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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Recruitment, counter-recruitment and critical military studies

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Despite constituting the formal mechanism by which states and militaries persuade and enrol their personnel, military recruitment is poorly understood in the social and political sciences. Tied either to a normative and partisan sociology which aims to provide applied solutions for recruitment and retention programmes, or subsumed under a broad banner, by critical scholars, of a global ‘cultural condition’ of militarisation, studies of recruitment lack the rigour they should be afforded. In exploring these issues, the paper offers a vision of critical military studies which takes seriously the efforts of counter-military recruiting activist and protest movements in the US and UK. Counter-recruitment activism is billed as the most practical way to resist policies of militarism and militarisation. In promoting locally situated, practical solutions to the effects of militarised cultures (often as part of activism in schools), it aims to expose the relationship between, and acts to correct, both local and global injustices. In reviewing the practical and conceptual basis for counter-recruiting strategies, and speaking to broader movements in feminist scholarship on militarisation, the paper demonstrates the importance of critical studies of military recruitment, and in so doing, argues for a critical military studies which is situated amidst the people and places militarism affects.

**Keywords:** military recruitment; counter-recruitment; military sociology; critical geopolitics; feminist geopolitics; militarism; militarisation

#### Introduction

On 8 January 2002 in the US, George Bush Jr. signed into law an educational federal grant Act entitled ‘No Child Left Behind’ (NCLBA). Though seemingly commendable at first glance, it being designed to improve academic attainment in disadvantaged state-funded schools (Zgonjanin 2006), a closer look at NCLBA’s 670 pages revealed a provision that allowed military recruiters near unimpeded access to the personal information of enrolled students. On pain of forfeiture of federal funding, schools covered by the Act were required to release student names, addresses and telephone numbers to military recruiters. As Nava (2011, 465) details, although

The provision gave parents the ability to ‘opt-out’ of releasing this information only if they first submit written notification to the school...NCLBA...does not provide any requirement, instruction, or mechanism to ensure that parents are aware of this.

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The data-gathering proposition in the NCLBA, just as with the Pentagon's Joint Advertising Marketing and Research database (Ferner 2006), is designed, at root, to streamline the solicitations of military recruiters. It focuses a military recruiting and retention budget, which reached \$7.7 billion in 2008 (Vogel 2009), effectively according to gender, age, ethnicity and recreational interests, amongst other variables. Combined with the access granted to military recruiters in that of 'extra-curricular' junior reserve Officer Training Corps programmes, or the Armed Services Aptitude Battery test (a 'Careers' test offered by two thirds of all US schools) (Allison and Solnit 2007), it is clear that military recruiting is an important set of practices in what Harding and Kershner (2011) call a 'deeply embedded' culture of militarism in the US.

Though cultures of militarism differ markedly between places, their being a symptom of nationalisms, political, geographical and historical imaginaries, and a product of the state's apparatus of persuasion, militarism in the UK is also bound to legislative efforts to promote a 'military ethos' in schools. In July 2012, for instance, shadow secretaries Stephen Twigg (education) and Jim Murphy (defence) wrote to the *Telegraph* to outline their vision for the future involvement of the British Armed Forces in schools (Twigg and Murphy 2012), opining that

We are all incredibly proud of the work our Armed Forces do in keeping us safe at home and abroad. They are central to our national character, just as they are to our national security. The ethos and values of the Services can be significant not just on the battlefield but across our society.

Practically, Twigg and Murphy called for the widening of military Cadet schemes; new schools with service specialisms; the use of military advisors and reservists for physical education and other curricula; and a rebalancing of military involvement particularly as it is absent from the majority of state schools. The military might be best-placed to teach, they suggest, a 'service ethos', a sense of 'responsibility and comradeship, and 'the value of hard work' and 'public service'.

Twigg and Murphy's vision, has, since November 2012, variously become a reality with an expansion of the Cadets, a 'Troops to Teachers' programme, and Government support for fledgling military 'free-schools' and academies (Education.gov.uk 2014). Much like critics of NCLBA however, there are some who can't help but see the connection between the Department for Education's 'Ethos' programme and military recruitment. Indeed, as Sangster (2012) notes, along with the fact that the DfE does not provide an examination of what 'military ethos' actually means, or why schools are the best place to teach hierarchy, demand for obedience, or the value of the use of force, there are clear, and clearly troubling, links between the integration of military attitudes into the structure of national education policy and eventual enlistment (Armstrong 2007; Lutz and Bartlett 1995).

Understanding military recruitment as part of political- and social-scientific inquiry is important for three reasons. Firstly, military recruitment is the formal mechanism by which militaries persuade and enrol their personnel, and as such, is a manifestation of the state's obligation to account for itself and its role. The media of recruitment (posters, TV ads, online games) provide opportunities to understand how violent visions, metaphors and templates are central to state-centric narratives of global politics (Rech 2014), and how states deploy nationalisms, domestic histories and mythologies of warfare, and mediate anxiety, threat and otherness in the name of consent and acquiescence (Rowland 2006; Saucier 2010).

Secondly, thinking beyond the state, the media of recruitment and the practices which bring it into being reflect and constitute contemporary militarisms. Successful military recruitment, as with government public relations, requires intricate economies of advocacy involving not only states and militaries, but a range of corporate advertising, creative and market research agencies (Rech 2012). More importantly, military recruitment is arguably part of, and synonymous with, a ‘cultural condition’ of militarisation (Stahl 2010). Namely, imaginaries conducive to recruitment – for example, the unproblematic acceptance of militaries and warrior tropes, a preference for the use of force – are widely present in popular media and are celebrated at public events (Allen 2009; Lewis 2010). Compounding matters is the fact that there is now, much as with advertising, a scant difference between military-industrial, media and entertainment industries in the West (Der Derian 2001; Robb 2004), with the effect that military public relations and recruitment happens at an interstices of reality and fiction, recreation and simulation.

