Not Ready for College, but Ready for the Military: A Policy Challenge for the College- and Career-Readiness Agenda

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Abstract: This essay examines the *Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruiting Information* (Section 9528) provision of the No Child Left Behind Act and its influence on the success of intervention programming for college and career readiness in Title I high schools. Using critical policy analysis, I show how Federal and State policies potentially unfold in local contexts and influence students' ability and desire to participate in intervention programming aimed at increasing readiness for college and career. I ask whether readiness for college and career includes readiness for the military and argue that readiness intervention programming designed to provide students labeled as not college ready a pathway to postsecondary education may fail if they do not address the permanent legal presence of military recruiters inside underserved schools.
Keywords: College and career readiness; military; military recruitment; critical policy analysis; higher education; United States; education policy; intervention programming; Title I

No Está Listo para la Universidad, Pero si para las Fuerzas Armadas: Un Desafío Político para la Agenda para la Preparación Universitaria y Profesional
Resumen: Este artículo examina el *Programa de Reclutamiento y Acceso de Estudiantes a las Fuerzas Armadas y de Información sobre el Reclutamiento de Estudiantes* (Sección 9528) apartado de la ley del 2001 *No Child Left Behind (*NCLB) y su influencia en el éxito en la intervención para la

preparación universitaria y profesional en las escuelas secundarias que atienden estudiantes en situaciones de alta pobreza. Utilizando el Análisis Crítico de Políticas, muestro cómo las políticas federales y estatales se desarrollan en contextos locales e influyen en la capacidad y el deseo de los estudiantes de participar en programas destinados a aumentar la preparación para la universidad y la carrera profesional. Sostengo que las intervenciones exitosas para los estudiantes etiquetados como "no preparados para la universidad" debe abordar las barreras materiales y discursivas que desafían la elección de la universidad, interrogando críticamente la idea de que el alistamiento militar es una vía más eficaz y eficiente para la movilidad social que la universidad.
Palabras-clave: preparación para la universidad; programación de intervención; educación más alta; militar; el reclutamiento militar; equidad

Não Está Pronto para a Faculdade, mas para as Forças Armadas: Um Desafio Político para a Agenda de Preparação Universitária e Professional
Resumo: Este artigo analisa o Programa de Recrutamento de Estudante para as Forças Armadas e Acesso à informação de Recrutamento de Estudantes (Seção 9528) da lei de 2001 *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) e sua influência nos programas de preparação universitária e professional nas escolas secundárias que servem alunos em situações de extrema pobreza. Usando o modelo de Análise Crítico de Políticas, mostro como as políticas federais e estaduais são desenvolvidos em contextos locais e influenciam a capacidade e o desejo de estudantes de participar em programas para aumentar a preparação universitária e professional. Defendo que as intervenções de sucesso para os alunos rotulados como "não está pronto para a faculdade" devem abordar as barreiras materiais e discursivas que desafiam a escolha da universidade, questionando criticamente a ideia de que o serviço militar é uma forma mais eficaz e eficiente para a mobilidade social que a universidade.
Palavras-chave: preparação para a faculdade; intervenção de programação; ensino superior; militar; recrutamento militar; equidade

Introduction

> The first time I saw a military recruiter at Carthage Junior and Senior High School[1] (CJSHS) was during a remedial math class held after the regular school day ended. A male recruiter interrupted the class and asked the instructor if he could speak with a senior student named Melissa. After the instructor gave his permission, Melissa met the recruiter in the hallway. When she returned to class, she said that she was going to join the Army, telling me that the recruiter was very interested in "convincing her to join." I remember thinking that I did not like the idea of a military recruiter interrupting an academic class. I did not like the privilege that I imagined the recruiter to have at this small rural school.

The above vignette is from a critical race ethnographic project (Duncan, 2006) that I conducted in 2010 (Castro, 2012). I was at CJSHS in an attempt to understand why Melissa and her peers were not benefitting from free remedial courses offered to students as part of statewide college and career readiness legislation passed in 2007. That afternoon, five of us were seated around a rectangular table in the library: three students, the instructor, and myself.

The college and career readiness legislation aimed to reduce postsecondary remediation rates by providing academic and supplemental intervention programming to high school students who scored below national benchmarks on standardized tests. Under the logic of the legislation, CJSHS

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[1] Pseudonym

was a prime candidate for the intervention programming given the number of students who scored below national measures of college readiness: in 2009, 95% of students scored below college readiness benchmarks in Math and 98% of students scored below benchmarks in reading (Illinois State Board of Education, 2010). Yet, because of social, economic, and other policy contexts, enrollment in these programs was extremely low to at times, non-existent. During all three years of the grant, remedial courses offered at CJSHS served very few students (Baber, Barrientos, Bragg, Castro, & Khan, 2009; Bragg, Baber, Cullen, Reese, & Linick, 2011; Khan et al., 2009).

Informed by my critical race ethnographic research, this essay engages a question that arises from my data by exploring the presence of military recruiters in high-poverty high schools as potential barriers to increasing readiness for college and career. Specifically, I am interested in the extent to which the presence of military recruitment officers in Title I schools may contribute to the effectiveness of intervention programming aimed at increasing readiness for college and career. During my ethnographic work I became curious as to how military recruiters gained access to the school building and the academic classes in which students were enrolled. I wondered why military recruiters were allowed on school property and in this analysis I take up these inquiries by examining the high school recruitment policies of the U.S. armed forces and their potential implications for college and career readiness intervention efforts. This essay uses critical policy analysis (Ball, 1993; Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009) to examine the *Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruiting Information* (Section 9528) provision of the No Child Left Behind Act and its potential influence on the success of intervention programming for college and career readiness in Title I schools. The analysis is inspired by the following question: why does military enlistment remain a desirable option for low-income students of Color when college is allegedly equally available?

