

# **DEFENSE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE**

**DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH**

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## **PRELIMINARY DEVELOPMENT OF THE MILITARY SOCIALIZATION INOCULATOR: A MEANS OF REDUCING DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS BY EARLY SOCIALIZATION INTO APPROPRIATE MILITARY BEHAVIORS**

by

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# **Preliminary Development Of The Military Socialization Inoculator: A Means Of Reducing Discipline Problems By Early Socialization Into Appropriate Military Behaviors**

## **Abstract**

While most African-Americans serve with distinction in the military, a disproportionate number experience the military justice system. Several studies show that more African-Americans than Whites who have encountered some problem with the military have received nonjudicial punishments (Articles 15) for insubordination early in their first tour of duty. Problems with early socialization into the military may be a cause of these problems.

This paper presents the concept of the socialization inoculator as a possible solution. The socialization inoculator is a video showing correct and incorrect verbal exchanges in potentially confrontational situations followed by discussion of the videos. The inoculator would serve to create realistic expectations of work-duty situations and to show appropriate behaviors in potential interpersonal exchanges.

In this first stage in the development of the inoculator, a survey of military equal opportunity reports and equal opportunity training materials resulted in a listing of actual and hypothetical confrontational scenarios between African-Americans and Whites. From this list several scenarios were developed into scripts for the video. In addition, discussion questions were included. It is recommended that a contractor develop these scripts into a high quality video and test the video at an equal opportunity training organization, such as DEOMI.

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# **Preliminary Development Of The Military Socialization Inoculator: A Means Of Reducing Discipline Problems By Early Socialization Into Appropriate Military Behaviors**

## **Introduction**

The military is dedicated to equal opportunity. On the positive side, for example, 16% of males and 25% of females in the services are African-American (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, 1992). On the negative side, however, a disproportionate number of discipline problems involve African-Americans.

## **African-American Discipline Problems in the Military**

There is a larger proportion of African-Americans in the military discipline system than their proportionate numbers in the military population (similar to the civilian population; however, the overrepresentation is greater in the civilian sector). For example, about 50% of inmates in military prisons are African-American, even though overall they are only 25% of the military (Horne, 1988). There have been a number of reasons proposed including a disadvantaged socioeconomic and educational background and discrimination in the criminal justice system (Reed, Austin, Clayton, Jones, Krisberg, Locke, Pinkney, Radelet, & Welch, 1993). The problem is that these factors should not come into play in the military. Military personnel are more highly educated than the general public (there should not be disadvantaged educational effects), there is no unemployment in the military, and there is guaranteed equal pay (there should not be economic reasons)(Edwards & Newell, 1994).

There is, however, relatively wide discretion at different points in the military (and civilian) justice system that may be open to discrimination. For example, prejudicial treatment can enter into how a discipline problem is investigated, how the local authority treats it, and how the formal court system handles it, if it proceeds that far (Curtis, 1989; McNeely & Pope, 1981). In the military, the local commander may have a fair amount of discretion in handling discipline problems (whether to pursue or drop the matter, and what informal punishments to administer).

Another indicator of problems that may yield additional explanations is the informal military justice system - the Article 15 (a fine, restricted duty, etc.), which a local commander may issue as a lesser disciplinary action rather than refer the matter to the formal military court system. A number of studies show that African-Americans receive more Articles 15 than do Whites across the services (Conway, 1983; Culbertson & Magnusson, 1992; Edwards & Newell, 1994; Edwards & Knouse, 1991; Horne, 1988; Knouse, 1993; Polan & Thomas, 1985). In one study where race of the local commander was available, there was a higher proportion given to African-Americans by both White and African-American commanders (Horne, 1988). Thus discrimination may not be the primary cause

of these disproportionate numbers of Articles 15. Rather some studies show that African-Americans receive more Articles 15 for personal confrontations (e.g., insubordination) than do Whites (Conway, 1983; Culbertson & Magnusson, 1992; Edwards & Newell, 1994; Knouse, 1993; Nellum et al, 1973). And African-Americans receive more Articles 15 during their first tour of duty (Culbertson & Magnusson, 1992; Knouse, 1993).

