later enlisters, however, historian Kenneth Noe found that Romantics had actually existed in strong numbers from the very beginning. Married men, who made up a far higher number of later enlistees, were surprised from the first by how much they longed for home and their loved ones upon their arrival at camp. As the war progressed, the expressions of lovesick feelings in later enlisters' letters actually decreased, Noe argues, through death, attrition, the loss of morale, and their adjustment to new circumstances.[239]

Adding to the confusion, historian James Marten found the opposite to be the case, arguing that "Correspondence between soldiers and their families suggests that wartime absences prompted more intense relationships among family members. High postal rates and an unreliable delivery system turned letters between southern husbands, wives, and children into precious emotional commodities."[240] Meanwhile Noe's study found that whether or not husbands

237. S. Hubert Dent to wife, Barracanas, Florida, November 7, 1861, S.H. Dent Papers, AU.

238. Ted Ownby, "Patriarchy in the World Where There is No Parting: Power Relations in the Confederate Heaven," in Catherine Clinton ed., *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 229-234.

239. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 74-76.

240. James Marten, *The Children's Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 69.

expressed greater emotion, 80 percent of his sampled soldiers who were married wrote faithfully to their wives and children throughout the war.[241] The written word exerted its emotional "push" and "pull" because it was the only available medium for two individuals of great distance to explore each other's psyches and emotions. According to Berry, the war represented a "vast psychic distance to close through letters which were a sort of incubator of romantic interest." Furthermore, letters allowed men—who were only supposed to display affection behind walls of stoicism and courage—to discreetly communicate their feelings to their lovers.[242]

The intense feelings of loneliness and loss in the wake of physical separation from loved ones often proved too intense for the average soldier. "To assuage the sense of loss at being separated, soldiers spent time establishing contacts with loved ones," historian George Rable surmised, "communication with families, rather than male bonding with other soldiers, satisfied most men's emotional needs during the war."[243] Alabamian Armistead L. Galloway wrote to his wife Eliza in June of 1862, "if you can read this bad wrighting wright ne word for know one els can wright mi feelings nor neither can I[.] I must close[.] Right every few weks to me[.] I wish I cold spend all my time in trying to wright to you."[244]

Like Galloway, soldiers often literally begged their wives and sweethearts to continue writing to them, scolding the harshly and often unreasonable for not writing more often. "Your sparkling blue eys and rosey red cheeks has gained my whole efections I hope for the time to come when we shall meet again," Lieutenant William Testerman of the 8th Tennessee Cavalry wrote to his sweetheart Jane Davis in the summer of 1863, "I want you to rite me as soon as you can for I will be glad to hear from you any time. Direct your letters as before and don't forget

241. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 74.
242. Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 89-90.
243. Rable, *Civil Wars*, 59-60.
244. Armistead L. Galloway to Eliza, June 22, 1862, Armistead L. Galloway Letters, AU.

your best friend."[245] The distance caused by war became a point of extreme anxiety between a soldier and his loved ones back home—a source of anxiety that in this study did not abate over the course of the war. Financial hardship, sickness, and death affected the home front just as much as it had before the war, and husbands in uniform were not at home to care for their families. As Union soldiers snaked their way across the southern landscape, their anxiety only increased. Worse yet, if unsettling news did arrive, soldiers were virtually powerless to do anything about it.[246] All of this compounded the average soldiers' sense of pain in enduring the separation from family.

Beyond meeting their emotional needs, soldiers also turned to their wives and sweethearts to meet their physical needs as well. For many Confederate soldiers, supplies from home often marked the difference between a man being healthy and ready for combat and another growing too weak or ill to fight. In effect, if a man did not receive proper aid either from the Confederate government or from home, he could not meet the masculine expectation of achieving martial glory in combat. Everything from clothing, literature, and baked goods, to fresh vegetables, grooming products, and more snaked their way from the home front to the battlefield through either the spotty and unreliable Confederate mail system or in the arms of visiting relatives and neighbors. Men would receive these goods, which were intended only for themselves, only to open their packages and share their bounty freely with their comrades.[247]

The psychological, emotional, and physical benefits of letter writing were not granted to married men alone. Unmarried men's minds constantly reverted to romantic prospects back home. As one succinct writer put it, they often wished "to go corting and squeaze some of the

245. William F. Testerman to Jane Davis, July 25, 1863, William F. Testerman Letters, VT.
246. Cimbala, *Soldiers North and South*, 117.
247. Madden, *Beyond the Battlefield,* 213-14.

girls, for I no that they would like to be squeazed a little."[248] For many soldiers, the women with which they corresponded were those that they had known before the war, scattered throughout their hamlets and hometowns across the South, and indeed often the sisters, or cousins of dear male friends. At other times, lonely men in camp would write to women who had sent goods as a goodwill gesture to soldiers on the front lines. Some of this correspondence went on so long that the relationship evolved from polite conversation to romantic interest. Primarily, forlorn men in the Confederate army sought women who fulfilled the antebellum ideal of womanhood: a woman of modesty and femininity—two characteristics which were far more important than physical beauty.[249] Though seemingly superfluous, these letters reminded soldiers of a peaceful world beyond their own narrow battle-scarred existence.

The value of the Confederate mail system to soldier morale, albeit with its frequent breakdowns and undelivered letters, thus cannot be understated. Confederate soldiers' emotional needs—which extended beyond platonic friendship and could not be fully met by their comrades—were met through the exchange of emotions through letters with their loved ones. These letters were the material representation of the emotional linkage between husbands and wives as well as beaus and sweethearts. The life of the soldier was often unpredictable, and for men who had generally never been more than a few miles from home before, the newness of camp life could be extremely overwhelming. In effect, the instability of their world shook soldiers to their core and the written word provided a much-needed connection to one more stable and calming than their own. Confederate soldiers *needed* the reassurance of the women in their lives and authorities recognized this, even going so far at times to bring local women to

248. John A. Smith to Sister, January 24, 1864, in *The Civil War in North Carolina: Soldiers' and Civilians' Letters and Diaries, 1861-1865: The Piedmont,* ed. Christopher M. Watford (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003), 145-46.

249. Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, 111.

visit with the troops in camp to maintain morale and remind the men of what they were fighting for.[250]

Without an efficient and reliable postal system, however, maintaining morale was nearly impossible. Husbands and beaus repeatedly chastised their loved ones for not writing more often or not responding to their letters, which most often was a result of the breakdown in the Confederate mail system. The lack of response from loved ones often upset soldiers because it touched two of their greatest fears—that they had been forgotten or that something terrible had happened to their loved ones. As the war stretched on, the deterioration or capture of an already languishing and relatively short southern railroad system meant that mail increasingly either never reached its destination or arrived weeks and months after it was sent.[251] Soldiers did not sometimes think reasonably about the logistical reasons behind the dearth of letters from their loved ones. Captain John Samuel Shropshire of the 5th Texas Cavalry complained to his wife in 1861, "I came to town today expecting to find aleast two letters from you but nary letter was there for me," "Please write often if you are able, if not let some one write to me how you are. I can not endure such suspense, every body sick & nobody to let me know how you are getting."[252] Two years later, anoter soldier expressed similar concerns. "Dear Father I write you a few lines tho I have but litel hopes of you ever giting it & I am out of hart about writing as I have writen you Several leters Since I left home & has got no anser yet," Captain Stephen Whitaker of Thomas' North Carolina Legion wrote in August 1863, "of corse I Shall quit if I git no ancers."[253]

250. Madden, *Beyond the Battlefield*, 223-27.
251. James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 132.
252. John Samuel Shropshire to Carrie, September 5, 1861, John S. Shropshire Papers, NML.
253. Stephen Whitaker to James Whitaker, Carters Department, August 25, 1863, Stephen Whitaker Papers, NCDAH.

These heightened emotional responses are indicative of the fact that soldiers placed an immense weight of importance on these letters to meet their emotional needs. Civilians also placed a similar level of importance on these letters, reacting strongly when they were not reciprocated. Writing to her husband Henry in the Confederate army, Ann Bowen wrote to him that "I would be glad to hear from you every week or every day if I could but I no I cant we could hear from each other every week if those that carryes the letters would not be so carless but it don't concern them and they don't care for it is next thing to seeing you and having a long talk with you to get a new letter."[254] Much of their worries were the result of the contradictory and often inaccurate casualty reports published in newspapers across the Confederacy. Family members often only learned of their loved one's death or wounding *months* after the fact, and relied upon the word of others to verify the status of an individual soldier.[255] "On the way to the battlefield," Private Spencer Welch of the 13th South Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife, "I met a negro who recognized me and told me that your brother Edwin was wounded in the breast and had gone to Richmond. I fear there is some truth in it."[256]

The emotional weight placed upon these letters meant that mail call could provide a soldier with a moment of intense elation or a deep depression. The very prospect of an undelivered letter from a loved one could send some soldiers into fits of desperation, and most particularly married soldiers. One expert on modern militaries, Roger W. Little, noted that "Letters represent the soldier's major contact with the social unit that reinforces his desire to serve faithfully and under great hardship."[257] Lieutenant Edmund Patterson of the 9th Alabama

254. Ann L. Bowen to Henry H. Bowen, January 14, 1865, Civil War Collection, Henry H. Bowen Papers, NCDAH.

255. Rable, *Civil Wars*, 64-67.

256. Spencer Welch to Wife, June 29, 1862, in Spencer Glasgow Welch, *A Confederate Surgeon's Letters to his Wife* (New York: Neale, 1911), 17.

257. Roger W. Little, "Buddy Relations and Combat Performance," in *The New Military: Changing Patterns of Organization*, ed. Morris Janowitz (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1964), 219.

Infantry Regiment put it succinctly in his diary, writing that "Letters from home or the immediate neighborhood of home have more to do with keeping up the spirits and morale of the army than is generally supposed. When each individual member of a company or regiment feels that his labors are appreciated by his friends and neighbors at home, he asks no other recognition of his serves and is cheerful and contented, and the spirit becomes general and animates the command as a body."[258] Thus, soldiers often "desired a fulfilling connection with their loved ones through the cultivation of uplifting emotions," historian Peter Carmichael noted, "Feeling the warm sympathy of a caring mother or the tenderness of a compassionate wife assured men of their value as son or husband as well as their standing as fighting soldiers."[259]

"The bizarre polarities in the lives of the Civil War soldiers, caught between fighting to survive and tedium, made them think constantly about being somewhere else and with different people," wrote historian Dave Madden. This cast of the mind, focusing on home and loved ones, acted as a panacea for the alternating extremes of stress, boredom, and terror that otherwise marked the undulating waves of the common soldier's life. As the war progressed, soldiers missed their families immensely and often longed for the tenderness and compassion central to their ideal of southern womanhood and femininity. As the war stretched on too, the killing increased, and the end seemed more distant than ever before. Soldiers then turned to letters for emotional catharsis. On August 17, 1864 Private Samuel King Vann of the 19th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife in the midst of battle: "I hear a ball pass by me every syllable I make, and since I have been writing there has been two men shot through the body right here in camp. Poor fellows, I think they will die. I am sitting behind a tree to prevent being

258. *Yankee Rebel: The Civil War Journal of Edmund DeWitt Patterson,* ed. John G. Barrett (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 83.

259. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 44.

shot until I get this letter wrote, and the balls are constantly striking the tree that I am behind, but just so they don't strike me I will not stop writing." Sensing that it might be his final moments on earth, Vann continued: "I may be writing to you for the last time, but I truly hope not, for I don't want to die just yet awhile, but alas, serious times with me for life is so precarious that a man ought to feel so, for in a moment he may be shot through as one poor fellow is out there on the ground crying to God for help." Even in the torrent of battle, King reminded his wife that "I want you to write to me often for this will be the only comfort and consolation now…Please do not wait for me to first, for I will surely write, and if you do not get any letters from me, do not indulge the idea that I have quit writing for I never expect to so long as you will write to me, for I expect to write one lady only and that shall be you, for I love you more than all the rest."[260] The emotional turmoil stirred up by war caused soldiers' letters to become increasingly darker. They began to share their fragile emotional state—as well as their fears, experiences, and hopes—with those whom they missed the most. Many soldiers spoke of their hope in reuniting either in this life or in heaven, many fearing that they would never again experience happiness on earth.[261]

Such obsessions extended into their non-waking hours. "My cheaks is very ofen wet with tears a bout you and darling Child to think that wee are so far a part and cant Get to See each other faces," wrote Private William Irby Box of the 3rd South Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife Margaret and daughter Rachel, "I can study a bout you and see your sweet fase and dream of you very ofen and when I wake I cant rest all day."[262] Similar dreams were often shared by spouses during the war. "It is no use to say to you I want to see you for you now that but I

260. Samuel King Vann to Nancy Elizabeth Neel Vann, Atlanta in the Ditches, August 17, 1864, in *Most Lovely Lizzie: Love Letters of a Young Confederate Soldier*, ed William Young Elliot (Birmingham, AL: Privately Published, 1958), 41.

261. Madden, *Beyond the Battlefield*, 212-15.

262. William Irby Box to Margaret and Rachel Box, Camp Near Winchester, October 6, 1862, Box Family Papers, USC.

never did want to see you as bad I dreamed last night of see ing you," Nancy King wrote to her husband Private Jasper King of the 18th South Carolina Infantry Regiment in March 1863, "I thought you was at home I can see as well how you looked I thought you looked sweet and prety as ever I wish my dream would come to pass."[263] According to historian Jonathan W. White, dreams provided a sense of solace that "may have contributed to the sense of closeness that endured between men and their families despite long separations." Though soldiers dreamed of everything from their favorite foods to sports, dreams of home were the most common theme in their letters.[264]

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Historian James McPherson estimates that between 700,000-800,000 married men enlisted in both Union and Confederate armies during the American Civil War. For Confederate soldiers, many felt the tension of achieving the masculine goals set for them while also protecting their families at almost any cost. On the one hand, soldiers were supposed to protect and provide for their loved ones. On the other hand, they were also expected to lay down their lives for their nation. To fail at either of these tasks was not just an *act* of failure but was also evidence of a man *being* a failure which was reflected in their shame and dishonor. White Southern males reconciled these two views by insisting that "In fighting for their country…they were defending the security and liberty of their families."[265] Before battle in May 1862, Private Jesse V. Fuller of the 2nd Mississippi Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife that "If I should git

263. Nancy King to Jasper King, March 14, 1863, Barkley Family Letters, Southern Historical Collection, SHC-UNC.

264. Jonathan W. White, "In Their Heads: Soldiers Dreamed of Battle, Loved Ones and Infidelity, and Cheese," *Civil War Times* 54 (December 2015), 28.

265. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 134.

killed to take it fare and easy for I never could die more honorable death I feel that I am a fighting for you liberty and the liberty and privolige of my little children."[266].

Yet historians also have been quick to argue that there was a growing sense of alienation among front line soldiers and their loved ones back home. The belief that war opened a psychological and emotional gulf between soldiers and their civilian counterparts is well entrenched in the literature.[267] More recently, however, historian Peter Carmichael found that "The bonds of comradeship did not isolate men from the home front, as Civil War regiments almost always replicated the local communities that sent them off to war."[268] The research for this project likewise indicates that there was little to no real shift or change over time in the level of emotional outpouring by soldiers to their spouses during the war. In fact, as the war progressed, many soldiers seemed to be *more* emotionally expressive—particularly as the prospect of a quick war and a quick return home faded. "More than fathers and mothers, it was the exchanges with a sweetheart that fired a man's self-belief," historian Stephen Berry wrote, "His love for her was the foundation on which he could build and rebuild his love of country…[his] love of country was anchored in his love of woman, which was his love of self in part."[269]

Historian James Broomall, in his study of the emotional world of Confederate soldiers, did note that for one of the soldiers in his study, a man only known by the name "Walton," the inverse was true. "Enduring the conflict required him to maintain close connections to his family and friends in Louisiana," he noted, even as he attempted to maintain the antebellum ideal of

266. Jesse V. Fuller to Elvira Elizabeth Fuller, Richmond, VA, May 18, 1862, Jesse Fuller Letters, EU. Fuller would die almost seven months later from a far less glorious cause of death—smallpox.

267. See Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 179; Dean, *Shook Over Hell*, 92; McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 140-41; Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 216-18; Phillips, *Diehard Rebels*, 88-90.

268. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 111.

269. Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 191.

stoic masculinity, painted himself as the provider of his family, and defender of the home and hearth in his letters, the "war had weakened men's reliance on postures and poses." Turning to his family to express his innermost emotional world, Walton's intimate revelations "expose vulnerabilities and doubts, modify interpretations of white men's protection of domesticity and authority at the expense of personal exposure" and were replaced with "intense longings which were severe and disarming." Walton's deeply personal revelations of "personal feelings suggests the dynamic interpersonal relationships and deep levels of trust shared among members of his family" but which "increasingly eroded his faith in the war and the Confederacy."[270]

The sense of death's imminence sharpened and further refined many other men's feelings towards their spouses. Emotions that may have once lain dormant in times of peace were often violently awoken when soldiers experienced the pain of witnessing death and experiencing material and emotional deprivation. What they had left behind to prove their manhood, fight for their country, or provide a sense of adventure, was now something that they turned to in their hours of desperate need. Often a soldier's emotional awakening was the result of the channeling of their innermost thoughts and feelings away from the source of their pain—the military and combat—towards the ones who were also bearing the burden of their suffering such as their comrades and wives. The most emotionally intense periods of a soldier's life—moments filled with terror, loneliness, and fear—often turned a man's mind back to all that he held most dear. "At dead of night when the enemies guns are roaring around me, I still take time to think of you all and my home!," Private Hiram Talbert Holt of the 38th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife, "Oh! how I think of thee and it lifts my soul almost from out of my body to think of you so far away...And for the present let it satisfy you that I have acted nobly, that I am where the

270. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 111-12.

brave die, that whether on the tented field or mixing in the carnage of battle I still will love & think of thee."[271] Likewise, Private Thomas Inglet of the 28th Georgia Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife, "Oh when I am on the Battle field an think of you how Shall i feel you so many a mil from me What Would I Give Could you I See."[272]

During the American Civil War, medical professionals noticed that a longing for home could even cause intense physical distress. "It afforded me no small pleasure to hear from you and my little ones, and to know that you are well," Private Edward T. Broughton of the 7th Texas Infantry Regiment declared to his wife, "But it would afford me to bear our separation as best we can. My physician said my disease from which I am recovering was produced by homesickness."[273] The act of writing and receiving letters served to succor the sense of isolation and loneliness that underlay much of the anxiety and resulting symptoms that soldiers felt. The pervasive sentimentalism of the 19th century intensified these feelings which often excited intense interest in romantic pursuits as a panacea.[274] According to historian Peter Carmichael, a common belief among soldiers was that military sacrifice "purified the love between man and wife" as it moved the war out of the abstract world of politics and into a new idealistic sphere which was "grounded in love for home, family, and nation." For at least one of the soldiers in his study, that gave him "an emotional resilience that kept him from deserting the cause or descending into the darkness of organized killing."[275]

"Letters are not intended merely to convey intelligence," one soldier informed his sister, "they are more precious as a medium for carrying on a silent conversation between those who

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271. Hiram Talbert Holt to wife, Fort Pillow, TN, April 25, 1862," Hiram Talbert Holt Letters, UM.

272. Thomas Inglet to Martha Inglet, Fredericksburg, VA, February 20, 1862, Thomas W.G. Inglet Letters, UGA.

273. E. Tom Broughton to Wife, January 29, 1862," Civil War Voices: Soldier Studies, http://www.soldierstudies.org/index.php?action=view_letter&Letter=691 (access April 2, 2015).

274. Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, 110.

275. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 36.

have thoughts and affections & sympathies & hopes alike."[276] This "silent conversation" stabilized the lives of soldiers whose once peaceful world was now wrapped in boredom, loneliness, brutality, and violence. As historian Aaron Sheehan-Dean has noted, letters "helped stabilize soldiers amid the uncertainty and violence of the war and served as a crucial counterpart to the institution building soldiers performed at the same time" and that "communication with families, rather than male bonding with other soldiers, satisfied most men's emotional needs during the war."[277]

As Americans moved towards greater individualism in the antebellum period, military service was the antithesis of this impulse. Soldiers from all over the Confederacy were swept into a sea of anonymity wherein the value of the individual was significantly less than that of the collective whole. Individuals did not necessarily win wars. Rather, particularly in a Napoleonic framework, *armies won wars.* Soldiers therefore did what they could to remind themselves of their own personal significance. Letters were tethers to a past in which their significance was not measured by their actions as part of a military unit but rather by their status as the head of household as well as the love of their families. Moreover, these letters often "moved the war from political abstractions to reminders of their past lives at home, where pure feelings of sympathy, compassion, and familial love made life sacred and worth dying for."[278] In the minds of many sentimental soldiers, love ultimately inoculated them to the dehumanizing effects of war while also motivating them to fight even when the future was bleak. The expression of emotions

276. Unknown to "My very dear Sister," June 6, 1861, James Eldridge Papers, Henry Huntington Library, quoted in Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought,* 60.

277. Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought,* 59-60.

278. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier,* 36.

in letters reminded a soldier that he was one of many "living, breathing men deserving of affection, with dignity and a future worth surviving for."[279]

The circumscribed gender roles of the pre-war period provided a rigid definition of the relationship between husbands and wives which would become paramount during the war. Before the war women were supposed to support their husband's ambition for the attainment of glory and the protection of their honor. During the war, wives served in the same capacity. This emotional and physical support of provided by women is fundamental to understand why white Southern males continued to fight. Wives represented one of the strongest emotional reservoirs upon which soldiers drew. It was widely understood that to desert one's military service was, by extension, tantamount to deserting one's family, as this was a war which was ultimately fought to protect one's family.[280]

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The nineteenth century then was not a period in which white Southern males discovered emotion, feeling, and sentimentality. Rather, the pre-war period witnessed a growing movement towards greater emotional expression which culminated in a fundamental reawakening of often dormant emotions during the war. Confederate soldiers lived within a matrix of sentimentality, Christian morality, masculinity, self-sacrifice, and an expectation to nurture one's family that shaped romantic and familial relationships during this period. The increasing physical distance between husbands and wives tended to create "immediate and aching loneliness but [also] deepened emotional needs among many soldiers irrespective of when they enlisted." Not only were their wives supposed to meet their emotional needs, but increasingly they were also supposed to meet men's economic needs—a fact which turned some traditional pre-war gender

279. Madden, *Beyond the Battlefield*, 234.
280. Rable, *Civil Wars*, 50; Weitz, *A Higher Duty*, 144.

roles on their head. If in the pre-war period, men were expected to be economically viable and able to provide for their families, their physical absence and low pay (coupled with rising inflation) meant that the family's economic survival was often placed upon the shoulders of wives and mothers back home. This shift represented a pragmatic reordering of the status quo, which only became more pronounced as the war ground on and the Confederacy's fortunes waned.

Soldier's expression of emotions took on a new intensity in their two greatest moments of emotional need, in the hours and days immediately after battle and around the holidays, especially Christmas. These were the moments in which soldiers felt the most acute pangs of separation from their loved ones, and their letters written during these periods are intensely jarring. "Mother I have been in A battle sence I wrote to you it was the hardest fight that I ever heard tell of before," Private John Wesley Williams of the 35th North Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote in July 1862, "I never saw before I have been on two battle fields besids the one that I fought in two men got shot down wright by me an the canester balls I never witchnest the Like before…not A haire of my head got hurt I thought I Loved you and my god before but I did not Love you Like I do now."[281] Likewise, after his brother and comrade was captured after the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864, Private John A. Everett of the 11th Georgia Infantry Regiment was in an extremely heightened emotional state. From a hospital, he wrote to his mother four days after the battle:

> Well ma I am hear alone I have no Brother with me now I am in hops that he is not Dead if he is you know that Iam in abad condision no one to Care for me it Seames to me lik I Can heare Him Calling me I hear his voice all the time ma you will have to Excuse me for not writing along letter for my tears air blinding my Eys and I Cant Half See and my mind is in troble you have no idia how much truble I am in I dont See any peace at all you may think that you air in truble but you air Enjoying your Self to what I am I feel like

281. John Wesley Williams to Mother, Brothers, and Sisters, Petersburg, VA, July 12, 1862, John Wesley Williams Papers, Duke.

> I have not got afriend in this world my Only Companion is Gone and left me alone in this trublesom world you must not think that I have forgoten you I want you all to Sympathyse with me and Give me all the comfort you Can give.[282]

Although white Southern males had often witnessed violence on a much smaller scale in their civilian lives, they generally were not privy to the horror of Minié balls or cannon balls tearing human bodies to ribbons. After the adrenaline of battle wore off, soldiers were left to process what they had just seen and experienced. "The soldier's privilege to kill," psychiatrist Theodore Nadelson writes, "is unlike anything most other individuals have ever experienced, and the soldier who kills is permanently changed, fixed to the death he has made."[283] Modern clinical research indicates that psychological trauma from combat actually does not simply stem from the fear of death or injury, but rather the natural "resistance to over aggressive confrontation, in addition to the fear of death and injury, is responsible for much of the trauma and stress on the battlefield." In other words, the natural human inclination toward the *preservation of life* and war's disruption of that inclination are responsible for inflicting much psychological trauma. "Fear, combined with exhaustion, hate, horror, and the irreconcilable task of balancing these with the need to kill," Dave Grossman writes, "eventually drives the soldier so deeply into a mire of guilt and horror that he tips over the brink into that region that we call insanity. Indeed, fear may be one of the least important of these factors."[284]

When human beings experience trauma, their stress hormone system triggers, sending a cascade of signals through the central nervous system. Generally, a "fight or flight" response is triggered but then returns to equilibrium once the threat has passed. For those who experience

282. John A. Everett to Patience Everett, Brigade Hospital Near Chancellorsville, VA, May 10, 1864, John A. Everett Papers, EU.

283. Nadelson, *Trained to Kill*, 37.

284. Grossman, *On Killing*, 54.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder,[285] the stress hormone system fails to return to equilibrium. Signals of an impending threat continue to be sent through the central nervous system long after the traumatic event has ended. For some individuals, the central nervous system becomes overwhelmed and the "fight or flight" response is stuck in the "on position." The constant secretion of stress hormones leads to constant agitation, feelings of panic, and the eventual degradation of an individual's physical and psychological health.[286]

A soldier's response to battle varied on an individual basis. While most soldiers felt abject horror at the sight of the battlefield, others found combat to be innervating and exciting. For most, fighting for a just cause did not necessarily equate to feeling justified for what they were witnessing and participating in. Soldiers often felt a sense of guilt and shame which would often become overwhelming, leaving the brain stuck in traumatic and profound moments. "The combat soldier appears to feel a deep sense of responsibility and accountability for what he sees around him," Grossman writes, "It is as though every enemy dead is a human being he has killed, and every friendly dead is a comrade for whom he was responsible. With every effort to reconcile these two responsibilities, more guilt is added to the horror that surrounds the soldier."[287]

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285. The debate over whether soldiers in the American Civil War experienced PTSD on a large scale is hotly contested with very little concrete statistical answers. Certainly, some Civil War soldiers experienced PTSD but the exact number is unknown. For more information on Civil War soldiers and PTSD, see Michael Adams, *Living Hell: The Dark Side of the Civil War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); Eric T. Dean Jr., *Shook Over Hell: Post Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Dennis W. Brandt, *Pathway to Hell: A Tragedy of the American Civil War* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2008); Brian Matthew Jordan, *Marching Home: Union Veterans and Their Unending War* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2015); James Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); David T. Courtwright, "Opiate Addiction as a Consequence of the Civil War," *Civil War History* 24 (June 1978): 101-111; Diane Miller Sommerville, *Aberration of Mind: Suicide and Suffering the Civil War-era South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

286. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 30.

287. Grossman, *On Killing*, 75.

Soldiers who experienced battle were often torn between their intellectual devotion to duty and country while also grappling with the emotional toll of taking human life. In combat, sentimentalism and idealization beats a steady retreat in the face of torn bodies and screaming men. Communicating what they saw as well as what they did to others was a difficult task for many soldiers, who struggled to convey what they felt and experienced. "I will try to describe the battle field to you but I hardly know how," Private Lewis Sylvester Branscomb of the 3rd Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his father in June 1862, "Just imagine yourself walking over a large field half leg deep in mud scattered all over with dead men and horses wounded men lying all about groaning in the agonies death begging you for assistines and you will have some idea of a battle field."[288] Letter writing had a therapeutic effect for many soldiers as it provided a medium for processing their feelings with those who they most trusted. Individuals under stress who have only a vague understanding of what their feelings are and why they feel that way are far more likely to ruminate on whatever is distressing them in the attempt to ameliorate that stress. "Being able to clearly understand one's feelings (i.e., having greater emotional insight) enhance one's ability to regulate these feelings," noted psychologists Eileen Kennedy-Moore and Jeanne C. Watson, "In contrast, poor understanding of one's feelings increases the chances of being caught in an aversive ruminative process, trying to figure out one's internal state."[289] This rumination could lead to a dramatic psychological and emotional spiral that could leave soldiers reeling for long periods. Communication with loved ones was vital for their emotional healing.

Studies of trauma consistently find that good support networks are the most powerful way to inure one to trauma since healthy relationships allow individuals to feel safe. After

288. Lewis Sylvester Branscomb to Bennett Hill Branscomb, Camp Near Richmond, June 7, 1862, Branscomb Family Letters, ADAH.

289. Eileen Kennedy-Moore and Jeanne C. Watson, *Expressing Emotion: Myths, Realities, and Therapeutic Strategies* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999), 77-78.

experiencing acute trauma, survivors need to see familiar faces and be in touch with loved ones as their attachment bonds provide the greatest level of inoculation against a threat. The human brain is wired to be in tune with others, and recovery from traumatic episodes requires human beings to connect within the context of relationships. In contrast, attempts to manage the stress of combat or PTSD on one's own can easily lead to "dissociation, despair, addictions, a chronic sense of panic, and relationships that are marked by alienation, disconnection, and explosions." From one's infancy, human touch and attunement is one of the most natural ways to calm distress as it diminishes the arousal response tripped by traumatic events.[290] In the absence of the physical touch of their loved ones, Civil War soldiers utilized their physical letters to process their grief with their wives and sweethearts.

Although the physical distance brought about by war elicited intense anguish, it also in many cases awoke dormant romantic feelings.[291] These relationships were in fact part of the soldier's healing and allowed him to resist the dehumanization endemic to war—both of oneself and of others. Men in the field longed for the life they once lived before marching off to war so exuberantly only years before. Distance inflamed the passions of husbands and wives who felt increasingly little compunction to couch their feelings in anything other than enthusiastic proclamations of love and devotion. In a poignant letter to his wife, Confederate Surgeon Harvey Black reminisced about their blissful days of courtship. "I don't know how much pleasure it affords you to go over these days of the past," he wrote, "but to me they will ever be remembered as days of felicity. And how happy the thought that years increase the affection & esteem we have for each other to be love & be loved…May I make you happy and in so doing be

290. Van Der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 212-18.
291. Rable, *Civil Wars*, 55.

made happy in return. A sweet kiss and embraced to your greeting."[292] For Black, like hundreds of thousands of other white Southern enlisted males, the blissful moments of their pre-war lives were all that they had to hold onto in the maelstrom of war. The love that had begun to bud in the antebellum years often reached its full bloom during the war as men found themselves unable to meet their masculine ideal—to stand on their own. Instead, they turned to their comrades, and their wives, and they would also turn to a far more unlikely source: their children. Without this lifeline of emotional support, more soldiers would have crumpled under the crushing weight of a war that was intensely personal, brutal, and as it progressed, increasingly hopeless.

