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Knox**

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Institute for the  
Study of  
Societal Issues

# **Pedagogy and Performance of Military Masculinity at Fort Knox**

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Historically, the U.S. Department of Defense has attempted to advance military goals within the academy by guiding, gathering, shaping and suppressing knowledge production. However, with the ascendance of the Homeland Security state, relationships between the Armed Forces and higher education have become both less obvious and more familiar features of the academic landscape, as increasing research dollars go to develop weapons and cyber-security programs. This paper documents a less-known strategy designed to pave military inroads into contemporary college campuses: a military training program at Fort Knox, Kentucky, created to enlist civilian academic faculty and staff to become supporters of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program. The training, “Operation Bold Leader,” embeds academics in pseudo-warfare situations that serve as military training exercises. Pedagogies include inviting academic faculty and staff to rappel down 50-foot towers to a soundtrack of recorded gunshots while hearing about the benefits of collegiate ROTC programs. This paper, based on ethnographic research, shows that “Operation Bold Leader” portrays an educative Army that is separate and distinguishable from acts of war-making and from war itself. In doing so, this training fosters participants’ identification with the U.S. Army by normalizing a vision of the military mission as a vehicle for social and educational improvement and global humanitarian development. This research finds that performing military training exercises facilitated a positive disposition toward the military, laying the groundwork for civilian academics to become “force multipliers” for the U.S. Army.

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## **Pedagogy and Performance of Military Masculinity at Fort Knox**

Dealing with educators is like dealing with [recruiting] prospects: they may hold uninformed opinions of the Army and simply need information. You must assume the roles of counselor, mentor, and coach to educate the educators and positively affect their opinions.

– US Army Recruiting Manual (No. 3-01; Chap 6-1 sec.3)

Every year, dozens of faculty and staff from college campuses around the country are invited to gather on the Fort Knox Army base to practice military exercises for a week. This program is one example of a systematic approach by the U.S. military to recruit college faculty and staff to become advocates for military projects on their home campuses. This article examines how military subjectivities are formed in civilian academics by analyzing the Fort Knox program. As I will show, this recruitment strategy, designed to influence college educators to support the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) on their home campuses, portrays the US Army as a pro-social educative institution, while obscuring its central mission in the present wars. This strategic portrayal contributes to the production of *militarized common sense* on college campuses by normalizing a vision of the military mission as a vehicle for social/educational improvement and global humanitarian development, yet one without a direct relationship to war. Using Gramsci's (1971) concept of common sense, or societal understandings that are adopted with popular consent despite harmful consequences, I define militarized common sense as a set of attitudes and beliefs which assume that war is a natural and necessary aspect of maintaining and protecting nationhood and that military priorities are more important than non-military ones. The production of militarized common sense is a deeply

gendered process, embedding masculine notions of war and warriors in the everyday “domestic” lives of civilians.<sup>1</sup>

The Department of Defense has developed multi-tiered strategies for recruiting in high schools and colleges. Recruitment manuals demonstrate official intent to utilize the school environment to persuade students to join the US military and to convince faculty and staff to support military goals. Part of this strategy involves inviting college faculty and staff to participate in military training exercises. Based on participant observation, this article analyzes this strategy to win the “hearts and minds” of civilian academics through a weeklong ROTC Community Leader/Educator Training Course (CLE) at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Methods and techniques employed by military trainers became transformative: I will show how male and female professors and university staff attempted to embody military masculinity (Belkin 2012) and came to valorize military goals and objectives. By analyzing military pedagogies aimed at civilian academics, I show how this program attempts – and succeeds – in creating support from civilian academics for ROTC campus programs, thus blurring the lines between war-making and civilian education. First, I will give a brief review of the US Armed Forces presence in higher education, followed by a discussion of gendered military practice; I then draw on US Army recruitment manuals to discuss strategies to recruit academic supporters for military recruitment on college campuses. This paper ends with analysis based on participant observation of one military training for civilian college employees and faculty.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of a larger research project discussed in my book *Grateful Nation: Student Veterans and the Rise of the Military-Friendly Campus* (Moore 2017).

## Militarization of the Academy

The militarization of the academy has a long history and has been the subject of extensive scholarship (Jorgensen and Wolf 1970; Foster 2000; Price 2008; Gonzalez 2010), as have the military's efforts to organize support from civilian academics (Noble 1977, 1984; Cahill 2008, Shaw 2012). Much of the existing scholarship documents ways that the military has guided, gathered, shaped and suppressed knowledge to further military goals, through research grants and academic partnerships. Some of these initiatives include making public funding for colleges contingent on hosting military training programs such as the Reserve Officer Training Corps, or ROTC. This body of literature also addresses the ways in which academics are recruited for military purposes through research funding, endowed chairs and preferential access to information.<sup>2</sup> A recent and growing body of literature links the process of militarization in institutions with neoliberal business models (Lagotte 2010, 2013; Mazzucato 2011).

My analysis of how the US Armed Forces create a presence on campuses departs from this literature and presents an analysis of a less familiar strategy: specialized trainings for “key influencers” on college campuses, or the *Community Leader/Educator* training. These specialized trainings foster identification with military goals by involving college personnel in participatory trainings that are not academic but specifically military. The trainings are built around pedagogical principles of participation, embedding academics in contrived military situations wherein participants perform military exercises. These trainings portray the US military as an organization that exists primarily for self-improvement and educational

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<sup>2</sup> Mazzucato, writing about the Cold War period in the US notes that “DARPA officers engaged in business and technological brokering – linking university researchers to entrepreneurs interested in starting a new firm; connecting start-up firms with venture capitalists; finding a larger company to commercialise the technology; or assisting in procuring a government contract to support the commercialisation process. Pursuing this brokering function, DARPA officers not only developed links among those involved in the network system but also engaged in efforts to expand the pool of scientists and engineers working in specific areas. An example of this is the role DARPA played in the 1960s by funding the establishment of new computer science departments at various universities in the US” (Mazzucato 2011: 79). See also Noble (1984) and Price (2003, 2008, 2011).

advancement. At the training I observed, the military mission abroad was portrayed as essentially humanitarian, with no direct relationship to actual wars.

Having civilian academics perform military training exercises while hearing that the military mission is about personal uplift and global humanitarianism is intended to facilitate a positive disposition toward the military among academics and lays the groundwork for civilian academics to become *force multipliers* for the military,<sup>3</sup> through a pedagogical process steeped in what Belkin calls *military masculinity*, or a set of beliefs, practices and attributes that can enable soldiers (both male and female) to claim authority on the basis of affirmative relationships with the military or with military ideas (2012: 3). The ideal of military masculinity includes, but is not limited to, practices that position masculinity in opposition to its feminized inverse of weakness and subordination.

The Community Leader/Educator training portrays an Educative Army that is separate and distinguishable from acts of war-making and war itself, thus constructing a distinction between “home front” educative military practices and military interventions abroad. In order for these beliefs to become naturalized, the institutional military – and ROTC in particular – must be framed in ways that promulgate the narrative of military (male) socialization as catalyst for shaping national and individual character. In this narrative, the institutional military operates as an apolitical organization that exists primarily for social and personal elevation: to train normatively male soldiers in discipline, leadership, physical conditioning and patriotism. This vision of the military is deployed not only in recruiting students to be soldiers, but also in recruiting academics to become military supporters.