Thirdly, and most pertinent to this paper, understanding military recruitment is important because it reveals possibilities for protesting militarism. Both the NCLBA in the US and the ‘Ethos’ programme in the UK, for instance, have been met by a burgeoning counter-recruitment (CR) movement. Though diffuse, the CR movement has grown amidst ‘the heightened militarism [consequent of the US’ and UK’s]...involvement in long-term wars in Iraq and Afghanistan’ (Harding and Kershner 2011, 79). The methods adopted by CR advocates are varied, as the paper describes, but CR has two main aims. Firstly, it aims to challenge militarism in a concrete fashion. That is, where militaries will always rely upon a population for personnel, CR aims to disrupt the continuance of warfare by denying militaries the wherewithal to fight wars by impeding the ‘structures supporting military enlistment as a viable career option’ (Harding and Kershner 2011, 79). Secondly, in light of a largely ineffective modern anti-war movement, it aims to provide a ‘strategic approach to challenging the roots of unending war and militarization’ (Allison and Solnit 2007, xi). CR is a grassroots movement organised at the community level – manifest as ‘opt-out’ strategies in the US, or CR activities in UK schools (forceswatch.org) – designed, not despite its local focus, to challenge militarism writ large.

In this paper, CR will be used to envision ways to do and think critical military studies. As it will be demonstrated below, studies of military recruitment are limited either by a normative and uncritical outlook, or by a too general attitude toward a ‘global militarism’ (in which recruitment is simply subsumed). Similarly, this paper suggests that ‘critical military studies’ – a realm of inquiry straddling critical geography, political science and critical IR – is limited either by an unwillingness to develop a critical moral stance toward violence, or by a too general attitude toward militarism which is often blind to militarisms affects. Put differently, the manner in which military recruitment has been studied is considered here analogous to current approaches to ‘critical military studies’. The paper argues, however, that by exploring how CR reflects and operationalises the concerns of recent feminist scholarship, that CR is indicative of possible changes to both studies of recruitment and critical military studies. In doing so, it attempts to underscore the possibility for scholarly approaches which

[a]re more accountable to the safety of bodies ...[and which traverse] scales from the macrosecurity of states to the microsecurity of people and their homes: from the disembodied space of neorealist geopolitics [*qua* ‘global militarism’] to a field of live human subjects with names, families and hometowns. (Hyndman 2007, 36)

The paper prompts us to think not only about what the efforts of CR activists tell us about *how* we might do future critical military studies (e.g. of recruitment), but about how protest might alter how we conceptualise our broader notions ‘militarism’ and ‘militarisation’ when we are forced, as when we study CR, to situate the response to their affects.

The paper is divided into three parts, and firstly will review academic scholarship on military recruitment in military sociology, geography and critical IR. Secondly, it provides a more detailed exploration of CR activism and protest in the context of feminist geopolitics and feminist-inspired critical military scholarship. Thirdly, the paper outlines what a feminist geopolitical approach to critical military studies, and the practical work of CR activists, might have to offer those seeking to resist militaries and militarism.

## **Military recruitment**

### ***Military sociology***

The study of military recruitment can be divided into two categories: the ‘military sociological’ and the ‘critical’ (the latter representing work in geography, political science, critical IR, etc.). In the first instance, with its origins in the development of military sociology beginning during WWII, sociological interest in recruitment was prompted by a shift to all-volunteer forces in the Anglo-American world from the 1960s onwards. 1973, for instance, saw an end to the roundly protested Vietnam-era draft, and the implementation of Milton Friedman’s ‘market-model military’ in the US. The draft, Tannock (2005, 165) notes, was protested above all because

it was inequitable and bore heaviest on working-class youth and youth of color; [because] it enabled U.S. military aggression and imperialism abroad, by guaranteeing the state a captive supply of military manpower; and [because] it coerced conscience and violated personal liberty.

The market model, on the other hand, aimed to indulge the US’ ideals of individual freedom and economic efficiency (Rowland 2006) and was designed to repair the military’s tarnished image where the Cold War still necessitated permanent mobilisation (Saucier 2010). Insofar as it necessitated a sharp change to force organisation and publicity efforts, however, the market military posed a set of challenges. Speaking of the US Army, Saucier (2010, 3) suggests that the military met these challenges by, firstly

Provid[ing] [as part of recruitment incentives] better pay, housing, and educational opportunities to compete with the civilian job market, as well as [by] recruit[ing] more women and racial minorities. [Secondly, it took] the unprecedented step of hiring advertisers to create a massive print, radio, and paid national television advertising and recruiting campaign.

In other words, this market model military was a military in which matters of recruitment were commoditised, and more sceptically, in which the soldier became a mere employee (rather than a proud servant of queen and/or country) (Rowland 2006).

Subsequently, military sociologists went to lengths to understand changing motivations for enlistment, particularly where military service might be considered merely as employment. The most popular schema developed to try to understand this change was Moskos’ (1977) institutional/occupational (I/O) model. Under this rubric, where Moskos believed that effective military service relied upon primary group solidarity, the ‘institutional’ tenets of ‘duty to country, loyalty and commitment’ were becoming less of a

motivation to enlist than were 'extrinsic [Occupational] concerns such as comparative pay, acquisition of technical training and [other] incentives' (Eighmey 2006, 308). Moskos was critical of the change to an all-volunteer force because, he thought, occupational concerns were having a damaging effect on the 'group solidarity' essential for an effective military.