292. Harvey Black to Mollie, November 1, 1863, Black, Kent, and Apperson Family Papers, VT.

4: The Influence of Familial Relationships on Soldier Motivations

On a hot, muggy day in August 1861, Private Asa T. Martin of the 12th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrestled with feelings of overwhelming feelings of fear and loss. Only a few months into his enlistment, Martin was acutely aware of the pain of his separation from his wife and children. "I wood like to sea you and the children very much," he wrote to them, "I want to know if William and sis has forgotten me or not I would like to sea them[.] I saw a little girl in richmond before we left there it made me think of home." Martin's nostalgia may have been triggered by a recent trip to the nearby Manassas battlefield which was still strewn with debris, bodies, and dead horses. The stench of decaying bodies in the hot summer sun must have been utterly overwhelming as Martin recalled seeing "more ded yankees then I expected to sea lying on the ground redie for the dogs to eat or enna thing else."[1]

Just one year later, in August 1862, Sergeant Isaac Lefevers of the 46th North Carolina Infantry Regiment arrived at his new camp outside Richmond, Virginia. Union forces under Major General George B. McClellan had almost captured Richmond during the Peninsula Campaign before Confederate General Robert E. Lee assumed command of the Army of Northern Virginia and launched fierce counterattacks during the Seven Days Battles in June and July, forcing McClellan to retreat. Having participated in the Seven Days Battles and witnessing the glorious retreat of the Union Army, Lefevers could only think of his wife and children. "It gave mee great sattefacton for all to hear you & the little children was all well and that buds pig was getting fat," he wrote, "I want him to keep it up till I come home & feed it good & make a big hog till paw comes home & then we will kill it." Lefevers then described his unceasing thoughts of his children and his longing for home, writing that:

1. Asa T. Martin to Mary E. Martin, Manassas, Virginia, August 10, 1861, Asa T. Martin Papers, AU.

> I Dremp of Bud last night I thought I saw him as plane as ever I did in my life I thout that I saw his purty little head Dear wife I have dremp of you & the childrean often since I have bin in camp but I dont now what is the Reasen I have dremp oftener of bud then enny of the other childrean & I now I would like to see them all but if I could not get to see them all at one time and had my choise I would Rather See the Babby altho one of them is as nigh as the other air Scearsly ever out of my mind when I lay down I think of you & when I get up in the morning you air the first thing I think of.[2]

When Martin, Lefevers and their fellow comrades enlisted, they could not have imagined the scale of destruction that would be wreaked by this war. Visions of glory gave way to the stark reality that they had exchanged warm hearths and comfortable beds for cold nights and hard ground—a harsh reality which tempered their idealistic visions of honor, duty, and country. Yet the first taste of battle with all of its horrific sounds, smells, and sights—the sickening thud of lead smacking flesh, the acrid burning smell of black powder, and the sight of men writhing in the last throes of their existence—turned the war from the abstract struggle for liberty into a concrete struggle for survival. Miles away from their wives and children, Confederate husbands and fathers longed to escape the horror that swirled around them, and they did so either by physically deserting or more often by mentally escaping by writing letters to their wives and children. Either way, soldiers longed for connection to their loved one's back home who provided physical and emotional support. While they were now soldiers and not *just* husbands, fathers, and sons, white Southern males saw their families as emotional lifelines which sustained in their struggle for the Confederate cause as well as, more importantly, their survival. Because of this, letters became emotional lifelines that bound families together and enabled them to a face a war which independently they could not survive.

The connection between Confederate soldier-fathers and their children represents a conundrum for Civil War historians who have long made blanket arguments that soldiers became

2. Isaac Lefevers to Catherine Lefevers, Camp Near Richmond, VA, August 24, 1862, Isaac Lefevers Papers, NCDAH.

hardened to war after first "seeing the elephant." Many soldiers did become inured to seeing dead bodies, and it would seem that neither their own death or even the taking of another's life bothered them as much as it had earlier in the war.[3] Over time, with more exposure to combat, human life simply lost its value to them. In the words of historian Drew Gilpin Faust, Civil War soldiers were "never quite the same again after seeing fields of slaughtered bodies destroyed by men just like themselves."[4]

Private James Zechariah Branscomb of the 3rd Alabama Infantry Regiment seems, on the surface, to be one such hardened soldier. In July 1862, after walking across a "battle field three miles long and a mile wide, literally strewn with the dead and dieing," he declared that "it hardens ones heart beyond conception the day after the fight on 27 June I was not with the regt and had a good chance looking over the battle field I think no more of walking over a dead man now than you would a hog." Yet while Branscomb boldly declared that he was little affected by what he saw, he may have simply been posturing somewhat to portray himself as a man who was emotionally strong. Historians will never be able to divine his intentions, but his letter closes with a tantalizing clue. With his regiment exhausted and whittled down to a hundred and fifty men, Branscomb wrote that:

> I will close now and write again in a day or two for *I am too nervous to continue* give all my love and tell them that the god of battles brought me safe through a perfect storm of shot and shell when many of my old friends fell close by my side, thanks to my God for the deliverance I have seen men so badly mangled by shells that they could scarcely be recognized as human bodies I have not written as much as I expected but I must close *I am anxious to hear from you again*.[5]

3. Dean, *Shook Over Hell*, 70.
4. Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 60.
5. James Zechariah Branscomb to Lucinda Caroline Branscomb, July 15, 1862, Branscomb Family Letters, ADAH. Emphasis mine.

Branscomb and many of his comrades were not as "hardened" as they had made themselves out to be. Though possibly hardened to the death of their enemies, the evidence for this project indicates that these men were not cold and unfeeling toward their comrades and families. On April 10, 1863, Private William H. Harden of the 63rd Georgia Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife about the execution of a deserter who attempted to kill one of his commanding officers. "I have Just got back from Town where I have been Called upon to witness one of the most horrid Scenes, that I ever beheld in my life," he wrote, "It is that of seeing a man shot. the scene was awful, and terrible to behold."[6] As soldiers and their comrades faced war together, combat and the deprivations of camp life changed them. They were forced to adapt emotionally in order to survive but the argument of many scholars that the process of hardening applied evenly to every area of a soldier's life is lacking in evidence. Much of this had to do with the emotional support provided by soldiers' wives and children.

For Confederate soldiers who were fathers, the letters exchanged between themselves and their wives are replete with either questions about their children or direct messages to their children. Of the 200 soldiers sampled for this project, 82 were married (41 percent of the total sampled) and, of these, 65 were identified as having children (representing 79.27 percent of those who were married). All but one of these 65 fathers (98.46 percent) made inquiries or references to their children in their letters. Out of a total 1,790 letters sampled, 524 included inquiries or references to their children (representing 29.33 percent of the total letters). In my sample, the sixty-five soldiers who were identified as fathers wrote a combined 1,055 letters out of 1,790, (58.94 percent) which indicates that fathers who were also husbands were the most highly communicative group in the sample. Additionally, of the 1,055 letters written by soldier-

6. William H. Harden to Nancy J. Harden, Camp Gordon, Georgia, April 10, 1863, William Harmon Harden Papers, EU.

fathers, 777 (73.65 percent) expressed emotion or affection, 524 (49.67 percent) made inquiries or references to their children, 235 (22.27 percent) contained religious declarations or references to God, 45 (4.27 percent) included descriptions of battles, and 40 (3.79 percent) contained expressions of ideology or duty. Clearly, much like husbands were with their wives, fathers were far more expressive of their emotions than their single counterparts, as almost half of their letters referenced their children. In fact, more of their letters referenced their children than God, battle, or ideology and duty. Clearly, Confederate fathers were family-oriented. Other than their wives, they were more concerned with their own children than religion, their "daring exploits," and their ideology.

The letters exchanged between soldier-fathers and their children indicate that white Southern males felt a great depth of emotion for their children. They saw their military service as an extension of their masculine duty to protect their families and their families' futures. Moreover, the relationship between Confederate fathers and their children served as an emotional bulwark against the degrading influence of war which threatened to dehumanize these soldiers. One contemporary account of the tenderness of the soldier in war is illustrated by the famous story of Union Sergeant Amos Humiston. Most likely killed on July 1st at the Battle of Gettysburg, Humiston's body was discovered without a knapsack or any other materials which could identify him. What he did have, however, was an ambrotype of his three children, which was clutched in his rigor-mortised hand. When newspapers got a hold of the story, it became a national sensation as the country collectively tried to track down the identity of the father and his children.

Humiston's story did not became a national sensation because of his anonymity. In an age before the use of "dog tags," tens of thousands of soldiers remained unidentified. What made

Humiston's story compelling was the obvious affection that he felt for his children. Though politics and ideology may have had impelled him to enlist, Humiston's final thoughts were about his family. It was they whom he turned to as he breathed his last breaths. "The last object upon which the dying father looked was the image of his children, and as he silently gazed upon them his soul passed away. How touching! How solemn!," an author in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted, "What pen can describe the emotions of this patriot-father as he gazed upon these children, so soon to be orphans!" The author of the article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* went on to imagine his final moments, writing "Wounded and alone, the din of battle still sounding in his ears, he lies down to die. His last thoughts and prayers are for his family…he has freely given his life to his country; and now, while his life's blood is ebbing, he clasps in his hands the image of his children, and, commending them to the God of the fatherless, rest his last lingering look upon them."[7]

Though Humiston's story made national headlines, his story was mirrored thousands of times by soldiers on both sides of the conflict. In the summer of 1862, Private Asa T. Martin of the 12th Alabama Infantry Regiment lay dying in a Richmond hospital. Mortally wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines, the amputation of Martin's arm left him unable to write to his family. Relying upon his nurse, Mrs. B.F. McGruder, to provide the link between the soldier and his wife and children by writing his letters, Mrs. McGruder began to write Martin's wife on her own volition as his health deteriorated. In one letter, she wrote that "he would talk to me of you all and said he could not bear the idea of going home with one arm and his eyes would fill with tears spoke of his mother and a tall sister he had of his parents and yours." Though Martin had witnessed combat, the death of his comrades, and possibly taken the life of others, he clearly had

7. "Whose Father Was He?" *Philadelphia Inquirer,* October 19, 1863.

not become emotionally hardened to the point of become unfeeling. His unique position as a husband and father helped to keep his heart tender as illustrated by Mrs. McGruder's story of Martin who was lying in bed suffering from "chills and fever." At once, he "heard a child crying on the street," she recounted to his wife, and "he asked me if it was possible he could hear one cry again said it had been so long since he had seen one or heard it cry one little one came in to the hospital and up to his bed he put out his arm and drew it to him that was enough to soften the heart of stone. I know he was a kind affectionate husband and father."[8]

Martin lived within a paradox of an external world marked by wanton destruction of human life and property with a terrifying randomness contrasted with an internal softness that was obvious in his affection for his children and his desire to be at home once again. Almost every soldier struggled with this paradox in one form or another. One such soldier, ruminating on the future, wrote to his sister: "Society will not own the rude soldier when he comes back, but turn a cold shoulder to him because he has become hardened by scenes of bloodshed and carnage." But this was not the whole story, as he explained to her, "I tell you, dear sister, there are feelings, tender feelings, deep down in the soldier's breast, which when moved will prove that all that is good is not quite dead."[9]

It has been estimated that in the Union and Confederacy combined, almost 40 percent of military age (age 13 to 43 in 1860) white males served in the armed forces.[10] In his sample of the Army of Northern Virginia, historian Joseph Glathaar found that in the 1860 census, "3 of every 8 (37.5 %) soldiers in the sample were married, and 5 of every 8 (62.5 %) were single" and that

8. B.F. McGruder to Mary E. Martin, Richmond, Virginia, August 23, 1862, Asa T. Martin Papers, AU.

9. Charles Carroll Morey, quoted in Edward Alexander, "And Then We Kill," *Hallowed Ground* 14, no. 4 (Winter 2013), <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/life-civil-war-soldier-battle> (accessed February 11, 2020).

10. Stephen M. Frank, "'Rendering Aid and Comfort': Images of Fatherhood in the Letters of Civil War Soldiers from Massachusetts and Michigan," *Journal of Social History* 26 (Autumn 1992), 6.

"a bit more than 3 in 10 (31.2%) men had children at home. By the time they entered the army that proportion would have increased slightly as well."[11] These numbers are slightly lower than the sample for this project, which reveals 82 out of 200 (41 percent) of the men sampled being married, 7 out of 200 (3.5 percent) courting, and 111 out of 200 (55.5 percent) as single (neither married nor courting). If one counts those who were courting along with those who are single, the number is much closer to Glathaar's figures with 118 out of 200 (59 percent) being counted as single. Of those who were married, 65 out of 200 total soldiers had children, representing 32.5 percent of the overall sample size—a number very close to that of Glathaar's. Thus, in terms of samples sizes, the source base for this project closely mirrors that of Glathaar's much larger sample from the Army of Northern Virginia.

The correlation between Glathaar's sample and the one for this project, which examines soldiers from the Army of Northern Virginia as well as western armies, indicates that this sample can be used as a statistically significant microcosm for the relationship between Confederate fathers and their children. In reading the letters for this project's source base, one of the most striking findings was how emotionally overwhelmed soldier-fathers were at the absence of their children. "I waunt to See you and the children verry Bad But I am two far off to Come to See you," Corporal Ebenezer Coggin of the 47th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife in June 1862, "though I havant forgot you Nor I Never Shal my heart is fild with greif and my eyes with tears to think that we ar so far apart that I Cannot see you and my Sweet little children."[12]

Desperate for news of their children, in an age of supposed emotional stoicism, fathers often freely expressed their emotions when it came to their progeny. "I hope that God will give

11. Joseph T. Glathaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia: A Statistical Portrait of the Troops Who Served Under Robert E. Lee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 127.

12. Ebenezer B. Coggin to Ann E. Coggin, Petersburg, VA, June 20, 1862, E.B. Coggin Papers, ADAH.

power to Conquer our enama and we will all return home to our wifes and dear little Children on harmed," Private Wilburn Thompson of the 56th Georgia Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife, "I want you to wright to me whether you did get aney of mi oates saived or not dear wif you dont no how bad i want to sea you and the Children i wish i was thar to kiss that sweat little babe i want you to kiss the Children for me tha ant minut pases mi memory be what i think of you and the Children."[13] "I want yo to take car of al yor pervisians take car of the children and yor Self and never forgit me," Private James E. Wesson likewise wrote to his wife Rachel in January 1863, "I Se a hard time her I rit these lines with tears in my eyes if eny of the children gits Sick I want yo to rit to me as Son as yo can. I Want yo to rit to me as Son as yo can I want to hear from yo So bad that I dont no what to do I have shed meny tears since I left yo."[14] The theme of soldier-fathers shedding tears at the absence of their wives and children is indicative of the trend towards the increased acceptability of emotional expression during the war. The masculine standards of emotional stoicism, which were easier to abide by in times of greater peace, were exchanged for a new standard which allowed for the visible and verbal manifestation of male emotion without the threat of degrading one's manhood. This further reflects Carmichael's assertion that Civil War soldiers were pragmatic in their approach to navigating the war.

It is important at this juncture to note that the war itself did not create *new* emotional bonds between fathers and their children. Rather, the pre-war movement towards emotional intimacy among family members, coupled with the physical distance and the possibility of never seeing their children or fathers again, *magnified* the emotional intensity of these relationships. As noted earlier, soldier-fathers turned to each other and to their wives as sources of emotional

13. Wilburn Thompson to Charlotte Thompson, Jackson County, AL, July 17, 1862, Wilburn Thompson Papers, Duke.

14. James E. Wesson to Rachel Jane Wesson, Camp Stonewall, Talladega, AL, January 11, 1863, Joseph E. Wesson Letters, ADAH.

support. Perhaps no other motivation spurred soldiers to continue to fight more than the belief that they need to protect their families as well as their children's futures. As the war progressed and the motivation to fight for country and ideology waned, soldiers turned to their families for motivation and for strength as the carnage which they witnessed threatened to destroy them on both a physical and emotional level. The letters exchanged between soldiers and their families bore witness to an emotional intensity that grew stronger as the war wound on and the body counts grew ever higher with little end in sight. The war should have torn families apart and sometimes it did so. The deleterious psychological and physical ramifications of combat coupled with the economic destruction wreaked by the war sometimes brought families to the brink of destruction—severing emotional ties and leaving families virtually destitute. For most however, the war seems to have bound family members more tightly together as their survival depended upon their ability to collectively shoulder the war's multitudinous burdens.

The emotional bonds between Confederate fathers and their children not only provided a source of motivation but also provided soldier-fathers with an identity rooted in prevailing notions of masculinity that prevented them from losing their sense of self and becoming dissociative. They were, after all, fathers before they were soldiers, but their soldiering reinforced their roles as the protectors of their families and thus imparted a meaning to their service that was deeper and more emotionally potent than mere ideology. This represents a "push" factor when understanding soldier's motivations during the war. At the same time, the uncertainty of the conflict intensified the emotional feelings between soldiers and their family members which provided a pull-factor in the sense that these soldiers wanted desperately to return while also providing a push-factor in that the emotional support of their families imparted emotional strength for soldiers to continue to fight in the conflict. The bonding between fathers

and children which had grown in intensity and expression throughout the antebellum period would come to full bloom during the country's greatest crisis. The result was that the war paradoxically took brutality to a level never dreamed of while also invoking a depth of masculine emotional expression which had never been seen on such a broad scale.