## **Early Socialization Problems Into the Military**

The fact that some African-Americans tend to receive disciplinary actions for confrontational offenses during the first tour of duty may indicate that something is happening early in their military career to cause disciplinary problems. In other words, something is happening during the early socialization of some African-Americans into the military.

Military socialization, like any type of organizational socialization, involves learning, among other things, role behaviors desired by the organization (Feldman, 1976). Moreover, socialization entails learning the appropriate cues on how to proceed correctly in various types of interactions (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Thus some African-Americans may not be learning the expected behaviors for some situations, nor are they learning the situational cues for initiating correct and incorrect behavior in those situations. Furthermore, they may display an inappropriate aggressive response to an interpersonal situation (Lapoint, 1992).

Some African-American males may have developed alternative distinctive behaviors termed "the expressive lifestyle" (Majors, 1989), which serve to deal with frustration and stress and elevate perceived empowerment and self-concept. Such behaviors include physical postures, content and flow of speech, and styles of walking. The competitive basis of many of these behaviors emphasizes success in fighting, conflict with authority figures, and disobedience in order to build recognition from male peers. Moreover, these behaviors conflict with mainstream European-American values and result in negative consequences for African-Americans practicing these behaviors (Harris, 1992). By extension, what is acceptable and effective in some African-American male peer groups in civilian life may be counterproductive in military interpersonal relations and even be perceived to be confrontational and insubordinate.

It should be emphasized at this point that young, White recruits can also exhibit socially inappropriate behaviors, which can result in disciplinary problems, including Articles 15. Similar to some African-Americans, some White males may be displaying behavior which is effective with peer groups but is counterproductive in military situations.

One possible solution is socializing the correct behaviors into new recruits at risk for these confrontational incidents. Ideally the socialization agent would be an senior African-American individual for young Blacks (or a senior White individual for young Whites), like an NCO, who could provide a role model for appropriate behavior (Lapoint, 1992; Warfield-Coppock, 1992) and act as a mentor for coaching appropriate behaviors (Kram, 1988). Unfortunately, in reality there are not enough senior minority people to provide the role modeling and mentoring needs of new minority recruits joining the organization (Knouse, 1992).

An alternative approach is the socialization inoculator--a device for training appropriate responses in high risk situations, like interpersonal confrontations (Dansby, 1992; Knouse & Dansby, 1994). Similar to a medical inoculation, the socialization inoculator would introduce appropriate behaviors in a safe environment (the training situation) and would "inoculate" the individual against inappropriate responses in later real life stressful confrontations that might lead to negative consequences (i.e., a disciplinary action).

## **The Cultural Assimilator**

To date, the military has not tried the inoculation approach. They have, however, attempted to deal with interracial problems with a cultural assimilator, whereby White officers would learn enough of the Black subculture in order to become more sensitive to Blacks in the military--their unique problems and perspectives. The Army developed a prototype assimilator which consisted of a programmed booklet in which officers read scenarios involving Whites and Blacks and then answered questions on appropriate responses to the incidents. The correct responses were then provided.

Field tests of the assimilator produced mixed results (Hart, Day, Landis, & McGrew, 1978). While cultural sensitivity did not improve as much as desired, several findings are significant for developing the inoculator here. Task-oriented items dealing with military work situations were more effective than items involving socializing (i.e., parties off base). In addition, subjects in the tests reported group discussion was required to support the assimilator.

## **Social Learning Theory**

The theoretical basis for the inoculator is social learning theory, which posits that individuals can vicariously learn appropriate interpersonal behaviors by observing role models exhibiting the behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Research shows that this vicarious learning is effective when the role models are perceived as similar to the audience (i.e., the people in the scenarios appear to be realistic) and the role models are reinforced for producing the appropriate behaviors (Manz & Sims, 1981).

