

MASS MEDIA EFFECTS ON RECRUITING



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Abstract

This study examines how the mass media's portrayal of the military, including the war in Iraq, affects U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps recruiting. A telephone survey of households in Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas was conducted to measure parents and young adults' exposure to information about the military in various media sources and how much attention they paid to those sources of information for information about the military. This study was hampered by a small sample size ($N=119$) that limits the ability to claim significant findings for several hypotheses. However, the study did uncover a pattern that indicated that greater use of newspapers and entertainment television reduced chances of young adults joining the military, whereas use of movies depicting the military enhanced the likelihood of joining. Also, media use predicted people's attitudes about the continued U.S. military presence in Iraq. The pattern was the same as above: Greater use of newspapers and television entertainment lowered support support for the war in Iraq, whereas more use of movies depicting the military enhanced support for the war. Taken together, these results suggest that news may undercut, and movies may bolster, recruitment efforts for both the Marines and Army. Recruiting has always been a challenge for the armed services and will continue to be a challenge the military will face. With today's evolving technologies and wealth of media, it is important to understand where adolescents and parents gather their information and how and if this impacts the way in which they form their attitudes and opinions about the military. Although our research was not entirely significant due to our sample size, future research that is more powerful in that aspect could provide the U.S. military with the pertinent evidence needed to address this ongoing issue.

Competing Messages: Mass Media Effects on Recruiting Introduction

“Army, Marines miss recruiting goals again: More cash and appeals to parents, patriotism haven’t reversed trend.” This was the headline for NBC news correspondent Jim Miklaszewski’s story concerning the problems facing recruiting May 2005. Many similar headlines appeared during the third year of the war in Iraq. April 2005, the Army had missed its recruiting goal for the third month in a row. The recruiters were short by 2,800 recruits, missing their mark by 42%. And for the first time in 10 years, the Marine Corps was unable to meet their goal for four months in a row (Miklaszewski, 2005).

Miklaszewski (2005) reports part of the recruiting problem is related to fear from parents about sending their child into the military and the prospect they will be sent to war. This report is just one example illustrating how the media has managed to cultivate fear by making images of death and casualties resulting on both sides salient during their intense coverage of the war. “Journalism’s images of war disturb. Among the most powerful visuals known to humankind, they are haunted by the stubborn inevitability and proximity of death” (Zelizer, 2004, p. 115). After September 11, 2001, the number of war images nearly doubled the typical amount of published images (Zelizer, 2004). This increase in war images has the potential to cultivate perceptions and feelings toward the military and also has the ability to directly impact recruiting.

Recruiting difficulties have been well documented over the course of the past two to three years dating back to the Army National Guard first missing its monthly goals in 2003 (Lumpkin, 2005). That trend led to the Army Guard missing their fiscal year 2004 goal for the first time in 10 years, falling 7,000 enlistees short of their goal of 56,000, and further causing the Guard to increase its recruiting force more than 50% (Moniz, 2004).

The *New York Times* first reported about Army Recruiting Command’s changes regarding lowering goals of recruiters and recruit standards in October 2004 (Schmitt, 2004). According to the

report, one main reason was the Army's inability to enter the 2005 fiscal year with 35% of its yearly goal already achieved. Instead the Army projected its goal as 25%, before officially achieving a goal of 18% – almost half of the original intended target.

Even with lower standards for enlistment, the Army fell 7,000 enlistees short of its target of 80,000 (Mazzetti, 2005). The difficulties of recruiting are also being felt within the Marine Corps, although they continue to meet yearly goals. General Michael W. Hagee, the Marine Corps commandant, has said that with the war in Iraq still raging, many parents were advising their children to wait before signing up for the Marines. "They're saying, 'It's not, maybe, a bad idea to join the Marine Corps, but why don't you consider it a year from now or two years from now,'" he said. "So the recruiters are having to work much harder out there right now" (Mazzetti, 2005, p. 1).

The war in Iraq made death and the inherent dangers of being in the military salient to the military's audiences. The military was riding the wave of post-September 11th patriotism and seen as upholding a noble and patriotic duty to the country. As the war progressed into the summer of 2005, and more of the nation's service members lives were lost, pressure came from members of both parties in Congress for the White House to create a strategy for withdrawal from Iraq (Klein, 2005).

In regard to the recruiting difficulty, the military branches say they have no way to directly measure the effect that war injuries and deaths are having on each service's recruiting (Moniz, 2005). "There is no way to quantify it, no block on an application that you can check for that," says Maj. Dave Griesmer, a Marine Corps spokesman (Moniz, 2005, p. 1).

However, there are numbers that show the desirability of military service has not necessarily dropped – just the desirability of serving in the Army and Marine Corps. The Navy and Air Force are reportedly turning away thousands of recruits, and the Air Force has a backlog of nearly 9,000 enlistees (Moniz, 2005). According to the Department of Defense military casualty information (2006), nearly 96% of the deaths during Operation Iraqi Freedom have been members of the Army or Marine Corps making

a strong case for the correlation between media messages and the desirability to serve in either of these two services.