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The idea that such emotional effusion would become so prominent among white Southern males runs contrary to the idea prevalent among historians of the antebellum South that white men of the period were emotionally repressed. This oft-invoked image of the sexually and emotionally repressed Victorian was largely a creation of liberal reformers and political radicals around the turn of the twentieth century. Scholars in the 1960s readopted this stereotype as a negative commentary on what they saw as the draconian and outdated social mores of the present. They argued that Victorian marries were "as characteristically cold as the relations between husband and wife were emotionally distant and formal."[15] In their view, that stereotypical coldness extended horizontally from husbands to wives as well as vertically from fathers to children. Historian Anthony E. Rotundo echoed this sentiment, writing that "The nineteenth-century father often lay outside the main emotional currents that flowed within his own home," and that "in middle class families of the nineteenth century, the emotional lives of fathers and sons simply did not become so entwined."[16] As the field of the history of emotions has emerged over the past two decades, however, more recent work demonstrates that American fathers were not as emotionally disinclined as scholars have previously argued. As the letters examined for this project have demonstrated, white Southern fathers felt an emotional intensity

15. Steven Seidman, "The Power of Desire and the Danger of Pleasure: Victorian Sexuality Reconsidered," *Journal of Social History*, 24 (Autumn 1990), 47.

16. Rotundo, "American Fatherhood: A Historical Perspective," 12.

towards their children that was neither lessened nor repressed by either war or prevailing masculine norms.

This emotional intimacy did, however, represent a marked change from the relationship between fathers and children in the colonial period. Though fathers were physically involved in their children's lives, they were emotionally less so. A father's primary role was to meet the physical needs of their children, apply discipline, and lend a guiding hand toward marriage and success.[17] Most white Southern colonial males were subsistence farmers and their families represented basic economic units at the head of which stood the father who served as the chief of production. "Within this narrow world," historian James Marten noted, "the family was the building block of society and the father served as the family's unquestioned ruler." Father's held immense power of their families as they could grant or deny their son(s)' request for their inherited property—the ownership of which represented a son's financial independence. Beyond social and economic control of their families, colonial fathers were also expected to exert influence over the moral and spiritual growth of their children. The spectrum of fatherly discipline ranged from persuasion or sympathy to corporeal punishment. Rotundo appropriately terms this model of fatherhood as "Patriarchal Fatherhood."[18] It would become the basis for models of fatherhood throughout the North and South in the decades leading up to the American Civil War.

The so-called "Industrial Revolution" became the catalyst for transitioning the paternal emphasis on physical provision to include emotional intimacy. The twin-headed hydra of urbanization and industrialization pushed middle class men out of the home and into the

17. James Marten, "Fatherhood in the Confederacy: Southern Soldiers and Their Children," *Journal of Southern History* 63 (May 1997), 269-70.

18. Rotundo, "American Fatherhood," 8.

workplace, establishing separate spheres between home and work, thus deconstructing the family as the basic economic unit of American life. With the father now out of the home, the patriarchal model of fatherhood slowly deteriorated as husbands became less involved with their families. At the same, Victorian mothers took on greater roles in the family by assuming the primary responsibility for the care of their children and creating what historians have termed a "Cult of Domesticity."[19] This idea of domesticity was a value system that emphasized women as the embodiment of virtue in which they were supposed "to uphold the four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submission, and domesticity." Women were expected to be more religiously pious than men and while submitting to men and assuming their place in the social sphere as child bearers and home makers. Thus, "value was placed on the home, which became more than a place to merely exist; rather, a man's home was a testament to his status in society and his wife was the barometer of family virtue." Women did not work outside of the home as they were considered too pure for such work while a man's value lay in his ability to provide for his family so that his wife did not have to work.[20] This new model of parenting lauded maternal affection and interpersonal bonding among family members. While the mother's role in the emotional development of her children increased, many historians have noted that antebellum fathers continued to assume the role of a strict disciplinarian who was less concerned with the emotional well-being of his family and far more concerned with his family's honor, morals, and future.[21]

Much of what we now know about fatherhood in the antebellum period stems from studies by historians of northern fathers, however, for whom urbanization and industrialization had a far greater impact than that of southern fathers. Additionally, the Cult of Domesticity was

19. Marten, "Fatherhood in the Confederacy," 270.

20. Lisa A. Keister and Darby E. Southgate, *Inequality: A Contemporary Approach to Race, Class, and Gender* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 21-22

21. Marten, "Fatherhood in the Confederacy," 270.

primarily a movement of the upper and middle classes certainly filtered down to the lower classes but held less potency as lower-class mothers often worked on the family farms to supplement their husbands' meager incomes. The impact of the Industrial Revolution was spread unevenly over the United States, influencing the industrialized norther far more than the agricultural south. Particularly among the lower classes, white yeoman farmers worked at home on the family farms and thus were not pulled by the industrial market outside of the home the way that their northern counterparts were.

It is logical to assume that fathers who spent most of their time at home were not emotionally disconnected from the individuals who made up their primary social circle. The sample compiled for this study indicates that southern fathers were emotionally attached to their children. Clearly, fathers wanted to know how their children were doing. Many of them even desperate to interact with these children. This finding aligns with the work of more recent historians who have shown that by the outbreak of the American Civil War, parents viewed children as sources of emotional comfort and refreshment. As Marten noted, children "became a haven from stress, a conduit of moral values, and a prominent component of what their descendants would call 'quality of life' whose disruption was to be avoided at all costs."[22] During the war, historian Suzaan Boettger discovered that mothers actually increased their devotion to their families emotional well-being as "an opposing reaction to the external strife of the Civil War." Amid the war's tumult, the "Cult of Domesticity" was seen by contemporaries as a stabilizing social force within the home.[23]

22. Marten, *The Children's Civil War*, 21.

23. Suzaan Boettger, "Eastman Johnson's 'Blodgett Family' and Domestic Values during the Civil War Era," *American Art* 6 (Autumn 1992): 51-52.

More recently, historians of gender have begun to look much more closely at Victorian fathers, uncovering a far more nuanced and complex picture of American fatherhood in the nineteenth century. Historian John Tosh, among others, has done much to rehabilitate the one-dimensional image of Victorian fathers, arguing "that for men the public and private realms were permeable and interconnected; that men saw themselves as much more than breadwinners and disciplinarians and could be doting fathers as well as successful business or professional men." In their study of middle-class Victorian British fathers, historians Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair found "that there were many different ways of being a father in this period because Victorians had complex and ambiguous notions of what constituted a proper paternal role…They could be strict but could also be indulgent. They stressed duty and deference but could be informal and intimate."[24]

As noted earlier, a spirit of egalitarianism crept into many matrimonial relationships which were marked by mutual love and forbearance. Likewise, older patriarchal models of parent-child relationships also increasingly yielded to this egalitarian impulse. Though not evenly applied across all social levels of society, men "came to value intimate family relations as the highest goal of life, or at least as worthy a goal as participation in the political and economic spheres. Emotional connections made life rewarding on a daily basis." In his study of soldiers in Virginia, historian Aaron Sheehan-Dean found that, "the pressures of military service encouraged men to identify their families' immediate and future well-being as the most important reason to participate in the war."[25] Historian Stephen Frank concurs that "little attention has been paid to soldiers as fathers and sons," but "soldiers viewed themselves and

24. Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, "Domestic Fathers and the Victorian Parental Role," *Women's History Review* 15, No.4, (September 2006): 554.

25. Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 4.

fought the war not simply as men but as representatives of their families; as husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons."[26] Confederate husbands and fathers were far from being emotionally distant from their families. Their wartime letters were instead often marked by immense warmth and tenderness that matched the prevailing Romantic idealism of the age in which they lived.

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Though soldier-fathers marched off to war to defend their families, little could they have known the level of sacrifice which would be required of them. Politicians and pundits had promised that the war would lead to little bloodshed and last only a few months—a rather minor affair that would most likely consist of one or two major battles before the other side would surrender.[27] Many echoed the sentiments of rabid secessionist A.W. Venable who, while giving a speech to voters in North Carolina in February 1861, pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and waved it around, declaring "I will wipe up every drop of blood shed in the war with this handkerchief of mine."[28] Steeped in the romantic and idealistic visions which had were shaped by and reinforced by evangelicalism and the Romantic movement, the intellectual milieu of Southern society was that the material and numerical superiority of the North could be overcome by masculine courage. Historians Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson noted this impulse, arguing that "The cultural isolation of their [Southern] society fostered a contempt for outsiders, particularly Yankees, and a romantic vision of southern self-prowess."[29] One Alabama soldier went so far as to declare that the South would win "because we are going to kill the last Yankey before that time if there is any fight in them still. I believe that J.D. Walker's brigade can whip

26. Frank, "'Rendering Aid and Comfort," 7.

27. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom,* 333. For a rebuttal of the "short war myth," see Jason Phillips, *Looming Civil War: How Nineteenth-Century Americans Imagined the Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 6-8.

28. *State Journal*, February 20, 1861.

29. Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson, *Attack and Die: Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1982), 170.

25,000 Yankees. I think I can whip 25 myself."[30] Swept up in the *rage militaire* of the early war period, Confederate fathers believed that they were the social and martial betters of their northern opponents. In a letter to his brother, A.J. Osborne of Macon County, North Carolina described the general mood of his community in the aftermath of Fort Sumter. "I know of nothing particular to write you,' he wrote, "except about the general excitement that prevails over here. I was over at Waynesville on Saturday last, Capt Robert Love made up a company of volunteers off a about a one hundred in number, & Samuel Bryson made up a company of about 25 or 26 of volunteers of footmen. The light horse company consists of 50 in number."[31]

Although their sense of patriotism and the desire to fight for a cause higher than themselves drew many men into the war, this *rage militaire* diminished as the war progressed. What sustained these soldiers over the span of a seemingly interminable war was the *love* that they felt for their families and which their families felt for them.[32] The heightened emotions engendered by these feelings of love were wrapped up in masculine norms of provision and protection which underlay Southerners' dogged defense of their "home and hearths." Corporal Andrew Sydnor Barksdale of Halifax Artillery (or Young's Battery) Virginia Artillery wrote to his sister in June 1862 after participating in a battle that:

> "That battle has been the cause of many to weep and morn, but now is the time, my dear sister for our tears to be turned into sparks of fire and we with determined resolution to whip or die. Think of what the South has been through, what we are fighting for and it, and it looks like we can't help from whipping the Yankees. We are defending our country, our homes, families, mothers, brothers, fathers sisters, Brothers children, wives and everything."[33]

30. T.B. Deaver to Thomas Hendricks, October 8, 1861, in *Cherished Letters of Thomas Wayman Hendricks*, ed. Josie Armstrong McLaughlin (Birmingham, AL: Birmingham Publishing, 1947), 86.

31. A.J. Osborne to "Dear Brother," Macon County, North Carolina May 6, 1861, C.W. Slagle Collection, WCU.

32. Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 27.

33. Andrew Sydnor Barksdale to Sister Omis, June 4, 1862, Barksdale Letters, ACWM.

For these soldier-fathers, the survival of the Confederacy was inextricably bound in their eyes to the future success and safety of their families and children. Northern industrialization and the market economy were seen as dehumanizing and a threat to their traditional way of life which emphasized the ability of man to control the natural world around him for his social and economic betterment. If land ownership meant independence and self-sufficiency, then participation in a market economy which emphasized industrial production was tantamount to slavery. For white Southern males, the Confederacy's survival was linked to the survival and future flourishing of their children. At the same time, soldier-fathers were also defending and often augmenting their family's honor through their own personal sacrifice. Marten noted that Confederate fathers "naturally hoped to save the Union or the Confederacy for the sake of their children's futures, but they more frequently referred to the importance they placed on their own and their children's honor as defenders of their nations." They concluded that "being a good and loyal soldier was now one of the duties of being a good father. Their belief that patriotic sacrifices were necessary to maintain their families' good names overcame sentimental attachments." In other words, the deep love that they felt for their children meant that they had little choice in forgoing military enlistment. Anything less would bring dishonor upon their families—especially their sons.[34] In essence, they believed that they were fulfilling their duty to their families by fulfilling their duty to their country.

During the war, when wives along the home front complained of the increased burden of maintaining farms in the wake of their husband's absence, soldier-fathers often reminded them to remember their own duty as wives and mothers to the family and, by extension, to their nation. The painful nexus between their families and their country at which most soldier-fathers found

34. Marten, *Children's Civil War*, 10-11, 81-82.

themselves often tore at their loyalties, however. In a letter to his wife Eliza, for example, Quartermaster Sergeant R.E. Corry of the 11th Alabama Cavalry complained of his commander, Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest, of being "a rash man and fond of going into danger," adding that "if Gen. Forrest does say that he will give the Alabamians transfers& whenever they become dissatisfied with him for one I would give up all my interest in the Spoils and Glory for the priviledge of being near my dear wife and little ones, but we may do our Country better Service here and it is the duty of a good soldier to obey orders and not Complain."[35]

Confederate fathers often found themselves paying greater attention to their families during the war. As the conflict stretched the physical, economic, and emotional limits of its individual participants, soldier-fathers repeatedly reassured their wives of the importance of their service (reminding them of the reason for their absence from the home) while also having to maintain the emotional stability of their children by giving them false promises of their own safety and protection. Though historians of gender have made great strides to uncover the seemingly limitless efforts of mothers to maintain the stability of their families during the war, fathers too bore the burden of providing familial stability, though on a far lesser and more indirect level than that of their wives. Historian Amy Murrell Taylor notes that "Mid-nineteenth century Americans idealized the family as the foundation of social and national stability." Even though the war stretched and strained the bonds of family, "it was not supposed to give in so easily to the weight of adversity." The bonds of emotional intensity so prevalent in the familial circle also extended beyond the nuclear family to include the nation-state, as if it were also a family.[36]

35. R.E. Corry to Eliza, Camp Near Okalona, November 25, 1863, Robert Emmett Corry Letters, AU.

36. Amy Murrell Taylor, *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 4.

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Unlike most of their single comrades, soldier-fathers' were saddled with the responsibility of continuing to lead, provide for, and care for their families from vast distances. It is impossible to know if the greater geographic distances between fathers and their children intensified their feelings or if it was the suffering that soldiers underwent in their service. Most likely, it was both. Separation became a lens that helped fathers focus more completely on their progeny," according to historian James Marten, "inspiring them to extend advice and counsel—as well as love and humor—to their youngsters behind the lines. The affection that leaps out of their letters to their children transcends Victorian rhetoric and indicates how important to their self-image were their roles as fathers."[37] What is known is that Confederate fathers desperately longed for contact with their wives and children during the war and they held little compunction about the propriety of expressing these longings. In a letter to his wife and children, Private Daniel Murphy of the 1st North Carolina Infantry complained that "you say you a great of trouble and I expect you do but cant See the trouble that I do you can see your children and friends but I am draged away from you and my dear babes in to a land of Stranger and heathens where there is any thing but peace or comfort."[38]

"I have bin looking for a letter from you som time though haven't receive it yet," Private George A. Williams of the 7th North Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote to his children in June 1864, "and I i want you to write as soon as this comes to hand and give me all the neuse I want to know how you all ar getting on Dick is well and hearty tell Mrs Martha Trice to write to me and

37. Ibid., 98-99.

38. Daniel W. Murphy to Wife and Children, Fort French Near Wilmington, NC, August 8, 1863, Daniel W. Murphy Papers, Duke.

let me know how the children is getting on."[39] Even as the Confederate mail system fell into disrepair and paper and ink became more difficult to procure, fathers were hungry to know that their families were safe and experiencing some modicum of stability. Moreover, they wanted to know that they were not forgotten by their families, often wondering if their children had somehow forgotten them. This fear was not wholly irrational as many soldiers had marched off to war with children who were too young to even remember their fathers. As the war progressed and the number furloughs waned with the Confederacy's fortunes, the opportunity for fathers to imprint themselves by their physical presence upon the minds of their children decreased as well. Writing directly to his children in March 1864, Private Franklin Setzer of the 1st North Carolina Cavalry wrote "a few lines to you children i want you to do all you can and make all the corn and watermelons you can tel i get home i would be glad to see you all but i dont no when that will bee so i must close by saying dont forget me."[40] In a letter to his wife in November 1863, Eliza, R.E. Corry similarly wrote "Don't let my sweet little girls forget me and tell them a great many things to make them love me." [41] Sometimes, soldiers attempted to buy their way into their children's affections by sending home souvenirs and presents, many of which were scavenged from the battlefields upon which they had just fought.[42]

Confederate mothers also worried that their husbands would either forget their children or feel little connection to them because of the geographic distance and the lack of physical presence. In response to his wife's worry that he would forget their child, Private Asa T. Martin of the 12th Alabama wrote to her in January 1862 that, "I want to sea you and the children very

39. George A. Williams to his children, Line of Battle Naer Malrins, June 17, 1864, Williams-Womble Papers, NCDAH.

40. Franklin Setzer to Wife and Children, Camp Vance, Burke County, NC, March 2, 1864, Franklin A. Setzer Correspondence, UVA.