Another tradition used to understand the effectiveness and purpose of recruitment is the civil-military relations literature (CMR). CMR asserts that military effectiveness and/or civilian control of the military is tied to the dynamics of the relationship between distinct civil and military spheres. Born of two paradigmatic but opposed military sociological texts – Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* (1957) and Janowitz' *The Professional Soldier* (1960) – CMR was also born of the changing relationship between an increasingly liberalising civil society and Conservative military officer corps. Subsequent scholarship on civil-military relations was split between adherents of the two theorists (Feaver, Kohn, and Cohn 2001). Huntington, for his part, argued that the military's ability to 'protect democratic values [and defeat] external threats' (Burk 2002, 13) required an equilibrium of civil-military relations manifest only in a state of 'objective civilian control' (Nielsen 2005). This approach – often labelled 'divergence' (Born 2003) – is based on the 'recognition of an autonomous military professionalism and on a rigid separation of the [armed forces] from the political [and civilian] sphere' (Caforio 2003, 16). Janowitz, on the other hand, favoured 'convergence' and the bridging of gaps between military, society and the political system (Born 2003). He believed that

genuine civilian control of armed forces could be completely realized only when the military is integrated into the broader network of social relations...[where] not professional warriors, but citizen-soldiers, either conscripts or reservists, would better link the military to its host society through their civilian roots. (Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2003, 133)

Though differently political (Huntington espouses a liberal theory, and Janowitz a civic republicanism), both theories imply policies of recruitment and retention. Huntington's is a vision calling for an increased presence of a careerist, politically neutral officer corps. Janowitz' involves 'increasing civilian involvement in officer professional education' (Nielsen 2005, 67) and efforts toward 'embedding military service within a system of voluntary national service and...programs of political education [linking] the professional training of soldiers to national and transnational purposes' (Burk 2002, 14).

Both the I/O model and CMR retain an enduring legacy. For instance, associated most strongly with the work of Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn (Feaver and Kohn 2000, 2001; Feaver 1999; Kohn 1994) and an 'American Renaissance' in military sociology beginning in the 1990s (Nielsen 2005), CMR remains tied to theorising the 'civil-military problematic' (Feaver 1996). This is a challenge to 'reconcile a military strong enough to do anything the civilians ask them to with a military subordinate enough to do only what civilians authorize them to do' (Feaver 1996, 149). Since the 1990s, however, such concerns have been considered in more directly cultural terms, with military sociologists exploring the implications of a 'culture gap' between civil and military spheres (Avant 1996/1977; Cohen 1997; Rahbek-Clemmensen et al. 2012).

Neither I/O nor CMR remain uncontested or undebated, however (see *Armed Forces & Society* 24 v.3), and there exist a number of critiques of the foundations for and reality of a split between 'institution' and 'occupation' (Chodoff 1983; Faris and Burk 1982; Harries-Jenkins 1986; Padilla and Laner 2001). Considering the focus of this paper, however, what is less important than attempts to extend or refute either the I/O model or CMR is the epistemological context into which they fit. Namely, whilst military

sociology has experienced recent conceptual jolts – ones associated with Moskos et al.'s (2000) notion of the 'postmodern military', scholarship around military work and citizenship (Cowen 2005, 2008) or the emergence of non-state military actors in global conflict (Sheppard 1998; Avant 2000; Singer 2002; Fredland 2004; Carbonnier 2006) – the study of military recruitment in military sociology has not been so influenced. Therefore, social scientific understandings of recruitment remain tied to the instrumental and normative approaches which parallel the theorisation and academic investigation of I/O and CMR, with two implications.

Firstly, there is the issue of analysis. The predominant method of analysis in sociologies of military recruiting and I/O, as Jenkins et al. (2011, 38) note, is that of a 'hypothetico-deductive epistemology and a resultant emphasis on positivist methodologies and the development and testing of models of social relations'. For example, Withers (1977) – focusing on estimations of British recruiting policy and simulations of recruit behaviour – employs a regression analysis of manpower objectives; Padilla and Laner (2001, 2002) use a content analysis of recruiting images to assess trends in US recruiting; and Eighmey (2006; Miller, Clinton, and Camey 2007; Yeung and Gifford 2011) analyses telephone survey data on youth motives. Similarly, recent and contemporary CMR uses survey-based approaches to public and military attitudes toward the 'culture gap' (Feaver and Kohn 2001 and the Triangle Institute for Security Studies), and relies upon testing relationships between dependent and independent variables (Feaver 1999). Whilst there do exist a small number of qualitative analyses of recruiting images (Hockey 1981; Rowland 2006; Saucier 2010), military promotional iconographies (Roderick 2009), and the disparity between the image and reality of military service (Shyles and Hocking 1990), little has been done to consider, in particular, the power of the image to affect dispensations toward military service. Neither has there been much attempt to understand what Jenkins et al. (2011) call 'military identities' and situated, local and '(inter)subjective experiences' which are clearly part of military promotion (Allen 2009). Summarily, as Jenkins et al. (2011) continue, the retention of hypothetico-deductive approaches in parts of military sociology when the broader discipline was experiencing its cultural turn explains in part the limited nature of social scientific studies of military recruitment.

