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# A Comparison of Marketing Techniques Among Military Recruiters

Paul Vincent McCullough III  
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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Paul V. McCullough III

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University  
2016

Abstract

A Comparison of Marketing Techniques Among Military Recruiters

by

Paul V. McCullough III

MS, University of Maryland, 2001

BS, King's College, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

April 2016

## Abstract

The U.S. Department of Defense spent \$11 billion in enlistment and retention bonuses from 2006 to 2010, which had only a marginally positive effect on the enlistment rate for the Army. The case study addressed this business problem of recruiting by exploring marketing strategies successful recruiting professionals used to motivate individuals to join the military. The purpose of this study was to determine effective recruiting strategies. Therefore, it incorporated the conceptual framework of emergent strategy theory, which postulated the best strategies are neither completely planned nor completely random, but are rather an adaptation to changing dynamics and circumstances. The population consisted of 2 former recruiters, 1 from the Army and another from the Marine Corps, as well as 38 college students located in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Data for the study morphed from face-to-face interviews and 3 focus groups comprised of 10 to 15 students each, for the purpose of addressing the research question. Data analysis occurred through a process of coding and theming. The 9 themes identified included *tell the story*, *advertising strategies*, and *fit for duty*. A lesson learned from these themes was that the key for successful recruiting strategies lies in aligning with the wants and needs of individuals in the target demographic. If senior leaders in the Department of Defense followed the recommendations provided, each of the branches of the military service could potentially achieve higher recruiting rates at a lower cost. The study could result in social change whereby eligible recruits could view the Army and Marine Corps as professions of arms in which individuals can live out their ideals of patriotism but also have a good quality of life due to the benefits of military service.

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## Dedication

I wish to dedicate this study to my loving family. This effort has taken me 6 long years to complete. My family has provided me with the encouragement and support I needed to persevere, and not give up on my goal of earning a doctorate degree. Oftentimes, this came in the form of understanding when I told them I could not engage in a family activity because I needed to complete an assignment or work on my study. Occasionally, they showed their support by coming to me while I was working and offering a meal, a hug, and a few kind words. My family always made me feel confident I could finish the work and become Dr. Paul V. McCullough III. My sincere hope is I can return the favor to each of them in the future.

My wife has put her career and education on hold so I could pursue my own aspirations. Heather, I thank you so much for that and want you to know you will have my complete support with whatever path you choose for our life after the military. My children, luckily, were only in elementary school during the 6 years I worked in pursuit of this dream. Paul and Sarah, many years of hard work lie ahead of you, but I want you to know you do not have to endure these challenges alone. I will help and support you, as you have done for me. Finally, I could not have come this far in life without the love and support of my parents and Uncle Mike. From a very early age, they saw something special in me and encouraged me to reach for the stars. I hope I made you proud and will endeavor to provide the same kind of love and support for my own children.

## Acknowledgments

There are so many people I need to thank for helping me complete this study and not give up. Above all, I must thank the Lord God Almighty, for I have always remembered Philippians 4:13, which says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” God is, has been, and always will be my source of hope and I know He will never leave my side.

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Next, I would like to thank a couple of very special people who I met very early in my Walden journey and continually encouraged me to never give up, Dr. Charlene Dunfee and Dr. Chad Shannon. Thank you so much for speaking life into me, rather than words of doubt. You truly made me believe there is light at the end of the tunnel.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Millions of Americans enjoy on a daily basis the many rights afforded them by the U.S. Constitution. These rights come as a direct result of the bloodshed of thousands of Americans in numerous battles since George Washington led the Continental Army in 1776 (Johnson, 2014). Although many citizens express their gratitude for the sacrifice of military personnel through memorial occasions annually observed on Veteran's Day, Memorial Day, and Armed Forces Day, few American citizens willingly desire to serve in the armed forces in comparison to the country's population (Wilson, 2014). This level of participation has resulted in the majority of the American population having a limited understanding about military service and how military service can change individuals' lives (Coe, 2012). In this study, I strategically communicated how the military has helped its members achieve success and offered methods for recruiters to improve their marketing techniques by highlighting the benefits of military service to potential recruits.

### **Background of the Problem**

Wilson (2014) reported that as of December 31, 2013, 1,357,285 people currently served on active duty in the five military services. In comparison to the current U.S. population, approximately .5% of Americans over 18 currently served in the military, and the number of service members plus their dependents amounted to only 1% of all American citizens (Wilson, 2014). This phenomenon may exist because most Americans do not understand how even a brief period of military service can improve a person's life. Unless an American has personally served in the armed forces, or has a family member with military experience, the individual likely derives an understanding of the military

solely from the social, news, and entertainment media (Coe, 2012). These sources of information have not always accurately portrayed the armed forces, which highlights the lack of effectiveness of the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) in strategically communicating the benefits of military service. If the DOD wants to change this perception, the department can begin by modifying its marketing techniques to focus less on financial incentives and more on ensuring all former, current, and potential service members fully understand how the benefits of military service could improve their lives. This type of marketing strategy would enable individuals to understand how serving in the military could help satisfy their wants and needs, both in the immediate future as well as for their long-term goals.