41. R.E. Corry to wife, Camp Near Okalona, November 25, 1863, Robert Emmett Corry Letters, AU.

42. Marten, *Children's Civil War*, 79.

bad you wantid to know of me if I ever thought much a bout the baby or not I dont know what made you amagon that I never thought much a bout her I want to sea her as well as I dwo eney body I want you to send me a loc of her hair if it is loing a nought I want som of williams and sises hair and a brade of your hair."[43] Often, wives attempted to stem their husband's fears by reminding them that their children had not forgotten them or telling them that their children had mentioned their name. These mothers also took it upon themselves to help their children to get to know their fathers by telling them past stories that illustrated their father's character and life.[44]

The impact of the war on parent-child relationships followed a similar course to that of husbands and wives, though they may have differed in their intensity. The only contact between father and child was often a hastily written letter or a few words scrawled on a page. Yet with each passing year, as the prospects of permanent separation through death grew in imminence, Confederate fathers fell into states of emotional apoplexy waiting for news of their families. The receipt of positive news of their families often provided soldier-fathers with a sense of security and strength which enabled them to continue fighting.[45] Lieutenant Colonel Charles A. Derby of the 44th Alabama Infantry Regiment, for example, wrote to his sister Mrs. Mary E. Stancell in July 1862, "Our Regiment have now a little breathing time. I have been thinking much of my poor wife and children. I have not heard from them since I left them…If I could hear from my family, I would be satisfied."[46]

Yet if Confederate fathers found the separation their families so emotionally taxing, then why did they march off to war in the first place? The answer is bound together with traditional

43. Asa T. Martin to Mary, Manassas Junction Virginia, January 13, 1862, Asa T. Martin Papers, AU.
44. Marten, *Children's Civil War*, 77.
45. Ibid., 2.
46. Charles A. Derby to Mary E. Stancell, Camp Near Falling Creek, July 15, 1862, Charles A. Derby Papers, VMI.

ideological and socio-cultural explanations for soldier motivations. As noted earlier, soldier-fathers saw their military service as an extension of the masculine role that they had always played as protectors of their families' honor, health, security, freedom, religion, emotional health, culture, and economic wealth. Through their military service and sacrifice, they could protect their families from what they saw as the invasion of a foreign foe while also providing for their families through their monthly pay—whenever the Confederacy could afford to pay them. At the same time, they could also continue to act in the fatherly role of providing direction and counsel for their families through their letters and maintain some semblance of their former roles. Through these letters, fathers often sought to model for their children what it meant to "be a man" through displays of tenderness and violence in their letters—the ability to be soft in some areas and harder in others, to nurture and yet kill, to build up and yet destroy. This paradeox was the product of the soldier's pragmatism as well as the emotional push and pull of Victorian ideals of masculine aggression towards external threats and the internal emphasis on fatherly nurturing. "The result was a new masculinity," historian Aaron Sheehan-Dean noted, "one that required both affection and hostility, the former directed toward one's family and the latter directed toward its enemies."[47]

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Throughout their time in service, fathers wrote letters either directly to their children or, more often, to their wives with asides or parentheses concerning their children. These letters unlock the door to understanding how soldier-fathers related to their children and the influence that these relationships had on their own willingness to fight. Roger W. Little, an expert on modern armies, explained the importance of this communication, writing that "Letters represent

47. Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 193.

the soldier's major contact with the social unit that reinforces his desire to serve faithfully and under great hardship. The conception of his role as a citizen of a community or member of a family was enhanced by the letters written him by persons whose evaluations of him were very important."[48] In other words, what his family thought of him was extremely important to a soldier's morale and letters were the mode by which these thoughts were exchanged.

Historian James Marten—the foremost expert on paternal relationships in the American Civil War—provided for three broad conceptions of fatherhood in his study of soldier's letters. First, letters displayed fathers' interest in their children's everyday lives. This included events that might have banal at home yet took on a new significance when families were apart. Behind the act of asking about their children's daily lives was a hope of being invited into their child's daily existence—the way that it would have been at home. Historian Bell Irvin Wiley noted this same pattern, writing that:

> If he was a father writing to his wife, he wanted to hear about his children: what they talked about, what new accomplishments they had achieved, or new tricks they had learned; whether they were obedient; if they were faithful in the performance of chores; how rapidly they were growing; did they show any increasing resemblance to their mother or father; what smart sayings had they uttered; were they making satisfactory progress at school; and did they recall their dad.[49]

The lack of news could sometimes drive soldiers to the brink of insanity, a feeling of helplessness exacerbated by the fact that soldier-fathers were not able to be directly involved in the daily lives and social maturity of their children. In February 1863, Private Benjamin Mason of the 60th Alabama wrote to his wife "I have waited as long as I have patience to wait for a letter I have written four times since I have recd a letter from you and have no patience to wait any longer I want to see you and the children worse than I ever did in my life and if I cant see you I

48. Little, "Buddy Relations and Combat Performance," 219.
49. Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 207-208.

must hear from you oftener than I do (so you see if you dont write I will just get me a wife that will) there is plenty of girls in this country and them that is pretty and want to marry too."[50]

Fathers were emotionally torn. On the one hand, they understood that their place was on the front lines, defending the honor of their nation and their families. On the other hand, they were expected to take part in the development of their children's behavior and moral standing in the community by modeling proper behavior. This was problematic since they were absent from their families. This tension only exacerbated their longing to see their families and to fulfill their masculine expectation of raising their children to become honorable. Private John W. Cotton of Hilliard's Legion, Alabama Volunteers, for example, wrote to his wife in May 1862, "I would bee glad to see little ginny and give her a kiss and see the rest of the children frolic around and play on my lap and see babe suck his thum if it had not have bee the love I have for them and my country I would have been ther now."[51] To his daughter, Lieutenant W.V. Fleming of the 3rd Battalion Alabama Infantry Reserves wrote that "I have written home four time and have not heard one word from home Daughter I want you to write to me Every week as long as you can git paper and ink I never was as anxious to hear from home in my life give my respects to your granney & Grancer tel them I want to see them all tel son ny must learn to write So he can write me a letter."[52]

The feelings of fatherly affection and love for their children weighed heavily upon fathers who longed for home while also being impelled by that love to continue their struggle to protect the Confederacy and, in their eyes, their children's futures. In the moments before he marched into battle, Private Liberty Independence Nixon of the 50th Alabama Infantry Regiment,

50. Benjamin Mason to "Dear Wife," Bristol, TN February 10, 1863, Benjamin Mason Letters, AU.
51. Cotton to wife, Montgomery County Alabama, May 5, 1862 in *Yours Till Death,* 4.
52. William V. Fleming to Mary Susan Fleming, Camp Near Blakely, September 14, 1864, W.V. Fleming Correspondence, ADAH.

pondered the possibility of his impending demise, whether or not he was truly a Christian, and whether he was ready to take the life of another, recalling that in that moment, "the thought of my little children would rush to my mind then the burden of my heart would be spared my life O Lord for my little children's sake. But not my will but thine be done."[53] Nixon marched into battle and survived another day.

Finally, Marten noted that there was an insistence on the part of soldier- fathers to continue fulfilling their duty as the guiding hand of instruction for their children in growing into honorable adulthood. Much as they had before the war, they sought to project their authority and their love on their children, though now in the form of the written word. By doing so, Confederate fathers remained "fathers" in function as well as in name. They existed within the stark tension between their place as husbands and fathers, as well as defenders of the nation, their own and their family's honor, and their children's futures. They did not do this alone, however, but only through the support of their wives and children which provided a symbiotic relationship of encouragement and mutual aid.[54]

Yet if children were so important to their soldier-fathers, then why was most communication between themselves and their children simple asides in letters to their wives? Furthermore, why didn't these soldiers write more often directly to their children rather than asking their wives about their progeny's status? First, paper and ink were in extremely short supply, particularly as the war progressed and the Union blockade tightened. Most letters from married Confederate soldiers were directed to their wives—a fact demonstrative of the primacy of the romantic relationship in a soldier's life. Secondly, mothers were considered the locus of family life and as such they were the gatekeepers of the family. Their primary role was to nurture

53. Liberty Independence Nixon Diary, April 3 1862 entry, Liberty Independence Nixon Papers, AU.
54. Marten, *Children's Civil War*, 70.

the family while husband's primary role was linking the family to the broader community. It is thus no surprise that these men felt the compunction to write more often to their wives on the status of the family. Finally, many of these soldiers had the misfortune of either having children who had either been very young or had been born after a soldier enlisted and knew little of their fathers and vice versa.

This is not to say that Confederate fathers did not exhibit any direct tenderness towards their children. According to Marten, "The overwhelming loneliness and longing of fathers and children, heartbreaking as it was, revealed the contours of the relationships between nineteenth-century children and fathers in ways that may not have been as clear if the war had not intervened."[55] As demonstrated in earlier missives to their wives, soldiers were not as bashful as historians have assumed when it came to displaying their emotions, particularly with their children. Marten goes on to note that "the separation and anxiety generated by the war no doubt amplified soldiers' commitment to and affection for their children" and that "The affection that leaps out of their letters to their children transcends Victorian rhetoric and indicates how important to their self-images were their roles as fathers."[56]

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This demonstrative affection runs contrary to the idea that soldiers became emotionally detached from their comrades and their families. For this study, the detached sentiment of many soldiers was found most often in their resuscitation of the tedious banalities of daily life in camp or drill. When it came to descriptions of battle or questions about the stability of their families back home, soldiers' communiques most often mirrored the sentiments of Private Willis S. Jones of the 26th North Carolina who wrote to a friend:

55. Ibid., 70.
56. Ibid., 98-99.

> Just staying out here to fight Just for the fun of the thing if that is the case I can say for myself that I never have seen any fun in it but to the reverse for God knows that I saw enough at Gettyesburg to make any man shed tears hundred being wounded some dying other bleding to death other crying and saying oh cant you do something for me or I shall die.. I shall have to stop saying any more about that bloody field for the thought of it allmost makes me shed teares.[57]

In a letter to his wife, Captain Frank M. Parker of the 30th North Carolina wrote after recounting the death of his men during the Battle of Gaines Mill, "What can make people go to war? To witness the destruction of life on the battlefield is enough to put a stop to all such arguments in the future. I mean such arguments as war."[58] One of the most frightening aspects of war was the uncertainty with which soldiers faced the prospect of their deaths. They never knew when the next bullet, piece of shrapnel, or contagion would come for them and for the most part, they powerless to prevent it. Soldier-fathers not only had to struggle to protect their families, but they also had to reconcile themselves to the prospect of their own death at any moment. The question ate at many of them: who would care for their families when they were gone? Writing after battle, Private Henry W. Robinson of the 42nd Georgia Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife that "you doant no what kind of afeeling it put on me to See men Shot down like hoges & See aman tore all to peases with a Shell after he is dead." In an emotionally vulnerable state while reflecting on his own mortality, Robinson finished his letter on a rather somber note, writing that "I must close & it may be the last time if it is live up Rite & onerbel til [tell] all the children howdy & kiss them for me."[59]

In his study of the 154th New York Infantry Regiment, historian Mark Dunkelman found that "Uncertainty—endemic in the army—plagued the men. They were helplessly afflicted by a

57. Willis L. Jones to Richard B. Paschal, Camp 26th NC Troops Orange C House, August 14, 1863, Civil War Collection, NCDAH.

58. Francis M. Parker to Wife, Near James River July 3, 1862, Francis M. Parker Papers, NCDAH.

59. Henry W. Robinson to Elizabeth Robinson, Vicksburg, MS, January 2, 1863, Henry W. Robinson Letters, EU.

typically military myopia…If active campaigning put them incommunicado, they had no idea of current events at home or in the nation at large…The unrelenting passage of time induced war weariness in the soldiers."[60] Confederates were no less affected. While his unit was exposed to intense bombardment at Spotsylvania Courthouse, Virginia in 1864, Sergeant Isaac Lefevers of the 46th North Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote a letter to his wife. In the uneasy silence between bombardments, Lefevers ruminated on his own mortality the prospect of never seeing his family again. Yet because of his love for his family, the act of writing and the prospect of a response gave him strength. "I tel you my Dear wife nothing gives me so much pleasure as when I can hear from you and Rite to you," he wrote, "my Dear wife I could not tel you how glad I would be to See you and the Dear little childrean this morning I most tel you that I Dremp of seeing the Sweat little babe last night and how glad would I abin If it had bin sow but I stil trust and pray to the good lord that I may See you all before long." What is striking is that even after years of service marked by uncertainty, Lefevers never seems to have lost his compassion or humanity. After surviving the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse, he looked over the battlefield where he saw "lots of Dead bodes Burnt in to a crips and I have no Eyedea but what some of the wonded was burnt of both sides but the most that I saw was of the enemy." "I saw one man that was burnt that had the picture I suppose of his little Daughter in his pocket," he wrote, "it was all burnt only the glass it loocked to be the Sise of Ida a very sick little girl I neaver saw enny thing that made me feel more sorrow."[61] Lefevers saw in this unfortunate Union soldier a father much like himself who also longed to return to his children. Their status as soldier-fathers allowed Lefevers to see his former enemy as a human being who felt the same painful longings that he

60. Mark H. Dunkelman, *Brothers One and All: Esprit e Corps in a Civil War Regiment* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 110-111.

61. Isaac Lefevers to Catherine Lefevers, Spotsylvania Courthouse, VA, May 20, 1864, Isaac Lefevers Papers, NCDAH.

himself had experienced throughout the war. Lefevers was far from the only soldier-father who saw much of himself in the enemy.

Most likely, Lefevers saw in his vanquished foe the possibility of his own future. This prospect permeated the minds of soldiers and often exaggerated their feelings of affection for their wives and children—particularly their sons. In his study of Northern soldiers, historian Stephen Frank likewise argued that "In particular, war as a masculine endeavor may have accentuated—and exaggerated—whatever bonds existed between fathers and sons." Frank also found that "The father-son relationship emerged most prominently in these letters at five moments in soldiers' lives: the time of enlistment; the time of blooding or baptism by fire; the time of resignation and mustering out; the time of wounding; and the time of death."[62]

Likewise, in his study of Virginians, historian Aaron Sheehan-Dean argued that concern for their families' safety and survival in the wake of repeated invasions by Union soldiers drove men to focus their emotional attention on their loved ones back home. In a sense, they "worked" on providing emotional attention by writing repeated letters to their loved ones. "All of this emotional work," Sheehan-Dean argues, "helped stabilize soldiers amid the uncertainty and violence of the war and served as a crucial counterpart to the institution building soldiers performed at the same time."[63] Soldiers also sought the help of their families through their access to the Divine. In December 1864, Private Francis Marion Poteet of the 39th North Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife and children that "If I cant git to see you I want you to still pray for me and all the balans of the soldiers and tell all of my friends to pray for me and to pray to god to spare my life to live to git home to raise my littel Children I have agrait desire to see

62. Frank, "Rendering Aid and Comfort," 24, 8.
63. Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 60.

you all one more."[64] The prospect of returning home was something which Poteet recognized was outside of his own personal control, choosing instead to entreat family to beseech the Almighty for his safe return. The prospect of returning home gave renewed meaning to Poteet's survival.