Shah, McLeod, and Yoon (2001) conclude “people seek information from whatever media sources are most accessible and normative in their social networks” (p.496) with older generations using print and broadcast media supplemented by the Internet and the reverse being the case for younger generations. Because the effectiveness of the variety of media messages is not known, the purpose of this study is to examine which, and to what extent, of various communication forms cultivate and affect perception and/or beliefs about the military in high school youth and their parents. In regard to recruiting, the military can use this information to add to, correct, or even influence attitudes of those audiences.

Literature Review

Images in media can be powerful, and for those who know how to use images in mass media have the ability to shape the perception of the masses (Zelizer, 2004). Media provide audiences a chance to view situations and events that they would otherwise never be able to experience. The media are able to do this through detailed and dramatic storytelling, photography, video, film and much more. However, those images relayed to audiences only portray a narrow view of a specific viewpoint (Zelizer, 2004). According to cultivation theory, perceptions are affected through cumulative exposure to media images (Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

In the age of “new media,” television still dominates the other forms of media. As of 2003, the television and the telephone were the only two media devices utilized by nearly every household in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The average person will spend more than 1,800 hours this year alone watching television programming – greater than the use of radio, Internet, video games, newspapers, books, and magazines combined (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Throughout an entire year, more than 20% of an average person’s time is spent watching television. Compare that to eight hours of

sleep a night taking up another 33% of the entire year and that leaves slightly less than 50% of the year for work and any other activities. This information provides a profound look into the viewing habits of the average American.

The notion that media images and television viewing are related to people's perceptions of social reality is virtually undisputed in the social sciences (Shrum, 2001), which is normally demonstrated by a positive correlation between the amount of television a person watches and the extent to which that person's real-world perceptions are congruent with the world as it appears in the media.

Using the cultivation theory to direct the study of media effects on parents' and young adults' regarding the desirability of military service, it would be expected that those parents who have a positive attitude about the military cultivated through media will be more likely to support their child entering the military. Correspondingly, those young adults with a positive attitude about the military cultivated through media will also be more likely to consider military service.

Cultivation

According to Gerbner and Gross' (1976) study on cultural indicators, common rituals and mythologies are methods of symbolic socialization and control. They demonstrate how society works by dramatizing its norms and values (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). They are the necessary parts of interaction that influence our outlook on society, our culture, and help to regulate social relationships. In essence, these stories helped to define past cultures through symbolic means, and today we use a variety of media forms such as television, movies, and books as opposed to basic story telling in the past.

Gerbner and his colleagues began to see a pattern emerge confirming their ideas that television was a much different medium from others at the time and required a new approach to study (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Printed media require literacy for utilization, radio only tells information and requires an auditory comprehension to create a picture in a person's mind, and prior to the television any sort of visual media required a person to actually travel some sort of distance to become consumed in that

visual experience. Because its accessibility is relatively unlimited, television has the ability to be with us throughout our lives, from even before we are able to read until our older years where it can be used to keep us company (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). However, this does not dismiss the effects of other forms of mass media as related to cultivation.

Cultivation is not easily understood. Two different types of effects are considered when using cultivation theory, first-order effects and second-order effects. First-order effects refer to estimations of frequency and probability of aspects of social reality that are empirically observable and verifiable in the real world, while second-order effects refer to opinions, beliefs, and attitudes toward an aspect of social reality (Van Mierlo & Van den Bulck, 2003; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). In the case of violence, the first-order effect would be for a heavy viewer of television to overstate the amount of crime in the world compared to a light viewer, and the second-order effect would be the heavier viewer believing the world is a scarier place. Gerbner (1998) refers to this as “mean world syndrome.”

Quantitative studies on the cultivation effect have shown effects are generally found to be small, but longitudinal studies have shown there are consistent effects, and the fact there are effects, no matter how minute, is significant when dealing with our perceptions (Gerbner, 1998).

Although Gerbner (1998) states the cultivation theory should only be used in the case of television, using the theory with other media is not unprecedented. Lubbers and Scheepers (2000) used cultivation and found significant effects in newspaper readers, Van Mierlo and Van de Bulck (2003) found significant cultivation effects in the video game arena, and Hawkins and Pingree (1981) found significant evidence showing differential cultivation effects based upon television genres viewed. Additionally, Pfau, Moy, and Kahlor (1999) used a modified version of the cultivation theory which combined the use of a variety of media and their effects on confidence of democratic institutions. It is upon Hawkins and Pingree’s (1981) implications of genre-specific cultivation effects, as well as Pfau and

colleagues' (1999) uses of different media, that we base our study upon and categorize various media into the area of news, entertainment, advertising, and conversation.

Because market research has shown our country's youth to constantly change what messages they will be most susceptible to (Goodman & Dretzin, 2001) and the generational difference of dominant media use between adults and adolescents (Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001), military recruiting must constantly look for new, inventive ways to deliver their message to their target audiences. The ability to provide more information for the military's recruitment campaign on where teenagers receive the strongest influence would allow for a better concentration of assets and resources.

Each of the aforementioned may be considered by both young adults and their parents before a decision can be made to enlist in military service. However, the direct importance of each media form and the direct affect those forms have on either parents or young adults are not known. To study the cultivation effects of information regarding the military, the only way to know where they are receiving their information is by recognizing where and to what frequency young adults go to actively seek knowledge about the military. Knowledge of where young adults seek their information and being able to further predict the impact on attitudes of the target audience, would be vital to military recruiting efforts. However, with today's technology, ways in which both teenagers and parents gather information has become increasingly more diverse due to the Internet, video games, and satellite news coverage.