Secondly, there is the issue of the purpose and critical imperative of military sociology vis-à-vis the 'close institutional links between sociologists and military establishments' (Jenkins et al. 2011, 39). Considering the aforementioned shift to a 'market model military', these links shouldn't be surprising. Indeed, with the establishment of all-volunteer militaries, 'recruitment and management became an essential function of... military operations' (Tannock 2005, 3). As Saucier (2010, 4) notes of the US Army after the Vietnam War, much of what would make this 'new' military effective was an 'image-making system'; a system in which 'army leadership, experts [i.e. sociologists], and advertisers became acute cultural and social analysts in order to sell the army to a community of American consumers'. But the military-social collaboration between scholars and military institutions has three effects:

First, it facilitates access to data, whether primary or secondary. Second, collaboration involves gatekeepers, who by virtue of their role have significant authority and power in shaping research trajectories...Third, collaboration requires accepting military institutional definitions of acceptable methodologies, conceptualisations of the social world that underpin the development of research questions, and understandings of how research fits a broader 'national interest' dictum. (Jenkins et al. 2011, 44)

The implications of this for social scientific studies of recruitment specifically are telling. The I/O model and the methods used to survey CMR have, for instance, directly influenced US Department of Defence (Sackett and Mavor 2003, 2004) and Army (Szayna et al. 2007) research into recruitment to the extent that there is little difference between sociological recruitment research from ‘military’ and ‘non-military’ perspectives (McCrory 2002). CMR, moreover, is designed to be simply ‘one aspect of national security policy’ (Huntington 1957, 1) theorised, as Bland’s (2001, 536) writing reveals, ‘For the Good of the Service’. In following an ‘engineering’ rather than ‘enlightenment’ model of inquiry (Higate and Cameron 2006), military sociology thus works predominantly ‘accord[ing] to...the conceptual world-views of [military] forces and their governing institutions’ (Jenkins et al. 2011, 44).

### *Critical military studies*

Though reflecting the aspirations of this paper more closely than sociological work on military recruitment, work in the ‘critical’ category is no less problematic. Starting from the assumption that recruitment inheres in popular culture and everyday life, this work has, notably, used film, games and gaming as its empirical focus. For example, in geography and the field of critical geopolitics, Ó Tuathail (2005, 373) suggests that whilst it is unclear to what extent Hollywood cinema (in this case *Behind Enemy Lines*) inspired individuals to join the military, those who were are sure to be ‘negotiating a world that is a great deal more complex than that presented in the movie’. Much of the critical geopolitical literature, similarly, is concerned with the difference (or not) between the ‘image’ and ‘reality’ of geopolitics and with the fact that popular and militarised visions of the world are problematic insofar as they go toward influencing how people respond individually to global politics (Dalby 2008; Klien 2005).

Moving to games and gaming, Der Derian (2001), in his work on the Military Industrial Military Entertainment Network, has set the stage for research which tracks the blurring of boundaries between military training simulations and commercial games, and which reveals games as instruments of recruitment and consent. With a focus on military-themed, first-person shooters, much of this work considers the propensity for games to mirror real-world conflicts (Power 2007), to ‘cast...players themselves in [for instance] the War on Terror’ (Stahl 2006, 112), to reproduce common-sense iconographies, aesthetics and imaginaries of cultural Others (Giesemann 2007; Shaw 2010; Sisler 2008), and to influence ‘understandings of war, peace and politics’ (Salter 2011, 362). A key game where recruitment is concerned – one with its own sub-genre of critical studies (Schulzke 2013) – is *America’s Army*, which was commissioned by the US Army expressly for the purpose of recruitment and the amassing of demographic data. The gaming literature has also charted the literal presence of game-based recruiting in civil spaces such as with *America’s Army Experience* roadshows (Allen 2009; Lewis 2010), and also provides insights into how game-based militarisms might be resisted (Stahl 2011).

But as with military sociology, though providing important insights, the ‘critical’ literature is limited in two ways. Firstly, as reflected in the work of Stahl (2010, 48), its critical stance assumes a pervasive global culture of militarisation where recruitment, crucially, has



Expanded beyond its normal confines to become a generalized cultural condition. While the appeal to actually join the military is one aspect of this condition, the interactive war consistently offers the civic sphere a standing invitation to become a ‘virtual recruit’.

The first limitation of this work is, then, too general an attitude toward the persuasive effects of contemporary popular militarised cultures and a weak distinction between the ‘virtual’ and ‘actual’ recruit. This paper does not dispute that recruiting has become implicated in broader cultural changes in the mediation of war (i.e. as a shift from ‘spectacular’ to ‘interactive’ war, Stahl (2010)). Rather, it argues that an understanding of the production of media specifically by and for states and militaries is essential wherever militaries use popular culture to persuade prospective personnel. As the opening of the paper revealed, military recruitment is a manifestation of the state’s obligation to account for itself and its role and a focused deployment of nationalisms, domestic histories, mythologies of warfare and senses of anxiety and threat. But recruitment is also a process through which people are persuaded to *act upon* such imaginaries; a fact that denotes the not subtle distinction between ‘virtual’ and ‘actual’ enrolment.

Secondly, these critical approaches do not often demonstrate the situated, local and embodied experience of militarism and military recruitment. As it has been demonstrated already, recruitment happens in-place – in schools, for example, and as part of spectacular events such as airshows. In this sense, a predominant focus in the critical literature on games is telling. Namely, even if we discount the fact that military recruiting happens in-place and as part of ‘real-world’ scenarios, the persuasive potential of military-themed games is not somehow trapped on the screen as representation. Gaming happens at the interface of discourses, screens, devices and players, and is embodied and affective. In kind, rather than confining an analysis to representations, or to the general ways in which the citizen is made ‘by default an interactive participant [in an “interactive” war]’ (Stahl 2010, 38), a critical approach to recruitment and militarism should, rather, emphasise the specific effects of military promotion and a ‘becoming military’ for individuals.