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<sup>3</sup> “Force multiplier” is a military term used to describe the role of each component (individual soldier, unit or branch) in the military apparatus intended to potentiate the efficacy of the whole. This term was applied to our group of academic participants by one of our leaders at Fort Knox.

## Theoretical Foundations: Gendered Nationalism, Banal Militarism

Nationalism and militarism are hegemonic, symbiotic, and co-constructed processes (Gramsci 1971; Cohen 1985). The promotion of national and military identification involves imagining symbolically constructing community (Cohen 1985), and creating societal consent for military projects (Gramsci 1971). These social processes are facilitated by the promotion of what I call – borrowing from Michael Billig (1995) – *banal militarism*, or everyday symbols and practices that conflate the interests of the nation and its people with the interests of the military. Billig’s notion of *banal nationalism* refers to manifestations of nationalist ideology in daily life. Symbols such as national flags, which are metaphors of both warfare and “freedom,” are used in everyday contexts, including classrooms, sporting events, children’s clothing, television, consumer product branding and department store sales. The mobilization of these symbols in daily life creates an imagined solidarity with the national project by conflating the interests of the nation-state with those of its citizenry.

Culturally, the practice of soldiering in the US military is racialized (white) and gendered (male).<sup>4</sup> Military, nation, and state are gendered male institutions. Cynthia Enloe writes that nationalism and militarism typically spring from “masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope” (1990:44). Following Enloe, I argue that it is not possible to study military practices without also understanding the male perspectives that shape both institutional and informal conventions. Therefore, I analyze military practices in relation to gendered ideologies. Even as the current all-volunteer armed forces rely increasingly on racial and ethnic minority male and female recruits and consciously and explicitly portray the

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<sup>4</sup> There is a broad consensus among scholars that military institutional practice and wars are masculine social endeavors. For more on this, see Kirk & Okazawa-Rey 1998/2010; Nagel 1998, Acker 1990; Enloe 1983, 1990, 2007; Bederman 1995; Sue 2004; Madriaga 2005; Oliver 2007; Belkin 2012 and Gardiner 2013.



institutional military as race and gender neutral, recent scholarship confirms that military practice is infused with the social construction of whiteness and hegemonic masculinity.<sup>5</sup> With the understanding that gendered perspectives shape institutional and informal military practices, what follows is an ethnographic examination of the gendered ideologies embedded in military trainings for civilian academics.

## Methods

This article is based on ethnographic material gathered as a participant observer in military training exercises for civilian academics. This leadership visit formed part of the ROTC training course designated “Operation Bold Leader.” I had asked to be part of this group after hearing about it from veterans’ advocates on campuses during my research on student veterans (Moore 2017). I joined a group of 48 male and female<sup>6</sup> educators – professors, administrators, counselors, financial aid officers, student services personnel, and others identified as college leaders – to take part in this training.<sup>7</sup> We spent one week in 2012 at Fort Knox, Kentucky, alternately participating in rigorous physical training exercises and attending formal meetings with groups of high-ranking military personnel. The week culminated in a question and answer session with high-ranking officers in which college faculty and staff made public commitments to support Army ROTC programs on their home campuses.

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<sup>5</sup> The US military claims to offer the template for a colorblind de-racialized America (see Moskos and Butler 1997: *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way*). However, Madriaga (2005) points out that the U.S. Military as an institution is in fact thoroughly constituted in discourses of whiteness (Roediger 1991; Blatt and Roediger 1998; Ignatiev 1995) and ethnocentric monoculturalism (Sue 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Gender is not fully encompassed by a male-female binary. For this study I consciously adopt the static and reified typologies of the U.S. military and use the binary categories of “male” and “female” when discussing gender.

<sup>7</sup> The official documents usually refer to us as “leaders,” yet one of the memos we received in advance of the trip refers to us, in the language of the recruiting literature, as “influencers.” This nomenclature slippage indicates the true intention of this trip: to influence in the Army’s favor, those with power (influencers) on college campuses.

My position as researcher and outsider – a white, middle-aged, not very athletic woman without a military background – certainly shaped my participation in the training exercises at Fort Knox. As a *situated other* (Lykes 1997) I used participant-observation and reflexive analysis of my subjective experience within the ethnographic encounter as my primary methodological approach. I believe that my outsider status provided a lens that rendered visible dispositions and practices not often considered by civilians, and that my social distance facilitated a type of critical examination distinct from that of institutional insiders.<sup>8</sup>

### **Recruiting Influencers in Theory: Recruitment Policies**

The Community Leaders/Educators (CLE) training was developed to enlist faculty and staff as part of an overall Department of Defense strategy to engender support for the military in and around schools. It forms part of a marketing plan developed by leading public relations strategists in the United States. The Pentagon spends 4.7 billion dollars yearly on recruitment, advertising and public relations, paying some of the largest advertising and public relations firms to develop a range of marketing tools to promote the US military.<sup>9</sup>

One strand of this promotion is aimed at academic decision-makers – higher-ranking university personnel and other designated key influencers – with the goal of enhancing military presence on college campuses. Recruiters are advised to develop working relationships with officials, including the campus “director of student affairs, career placement officer, college registrar, financial aid officer, dean of students... department chairpersons, and professors who

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<sup>8</sup> Studying cultural practices from the outside presents particular challenges, but as anthropologist and Army Captain Alexandra Jaffee (1995) notes, there are also challenges involved in attempting to produce ethnography while positioned within a closed system like the military. Jaffee was unable to write an ethnography of her military experience because she was unable to separate her civilian and military identities inside the totalizing discourse of her military environment.

<sup>9</sup> Among the firms employed by the Department of Defense are marketing giants Leo Burnett Worldwide and McCann Erickson (Lagotte 2012).

may be helpful in making presentations or communicating Army opportunities” (U.S. Army Recruiter Handbook-23).

The weeklong participatory experience called the “E/COI (Educator/Center of Influence) Tour” invites academics to participate alongside Army cadets in physical training exercises. The US Army Recruiter Handbook describes the purpose and intention of the tours:

E/COI tours are designed to be professionally enriching experiences for key influencers. They are not junkets or rewards for cooperation with recruiters. Tours are resources that must focus on those areas (access, ASVAB [military occupational aptitude] testing, and release of directory information) that need special attention. Tours provide E/COIs the opportunity to view Soldiers in a training environment. *Many participants become informed supporters who publicize and promote Army opportunities with students, graduates, and other key influencers.* [Emphasis added]

By participating with other educators and ROTC cadets in physical training, the goal of the tour is to recruit campus decision-makers to become *informed supporters* and advocates of military presence on their campuses. Courting and grooming behavior begins with the name itself: designating the program “Educator/Center of Influence tours” confers on the invited a status of importance and centrality, endorsing as influential the invited college personnel. As part of an official strategy to promote military services to college campuses, these tours focus on campuses deemed to have strategic recruitment value; to cultivate working relationships with higher level school officials, who are in turn expected to facilitate military inroads into the cultural and institutional practices at colleges and universities. In July of 2012, I travelled to Fort Knox, Kentucky, to participate in an E/COI tour. The following sections describe this experience and analyze processes through which the US Army personnel attempted to cultivate instrumental relationships with college faculty and staff academics.