In the larger critical race ethnographic project, I combined critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) with a variety of ethnographic methods in order to understand how the CJSHS community experienced and perceived the college and career readiness legislation. Over the course of five months, I conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups, observations, historical analysis, and archival research to learn how various school and community stakeholders experienced the legislation at their school.[2] My inquiry aimed to identify the material and discursive obstacles that prevented students at CJSHS from participating – or wanting to participate – in the college and

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[2] I used a variety of empirical materials in the critical race ethnographic project. These materials included interviews, observations, student's writing samples, litigation documents, newspaper and peer-reviewed articles, literature, poetry, and institutional, political, and cultural documents. In order to fully understand the context of learning and class dynamics, I participated in weekly classroom observations of the math course and general observations of the school two days a week. Over the course of five months, I conducted semi-structured and/or open-ended interviews with 38 people connected to CJSHS, including ten students who were eligible for the math course and a focus group with five students who were eligible. I interviewed three faculty working at CJSHS, eight staff members working at CJSHS (including teaching aides, janitorial staff, and administrative staff), the principal, dean of students, and guidance counselor at CJSHS, two executive-level administrators at the local community college involved with the implementation of the grant, the project coordinator of the grant who was employed by the local community college, the instructor for the math course who was employed by the local community college and hired to teach at CJSHS, the district superintendent for CJSHS, the former president of the CJSHS teachers' union, the former president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (who is also a community historian, liaison, and advocate), and the administrator at the Illinois Community College Board, the governing agency of community colleges in the state, who was involved since the inception of the Illinois College and Career Readiness Pilot Program.

career readiness intervention programming. To foreground the role of race and racism in the provision of educational opportunity, I used critical race ethnographic methodology (Duncan, 2006) to identify why low-income students of Color might choose *not* to participate in the intervention programming, and ultimately concluded that readiness for college and career is a racialized phenomenon (Castro, 2013).

In this essay I use vignettes and interview data from my critical race ethnography to provide context for the critical policy analysis. I turn to CJSHS throughout the essay as an example to provide insights into how the layering of Federal and State policies may play out in rural Title I schools. I argue that contemporary college readiness efforts must account for the potential paradox that the armed services recruiter provision presents, particularly for students of Color attending high-poverty schools whose range of pathway opportunities are restricted by the contours of poverty, racism, and social neglect. If higher education truly wants to intervene into the lives of students deemed not ready for college, then policies need to disrupt both the rationale and the reality that military enlistment is a more effective and efficient pathway out of poverty than postsecondary education.

Local Policy Context

The local policy context for this critical analysis is the *Illinois College and Career Readiness Pilot Program* (Public Act 095-0694)*,* passed by the state in 2007. The Illinois General Assembly passed this legislation in an attempt to reduce statewide remediation at the community college level and address the misalignment between high school graduation expectations and the requirements of college and career success. The logic underlying the *CCR Pilot Program* was to create appropriate interventions for high school students identified through the use of diagnostic testing as in-need of remediation. Community colleges were to work with local high schools in their districts to identify eligible students. Despite demonstrable need for academic assistance, remedial math and reading courses funded through the legislation and offered to students at CJSHS by the local community college served very few students the first three years of the project (Baber et al., 2009; Bragg et al., 2011; Khan, et al. 2009). The intervention programming did not garner enrollment because it failed to account for the context present at CJSHS.

According to criteria used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), CJSHS was considered one of over 16,000 "high-poverty" schools across the nation in 2010, with one hundred percent of its students eligible for free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch (Illinois State Board of Education [ISBE], 2010). In order to be classified as a high-poverty school, more than three-quarters of the student population must be eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Consistent with national statistics on high-poverty schools (Aud et al., 2010; Orfield, 2009; Pollock, 2008; Saporito & Sohoni, 2005), almost all of the students enrolled at CJSHS are students of Color: 90% African American, 1% multi-racial and 1% Hispanic (ISBE, 2010).

According to the Illinois Report Card (ISBE, 2010), 100% of 11th graders attending CJSHS in 2010 were considered not college-ready by national standards. College readiness is currently assessed by a combination of variables, such as grade point averages, courses titles, and standardized test scores, including the American College Testing (ACT) test (Conley, 2010). Of the CJSHS 11th graders who took the ACT in 2009, 96% of students did not meet college readiness benchmarks in math and in that same year, 93% of students did not met the benchmarks in reading. The year after, in 2010, 100% of students scored below the benchmarks in math and 95% of students did meet benchmarks in reading (ISBE, 2010). Institutionalized markers of academic failure coincide with socio-structural challenges at CJSHS as the small school is located in an area of concentrated poverty and racial isolation.

Ethnographic Context

The institutionalized context described above was missing from any official explanation of why the readiness programming at CJSHS suffered from low enrollment, attendance, and completion rates during all three years of the pilot project. In response to very low numbers of students participating and completing the courses at CJSHS, administrators of the legislation labeled the students as unmotivated. Specifically, during state-mandated evaluation interviews, school and state leaders expressed that if only the students at CJSHS were more motivated, they would show up to recruitment meetings, attend classes regularly, and score better on diagnostic tests. The dominant explanation for failure at CJSHS was simple: the readiness legislation failed because students lacked the motivation to participate. In the specific context of CJSHS, where in 2010 98% of students in the Junior class read below grade level and where 100% of students were eligible for free and or reduced price breakfast and lunch (ISBE, 2010), it is a lazy and unimaginative accusation to locate policy failure within individual students.

Student motivation alone does not explain the failure of the college readiness intervention programming to attract and retain students at CJSHS. The deficit-based narrative of student motivation also fails to consider context, which includes how competing and/or contradictory policy efforts might influence both the students' understanding of the programming as well as their ability to participate in it. In my critical race ethnographic project (Castro, 2012), I argued that it was not the students who lacked motivation to participate in the intervention programming but rather policy architects and administrators who lacked motivation to understand the racial and class dynamics of policy implementation at CJSHS. I found that the failure of the intervention legislation at CJSHS was due to a host of systemic and institutional obstacles that prevented students from being able to participate in the college and career readiness programming. The legislation failed not because low-income students of Color at CJSHS lacked motivation to participate in college readiness intervention programming, but because that programming failed to recognize their everyday realities: decades of educational neglect reflected not simply in the lack of material resources such as textbooks, but in personnel, as the students shared just one part-time guidance counselor for the entire school. A host of intervention-like programs were offered at CJSHS throughout the year and what the readiness legislation failed to recognize was the cumulative effects of being targeted for such programming and the associated deficit messaging that accompanies it. As explained to me by students, staff, and faculty, the school building was an additional barrier and with only two windows, one in the principal's office and one in the administrative office, resembled more of a prison than a school. Given this context, why would students volunteer to participate in even *more* education?