In summary, both military sociological and critical engagements with recruitment are limited, lacking either a critical normative stance toward violence, and/or a reading of the specific, situated and individual effects of militarism. By further exploring the efforts of CR activists in the context of feminist scholarship, the paper now considers how these issues might be remedied as part of a re-envisioned critical military studies.

### Counter-recruitment

The exploration of counter-recruitment in this paper is informed, as the following subsection describes, by recent feminist scholarship on geopolitics and militarisation. However, scholarly discussions of sex, gender, diversity and inclusivity in Western militaries (in relation to recruitment) are not new, being evident in military sociological literatures also. Growing diversity in militaries, as Winslow, Heinecken, and Soeters (2003) note, relates to a move from conscription to all-volunteer forces and ‘fully-integrated’ postmodern militaries (Moskos et al. 2000) where recruiting quotas are met by the tapping into of increasingly ethnically diverse populations, and particularly, by targeting women. The opening up of posts to women, as Woodward and Winter (2007, 39, 2004) note of the British context, implies a range of issues such as ‘recruit selection and training, the evolution of equal opportunities and diversity policies, and...the exclusion of women from direct combat posts’. Military sociology, for its part, has tracked the arguments for the greater integration of women service personnel in differing national

contexts by outlining a ‘theory of the variables that affect the degrees and nature of women’s participation’ (Segal 1995, 758). Whilst the need for personnel (a military variable) has arguably been the driving force behind expansion of women’s military roles (Nuciari 2003), other variables associated with ‘social structure’ and ‘culture’ have been increasingly important in subsequent research which has explored the social construction of gender in the military (Archer 2013; Baaz and Stern 2013; Chapman 1999; Evans 2013; Kümmell 2002; Sasson-Levy 2003; Stachowitsch 2013). Gender is clearly an issue for recruitment and influences, in a basic sense, the division of the recruit pool according to sex (Woodward and Winter 2007). Yet whilst military sociology remains wed to questions around sex distributions, broader literatures point to the discursive importance of gender difference, gender relations and gender identities to military practices and militarism (Enloe 1983, 2007). Where militarism sees the ‘conflation of specific forms of masculinity with military identity’ (Woodward and Winter 2007, 3), recruitment thus becomes a matter of judgements about physical capability and potential, about gender more broadly as a marker of difference, and about whether appropriate ‘male’ and ‘female’ behaviours are commensurate with the ideal of the ‘soldier’.

In parallel with this latter and more nuanced approach to the gendered aspects of militarism, the paper adopts a feminist-inspired approach to the CR movement. Specifically, it uses feminist geopolitics and critical military studies to prompt a more situated and grounded understanding of how military-social norms (including, but not limited to, military masculinities) circulate, become affective *and might be resisted* in civilian spaces.

### ***Feminist geopolitics and critical military studies***

Feminist geopolitics emerged as a challenge to the field of critical geopolitics. Critical geopolitics can be thought of as ‘the moniker for the writings of a loose assemblage of political geographers concerned to challenge the taken for granted geographical specifications of politics’ (Dalby 2010, 280). Its aim is to undermine the tradition of geopolitics where it ‘offers for many a reliable guide of the global landscape [employing the use of] geographical descriptions, metaphors and templates’ (Dodds 2007, 4). Critical geopolitics is also, as Dodds (2007, 5) continues, concerned with how these descriptions, metaphors and templates ‘generate particular understandings of places, communities and accompanying identities’ and with the imaginative, discursive and cultural work that constitutes and reproduces dominant, state-centric narratives of global politics. It is, after Ó Tuathail (1996, 256):

One of many cultures of resistance to Geography as imperial truth, state-capitalized knowledge, and military weapon...[and] as small part of a much larger rainbow struggle to decolonize our inherited geographical imagination so that other geo-graphings and other worlds might be possible.

However, a vital part of feminist interventions into critical geopolitics is an argument that, though a fruitful mode of interrogating knowledge production and the geo-graphing of politics (Hyndman in Jones and Sage 2010), critical geopolitics is nevertheless limited. For instance, Smith (2000; Sparke 2000) argues that critical geopolitics runs the risk – amidst its reliance on the analytics of Derrida and Foucault – of merely bolstering the cause of linguistic post-structuralism rather than dealing with the material realities of geopolitics. Though demonstrating that IR theory and geopolitics is gendered (Dalby

1994), critical geopolitics is also charged with being a similarly masculinist practice considering its perennial focus on the Big Men of historical and classical geopolitics (Hyndman 2004). And as Hyndman (in Jones and Sage 2010, 317) continues, though quite successful at decentering the nation-state and in its quest to destabilise the normative, 'it rarely engages in transformative or embodied ways of knowing and seeing'.

