

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## **American Football, Flags, and “Fun”: The Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl and the Rhetorical Production of Militarism**

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*The Armed Forces Bowl provides a troubling integration of commercial sport and the American culture of militarism. The game features patriotic displays and symbols that have become increasingly central to sporting events during the ‘war on terror,’ represents the first time a military manufacturer has been the official sponsor of a college bowl game, and depends on a ubiquitous rhetoric of “support the troops.” By expanding the familiar conflation of sport and war, the Armed Forces Bowl simultaneously trivializes the seriousness of war as it emphasizes the seriousness of supporting the American military. This rhetorical division offers a delimited conception of appropriate American identity, thereby normalizing war in general and endorsing the ‘war on terror’ specifically.*

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There can be little doubt that war is, in part, a rhetorical proposition. In the years since U.S. troops invaded Afghanistan in 2002, rhetorical critics have examined the various dimensions of America’s “war on terror,” largely concluding that it has been characterized by a series of false claims or argumentative failures. These analyses range from Bostdorff’s (2003) examination of the rhetoric of covenant renewal that justified public support of war, to West and Carey’s (2006) critique of the Bush administration’s enactment of frontier justice, to Jamieson’s (2007) account of the faulty evidence used by President Bush in the lead-up to the Iraq invasion in 2003. Most emphatically, Hartnett and Stengrim (2006) define the “war on terror” as an “operation of deception,” through which millions of lives have unjustly been altered. These scholars, and many others, have demonstrated persuasively that American military actions since 9/11 have been highly problematic.

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These rhetorical critiques have been complemented by a growing public dissatisfaction in the United States with the war in Iraq. On one hand, this opposition is the product of the war's ambiguous mission and absent exit strategy. Once military personnel were committed beyond President George W. Bush's (2003) now infamous declaration that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended" just months after the invasion commenced, Americans were likely to grow weary of the conflict. Yet on the other hand, public outrage has resulted from the Bush administration's rhetorical strategies that have constructed a world divided by "us" and "them," produced accusations of torture in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, disciplined American citizens to accept a perpetual state of fear and surveillance, and marginalized or sanctioned political dissent.

Despite critiques and protests, however, the United States retains nearly 150,000 troops in Iraq (Eggen, 2008) and spends just more than \$10 million each month (Belasco, 2008) on the war. In the midst of declining support, how is it that politicians and military organizations are able to justify the high costs of the war, both in human and in monetary terms? The answer partly lies in the American public's acceptance of the military's place in the economic and political segments of U.S. society. This interrelationship, first termed the "military-industrial complex" by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, has steadily eroded the boundaries between the military and daily life in the United States. Thus, contemporary American culture may be understood in terms of *militarism*, what Chalmers Johnson (2004) suggests is "the phenomenon by which a nation's armed services come to put their institutional preservation ahead of achieving national security or even a commitment to the integrity of the governmental structure of which they are a part" (pp. 23–24). Far from being contained to the actual Armed Forces, militarism functions discursively, as "a rationality that deeply influences the structures and practices of the general society through storytelling, mythology, media images, political messages, academic discourses, and simple patriotic indoctrination" (Boggs & Pollard, 2007, p. 19). Especially in the years following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, an aggressive foreign policy rhetoric—the "Bush Doctrine" is grounded on the presumption that preventive military action is justifiable—has been reinforced by popular culture discourses that affirm and celebrate the violence of warfare.

Ivie (2007) argues that the articulation of the military with popular discourses "normalizes war, rendering it habitual, seemingly rational, and largely immune to challenge" (p. 204). In this way, militarism functions ideologically, so that military and foreign policy rhetoric are "defined in a way that makes them appear to represent the natural order of things" (Makus, 1990, p. 498). Because rhetorical production is "not restricted to explicitly political public address," we must heed the words of Charland (1987), who suggests that ideology is also manifest in "a range of aesthetic practices, including music, drama, architecture, and fashion, that elicit new modes of experience and being" (p. 148). A striking omission from Charland's list is sport, an institution that arguably has more reach than any other form of popular culture (Miller, Lawrence, McKay, & Rowe, 2001). In this essay, we contend that

American identity is constituted in and by a *culture of militarism*, wherein Americans are implicated in a structural relationship between government, the military, and entertainment industries to the extent that it has become functionally impossible to live outside the rhetorical production of war. Moreover, we wish to demonstrate that sport rhetoric is an especially persuasive vehicle for sustaining and extending the culture of militarism.

An especially troubling participant in the U.S. sport/politics landscape is the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl. This annual college (American) football postseason game was originally named the Fort Worth Bowl when it debuted in 2003.<sup>1</sup> Three years later, after the original sponsorship with PlainsCapital Bank expired, bowl officials teamed with ESPN and Bell Helicopter-Textron to create the Armed Forces Bowl. In the words of the game's president, Tom Starr, the name change was intended to "honor our nation's men and women in uniform, which gives us tremendous pride" ("Fort Worth Bowl," 2006). Fort Worth's mayor, meanwhile, echoed Starr's sentiments by emphasizing his community's relationship to the armed forces. "If it can't be the Fort Worth Bowl, I can't think of a better name than the Armed Forces Bowl," said Mike Moncrief. "Fort Worth has been, and always will be, a military town. That's part of our history" (Francis, 2006, para. 5). In addition to the new sponsor, the game secured the financial support of multiple corporations wishing to align themselves with the U.S. military. First Command Financial Services, for example, stated in 2007, "By helping sponsor this patriotic college bowl game again in 2007, we proudly continue First Command's many years of serving America's military men and women and thank them for their service to our country" ("First Command," 2007). Meanwhile, the president of Teletouch and CEO of Hawk Electronics declared, "We're proud to be a part of this great team of ESPN partners honoring all of the men and women in uniform proudly serving our country" ("Teletouch-Hawk," 2007).

Statements such as these indicate the ease with which the alliance between corporate and military interests has been articulated. Yet, it is Bell Helicopter-Textron that demands our sharpest focus. Although it is now commonplace to see corporate sponsorship of intercollegiate athletics, the Armed Forces Bowl is the first college event to be named after a military entity. Thus, rather than snack foods and insurance, college football audiences are sold an image of national identity that depends on war. In Bell Helicopter's own words, the company produces:

The world's best military helicopters, including the V-22, the ARH-70A Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter, and the AH-1Z and UH-1Y H-1 helicopters. A sister company, Textron Systems, produces the new M1117 Armored Security Vehicle, which is designed for speed and for deflecting rocket-propelled grenades and land mines (Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl Media Guide, 2006).