## ROTC and the Vietnam Era

The history of this invitational Community Leader/Educator (CLE) training course dates back to 1967 at the height of campus opposition to the Vietnam War, when opposition to collegiate ROTC programs became a central feature of 1960s and 70s campus activism against the war. Many faculty and students objected to the ROTC as a recruiting organization for the US Armed Forces, and sought to expel ROTC programs from campuses. The US Army developed the CLE training as a strategy to counteract this trend.<sup>10</sup> A military journalist assigned to cover the tour wrote on the ROTC website:

Over the years, the visit has proven successful in helping educators to become assets to ROTC around the country. ‘We want to win the hearts and minds of the influential people’ said Lt. Col. Keene<sup>11</sup>, officer in charge of the leadership visit. ‘They are in a position to help the ROTC program in their schools. This visit gives them a window to what it is that the Army ROTC does and how we train our Cadets.’<sup>12</sup>

Upon our arrival at Fort Knox, participants were told that this training had been developed during the Vietnam War as a response to a perceived anti-military bias within academia and was intended to enhance the reputation and access of the US Army on civilian college campuses. In describing the Army’s objective as attempting to “win the hearts and minds of the influential people,” Keene invoked the US military’s strategy to gain public support for a counterinsurgency war and facilitate success of combatants fighting in hostile territory.<sup>13</sup> Using

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<sup>10</sup> In a welcome speech to our group, Fort Knox commanding officer Major Balko spoke about the development of this training as a response to campus opposition against the Vietnam War. Balko’s remarks were the first of several references tying the development of this training to civilian opposition to the Vietnam War.

<sup>11</sup> All names of individuals in this paper have been replaced with pseudonyms.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Col. Keene posted on Fort Knox website (retrieved 7/15/12).

<sup>13</sup> The battle for the “hearts and minds” referred to a combination of military, political, social and economic strategies developed in response to communist insurgencies. The strategic goal is to gain the support of a population for a specific military strategy by embedding military objectives into the economic, political and social fabric of national populations engaged in insurgent conflicts. After being employed in military campaigns for centuries, notably as a strategic centerpiece of the Vietnam War, the hearts and minds doctrine was officially revived in 2006, with the release of the “Counterinsurgency Field Manual (FM 3-24)” advising ground troops in Middle East wars to concentrate on “non-kinetic” elements of warfare such as information operations, human intelligence (“human terrain”) and cultural awareness, with the goal of winning popular support for US-backed governments.

this language of counterinsurgency, Keene positioned civilian academics as influential yet potentially hostile ‘enemies.’<sup>14</sup> In this discursive battle, ‘winning’ would mean that civilian college educators would become allies and assets to ROTC around the country<sup>15</sup>

### **Humanitarian Re-branding of War: “We’re like the Peace Corps, with Guns”**

Consistent with Army recruiters’ mandate to frame military involvement as supporting students’ best interests, this “Operation Bold Leader” visit showcased ROTC as a program providing leadership, citizenship and personal growth opportunities for students through physical fitness training and mentorship. We were also reminded that ROTC offers full scholarships through college. Our hosts saw the University of California, Berkeley, the institution with which I was affiliated, as an important center of research, and thus an influential campus.<sup>16</sup>

However, the name of UC Berkeley also carried negative connotations because of its reputation as home to Vietnam War protests in the 1960s. Despite the fact that today UC Berkeley proudly claims to be among the nation’s most *Military Friendly* college campuses<sup>17</sup>, Berkeley’s negative reputation persists among military personnel. After the first night’s welcome ceremony, sitting in a bar drinking beers with officers in charge of our visit, Col. Keene asked me, “Do you think the people of Berkeley are prejudiced against the military? Because I do.”

This allegation of unfair prejudice against the military by Berkeley liberals became the opening

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<sup>14</sup> This recruiting-as-war language echoes the sentiment of the recruiting manual: “Sensors (recruiters) must constantly be aware of their surroundings especially during recruiting activities...Awareness and assessment assets support the mission by alerting commanders to potential obstacles and threats that may affect mission success. For example, the company commander needs to know that a local college changed their access policy for recruiting personnel. This example of awareness directly affects any college recruiting operation and is a key consideration during mission planning” (From Sections A-4 and A-5).

<sup>15</sup> From an interview with Lt. Col. Keene, posted on the ROTC Leadership Training course website.

<sup>16</sup> I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend this training, as my position as a doctoral candidate would not automatically classify me as a “key influencer.”

<sup>17</sup> The national magazine *GI Jobs* publishes a list of top “Military Friendly” college campuses in the US based on services available to military students (specifically veterans) and campus climate toward student veterans. UC Berkeley has been named among the 50 most Military Friendly campuses every year since 2008.

salvo in a pointed conversation about the officers' belief that civilian academics were uninformed about the mission of the contemporary US Armed Forces.

In our conversation that evening, several officers said that a fundamental problem on college campuses was civilians' misperception, or misunderstanding – particularly in places like Berkeley – about the practice of the contemporary US military. Col. Keene described the military mission in Afghanistan as essentially one of humanitarian development. “Really, when you look at a lot of the work we do, we’re like the Peace Corps, with guns,” he said. “We build soccer fields for kids and set up clinics in places where people really need stuff – where nobody else wants to go.” In this discussion of military intervention as global social work, there was no mention of war – and the total and traditional military mission (in its multiplicitous manifestations: regime change, “peace-keeping” interventions, occupation, or resource extraction) was overlooked, obscured, or re-branded as humanitarian. This framing illustrates a dual purpose of these trainings – both to produce militarized common sense within college educators, and to re-brand combat zones as “humane” social spaces for sports, medical attention, family. This mixing of the “home front” and “military front” activities serves the purpose of obscuring and de-linking realities of combat from “pro-social” tasks of building civic infrastructure, thereby facilitating positive dispositions towards the military project.

In recent years the “Peace Corps with guns” characterization has been adopted and disseminated by military personnel. This analogy is currently used by both supporters and critics to describe the US military’s recent “humanitarian turn” (Gonzalez 2012) in current Middle East conflicts. This characterization has become popular shorthand used to highlight what are called

*Human Terrain* counterinsurgency strategies: contemporary versions of Vietnam-era hearts and minds strategy coupled with strategies for nation-building and extended military occupation.<sup>18</sup>

Our hosts spoke about US military personnel on civilian college campuses as beleaguered minorities, discriminated against by liberal schools, and suggested that military programs should be protected from an ostensible liberal bias. These officers proposed ideological and cultural explanations for military/civilian misunderstandings, asserting that a liberal bias in network media outlets and in Hollywood films allowed anti-war and anti-military stereotypes to persist within the broader culture. I would later come to see an irony in this allegation, as it became clear throughout the week that this training actively deployed Hollywood film tactics and aesthetics in the effort to promote a military-valorizing counter-narrative.