### **Problem Statement**

A report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO, 2011) indicated the DOD spent \$11 billion in enlistment and retention bonuses from 2006 to 2010, which had only a marginally positive effect on the enlistment rate for the Army (Hosek & Miller, 2011). As a result of projected reductions to the DOD budget of approximately \$450 billion over the next 10 years (Smith, 2012), the Army must reconsider its marketing strategies to save money. In contrast, Hosek, Asch, and Mattock (2012) indicated the Marine Corps' branding strategy enabled them to consistently attract recruits with higher percentages of high school diplomas as well as better scores on the Armed Forces Qualification Test. The general business problem is different approaches in military marketing campaigns produce different results. The specific business problem is some

military recruiting professionals have limited marketing strategies for motivating 18 to 22-year-olds to join the military.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this exploratory, qualitative case study was to determine what marketing strategies successful recruiting professionals use to motivate 18 to 22-year-olds to join the military. The population consisted of two former recruiters, one from the Army and another from the Marine Corps, as well as 38 college students located in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. The first step in conducting the study was to critically analyze the current marketing materials of the Army and Marine Corps to determine the effectiveness of the information presented for motivating individuals to join the military. The second step was to interview two former recruiting professionals from the Army and Marine Corps to obtain their perspectives on successful recruiting strategies. The third step was to conduct three focus group sessions (Marshall & Rossman, 2014), with sets of 10 to 15 individuals each in the target demographic age group. The goal was to collect their perceptions about the wants and needs of people in their age group and how well the marketing materials from both the Army and Marine Corps addressed these desires. The results of the study could lead to social change by providing military recruiting professionals with valuable information regarding what motivates individuals to join the military.

### **Nature of the Study**

Wahyuni (2012) outlined three methods for conducting research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. He suggested a quantitative approach causes a researcher to

develop objective, statistical data through predetermined instruments to support a specific hypothesis. In a qualitative approach, conversely, the researcher aims to derive themes from the subjective responses of research participants. With a mixed methods approach, a researcher attempts to combine both of these strategies to enhance meaning of outcomes or study validity. For this study, the qualitative method was appropriate for determining recruitment and marketing strategies in the military's target demographic to join the armed forces.

In a qualitative approach, different forms of analysis are acceptable for a doctoral study, according to the research design considerations discussed by Marshall and Rossman (2014). These forms of analysis include the phenomenological, the ethnographic, and formal case study designs. Working with a phenomenological design, a researcher seeks to describe the meaning of perceived and lived experiences of individuals (Moustakas, 1994). An ethnographic design studies a cultural or social group through a prolonged period of analysis and observation (Agar, 2014). In contrast, the formal case study provides an in-depth analysis of a case or system through a diverse array of data the researcher must place in context (Yin, 2014). For this qualitative study, the case study design was appropriate to understand the perceptions of military recruiting professionals on the effectiveness of their marketing materials, in relation to the reactions of college-aged potential recruits, when these recruits view marketing materials produced by the Army and Marine Corps intended to entice individuals to join a particular service.

### **Research Question**

The overarching research question was the following: What marketing strategies do successful recruiting professionals use to motivate individuals to join the military?

### **Interview Questions**

1. How long did you work as a recruiter and where?
2. What branch of service did you work for as a recruiter?
3. What kind of recruiting materials did you use as a recruiter?
4. What was your most effective technique in convincing college-aged potential recruits to join the military?
5. What kind of training did you receive to become a recruiter?
6. What do you think motivates college-aged potential recruits to join the military today, given the various conflicts with other nations and the budget cuts caused by sequestration?
7. Is there anything else you can tell me about what you think is important for recruiting college-aged potential recruits?

### **Focus Group Questions**

1. What are your top five needs and top five wants, both for the immediate future and long term (the next 5 to 10 years)?
2. How do you think the marketing materials developed by the Army and Marine Corps align with the wants and needs you just discussed?
3. What particular aspects of the marketing materials of either service do a better job of addressing your wants and needs to motivate you to join the military?



4. What benefits of military service are you aware of based on the marketing materials I showed you and your own previous knowledge?
5. What extent do the experiences of any your friends or family members who have served in the armed forces influence your likelihood to join the military to satisfy your wants and needs?
6. In what ways do the ending of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan relate to your wants and needs, which could influence your decision to join, or not join, the military?
7. Is there anything else important you can tell me about this issue?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework guiding the study, based on the work of Mintzberg and Waters (1985), is called emergent strategy theory. Mintzberg and Waters postulated an important difference between a deliberate marketing or business strategy, which is implemented by design, and an emergent strategy that develops almost by accident. Insignificant variables in initial conditions based on the things people need and want can have a dramatic effect on a planned course of action and alter the outcomes. Recruitment specialists have used emergent strategy theory to justify the need to change marketing approaches to improve recruitment efforts for MBA students (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). Although a strategy is precisely targeted toward a specific group of candidates, a revised, emergent strategy evolves when the results of different marketing approaches can clearly be seen.

The underlying foundation of an emergent strategy is that an organization should recognize its inability to accurately predict the most effective strategy at the beginning of the process. Recruiters need to allow the details of the strategy to emerge from what they learn as they move forward, evaluate their strategy, and find consensus before deciding what the next steps should be. The study could assist military recruiters to create mechanisms for review and reflection that might help to improve recruitment efforts.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Active duty:* Full-time duty in the active military service of the United States. This designation includes members of the reserve component serving on active duty, or full-time training duty, but does not include full-time National Guard duty (DOD, 2014).