Significantly, although fans may purchase the products of other bowl game sponsors—Tostitos chips, or Mobil gasoline—they cannot participate in the active consumption of armored vehicles and helicopters. Therefore, the Armed Forces

Bowl shifts the terrain of consumption to the culture of militarism that pervades contemporary American life.

Our purpose in this essay is to read the mediated production of the Armed Forces Bowl as a rhetorical text, one that is situated in a larger rhetorical culture that has defined national identity following 9/11. In this context, the Armed Forces Bowl cannot be seen as an independent event, nor can the patriotic and militaristic displays be understood as isolated; rather, they represent a substantive articulation of the form of militarism that reduces citizens to spectators and normalizes the presence of war in general and the "war on terror" specifically. In the midst of declining American public support for the war in Iraq, the rhetorical production of citizenship through sports may be understood as an effort to counter resistance by fostering identification with the "troops" while eliding the realities of war. The Armed Forces Bowl accomplishes this by interweaving the logic of "support the troops" with contemporary branding practices in order to provide a "fun" entertainment spectacle for football fans. Consequently, the rhetorical production of the game exploits the sport/war metaphor to the extent that it further sanitizes the realities of war, commodifies the personnel of the U.S. Armed Forces, and reduces American identity to a brand name. Our analysis begins with an overview of the relationship between sport and the military in the United States. We then move to a rhetorical analysis of the Armed Forces Bowl, before concluding with critical implications of this production.

### **The culture of militarism and college football**

In recent years, scholars in various disciplines have contested the expansion of militarism into the everyday lives of Americans that is seen most commonly through popular culture outlets such as Hollywood films, video games, and sports. Consequently, Eisenhower's cautionary phrase has been invoked and reworked in order to forestall the continued development of more sophisticated complexes: the "military-entertainment complex" (Herz, 1997), the "masculinist sport-militaristic nationalism complex" (Stempel, 2006), or the "military-industrial-media-entertainment network" (Der Derian, 2001), to name only a few. Perhaps the most inclusive of these conceptualizations comes from Turse (2008), who identifies "The Complex," which is a "new military-industrial-technological-entertainment-academic-scientific-media-intelligence-homeland security-surveillance-national security-corporate complex that has truly taken hold of America" (p. 16). Although defense expenditures are often justified because they produce the means for *protecting* democracy, Turse notes that The Complex represents a *threat* to democratic life. As he argues, "The Complex thrives on the very obliviousness of the civilian population to its existence in the world it has made so much its own" (Turse, p. 270). In this way, militarism cultivates a nation of complicit citizens, most of whom are unaware that their own actions may contribute to an increasingly militarized culture.

If this form of militarism depends on a complicit citizenry, then commercial sport represents a particularly potent site for production of militaristic rhetoric.

As Shapiro (1989) explains, sport and international politics function intertextually, in part, because many sports find their origins in military activities. Despite this shared heritage, however, contemporary discourses too often attempt to dissociate sport from its political context. International relations scholar Mandelbaum (2004), for example, claims that among the virtues of major American sports is that they "divert spectators from the burdens of normal existence" (p. 4). Such thinking is commonplace in American culture, and it is the very logic that enables militaristic discourses to seep into the sporting terrain without being seen as overtly "political." Thus, when sporting events become sites for affirming the military they often hail spectators as citizens. As a consequence, good citizenship is conflated with spectatorship, minimizing the active engagement required of democratic citizens.

Modern sport and the military have a rich shared history in the United States. For example, the emergence of baseball as the "national pastime" occurred in the context of the Civil War. The game was seen by many as a "symbol of reunification," thus affirming modern sport's rhetorical capacity from its earliest days (Tygiel, 2000, p. 13). In subsequent decades, as the nation's most popular sport, baseball regularly featured patriotic and military themes at the ballpark, from World War I military drills executed by major league players to the World War II installment of the "Star Spangled Banner" prior to each game's opening pitch (Rader, 2002). This wartime ritual was eventually adopted by all professional and intercollegiate sports leagues and remains a fixture in contemporary sport. Meanwhile, baseball continues to affirm the American military through overseas visits to the troops, the promotion of "Military Appreciation" events and, most recently, sponsorship of a new charity called "Welcome Back Veterans."

By the 1960s, American football had replaced baseball as the nation's most popular sport. This transformation was, in part, a result of television's ability to aestheticize the violence of football and to cultivate the metaphor that war is, as journalist Tom Callahan called it, the "moral equivalent of football" (quoted in Segrave, 2000, p. 49). Significantly, the birth of the modern National Football League (NFL)—represented by the merger of the old NFL with its rival American Football League—overlapped with the escalation of the Vietnam War. Given the intense "national confusion and distress" precipitated by Vietnam, Wanda Wakefield (1997) suggests that, of all sports, "football seemed to serve cultural needs most effectively" in the 1960s and 1970s (p. 138). Accordingly, military pageantry became an early staple of football's most spectacular occasion, the Super Bowl. As religious scholar Michael Novak (1992) describes, "At the Super Bowl in 1970, clouds of military jets flew in formation, American flags and patriotic bunting flapped in the wind, ceremonies honored prisoners of war, clergymen solemnly prayed, thousands sang the national anthem" (p. 35).

More recently, the end of the Cold War and the advent of the "war on terror" have provided the context for an unprecedented overlap between military and sporting discourses. Super Bowl XXV, for example, took place just days after the United States launched military actions in the first Gulf War. It is a game often remembered

for singer Whitney Houston's rendition of the national anthem, a performance set against the backdrop of waving American flags and signs of support for the troops. As Kellner (1992) recalls, "The 'Star Spangled Banner' was dedicated to the 'half million fans in the Gulf,' identifying troops with fans, war with football" (p. 258). In the wake of 9/11, the blurring of sports and war has found additional strength. The past several years have brought near-constant reminders of the American military through baseball stadium rituals (Butterworth, 2005), NFL "kickoff" ceremonies (King, 2008), NASCAR (auto racing) displays of belligerent patriotism (Kusz, 2007), and an almost endless list of military appreciation events at college football games.