## The Discursive Role of Rank

Military rank is a visible message of your level of responsibility and degree of experience. Your rank shows where you fit into the Army structure that binds individuals together into teams.<sup>19</sup>

– “Army Rank, Structure, Duties, and Traditions” in ROTC Handbook

Anthropologist and former US Army officer Alexandra Jaffee notes that “the privileges and obligations of rank pervade so much of military life that it is impossible to experience rank as meaningless” (1995: 42). The rank system organizes social relations not only between individuals but also within the entire administrative apparatus; the social marker of rank

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<sup>18</sup> The first use I can find in military literature is in an edited volume put out by the Army War College called *A 'Peace Corps with Guns': Can the Military Be a Tool of Development?* (Irish 2007) which argues that the military can be, and is. This characterization has also been taken up by critics of the war: the *Rolling Stone* used this description in a 2010 profile of Gen. Stanley McChrystal: “From the start, McChrystal was determined to place his personal stamp on Afghanistan, to use it as a laboratory for a controversial military strategy known as counterinsurgency. COIN, as the theory is known, is the new gospel of the Pentagon brass, a doctrine that attempts to square the military's preference for high-tech violence with the demands of fighting protracted wars in failed states. COIN calls for sending huge numbers of ground troops to not only destroy the enemy, but to live among the civilian population and slowly rebuild, or build from scratch, another nation's government – a process that even its staunchest advocates admit requires years, if not decades, to achieve. The theory essentially rebrands the military, expanding its authority (and its funding) to encompass the diplomatic and political sides of warfare: Think the Green Berets as an armed Peace Corps” (Hastings 2010).

<sup>19</sup> “Army Rank, Structure, Duties, and Traditions” in ROTC Handbook found at [www.uc.edu/MSL\\_201\\_L01b\\_Army\\_Rank\\_Structure\\_Duties\\_Traditions](http://www.uc.edu/MSL_201_L01b_Army_Rank_Structure_Duties_Traditions)

permeates all material and symbolic institutional practices designed to enforce military order (Vojdik 2003). Given the primary organizing role of military rank, it was significant that our group of educators interacted extensively – almost exclusively – with high-ranking officers.<sup>20</sup> Upon arriving at the Louisville airport, we were met by a relay team of colonels: Col. Nesbitt, the lone female squadron leader, directed me to the baggage claim area, where Col. Landon, the lone African American squadron leader, met me and carried my bags to the waiting van. We were “in-processed” (given medical history forms and indemnity waivers to fill out along with brochures explaining our visit) by Colonels Richter and Davidson. The commander of Fort Knox, Major Balko, welcomed us to the base and the training, after which we were divided into groups: two platoons, each made up of three squadrons. Before sitting down to dinner, our squad (2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, 1<sup>st</sup> squad) exchanged introductions and met briefly with our squad leader, Col. Landon.

In the explicitly hierarchal organization of the US Army, high-level leaders performed the lowest level administrative tasks for our group. Every interaction, from questions about schedules or protocol, to chatting on the bus between activities or having drinks in the bar entailed interactions with high-ranking officers. This was a lot of rank to be escorting a small group of relatively low-level faculty and staff members: student affairs deans, assistant professors, college admissions office staff, a congressional staffer and one doctoral candidate. The deployment of rank both reflected and produced the educators’ positions as important and influential guests. Discussing this later, a UC Berkeley sociology student and former Army captain offered her perspective on this scenario, calling it noteworthy that we had colonels serving as squad leaders. Using the analogy of a small town’s hierarchy, this former officer said

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<sup>20</sup> The exceptions to the preponderance of high-level officers included one of our bus drivers/logistics staff support, who held the rank of Master Sergeant, and a few of our field trainers, who held the rank of Sergeant.



that a colonel was the social equivalent of a mayor: “If we're talking about a small military base somewhere, a colonel is going to be like the mayor of the town. He will be the person in charge of the whole base. [In contrast,] squad leaders would be people on the side of the road with a broom and dustpan. ... This [training situation] is very unique”<sup>21</sup>. Our group had metaphoric mayors, senators and congressmen acting as hotel concierges, baggage handlers and tour guides. To justify this asymmetrical deployment of resources, the educators had to be positioned as equally important guests. We were all issued personalized embroidered tags identifying us as “VIP” to affix on our uniform. Thus while we were outwardly designated as Very Important Persons, we were also discursively positioned as such by being escorted by high-ranking officers. This inversion of rank and power was gendered in instrumental ways: academic work within the institutional military is typically devalued and feminized; viewed as irrelevant, biased with liberal ideology, irrational and impractical. However, in this case the male and female academics on the E/COI tour were discursively positioned as masculine, our position as important leaders marked on the VIP name plates affixed to the military uniforms issued to us to wear during the training. By designating us as important and influential – hierarchic equals to colonels – we were groomed to use our influence to promote the ROTC when we return to our home campuses.

### **Embedded Practice, Embedded Identities**

Several weeks before I left for Fort Knox I was issued a full Army Combat Uniform (ACU) with the instructions: “This clothing is to be worn during any optional hands-on training opportunity during the visit. This clothing should be packed even if a Community

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<sup>21</sup> Margo Mahan, personal communication, May 2013

Leader/Educator is unsure if he/she wants to participate in optional hands-on training.”<sup>22</sup> Our group activities were organized in military formation carried out in uniform: divided into platoons and squadrons, we performed grueling physical training exercises dressed in combat fatigues, which facilitated maximum identification with soldiers.

In high-stress environments, when embedded outsiders depend on a team of military personnel for survival, they become unable to experience separation from military perspectives and priorities (Maniaty 2008). Television journalist Tony Maniaty, who has reported from war zones in many conflicts, describes this process in a discussion of how embedded reporting changes reporters’ subjectivities, which in turn affects their coverage of wars, resulting in reports that avoid questioning or critiquing military practices or missions. Maniaty writes that the result of wartime embedded reporting will be that:

[O]ld-fashioned censorship will not be necessary: television crews, reliant on military transport and on surrounding troops for their survival, will do what they are told to. Eagle-eyed detachment will be rare, anodyne coverage far more likely. The industry mantra, ‘If it bleeds, it leads,’ will not apply—if it bleeds in Baghdad, it will be dropped. Images of dead American soldiers, even in their coffins, will not be permitted. A study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism of 40.5 hours of coverage by ABC (America), CBS, NBC, CNN and Fox early in the conflict found about half the reports from ‘embeds’ showed combat action, but not one story depicted people hit by weapons .... What television showed was not the multi-faceted horror of war but the palatable shorthand of war, in neat packages that audiences could watch without revulsion, bleaching the nightmare (Maniaty 2008: 96).

Thus Maniaty argues that the process of embedding does not produce disinterested knowledge; rather, it forms subjects and subjectivities. Educational scholarship describes this process in terms of social practice and pedagogies of identification, participation and practice. Moje & Lewis (2007) note that participation creates new knowledge and knowledge practice, which result in shifting or re-making of identity. Lave (1996) and Gee (2001) write that learning can be understood as shifts in identity; that with new forms of knowledge and participation, one learns to adopt new identities. Participatory learning involves learning not only subject matter content –

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<sup>22</sup> From packing list “TAB E (Packing List) to Annex I to Appendix 1 (Community Leader/Educator Visit) to LTC OPORD 12-02 (Operation Bold Leader)” sent prior to visit.

for example military knowledge or information about ROTC programs – but also how to think and act like a military subject even if one does not formally enlist in the military ranks (Moje and Lewis 2007:18-19). The pedagogies used in this *Operation Bold Leader* training similarly produced militarized subjectivities and dispositions. I noticed this happening on the first day, when our group waited to board the bus to the training grounds.