The emotional impact of this physical separation was felt by every member of a family. Although soldiers' wives wrote extensively of their anxiety over the prospect of losing their husbands, their feelings of isolation and loneliness, and their growing weariness of a war which required great sacrifice with no end in sight, their anxiety and exhaustion could at times lead to emotional detachment from their children. Though this likely rarely happened, it nonetheless represents an important facet of the psychological development of children during the war. Already struggling from the emotional pain of an absent father, children's emotional health now mostly depended upon the ability of the mother to manage her anxiety and personal emotions to protect her children's health and happiness. Women were particularly burdened by the need to put their children before themselves in a way that soldier-fathers did not often understand.[65]

The immense toll that the war took upon soldiers' wives is evident in many of their letters, particularly as the war progressed. When Kezia Stradley received a letter from her husband, Private Roland C. Osborne of the 25th North Carolina Infantry Regiment, her insecurity at the perceived lack of concern from his dearth of writing overwhelmed her. "I felt like there was something wrong when I saw so much blank paper, and as I read it down tears gathered thick and fast in my eyes but I forced them back until I went to my bed by my self where I lay for hours studying and crying." In her mind, the blankness of the page provided a visual

64. Francis Marion Poteet to Martha Hendley Poteet, Petersburg VA, December 31, 1864, Poteet-Dickson Letters, NCDAH.

65. Marten, *Children's Civil War*, 111-12.

reminder of what she perceived as the growing chasm between herself and her husband as a result of the strain brought on their marriage by the war. Kezia further worried that by communicating her own despair and the feeling that her emotional needs were not being met, her words may have only added to her husband's distress and their marital turmoil. "I am only sorry that I did not bear all with out complaining; can you forgive me for distressing you with my little troubles," she wrote, "If I were never to see to you again I never would forgive my self for giving you so much pain…I know you have troubles enough of your own and I would rather try to lighten them than to add to them so I try to bear all in silence."[66] Kezia's selfless concern for her husband's well-being represented societal expectations that a woman would subsume her own self-desire for the betterment of her family. At the same time, the fact that she had previously been so honest with her husband of her insecurities, fears, and disappointments are indicative of her feeling overwhelmed by the heavy burden of caring for her family's emotional and physical needs at the expense of her own. Kezia may have wanted to "lighten" her husband's burdens but in her complaints, she made it clear that she also longed for him to help carry her own.

Sometimes, even from a distance, fathers could step in and provide emotional support for their children when mothers found themselves too overwhelmed. The number of women who were emotionally unable to properly care for their children will never be known beyond scant anecdotal evidence. For the sake of their family's health, mothers and fathers *had* to be regularly involved in the emotional development of their children for them become healthy individuals. For fathers, this was particularly difficult considering the vast geographic expanse between themselves and their children. One review of longitudinal studies of fathers' involvement with

66. Kezia Stradley Osborne to Roland C. Osborne, Asheville NC, March 16, 1862, Roland C. Osborne and Kezia Stradley Osborne Civil War Letters, WCU.

child development found that "*cohabitation* with the mother and her male partner is associated with less externalizing behavioral problems" and that "active and regular *engagement* with the child predicts a range of positive outcomes, although no specific form of engagement has been shown to yield better outcomes than another. Father engagement seems to have differential effects on desirable outcomes by reducing the frequency of behavioral problems in boys and psychological problems in young women and enhancing cognitive development."[67] Letters and the occasional furlough were the only methods by which soldier-fathers could engage with their children.

Much as the loss of a father could hinder the healthy development of a child, the loss of a mother could also hinder a child's healthy growth. Though civilians may have been spared the images of charred bodies, the crack and whiz of bullets, or the acrid smoke of the din of battle, they too felt the uncertainty surrounding their future and that of their families. The specter of disease and financial collapse elicited feelings of helplessness which their soldier-husbands knew all too well. That the war elicited similar feelings along the battlefront and the home front bound husband and wives together as they could identify with each other's fears and in each other, find mutual support in the wake of their shared suffering. In letter to his wife Eleanor in May 1864, Private Silas Stepp of the 6th North Carolina Cavalry wrote:

> I tel you my dear you dont now how bad i want to see you and the children itel you it is hard for aman to bea drag away from his family i wood give any thing i have got to get home and stay with you the rest of my days… iam sorry to here the wimmen and children is Suffering for bread tel mee if you have got enough and how your truck look i am sow oneasy about you i can see now peace here that is any satis faction to mee i often think of old times that wee have had to gether i wood bea glad if i was there to day.[68]

67. Anna Sarkadi et al., "Fathers' Involvement and Children's Developmental Outcomes: A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies," *Acta Pediatrica* 97 (February 2008): 153.

68. Silas Stepp to Eleanor Stepp, May 29, 1864. Silas H. Stepp Civil War Letters, UNCA.

Contrary to popular belief, wives, children, and parents were not passive participants in the war. The support of wives and children emotionally sustained soldier-fathers throughout the war, enabling their continued service along the battlefront. Yet children also participated in the war through direct means by imbibing the images and stories of war through newspapers, books, word of mouth, and letters from their fathers. Adults invited and encouraged children to do their part by mirroring the sacrifice, loss, and patriotism exhibited by their father's military service.[69] In effect they "served" alongside their fathers by being indoctrinated through educational programs and parental influence. In this regard, they came to see their fathers' service as a necessary evil for the protection of their family and nation. By the spring of 1861, many schools throughout the South were shuttered as older students and teachers enlisted in the Confederate army. Those in the field of education who remained were expected to support the war effort by publishing materials favorable to the Confederate cause and which couched military service in terms of honorable sacrifice. While promoting romantic visions of conquering Yankee foes through martial spirit and indomitable courage, textbook writers were also expected to downplay the ethics and martial spirit of Union soldiers and civilians.[70] An 1863 textbook called *The Geographical Reader for the Dixie Children,* explained the war this way:

> In the year 1860 the Abolitionists became strong enough to elect one of their men for President. Abraham Lincoln was a weak man, and the South believed he would allow laws to be made, which would deprive them of their rights. So the Southern States seceded, and elected Jefferson Davis for their president. This so enraged President Lincoln that he declared war, and has exhausted nearly all the strength of the nation, in a vain attempt to whip the South back into the Union. Thousands of lives have been lost, and the earth has been drenched with blood; but still Abraham is unable to conquer the "Rebels" as he calls the South. The South only asked to be let alone, and to divide the public property equally. It would have been wise in the North to have said to her

69. Marten, *Children's Civil War*, 50-52.
70. Werner, *Reluctant Witnesses*, 53-54.

> Southern sisters, "If you are not content to dwell with us longer, depart in peace. We will divide the inheritance with you, and may you be a great nation.[71]

According to James Marten, “together with children’s books and stories and their correspondence with fathers and brothers in the armies of the competing nations, these formative episodes politicized children and pointed them toward a wide range of responses to the Civil War” which helped them “identify good and evil, Yankee and Rebel, and the right and wrong ways to act.”[72] Though soldier-fathers and their wives both suffered from material deprivation, the looming specter of death, and the emotional pain of their physical distance, fathers could take comfort in the fact that in their absence, the South’s educational system would step in and provide some modicum of moral development which they found favorable and which had previously been the father’s purview in times of peace.

Indeed, the unfairness of war seemed to fall evenly upon all members of a soldier’s family and all members came to depend upon each other for emotional and physical support. Each family member was forced into new roles which required mutual support and encouragement in order accomplish these new tasks. In their father’s absence, sons had to “grow up” quickly and assume responsibilities that were once the domain of their much older and much more experienced fathers or older brothers. Likewise, wives and children assumed new roles in advancing or at the very least sustaining the family’s economic future in order to survive. No matter the level of physical, emotional, or psychological deprivation, soldiers and their families struggled to endure the war as their love for each, and their hope of once again being reunited, gave meaning to their survival.

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71. Marinda Branson Moore, *The Geographical Reader for the Dixie Children,* (Raleigh, NC: Branson, Farrar, 1863), 13-14.

72. Marten, *Children’s Civil War*, 147-49.

Soldiers were not tone deaf to the dire struggle of their wives, children, and families along the home front. John T. Scott of the 45th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his sweetheart in 1863 that:

> The old year has passed away, a new one has dawned and this horrible war still rages. When will it cease…I fear more gloomy than ever I have felt in regard to our future, I can see nothing ahead by submission, subjugation, annihilation, and a giving up of everything honorable. Could we expect more than this? could we expect that God would prosper us in our cause when our people have thrown aside everything and turned their attention to speculation. It is no wonder that the poor soldiers have become dispirited, when every letter reaches them from the loved ones at home bring the unpleasant tidings that the children cry for bread and the rich lend them no assistance. It is not to be wondered at that God has not favored us when in the short space of three years our people have become bankrupt in morals, bankrupt in religion and bankrupt in everything that should elevate us as a nation. I am tired of war and war news. though really in our part of the country we see or hear of nothing else.[73]

The constant barrage of news of the war and of the economic and material deprivation of the home front ignited a level of emotional effusion rarely seen on such a broad scale during times of peace. "Charged with fear, amplified by patriotism, and haunted by economic hardships and danger, the letters exchanged by Civil War fathers, mothers, and children," Marten noted, "reveal deeply felt notions of familial affection and responsibility."[74] Though family members were expected to take care of each other at all times, the lengths to which the war would force them to go was something which relatively few could have foreseen when the prospect of war seemed so distant only a few years before.

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While children most certainly felt the pangs of separation from their fathers, the physical and emotional separation from their children created a deep sense of pain, frustration, and guilt in the hearts and minds of many southern fathers. Many sought solace in staying busy or by

73. John T. Scott to Miss Philo, Camp Near Tunel Hill, January 4, 1863, John T. Scott Letters, AU.
74. Marten, *Children's Civil War*, 69-70.

investing more in their relationships with their comrades. Most would find little comfort, however. In their waking hours, the thoughts of home and the fear of never seeing their families again could be overwhelming to soldiers. Even in the unconsciousness of sleep, these fears still stalked them. “We was allowed to lie down & sleep if we could som slep soundly I did not sleep much my mind being on my Dear Wife & little wons at home, I dream of them often of being with them, you do not draw any ida how I feal being compeld to stay from them,” Private Isham Simms Upchurch of the 16th North Carolina Infantry Regiment wrote to his brother, “5.00 chances to 1 wether I ever shall see them a gain on earth if I do not I feal that I shall meet them in heaven.”[75] “Dreams often revealed soldiers’ anxieties,” historian Jonathan W. White wrote, “Home was the most common dream theme for soldiers both North and South.”[76] Even worse, many soldiers dreamed such vivid dreams of their children that believed that they were physically close to them and had somehow become free of the war. That is, until they awoke to find that it was all a cruel illusion.[77]

One of the greatest uncertainties endemic to a soldier’s life was that of the safety of their children. On average, mothers in the early nineteenth century gave birth to an average of seven children. In 1850, the average life expectancy was 39.5 for whites and the infant mortality rate was 216.8 deaths per 1,000 births annually (or 21.68 percent). By 1860, life expectancy rose to 43.6 years with 181.3 deaths per 1,000 births annually (18.13 percent).[78] “Before 1850, infant deaths were commonly accepted as a part of everyday life, a reflection of the natural order in which the strong outlived the weak,” Developmental Psychologist Jeffrey P. Brosco wrote, “In

75. Isham Simms Upchurch to Brother, Camp Gregg, June 1, 1863, Isham Upchurch Papers, Duke.
76. White, “In Their Heads,” 28.
77. Marten, *Children’s Civil War*, 69.
78. Michael R. Haines, “The White Population of the United States, 1790-1920,” in *A Population History of North America*, ed. Michael R. Haines and Richard H. Steckel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 308.

the latter half of the century, however, families began to value children as more than an economic resource, and infant deaths no longer seemed acceptable."[79] This process may have begun long before 1850, however. In his study of childhood death in the Old South, historian Craig Thompson Friend found that the assertion of scholars that Victorian parents were somehow resigned to the death of their children or, at the very least, were expected to restrain themselves emotionally was false. Instead, he found that the loss of a child "elicited a great range of emotional responses from parents" which included grieving "deeply over deceased children, expressing guilt, confusion, and frustration at their helplessness." He also found that these same parents were not "hesitant to express anger with or openly question God's will."[80]

Although Victorian ideals of masculinity dictated that men were supposed to suppress their emotions for fear that it would risk their image of control, the war brought about such emotional distress and physical destruction that men did not seem to care that they were displaying their emotion—particularly when they experienced the loss of a child. There may have been fewer *public* displays of emotion on the part of fathers, but this does not mean that they either did not mourn or somehow mourned less than mothers. Rather, they mourned in more private ways with the few individuals who they trusted with their feelings. "Given the opportunity to express themselves in private diaries," Craig Thompson Friend wrote, "men were often more tender and as grief-stricken as their wives."[81] When one considers how tender soldier-fathers' feelings were towards their children while they were alive, Friend's assertion

79. Jeffrey P. Brosco, "The Early History of the Infant Mortality Rate in America: 'A Reflection Upon the Past and a Prophecy of the Future'," *Pediatrics* 103, no. 2, (February 1999). *Gale General OneFile* (accessed February 14, 2020) <https://link-gale-com.spot.lib.auburn.edu/apps/doc/A53877078/ITOF?u=avl_auburnu&sid=ITOF&xid=84283be3>.

80. Craig Thompson Friend, "Little Eva's Last Breath: Childhood Death and Parental Mourning in 'Our Family, White and Black,' in Craig Thompson Friend and Anya Jabour, *Family Values in the Old South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 62-64.

81. Ibid., 74-75.

seems both logical and reasonable. While recovering in a Richmond hospital for "infmmation of the bowles," Private Jesse H. Everett of the 11th Georgia Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife Patience, "my darling if i only cold tell you had bad i want to see you an my dear little children i no that you would bee Sorry for me tears dims my eyes so i can hardley write," before ending his letter with a request to "pleas write Soon an Send me Som of the babes hair."[82]

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War itself fundamentally upsets everything that provides a sense of stability and security in an individual's life. One way that soldier-fathers sought to recover their emotional equilibrium was by communicating their legacy to their children. Confederate fathers instilled in their children values which they believed would guide their children throughout their adult lives and help bring honor upon their families.[83] Private George A. Williams of the 7th North Carolina Infantry Regiment reflected this impulse in a letter to his children, directing them "to be Smart and all ways have respect for olde peples dont gave them any provication of corsecting you I want you to be smart and take good advise from a friend who is capable of advising you."[84] Fathers became wells of paternal advice under which often simmered an aching sense of powerlessness at not being able to impart these values in person. Facing the daily uncertainty of their own mortality, they also feared that if they did not communicate these life lessons to their children now, they may never have the opportunity and thus would leave no legacy of their own for their beloved progeny.