Training in industry has effectively used Bandura's ideas of vicarious learning for teaching appropriate interpersonal behaviors between supervisors and employees, including interviewing, performance appraisal, and disciplinary sessions (Goldstein, 1993). A typical training program would first have trainees view the correct and incorrect behaviors in a video or movie. Trainees would then practice the correct behaviors one-on-one with a trainer, who would videotape the practice sessions. And then trainee and trainer would view the videotaped practice together for feedback on appropriateness of trainee responses.

## **The Socialization Inoculator**

### **Functions**

The military socialization inoculator can serve several important functions.

**Realistic Expectations.** In the military, like the civilian world of work, many new recruits do not make it past their initial tour of duty. One explanation is unrealistic expectations (Wanous, 1992). Traditional recruiting methods produce unrealistically high expectations in new people coming into the organization (e.g., they expect to be doing important work immediately, rather than spend time "learning the ropes"). When these unrealistically high expectations meet the reality of the work situation, dissatisfaction sets in (in terms of organizational socialization, they are facing "reality shock," Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), which in turn translates into a high rate of turnover during the first years with the organization. Wanous, on the other hand, advocates creating realistic expectations in recruits that will match the reality of the work place and thus create less initial dissatisfaction and ultimately fewer problems at work, like turnover (Wanous, 1992).

One function of the socialization inoculator is to create realistic expectations about interpersonal confrontations--what to expect and how to handle situations. Thus the expectations of new recruits will more closely match the reality of their duty station and hopefully less dissatisfaction and negative consequences will occur.

**Learn Appropriate Role Behaviors.** One of the basic functions of socialization is to learn behaviors appropriate to one's role in a situation (Feldman, 1976). The inoculator will train appropriate interpersonal behaviors in confrontational situations that potentially could degenerate into discipline problems.

## **Structure of the Inoculator**

Following the vicarious learning model used in industrial training, the inoculator will consist of videotaped scenarios of potentially confrontational situations between supervisors and new enlistees and among peers and the new enlistees. New recruits will view the video followed by questions on what happened in the confrontation and what are the appropriate responses. Ideally recruits will then practice appropriate behaviors with trainers while being videotaped for feedback on mastery of the appropriate behaviors.

## **Construction of the Socialization Inoculator**

### **Confrontational Scenarios**

The first step in constructing the inoculator was to generate a list of confrontation scenarios that exhibited face validity (i.e., seemed realistic) and appeared to cover a range of incidents. Consequently, several possible repositories were searched: Air Force Reserve sexual harassment training scenarios, the annual Navy/Marine Corps Equal Opportunity Assessment Survey, comments from respondents to the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS), DEOMI training case studies, and the Intercultural Sensitizer (Landis, 1993). Table 1 shows a representative sample of possible sexual harassment and interracial incidents.

From these scenarios, several situations were chosen for writing brief scripts that represented a range of interpersonal confrontations. In each script, the incorrect behavior response first occurs followed by the correct response.

**Table 1**  
**A Sample of Possible Confrontational Scenarios**

<u>Scenarios</u>	<u>Source</u>
<i>Sexual Harassment</i>	
o Person asks female to massage his shoulders.	AF Reserve Scenario
o Person's radio is always turned to a station airing sexual comments and jokes.	AF Reserve Scenario
o Person stands close to female when talking to her.	AF Reserve Scenario
o Person remarks on another's love life.	AF Reserve Scenario
o Person puts up a calendar picturing scantily clad women.	AF Reserve Scenario
o A male asks a female for a date and insists on speaking to her at social functions after she repeatedly told him to leave her alone.	AF Sexual Harassment Complaint
o Several males tell lewd jokes and use vulgar language.	Navy/Marine EO Assessment
o Males tell of sexual exploits which are overheard by female.	Navy/Marine EO Assessment
o Males speculate about female's sexuality which she overhears.	Navy/Marine EO Assessment
o Male invites himself over to female's house while her husband is away.	Navy/Marine EO Assessment
o Female asks male to remove bottle from table at which she is playing a game. He directs obscene language toward her.	Navy/Marine EO Assessment
o Male touches the arm, thigh, buttock of female.	Navy/Marine EO Assessment