Big-time college football is a decidedly commercial production, competing with the NFL for media attention and corporate sponsorship. In an effort to capitalize on this enterprise, major university athletic programs invest heavily to build state-of-the-art facilities, hire prominent coaches, and recruit "blue-chip" athletes. At the University of Oregon, for example, the athletic department spent \$14.6 million on an indoor training facility for their football team, and \$3.2 million on a new locker room (Murphy, 2003). Texas A&M recently completed a 125,000 square-foot, \$27 million practice facility, whereas nearby Texas Tech used \$84 million to renovate their football stadium (Davie, 2004). Meanwhile, in 2007 the University of Alabama made Nick Saban the highest salaried head coach in the country, paying him \$4 million annually (Upton, 2007).

Expenditures such as these have made college football a target of critics who fear that the mission of higher education is at risk. Murray Sperber (2000), for example, suggests that public universities in particular promote the culture of big-time athletics—"beer and circus"—to attract undergraduates who are then given an education that has been compromised by the investment in sports. Matthew McAllister (1998) argues that the commercialism of college football is "overwhelmingly detrimental to the nature of amateur athletics, the spirit of competition, and the independence of academia" (p. 362). In particular, he critiques the relatively recent development of having corporate names attached to postseason bowl games. The Tangerine Bowl was the first game to adopt a corporate identity when it became the Florida Citrus Bowl in 1982. Once the Rose Bowl agreed to sponsorship in 1999, every bowl game had a corporate identification. In the process, McAllister contends that these games have become mass mediated corporate spectacles, wherein excessive sponsorship "turns the bowl into a giant commercial" (p. 368).

It is perhaps now taken for granted that corporatism exerts considerable influence over universities in the United States. Accordingly, we share the concerns of the critics noted above. However, we also wish to extend those concerns, for the consequences are not limited to commercialism or the devaluing of higher education. More than this, the recent collaboration between college football and the U.S. Armed Forces exploits both the principles of sponsorship and the culture of militarism to constitute a site for the legitimization of war. Indeed, the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl represents a troubling development in commercial sport, as it relies on the logic of corporate sponsorship to normalize the presence of military spectacle. In the midst

of the "war on terror," we insist that the corporate-military-sporting relationship demands critique and contestation. It is to that purpose that we now turn.

### **Making militarism "fun": The Armed Forces Bowl**

The Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl is a mass mediated celebration of the culture of militarism. It is sponsored by a military hardware manufacturer, supported by Department of Defense initiatives to "support the troops," and broadcast by the self-proclaimed "World Wide Leader" in sports, ESPN. Moreover, it depends on the production of an entertainment spectacle that masks the violent realities of war and exploits the members of the U.S. military as a means for justifying corporate-military expansion and defusing critiques of military policies. In order to demonstrate how the Armed Forces Bowl functions rhetorically in the culture of militarism, we see the "game" as an articulation of multiple rhetorical forms that constitute the event. This perspective is informed by Burke's (1969) notion of "identification." As he explains, "we must think of rhetoric not in terms of some one particular address, but as a general *body of identifications* that owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement than to exceptional rhetorical skill" (p. 26).

Dickinson (2005) notes that Burke's theory of identification shifts our focus away from rhetoric as merely an instrument of persuasion. In his words, "Rhetoric as identification functions far more globally than does rhetoric as persuasion and often does the prior work of creating the groups to which persuasive messages can then be directed." Building on Charland's (1987) theory of "constitutive rhetoric," he continues, "Rhetoric as constitutive both creates and recreates the audience itself" (p. 273). In this way, the discursive elements that characterize a culture of militarism are both references to an existing ideology and reinforcements for the perpetuation of that ideology. Central to the rhetorical production of militarism, therefore, is the *articulation* of apparently unrelated discourses. Articulation, states Hall, is the "form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements" (quoted in Grossberg, 1986, p. 53). The result is not merely that two elements may be present at the same time. Rather, articulation establishes "a relation among elements such that *their identity is modified* as a result of the articulatory practice" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 105, emphasis ours). In this way, the rhetoric of identification has the capacity to constitute audiences who come to see the disconnected elements as having a natural relationship.

Our analysis is not concerned with the actual action on the field or the outcome of the game as a contest. Instead, we wish to view the articulation of discursive elements that position Americans to identify positively with the culture of militarism. For Burke (1969), this identification allows humans to be "consubstantial" with one another, thus dissolving divisions between them (p. 21). Although the rhetoric of identification may serve ends that minimize damage and enhance democratic practices, it may also bring "rhetoric to the edge of cunning" (Burke, 1969, p. 36). Because we have not had the opportunity to attend the games in person, we identify

the articulations of militarism that are based on the *presentation* of the Armed Forces Bowl through the official statements by the game's sponsors, the marketing efforts made by the game's officials, and the televised broadcasts by ESPN in 2006 and 2007. These elements constitute a rhetorical text through which we may identify and destabilize the various associations that through this college sporting event constitute a citizenry that is complicit with the culture of militarism, especially at times of war. As Burke states, "Particularly where an association is seen to be moving the world towards a universal calamity, we should try the experiment of dissociating it, not just for the love of the art . . . but for the vision that may come of such ideological manipulations" (p. 153). It is our hope that such a vision might shed light on the political significance of the Armed Forces Bowl and provide opportunities for alternative ways of living in a culture of militarism.

### **Bowl sponsorship**

Bell Helicopter is headquartered in Fort Worth, TX, an important indicator that the local community is deeply invested in the military-industrial complex. Indeed, the military has a strong presence in Fort Worth, evidenced in part by Mayor Moncrief's praise for the defense industry that we noted earlier and by AT&T's decision to feature a picture of the Armed Forces Bowl on the cover of its 2007–2008 directory. As the game's president, Tom Starr, confirmed, "We are honored to be selected for the cover of the new AT&T Real Yellow Pages and believe it delivers a great visual message on how Bell Helicopter and Fort Worth pay tribute each year to our country's military men and women in uniform" ("AT&T," 2007). Consequently, everyone in Fort Worth is invited to identify with the military as the standard-bearer of the community and its values. This relationship is consonant with Fort Worth's reputation as a "family-friendly" city, and the "Old West" tradition embodied by its famous Stockyards, to constitute an environment that slides comfortably between entertainment and the symbols of violence. Thus, the agreement between Bell Helicopter and the bowl's officials was facilitated by the already present overlap of military, economic, and entertainment interests.