Regarding approaches to geopolitics, militarism and militarisation in IR, similar and parallel contradictions are apparent. For example, as Sylvester (2012, 483–484) notes:

To date, much of IR has been operating comfortably in a world of theoretical abstractions – states, systems, power, balances, stakeholders, decision-makers, peace, war – tacitly leaving *people and war* to journalists, novelists, memoirists, relief workers, anthropologists, women's studies and social history to flesh out. (my emphasis)

Critical IR, much as with critical geopolitics, therefore misses out, Sylvester (2012, 484) continues, on 'the key elements of war: its actual mission of injuring human bodies and destroying normal patterns of social relations'. For Sylvester (2011), McSorley (2013) and others concerned to explore War, Politics and Experience, remedying the oversights of IR in relation to militarism and militarisation means drawing 'attention away from strategic and national interest politics of war to the prospect of theorizing war from a starting point of individuals' (Sylvester 2011, 1), and particularly, to that of understanding how war engages and acts on bodies. For geographers like Dowler (2012), Katz (2007) and Nicley (2009), it is *place* which must figure as the locus for a renewed or reinvigorated investigation of violence and militarisation. Indeed, militarisation, Dowler (2012, 492) suggests, should be considered a 'type of gendered sovereignty that is not only fixed at the scale of international hierarchies, but also rooted in embodied place-making practices'.

It is in the context of the combined aspirations of feminist geopolitics, critical IR and feminist geography that the paper sites the concerns and practices of the CR movement. In the following discussion, a twin parallel is drawn between the omissions from current critical military studies (outlined above) and the affordances of feminist approaches to militarism and militarisation. Put more directly, the remainder of the paper frames the efforts of counter-recruiters as, firstly, developing a critical normative stance toward violence by implicitly underscoring 'the universal value of human life (and death)' (Hyndman 2007, 36) and the urgency of countering and protesting the militarisation of societies. Secondly, by shifting the scale at which militarism is thought to operate and by providing more 'epistemologically embodied accounts of war that more effectively convey the loss and suffering of people affected by it' (Hyndman 2007, 36) CR will be shown to prioritise a reading of the specific, situated and local effects of militarism.

### ***Practicing counter-recruitment: protesting militarism***

As noted earlier in the paper, the means and methods of the CR movement in the US, UK and Canada are varied. However, there are three predominant tactics used by counter-recruiters. Firstly, and perhaps most straightforwardly, CR activists produce and distribute promotional materials and occupy certain spaces in order to counter the message and efforts of military recruiters. As the opening examples also implied, much current CR activism takes place near or on school campuses, and as Allison and Solnit (2007) note, this might take a number of different forms. Flyering outside school property is one of the easiest and most effective methods of CR, and if done at strategic times, its message – perhaps a simple printed list of the '10 things you should know before you join' – might

well become the subject of class discussion during the school day. As the authors continue, flyering might be complimented by ‘tabling’ on campuses at lunchtime, at sporting events or careers fairs. Here, a static presence is used to distribute other literatures like Andreas’ (2003) comic book *Addicted to War*, badges, buttons and other symbolic materials.

Counterpropaganda – the defacement of military and recruiting iconographies – is also a popular tactic for CR activists who have adopted an approach which uses flyers or postering. For instance, drawing upon a broader culture of the remixing and ‘jamming’ of military recruitment and militarised popular cultures (Graham 2010; Stahl 2011), CR campaigners have quite successfully remixed US recruiting so as the ‘Army of One’ campaign became a series of ‘An Army of None’ posters (nnomy.org). A culture of flyering, tabling and postering in the CR movement also follows an ethic of the free distribution of information and artwork. Both Penner (2006) and Allison and Solnit’s (2007) accounts of the CR movement, for example, are useful examples of the history of CR in the US and Canada and billed as ‘organising kits’ for aspirant counter-recruiters, and as such, are free of copyright restrictions.

The precise mission of CR where it centres on the distribution of materials and the maintenance of presences in/around schools is diverse and, importantly, context-specific. But a number of overlapping objectives are readily observable. As Allison and Solnit (2007, xv–xvi) argue, CR is, firstly, about informing people as to ‘what military recruits are used for in the world, understanding war, and creating viable alternatives [with a view to breaking] out of the deadlock of militarism’. In this sense, the distribution of flyers, the putting up of posters and the maintenance of presences at careers fairs has been important to the offering alternative careers advice – or ‘vocational visions’ (Harding and Kershner 2011) – especially in the (nearly always poorer) communities relied upon by recruiters.

CR is, similarly, about producing and distributing materials which challenge the ‘core myths’ of military service, including those which suggest the military provides relatively equitable employment and post-service benefits and that ‘the military provides a healthy environment in which to live, work, learn, and develop oneself mentally and physically’ (Tannock 2005, 169). Moreover (as described in more detail below), CR involves providing the material wherewithal to ‘opt-out’ of naturalised and seemingly mandatory data-gathering programmes like the NCLBA, and in doing so, reveals an important resistive impulse. In many cases, activism of this sort emerges as a direct response to military presences at schools and in communities – emerging as counter-presences and counter-visibility – with the effort to distribute materials being a subversion of the symbolic violence of military recruiters-on-campus.

The second tactic used by CR activists is legal challenge. Such approaches have been markedly useful in challenging the access granted to recruiters to US public schools. A key example of the CR as, essentially, a legal practice, is that of the battle for ‘equal access’. As Nava’s (2011) commentary on US educational and constitutional law describes, after having been barred from her local school by a district superintendent (who considered the presence of counter-recruitment ‘peace tables’ in school as ‘unpatriotic’), CR activist Sally Ferrel of Wilkes County, NC, was forced to litigate against the school district. Legal challenges against military recruiters of this sort happen, however, in a complex landscape of historical precedent. Where schools are free to make policy surrounding who gains access to the campus (be it either recruiters or CR activists), for instance, many public schools are wary of denying access to the military for fear of violating the more recent stipulations of the NCLBA. Schools may allow access to CR activists, however, on the basis of previous legal contestations around ‘viewpoint

discrimination' and the 'equal access act', both of which highlight the legal basis for providing alternative voices and viewpoints to be present wherever the military deign to recruit (Jahnkow 2006). The outcome of a number of legal challenges to the culture of recruiting in the US now means that

the question of military service (whether voluntary or compulsory) [is now recognised as] a controversial political (not economic or academic issue), and if a school establishes a forum from one side to present its views on the issue, it must give opponents equal access to the forum. (Allison and Solnit 2007, 72)

Therefore, as Allison and Solnit (2007) note, an integral though straightforward element of CR should be knowledge of your legal rights as a student, parent, teacher or community member.