What I did not explore in the critical race ethnographic project was the role and influence of military recruiters in the highly surveilled and regulated space of CJSHS. Military recruiters were omnipresent at CJSHS, walking the halls during the school day and conversing with students, staff, and instructors. In one of my very first interviews with a senior named Jon (Pseudonym), he mentioned the influence of the military at CJSHS. He was describing his perceptions of the college and career readiness programming offered at his school and explaining why he chose not to participate. We were casually talking about potential career paths and what students might choose to do after high school when he mentioned that a recruiter had called him the night before:

Jon: Well, some military branch called my cell phone and was asking—
Erin: Your cell phone?
Jon: Yeah, you have to give them your number too. You have to put your number on that little paper for the ASVAB, and they call you, "I want to congratulate you on your ASVAB score. What are your plans after school?" I was like, "College." "Well,

> you should just look into us. We'll pay for it." I was, "Nah, you not fixing to sell me
> a dream either."
> Erin: You said that to them?
> Jon: They not fixin' to sell me a dream either.
> Erin: There seems to be a big presence of them in this school. They come in a lot?
> Jon: Yeah, they do. A lot. They always in the cafeteria because they trying to pull all
> our students to do that.
> Erin: Why, do you think?
> Jon: I have no idea. Because I guess they figure our students are hopeless like they
> don't have no other plans but the military. Like they don't have no other dreams but
> the military. That's not, no. I don't like the military, and the dreams they sell students
> is, "We'll pay for your college." Okay, will you pay for my limbs when they get blew
> off?

Jon was critical of the armed forces recruitment presence at CJSHS and passionately expressed his aspirations for college. He was the first student I interviewed, and I admired his critical perspective, but I would have no other interviews like the one with Jon. The other students with whom I spoke at CJSHS planned on enlisting in the military after high school.

I cannot say that every student who decided not to participate in the intervention programming at CJSHS did so because of plans to enlist the military, although this is certainly one plausible explanation. The readiness legislation at CJSHS failed because it neglected to account for the local context of CJSHS, and that context included a strong military presence. What I propose here is that similar readiness efforts, at least in part, may fail because they run up against other more successful and developed policy efforts, like the *Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruiting Information* (Section 9528) provision of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Methodology

This analysis is informed by the two key assumptions put forth by critical scholars of policy: policy as a practice of power (Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009) and an emphasis on the relational intersections of policy (Ball, 1993). Policies are cultural constructs (Stein, 2004) in that they promote particular ways of viewing the world and provide rationales for the best way to address problems and the people they aim to regulate. I draw heavily from Levinson et al. (2009) who propose that critical policy research examine not simply the question of what policy is, but importantly, what policy does.

Levinson et al. (2009) contend that critical approaches to understanding policy, including policy failure, have three essential elements. First, they are anchored in an analysis of power, paying particular attention to the distribution of and access to power. Because power is institutionally structured, policies influence the circulation of power and the kinds of power to which people have access. Second, critical approaches to understanding policy need to critique modes of domination, which are institutionalized structures of power. Documenting domination includes identifying systems and specific mechanisms that facilitate and/or limit the distribution of and access to power. Third, critical approaches have a basis in pragmatism and must legitimate and pose what they refer to as a "horizon of the possible," a vision for how things can be different and directions for how we can get there (769). Levinson et al. argue that qualitative research, and specifically ethnography, is needed to understand policy as a social practice of power because analyses that are grounded in or influenced by critical ethnography can expose dominant assumptions about policy processes, including commonsensical ideas about the purposes and possibilities of policy. They call for qualitative research that traces policy language across documents and lends insight into "the quality

and density of actual relations between institutions and actors that produce policy, and those that appropriate it (p. 789).

As a theoretical lens, policy as a practice of power allows for the recognition of policy intersection, specifically how policies intersect with one another and with those individuals they are designed to govern. Ball (1993) argues that policies are never external to power relations; rather, they enter existing landscapes of power, which invariably influence and shape their livelihood. The conceptual assumption underlying educational policy as a practice of power is that policies are expressions of power and accordingly, behave in much the same way as power in that they are not static, but dynamic. Policies are used to organize and regulate the behavior of certain subjects and when inserted into inequitable structures, they invariably respond. Like the individuals they are designed to regulate, policies are responsive, reacting to a range of social forces and actors, histories, conventions, and norms. In this sense, it is of particular importance to understand that policies are not neutral because they enter existing power relations, rather than simply changing them (Ball, 1993). As such, the contextual environments into which policies are inserted are particularly important in understanding apparent policy failure.

The dominant explanatory narrative provided by state-level policymakers regarding the failure of college and career readiness intervention programming at CJSHS located the blame within individual students.[3] This deficit-based narrative fails to consider how competing and/or contradictory policy discourses influenced both the students' understanding of the programming as well as their ability to participate in it. The simplistic explanation that students lack motivation also fails to recognize one of Ball's concerns regarding the contextual (meaning that policies are enacted on top of other existing policies) and fluid nature of policy: that, sometimes, "when we focus analytically on one policy or one text we forget that other policies and texts are in circulation […] the enactment of one may inhibit or contradict or influence the possibility of the enactment of others" (p. 13).

In the analysis that follows, I show how the policy interaction that Ball (1993) references is likely evident in Title I schools because they are strategically targeted by the U.S. Department of Defense for recruitment into the armed forces. I use CJSHS as an example to show how Federal and State policies might unfold in spaces where military recruitment contradicts efforts to increase readiness for college and career. My critical policy analysis examines federal legislation, reports commissioned by the U.S. Department of Defense, and legal analyses alongside existing literature and empirical research that details the influence of military recruitment in high poverty schools. My goal is to document policy as a practice of power by examining the text across these documents to reveal policy intersection and contradiction. I am interested in how policies shape opportunities for students (i.e., distribution of power) in Title I schools and in this analysis I document power via text as evident in stated policy goals by the U.S. military.