An August 23, 2006 press release announced that the Fort Worth Bowl would be called the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl. Michael Redenbaugh, CEO of Bell Helicopter-Textron, stated:

Bell Helicopter is pleased and proud to be the sponsor of the Armed Forces Bowl. Not only is it an honor to build the products our military use in performing their missions, but also to recognize them for their service to our country. Hopefully this game will provide them with a little fun and relaxation during the holidays. We look forward to a great football game with thousands of military men and women in the stadium ("Bell Helicopter to Sponsor," 2006)

In this statement, Redenbaugh made it clear that "fun" was one of the central themes of the event. This point was emphasized by Starr, who declared that the game would be the "Cirque du Soleil of bowl games" (West, 2006, p. D1). Throughout



the production of the Armed Forces Bowl, fans are invited to view the event primarily as an entertainment spectacle, in spite of official statements that claim to "honor" the military. As a consequence, when the elements of militarism are on display—including the troops themselves—they are positioned to constitute an audience of happy spectators rather than engaged citizens.

### **Marketing the Armed Forces Bowl**

Although it is not clear why other college bowl games are *not* fun, it is obvious that "fun" at the Armed Forces Bowl is explicitly linked to militarism. Most notably, outside the stadium visitors are welcomed by a "fanfest," an amusement park-style exhibition that features armored vehicles, tanks, helicopters, simulation machines, and recruiting booths ("2006 AFB Game Recap"). The presence of recruiters disrupts the illusion that the fanfest is only about fun and games, a concern to which we will return later. Meanwhile, other elements of "fun" include an F-18 flyover, a demonstration by a military skydiving team, performances by a military band and honor guard, and the presentation of the "Great American Patriot Award." Although some of these moments are not included as live components in the ESPN broadcast, each of them are referenced either verbally or with video images. In this way, even fans at home are able to participate in the larger production of the game.

Commercial sporting events are sites of consumption and entertainment. By embedding military machinery so deeply in this context, the Armed Forces Bowl exploits the relationships present in the culture of militarism. Consequently, the seriousness of actual warfare is dismissed. As sportswriter Gwen Knapp (2003) has said of flyovers, "The ritual is fundamentally disrespectful to military operations. The presence of those planes at a sporting event trivializes their real purpose" (p. B2). In the case of Bell Helicopter-Textron, their real purpose is to build military hardware, hardware that is in higher demand during times of war. Thus, the sponsorship of a college football bowl game came at a time when Bell Helicopter-Textron stood to benefit from the continuation of the "war on terror," either in Iraq or elsewhere.

Bell Helicopter is a subsidiary of Textron, Inc., a Fortune 500 company with revenues of \$11 billion ("Textron"). It produces both commercial and military aircraft, though it is arguably most identified with the "Huey" helicopter that provided one of the enduring images of the Vietnam War. According to the company, "Bell's military products rewrite the rules of mobility and mobilize the rules of engagement" ("Bell"). Moreover, it is clear that Textron values Bell primarily for its potential to capitalize on the U.S. Government's substantial military budget. The 2006 Textron Annual Report notes, for example, that "Bell Helicopter saw continued strong demand for their products, with a year-end \$2.4 billion U.S. Government backlog." The commercial backlog, meanwhile, was worth just over \$600 million ("Textron Annual Report," 2006).

It is clear that Bell Helicopter is a key component in the \$515 billion defense budget ("Fiscal 2009") of the United States and a significant contributor to the production of military equipment. However, the average college football fan is

not in a position to purchase a helicopter. Thus, the Armed Forces Bowl uses the sponsorship of Bell Helicopter to sell a different kind of product: An *identity* that is rooted in the culture of militarism. The most obvious manifestation of this identity is a rhetorical shift that de-emphasizes the corporate sponsorship of the game, choosing to cast the mission of the game as a means to "support the troops." Here, the game uses the "brave men and women" of the U.S. Armed Forces as a symbolic bridge between citizens and soldiers. This is the essence of Burke's (1969) notion of rhetoric, through which "identification is compensatory to division" (p. 22). Consequently, the division between the war and its opponents is lessened to the extent that citizens are willing to "support the troops." Moreover, this positive identification with the troops is made possible because of the game's sponsor, a condition that enables Bell Helicopter to also be viewed more positively. Thus, there is considerable risk that when Americans accept the sponsor's invitation to "support the troops," they are simultaneously giving tacit support to a corporation that profits from sending those troops to war.

The program from the 2006 game includes another statement from Michael Redenbaugh. He writes, "It's important that we remember that those in military uniform here and those on duty around the world tonight are on the field every day, somewhere on the globe, serving their country so that we may enjoy the freedoms we sometimes take for granted." This theme recurred throughout the program, as advertisers linked their products and services to slogans such as, "Proud to Support Our Troops & The Armed Forces Bowl," "We Salute the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl," and "Proud to Support Our Men and Women in Uniform" ("Armed Forces Bowl Program"). Here, identification is cultivated through the accumulation of support expressed by local sponsors. The repetition of the message contributes to the "body of identifications" that Burke (1969) suggests lends rhetoric its power (p. 26).

Framing the game as an honor to the military is troublesome because it depends on what Kellner (1992) terms "empty patriotism," through which wartime citizenship is constituted by chants of "USA! USA!" and slogans such as "support the troops" (p. 256). We do not mean to suggest here that having respect and admiration for members of the U.S. Armed Forces is inappropriate. Rather, we wish to emphasize that, as a rhetorical strategy, declarations of thanks to the military tend to reduce identification with the military to *images* rather than serving as invitations to Americans to serve, sacrifice, or reflect on the mission of the war. As Robert Jensen (2004) contends, "In a democratic society, the question should not be whether one supports the troops. The relevant question is whether one supports the policy. The demand that war opponents must 'support the troops' is nothing more than a way of demanding that we drop our opposition to the policy" (p. 21).