As we gathered in the hotel lobby, there was a palpable sense of excitement. We compared notes on our uniforms; the more experienced advised newcomers on how to appropriately wear the uniform (trouser legs tucked and bloused in combat boot, laces tucked; jackets loose, mandarin collar open; sleeves rolled down and cuffed up; desert tan rigger's belt snugly fastened, patrol cap removed indoors). Those who arrived with incomplete uniforms apologetically explained the absence of a hat, name tapes or in some cases the entire uniform: the fact that they were dressed differently from everyone else was immediately apparent; it set them apart and made them look somehow lacking, like unofficial adjuncts to the group. Thus the uniform became a disciplinary force – a marker of compliance and a measure of how well we conformed to our surroundings; the manner in which we wore our uniforms communicated how well we were able to follow dress protocol, and follow directions in general. Power was enacted through techniques of improvement: one female school administrator helped me adjust my uniform, and I gratefully accepted her assistance. Although we had been given no formal instruction on how to wear the uniform, those wearing it incorrectly looked out of place, and *appeared* insubordinate. While there was no penalty associated with wearing the uniform incorrectly, unspoken social forces mitigated against non-compliance.

Foucault (1979) reminds us that disciplinary power normalizes individuals and their behavior through spatial structures, temporal rhythms and body movements. Principles, doctrines

and rules of conduct train us to think and act in seemingly “spontaneous” ways, as socially constructed norms, behavior and identities become naturalized. Our identity as a militarized corpus was cultivated by our hosts through logistics and management of our individual bodies: we travelled and ate together in Platoon formation; we were encouraged to spend free time with our Platoon leader and cohort, we developed chants and slogans that reinforced group identity, presentation and perceptions (“3<sup>rd</sup> [Platoon] Herd!” “Hooah 1<sup>st</sup>!”) The normative idea that fellow Platoon members’ appearance and demeanor reflected on the group became a cultural fact. Using the uniform as both signifier of affiliation and evidence of compliance, we collectively legitimated an ideologically based system of military power and respect. The *logos* of the uniform functioned independently from our individual preferences and beliefs, and thus we became the *logos*, and the *logos* became us (Foucault 1994a: 29). Enacting Foucault’s *technologies of the self*, we all participated in militarizing our civilian subjectivities by monitoring and correcting each other, not with the punitive severity of drill sergeants, but by serving as mutually supportive guides in this primary task of conforming. In doing so, we relieved our military hosts of the task of policing us (Foucault 1994b).

## **Pedagogies of Performance and Participation**

“Cadets grow the most when they are out of their comfort zones.”

– Col. Alison Nesbitt, CLE squad leader

The first few days of the training were focused on physical activities, beginning with relatively low-stress, team-building “waterborne exercises.”<sup>23</sup> These activities were the least

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<sup>23</sup> The waterborne exercises entailed teams competing to assemble rafts from boards, barrels and nylon ropes, and then racing each other in vessels of varying degrees of sea-worthiness. Teams also intentionally capsized and re-boarded inflatable Zodiac boats. I did not experience this exercise as difficult because it was a group effort and because I am a capable swimmer. Within our group there were a few non-swimmers and for them, the exercise became very stressful when we had to jump from the rafts and swim until we were able to re-board.

physically challenging and most team-focused; this exercise took pressure off individual performance as it distributed tasks among team members. Our first individual exercise was the high ropes course, located on the main training area of the base. The course was 30-feet high and consisted of a range of tasks, which culminated in trainees leaping from a platform onto a mesh rope wall and descending via zip line down to the ground.

Each training activity began with a similar ritual demonstration of what participants would be asked to do. Each demonstration entailed a well-choreographed performance, beginning with an expert team of physically fit male soldiers performing the required operation with speed, precision, skill, and with no apparent fear. The demonstrations always included special effects: smoke bombs filled the air with thick haze, sounds of explosions and rounds of M-16 automatic weapons being fired, and pulsating heavy metal music. These environmental stimuli evoked a war zone and gave our participation a sense of immediacy. It was difficult to discern if the adrenaline surging through my body was evoked by the sounds of explosions and machine gun fire, the pounding bass-enhanced Death Metal music or the fact that I would be asked to execute a series of difficult physical maneuvers 30 feet about the ground, while balancing on a rope.

I decided not to do this exercise, because a decades-old physical injury had compromised my sense of balance. However, our military hosts made it very difficult for anyone to decline. Practicing Col. Nesbitt's teaching principle that "cadets grow the most when they are out of their comfort zone," and its unspoken corollary: that learning depends not on what you think or believe, but on how you act and perform, our military trainers gave insistent encouragement and motivational support, exhorting "Of course you can do it! Think of how proud of yourself you'll be when you are done!" to keep us involved in the training. We were advised to avoid the pitfall

of approaching exercises with implicitly gendered conceptions of feminized “overthinking,” and instead urged to engage in masculinized dynamics of “learning through action.”

Positive reinforcement of the kind offered by our instructors has been shown to be a highly effective educational tool. Thus, there is sound educational theory behind the pedagogical technique of positive reinforcement, and this intervention clearly helped some of the training participants to overcome self-limiting fears. However, this commitment to task-performance was also a manifestation of ideology. Jaffee (1995) notes that military training is inextricably linked with the display of gendered ideology and the performance of commitment. Thus the relentless and lavishly indiscriminate encouragement used to achieve total participation is also a means of social control (Jaffee 1995: 40). Moreover, I contend that there was an additional pedagogical goal involved in the single-minded push for total participation, beyond simple confidence-building or social conformity. The push to take us out of our comfort zones and into zones of incompetence, public performance and potential physical harm served to create militarized subjectivities through a process of identification through *disidentification*, or attempting physical tasks, and being unable to perform them as well as the soldiers. The young and fit male soldiers set the normative standard for performance against which our attempts were judged, not only by the assembled military and civilian onlookers, but also by ourselves.

Throughout this training there was an implicit – and occasionally explicit – theme that positioned academics not only as Very Important Persons, but also as deficient recruits: desk-jockeys who spent our days in unphysical (and unmasculine, was the implication for the men) intellectual pursuits. The feminized world of the intellectual academic was our “comfort zone,” but it did not seem at all attractive in comparison to the strong, vital, active, competence of the cadets and officer cadre. This theme was portrayed in light-hearted jokes and banter during

informal conversation. As one of the colonels joked to our group on the bus leaving a formal event, “When the Major asked if you all wanted to say anything, I thought, ‘Oh no, the way these guys talk, we’ll never get out of here!’” A university professor in our party then joined in, saying, “Yeah, in PhD school we learn how to speak only in 50-minute increments – we don’t know how else to talk!” The crowd laughed appreciatively, and in doing so participated in the process of military identification, accepting and endorsing the frame set by our military hosts: that what we civilian academics might lack in physical prowess, we made up for in bloviating speech. In this way we were taught to identify with the institutional military through a process of disidentification, by discovering that we were not as fit, nor as competent, and were therefore inferior to our military counterparts.<sup>24</sup> Moje and Lewis note that this type of experiential learning involves both awareness of differences and distinctions, and that ultimately, it represents an act of subject formation through identification with particular communities. These identifications are demonstrated through the enactment of particular identities one knows will be recognized as valuable in particular spaces and relationships (2007: 19). Whether attempting the exercises or declining to participate, we were made aware of that which made us as professional educators different and not-quite-equal to our military counterparts.