Use of News and Perception of the Military

The effect that concerns this research is the perception of the military and in this section – how news effects that perception. News can be delivered through television, print, radio, and the Internet. In news, an example of cultivation effects showing statistical significance with heavy exposure to newspaper stories containing negative reports about ethnic crimes leads people to perceive ethnic minorities as being more of a threat than they would if they had read newspapers without negative

ethnic reports (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000). The perception or belief about the ethnic group stems from cumulative exposure to the same thoughts and ideas are expressed in those articles.

When measuring cultivation effects from the news, it is important to know that news or “real” media, especially programs containing violence, have a greater influence upon beliefs than fictional media (Geen, 1975; Atkin, 1983). An example of this was depicted by embedded media during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Due to unprecedented access by embedded media in bringing the public direct imagery from Iraq, the public’s perceptions about the daily life of a soldier in war have become “real” to the audience. News images allow the public to see what is real but in a way that only partly reflects what is actually happening (Zelizer, 2004). Images from the war in Iraq may show how horrible life is only through pictures that extremely exaggerate the quality of life during war time and the time frame in which hardship must be endured. Those images are not formed in a vacuum (Zelizer, 2004).

The link between negative media and shortfalls in recruiting has been made by several Senators as they denounced other lawmakers and the news media for unfavorable depictions of the Iraq war (Allen, 2005). At a U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, Sen. James Inhofe, an Oklahoma Republican, said families are discouraging young men and women from enlisting "because of all the negative media that's out there" (Allen, 2005, p. 1). According to the theory of cultivation, constantly portraying news of death in Iraq could change audiences’ perceptions of the actual amount of death occurring. This leads to the following prediction:

H1: Those who rely more on the news for information about the military will have negative attitudes about a) the military and about b) serving in the military.

Use of Entertainment and Perception of the Military

For most viewers, new types of delivery systems (e.g., cable, satellite, and cassette) represent even further penetration and integration of established viewing patterns into everyday life (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1986). Teenagers, as well as adults, now have more sources, such as the

Internet, video games, and talk radio, to gather information on the world around them to supplement television use. Depictions or assumptions based on television programming and genres can be applied to genres of video games and where interests lie when searching the Internet.

Entertainment media is just another form for audiences to gather information. Although it may seem as though what is watched, read, or heard may be done so purely for entertainment, serious and real life situations are being depicted to audiences (Baum, 2003). Examples of these would be entertainment news, talk shows, and movies. Most television shows and movies regarding the military portray the military in a glamorous light by selecting attractive and popular stars to play the leads and stamping them with the label of the hero that saves the day.

In the past year, movies like *Jarhead*, *Annapolis*, and *Stealth* have been released depicting and glamorizing life in the military. On their opening weekends alone these movies grossed nearly \$50 million. The popularity of military portrayal in film has also spread to television shows such as *Over There*, a show depicting current life of war in the Middle East. Even through popular television soap operas like *Days of our Lives* include a plotline of a Marine deployed to fight in the war on terrorism (Soriano & Oldenburg, 2005).

In video games such as *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs*, a player is allowed to become immersed in the military experience by speaking commands to your fellow "teammates" through a headset and giving a person of the actual sense of what it is like to be on a military mission. Whether it is in video games, movies, or television, entertainment media glamorize service in the military in contrast to what a viewer would see in on the news. While entertainment may also deal with the reality of death in military service, we must take into account the way in which the two genres regard death. News rarely demonstrates the ability for valiant efforts of service members to be encapsulated into an entertaining story; instead, it focuses mainly on numbers of dead rather than heroic circumstances behind their

sacrifice. Through the entertainment media, death of a service member is rarely in vain. Therefore this study posits that:

H2: Those who rely more on entertainment for information about the military will have positive attitudes about a) the military and about b) serving in the military.

Video gaming systems with the ability to produce extremely lifelike images are a relatively recent addition to the media environment. Like movies, these games offer new and often times quite realistic worlds that have the ability to depict violence, sexuality, and other real life situations (Van Mierlo & Van de Bulck, 2003). As technology grows and these games become more and more prevalent in the daily lives of teenagers who have never been without the influences of these alternate forms of entertainment, it is likely cultivation will have an impact similar to that of television (Van Mierlo & Van de Bulck, 2003). Due to the fact even perceived realism has shown to play a role in linking exposure to social perceptions (Potter, 1986), it may be that these alternative media could soon prove to be just as effective upon perception as real television images.

One study found nearly a third of boys and girls reported playing video games at home for one to two hours per week (Beasley & Standley, 2002). Video games are also the most popular form of entertainment for boys and men between 12 and 25 years of age (Beasley & Standley, 2002) and are increasingly popular for parents of children. According to a recent survey of more than 500 households in 2005 regarding video game use, nearly 35% of parents play video games, 80% of which play video games with their children and 66% reportedly do so to bring their family closer together (Woodbury, 2006). However the number of parents playing games is relatively small when compared to the 81% of 15-18 year olds who have a video game player in the home, and another half has one in their own room (Roberts et al., 2005), accessible at any time of the day.