The rhetoric of "support the troops" is extended through Bell Helicopter's partnership with America Supports You, an organization dedicated to developing community support for members of the U.S. military. As the group states:

America Supports You is an ongoing nationwide program that helps showcase Americans' support for the men and women of the Armed Forces. Since its launch in November of 2004 by the Department of Defense, America Supports You has welcomed nearly 250 grassroots organizations and more than 33 corporate sponsors to its team. America Supports You team members support the troops by writing letters, sending care packages, helping the wounded when they return home, assisting military families, sending e-mails or simply extending kind gestures to the troops ("Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl Media Guide," p. 6).

We want to draw particular attention to the fact that this program is *an invention of the Department of Defense*. Thus, America Supports You presents the illusion that Americans are independently moved to support the military, when, in this case at least, they are given the script by the bureaucracy that depends on the military-industrial complex. In other words, the Department of Defense is *not* part of the military, but rather it is the military-dependent arm of the government that is run by *civilians*.

Just one month after America Supports You was created, then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld visited U.S. troops in the Middle East. When questioned about inadequate equipment, Rumsfeld infamously replied, "As you know, you go to war with the Army you have. They're not the Army you might want or wish to have at a later time" (quoted in Ricks, 2004). Such a comment revealed a disconnect between the "support the troops" rhetoric and the actual support for the troops provided by the Department of Defense. Indeed, given that Bell Helicopter depends on the U.S. military for much of its revenue and America Supports You is an organization created by the Department of Defense, it appears that the "support the troops" rhetoric that is central to the Armed Forces Bowl has less to do with the men and women serving in the military and more to do with legitimizing the causes that place them in harm's way in the first place. We contend that such posturing is disingenuous, as it exploits the members of the U.S. Armed Forces and masks the set of relationships that facilitates war.

Yet, there are additional ways that the Armed Forces Bowl uses military personnel as part of the entertainment spectacle. Bowl officials ensure a large military presence among the crowd by offering discounted ticket prices to veterans and free admission to those on active duty. Each quarter of the game is dedicated to one of the four branches of the U.S. military. And high-ranking personnel participate in on-field ceremonies such as the pregame coin toss. The most prominent feature is the halftime show, which includes the presentation of the "Great American Patriot Award." This award is sponsored by Military Alliances and Associates LLC (MA3 LLC), which is a "military recruiting firm specializing in placing former military officers and NCOs into leadership positions in the private sector" (Crawford, 2006). According to the Armed Forces Bowl media guide, the Great American Patriot: "Is of high moral fiber and good character; has spent his or her career serving the common good of

the United States; has gone beyond the call of duty to serve and protect his or her country; has proved dedication and loyalty in upholding the Constitution and the laws of the nation; has worked tirelessly to make the U.S. a better and safer place for all its citizens" ("Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl Media Guide"). Then, as if to guarantee a future batch of Great American Patriots, the halftime festivities also include an enlistment ritual of new recruits. During the 2007 ceremony, the Great American Patriot Award was presented to Secretary of the Army Pete Geren. Immediately thereafter, "Secretary Geren administered the oath of enlistment to 100 recruits representing all branches of the military" (Thurmond, 2008).

The enlistment ceremony offers fans in attendance a glimpse into one of the most revered rituals of military service. Placed within the context of an entertainment spectacle, however, it focuses on the pageantry of the military while yet again obscuring the realities of war. It is entirely possible that some of those 100 men and women fought under the American flag, and died in their service. Yet, during the Armed Forces Bowl, these possibilities are lost among the flags, fireworks, and fun. Thus, fans are invited to identify not with the troops as individual people but with the *image* of the troops as idealized expressions of American identity.

The use of college football as a site for military recruitment is also cause for concern. Already, the Army alone spends \$1.5 billion each year on recruitment, targeting high schools, shopping malls, and other areas where young people can be found. As of 2005, the Pentagon has employed an outside marketing firm, BeNow, Inc., in the effort to improve declining enlistments (Boggs & Pollard). Meanwhile, forms of entertainment and play have become increasingly important to recruiting strategies. At the forefront of these efforts is the U.S. Army's successful video game project, *America's Army*. An online game played by millions, *America's Army* "provides players with the most authentic military experience available, from exploring the development of Soldiers in individual and collective training to their deployment in simulated missions in the War on Terror" ("America's Army"). As Stahl (2006) points out, this authenticity is undermined given that the violence of war is sanitized for those who play the game. Moreover, *America's Army* shifts the rhetoric of recruitment by inviting online gamers to identify with the Army in the same way they would with other commercial game producers. "In this new war gaming environment," he argues, "recruitment has taken on a logic that is entirely harmonious with the brand, a kind of brand loyalty" (p. 125). Similarly, the Armed Forces Bowl is "branded" by its affiliation with Bell Helicopter and the various ways that military personnel are included in the entertainment spectacle. Thus, the presence of recruiting booths at the fanfest and the enlistment ritual during halftime are conspicuous moments when college football is used to promote the culture of militarism and to normalize war.

The emphasis on "branding" that is ubiquitous across college football is a product of larger changes in contemporary economics. As Naomi Klein (2002) has detailed, corporate entities increasingly have turned away from marketing specific products in favor of "*images* of their brands" (p. 4). Such images are designed to hail citizens as

consumers, so that they may identify their purchasing choices as endorsements for a particular way of life. In his analysis of corporate advertising after 9/11, Dickinson (2005) recognizes that, through identification, corporations "urged Americans to see consumption as a powerful means for enacting patriotism in a post-September 11 world" (p. 275). Similarly, the association between college football and the military that is reified by the Armed Forces Bowl invites fans to celebrate and identify with an identity grounded in a commercialized form of militarism.

A troubling consequence of this branding is the degree to which it uses a public space to elide public responsibilities. In the words of Benjamin Barber (2007), the use of corporate names on sports stadiums "does to public arenas what the transformation of urban public squares into private commercial malls does to civic spaces. . . . Rebranding is more than name-deep: It alters the character of the civic environment and allows commerce to trump every other activity, whether recreational or civic" (p. 201). Thus, even as the festivities surrounding the Armed Forces Bowl appear to be cultivating a civic awareness of and appreciation for the U.S. military, they more likely reduce critical reflection about the purpose of the military and, in turn, further legitimize the commercialization of the Armed Forces.

All of this comes, of course, at a time of declining public support for the "war on terror." By 2006, only 39% of Americans believed that the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was appropriate (Staunton, 2006, p. 13). If they are at all representative of the general population, American football fans have become less likely to endorse overt messages that promote war. Instead explicit celebrations of war, then, the Armed Forces Bowl offers a series of identifications which offer observers the opportunity to consume a way of life, one which depends on militarism even as it masks that dependency.