*Military service:* A branch of the armed forces of the United States, established by act of Congress, in which persons are appointed, enlisted, or inducted for military service, and which operates and is administered in a military or executive department. The military services are the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard (DOD, 2014).

*Strategic communication:* A systematic series of sustained and coherent activities, conducted across strategic, operational, and tactical levels enables understanding of target audiences and identifies effective conduits to promote and sustain particular types of behavior (DOD, 2014).

## **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are issues or propositions accepted as true, or at least plausible, which could have an influence on the findings of a study (Bernard, 2013). For this study, I assumed the collective opinions of the marketing professionals and the individuals participating in the focus groups served as a representative sample of what motivates individuals in the target demographic to join the military and how individuals in this age range perceive marketing materials developed by the Army and Marine Corps. Participants had the ability to fully read and understand the marketing materials presented to them. In addition, participants likely already had perspectives about the benefits of military service, prior to looking at any marketing materials. Finally, participants likely provided truthful answers to all questions posed to them because they did not receive financial compensation for participating in the study.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are the potential weaknesses of the proposed study, which the researcher does not have control over but can affect the study (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). Although the focus groups occurred on a college campus not affiliated with the military, assuming the participants may have had strong biases, and would provide opinionated responses based upon their age group and experiences with the military their friends or family members might have had, seemed logical. In addition, participants may not have been able to delineate all their wants and needs, particularly those affecting long-term decisions. A further limitation was the focus groups could only occur during the

academic year (September to May) because college students are traditionally on break during the summer.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are the definitions of the boundaries of the central research question the researcher has control over (Bernard, 2013). The duration of focus group discussions was limited to no more than 1 hour because the participants were college students who had limited time in between classes and extracurricular activities. The goal was to have each focus group contain between eight to 12 individuals, depending on student availability, to keep the group small enough to facilitate discussion. Finally, I also limited the number of focus groups to three, because it seemed reasonable that no new information could be derived from continuing to conduct additional focus groups.

### **Significance of the Study**

Scholarly research does not currently exist comparing the recruiting practices of the Army and Marine Corps. Scholars have explored the recruiting practices of each service but have not conducted a comparative analysis (Hosek & Miller, 2011; Korb & Segal, 2011). As a result of this gap, the study could provide valuable recommendations on how to improve the business practice of recruiting and potentially change the way Americans view a career of military service.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

As the study becomes available, senior leaders in the DOD and military recruiters could gain a better perspective of what motivates college-aged potential recruits in the target demographic to join the military. Understanding the results of the study could help

recruiters improve their success rates by modifying their marketing materials to better communicate to college-aged potential recruits how the benefits of serving in the armed forces can help them achieve their objectives. Finally, if military recruiters successfully learn how to modify their approach to appeal to what matters to college-aged potential recruits, the study has the potential to assist the DOD to reduce the amount of money spent on recruiting because recruiters will no longer have to rely on hefty financial incentives to entice prospective recruits.

### **Implications for Social Change**

As a result of approximately \$450 billion projected reductions to the DOD budget over the next 10 years (Smith, 2012), the Army must reconsider its marketing strategies to save money. As new strategies for military recruiting begin to focus more on the wants and needs of 18 to 22-year-olds, society may start to develop a different impression of the meaning of serving in the military. Rather than viewing military service as an occupation for the poor or uneducated, society may realize joining the military could provide a means for achieving one's dreams and building a better future. O'Connor (2012) emphasized this point through an elaborate description of the life of Major General (MG) David A. Rubenstein. This officer availed himself of all the benefits of military service, earning countless civilian and military accolades, and now serves his community by mentoring future leaders (O'Connor, 2012). This perspective could lead to more people wanting to serve in the armed forces, without recruiters having to spend billions in financial incentives that do not yield a high return on investment (Hosek & Miller, 2011).

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The content of the review of the literature includes a critical analysis and synthesis of various sources on military recruitment practices. Throughout the review, different scholarly opinions were presented and contrasted, providing depth to the study inquiry. Information was synthesized into logical sections to help the reader fully understand the topic and the surrounding issues. The reviewed literature is organized into 11 categories: (a) purpose of the study, (b) conceptual framework/theory, (c) origin of the benefits of military service, (d) benefits while serving on Active Duty, (e) benefits for veterans, (f) recruiting practices and trends, (g) conscription, (h) budgets and retention, (i) strategic communication with the American people, (j) forms of strategic communication, and (k) sending a clear message.

The strategy for searching the literature involved the use of many scholarly journals and references regarding the benefits of military service, recruiting, and strategic communication. Search terms for the literature review included Boolean searches for several permutations of words such as (a) *military*, (b) *benefits*, (c) *recruiting*, (d) *strategic communication*, and (e) *marketing*. These resources originated from the Walden Library, primarily in business and government databases, including (a) Academic Search Complete/Premier, (b) ProQuest Central, (c) Business Source Complete, (d) Military and Government Collection, and (e) Homeland Security Digital Library. A rich site summary (RSS) feed reader allowed for the real-time monitoring of each of these databases for relevant literature. The review included 81 articles, government websites, and publications; 87.7% of the articles were peer reviewed and less than 5 years old from the

date of CAO approval. The remaining 8.2% of were either not peer reviewed or would be more than 5 years old at the time of CAO approval (Appendix A).