Van Mierlo and Van de Bulck (2003) found players of violent video games predicted higher estimates of the prevalence of violent crime as well as the number of policemen in the total workforce, an indication of the influence the cultivation effect has through video games.

In the past year, at least 10 video games on Microsoft's Xbox video game console have been released portraying depictions of life in the military as a "tactical shooter." The most notable is the release of *America's Army: Rise of a Soldier*, a game originally released via computer download and was further refined for release on the Xbox due to a response of 17 million online downloads (Soriano & Oldenburg, 2005). This game was actually developed by the Army to attempt to portray life as a soldier in Iraq as realistically as possible. On the video game website Gamespot.com, users have the ability to give their own rating of the game and more than 70% have given it a rating of 8 or higher on a 10-point scale.

Today, With the Armed Forces clearly recognizing the importance of providing an entertaining experience of life in the military through video games, and with gaming proving to be a much larger role in the lives of adolescents than parents, it only widens the gap between the importance of entertainment in the lives of children in comparison to the significance of news for adults.

Entertainment shows like *The Daily Show with John Stewart* are talking about serious issues through humor, and the effects of these shows on public perception should not be taken lightly, especially for adolescents. For children 15-18 years old, only 10% of their television time is spent watching news, a mere seven minutes reading the newspaper, and the rest dedicated to entertainment media (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2005). Those slightly older, in the 18-24 year old category, report they devote 35 minutes per day to news; the attention given to news on a given day nearly doubles for those 35 and older (Pew Research Center, 2004). Because more audiences are tuning in to get the news from different avenues, such as entertainment (Kurtz, 1999), these findings could be very important in understanding how little youth rely on news while learning more from entertainment. Therefore this

gives parents the ability to have cultivated more beliefs about negative repercussions of military service through hard news.

H3: Compared to parents, young adults manifest positive attitudes about a) the military and about b) serving in the military.

Use of Advertising and Perception of the Military

Advertisements today do not always come in the form of neatly-packaged 30-second spots in between television programs; there are more subtle and direct forms of influence such as Internet chat rooms and blogs, Internet pop-ups, and product placement within television and radio programming.

To illustrate the number of people flocking to the Internet as a source for information, MySpace.com, a blog site, has grown in popularity from zero to nearly 50 million users in two years (Kornblum, 2006). It is possible that military blogs, or milblogs, could be an important source for disseminating information about the military, or advertising in this case. However, Internet chat has already caught onto the point where the Army's recruiting website GoArmy.com now includes a link to enter a chat room where Army recruiters are available to answer any questions even until 2 a.m. Sunday through Thursday.

The Internet is not the only place recruiting efforts are currently leaning toward to attract its youth demographic. Product placement has also found a place for recruiting in the form of NASCAR sponsorship for the military services. The Marine Corps spends approximately \$3.5 million on its Busch Series sponsorship, while the Army spends "less than \$10 million" on its Nextel Cup sponsorship (Milburn, 2004).

While there are no studies directly measuring the persuasiveness of recruiting advertisements, there is significant evidence showing how advertising in general can be an extremely effective tool. The television documentary *Merchants of Cool* (Goodman & Dretzin, 2001) illustrates the power of advertising and the rise of Sprite from relative anonymity in the beverage industry to its relationship

with hip-hop culture today. By advertising on MTV, linking the product to cultural icons and hip-hop concerts, and even paying “cool” kids to show up to these concerts to have a good time, Sprite was able to successfully launch itself into an association with cultural identity (Goodman & Dretzin, 2001). By marketing “cheap and easy content” to appeal to our nation’s youth through, what the program calls, “mooks” (the guy who even in his late 20s and early 30s continues to act like a teenager) and “midriff” (the narcissistic teenager who strives to look and act much older than she really is) who adolescents can identify as “cool,” and then implying the products teens buy will allow them admission to these desirable groups helps make MTV \$1 billion a year in advertising revenue (Goodman & Dretzin, 2001). Admittedly, this strategy is not about delivering youth with what they want to see on television, it is about figuring out through which kinds of programming to best pitch what marketers want to deliver to the young consumer (Goodman & Dretzin, 2001).

If the Army and Marine Corps have truly found a way to market their product through some sort of “brand recognition,” through areas such as their NASCAR advertisements – it could have an even greater impact in terms of parental influence. Moore, Wilkie, and Lutz (2002) used multiple measures to demonstrate how brands transcend by generation through parental influence. Likewise, if parents are able to associate these advertisements with a positive affect, it is likely those perceptions will be passed on. This study predicts:

H4: Those who rely more on advertisements for information about the military will have positive attitudes about joining the military.

Use of Discussions and Perception of the Military

Family communication patterns can also influence the transmission of political attitudes, such as views about the military, from parent to child. Meadowcroft (1986) posited family communication is an

important influence on children and young adults' perceptions of social reality because these communication patterns are a framework for interpreting the environment.

Family communication about politics is a complex process. Gemelli (1996) suggests young adults assert their own views, and parents are less likely to transmit their ideas directly to their children. Evolving perspectives can also affect family communication patterns (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a). McDevitt & Chaffee (2002b) argue parental preparation for political communication may actually be meager. However, more parents are watching hard news and receiving information about the military through news media as opposed to entertainment media, a negative affect is likely to be projected.