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[3] After the policy implementation failed to attract students at CJSHS, a deficit-based explanatory narrative surfaced among community college and state-level administrators during interviews, as well as some faculty at CJSHS: "students lack motivation." My critical race ethnographic work investigated alternative reasons for policy failure at CJSHS and examined the lack-of-motivation discourse as a racialized script rooted in deficit ideology. I explore these issues in detail in a manuscript submitted for publication titled, *Lacking the motivation to find better explanations for policy failure: Deficit ideology and intervention programming for college & career readiness*.

Analysis

The No Child Left Behind Act and Military Recruitment at Public High Schools

In 2002, then-President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that tied state funding to federal improvement measures for public schools. Since the law had wide bipartisan support, there were very few challenges, objections, or debates when the U.S. House of Representatives passed NCLB (Zgonjanin, 2006). Over the course of the last decade, however, NCLB has attracted much controversy and critique, including a collection of legal challenges filed on behalf of school districts and states. Issues of inadequate federal funding for NCLB compliance that may place an undue financial burden upon schools comprise a majority of legal actions against the U.S. Department of Education (Zgonjanin, 2006). Yet, in recent years concern has escalated over a different aspect of NCLB, a small yet powerful provision in the legislation related to federal funding eligibility.

Prior to NCLB, the 1975 Family Educational and Privacy Act (FERPA) protected students' personal and private information from military recruiters and other third parties unless they obtained parental consent (Nava, 2011). The provision in NCLB, *Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruiting Information* (Section 9528), stipulates that secondary schools submit to the military a list of its students' names, addresses, and telephone numbers upon request to receive federal funds.[4] The provision is the result of the Vitter-Sessions amendment, which was sponsored by two Republican representatives who proposed the amendment to NCLB before its authorization. Representative Sessions stated the following in support of the proposed amendment in 2001:

> [M]any times there are people who have no other opportunities, whether it be college or other directions, and the military stands as a fabulous, not only career, but an opportunity for public service that [sic] young men and young women all across our country, and they might not have that opportunity simply because a school board or a school superintendent or a principal might have a bias against the military. (quoted in Zgonjanin, 2006, p. 171)

Zgonjanin argues that the provision in NCLB was passed as part of a larger campaign to increase military recruitment "by all means possible and without much regard to students' or parents' constitutional rights" (p. 173). The final version of the section included provisions for parental consent, exceptions for religious objection, and – important for the present analysis – the same access to secondary institutions that "college recruiters enjoy" (para 2). In a high-poverty school like CJSHS, where college recruiters visit seldom if at all, granting the U.S. armed forces the same degree of access that "college recruiters enjoy" is akin to inviting the Department of Defense to move into the school.

The recruiters who frequented CJSHS seemed to move about the space with a certain degree of freedom: students and staff knew their names and the recruiters claimed partial ownership of the space, expressed in their confidence and ability to navigate the school with an autonomy not afforded to the students. During my visits to the school, I would have lunch in the cafeteria. I would watch the students, staff, and others who interacted within the space. During one of my first observations, I noted the following in my field journal:

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[4] Section 9528 states the following: Access to student recruiting information. Notwithstanding…[20 U.S.C. 1232g(a)(5)(B)] and except as provided in paragraph (2) [providing that a secondary school student's name, address, and telephone number can be withheld upon the parent's request], each local educational agency receiving assistance under this Act shall provide, on a request made by military recruiters or an institution of higher education, access to secondary school students names, addresses, and telephone listings.

> Military recruitment officers set up a table in the cafeteria every other week to talk with students during their lunch hour. The recruiters are popular and they have swag: pencils, t-shirts, dog tags, and colorful brochures. The recruiters assist students with paperwork, answer questions, joke and laugh, and explain the many benefits of military service. The interaction between the recruiters and the students looks nothing like what I witness in the classroom spaces I observe, where students sit largely passive and uninterested. It is as if for the 40 minute lunch period the cafeteria is transformed into a virtual military recruitment center; fitting for a commercial, really, if it weren't for the fact that we are having lunch in a school that literally does not have any windows. A windowless school located in the poorest county in the state, where 98% of the students are Black and all of the teachers are white, is probably not the image that the U.S. armed forces advertising and marketing campaign is looking to broadcast. (Field notes, February, 2010)

Strategically using high schools as recruitment centers for the U.S. armed forces is not a new phenomenon, but the legal access for recruiters made possible by NCLB is remarkable. Throughout the 1990s, the U.S. legislature made small changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act by gradually strengthening the language around access to high schools for the military (Burelli & Feer, 2009). The NLCB provision went a step further by establishing a new requirement for secondary schools to provide military recruitment officers access to students' directory information as a condition of receiving federal funds. Schools relying on these funds in order to operate are placed at a particular disadvantage as a result of the provision. Given their dependence on federal funding, high-poverty schools like CJSHS are unlikely to challenge or resist military recruitment procedures, or to raise questions about the legality of releasing personal student identification information.

Under NCLB, military recruitment officers have access to personal student information upon request unless a parent or guardian chooses to "opt out." Much confusion and ambiguity exists around what opting out means or entails. In order to opt out of the requirement, parents or guardians must submit to the school a written consent requesting that it not release student information, but because schools can interpret consent in different ways, inconsistency and misinformation abounds. Because the law does not stipulate that schools have a protocol in place, districts and schools across the country have very different policies regarding if and when they alert parents or guardians about their right to opt out. The myriad of obstacles that would prevent parents and guardians from being able to opt out, then, results in a de-facto opting-in and a tacit endorsement of what was previously considered illegal exploitation and theft.