The purpose of this exploratory, qualitative case study was to determine what marketing strategies successful recruiting professionals use to motivate 18 to 22-year-olds to join the military. The goal was to collect their perceptions about the wants and needs of people in their age group and how well the marketing materials from both the Army and Marine Corps addressed these desires. As such, the purpose of the literature review was to explore the multitude of benefits among the military services and how recruiters strategically have communicated these benefits to individuals in their target market.

### **Emergent Strategy Theory**

The conceptual framework served as the lens for the review of the professional and academic literature pertaining to the topic. The basis for the conceptual framework comes from the emergent strategy theory of Mintzberg and Waters (1985), who postulated that as an organization develops a strategy, the organization chooses among a continuum of strategy types, ranging from deliberate to emergent. A discussion of these strategies, and their implications for military recruiters, provided a context for understanding how the components of the literature review directly relate to military recruiters and their ability to develop effective recruiting strategies.

Mintzberg and Waters (1985) suggested all organizations have some form of strategy, whether intended or not, based on a pattern in a stream of decisions. As this pattern develops, the identified strategy guides organizational behavior, but the outcomes

of this behavior could result in unanticipated consequences. They stated this deviation between what an organization planned to happen and what actually occurred stems from the type of strategy the organization's leadership adopted.

Mintzberg and Waters (1985) explained how some researchers claim only two possible types of strategies exist, deliberate and emergent, which must operate independently from one another. The former strategy places an organization's leaders in the position of authority, from which the leaders have the sole responsibility of formulating their intentions and a means to achieve them as precisely as possible. The leaders must then pass this information down quickly and succinctly to ensure their subordinates understand the message and can effectively execute the plan. The latter strategy, however, relies on an organization's collective ability to consistently adapt to circumstances and changes in the environment, continuously making changes to a pattern of behavior with little or no planning.

Although these strategies have merit, Mintzberg and Waters (1985) suggested these strategies make an organization unlikely to have a purely deliberate or purely emergent strategy because of the conditions that must exist for this purity to occur. For a perfectly deliberate strategy, the organization's leadership must express its intentions so precisely and clearly that no chance exists for subordinates to misunderstand or misinterpret their intentions. In addition, a purely deliberate strategy must also possess some form of control mechanism for ensuring subordinates execute the plan exactly as directed. Furthermore, a purely deliberate strategy assumes the organization operates in an environment of complete predictability and no susceptibility to external forces, such as



the market, technology, or politics. This notion of a purely deliberate strategy seems unrealistic, given no organization operates in a vacuum and no leader ever achieves complete control of subordinates, even in a dictatorship. Likewise, a purely emergent strategy also seems quite difficult to achieve. For this purity of strategy to occur, a consistent pattern of behavior would have to arise in an organization, without a single plan, direction, or intention from leadership. Although some leaders may profess belief in this type of strategy, Mintzberg and Waters pointed out that every organization at least has some kind of idea about what kind of product or service the organization will offer, which in itself is a direction and intention.

As a result of the extreme difficulty of implementing a purely deliberate or purely emergent strategy in an organization, Mintzberg and Waters (1985) suggested organizations can choose from a number of strategies along a continuum from purely deliberate to purely emergent. These strategies include entrepreneurial, ideological, umbrella, process, unconnected, consensus, and imposed. As leaders of organizations carefully explore the choices along this continuum, from deliberate to emergent, each approach has fewer elements of a deliberate strategy and more components of an emergent strategy. Mintzberg and Waters emphasized that the only way for an organization to have a truly effective strategy lies in its ability to blend planning and communicating its goals and intentions while still allowing new ideas to emerge as circumstances change.

The first type of blended strategy, entrepreneurial, still enables a single leader to develop a vision and intentions, but acknowledges changes can emerge and an

organization must remain adaptable (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). The use of this ideological strategy by business leaders removes some control from the leader and requires strategies to develop from the shared beliefs of all actors. As a natural follow on, a leader who uses the umbrella strategy can provide constraints or targets while empowering subordinates to make decisions within this framework in response to changes or market forces. Leaders who use a process strategy require staff to deal with process functions such as hiring and organizational structure but delegates the daily activities of the organization to subordinates (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). This separation between leadership and subordinates becomes even more apparent in the unconnected strategy, where strategies develop in enclaves and actors have a loose coupling to the organization in the absence of common intentions. As enclaves begin to work together, leaders of organizations use a consensus strategy, wherein emergent ideas come together through mutual adjustment (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). Finally, in the imposed strategy, the environment or workplace influences patterns of behavior through direct imposition or limiting organizational choices.

Additional work on the subject of strategy formation by Mintzberg and McHugh (1985) suggested the best strategies form in an *adhocracy*. The same researchers described the concept of an adhocracy as a complex and dynamic organization, with highly trained experts in specialized units/teams, who rely on mutual adjustment to each other's unpredictable work and have the authority to make decisions when the experts possess the information and expertise necessary to deal with a particular situation. Mintzberg and McHugh labeled this type of strategy formation as grass roots and asserted

the six main components of grass-roots strategy formation. First, despite the importance of leaders communicating goals and intentions, patterns need to emerge without artificial constraints or burdens (Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985). Second, leaders in an organization must realize patterns and new ideas can emerge wherever subordinates have the capacity to learn about new forces in the market or environment and have the resources to act on this information. Third, as different actors in the organization recognize the same emerging pattern, new strategies should become collective and pervasive throughout the organization (Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985). Fourth, this process of proliferating the new strategy does not necessarily require formal procedures but rather can occur through informal channels. Fifth, leaders in an organization should realize the cultivation of new strategies across an organization usually occurs in distinct periods naturally existing in the cycle of the organization (Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985). Finally, as organizational leadership watches these changes emerge, the leaders should only intervene when leaders believe the emerging pattern could become destructive to the organization.