In his own study of Confederate fathers, Marten noted that they "believed in a higher duty to guide and counsel their offspring and siblings. Some perceived the heightened emotions

82. JH Everett to Patience Everett, Manassas Junction, VA, October 26, 1861, John A. Everett Papers, EU.
83. Marten, *Children's Civil War*, 71.
84. George A. Williams to children, Line of Battle Near Malrins, June11, 1854, Williams-Womble Papers, Private Collections, NCDAH.

and urgency sparked by the war as a unique opportunity for getting their children's attention and teaching them a lesson."[85] Private William T. Presley of the 1st Alabama Cavalry reflected this sentiment by writing to his wife,

> If I could only see you and them Dear little Babies I would be Proud but there is no telling when I will see you…try to improve the Children all you can in Education and in manners and tell them to be Smart Boys So that Papa can brag on them when he comes home Kiss them over and again for me tell them papa will come home some time to see them and Stay at home with them to go to the wars no more.[86]

Similarly, at a critical junction in his daughter's life in which she had entered her teenage years "and are fast passing from child hood to woman hood," Private Benjamin Mason of the 60th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to her that "I hope my daughter that as you grow in age and size that you will try to improve in wisdom and prudence that you may be a sorce of pleasure and comfort to your friends and usefulness to your self do all you can to help your Ma to take care of your little brothers and sisters."[87] Mason was trying to fulfill his masculine duty to encourage his daughter to become a woman of virtue and to guide her into her adult years. The lack of his physical presence, however, may have made Mason feel as if his words did not carry the same potency as if he were present with his daughter. Nonetheless, he would try to father her through the written word—the best that he could do considering the circumstances.[88]

In the absence of physical touch, these letters became the only physical link between children and their fathers. While letters written to children from fathers far exceeded the number of letters written by children to their fathers in this sample, children who did communicate with their fathers did so mainly by dictating their thoughts to their mothers who recorded them in their

85. Marten, *Children's Civil War*, 87.
86. William T. Presley to Henrie, Gate City Hospital Atlanta, October 22, 1862, William T. Presley Papers, AU.
87. Benjamin Mason to "Darling Daughter," January 28, 1863, Benjamin Mason Letters, AU.
88. Marten, *Children's Civil War*, 87-89.

regular correspondence with their husbands. Recognizing the mother's primacy over the family as well as the greater importance placed on the marital union, fathers often responded to their children through their wives. Private Armistead L. Galloway of the 34th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote to his wife, "my Dear tell cole to right to me how he is getting a long tell them all to right to me I wold wright to them all if I cold but all the time I hav I must giv it to you Eliza."[89]

Soldiers-fathers often found themselves particularly tender toward other children that they came across in their military service. One of the most famous examples of this tenderness was that exhibited by Major General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. Married and with one daughter, Jackson had seen little of his family by the winter of 1862. In the gloomy gray of a Virginia winter, Jackson struck up an affectionate friendship with six-year old Jane Corbin, who lived near his winter quarters. Corbin and Jackson were inseparable. Known for his odd behavior and particularly stern opinions, in the young girl's presence Jackson exhibited "a degree of joy and lightness that not only surprised, but astonished observers who thought they knew Jackson well."[90] Historian W.G. Bean explains this behavior by adding that, "Doubtless, his love for his newly-born daughter, whom he had not yet seen, overflowed to little Jane Corbin." When the young girl passed away unexpectedly from Scarlet Fever, upon receiving the news, the normally stoic Jackson broke down in tears.[91] Soldiers less famous than Stonewall Jackson often relished the presence of children, particularly as the war stretched on as the prospect of a bright future with their families seemed to dim. When the children of strangers or comrades entered camps,

89. A.L. Galloway to Eliza, July 1, 1862, Armistead L. Galloway Letters, AU.

90. Ethan S. Rafuse, *Stonewall Jackson: A Biography* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing, 2011), 152.

91. W.G. Bean, *Stonewall's Man: Sandie Pendleton* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 108-109.

soldiers often abandoned themselves to child's play.[92] The presence of children provided some relief from the stress and tedium of military service.

Though the presence of children often provided a soothing and even joy-inducing effect upon soldiers, war could destroy the innocence of these moments. The fact that children and soldiers found stability in the warmth of each other's connection to the other made the severing of that bond markedly more traumatic. During the siege of Vicksburg, local resident Mary Loughborough's two-year old daughter befriended a young Confederate soldier named Henry who showered the little girl with flowers, apples, and even pets. Loughborough's daughter awoke one morning to see Henry perched upon his horse and riding towards a body of water in the distance. "O mamma, look at Henry's horse, how he plays!" she exclaimed to her mother. As Henry and his horse moved closer to the home, the Loughborough's saw a black cylindrical object in his hand. Not long after, the piece of ordnance exploded, tearing off Henry's hand at the wrist and lodging a piece of shrapnel in his head. As the Loughborough's watched helplessly, Henry cried out for his comrades "Where are you, boys? O boys, where are you? Oh, I am hurt! I am hurt! Boys, come to me!—come to me! God have mercy! Almighty God, have mercy!" Meanwhile, the young girl clung to her mother's dress, screaming "O mamma, poor Henry's killed! Now he'll die, mamma. Oh, poor Henry!" before she was carried away, never to see Henry again.[93]

Since World War II, extensive studies by mental health professionals of war's effect on children has found that those who came into direct contact with the sights, sounds, and smells of combat exhibited symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which mirrored those of soldiers

92. Marten, *Children's Civil War*, 74-75.

93. Mary Ann Loughborough, *My Cave Life in Vicksburg: With Letters of Trial and Travel* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1864), 128-31.

on the frontline. These symptoms include intrusive memories of the traumatic events, nightmares, and hypersensitivity to the sights, smells, and sounds that remind them of their wartime experiences. Depending on their level of exposure to violence, their capacity to cope with it, as well as their age, gender, temperament, and level of social support from friends and families, researchers have discovered that children can endure trauma to a certain extent without it totally destroying their lives. Beyond their direct exposure to the war, children also experienced the trauma of being separated from their fathers, which psychologist Emmy E. Werner argues was "often more distressing than the violence that surrounds them." Children, like their adult counterparts, often suppressed their memories of the war and it was only through either talking or writing about their experiences that they too could find some modicum of healing. Thus, members of a family often processed their emotions within the safe confines of that family and their mutual support provided a buffering effect that gave each member resiliency and the self-confidence in the belief that they could survive, even as they took on increased responsibilities and encountered new experiences.[94]

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The emotional potency of familial relationships is best demonstrated by the rates of desertion on the part of Confederate soldiers during the war. Of the approximately 880,000 Confederate soldiers who served during the war, official statistics from the period indicate that 103,400 soldiers officially deserted, which represent 11.75 percent of total Confederate enlistments. Historian Mark Weitz argues that the number of Confederate deserters may be much higher.[95] If these numbers are correct, 776,600 Confederate soldiers (or 88.25 percent of total

94. Emmy E. Werner, *Reluctant Witnesses: Children's Voices from the Civil War*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 151-54.

95. Weitz, *More Damning Than Slaughter*, 287-288.

enlistees) did not desert. Underlying the decision on the part of many of these soldiers to desert was the belief that the Confederate government was no longer willing to protect and provide for their families while men served in the military. In their minds, the best way of protecting and providing for their families was to desert and to return to their homes.

In his study of desertion among soldiers from Buncombe County in Western North Carolina, historian Scott King-Owen found a pattern of absenteeism wherein men left the front lines to visit their families temporary before subsequently returning to duty. He argues that "most absentee soldiers seemed to have considered loyalty to family paramount to their conditional loyalty to the Confederacy."[96] For most soldiers, family provided a "push factor" which imbued their service with greater meaning and a modicum of emotional support. But these families could also provide a "pull factor" wherein the desperate pleas of many wives for the return of their husbands resulted in increasing rates of desertion. In effect, in the minds of married soldiers, the war was always inextricably tied to the protection and provision of their families. "For most residents of western North Carolina," King-Owen asserts, "neither slavery or its social system, nor particular political preferences, played a large role in shaping desertion."[97] Historian Peter Carmichael noted that "Sorting out which soldiers were deserting and which were just visiting home frustrated professional military men throughout the war, especially since company officers tended to look the other way, know that quick trips home actually bolstered morale and improved a man's physical health."[98] Similarly, in his study of Georgia soldiers, historian Mark Weitz found that before the war "the South faced the same problem the colonies had encountered during the American Revolution: the inability of the common citizen to recognize a duty higher

96. Scott King-Owen, "Conditional Confederates: Absenteeism Among Western North Carolina Soldiers, 1861-1865," *Civil War History* 57 (December 2011): 351.

97. Ibid., 359.

98. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 179.

than family and community" and that "Confederate patriotism found its basis within a duty to local peoples and places. Abstract notions of democracy involving states' rights lost their relevance if taken beyond the immediate context of family and community."[99]

The war may have affected individuals unevenly, but it also affected almost every level of society. By viewing the war as a struggle to protect their families, Confederate fathers found emotionally-potent fuel for their willingness to fight. Through letters and visits home (whether they were officially authorized or not), soldier-fathers found comfort in the presence of their families. As historian Joseph Glatthaar noted, "Marriage and parenthood offered soldiers stability and continuity. In most cases, a married soldier or a soldier-father had not only parents and siblings but also a wife and broader community of in-laws on whom he could rely for help. He also had a life to return to after the war, whereas many single troops had no such guaranteed, established world at war's end."[100] In this way, families with children received emotional advantages that single and married soldiers without children did not have.

The severing of the bond between fathers and their children was a fear which was continuously stoked by soldier's all too frequent witnessing of the deaths of their fellow soldier-fathers. In a letter to his wife in April 1863, Private Eluctius Treadwell of the 19th Alabama Infantry Regiment wrote of the death of his friend Luke Aubury that "this is sad news I presume to his wife and an irreparable loss to his little children who are now left without a kind father's protection. God bless the fatherless and keep them with a fathers hand." As Treadwell's mind turned from his friend towards his other comrades, he described a solemn scene which shook him to his core as a husband and father. "I now look away to the top of yonders knole and see the

99. Mark Weitz, "A Higher Duty," 24.

100. Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia: A Statistical Portrait of the Troops Who Served under Robert E. Lee*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 127.

mounds that mark the last resting places of many who no doubt have left many dear little ones behind to mourn their loss," he wrote, "they have fell victims to disease and are now done with the cares of Earth. Nothing marks their resting places Except a mound of clay." The prospect of his own future buried beneath such a mound of clay impelled Treadwell to appreciate the moment in which he still drew breath. "Mattie to day's Sunday tis quite a lovely day indeed the Bluebirds are singing beautifully around me," he wrote, "The sun shines warm and now and then I hear the innocent dove cooing in the top of some distant tree. Tis pleasant for a moment to be thus situated." Noticing the vibrancy of Spring's first blush all around him, Treadwell noticed that "Around me I see the earth coverd with green grass and the trees that a few days ago looked as though they were dead now are putting forth their green foliage." The surge of life around him reminded him of happier moments with his family. "The present time seems to me to be one which could not fail to carry my mind back to days and hours more pleasantly spent," he wrote, "Hours that were spent in the presence of all that was dear. Will it ever be that I may be allowed the privilege of dwelling in Peace with thee and hour little ones again. God grant that the time may come when peace will again through out the land reign." Before signing off, Treadwell assured his wife that "I am tolerable well and hope this will find you and our dear little ones well. Kiss them often for me and Reserve a full portion of my love to your self."[101]

Though Treadwell survived the war, many soldier-fathers were never availed of the opportunity to see their loved ones again. Thousands moldered in hastily-dug graves scattered across the Union and the Confederacy. Others endured the intense pain of losing children that, even if they did survive the war, they would never again see. But for many, their hope lay in the future prospect of being reunited in heaven. After receiving news of the death of his son

101. Eluctius W. Treadwell to Mattie Treadwell, Shelbyville, TN, April 5, 1863, E.W. Treadwell Letters, ADAH.

Slocumb, Private Daniel Webster Revis of the 64th North Carolina Infantry assured his grief-stricken wife Sarepta that "he is gon to rest bles his sweet little soal he is gon to heaven to sweet Jesus whar he wil never suf fer no more hecan not come to us but we can go to him sereptia I want you to prepair to meet me and little slocum in heaven." He went on to remind her that "I may never se you hier any more but stil I hope I wil but if it was gods wil that I shold not I hope I wil meet you in heaven whair we shal hav to part no more."[102] Private Revis was captured in Petersburg, Virginia in February 1865, and sent to the Union Prison at Point Lookout, Maryland. Like most of his comrades, Revis held on to the prospect of seeing his family once again and his love for them imparted a renewed meaning to his survival. In June 1865, he was paroled and not long after, made his way back home where he once again felt the embrace of his beloved wife Sarepta and his last remaining son, Daniel. Though they had not been reunited in heaven, most certainly Daniel felt like a little piece of heaven had been imparted to him.

102. Daniel Webster Revis to Sarepta Revis, Knoxville, TN, December 7, 1862, Daniel W. Revis Letters, NCDAH.

Conclusion: Postwar Lives and Relationships

On the morning of April 9, 1865, Private William Abernathy and his comrades of the 17th Mississippi Infantry Regiment surrounded their regimental colors at Appomattox. After enlisting at the tender age of 17 in April 1861, Abernathy marched into combat under these colors in some of the bloodiest battles of the war, including Seven Pines, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Chickamauga and Cold Harbor. Wounded six times over the course of the war, private Abernathy continued to serve in uniform until the bitter end. Now, almost years of suffering and sacrifice ended in defeat. But Abernathy and the other members of his regiment refused to surrender their flags. As they were unfurled, each man of the 17th Mississippi stepped forward and tore a piece of their beloved flag as a tangible reminder of their service, until there was nothing left. Soon after, Abernathy recalled that "We gave way to womanish tears…and shall I say it, cried bitterly." Thirty-seven years later, Abernathy wistfully remembered the men of his company and all that they had endured together over the course of the war. "We had entered the Confederate Army one hundred and thirty strong," he wrote, "the faces of whom gathered around the old flag that night and parted; among them of the old company comes vividly before me…All of them bore scars of the siege in battle. And now, when the Heavens were black, they parted the old flag, and wending their way homeward, took up life again."[1]

In the spring of 1865, surviving Confederate had endured years of varying degrees of boredom, terror, fear, disease, and psychological suffering with no country to speak of for all their toil and misery. Some could not accept defeat. These men "came from a Southern male culture that pressured men to push aside self-doubt and insecurities, freeing them to exaggerate

1. Abernathy, "The Confederate Memoir of William Abernathy," 17.

their public persona as part of the high-stakes game of earning their respect and reputation from the public."[2] The end of the war ushered in a confusing period for former soldiers who felt sorrow at the collapse of the Confederacy and the loss of so many friends as well as unadulterated joy at the prospect of seeing their families again. For many men, their exuberance at the possibility of seeing their wives and children carried them along the long and arduous trek back home—much the same way that it had carried them through the war. According to the Atlanta *Intelligencer*, in May 1865 former soldiers of the Army of Northern Virginia who streamed through their city on their way home walked with "buoyant steps and exulting smiles at the thought of soon again meeting with 'loved ones at home,' from whom they had been separated for years." Meanwhile, others expressed their "anxiety and despondency" freely.[3]

"Moral optimism and cheerfulness, which had guided men through the hell of soldiering, continued to serve former Confederates as they looked into the abyss of defeat," noted historian Peter Carmichael.[4] Soldiers and civilians alike wanted to put the war behind them and carry on much the same way that they had in the years leading up to the war. Yet the men who walked through the doors of their homes encountered family members who had been changed by the war even as they themselves soon discovered that they were no longer the wide-eyed and carefree men who had walked into enlistment offices so many years ago. Though the shedding of their uniforms signaled the symbolic end of their military service and their transition into civilian life, many of these men were unable to put the war behind them. To make matters worse, the civilians around them little understood what these soldiers had endured and, in their haste to put the war behind them, often showed little concern for reintegrating soldiers back into civilian life. It

2. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 277.
3. "War-Worn Veterans," *Intelligencer* (Atlanta, GA), May 10, 1865.
4. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 272.

seemed as if the soldier was expected to beat his own path back into a world that seemed eminently foreign to him now.[5]

The experience of war and its aftermath is hard to characterize, but some general observations can be gleaned from soldier's accounts. "Former Confederates…could not walk or look in any direction without seeing evidence of their ruination. The war had swallowed Southern society," Carmichael noted, "Cities were destroyed, plantations razed, family members scattered, maimed, or dead, and slaves were liberated and 'roaming' free." Out of a total population of 5.5 million, 450,000 white Southerners were casualties of the war, representing 8.2 percent of the total population. In comparison, 1.8 percent of the total Northern population became casualties of the war.[6] The war's physical scars were everywhere around Southerners ranging from decimated buildings to scorched landscapes to the now empty chairs that surrounded so many dinner tables.

There were psychological wounds as well. For soldiers who had invested their lives, fortunes, and families in the war effort, the idea of accepting defeat was a source of almost unbearable emotional anguish. "Defeat, at its most abstract," historian Wolfgang Schivelbush points out, "is nothing more than the negation of a will that has proven unable to realize its aims, despite using all the means at its disposal." For many white Southern males, the dissolution of the Confederacy and their growing fears of a rising tide of white abolitionism and "Negro rule" bolstered their belief that the Confederacy's loss represented the proverbial darkest hour before the dawn. For these "diehards," the Confederacy would once again rise. This unwillingness to accept defeat may have rested in the unwillingness on the part of these soldiers to accept their loss of control—a defining feature which was a hallmark of Southern masculinity before the war.

5. Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 208.
6. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 269.