### *Interracial*

- o White male directs verbal racial comments toward black male. Navy/Marine EO Assessment
- o White male directs derogatory racial remark toward black male during a ball game. Navy/Marine EO Assessment
- o A white and black trade racial slurs and then start a fight. Navy/Marine EO Assessment
- o Supervisor states, "Since she is a black female, you know she will get the job" MEOCS Respondent Comment
- o Supervisor states, "I have not met a black yet who sounds educated." DEOMI Army Case Exercise No. 2
- o Supervisor states, "Turn off that music; it's racist." DEOMI Army Case Exercise No. 5
- o Black male replies, "Your music is country redneck." DEOMI Army Case Exercise No. 8
- o Black male phones white sergeant that he will be late for duty. White sergeant replies, "Get your ass over here or else!" Intercultural Sensitizer Item A1
- o Black male hitches a ride on a military vehicle on base and is stopped by white officer who states he cannot hitch rides. Black male replies that whites do it all the time and nothing happens. Intercultural Sensitizer Item A5
- o A black male accidentally picks up a white male's cap as he is leaving a meeting. The white runs over, stops him, and asks for it back tersely. Intercultural Sensitizer Item A70
- o A white male yells at a black male that a tool that the black is using belongs to the white. The black responds that it is his. The white states, "You, son of a bitch. This is mine." Intercultural Sensitizer Item D13

## **Confrontation Scenario Scripts**

### **Confrontation over a Possession**

#### *Incorrect Verbal Exchange*

A number of African-Americans and White enlisteds are leaving a meeting. A White male picks up a cap and places it on his head. An African-American comes up to him and states, "Hey. That's mine. Give it to me." The White replies, "No. It's mine." The African-American replies, "I said to give it to me, you White son-of-a-bitch!" Both proceed to get into a shouting and shoving match.

#### *Correct Verbal Exchange*

A number of African-Americans and White enlisteds are leaving a meeting. A White male picks up a cap and places it on his head. An African-American comes up to him and states, "Excuse me. I believe that is my cap. Would you mind checking the label. Thanks." The White male replies, "Yes. You're right. Sorry."

### **Confrontation over Loud Music**

#### *Incorrect Exchange*

The scene is an enlisted dormitory. A White steps into an African-American's room and says, "Hey! Turn down that damn black noise. It's vibrating the whole building!" The African-American replies, "Get off my ass, cracker!" They get into a shoving match.

#### *Correct Exchange*

The scene is an enlisted dormitory. A White steps into an African-American's room and says, "Excuse me. Do you mind turning it down a little." The African American replies, "No problem." The white replies, "Thanks."

### **Confrontation over Being Late**

#### *Incorrect Exchange*

The scene is a military office. The time is 8:20 am. An African-American enlisted person walks in the door. A white NCO says, "It's 0820. The duty day starts at 0730. You're late." The African-American replies, "Get off my ass!"

### *Correct Exchange*

The scene is a military office. The time is 8:20 am. An African-American enlisted person walks in the door. A white NCO says, "It's 0820. The duty day starts at 0730. You're late." The African-American replies, "I'm sorry. I had car trouble. It shouldn't happen again."

### **Confrontation over Perceived Differential Treatment**

#### *Incorrect Exchange*

The scene is a military office. An African-American enlisted person says to his/her NCO, "I need to take off early this afternoon." The NCO replies, "With our work load, I can't let you off." The African-American states, "Hey! You let White guys off early all the time! You're racist!"

#### *Correct Exchange*

The scene is a military office. An African-American enlisted person says to his/her NCO, "I need to take off early this afternoon." The NCO replies, "With our work load, I can't let you off." The African-American states, "I really need to take off early, because I have to pick up my car at the shop across town before the shop closes. Could I come in early tomorrow morning to make up the work?"