This idea of a grass-roots strategy complements the work of Mintzberg and Waters (1985). Researchers of both strategies advocated that the best type of strategies have components of both planned and emergent concepts (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Neubauer, Figge, & Hahn, 2015). The findings of these researchers certainly have merit for helping managers of organizations develop an effective strategy, but over time, other researchers have also contributed to the field of strategy formation. Neubauer et al. (2015) supported the theory of Mintzberg and Waters that strategies exist on a continuum from planned to emergent, but these authors also built on existing theories through a

description of four categories of contingency factors that could greatly affect which strategy along the continuum an organization should select. The first of these is the environment, which ranges from stable to turbulent, and could include the market in which the organization operates and the industrial sector to which the organization belongs (Neubauer et al., 2015). The second category of contingency factors, organization, includes the size of the organization, its stage of development, available resources, past and present performance, and past and present strategy. The third category, the decision-making process, includes the complexity, urgency, and uncertainty associated with any choice (Neubauer et al., 2015). The final category, characteristics of the decision maker, includes the leader's age, gender, educational background, previous experiences, personality, values, need for achievement, and aggressiveness.

When combined, all these factors play a unique role in helping to determine the most effective strategy for an organization. Neubauer et al. (2015) also made another contribution to the field of strategy formation, through their idea of the sustainability of a strategy, in relation to the wickedness or salience of a problem. In terms of sustainability, these researchers defined wickedness as the complexity, societal impacts, and long-term nature of a problem. In contrast, Neubauer et al. defined a problem as salient if powerful stakeholders can influence companies to address the issue, solving the problem seems desirable within societal norms, and the problem requires immediate attention. They recommended a wicked problem requires a more emergent strategy, whereas a salient problem requires a more planned strategy. In the case of a problem with both wicked and salient aspects, Neubauer et al. asserted the problem calls for a strategy with strong

aspects of both planned and emergent thinking, such as the umbrella strategy discussed earlier, supporting the work of Mintzberg and Waters (1985).

The combined work of all these scholarly researchers (Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Neubauer et al., 2015) on strategy formation has strongly suggested, in a supporting fashion, that an effective organization must have components of both planned and emergent thinking to become successful. In a contrasting fashion, Dibrell, Craig, and Neubaum (2014) studied strategy formation in 448 companies and its effect on firm growth. They concluded the highest rate of firm growth occurred at the midpoint of the strategy continuum, where both planning and emergent qualities exist. Their research indicated that, whereas purely planned strategies can lead to a false sense of control and an inability to learn from prior mistakes, a purely emergent strategy leads to an overly reactive and ad hoc organization.

Within the context of recruiting for the Army and Marine Corps, the literature review illustrates this concept in action. The next section begins with an exploration of the benefits of military service, looking at how the military developed strategies for providing benefits to service members but also allowing emerging ideas to influence the adaption of these benefits to current needs.

### **Potential Themes and Phenomenon**

**Origin of the benefits of military service.** Although the words *military* and *service* seem to naturally fit together, some people once tried to view the Army as a job rather than a service, according to Mittelstadt (2012). Mittelstadt studied the attempt to unionize the armed forces of the United States in the 1970s, a time when the military had

just transitioned to an all-volunteer force in lieu of conscription. The benefits of serving in the military were at risk because of congressional reductions. Mittelstadt discovered many leaders in both the military and Congress realized the pitfalls associated with the unionization of the armed forces and quickly worked to protect military benefits. As a result of these efforts, President Ronald Reagan provided service members with a 14.3% raise in 1981 (Mittelstadt, 2012)..

**Benefits while serving on active duty.** Due to President Reagan, benefits afforded to service members have greatly increased since 1981. Significant differences exist, however, between the benefits available to those on Active Duty compared to veterans. This section begins with a discussion of the former, because all veterans have served on Active Duty at some point, even if they belonged to the Reserves or National Guard.

***Expedited citizenship.*** Some individuals now join the military as a path to expedite citizenship because of the dedication of President Reagan and his successors to the armed forces (Cunha, Sullivan, Can, & Yalcinkaya, 2014). Cunha et al. (2014) explained that after President George W. Bush declared a period of hostilities after September 11, 2001, immigrants serving on active duty in the American military became eligible for immediate naturalization. Furthermore, as a result of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2004, the government took additional steps to aid in the naturalization process (Cunha et al., 2014). These included waiving the naturalization fees; allowing migrants to apply for naturalization in overseas embassies, consulates, or military bases; and extending naturalization benefits to the immediate family of eligible

service members. The government has since expanded upon these benefits through the Military Personnel Citizenship Processing Act and the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008. Most recently, Executive Order 13269 enabled military personnel to apply for citizenship after just one day of service, a substantial reduction from the previous waiting period of three years (Cunha et al., 2014). These pieces of legislation require agencies of the federal government to work together closely in an effort to expedite applications and also ensure reentry into the United States by lawful permanent residents.