Yet this experiential pedagogy was not designed so that we would fail at the physical exercises, and indeed, many in our group were successful. I believe that our military leaders sincerely wanted us to succeed, and in the process, to gain an appreciation of the effort involved in the physical work of soldiering. Participants experienced masculine military prowess as privileged and desired; it was something we sought to emulate and achieve. This happened

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<sup>24</sup> Jaffee’s ethnographic research in the military found that academic prowess, rather than being valued in the military milieu, was more often seen as a liability. Military members “with strong academic backgrounds found it of little practical use or consequence to their social standing. In fact, social display of more than the required or instrumental amount of education was viewed with suspicion and men (much more than women, who were exempt from most of the ‘macho’ standards of military evaluation) were judged in spite of their intellectual achievements, as if being an academic precluded being a tough or efficient soldier” (1997: 39).

through purposefully being put in situations beyond our areas of competence and placed in areas of incompetence. This process of identification through disidentification would lay the foundation for adopting a positive stance towards military members, which is part of the process of producing a militarized disposition. Bourdieu (1977, 1990) argues that in order for any experience to become legitimized, arbitrary interpretive or conceptual models must be made to become – or made to appear – necessary. Although there was great pressure to participate in these exercises, the forces compelling us to participate beyond our skill level were entirely constructed by our Army trainers and served to legitimize their mandate of participation. The social pressure to comply with this mandate was difficult to resist and indeed proved dangerous for some: a few people in our group were injured on the high ropes course. For example, Patty, a female member of our squadron and among the first to volunteer, broke her leg when she fell short in her leap from one station to the next. Her injury notwithstanding, Patty continued the rest of the tour with the group, on crutches and wearing a cast, with indefatigable perseverance; she soldiered on with the squad, boarding the bus, observing the exercises, cheering the participants. At a closing ceremony of the week's activities, our military hosts gave Patty an engraved plaque conferring on her the "Hooah! Award" for most grit and determination. With this honor we were shown that participation was the highest goal, that grit and determination were valued over caution and circumspection, and that one should boldly attempt physical challenges even at the risk of injury.

### **Pedagogies of Non-participation**

In the course of this training, we learned about leadership through pedagogies of participation, and for a few of us, pedagogies of non-participation. The trainers told us that "all



exercises are optional” and yet there was a constant exhortation and expectation to participate and to overcome fears and physical limitations. To decline to participate was perceived as a failing and was met with public humiliation, in the guise of jokes and “friendly” coercion. If a participant continued to opt out, colonels would intensify pressure to participate, so that to successfully decline, one had to become adamant and categorical, to the point of seeming obstreperous and rude.

This friendly coercion exemplifies what Nader (1997) calls *controlling processes* of hegemonic construction. The controlling process of encouragement created a dynamic of power that shaped our ideas about the meaning of participation and about what it meant to be a team player. But beyond the pressure to conform that arises within cultures of mandatory participation, this kind of performance-based pedagogy had the discursive power to elevate one’s status to that of successful “insider” or conversely, to render one irrelevant to the group.

For example, in one exercise we were to rappel down a 50-ft. tower. As with every new exercise, this one began with an opening demonstration/performance: smoke bombs, loud sounds of simulated explosions and automatic gunfire, heavy metal music blaring over loudspeakers. This special effects soundscape immediately heightened sensations of tension and anticipation, and again I felt adrenaline rush through my body, along with shallow breathing and rapid heart rate. Even though I was aware that this was a performance, my body reacted as if there were an actual attack going on. A team of soldiers jumped off the 50-ft. tower and within five seconds they had rappelled to the ground. It was a choreographed performance of military masculinity and an impressive show of fitness and competence. When the last soldier touched ground our group erupted in cheers, whistles and applause.

I encountered Merrie, a dean from a Midwestern college who had experienced a panic

attack on the high ropes course the previous day and had to be rescued by ladder. She and I had both independently decided that we would not attempt the rappelling exercise. However, Col. Nesbitt would not let Merrie decline. Col. Nesbitt, the one female officer attached to our group, physically put the harness on Merrie, walked her up the 10 flights of stairs, and rappelled down with her every step of the way. This gesture of solidarity and support, combined with the backstory of Merrie's humiliating experience the previous day created a dramatic spectacle embodying narratives of sisterhood, empowerment and redemption. It was extremely moving to watch Merrie descend the tower accompanied by Col. Nesbitt; it brought many people, including me, to tears. When Merrie landed on the ground, we all leapt to give her a standing ovation. It was a triumphant moment.

For those of us who declined to do it, there was neither triumph nor applause. Col. Nesbitt dispatched Merrie to convince me to do it, and Merrie implored me to give it a try, saying that it had been the most empowering experience of her life. Col. Nesbitt approached and offered to accompany me as well. Although it was difficult to refuse what seemed like an insistently kind offer, I declined. Having twice attempted—unsuccessfully—to rappel down the 12-ft. practice tower, it did not seem wise to attempt an exercise that clearly required more coordination and upper-body strength than I possessed. It appeared that Col. Nesbitt saw my refusal as a personal rebuke. From that point on in the training, I became the non-participatory Other; and my presence became, if not undesirable, then irrelevant to the group. Earlier that day I had been called a “superstar” because I came from UC Berkeley, and fellow educators afforded me high status for being a member of a top-tier research university. By the end of the day, it seemed as though my fellow educators were avoiding me, as if non-participation were a contagious condition. It is possible that no one was actively avoiding contact with me, but that I

was marginalizing myself from the group, because I had nothing positive to add to the conversations of triumph, of mutual admiration and respect for a job well done.

At this training, physical prowess and grit were the coin of the realm. Conversations – in chow lines, on transport busses, in the bars at the end of the day – all centered on participants’ success-derived euphoria and pride in having overcome their fears. Without that narrative there was little to say, and this became a social liability. Moreover, in this milieu, both successes and failures were seen as a reflection on leadership. When trainees showed reluctance, or were unable to complete the physical challenges, it not only made trainees look bad, but it reflected poorly on squad leaders. Therefore, the leaders were very motivated to make sure everyone participated successfully.

I was taught, and I learned affectively from this exercise that soldiers are more fit, more disciplined, more competent, more brave than I; I was tested and came up short in the comparison. Yet I firmly believe that this pedagogy was not designed to make us feel bad, but to motivate us to want to succeed; to identify with the more fit and more competent soldiers and to want to emulate them. This aspect of the training was very effective: when I called home that night feeling bad about my performance failures, my teenage daughter said, “But Mom, you don’t even *want* to be a soldier!” And this is precisely the point: that even the most war-averse skeptic can emerge from this experience wanting to be like the soldiers and wanting to excel at war-simulation exercises; to fit in with and win the admiration of soldiers. This represents a powerful pedagogy of social control.

## Militarism as Spectacle

The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.

– Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*

We performed the stream crossing, which required us to pull ourselves across a rope tied tautly above a stream. This exercise began with what had become a familiar opening: smoke bombs, sounds of explosions, a team of 10 soldiers running, as if in battle, tying a rope tautly around the tree, then pulling themselves across a 20-foot expanse using only their arms, ankles and feet. As with all of the demonstrations throughout this training, this demonstration relied heavily on symbolism and mythic spectacle.