Now, after losing their sense of control on both a political and social level—the markers by which one's manhood was measured—the insecurity of being unable to fulfill pre-war masculine directives made the prospect of accepting defeat emotionally unacceptable. Rather than seeing the obvious—that the Confederacy was forever doomed, diehard Confederates believed that a new revolution would give birth to their future ascendency. This is a common refrain of the defeated who often believe "that war, birth, and rebirth are cyclically linked," and which Schivelbush notes, "do not allow for absolute eradication."[7] The same romantic spirit that was inculcated in Southern society in the years leading up to the war would now bolster diehard rebels' belief in their moral and martial superiority over their Yankee and free African-American foes. For those who were no longer willing to fight and yet were emotionally unable to accept defeat, the longing to escape the surrounding reminders of their own failure impelled many to flee. Between 1865 and 1867, roughly eight to ten thousand former Confederates fled the United States for Mexico, the Caribbean, Canada, and Central and South America.[8]

Most white Southern males were so exhausted by the war and in such a hurry to resume their lives that they accepted their defeat and adhered to the terms of surrender.[9] Over four arduous years, young men were faced with impossible challenges that matured them and ave them a newfound sense of confidence but which also stretched their psychological, physical, and emotional limits. "Many a weak, puny boy was returned to his parents a robust, healthy, *manly man*," Carlton McCarthy waxed poetically, "Many a timid helpless boy went home a brave, independent man. Many a wild, reckless boy went home sobered, serious, and trustworthy. And many whose career at home was wicked and blasphemous went home changed in heart, with

7. Wolfgang Schivelbush, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*, trans. Jefferson Chase (New York: Picador, 2004), 1-3.
8. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 93.
9. Ibid., 97.

principles fixed, to comfort and sustain the old age of those who gave them to their country, not expecting to receive them again."[10] Many sought moderation through the restoration of civic order and a firm belief that God had ordained the Confederacy's defeat. This attempt at moderation was congruent with the prevalent idea that manliness involved self-restraint.

For the moment, they had no choice but to simply bow to Union authority and wait to make their next moves. "The idea that Confederate veterans came home catatonic with despair is a gross exaggeration of the mental state of Southern men," historian Peter Carmichael argues. "Internally, to be sure, returning veterans were in turmoil, but in public they had little choice but to show a brave face, now that power was up for grabs." This power concerned "who would control black labor, who would have a political voice, and who was entitled to national citizenship awakened white Southerners from the dejection of defeat. Too much was at stake for Confederate soldiers to mope on the sidelines of civic life." In Carmichael's eyes, "a *controlled despair* best describes the initial reaction of Southern veterans as they stepped through the front doors of their homes, overjoyed by their survival and relieved that they had escaped the army's grinding machinery of death."[11] It would not be long before the South erupted in a series of violent clashes that led to the de facto reestablishment of a white social and political order built upon the repression of freed peoples. The attempt on the part of Radical Republicans to protect the constitutional rights of freed African-Americans and promote black-suffrage was too much for most Southerners to stomach. The broad changes wrought by Radical Republicans unified former Confederates who felt intense anger at the prospect of racial levelling in the realms of politics and business.[12]

10. McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae*, 215-16.
11. Carmichael, *War for the Common Soldier*, 293-294.
12. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 95.

As the armies demobilized however, individual soldiers found themselves in a sort of purgatory. Carlton McCarthy described the feeling of his fellow "survivors," noting that they "felt that they were not yet returned to civil life, but 'foraging' on the neutral ground between war and peace, neither soldiers nor citizens" and that they now had "the responsibility of 'finding themselves.'"[13] Civilians had not borne witness to the evils and banality of camp life, nor did they witness the carnage of the battlefield. Likewise, soldiers had known little of raising children and trying to survive in an economy that was, for the last two years of the war, in shambles. The prospect of a harmonious return to hearth and home must have seemed unattainable after former soldiers settled into their homes and found that that not only had they changed, but their families, their cities, and their country had changed as well. Nothing was as they left it all those years ago. The security of normalcy was, once again, outside of their grasp.

To find relief, soldiers reverted to what they had done during the war to survive by turning to each other for solace. The prewar competitive drive as embodied by the "Self-Made Man" was crushed under the dispiriting weight of war as men of differing social classes were bound by their mutual need for intimacy and emotional support. They also once again turned to the act of writing to process their feelings and make sense of what they had just endured. Former Sergeant-Major David Johnston of the 7th Virginia Infantry Regiment undertook this task in his memoir "At the urgent request of some of my old comrades who still survive, and of friends and my own family," and as a remembrance of the "patriotic, self-sacrificing, brave company of men with whose fortunes and destiny my own were linked for four long years of blood and carnage,

13. McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae*, 193.

and to whom during that period I was bound by ties stronger than hooks of steel; whose confidence and friendship I fully shared, and as fully reciprocated."[14]

Postwar accounts of the war are replete with syrupy remembrances of the relationships that soldiers shared during the war. The fact that they had endured combat together and depended upon each other for survival meant that they shared experiences that their own family members could not have comprehended. At least in the military, former soldiers could gaze into the eyes of comrades who understood their feelings. In recalling these men, it seemed as if many veterans found some of their greatest comfort not in their families but rather in their memories of friends long gone. Long after the war had drawn to a close, William Abernathy wondered "if when this toilsome life is over for all of us, shall we meet again, and if so, will the imprint of our life here have any trace left upon us" before recalling how the war had maimed and destroyed the men of his mess, "for when Scott Lynch starts to Heaven, he will have to go by Gettysburg to get part of his bones, and then, he shall have to go down to North Carolina to get the balance. And so with Bill Phillips…He will have to visit Knoxville, Tennessee to make himself a full proportioned man. And so, with you, Cal Cummings, if you do not want to appear maimed before St. Peter, you will have to go to Gettysburg."[15]

The Confederacy's loss in the American Civil War fundamentally upset the social and political order which gave white Southern males and their families structure. Moreover, it also upset the interpersonal order that gave their lives security and which proved so devastating when men returned home and found that the changes wrought by the war in their families would leave them feeling isolated, alone, and insecure. Maggie Edmonston recognized these changes when

14. David E. Johnston, *The Story of a Confederate Boy in the Civil War* (Portland, OR: Glass & Prudhomme, 1914), iii.

15. Abernathy, "The Confederate Memoir of William Abernathy," 17.

she wrote to her soldier-brothers that "it has been a long time since I saw either of you. There has been so many changes taken place so many loved ones have passed away to be no more."[16] Unlike their civilian counterparts, veterans found that the war dramatically altered how they saw themselves, their identity, and their relationships to others. Those who were rich often returned home to devastated plantations, those who owned slaves now faced the emancipation of their workforce, and those who were poor returned to homes with little financial wherewithal. The war had taken everything by which men had once defined themselves and they would once again resort to pragmatism to develop new models of acceptable manhood that would come to define some of the worst and most horrific excesses of Reconstruction.

In the process of soldiering, men had learned much about themselves. "Men learned that life was passable and enjoyable without a roof or even a tent to shelter from the storm," Carlton McCarthy wrote, and "that cheerfulness was compatible with cold and hunger; and that a man without money, food, or shelter need not feel utterly hopeless."[17] They also learned that they could allow other men—particularly fellow veterans—to be privy to their most intimate and personal emotions. As a result, soldiers at home often felt a closer connection to their comrades than their own families—an attitude which had developed during the war and which was reflected in the letters of soldiers who while on furlough and away from the battle front, desired to be back with their comrades. "I suffered more at Home on the subject of the war than I have since I have been in the army," wrote Private Horace McLean of the 59th Alabama Infantry Regiment in 1863, "for the reason that I was studying about my friends in the service and thinking that I was no better to be by their side with a gun in hand."[18]

16. Maggie Edmonston to Dear Brothers B.B. & B.F., Webster, North Carolina, July 14, 1864, Edmonston-Kelly Family Papers, WCU.

17. McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae*, 215.

18. Horace McLean to Wife, Beans Station, May 4, 1863, Horace McLean Letters, AU.

In a world marred by significant and unsettling changes, veterans provided each other with emotional support. Feeling the loss of their own power through the collapse of the dominant traditional racial and social order, Southern men turned to each other to face what many saw as the collapse of civilization as they had known it.[19] As a result, veterans groups popped up across the South in the years after the war and many became very insular in nature. While most veterans never joined these organizations, a sizable portion did, and after its founding in 1899 the United Confederate Veterans organization grew exponentially to include over 80,000 former Confederate soldiers.[20]

The insular nature of these organizations fostered another level of intimacy between these brothers-in-arms who looked to each other for their emotional support. The survival of many of these soldiers was attributable to the relationships which they had developed during the war. In their study of Union veterans, researchers Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn found that those who faced greater wartime stress (measured in terms of higher battlefield mortality rates) experienced higher mortality rates at older ages than men who were from more cohesive companies that were statistically less likely to be affected by wartime stress. Social networks often mitigated the negative effects of stress by providing oppositional beneficial effects on a soldier's psychological and physical well-being. [21] Moreover, veterans' organizations also provided for the welfare of their members and their families.

The postwar period also reflected the strain placed upon both prospective and established marital unions by the war. Soldiers disfigured by the war who were either single or in the early stages of courting became exceedingly preoccupied with what they saw as diminished prospects

19. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 90, 109.

20. Herman Hattaway, "Clio's Southern Soldiers: The United Confederate Veterans and History". *Louisiana History* 3 (Summer 1971): 214.

21. Costa and Kahn, "Health, Wartime Stress, and Unit Cohesion" 45-46.

for marriage.[22] "I constantly hear the unmarried ones," one nurse described her amputee patients, "wondering if the girls will marry them now."[23] The war had not only taken from these men their appendages but it had also awoke a deep insecurity that, because of their wounds, no one would ever love them. Though they would often acceptance from their fellow soldiers who had shared in their experience of loss, many doubted that they would find women who would be so accepting.

The war had changed everything, however. Exactly how many widows were made by the war cannot fully be known. What is clear is that the war cut through the young white male population like a scythe. Historian Gary Gallagher estimates that between 75 percent and 85 percent of the Confederacy's male population of military age had mobilized by the end of the war, compared with only 50 percent of the same population in the North. As a result, the postwar period witnessed a dearth of suitable men, leaving those who remained—whether mangled or not—with a far greater pool of potential mates.[24] Those who married either before, during, or after the war came to rely upon these spouses for their healing. "Most psychologically disturbed Civil War veterans were cared for, at least initially, in the traditional manner at home by their families," historian Eric Dean wrote, but "when things got out of hand, families would often first turn to the local jail and then maybe the insane asylum."[25]

Men who had become defined by their service on the battlefield now found their identity in the service of their families by becoming devoted husbands and fathers. In the process, they melded the "martial and civil spheres within the domestic realm," as "Confederate veterans who

22. Hacker, "Southern Marriage Patterns," 49.

23. Kate Cumming, *A Journal of Hospital Life in the Confederate Army of Tennessee: from the Battle of Shiloh to the End of the War* (Louisville, KY: John P. Morton & Co., 1866), 117.

24. Hacker, "Southern Marriage Patterns," 47, 63; Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 28-29.

25. Dean, *Shook Over Hell*, 137-39.

returned home pronounced the importance of a restrained, if still volatile, manliness."[26] A time of intense emotional upheaval, the first decade after the war's conclusion represented an attempt on the part of former Confederates at "self-control and emotional moderation in an attempt to suppress the unfettered feelings expressed at the war's end and to reassert a stronger public face."

The postwar period also represented a loosening of the tension that former soldiers felt during the war between their duties as husbands and fathers as well as their duty to their country. With military service out of the picture, white Southern males could focus on their families before renewing the fight on a political front. They would be pulled taut between their internal desire to connect emotionally and the external demands of a society which demanded that men once again master themselves and the world around them. Men would do as they had always done by falling into line and once again attempt to fulfill the societal expectation of male dominance which led to the rise of Lost Cause ideology as well as new and increasingly brutal attempts to subjugate African-Americans once again. "Men who struggled to reconstitute white manhood and prevail over personal pains," noted James Broomall, "lashed out at freedpeople in the postwar years, directing the course of the white South's 'redemption.' Reconstruction was an emotional experience, and men's feelings shed light on their public actions."[27]

The period between the outbreak of war in 1861 and its unceremonious end in the summer of 1865 represented an important emotional epoch that was markedly different from the pre- and post-war periods. The exigencies of war which bound men together through shared suffering and which threatened to destroy them as individuals forced men to eschew pre-war masculine ideals in favor of a more pragmatic approach that emphasized the need for mutual aid

26. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 94.
27. Broomall, *Private Confederacies*, 109.

and comfort. To this end, soldiers and veterans looked to both their comrades and their families, many of whom found that their survival depended upon the wives and children over whom they were supposed to have absolute power. War had an equalizing effect on the Southern family as it accelerated, albeit temporarily, the egalitarian and emotionally effuse impulses of the prewar years. At the same time, it exposed the inherent flaws in the dominant pre-war masculine ideology which would once again hold sway over white males in the post-war period. Reconstruction bore witness to its violent resurgence, and in the process, a civil war of another type would rage. As the American experiment inched ever closer to the precipice, the emotions of white Southern males were now directed towards a new challenge: restoring the social, political, and economic dominance of the white race. These heightened emotions surrounding this challenge drove white men and women to new levels of barbarity. As a result, thousands of newly freed African Americans would feel the familiar sting of an emotion that white Southerners had only come to know themselves during the war: fear.

Abbreviations

ACWM	Ellen Brockenbrough Library, American Civil War Museum, Richmond, VA
ADAH	Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery
AU	Special Collections and Archives, Auburn University, Auburn, AL
Duke	Special Collections, Duke University, Durham, NC
ECU	Special Colelctions, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC
EU	Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA
JWL-UM	J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi, Oxford
NCDAH	North Carolina Department of Archives and History
NML	Nesbitt Memorial Library, Columbus, TX
SHC-UNC	Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
UGA	Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens
UM	William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
UNCA	D.H. Ramsey Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina Asheville
UNCW	Randall Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina Wilmington
USC	Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina
UVA	Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville
VMI	VMI Archives, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington
VT	Special Collections, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg
WCU	Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC
WLU	Special Collections, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, NC

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- E.B. Coggin Papers
- E.K. Flournoy Letters
- E.W. Treadwell Letters
- Henry C. Semple Papers
- Joseph E. Wesson Letters
- William Tilmon Bishop Letters.
- W.V. Fleming Correspondence.

Auburn University, Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, AL
- Armistead L. Galloway Letters
- Asa T. Martin Papers
- Benjamin Mason Letters
- Duggar Family Papers
- Horace McLean Letters
- John T. Scott Letters
- Liberty Independence Nixon Papers
- Robert Emmett Corry Letters
- S.H. Dent Papers
- William T. Presley Papers

Duke University, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Durham, NC
- Alexander Frank Papers
- Alfred W. Bell Papers
- Daniel W. Murphy Papers
- Eliza Whitener Papers
- George K. Evans Letters
- Harrison Hanes Papers
- Isham Upchurch Papers
- James C. Zimmerman Papers
- John H. Hartman Papers
- John J. Jefcoat Papers
- John W. Hodnett Letters
- John W. Reese Papers
- John Wesley Williams Papers
- Robert Boyd Papers
- Tilmon F. Baggarly Papers
- Wilburn Thompson Papers
- William A. Tesh Papers

East Carolina University, Joyner Library Special Collections, Greenville, NC
- Joseph Kinsey Papers

Ellen Brockenbrough Library, American Civil War Museum, Richmond, VA
- Barksdale Letters
- CSA Collection
- Fairfax Letters

Emory University, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, GA
- Benjamin L. Mobley Papers
- Henry W. Robinson Letters
- Jesse Fuller Letters
- James W. Watkins Papers
- John A. Everett Papers
- William M. Batts Letters
- William Harmon Harden Papers

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- John S. Shropshire Papers

North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh
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- Civil War Collection
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- Faison Family Papers
- Francis M. Parker Papers
- Futch Letters
- Henry H. Bowen Papers
- Isaac Lefevers Papers
- Jesse Hill Letters
- Marcus Hefner Papers
- Poteet-Dickson Letters
- Stephen Whitaker Papers
- William Hyslop Sumner Burgwyn Papers
- Williams-Womble Papers

University of Georgia, Hargrett Rare Boko and Manuscript Library, Athens
- Thomas A. Woodham Papers
- Thomas W.G. Inglett Letters

University of Michigan, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor
- Hiram Talbert Holt Letters

University of Mississippi, J.D. Williams Library, Oxford
- James T. Jones Collection

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