Cunha et al. (2014) suggested many potential service members may benefit from expedited citizenship. They indicated that approximately 1.2 million noncitizens have the correct demographics for military service, including age, education, permanent resident status, and the ability to speak English. Cunha et al. discovered citizenship attainment is more possible for minorities, women, and married individuals, and those with more education. Cunha et al. also indicated the new Executive Order enticed more White and Black noncitizens to join the military, particularly when they could train for military jobs that are not combat-intensive in nature. Cunha et al. suggested the new Executive Order did not have a substantial effect on overall enlistment across the services, but still offers a valuable benefit to potential service members at little or no cost to the government.

***Comprehensive soldier fitness.*** In addition to the benefit of expedited citizenship, Lester, Harms, Herian, and Sowden (2015) explained the military also helps recruits to develop as individuals through a program called Comprehensive Soldier Fitness. This concept requires soldiers to use a global assessment tool to assess their well-being in all aspects of human behavior and development. Upon completion of this assessment,

leaders in the chain of command provide service members with appropriate assistance. This assistance ranges from dieticians and personal trainers for physical fitness, to mental health specialists for behavioral and relational issues, to financial counselors for monetary issues, and spiritual advisors for religious issues. This kind of attention to all aspects of a service member's life could result in happier individuals and units that are more productive.

Although some may believe members of the military have a higher divorce rate than civilians, Karney, Loughran, and Pollard (2012) offered evidence to the contrary. They compared the marital and divorce status of military and civilian populations, accounting for factors of rank, age, education, and racial/ethnic background. Karney et al. suggested service members remain equally or less likely to obtain a divorce than their civilian counterparts, despite the increased stress service members have suffered in recent years resulting from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Karney et al. also stated military couples in older ranges (32 or older) have proven to have more stable marriages than their civilian counterparts and have a higher propensity to remarry should divorce occur. Karney et al. attributed these results to the attitudes of traditionalism and commitment common among service members and the multitude of benefits afforded to military families.

Karney et al. (2012) offered complementary evidence that certain existing factors of military life led to an early and smooth transition to adulthood. They suggested military service not only provides a good start in life but can help service member's transition to having a positive effect on society. When service members separate from the



military, their maturity and life experiences enable them to take on difficult tasks and make valuable contributions to society in their fields of choice.

***Life insurance.*** Although military service has the positive effect of helping individuals transition to adulthood, this profession also carries the risk of service members losing their lives. This unfortunate reality, however, has led to another benefit for military families, the survivor benefit plan (SBP), discussed by Davis and Fraser (2012). Upon entering the military and during periodic reviews of administrative records, service members have the option of purchasing the Service Members Group Life Insurance in varying amounts up to \$400,000. This coverage does not require a medical exam or detailed family history and acknowledges military service as an inherently dangerous occupation. The price for this coverage does not change with the age of the service member and costs a maximum of approximately \$25 a month, far less than a person would pay for similar insurance over the course of a 20-year civilian career (Davis & Fraser, 2012). In addition, the military provides a \$100,000 death benefit shortly after the passing of a service member to help those left behind tend to immediate family needs and plan for funeral arrangements.

Davis and Fraser (2012) suggested these benefits provide a long-term, tangible benefit for military service members but may not provide sufficient funding for family members grieving the loss of a service member. They indicated the military, therefore, affords service members the opportunity to ensure their surviving spouse continues to receive up to 55% of their retirement cash flow. Davis and Fraser explored the utility of this plan and indicated the SBP has proven quite lucrative for male retirees but less

rewarding for female retirees, especially those with an older spouse. They suggested military families should consider availing themselves of the SBP as part of their long-term planning for life after the military.

**Leave.** In addition to the life insurance and SBP provided by the military, service members and their families also receive the benefit of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Malone (2012) researched this benefit and noted President George W. Bush expanded portions of this mandate with the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act. Malone stated that because of this updated policy, military families receive two benefits not afforded to civilians, qualifying exigency leave and military caregiver leave. According to the Department of Labor (2013), the first benefit allows employees who are family members of a covered military member to take FMLA leave to address common issues, such as attending military-sponsored functions, making financial or legal arrangements, and arranging for childcare. The second benefit, formed in response to the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors, allows family members of covered service members to take leave to care for a service member with a serious injury or illness. This benefit illustrates the support of the United States for its military and represents another example of a military service benefit.

**Education.** The support for service members, however, does not end with the FMLA. Educational benefits became available to veterans in 1944 through the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, intended to assist veterans returning from World War II. Since then, this support transitioned to the Korean GI Bill, then to the Vietnam Era GI Bill, next to the Post-Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program, leading to

the development of the well-known Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) in 1985. Martorell and Bergman (2013) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the MGIB, to determine its usage and effectiveness as a recruiting tool. They discovered with the MGIB's educational benefit of \$40,000 and 10-year eligibility window, approximately 46% of service members avail themselves of this benefit. Although a lack of statistical data prevented the authors from making conclusions about the enhanced version of the MGIB, called the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Martorell and Bergman suggested many members of the military population will take advantage of this benefit, despite recent legislation, which resulted in tuition caps and a slight reduction in benefits. Martorell and Bergman also surmised the usage of the Post 9/11 GI Bill might increase further because of new legislation allowing service members to transfer this educational benefit to family members. Martorell and Bergman stated this benefit also appeals to service members because service members can use this benefit while in the service and after separation.