Beyond typologies of family communication, researchers have noted a lack of political discussion between parents and children. "The impact of media, primarily television, is in some measure a function of parental interest and the likelihood that television news will be watched and discussed in the home" (Moore, Lare, & Wagner, 1985, p. 135). Drew and Reeves (1980) found that only 10% of the children in their samples discussed television with their parents, friends, or in classrooms. Making the correlation between politics and military, it can be expected when youth are having more conversations at home or school about the military, they will have a stronger attitude about the military.

However, there can be a multitude of factors contributing to either a young adult's or parent's perception of the military, such as prior military service or the current service of a parent or sibling. With military background in the immediate family it is more likely for parents and their children to have more informed conversations about military service. Those with less direct experience are more likely to have their attitudes affected by the media. Thus, this study posits:

H5: Those who rely more on conversations for information about the military will have negative attitudes toward a) the military and about b) serving in the military.

H6: Both parents and young adults, who have military experience within the immediate family, will have positive attitudes about a) the military and about b) serving in the military.

Parental Influence and Perception of the Military

While a past U.S. Army Research Institute study regarding parental influence has shown a correlation with the decision of adolescents to join the military, there is also significant evidence that youth perception of parental beliefs are often different from the parent's self-reported belief (Legree et al., 2000). These differences show there may be either a lack of communication between child and parent or the outside influence on adolescents from parental figures in media (Legree et al., 2000).

Data used in the Army's report were taken from surveys collected in 1987, and due to the differences in the change in the household media environment, and the fact this past study did not take place during a time of war when attitudes about death and war are much more salient, more information needs to be gathered to help determine parental influence in an adolescent's decision to enlist.

As the Legree et al. (2000) study points out, the number of parents with direct knowledge about the military is dropping and suggested targeting parents in the services' recruitment strategies. With the recent ads targeting parents, it is reasonably expected that such information would provide them with more positive attitudes about the military thus reinforcing the early studies' findings that parental reports of positive attitudes are associated with adolescent enlistment behavior.

This study posits:

H7: – Parents who manifest positive attitudes toward the military will be more likely to support their young adults joining the military.

H8: – Young adults who manifest positive attitudes toward the military will be more likely to express an interest in joining the military.

Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which various communication forms cultivate and affect perception and/or beliefs about the military in high school youth and their parents. Via recruiting, the military can use this information to add to, correct, or even influence attitudes of those audiences.

Telephone Survey

To assess the research questions and the predicted organizational model, a one-panel telephone survey was conducted by the students in the Department of Defense Joint Course in Communication. The telephone surveys were conducted the last week in February ($N=119$). The sample was drawn from households in the states of Arkansas, Kansas and Oklahoma. The sample was obtained from the Department of Defense. The sample was randomly divided into 'Parents' ($N=71$) and 'Young Adults' ($N=48$) categories. Participants were screened by asking if they were 16 to 18 years old or if they were the parents of 16 – 18 year-olds before they took part in the survey. Participants had to be 16 to 18 years of age or be a parent of a young adult between the ages of 16 to 18. They also had to agree to participate in the study. Each phone survey was between 12 to 20 minutes in duration.

All instruments in the telephone surveys featured multiple-item indicators and were assessed for internal consistency using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The measures are described below.

Sociodemographics

Respondents' sociodemographic characteristics, including gender (Males=64, Females=55), race, age, household income, marital status (Married=52%), number of children, and military service were measured.

Respondents' gender was determined without asking and was operationalized as male or female. Race was assessed by asking if they were: Caucasian (79%), African-American (8%), Hispanic (6.7%), Native-American/Pacific Islander (2.5%), or other (3.8%). Age was assessed by asking the respondents' age. Household income was operationalized as: below \$25,000 (5%), between \$25,000 and

\$34,999 (7.6%), between \$35,000 and \$44,999 (4.2%), between \$45,000 and \$54,999 (6.7%), between \$55,000 and \$74,999 (13.4%), and \$75,000 and \$89,999 (7.6%), and above \$90,000 (8.4%). Marital status was assessed by asking if they are married or single (62 married, 57 single), and presence of children was answered yes/no to a question asking if they had children. Military service was determined by asking if the parents had ever served in the military. We also asked them what their primary source of information about the military was, how many days in the past week they watched national or local television news, how many days in the past week they read the news section of the paper, and how many days during the past week they sought out information about the military on the world wide web.

Independent Measures

Media use and attention served as the independent variables. The study operationalized media use as exposure to and attention paid to specific communication media. This approach is recommended by McLeod and McDonald (1985) and Chafee and Schleuder (1986) who maintain that both exposure and attention paid scales are required in order to compare communications use. This investigation employed two ten-point scales to assess people's exposure to and attention paid to different communication forms. Media items were broken down into four dimensions: news (national television news programs, local television news programs, newspapers, magazines, radio news programs, television news magazines); entertainment (radio talk shows, television talk shows, television shows, movies, video games, the internet, movies depicting military personnel, video games depicting military personnel); advertising (televised military advertising, print military advertising, printed materials about joining the military), and conversations (with parents, friend, and in school settings).