### **Televised military spectacle**

No bowl game can claim to be "fun" unless it is broadcast on television. Indeed, the ESPN production of the Armed Forces Bowl warrants the largest focus of our critique. It is no coincidence that ESPN televised the Armed Forces Bowl; in fact, the game is owned and operated by ESPN Regional Television. Thus, the network exerts a tremendous influence over the production of the bowl. Few would argue that, since its inception in 1979, ESPN has become the dominant entity in sports media. It is the largest cable network in the United States, and its assets now include ESPN2, ESPN News, ESPN Deportes, ESPN Radio, ESPN.com, *ESPN The Magazine*, and ESPN Zone restaurants (Freeman, 2000). Our analysis examines the televised broadcast of the Armed Forces Bowl, which aired December 23, 2006 and December 31, 2007 on ESPN and ESPN Radio. Although these represent separate and, to some extent, different broadcasts, we maintain that the rhetorical production of militarism is consistent enough to read them together as a relatively unified "text."<sup>2</sup>

Much as the marketing efforts have done, both broadcasts blurred the lines between war and fun while simultaneously reaffirming the rhetoric of "support the troops." The 2006 broadcast began with the familiar chatter of a college football pregame show.<sup>3</sup> Rather than focus on the bowl match-up between the University

of Tulsa and the University of Utah, the studio analysts dedicated most of their time to a discussion of Texas Tech University basketball coach, Bob Knight. On December 23, he was poised to win his 880th game as head coach, a total that would surpass North Carolina legend Dean Smith and make Knight the winningest men's basketball coach in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) history. We note this because it is significant that the pregame began by featuring a man commonly known as the "General." Knight's previous affiliation with West Point, his affinity for military history, and his infamous temperament have allowed sports fans to accept the "General" as a moniker without questioning the appropriateness of the term. Significantly, each of the studio analysts, former college football coach Lou Holtz, and former players Doug Flutie and Mark May, went out of their way to praise Knight, rationalizing his boorish behavior and announcing that they would send their own sons to play for such an exemplary coach. So it was that ESPN set the tone for the evening by making Knight a prominent part of their coverage.

After a brief introduction from play-by-play announcer Mike Patrick and color analyst Todd Blackledge, Bell Helicopter's Redenbaugh provided a welcome message that overlapped with his comments in the game program. In this videotaped message he said, "Good evening. We are here tonight to watch a great football game and honor the men and women of our armed forces. These brave individuals are around the world. They are on the field for us. It is a privilege for Textron and Bell Helicopter to recognize them." Perhaps most revealing in Redenbaugh's statement is the sentence, "They are on the field for us." This was a clear attempt to equate the football field with the battle field, thus relying on the familiar trope of equating football with war. Here, soldiers and players become "consubstantial" (Burke, 1969, p. 21) with one another, and they, in turn, are made consubstantial with fans so that the sport/war metaphor may be exploited without attending to the violence that distinguishes warfare from sport.

As the game began, the presence of the game's sponsors became obvious. Spray-painted advertisements for "Textron Systems" and "America Supports You" appeared between the 20- and 30-yard lines, and naturally, "Bell Helicopter" was consistently mentioned as the game's chief sponsor. These entities blended seamlessly with the more conventional corporate logos of "Geico" or "ACME Brick." In addition, given the time of year, it was of little surprise that the broadcast featured numerous commercials based on the Christmas holiday. Sports fans are especially familiar with the endless advertisements for razors and jewelry, and these were intermixed with promotions for Capital One and Disney World. In this way, games such as the Armed Forces Bowl participate in the production of what Silk, Andrews, and Cole (2005) term "corporate nationalisms," wherein "global capitalism seeks to, quite literally, capitalize upon the nation as a source of collective identification and differentiation" (p. 7). These predictable advertisements were woven together with recruitment commercials that are standard during sports broadcasts. Virtually every commercial break featured an advertisement for some branch of the military. One for the Marines included the text, "They've stormed beaches. And freed countries.

They've raised our flag. And our hopes. They've been called 'leathernecks.' They've been called 'devil dogs.' But above all, they're called Marines." This commercial became a regular part of sports telecasts, and it promotes the uncomplicated heroism of American military personnel. Dedicated to "freedom" and "hope," Marines and other service members are viewed through the lens of American exceptionalism. Carolyn Marvin and David Ingle (1999) argue that American identity is secured through the assurance that the United States is always on the side of good and, thus, never shoots first. Such a mythology, one that articulates with the mythology of sports figures as virtuous heroes, is strongly endorsed in these recruitment ads.

Bell Helicopter also produced its own "support the troops" commercial. This one contained no narration, just a pleasant acoustic guitar as the soundtrack to a series of patriotic images: yellow ribbons, small-town America, national monuments. The yellow ribbons were most prominent, a familiar symbol from wars past that symbolize a nation united in its support for the troops. The yellow ribbons, much like the support our troops ribbons found on sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and minivans, and the multiple deployments of the American flag, offer Americans the comfort of symbolically *supporting* the military without having to question the *actions* of the military. This extends the rhetoric of identification by allowing citizens to purchase and display a *representation* of the military. Football fans cannot purchase a helicopter made by Bell, after all, so the metonymic reduction of the Armed Forces to yellow ribbons is the best approximation available. Moreover, this form of identification depends on the logic of television advertising, in effect allowing viewers to consume a way of life by equating members of the military with products for purchase. Thus, although the symbolism of the yellow ribbons is designed to personalize the troops and show them support, the logic of commercialism instead risks dehumanizing the troops by making them objects for sale.

Here, we see the consequences of a shift in the relationship between citizenship and consumption that has been detailed by Cohen (2003). As she contends, historical articulations of consumers as citizens have been pushed aside in favor of a "consumerized" citizenry, "where self-interested citizens increasingly view government policies like other market transactions, judging them by how well served they feel personally" (p. 9). In this way, attending or viewing the Armed Forces Bowl affords Americans the opportunity to play the role of supportive citizen regardless of their level of engagement with matters of politics or war. Thus, these advertisements relied on similar strategies to those used by corporations after 9/11 identified by Dickinson (2005), perhaps best symbolized by President Bush's call for Americans to exercise their patriotism by flying in airplanes to Disney World.