According to Wilson (2014), these educational benefits might also appeal to service members because of the initiatives developing on college campuses, designed to help and support members of the military. Wilson suggested Army recruiting materials attempt to convey the notion that not only can the Army help college-aged potential recruits achieve their college aspirations, but earning a college degree will help soldiers advance in their military careers. This type of symbiotic relationship between the Army and college has become typified at Western Kentucky University, a school deemed a military friendly school by *G.I. Jobs* (Wilson, 2014). This school has an office of Military Student Services (MSS), which helps military students in an assortment of ways.

This organization works with the Veterans Administration to ensure students receive their funding for the school year. The office of MSS offers a Textbook for Troops program, which provides textbooks for veterans and their dependents to use at no cost during the semester. MSS also sponsors a Student Veterans Alliance, a Vet-to-Vet peer mentoring program, a military list serve for announcements, and a dedicated military programs counselor. In addition, MSS provides veterans with a Golden Retriever service dog named CanDoo intended to accompany service members suffering from anxiety or mental health issues. Similarly, MSS also works with two local Wounded Warrior programs to provide horses for veterans suffering from physical or emotional war injuries. Furthermore, MSS sponsors a program called Veterans Upward Bound, which offers assistance in reading, writing, mathematics, and training programs. MSS also hosts a robust Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program, which helps contribute to the second largest supply of newly commissioned second lieutenants in the nation.

Finally, MSS also partners with the school's ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships, a group focused on improving quality of life through internships with local companies, family support, and therapy. Collectively, the services offered by the Military Student Services of Western Kentucky University provide veterans with a feeling of safety and security. On the battlefield, service members have referred to this emotion as *the brotherhood of war* because they know the man or woman fighting beside them understands how they feel and will do everything possible to safeguard the wellbeing of fellow soldiers.

***Brotherhood of war.*** One area where this concept of the brotherhood of war has become particularly important is suicide prevention. According to Power and McKeon (2012), over 36,000 Americans commit suicide annually, 1.1 million adults attempt suicide each year, and annually over 8,000,000 individuals consider suicide as a way of escaping their problems. Additional research on this issue by Langford, Litts, and Pearson (2013) revealed in the military over 1,300 service members committed suicide from 2006 to 2010. As a result, the DOD and Veterans Affairs (VA) worked together to provide three venues to help service members and their families struggling with thoughts of suicide. These include having a suicide prevention coordinator at each VA medical center throughout the country, offering a hotline for veterans and service members who need to talk, and sponsoring the Suicide Prevention Resource Center. The DOD also ensures all service members receive annual training on the suicide prevention program, which has the three components of ask, care, and escort. This program encourages service members to ask one another if they need help with their problems, provide them with immediate care, or escort them to someone with more in-depth training in suicide prevention, such as a mental health professional or chaplain. Although leaders in the DOD may never successfully eradicate the problem of suicide, these measures represent a visible benefit of military service. The DOD cares deeply about the men and women in uniform and will fight to protect their lives.

***Health insurance.*** Further proof of the benefits of military service comes from Cebula (2011), who explored the lack of health insurance in the United States to determine the effect of this nationwide problem on enlistment in the military. He

discovered a positive correlation between enlistment and the medical care inflation rate, providing strong support for the Army health care magnet hypothesis, according to which Army enlistment increases as the percentage of Americans without health insurance increases. In addition, he stated an increased presence of military veterans also leads to growth in enlistment, because veterans promote military service. Cebula (2011) commented, however, if universal health care could have an adverse impact on military recruiting if universal health care ever becomes available in the United States. Although no proof of this hypothesis currently exists, the military may have to adjust its recruiting strategy upon the full implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, signed into law by President Obama on March 23, 2010.

In the interim, however, Wu, Henne, and Propst (2012) demonstrated the large financial benefits of the military health care system. They explored the Family Act, a proposed addition to the Tricare medical system, targeted for infertility treatments, introduced to the Senate on May 12, 2011. Wu et al. discovered upon implementation of the Family Act, medical expense deductions could exceed 7.5% of adjusted gross income per year, with a maximum lifetime credit of \$13,360. This new law could also result in an increase of in vitro fertilization procedures at military treatment facilities by as much as 29% and reduce patient medical expenses for the procedure by 50% (Wu et al., 2012). For couples in the military that desire to have children but have struggled with fertility issues, the Family Act provides military families access to fertility treatments that may help individuals realize their dreams without spending excessive sums of money.

**Compensation.** The compensation service members receive for performing their duty, through cash, noncash, and deferred payments, is another financial benefit of military service. According to Hosek et al. (2012), funding for military personnel has risen by 45% since 2000, an increase greater than the Consumer Price Index or Employment Cost Index during the same period. Hosek et al. suggested military compensation now exceeds the 70th percentile threshold, compared to civilians in equivalent jobs, who experienced a 4% to 8% decrease in pay in recent years. A career in the military also stands as an anomaly in today's society, with an assured pension after 20 years of active federal service, which provides 50% of the average of what the service member earned in base pay during the last 3 years of service. The military also provides free health care to service members and their families, whereas the cost of health care for civilians has increased substantially. Hosek et al. suggested these benefits have become too costly and require reform. Until Congress changes the law, however, these benefits certainly provide valuable incentives for anyone considering military service.