During my ethnographic project, I wrote the following in my personal researcher notes after I witnessed the lunch-hour table session with students for the first time: "Military recruitment officers should not get to corner the market with a biweekly table in the school cafeteria!" On that particular day, I was having lunch with Frank, a teaching aide at the school. I was watching the students interact around me without remarking on the presence of the military recruiters in the cafeteria and as I ate my lunch, I wondered how their presence here became normalized. How did military recruiters gain access to this space during the lunch hour with the explicit aim to expose high school students to a career in the armed forces? Was their presence here so institutionalized that no one found it out of the ordinary? I wondered what lunchtime might look like if the table were hosted by the local community college, a four-year university, or perhaps the Peace Corps. I wondered what the lunch hour might look like if there were no recruiters at the table and the students were permitted to enjoy simple human interaction during their lunch hour without being targeted for

recruitment of any kind. The students at CJSHS were under constant surveillance and subjected to a hyper-regimented routine that made me wonder what the lunch hour might look like if they were permitted to stand for more than sixty seconds if not "traveling to a specific destination," as told to me by the principal who watches over them during their lunch period. The overexposure of the military at CJSHS coupled with the rigid disciplinary order of the school meant that students were disproportionately exposed to a particular kind of career path, and one with which I felt was difficult to compete.

Military Recruitment in High Schools

Hundreds of thousands of students participate in the federally funded Junior Reserves Officer Training Corps (JROTC) programs, a secondary school-based program that includes all branches of the armed forces. The first programs of this kind were developed under the National Defense Act of 1916 as a measure to increase U.S. military readiness for WWI.[5] JROTC presence in high schools was marginal for decades after WWI, but reinvigorated in the 1960s and continued to thrive at least in part to a U.S. defense policy predicated upon war readiness (Anderson, 2009). Between 1990 and 2000, for example, the JROTC budget more than doubled from $76 million to $156 million in an effort to expand programming by increasing the number of units in high schools (Berlowitz & Long, 2003; U.S. Office of Management and Budget and Federal Agencies [OMBFA], 2006). In 2001, the Defense Authorization Bill drastically altered the growth rates of high school units by lifting all previous caps on JROTC expansion in public schools and increased federal funding, resulting in a coordinated military infiltration of public education.

In addition to expanding the overall number of JROTC units in high schools, the Department of Defense sought to specifically increase the number of units in high-poverty schools. According to a federal evaluation of the JROTC program in 2006, the Department of Defense engaged in what it referred to as a "need-based expansion" of JROTC units by strategically targeting schools receiving federal funding under the Title 1 Program (OMBFA, 2006). Title 1 program eligibility was used as a proxy for low-income status, and the goal for JROTC in 2006 was to "focus efforts on at-risk youth by maintaining at least 20 percent of units in educationally and economically deprived areas" (OMBFA, 2006). As stated in the evaluation, the rationale for maintaining 20 percent of units in Title 1 schools was to ensure that the "Department provides assistance to at-risk youth development" (OMBFA, 2006). The coordinated federal effort of JROTC expansion in combination with the advent of unprecedented military recruiting practices in public schools resulted in a facilitated movement of militarism and military culture into educational spaces, particularly the most underserved ones.

In his critical analysis of truth-in-military-recruiting practices, Anderson (2009) argues that military presence in public schools has gained legitimacy through a variety of practices that blur the lines between education and the military. The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), a "multiple-aptitude battery that measures developed abilities and helps predict future academic and occupational success in the military," is routinely described as a career exploration tool for students (http://www.military.com).[6] Yet, students' ASVAB scores are not automatically transferred to regional postsecondary institutions, thereby limiting the range of exploration made

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[5] http://www.usarmyjrotc.com/jrotc-history
[6] Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense, The ASVAB Career Exploration Program is a "career planning and exploration program that combines a multiple-aptitude test with an interest self-assessment and a wide range of career exploration tools. And it's FREE to participating schools!" (http://www.asvabprogram.com/). The test is administered annually to more than one million military applicants, high school, and post-secondary students (http://official-asvab.com/).

available to students. Programs like Troops-to-Teachers functions in a similar fashion. According to the U.S. Department of Education, The Troops-to-Teachers program provides competitive grants to "recruit, prepare, and support former members of the military services as teachers in high-poverty schools" (Para 1). Eligible veterans can receive funds in the form of a stipend to assist with costs associated with teacher certification or as a bonus for agreeing to teach for three years in a "high-needs" school.[7] In some schools, like CJSHS, mobile lunchtime military recruitment centers become part of the normal school day. Together, these kinds of practices create a commonsensical school culture that is uncritical of the military (Furumoto, 2005; Peréz, 2006). In a context where other career opportunities are circumscribed by poverty and inequality of educational opportunity, public disinvestment in education essentially functions as a military recruitment strategy.

Military Recruitment Malpractice

Contemporary military recruitment practices in high schools are rooted in historical policies and practices. Following the Vietnam War in 1973, the U.S. moved from a conscription or mandatory military to an all-volunteer-force. The move away from the draft coincided with JROTC expansion in high schools and the beginning of consistent federal spending on military recruitment efforts. In the aftermath of 9/11, the Bush Administration launched what it labeled the 'war on terror,' which emphasized a preventative philosophy in U.S. national security. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan placed an immense amount of pressure on the U.S. military to supply thousands of ground troops for these operations. In the span of six years, from 2003 to 2009, the two wars required the deployment of about two hundred thousand troops on a continuous basis (Korb & Segal, 2011). The increased demand for active-duty soldiers created a predicament for the administration: the military did not want to raise the issue of selective service with Congress nor the American public, and the U.S. was forced to call upon reserve forces to "a degree not seen since World War II" (Korb & Segal, p. 81). Korb and Segal's (2011) research on the overuse of the military chronicles what they describe as "the horrendous situation" of the U.S. Army during the combined wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They argue that in the Spring of 2007, six years after the passing of NCLB, the military was deeply strained as a result of the ongoing wars. Twenty of its forty-four combat brigade teams were on the ground in either Iraq or Afghanistan and of them, "none had been back home for a full two years between deployments – the time period regarded as optimal for recovery from combat – and four had one year or less at home between combat tours" (p.82).[8]

The necessity to meet monthly recruitment goals for providing soldiers post-9/11 contributed to what many critics characterize as an obscene number of recruiter malpractices on record, including allegations of wrongdoing, criminal violations, and recruiter irregularities (United

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[7] The Troops-to-Teachers program was first established by the Troops-to-Teachers Program Act of 1999 (title XVII of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000). According to the Department of Education, the Troops-to-Teachers Program defines a "high-need school" as a public elementary, secondary, or charter school that meets one or more of the following criteria: (A) Low-income children: At least 50 percent of the students enrolled in the school were from low-income families (as described in section 2302(b)(2)(A)(i)) and; (B) Children with disabilities: The school has a large percentage of students who qualify for assistance under part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. For more, see: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg27.html

[8] Additionally, the authors point out that: "nine were already on second tours, seven were serving a third tour, and two were on a fourth deployment of at least twelve months […] of the twenty-four brigades not deployed in Spring 2007, ten had already been deployed for two tours, and three had been deployed three times in the previous five years" (p. 82).