Although the commercials demonstrated the articulation of sport, corporatism, and war, we argue that the most telling sequence came after a commercial break. Upon returning to game coverage, ESPN provided a video montage of the military fanfest held outside the stadium. Opening with the image of a banner reading, "Welcome to the Armed Forces Bowl," the sequence included shots of the various pieces of military hardware on display. Most striking were young boys, probably aged

9 or 10, one of whom was seated in the cockpit of a helicopter, the other seated atop a tank, behind a Cadillac Gage gatlin gun. The boy behind the gun appeared to be saying, "Cool!" Although it is not unusual to see boys fascinated by guns and military imagery, *it is unusual to see a sanctioned event designed to promote that fascination.* Yet, ESPN's broadcast revealed no awareness of the mixed messages presented by the military display. Instead, Mike Patrick simply reminded viewers that this was "the largest display of military hardware ever at a bowl game." Then, as game action resumed with a shot of soldiers in the stands, he reflected on the scene he witnessed before the game. "And [there are] a lot of military personnel on hand here tonight and we salute them for everything they have done for us. And it [the display] was a lot of fun for, uh, there were a lot of kids out at the displays and got to sit in helicopters." Once again, the theme of "fun" was central to the Armed Forces Bowl experience.

Naturally, no one commented on how helicopters and tanks are used. In this way, the conflation of sport and war was presented as perfectly normal, a rhetorical move that was reinforced through the broadcast of the game on December 31, 2007. Many of the same themes were present in this second version of the newly named bowl, with the added intrigue of an on-field match-up that featured the University of California—arguably the university most identified with an antiestablishment image—and the Air Force Academy. The presence of a service academy in the game was not lost on organizers, and players and coaches from Cal made sure that they could be seen as equally respectful of the U.S. Armed Forces as were the Falcons from Air Force. Golden Bears head coach Jeff Tedford was quoted as thanking the "men and women around the country and the world who keep us safe" (quoted in Phillips, 2007). In addition, ESPN sideline reporter Todd Harris informed the audience before kickoff that Tedford decided to have names removed from the back of players' jerseys to show "solidarity" and to defer to the Armed Forces.<sup>4</sup>

Once the game was underway, Cal's players were introduced to the audience by Jason Kidd, a former basketball star at the university. These introduction segments are familiar to sports viewers, and they typically include prerecorded video of a player or coach listing the starters and offering brief comments about star players. For the 2007 Armed Forces Bowl, the Air Force starters were introduced by Brigadier General Tod Wolters, who radioed in from the cockpit of his F-22 jet. It was not clear whether the segment was live, but it was framed to suggest that Gen. Wolters was, indeed, flying overhead while reading the Falcons' names. In this way, an active duty member of the military was folded directly into the game's narrative. The ease with which the broadcast moved between Kidd and Wolters and the familiarity of such introductions made it all the more likely that viewers found nothing unusual in the presentation.

The inclusion of active military personnel peaked during halftime. Although neither the presentation of the "Great American Patriot Award" nor the induction of new recruits were part of the television broadcast, ESPN did feature a videotaped message from General David Petraeus, Commander of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq.<sup>5</sup> In many ways, Petraeus was the most visible face of the U.S. military effort in Iraq. Thus, his presence suggested that he was speaking not only on behalf of the Armed



Forces in general, but also of the specific mission underway in the "war on terror." As the broadcast came back from a commercial, Petraeus addressed the audience:

Greetings from Baghdad to all the fans at the Armed Forces Bowl, and thanks for dedicating this bowl game to America's service men and women. As you know, our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coastguardsmen are doing magnificent jobs in Iraq, Afghanistan, the heart of Africa, Korea, and a host of other places around the world. They continually demonstrate initiative, determination, innovativeness, and courage. And they are very worthy of the tribute you've paid to them today. Thanks, as well, to each and every one of you for your support of our men and women in uniform. They truly are America's new, greatest generation. Go Falcons, and go Golden Bears. Thank you.

Petraeus' comments demonstrated the ease with which "support the troops" stood in for a stronger message of "support the policy." In particular, his assertion that the Armed Forces were doing "magnificent jobs" was a rhetorical move that justified the mission of the "war on terror." For if Americans are willing to concede that their Armed Forces are "magnificent," how prepared would they be to question the morality or necessity of the actual "jobs" being done? Moreover, Petraeus' comments draw upon the legacy of the "greatest generation," a reference that equates the morally suspect "war on terror" with the nobility of World War II. This rhetorical strategy is consistent with other efforts during the "war on terror," especially those made through the rhetoric of President George W. Bush. As Bostdorff (2003) suggests, the president responded to the attacks of 9/11 with a religiously inflected rhetoric of "covenant renewal," through which Americans could reconnect with the courage and character of the greatest generation. Far from simply offering a historic touchstone, this rhetoric of identification has implications for contemporary citizenship. Indeed, in the words of Barbara Biesecker (2002), "popular cultural representations of the 'Good War' . . . constitute one of the primary means through which a renewed sense of national belonging is being persuasively packaged and delivered to U.S. audiences for whom the question what does it mean to be an American has . . . never been more difficult to answer" (p. 394). Accordingly, the rhetorical production of the Armed Forces Bowl, punctuated by Petraeus' comments, depends on a series of identifications that constitute the proper limits for American citizenship.

We do not wish to dispute the determination or courage of these service men and women, but we do object to the privileging of a militaristic message that was central to these broadcasts. Indeed, the Armed Forces Bowl is largely a spectacle of the culture of militarism, overdetermined by the multiple points of articulation from sponsors, advertisers, and broadcasters who appear eager to use the game to garner support for war and valorize the industries that make war possible in the first place.<sup>6</sup>

### **American identity in the culture of militarism**

In Stahl's (2006) critique of *America's Army*, he laments the extent to which the lines have blurred between news, entertainment, commercialism, and war. He concludes,

"The business of play works closely with the military to replicate the tools of state violence; the business of state violence in turn capitalizes on playtime for institutional ends" (p. 125). We may consider the Armed Forces Bowl in similar terms. As produced by the corporate-military relationship between ESPN and Bell Helicopter, the game relies on images of "fun" and "play" as a means to sanitize the realities of war, affirm support for the troops and therefore the mission of the troops, and cultivate an attitude among young viewers that may be favorable to military enlistment. All of which is a reminder that this rhetorical text is situated in the larger discourse about national identity and war.