Dependent Measures

Overall attitudes about the U.S. Marine Corps and the Army were assessed with a global attitude measure across media forms adapted from Burgoon, Cohen, Miller, and Montgomery (1978). The measures are based on the operationalization of media use. The measure's seven-point bipolar

adjective scale includes: unacceptable/acceptable, foolish/wise, unfavorable/favorable, negative/positive, bad/good, and wrong/right (Marines: $\alpha = .96$, $M=6.57$, $s.d.=1.52$; Army: $\alpha = .96$, $M=6.33$, $s.d.=1.53$). Next, the individual's overall attitudes about a young person joining the U.S. Marine Corps or the Army was assessed using the same global attitude measure (Marines: $\alpha = .98$, $M=6.35$, $s.d.=1.75$; Army $\alpha = .94$, $M=6.24$, $s.d.=1.71$).

Overall attitude about U.S. military presence in Iraq was assessed with a global attitude measure adapted from Burgoon, Cohen, Miller, and Montgomery (1978). The measure's six-point bipolar adjective scale included: unacceptable/acceptable, foolish/wise, unfavorable/favorable, negative/positive, bad/good, and wrong/right ($\alpha = .98$).

Thermometer scales (1 to 100) were used to measure the likelihood of young adults serving in the military, as well as a parent's likelihood of encouraging their child to join the military. The participants were asked, "On a scale of 0 to 100 (0 being not at all, and 100 being extremely likely) how likely are you to encourage your child to join the military?" ($M=46.76$, $s.d.=36.17$). The wording of this item was patterned after an item used in past studies of public confidence conducted by, among others, the Institute for Social Research/Center for Political Studies (Asher, 1988) and Harris, Gallup, and NORC (see Lipset & Schneider, 1987).

Parents and young adults were asked how often they had discussions with parents, friends, or in class/work about the military. This was a 0 (never have these types of discussions) to 7 (discuss this a lot) scale (Horowitz, et. al., 2005).

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine how the communication use of potential recruits and their parents influence their attitudes toward the United States Army and Marine Corps, and the likelihood of these electing to serve in the Army or Marine Corps.

Regression Analyses

Hierarchical regression analysis was employed to assess the influence of communication use of young adults and parents on potential for military service. This broad issue is embodied in Hypothesis 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7. The first predictor block consisted of sociodemographic variables: ethnicity, age, income, and gender. The next block consisted of a wide array of communication forms. Each embodied a unique source of information about the military, including: talk radio, network television news, conversations with others, print newspapers, general video game use, video games depicting military personnel, entertainment television, television talk shows, local television news, general movie viewing, movies depicting military personnel, radio news, television magazines, television recruiting advertising, and newspaper recruiting advertising.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that respondents who rely on news for information about the military would have a negative attitude about the military and about serving in the military. Radio news is the only predictor of attitude about the military and about serving the military. Therefore, at first glance, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported because radio news use predicted attitudes about the military and about military service, but newspaper use and national television news use did not.

Hypothesis 2 predicted those who rely on entertainment for information about the military will have a positive attitude about the military and about serving in the military. At first glance, Hypothesis 2 was not supported when examining scaled measures of attitude about the military and about military service. However, a thermometer scale was also used to assess the likelihood of joining the Army or Marines. The single item scale did have significant predictors. Ethnicity ($\beta = -.31, p < .05$), newspaper use ($\beta = -.36, p < .05$), entertainment television use ($\beta = -.44, p < .05$), and use of movies depicting the military ($\beta = .48, p < .10$) were all significant predictors in determining young people's likelihood of serving. Caucasians were more inclined to serve than other ethnic groups. Newspaper use and entertainment talk show use were negatively related to and movies depicting the military were positively associated

with likelihood of serving in the military. The results for the Thermometer measure often additional support to the Hypothesis 1 and partial support for Hypothesis 2.

People's media use and attention may impact their attitude about the war in Iraq. We were interested in determining what would predict attitudes about the war in Iraq. Income ($\beta=.27$, $p<.05$), use of newspapers ($\beta=-.52$, $p<.01$), use and attention to television entertainment shows ($\beta=-.43$, $p<.05$), and use and attention to movies depicting the military ($\beta=.54$, $p<.05$) were all significant predictors of attitude about the war in Iraq. Therefore, young adults and parents reading the newspaper or watching television entertainment shows had negative attitudes about the war in Iraq.

Hypothesis 4 predicted those who rely on recruiting advertisements about the military will have positive attitudes about the military. Hypothesis 4 was not supported. Hypothesis 5 predicted that those who rely on conversations to gain information about the military would have negative attitudes about the military. Hypothesis 5 was not supported. Hypothesis 6 predicted that those who have military experience within the immediate family would have positive attitude about the military and serving in the military. Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

Overall, the regression results were disappointing. The only significant predictors of attitudes towards the Marine Corps were income ($\beta=.42$, $p<.05$), talk radio use ($\beta=.40$, $p<.05$), and radio news ($\beta=-.43$, $p<.05$). Greater family income and greater use of talk radio were positively associated with attitudes toward the Marine Corps whereas greater use of radio news was related to less positive attitudes toward the Marine Corps. Income ($\beta=.45$, $p<.05$) and radio news ($\beta=-.42$, $p<.10$) were significant predictors of attitude toward the Army. Greater income was associated with more positive attitudes toward the Army and greater radio use with less positive attitude toward the Army. Income ($\beta=.28$, $p<.10$) was also a significant predictor in determining the likelihood of joining the Marine Corps. Income ($\beta=.33$, $p<.05$) and radio news use ($\beta=-.39$, $p<.10$) were significant predictors in determining ones likelihood in joining the Army. Greater incomes was associated with more positive attitudes about

joining both branches whereas greater radio use was related to less positive attitudes about joining the Army.