Insofar as the CR movement has, in this way, secured key legal and policy victories (Harding and Kershner 2011), resistance to the fated NCLBA has unfolded along similar legal lines. Where, as mentioned earlier in the paper, NCLBA does not make it incumbent upon schools to offer the opportunity to opt out of the data-sharing part of the Act, CR has been targeted at this issue in particular. As Zgonjanin's (2006) account of the NCLBAs legislative and legal history details, the effort of CR activists has forced a fundamental re-think not only of how military recruiting happens in schools, but the broader nature and purpose of federal funding. Revealing a range of contentions around the Act, Zgonjanin (2006, 195) argues that

The mandated disclosure of student information to military recruiters does not meet the purpose of the NCLB[A] [it being at odds with the aim to improve education for the most disadvantaged], and furthermore, it compels speech by students and parents in opposition of such disclosure [insofar as it requires an active 'opting-out'], violating clearly established law under the First Amendment. [Furthermore] Section 9528's opt-out provision is an impermissible exercise of the government's power to regulate. It violates freedom of speech and the right to anonymity and by doing so imposes an unconstitutional condition on recipients of federal funds.

Save having NCLBA or the offending provision around opt-out repealed, CR and anti-war coalitions are, thus, focusing strongly on 'opt-out' organising with the primary aims being

To ensure that school districts live up to their legal mandate to inform students and parents of their right to opt-out; [and] to encourage students and parents to sign and submit opt-out forms to their school districts. (Tannock 2005, 164)

As Allison and Solnit (2007) note, 'opt-out' campaigns have resulted in best-practice policies amongst the CR movement which pressure schools to place opt-out checkboxes on student emergency contact forms, and to recognise that an 'opt-out' decision carries over a whole school career, rather than one year, as it stands currently.

The third and least developed CR tactic is the direct lobbying of government around recruiting and retention policies. A key organisation working in this area is the UK-based Forces Watch charity ([forceswatch.org](http://forceswatch.org)). Forces Watch has three overriding priorities: to observe and respond to ways in which the military is being promoted as a normal part of everyday life; to make the argument and support people in resisting, military presences in schools; and to advocate for change in policies of military recruitment, the conditions of service, rules around contentious objection and the human rights of soldiers through the lobbying of government ministers. Though providing regular briefings and reports on UK

military policies, lesson plans and other educational materials, and organising public debates, Forces Watch also attempts to directly influence government policy in these ways.

A key issue for the charity has been, in this sense, the stark fact that the UK is the only country in Europe and the only country on the UN Security Council to have a minimum age of 16 for enlistment into the Armed Forces. Criticised by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, and by the UK Parliament's own joint committee on Human Rights, government and Forces policy in this area is critiqued by a coalition of anti-militarist charities including Forces Watch who have argued that, until the age of 18, recruited service personnel should have the right to a discharge from service if one is sought, even during the period between the second and sixth month of service (the Discharge As Of Right period). Due to campaigning by Forces Watch and others, June and July 2011 saw a number of changes to government policy in this area including the right for newly recruited personnel to leave the military before their 18th birthday, along with a shortened – ‘cooling off’ – maximum notice period of 3 months, and the reduction of notice required by adult personnel to 6 months. These changes, suggests Emma Sangster of Forces Watch, have ended ‘the injustice of the six-year trap, which forces 16- and 17-year old to remain in the military until 22’ (forceswatch.org press releases).

### *Conceptualising counter-recruitment/situating militarism*

As this outline of Anglo-American CR demonstrates, CR activism is clearly bound to a critical moral stance toward military violence and the value of human life. This is particularly the case where the aim is to protect the expression of counter-narratives to militarised cultures, to protect privacy, to free the genuinely emancipatory potential of education from military interference, and as with Forces Watch, to align military recruiting policies with more broadly held expectations surrounding human rights. CR is in this sense about ‘emphasising clearly defined – and what organizers see as achievable – goals linked to the “symbolic violence” represented by military recruiters in schools and local communities’ (Harding and Kershner 2011, 80). But more than this, CR accounts for violence and militarism more broadly conceived where, for example, flyering and remixing involves a tacit critique of contemporary war in the Middle East and of the military-industrial complex. CR is, drawing on Harding and Kershner (2011, 101–2) again, thus profoundly:

*anti-militarist*, [rather than] simply anti-war. [CR] is aimed at countering that part of...culture which promotes violence and war as the optimal response to conflict...[and] is thus a means of resisting not just one war, but the larger culture of militarism whose survival depends in part on young people's passive acceptance of military values and ideals.

However, considering the framing of this paper, CR's tendency to situate anti-militarist practice amidst the lives and places that militarism affects, warrants further discussion.