Through sporting discourses after 9/11, national identity has too often been reasserted through excessive displays of patriotism commonly seen through ritual performances of songs and appearances by military personnel. In this respect, there is little new in the Armed Forces Bowl that we have not seen in countless versions of "God Bless America," or the Bush administration's mythologizing of Pat Tillman.<sup>7</sup> What is new is the extent to which the game blurs the lines between war and entertainment, service and consumption, fighting and fun. In the process, the Armed Forces Bowl is problematic for at least four reasons. First, it extends the logic used by other entertainment media to sanitize and normalize war. Military hardware exists as a mere amusement for children and families, and the valorization of soldiers deflects any consideration of the violence that they will engage in or fall victim to after they enlist. Through the framework of the game, military service is an adventure, and the actual actions of the Armed Forces are fun and games.

Second, despite the relentless rhetoric of "support the troops," members of the Armed Forces are commodified for the audience's pleasure and consumption. They become convenient props and symbols for fans in attendance and viewers at home, a means for evoking patriotism with a gesture as minimal as wearing yellow ribbons and U.S. flag lapel pins. Ivie (2007) argues that abstract celebrations of soldiers run the ironic risk of making them *less* human. Writing specifically about statues and monuments, he suggests, "Just as our enemies are dehumanized by rendering them into devils, our own soldiers are dehumanized by reducing them to depersonalized heroes" (p. 79). We contend that the same is often true of living service men and women, as well. By abstracting the members of the Armed Forces and reducing them to symbols and tokens, the rituals performed during the Armed Forces Bowl reify the troops as tragic heroes. Rather than flesh and blood humans who are vulnerable to the violence of war, they become idealized defenders of freedom and democracy. As a consequence, when members of the U.S. military enact *nonheroic* behaviors, such as the atrocities committed at Abu Ghraib (Hersh, 2004), or when it is revealed that veterans returning from Iraq are increasingly likely to commit suicide (Concern Mounts, 2008), Americans are invited to view these revelations as aberrations rather than the logical results of a culture of militarism.<sup>8</sup> Far from honoring the troops, therefore, we view the rhetorical production of the Armed Forces Bowl as *antitroop* to the extent that it legitimizes the "war on terror," thus placing more military personnel at risk of injury or death.

If this form of commodification risks the physical health of the Armed Forces, it also risks the democratic health of the broader public. It is clear that for Americans to identify with the troops they must subscribe to the logic of commercialism that legitimizes a culture of militarism. More than simply facilitating the *individual* purchase of a yellow ribbon magnet or an American flag, however, the Armed Forces Bowl constitutes a *collective* audience of citizen consumers, whose "purchase" of a college football game reaffirms the centrality of the military in American life. As Turse (2008) reminds us, "From sunglasses to video games, golf courses to doughnuts, hot movies to hot cars, much of the way the Complex manifests itself hardly looks 'military' at all" (p. 270). In this light, the Armed Forces Bowl is a rhetorical production that masks America's deepening dependence on the defense industry, as well as its expansion into more and more aspects of public culture. Consequently, this rhetoric of identification not only promotes the culture of militarism, but it also has the capacity to blunt the growing resistance to the "war on terror."

A related and fourth problem results from this intersection of sport and war. The common perception is that sport is merely a metaphor for war, a notion supported only to the extent that sport invokes war's symbolism but not its consequences. Thus, Ronald Reagan could remark, "Sport is the human activity closest to war that isn't lethal" (quoted in Burstyn, 1999, p. 165). The Armed Forces Bowl, however, renders this distinction irrelevant. Through this military-media-sport spectacle, sport effectively *is* war. It literally brings the military to the sporting public, immersing fans in the machinery of war and enlisting them to rally around the troops.

As Ivie (2007) states in the opening of his book, *Dissent From War*, "War is easy. Peace is difficult" (p. 1). The Armed Forces Bowl makes this reality all too clear. What is easily dismissed by many as an innocent sporting event with a "patriotic" theme is more accurately described as a mediated spectacle of militarism. Through the merging interests of the Fort Worth community, ESPN, Bell Helicopter-Textron, and the game's other sponsors, football simultaneously trivializes the seriousness of war as it emphasizes the seriousness of supporting the American military. This rhetorical division offers a delimited conception of appropriate American identity, thereby sanctioning the promotion of war in general and endorsing the "war on terror" specifically. Most tragically, the Armed Forces Bowl claims to "support the troops" even as it reduces them to commodities or dehumanized symbols of heroism. Thus, at a time in U.S. history when vocal resistance to war is most required, Americans are instead further enmeshed in the culture of militarism.

## Notes

- 1 The use of the term "football" reflects its distinct meaning in the United States. The international game of football is called "soccer" in the U.S. All references in this essay are to *American* football.
- 2 We do not include an analysis of the game broadcast on December 31, 2008. That broadcast largely echoed the themes of those in 2006 and 2007.

- 3 All of our observations about the 2006 game are based on watching a video recording of the ESPN broadcast on December, 23, 2006.
- 4 All of our observations about the 2007 game are based on watching a video recording of the ESPN broadcast on December, 31, 2007.
- 5 All military ceremonies were included in the simulcast with Armed Forces Network (AFN). These broadcasts are important, but cannot be fully addressed within the scope of the present argument.
- 6 Although we do not include the 2008 broadcast in our analysis, it is worth noting that a video message from President George W. Bush preceded the kickoff the December 31, 2008 game. This serves as a further reminder that this sporting event is an explicit endorsement of the “war on terror,” especially given that Bush’s comments praised the military for making the “world freer” and “America safer” during his time as Commander in Chief.
- 7 Pat Tillman is the former NFL player who gave up a lucrative contract in order to enlist in the U.S. Army Rangers. Although he was killed by “friendly fire,” many politicians and media commentators used his death to symbolize American heroism and service to country.
- 8 When news broke about the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, President Bush used this very logic to defend the honor of American troops. At a press conference with Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, he said, “I also want to remind people that those few people who did that do not reflect the nature of the men and women we’ve sent overseas. That’s not the way people are, it’s not their character, that are serving our nation and the cause of freedom.” (Transcript, 2004, para. 29).

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