Multivariate Analysis

Hypothesis 3 compared parents and young adults' attitudes toward the military and serving in the military. Specifically, Hypothesis 3 predicted parents would have a negative attitude compared to young adults about the military and serving in it. To assess this question, a one-way MANCOVA was computed for group (young adult or parent) on the dependent variables of: attitude toward the Marine Corps, attitude toward the Army, attitude about joining the Marine Corps, attitude about joining the Army, and the one item indicator of enlisting in the military. Covariates included gender, age, and ethnicity. The omnibus results indicated nearly significant differences for the covariate of gender, Wilks' λ $F(5, 109) = 1.94, p < .10, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .09$. Subsequent univariate tests revealed significant differences for gender on the dependent variable of attitude about joining the Army $F(1, 117) = 5.64, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .05$. The pattern of means revealed parents were more supportive of youth joining the Army or Marines than young adults. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported. Parents and their children did not differ on their attitudes toward the Marine Corps or the Army. Parents had a more positive attitude about the Marines ($M_p = 6.65, sd = 1.69; M_{ya} = 6.46, sd = 1.23$) and the Army ($M_p = 6.60, sd = 1.67; M_{ya} = 6.08, sd = 1.29$) when compared to young adults. Also, they did not differ in terms and support for joining the Marine Corps or Army. However, males scored higher than females in the Army. Parents were more likely to encourage their young adults to form the Marines ($M = 6.50, sd = 1.81$) and the Army ($M = 6.38, sd = 1.84$) than young adults.

Correlation Matrix

Hypothesis 7 and Hypothesis 8 predicted parents who have a positive attitude about the military would support their children's joining the military, and that young adults who have a positive attitude

about the military would be more likely to join the military. A correlation matrix was computed measuring attitude toward the Marine Corps, attitude toward the Army, attitude toward joining the Marine Corps, attitude toward joining the Army, and likelihood of enlisting. The results revealed that parents who manifested a more positive attitude about the military were the more likely to support their children's joining the military with all correlations significant ranging from $r = .38$ to $.86$. The same pattern was true for young adults, with all correlations significant ranging from $r = .30$ to $.77$.

Discussion

The objective of this research was to measure the use and attention of mass media sources as they affect the attitude of parents and young adults about the Marine Corps and Army. The study was conducted to determine if parents and youth differ in where they obtain information about the military and how it affects their attitudes of military and likelihood of joining the military. The goal of the study was to provide information to help recruiting efforts of the Army and the Marine Corps, the two services whose recruiting has been most affected by the Global War on Terror.

Our study was hampered by a small sample size. Consequently, this left many of our hypothesis unsupported. In a number of cases, we were approaching significance, but could not claim significance due to the small power. If at least 200 surveys could have been attained, the significance of the overall study would have been greater. However, we were able to find significance for several hypotheses even with a small sample.

The only significant predictors of attitudes towards the Marine Corps were income and talk radio use. Greater family income and uses of talk radio and radio news, were associated with positive attitudes about the Marine Corps. Use of radio news was related to less positive attitudes about the Marine Corps. For the Army, income and radio news use were significant predictors of attitudes about the Army. Respondents reporting greater family income manifest more positive attitudes about the Army. Those relying on radio news information about the Army manifested less positive attitudes. We

also found that income was a significant predictor in determining the likelihood of joining the Marine Corps. Greater family income was related to greater likelihood of joining. For the Army, income and radio news use were significant predictors in determining likelihood of joining their service. Greater family income was associated with greater likelihood of joining the Army. Use of radio news predicted less likelihood of joining the Army.

Our predictions also stated parents who have a positive attitude about the military would support their young adult joining the military and young adults who have a positive attitude about the military would be more likely to join the military. As the Legree et al. (2000) study points out, the number of parents with direct knowledge about the military is dropping and suggests targeting parents in the services' recruitment strategies. Our results found parents who have a positive attitude about the military are more likely to support their young adults in joining the military. The same pattern was true for young adults. This supports Legree et al. (2000) study, where his research suggested that parental reports of positive attitudes are associated with adolescent enlistment behavior.

Our research posited parents would have a negative attitude about the military and about serving in the military when compared to young adults. However, attitudes regarding the Marine Corps and the Army did differ between groups. Also, the likelihood of joining either service did not differ across the group. Likelihood for joining the Army was higher for males than females.