After the usual ritualized performance/demonstration it was time for our academic contingent to cross the stream; we heard the now-familiar sounds of machine gunfire and smelled the sulfurous smoke bombs. Again, spectacle was used as a carefully manufactured public display to forge a new social relationship: academics as soldiers. Musical and sensory cues were used to create a fetishized experience of reality. This highly orchestrated evocation of combat was meant for the casual consumer of heroic images of war. The chaos and terror of real bombs going off, with real blood and dying, were never meant to be included in this display. There were no sounds of shattering glass or screams of terrified victims. No sirens, no blazing horns, no flames, no panic. No dust of rubble from fallen buildings. It reflected, as Maniaty wrote, referring to TV images of wartime heroics, “not the multi-faceted horror of war but the palatable shorthand of war, in neat packages” (2008: 96). This process of fetishization through spectacle both exalted and concealed: it raised the heroic image of the warrior while erasing the reality of the war, thereby reifying military ideology and enlisting academics as eager, if anxious, pseudo-warriors.

The exercises usually incorporated a youth-oriented soundtrack of heavy metal music, but in this case we would cross the stream to the music of Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries." As this orchestral piece blared over the loudspeakers, World War II newsreels came to mind: both US and Nazi military newsreels used this musical score for their propaganda films. This was a curious musical choice, because the score is also associated with one of the most iconic scenes of the Vietnam-era war film *Apocalypse Now*. In that scene, Wagner's music swells in the background while Vietnamese villagers, men, women and children, flee in terror as US soldiers circling above in helicopters strafe them. Perhaps the choreographers of this exercise did not realize that this musical score is famous for a Hollywood rendition of war atrocities, or perhaps it did not matter to them. The music was intended to evoke heroic battles, to get our adrenaline flowing and prepare us to tackle a physical challenge. As the smoky, sulfuric haze mingled with Wagner's score, the collective cultural memory of past wars and cinematic imaginaries enhanced an intensely physical embodied experience. Waiting my turn to cross the river, I felt a mix of fear and the taste of adrenaline.<sup>25</sup> Thus, this pedagogy drawing on emotion, spectacle, and heightened sensory involvement does not simply teach; it changes subjectivities. By participating in the soldiers' tasks, one identified with the mythic aspects of the war experience. This pedagogy seemed to be effective: participants were energized, and there was a palpable sense of excitement on the grounds as people lined up, nervously awaiting our turn to shine.

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<sup>25</sup> To many people, adrenaline tastes distinctively like ferrous oxide, or copper. One former soldier I interviewed described how he used to taste adrenaline (what he called the "mixture of fear and excitement") in the middle of a battle; he said it tasted like "pennies in my mouth."

## War-making without War

It was strange that at Fort Knox, a site dedicated to training warriors, there was no mention of the current wars in which the US military is engaged. For one week we were shown an educative Army that provided training in leadership, pathways to college funding and mentorship; all of which were apparently disconnected from killing and war. It was as if learning combat skills could be conceived as separate and completely divorced from the reality of fighting in which they might be used. In the push to overcome physical limitations and psychological fears, the ideals of leadership, discipline, education and physical fitness were demonstrated in abundance and made a compelling case to embrace ROTC as a path of training for future leaders. With so much enthusiastic support to excel at these physical challenges, it was not obvious that soldiers were being trained to fight in Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Iran, North Korea or a number of other potential or current wars. It was difficult to see, and much easier *not* to see, how this training connected with war making. However, despite our trainers' best efforts to portray the military mission as essentially humanitarian, it was not possible to sanitize the war completely from our view, and it surfaced, like ambient background noise. Lining up outside the mess hall waiting to eat, we were reminded of the central purpose of this training. As a platoon of cadets marched past in formation, we heard them chant cadences to keep time:

When I go to bars  
 The girls they will say  
 How you earn your living  
 How you earn your pay?  
 My reply was a cold kind of nod  
 I earn my living killing commies for my God

When I go home  
 The hippies they will say  
 How you earn your living?  
 How you earn your pay?

And I replied as I pulled out my knife  
Get out of my way before I take yo' life

With the exception of these young cadets chanting about killing commies for God and stabbing hippies – oddly a-contextual expressions of hatred against historically obsolete or imagined enemies – it was difficult to remember that the purpose of this camp was to condition future officers to lead young people in war. However, it became increasingly clear in the muggy heat of that rural Kentucky summer that this marching exercise was not intended to train soldiers to kill a corporeal human enemy; rather the intention was to teach cadets to march in unison while imagining a fabricated enemy of ideal types, gender-coded in their positions for and against the wars. The act of training cadets to march together became a performance in which masculine and fit young soldiers marched together against the ideologically fabricated threat of hippies and communists, the ideal feminization of the anti-war subject.

Orchestrated and affecting displays of prowess notwithstanding, there were moments of contention and contestation. Not all academic participants in our group were moved to actively support the military on their home campuses. Similarly, not all of the military trainers followed the line of portraying war-making without war. For example, one officer, Lt. Col. Richter, a military professor and the head of the ROTC program at a Midwestern university, talked about the curriculum he uses to teach ROTC cadets, saying that he deviates from the standard centralized curriculum provided by the Army. The standard curriculum, he said, deals in military history and lore and talks about military ideals and philosophy but not about real combat situations. He described a quiz he gives his students, which asks them to compose a condolence letter to the family of a soldier killed on deployment to Afghanistan. At my request, he sent me a copy of the quiz:

### Condolence Letter Quiz

Write a condolence letter to the family of “SPC [Specialist] X” who was killed last week by an IED while on foot patrol on a remote road in Afghanistan. Here’s some background data on “SPC X”:

1. He enlisted in the National Guard in 2006 for financial reasons – wife was diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2005 and neither had the health insurance needed to cover her treatments.
2. Worked as a mid-level manager at one of the major sporting goods stores.
3. He was married with 3 children (ages 7, 4, and 3 months, (boy, boy, girl))
4. His wife has been an integral part of your company’s FRG [Family Readiness Group].
5. Was on his 2<sup>nd</sup> deployment – first was to Iraq.
6. One of his children is a special needs child.
7. He was YOUR DRIVER and was thought of fairly highly in the unit.
8. His MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] was 88M and he really enjoyed being your driver.

The background given to the students in this hypothetical scenario positioned the dead soldier as an economic recruit who has been sent on multiple deployments. Col. Richter said that he felt it was important to humanize soldiers as members of families, as fathers and caregivers of disabled children. The vignette acknowledged that soldiers on deployment often come from modest backgrounds and face hardships beyond those presented by being in the military. Richter said that new cadets typically balk at doing this assignment, but he tells his students if they cannot do this assignment, then they should not join the Army or expect to be an officer, because going to war is part of their job as soldiers, and part of their job as officers is to send soldiers into battles in which some will die. Within the constrained space of the Bold Leader training, amidst the collective erasure of the effects of war, this military officer was the only one who spoke to me about the lethal reality of war.

### **Colonel’s Leadership Panel: “The Ask”**

As military recruitment manuals state, the Educators/Centers of Influence tour forms part of a strategy to cultivate relationships with academics who, it is hoped, will later support military projects in their respective colleges. However, after being immersed in military training and feted as important visitors, members of our group offered to advocate for ROTC programs on



their home campuses before any official request was made, thus taking on military priorities and projects as their own.