State Government Accountability Office [USGAO], 2006). These malpractices had direct implications for secondary students. Editorials published in outlets such as *Mother Jones* (Goodman, 2009), *The Washington Post* (O'Harrow, 2012), and *Democracy Now!* (2004) chronicle high-school military recruiters' aggressive and coercive recruitment practices, including incessant and assertive phone messages left for high school students at their homes. The USGAO found that between 2004 and 2005, allegations of recruiter wrongdoing increased from 4,400 to 6,600 cases and it is likely that the 6,600 documented incidents underestimate the true number of recruiter irregularities because of a host of factors, including inconsistencies in reporting protocol across different units. Labeled as "recruiter irregularities," documented incidents range from "administrative paperwork errors, to actions such as failing to disclose disqualifying eligibility criteria…to criminal violations committed by a recruiter […] such as sexual harassment and falsifying documents" (p. 3). The 2006 Report to Congressional Requestors by the USGAO states that recruiter misconduct potentially increased as monthly deadlines approached and recruiters resorted to "overly aggressive tactics" (p. 2). Ongoing war required new recruits.

In its recruitment process, the Department of Defense sets minimum standards for recruitment and potential soldiers fall within a range of desirability. The Department of Defense describes its most desirable recruits as Tier 1 recruits, who are individuals with high school diplomas who score at least average on the Armed Forces Qualifying Test[9]. Between 2005 and 2008, the Army's goal was for 90% of its recruits to come from the Tier 1 category, but it did not meet this goal (Korb & Segal, 2011). Between 2004 and 2005, the Army recruited more individuals scoring in the lowest mental category and drastically increased the number of moral waivers[10] that it issued: by 2008, the number of moral waivers issued exceeded 25 percent of all recruits, or eighty thousand in total between 2005 and 2008 (Korb & Segal, 2011). The number of moral waivers issued during this time period suggests that the armed forces were under great strain to increase civilian recruits, so much so that they compromised eligibility standards in addition to using aggressive and coercive recruiting tactics.

In exchange for 130,000 enlistments, the Guard paid more than $300 million and an additional $106,364 in bonuses. At the height of the Iraq war in 2005, and under great pressure to relieve active-duty soldiers, the Army launched a recruitment bonus program titled the Recruitment Assistance Programs. Under this program, the National Guard, their relatives, civilians, and retirees could sign up to be recruiting assistants and earn up to $7,500 for each new recruit they were able to enlist. The program operated for seven years until it was terminated in February 2012 after internal audits provided evidence of ongoing egregious fraud. According to congressional hearings

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[9] The Armed Forces Qualification Test is used to determine basic qualifications for enlistment. Percentile scores are divided into six categories, ranging from "above average in trainability" to extremely low in trainability (www.huntingtonhelps.com). The test includes four components of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB): Paragraph Comprehension, Word Knowledge, Mathematics Knowledge, and Arithmetic Reasoning.

[10] The Department of Defense issues moral waivers to individuals who are otherwise disqualified for enlistment. The waivers function to increase recruits and to identify and screen applicants who "could present disciplinary problems (USAREC Regulation 601-56, 2006). According to the United States Recruiting Command (2006) Regulation 601-56 regarding Waiver, Future Soldier Program Separation, and Void Enlistment Processing Procedures, "Serious criminal misconduct or misdemeanor offenses pose serious questions as to an applicant's fitness for service, as does an excessive number of minor traffic and minor nontraffic offenses. Such applicants are likely to become serious disciplinary problems while on active duty (AD) and could divert resources from performance of military missions (p. 1). The USAREC was revised again in 2012. To read the full 2012 revision, see:
http://www.usarec.army.mil/im/formpub/REC_PUBS/R601_56.pdf

conducted in 2014, the bonuses helped the Army increase enlistment during critical years of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but ultimately resulted in a long-running scheme of fraud and abuse. In one scheme, high school guidance counselors and principals accessed students' personal information and took credit for recruiting them into the Army if they knew the students were already going to join (Cooper, 2014). As "recruiting assistants," high school counselors and principals received bounties for the enlistment of their students. Active investigations that began in 2014 involve at least 1,200 army recruiters – 200 of them officers – who received payments that were potentially fraudulent and another 2,000 recruiting assistants who received questionable payments (Cooper, 2014; Vanden Brook, 2014). At the end of the overall investigation, commanding general of the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command estimates that fraudulent payments may come close to $100 million (Cooper, 2014).

The U.S. armed forces were under tremendous pressure during the dual wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to recruit new enlistments. The Department of Defense issued a stunning number of moral waivers, disregarded minimum standards for enlistment, and participated in coercive and illegal recruitment strategies in the attempt to sustain ongoing war. By giving recruiters a legal means of access, the provision in NCLB turned high schools into fertile recruitment ground and further solidified the relationship between public education and the U.S. military.

Military Recruitment in High Schools as "Cooling Out"

In 1960, sociologist Clark argued that there were certain components of U.S. higher education that might be necessarily "cooling out" the aspirations of students. His argument hinged on the paradoxical nature of a democratic (or, putatively democratic) society: that is, the mismatch between an ideology of equal opportunity and a structural reality that cannot actualize the high aspirations of all individuals. Individual failure is inevitable and institutional processes must be in place to facilitate the management of aspirations. Clark focused on the role of the community college within the higher education landscape, but the concept of "cooling out" can be applied to other contexts. Higher educational institutions may need for potential students to "cool out" and not attend college.