Our hypothesis suggested those who rely on news for information about the military will have more negative attitudes about the military and about serving in the military. According to Kurtz (1999), more audiences are tuning in to get the news from different avenues, such as entertainment. For adolescents that are 15-18 years old, only 10% of their television time is spent watching news (Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2005). For those 35 and older, they spend nearly double the time watching news (Pew Research Center, 2004). The results found radio news was the greatest predictor of attitude about the military and about serving in the military. However, our hypothesis was only partially supported because

the other vehicles of news information, such as newspapers and television news, did not predict military attitudes.

We also predicted those who rely on entertainment for information about the military will have more positive attitudes about the military and will be more likely to serve in the military. Entertainment is just another form for audiences to gather information. Although it may seem as though what is watched, read or heard may be done so purely for entertainment, serious or real-life situations are being depicted to audiences (Baum, 2003). For our study we examined entertainment mediums such as movies, videogames, entertainment television, and primetime television shows about the military. Ethnicity, newspaper use, entertainment television, and movies depicting the military were all significant predictors in determining one's likelihood of serving.

The results offer only partial support for the positions that news might undermine, but entertainment might enhance, recruitment. However, two additional tests provide further support for these positions. First, the thermometer measure, which assessed the likelihood of joining the military, in contrast to the attitudinal scales, provide additional support. The results here indicated that greater use of newspapers and entertainment television reduced chances of joining the military, whereas use of movies depicting the military enhanced likelihood of joining. Second, media use predicted peoples attitudes about continued U.S. military presence in Iraq. The pattern was the same as reported above. Greater use of newspapers and television entertainment undermine support for the war in Iraq, whereas more use of movies depicting the military enhanced support for the war. Taken together, these results provide further support for our hypotheses: that news may undercut, and movies may bolster, recruitment efforts for both the Marines and Army.

There is limited research measuring the persuasiveness of military advertisements, but there is evidence showing how advertising in general can be a highly effective tool. The television documentary *Merchants of Cool* (Goodman & Dretzin, 2001) illustrates the power of advertising and the rise of Sprite

from relative anonymity in the beverage industry, to its relationship to hip-hop culture. We predicted those relying on advertisements for information about the military would have positive attitudes about the military. However, this hypothesis was not supported in our study. Likewise, our prediction that those who had military experience in the immediate family would have a positive attitude about the military and serving in the military, was not supported. It is easy to conclude that the current war is having an impact on the attitudes people have about the military and serving in the military despite the fact that immediate family have served in the military.

Limitations:

The limitations of our research are most directly related to the audience from which we used to draw our sample. Specifically, the limited location, age, time to draw the sample, and size of the sample, impacted our ability to provide greater significance to our results.

First, one of several limitations of our data are that our audience and sample only reflect those people in the Oklahoma, Kansas, and Arkansas area. In order to obtain the most generalizable results, future research should encompass a larger area. In addition, another limitation of our data was the age of the adolescent respondents, which was 16-18. Future research should expand the age of kids to 29, which corresponds to the armed forces recruiting standard of ages 18-29.

Other limitations include time restrictions and size of the sample. In the two week time frame in which data was collected, 1014 calls were made with 119 surveys completed. In future research, more time would be required to collect data from a larger sample. Future research should also seek other methods of conducting the survey, as our research was limited to phone surveys. Conducting the 20 minute survey through face-to-face, and/or mail-in surveys should be considered.

Conclusion

Recruiting has always been a challenge for the armed services and will continue to be a challenge the military will face. With today's evolving technologies and wealth of media, it is important to understand where adolescents and parents gather their information and how and if this impacts the way in which they form their attitudes and opinions about the military. Although our research was not entirely significant due to our sample size, future research that is more powerful in that aspect could provide the U.S. military with the pertinent evidence needed to address this ongoing issue.

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Table 1
Significant Demographic and Gratification Predictors For Supporting the War in Iraq

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	Predictor	Beta	Significance
Attitude about U.S. military presence in Iraq	Income	.27	.05
	Paper Use	-.52	.001
	TV Entertainment	-.43	.017
	Military Movies	.54	.026

Note: Overall attitude was assessed using a global attitude measure adapted from Burgoon, Cohen, Miller, and Montgomery (1978). The measure is a 7-interval bipolar adjective scale. Multiple item indicators were used to include; unacceptable/acceptable, foolish/wise, unfavorable/favorable, negative/positive, bad/good, and wrong/right.

Table 2
 Correlation Matrix for Young Adults Attitude about the Military and Likelihood of Joining the Military

Interest in Joining			
(M _p = 6.65, sd = 1.69; M _{ya} = 6.46, sd = 1.23) Attitude	Likelihood of Joining Marine Corps	Likelihood of Joining Army	Single Item Indicator of Enlisting
Attitude toward Marine Corps	.67**	.41**	.30*
Attitude Toward the Army	.24	.58**	.24#

n = 48

#p < .10 *p < .05

** p < .01

Table 3
 Correlation Matrix for Parents Attitude about the Military and Likelihood of Encouraging Young Adults to Join the Military

Support for Joining			
	Likelihood of Joining Marine Corps	Likelihood of Joining Army	Single Item Indicator Enlistment
Attitude toward Marine Corps	.76**	.63**	.51**
Attitude Toward the Army	.70**	.77**	.38**

$n = 71$

$p < .10$ * $p < .05$

** $p < .01$