### **Confrontation involving Sexual Harassment**

#### *Incorrect Exchange*

The scene is an African-American male and an African-American female passing in the hall. The male says to the female, "You sure do look good today. But, of course, you always look good, because you are a woman with a radiant natural beauty that dazzles the beholder. How about coming over to my place after work, so I can better appreciate those deep ebony eyes?" The female sternly replies, "I don't want to go out with you!" The male replies angrily, "Hey! Don't take that attitude with me, bitch!" A shouting match ensues.

#### *Correct Exchange*

The scene is an African-American male and an African-American female passing in the hall. The male says to the female, "Good morning. How are you?" The female replies, "Fine, thanks." (Keep any sexual comments, references, or other intimations out of the work situation.)

## Questions for Discussion after Viewing Scenarios

1. What do you see in common among the incorrect exchanges that might cause problems?

- Answers:
- o Angry exchange between a White and Black (male and female)
  - o Emotionality
  - o Raising the voice level
  - o Perceived hostility
  - o Being too forward (pushy)

2. What do you see in common among the correct exchanges that might defuse problems?

- Answers:
- o Not raising voice levels
  - o Less emotionality
  - o Emphasis on exchange of information
  - o Emphasis on objective handling of the situation

3. Can you come up with other ways the individuals might have effectively handled the situation?

- Answers:
- o Ask for reasons that the person was making a certain statement (try to see the purpose behind actions so they would not be misperceived)
  - o Give reasons for statements (so the other person would not misperceive your actions)
  - o Try to come up with alternative solutions to problems (e.g., offer to trade time off now for working extra time later)
  - o Be sensitive to certain words or comments that might anger someone of another race or gender

4. Can you see what things you should not do in these situations?

- Answers:
- o Don't start the exchange with volatile words that would incite an argument or hostility
  - o Don't use name-calling or other hostile words
  - o Don't escalate the exchange with volatile words
  - o Keep your composure (keep "cool")
  - o Try to keep emotions out of it
  - o Don't try to overwhelm the other person (keep out of his "face")

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Produce a socialization inoculator video**

It is recommended that DEOMI contract the actual shooting of the video to a professional company in order to produce a high quality video suitable for extensive military use.

### **2. Test the video**

The contract should also specify a test of the video with an equal opportunity training organization, such as DEOMI. The test should examine the perceived realism of the confrontation scenarios and the perceived realism of the subsequent correct and incorrect responses. In addition, the test should evaluate and expand upon the questions to be used in group discussion following the video.

### **3. Track the effectiveness of the video**

After the video is tested and finalized, a longitudinal study should evaluate its effectiveness using a 2 (training: inoculator or no inoculator) x 2 (risk for military problems: high or low risk) x 2 (race: African-American or White) design. DEOMI (or a contractor) should identify matched samples for comparison purposes who either complete or do not complete the socialization inoculator. Within each sample, researchers should track a high risk subsample of African-American and White recruits (e.g., disadvantaged backgrounds, prior legal or school infractions) and a low risk subsample of African-American and White recruits (e.g., middle class backgrounds, no prior legal or school infractions) who complete the socialization inoculator and compare the results on a matched sample of high and low risk African-Americans and Whites who do not complete the inoculator.

The various training, risk, and racial groups could then be compared on several dependent variables. The socialization function of the inoculator could be evaluated as appropriate interpersonal behaviors exhibited during their first tour, which could be measured as higher scores on interpersonal scales of performance evaluations and as military successes (e.g., promotions, awards), while inappropriate behaviors could be measured as problematic behaviors mentioned on performance evaluations and as military infractions (e.g., Articles 15 and other informal punishments). In addition, interviews of supervisors could tap appropriate and inappropriate interpersonal behaviors. The realistic expectations function of the inoculator could be measured as satisfaction with their first tour and willingness to reenlist.

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