Toward the end of the week, we were invited to a luncheon and panel discussion with five colonels and the commanding officer of Fort Knox. Escaping the triple-digit heat of a humid Kentucky July, we enjoyed lunch in the air-conditioned comfort of the base Officer's Club. After hearing introductions from the all-white male panel of colonels, the panel asked for questions from our academic group. A dean from a northern state university set the tone for the discussion when he asked the first question: "How can I best serve the Professor of Military Science [the title given to the chief administrator of campus ROTC programs] at my campus?"

In fundraising lexicon, the moment when potential donors or "prospects" are presented with requests for support is referred to as "the Ask". In posing his question to the colonels and to the assembled audience, the dean precluded and rendered unnecessary any direct requests by the colonels. The dean's question provided the opening for the colonels to promote improved military access to schools. The colonels responded by asking civilian college faculty and staff to serve as facilitators, interpreters and cultural guides in supporting military personnel on campuses. One of the colonels responded: "Academic culture is a foreign environment. We need to be able to translate the conversations. We need to learn the academic culture. Academics have a different leadership style." College faculty were also asked to serve as military recruiters: we were told that the Army is looking for students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields that utilize principles of engineering and scientific rigor. We were told to look for and approach students in these fields who are struggling financially; to steer them toward the Army with the promise of scholarships. "Get faculty, advisors and counselors to realize when a kid's grades are dropping it may be because they are spending hours working at

outside jobs. Have their advisors counsel them to join ROTC if they aren't able to afford college on their own," one colonel said. "The Army should be a Plan A for students." It became clear that the point of this tour was not simply to render campuses more "military-friendly" nor to put a friendly face on the ROTC, but to actively strengthen and increase numbers of Army officers.

Not all of the questions came from participants directly involved in the field of education, but all echoed the desire to help the Army achieve its goals. For example, one participant identified himself as the mayor of a medium-sized city in California. He said, "After this [visit], I am a true believer. What can we elected officials do to help?" The panel of colonels gave the mayor several options that would allow his municipality to contribute to the military effort, beginning with permission to use municipal land for training exercises: "First, we need land – the ability to let kids roam. We need that from cities." One panel member asked for authorization to perform weapons training within city limits, which required cooperation from the local police force: "We train with weapons, or things that look like weapons. We need systems in place for everyone's safety," he said. "We need the support of local law enforcement for that." Finally, the mayor was asked to intervene at the high school level, to use his influence to ensure recruiter access to public schools: "We are looking to go into high schools [to recruit]. Some high schools are still stuck in Vietnam. We need help with that – to get the word out that the military should be Plan A." By invoking historic campus opposition to the Vietnam War, this speaker echoed the often-repeated charge that civilian schools actively oppose the US military and the current wars. This had been a recurring rhetorical refrain throughout this *Operation Bold Leader* visit: ostensible anti-Vietnam War sentiment became the rationale and the imperative to make campuses more welcoming to the US military. The constant reference to college anti-war

demonstrations was noteworthy because of the striking absence of such demonstrations on campuses today.

In the interchange above, the mayor described himself as a “true believer.” With this characterization, he signaled to the colonels and to the rest of the room that he had undergone a transformation, reminiscent of a religious epiphany. It felt as though the meeting had taken on a quasi-religious tone: we were witnessing the testimony of one who had been transformed from an unbeliever to a believer in the military mission, and who was thus redeemed.

A final question from one college administrator to the officers’ panel: “How can we be advocates for you all on our campuses?” offered the opportunity for the colonels to make their most direct appeal for help. At this point, all of the colonels had responded with suggestions on how faculty could help to improve retention rates of ROTC students (for instance, one suggested that professors should give special attention to military students: “helping ROTC students pass courses” so they can keep up their GPAs and stay enrolled). Suggestions ranged from military-style classroom mentorship programs, “Build a chain of command in your classrooms, with senior students acting as cadre. Then work that program into the college itself,” to gentle morale-building military support, “If your ROTC is out there on their own, then there’s a problem. Go out there and give them a little hug.” Clearly the metaphoric hug to which the speaker referred was institutional and structural— that is, the incorporation of military leadership and priorities within the campus administration. These strategies sought to ensure military access on campuses, and the maintenance of a permanently institutional role in the classroom and on campus. As one colonel put it: “Military Science needs to be aligned in a college within the university. We need to be seated at the big table with the big kids. We need to get on academic committees – if you aren’t allied, the gates will be closed.”

While I did not survey the group or even ask participants openly if they would work to increase institutional support of the military on their home campuses, some tour members indicated discomfort with the idea of serving as a source of military support, commenting privately to me that they had reservations about encouraging students to sign up for the military. Some of their reservations were based in the danger involved in joining the Army during wartime; some noted that institutional policies and customs that they felt discriminated against women might make enlistment difficult for their female students.

### **Conclusion: Bringing Militarized Common Sense into Education**

Once at Fort Knox I came to understand the strategic purpose of this training: to influence the ‘influencers’ in educational institutions. Thus, I came to understand it as a prime site for the production of militarized common sense. In *Powers of Freedom*, Nikolas Rose builds on Foucault’s notion of discipline to denote a mode of power that works through the calculated distribution of bodies, spaces, times, and gazes in an attempt to produce subjects “who are at once useful and compliant” (1999: 233). Using the *Operation Bold Leader* training as a case study, I have delineated the mechanisms – specifically a combination of high-stress kinetic training, affective spectacle, and supportive persuasion – through which the US Army attempts to produce civilian college educators who will promote military ends on their campuses. Academics on this tour were immersed in the discourse of the Educative Army: an institution that delivers social goods (such as training in leadership, pathways to college funding, mentorship), in a context of global humanitarianism (carrying out missions to build soccer fields in remote zones of conflict) – activities that are positioned as disconnected from war. Many participants emerged wanting to support military projects on their home campuses. As I

discussed above, physically performing military team-building exercises fosters positive identification (sometimes through the process of disidentification), which can create receptivity to supporting military projects on campus.

Lave (1996) writes that learning should be understood as shifts in identity; that deep, participatory learning involves learning how to think, act, and *inhabit* the new knowledge. Participation in this training created new knowledge and knowledge practice, which resulted in shifting of identities. I am not arguing that participating in a weeklong training fundamentally or enduringly changed participants' identities. However, I do argue that by creating identification with the Army and military practices, and by framing the military mission as disconnected from war-making and war, participants were familiarized to specific and partial aspects of military training, which in turn fostered positive dispositions toward military personnel and the institutional Army. In this military simulation, the reality of war was elided. We were offered a curated civilian version of military culture, which served to recruit academics to the military mission and bridge the gap between military and academic cultures.

Pedagogical techniques employed by the military trainers – embedding academics at military bases to perform military training exercises, facilitating participants' interaction with high-ranking military personnel, utilizing supportive relationships and removing college faculty and staff from their areas of competence while re-locating them to the position of recruits – were designed to foster identification with the military. These strategies of gendered militarization were leveraged to enlist civilian academics to assume masculine identities and advance military objectives on their home campuses, thus producing militarized common sense on college campuses.

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