Higher educational institutions do not explicitly exclude low-income students of Color coming from high-poverty schools and environments. In fact, the rhetoric underlying what are now omnipresent diversity efforts on predominantly white college and university campuses articulate just the opposite: colleges and universities strive to be bastions of inclusivity and multiculturalism. However, Clark argues that institutions do not have to explicitly deny students entry to participate in or facilitate the process of "cooling out." Colleges and universities can rely upon admission criteria as one way to manage ambition, as is the case with using cut-off scores to determine enrollment eligibility into the institution and various academic departments. In the context of intervention programming for college- and career-readiness, the routine use of standardized test scores begs a similar critique. Individual failure is the effect of a structured, or in this case, standardized, process.

The "cooling out" process in higher education requires alternative achievement pathways for students, ones that are described as precursors for future enrollment in college, such as enlistment in the U.S. armed forces. Clark refers to these as "substitute pathways" and argues they are "made to appear not too different from what is given up, particularly as to status" (p. 574). Because low-income students of Color attending high-poverty schools are strategically targeted by the U.S. armed forces, enlistment may be a "cooling out" mechanism for these students. Military enlistment may serve as a substitute avenue that sidetracks "unpromising students" (Clark, 1960) or in the case of college enrollment, students labeled not ready for college based on their standardized test scores.

The challenge in high poverty schools, like CJSHS, is that students have likely already experienced the cooling out process before intervention programming enters the schools. The intervention programming, then, can either contribute to the process of cooling out or disrupt it. Decades of inadequate education and what Pollock (2008) refers to as opportunity denial means that authentic disruption, where intervention programming would provide reality-based pathways and accessible resources for students to attend and be successful in college, is doubtful. While providing viable pathways to college for chronically underserved students may be desirable, correcting for decades of educational neglect cannot be accomplished in a one-semester class, or a summer bootcamp, nor a series of supplemental workshops. The students are likely aware of this, too, and can see when programs come into their school promising college when in reality, higher education is not possible. The cooling out process looks like this: it is the collection of denials that together make not going to college a reasonable decision. Unlike readiness for college and career, becoming a soldier is attainable.

Funding in the form of enlistment bonuses and money for college is also an attractive attribute to enlistment. One of the primary reasons young people enlist in the armed forces is money for college (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, & O'Malley, 2001). The association between military service and postsecondary education benefits is due almost entirely to the passage of the Montgomery G.I. Bill, formerly the Serviceman's Readjustment Act, which was first passed into law in 1944. The G.I. Bill was to provide returning World War II veterans with a range of benefits, including compensation for postsecondary education. However, only 35% of veterans used their education benefits in 2010 and alarmingly, only 3% of surveyed veterans reported that they understood their education benefits through the G.I. Bill (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2010).

The military may not intend to "cool out" the aspirations of high school-aged recruits or deter them from attending college, but it is troublesome that so few veterans have taken advantage of their educational benefits when this is the primary reason cited for enlistment. Woodruff, Kelty, & Segal (2006) argue that education benefits may also present a quandary for the military because while they are one of the main motivators for enlistment, they are also one of the main motivators for exiting the military. Thus, the educational incentives of the G.I. bill assist in the recruitment of young people into the military and they also contribute to "the difficulty of retaining soldiers after their initial enlistment term of service" (p. 360). While the pathway is often imagined as a linear one, with enlistment as a precursor to college enrollment, the relationship between the military and higher education is much more tangled. The implementation of far-reaching incentive programs like the G.I. bill help to set the stage for competition between higher education institutions and the military for recruits.

Readiness for College and Career, or the Military

The constitutive relationship between the U.S. armed forces and public education via deliberate federal policy dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century, revealing that the modern normative coupling of education and military is no accident. The legal movement of military recruiters in and out of public secondary school spaces is a coordinated effort on behalf of U.S. Congress and the Departments of Defense and Education to expose secondary students to military career paths in order to facilitate their enlistment into the armed forces. Because the explicit role of secondary schools in the current era is to prepare students to become "ready" to enroll and successfully persist in some form of accredited postsecondary education (e.g., see: United States Department of Education, 2010), the bringing together of public education and military service could be understood as a logical combination toward the goal of providing secondary students with military career options. It is also a logical pairing for the maintenance of an all-volunteer-force.

Attending college is one avenue for students to pursue after high school and in this regard,

the U.S. military competes with higher education and other career pathways for enlistment (Bachman, Segal, Freedman-Doan, & O'Malley, 2000; Bachman, Freedman-Doan, & O'Malley, 2001; Wang, Elder, & Spence, 2012; Wilson, Greenlees, Hagerty, Helba, Hintze, & Lehnus, 2000). Put slightly differently, the U.S. military competes with higher educational institutions for high school graduates, and this is true even for students with the dual aspirations of enlisting and going to college. To gauge students' attitudes toward the military and military careers, the Department of Defense commissions a report every ten years. In the last publicly available report from 2000, the Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS) explains the relationship between the military and higher education for the recruitment of young people in the introduction:

> YATS has been providing the Armed Services with information on youth attitudes since 1975. Shortly after the termination of the military draft, DoD [Department of Defense] realized that, *to compete for youth with commercial and educational institutions*, it needed ongoing information on youth attitudes: what was important to youth, and how youth viewed military service. YATS was created to address these needs (Wilson, et al., p. 1-1; emphasis mine).

In this same report, the authors warn the Department of Defense about a potentially bleak future for the recruitment of young people. As part of the research conducted for the 2000 report, it was found that as individuals earn more education, their propensity to enlist in military service declines. The authors caution that with increased numbers of young people participating in postsecondary education, there will be a negative effect on recruiting for the armed forces: "The demographic profile of the target recruiting population is changing as more of today's youth go to college. Since propensity [to enlist] declines with increasing educational attainment, policy makers should expect a negative impact on recruiting" (p. 1). Their findings echo research that inversely ties college aspirations to propensity to enlist; that is, as aspirations for college increase, propensity to enlist decreases (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, & O'Malley, 2001). Students' propensity to enlist is also affected by environmental characteristics (Eighmey, 2006). Enlistment rates tend to be lower among individuals who have high grades, college-educated parents, and plans for college, and higher among African Americans, Hispanics, and those who view military work as attractive (Bachman, Segal, Freedman-Doan, & O'Malley, 2000). We see these processes unfold in Title I schools with a large majority of students labeled as not ready for college and where, as a result of federal policy, military recruiters are permanent fixtures in the school.