As noted at the outset, a primary aim of CR is to offer a strategic approach to challenging militarism where the modern anti-war movement has been largely ineffectual. CR, in this sense, is a pragmatic solution and is concerned with the fact that without troops, governments ‘can't fight war...maintain an occupation...[or] begin new wars’ (Allison and Solnit 2007, 145). For adopting such an approach, however, CR is not without detractors. For instance, as Jahnkow (2006) argues, speaking of US schools, if ‘opt-out’ awareness strategies are the only ones adopted, activists undoubtedly miss a

range of other recruiting tactics used in schools and beyond (e.g. cadet schemes). Similarly, Tannock (2005) argues that a focus on individual potential recruits, schools or communities might be too parochial where the concern is to remove militaries and militarism from our societies more broadly. Such strategies, moreover, cannot account for the cultures of militarism which enable military presences in schools in the first place.

Such critiques accepted, this paper argues that it is precisely this sensitivity to the individual and local – where it is readily connected to militarism broadly conceived – which might inspire a critical military studies in theory and in practice. CR is a useful example of this because, as Allison and Solnit (2007, xiii) argue, it critiques all the adverse effects war has on communities without moral or geographical relativism and, vitally, seeks ‘connections between injustice abroad and at home, [between] local struggles [and] global ones’. This multi- and trans-scalar imaginary has its roots in peace movements since the Vietnam War which have allied social struggles for equality at home (e.g. the overrepresentation in Western militaries of people from working class and/or minority ethnic groups) with the misuse of lethal power and loss of life abroad. CR also understands that ‘pragmatic actions, like keeping youth from joining the military, are most effective when they have as their end the transformation of the root causes of war, undemocratic governance, and injustice’ (Allison and Solnit 2007, xviii). But most importantly, the practical philosophy of CR recognises the interconnectedness and multi-scalar phenomenon of militarism and that, despite decades of vocal anti-militarism since the Cold War, militarism starts and ends at home. In this sense, CR activists would argue that

War cannot be fully apprehended unless it is studied up from people and not only studied down from places that sweep blood, tears and laughter away, or assign those things to some other field to look into; and [that people] too comprise international relations, especially the relations of war, and cannot therefore be ignored or relegated to collateral status. (Sylvester 2012, 484)

All of this is to say that, along with being anti-militarist and engaged with the business of the defence of human life, CR is also a form of protest which doesn’t resign considerations of ‘militarism’ and ‘militarisation’ merely to the sphere of international relations, states, nations and sovereignty. Rather, it is a practice and ethic which attempts a globally informed, whilst epistemologically situated ‘politics of security at the scale of the civilian body’ (Hyndman 2004, 309). CR is committed to exposing and remedying the specific and individuated effects of militarism, where militarism is conceived of as an interconnected phenomenon, affective often simultaneously at scales from the body to the global.

### **Conclusion: toward a critical military studies**

Military recruitment has, to date, been studied by scholars across a spectrum of the social and political sciences. The outlook and aspirations of the various disciplines and sub-disciplines engaged with it differ widely, but all would concur, however differently, that recruitment is a process through which individual and social identity-work meets an apparatus of persuasion, and inflects through nationalisms, domestic myths of warfare and the warrior, and geographical imaginaries. Studies of military recruitment, however, have the potential to reveal more than this and could be vital starting points in resisting militarism. In reviewing the efforts of CR movement, the paper has revealed possibilities for thinking critically about not only the constructedness of the imaginaries inherent to

recruitment, but how military recruitment and the societal structures which enable it to happen might be questioned. In this way, the paper pointed to the limitations of the current literatures. Where existing work often fails is in lacking a critical normative stance toward violence and an underscoring of the universal value of human life. It also fails in not providing a reading of the specific, situated and local effects of militarism. The CR movement, therefore, demonstrates how a more refined and resonant approach to recruitment and everyday militarism – framed by dissident scholarship around the protestation and ending of political violence (Hyndman 2007) – might be practiced and theorised.

In moving forward, what should hopefully be implied by this paper is a need for more research around military recruitment. But more fundamentally, an attempt has been made here to use CR to envision a theory and practice of ‘critical military studies’. What this paper doesn’t argue for, however, is a critical military studies *modelled* on CR. Taking inspiration from the efforts of anti-military activists should always be done in knowledge of the entanglements of peace, resistance and power (Sharp et al. 2000). In this sense, CR is not without its problems. Most importantly, CR, much like military sociological CMR and the I/O model, is based on the assumption of distinct civilian and military spheres whereby CR activists identify (normatively and much like CMR surveys) the ‘military values’ which go toward militarising civil society. The extant critical military literature, as we’ve seen, would contest such a reading and would argue rather for a relational reading of both ‘civilian’ and ‘military’ and that the lines between the two matter only insofar as they are indistinct.

This paper calls for a critical military studies which is a synthesis of these two approaches grounded in a more responsible analysis (after Megoran 2008). This would be a critical military studies which recognises militarism as a global phenomenon manifest as the blurring of civilian and military spheres, *and* there are distinct, situated practices (like recruitment) whereby certain militarised dispositions, and a ‘becoming military’, is fostered and taught. Though highly problematic, work in military sociology and on CMR in particular is adept at identifying these sorts of dispositions (i.e. widely held beliefs and subjectivities around militarism and militarisation), and would provide the critical scholar a good starting point. But where there is work to do to explore the shared concerns of critical geographical, geopolitical and IR-inspired feminist analyses of militarism and militarisation, a more resonant critical military studies means, fundamentally, ‘taking sides...[and adopting] embodied ways of seeing war, witnessing and protesting violence’ (Hyndman 2004, 319). It would mean situated apprehensions of militarism and militarisation at, and across, multiple scales. But would also entail, as with CRs ethic of non-violent futures, taking seriously the theory, practice and radical potential of protest.

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