Discussion

Thus far, I have shown that the level of funding, resources, and policy behind the strategic recruitment of young people into the military is a multi-billion dollar publicly-subsidized enterprise. This analysis reveals a popular but erroneous assumption underlying contemporary intervention programming for college and career readiness: that college is equally available to all students. When low-income students of Color are hyper-exposed to the military as a consequence of attending a Title I school, this is simply not the case.

One of the phenomena I encountered during my critical race ethnographic research was that almost every student in the Junior class was not considered college ready because of low ACT scores (recall that one hundred percent of juniors attending CJSHS in 2010 read below grade-level). Yet, the students were eligible for enlistment into the armed forces because of their score on the ASVAB and thus heavily recruited into the Army. Readiness for college is predominantly defined as a student's ability to enroll in the first year of college without the need for remediation (Conley, 2010) and currently, standardized test scores are the most commonly used indicator by universities to

assess readiness (Stemler, 2012). The students attending CJSHS were not considered 'college ready' by national benchmarks, but it could be said that they were considered 'military ready' by the U.S. armed forces because they were eligible for enlistment. When low-income students of Color in high-poverty schools are labeled as 'not ready for college,' but are at the same time actively recruited into the military, they are directed to a logical conclusion: college is not available to them. They are ready for the military, but not for college.

The armed services recruiter provision presents a challenge for the contemporary college- and career-readiness agenda: how can students be considered not 'ready for college,' but simultaneously 'ready for the military'? Intervention programming for college and career readiness must account for this paradox that the armed services recruiter provision presents, particularly for students of Color attending Title I schools. Because an all-volunteer-force relies upon new recruits each year, the military has a vested interest in managing the competition that other avenues, including higher education, might pose to potential recruits as viable career paths. The competitive environment exacerbated by the infiltration of the military into Title I schools creates a policy landscape that contemporary intervention programming for college and career must recognize.

In its basic forms, intervention programming for college and career is finite and specific, usually implemented in the form of a semester-long remedial course (during the summer or school year), a summer length or condensed 'bootcamp' class, or as ongoing enrichment and supplemental services. While well-intended, these approaches to increasing the readiness of chronically underserved students fall terribly short of addressing legacies of undereducation and systemic neglect. They are typically designed as one-time interventions, with a beginning and an end, and consequently see readiness for college as something that students master rather than become. A perspective of mastery is deficient when working with student populations who are subject to institutionalized obstacles in pursuing postsecondary education, which can include the permanent presence of military recruiters in their schools. Students in these contexts, when faced with the competing options of participating in intervention programs that claim to increase readiness for college and career and pursuing military career paths, are likely to choose the latter. If intervention programming aimed at preparing students for college is genuinely concerned with altering the career paths of students in high-poverty schools, then it must be more purposeful, systemic, and reality-based. One remedial math course offered to a student in her junior year is not going to seriously alter her post-graduation aspirations, nor her vision of what is possible. This kind of work cannot be accomplished in short-term intervention programs designed to solely increase students' standardized test scores. A more nuanced and comprehensive approach is needed, and one that directly acknowledges the role of military recruitment practices in the lives and livelihoods of students and their school communities.

Conclusion

This critical policy analysis, informed by critical race ethnographic data, examined the *Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruiting Information* (Section 9528) provision of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act and its potential influence on the success of intervention programming for college and career readiness in Title I schools. Specifically, I argued that the legal presence of military recruitment officers in Title I schools may contribute to the failure of intervention programming aimed at increasing readiness for college and career. As a federal policy initiative, the strategic placement of military recruitment officers in Title I schools potentially contradicts efforts at increasing readiness among students and developing a college-going culture.

In one of my last interviews with students at CJSHS, I met with Alton, a Junior at the school. I asked him what his plans were after graduation and he said:

> I have so much military background, the military's gonna want me. 'Specially with all
> those academics cause I already have a good feeling that when I take the ASVAB I'm
> gonna score, I wanna score 90 somethin', but I can take a 80 something, because not
> many people score 80 something on the ASVAB. 'Cause a coupla my cousins were in
> the military. So I like that. That's just tradition.

Alton wore dog tags around his neck and I would see him in the cafeteria talking with the recruiters during his lunch period. From Alton's perspective, the military is going to want him and he is going to be valued by the military. Alton is responding to a particular policy intervention at CJSHS by the U.S. military and efforts sincerely wanting him to respond differently must recognize this policy landscape. As Ball (1993) remind us, policies are enacted on top of other policies and in high-poverty schools like CJSHS, there exist layers of policy interventions that are, at-times, contradictory or competing in nature. Military pathways pose an important question for the college- and career-readiness agenda to address: does 'readiness' for college and career also include the military? If so, then what does this look like for students like Alton, who may choose not to participate in intervention programming because remedial math is not a prerequisite for enlistment? If readiness for college and career includes the military, then how can students be considered ready for one but not the other?

At CJSHS, the students were considered failures by the State of Illinois because of their standardized test scores, but were likely hailed as components of success by the U.S. Department of Defense. We need to have a deeper understanding of how and why this paradox occurs. Specifically, we need more research that chronicles how low-income high school students of Color are positioned via intersecting and, at times, conflicting policy efforts. If higher education policymakers and practitioners want to intervene into the lives of students labeled as not 'college ready,' then they have to facilitate a more comprehensive policy approach that addresses the material and discursive barriers to college choice. These approaches must challenge and disrupt the idea that military enlistment is a more effective and efficient pathway to social mobility than college as well as the invasive recruitment practices that propagate that idea. Without this disruption, students will continue to choose the military at greater rates than they do college and they will continue to be held accountable for the failure of policies allegedly aimed at encouraging them to do otherwise. Low-income students of Color attending high-poverty schools are not immune to good policy interventions, and one need only look to the successful U.S. military recruitment strategies for evidence.

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