In an effort to determine exactly how much of an effect benefits such as military retirement have on service members, Salm (2011) studied the effect of pensions on longevity, using evidence from veterans of the Union Army. Salm discovered the 1907 law, which provided a pension for veterans from age 65 until death, increased life expectancy by .82 years. Similarly, the 1912 law, which provided a slightly increased pension for veterans during the same period of life, improved life expectancy by 2.35 years. Salm stated he observed a profound effect of pensions on all wealth groups, in both rural and urban populations, but the demographic most affected lived outside big cities

and had minimal income. Salm believed this improvement in the mortality rate occurred because pensions provided service members with food, security, and reduced psychological stress.

Despite the documented benefits of the military pension, many individuals suggested the current retirement system needs reform. This quest for savings comes as direct result of the directive by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in 2006 to reduce the DOD budget by \$100 billion by 2016. Although his guidance directed military leaders to seek savings in all areas, military retirement has become a target in recent years because recruitment consumes a significant portion of the defense budget (Asch, Mattock, & Hosek, 2013). Thus far, many recommendations for changes in the retirement plan have gone forward to the President and Congress for consideration. These include (a) making service members wait until age 60 to start collecting their pension, rather than immediately upon the conclusion of their military career; (b) reducing the percentage of base pay a service member would receive for 20 years of service; (c) matching service members' contributions to investment vehicles in exchange for reduced percentages of base pay; and (d) offering reduced retirement plans to service members with fewer years of service (Asch et al., 2013). As of May 2015, military and political leaders have not made a decision regarding the best course of action.

***Travel.*** Regardless of the path forward senior leaders choose for military retirement, service members will always derive an intangible benefit from their years of service, especially if the members serve one or more tours overseas. Specifically, nearly every service member will conduct a permanent change of station one or more times



during service in the military. Although the process of moving sometimes seems daunting, each new location presents new opportunities to learn about the unique culture, food, language, and customs of a particular area. For instance, many service members stationed in Japan have a chance to learn about a famous Japanese tea ceremony called chanoyu, an ancient art developed during the time of the samurai and regularly serves as a form of relaxation and entertaining guests (Reider, 2012). Participation in this type of cultural activity, in places around the globe, makes service members well rounded and provides them with an understanding of different ways of life.

*Combat experience.* Unfortunately, drinking ceremonial tea or seeing the remnants of the Berlin Wall in Germany does not provide service members with sufficient reason to remain in the military during a time of persistent conflict. For this reason, McGee (2012) argued service members also derive benefits through the actual performance of their duties in combat. McGee served as the commander of a task force of 1,000 soldiers operating in the vicinity of Samarra, Iraq, from October 2007 to November 2008. During his time in command, McGee learned valuable lessons about the laws of war and the benefits of obeying these rules can yield for service members. He indicated by properly following the laws of war, soldiers promote a positive image of the U.S. military, both in the host country and in the United States.

Writers of news accounts have demonstrated how the improper behavior of just a small population of soldiers, such as at the Abu Gharib facility, can have disastrous effects on public perception of the military (McGee, 2012). In addition, McGee (2012) suggested service members who abide by the laws of war have an easier time

transitioning to civilian society because of not having lingering mental images of prisoner abuse, excessive violence, or the indiscriminate usage of firepower when after finishing their service and become civilians.

**Benefits for veterans.** Active Duty service members clearly receive a plethora of benefits for their dedication to duty. It remains important, though, for society to not neglect the former service of veterans and recognize them for their sacrifice. These benefits can be seen in the form of assistance in transition to civilian employment, mental health care, help with reintegrating into their former lives when returning from a deployment, and having their value and impact recognized by society.

***Transition to civilian employment.*** According to Faurer, Rogers-Broderson, and Bailie (2014), the time will soon come when many veterans will seek employment in the civilian sector. These authors stated this shift in the workforce comes as a direct result of the expected troop reduction in the U.S. Army of over 50,000 personnel, coupled with the DOD's budget reduction of over one trillion dollars in the next 10 years. Given the historical success rate of veterans seeking jobs, however, Faurer et al. seemed quite pessimistic about the possibility of all veterans obtaining employment. They reported in 2009 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan had an unemployment rate of 21.6%, a staggering number compared to the 8.6% national unemployment rate of 2011. Despite how grim this situation might seem, Faurer et al. suggested veterans often encounter a cyclical pattern of unemployment, typically after major conflicts when defense budgets dramatically decrease.

In an effort to correct this problem, Congress initiated the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in the 1990s. After examining 20 years of historical data, however, President Obama deemed this program ineffective and ordered the DOD and Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct a complete redesign of the program. According to Faurer et al. (2014) an independent examination of the new TAP program revealed veterans who used the service obtained employment an average of 3 weeks earlier than those who did not. The authors attributed this success to the changes in the TAP program. Veterans now receive more individual counseling and follow-up, tailored specifically to their personal goals and plans. Faurer et al. suggested TAP could still benefit from additional refinements, such as improving workshop availability times, encouraging employers to standardize job descriptions to effectively convey position requirements, hiring human resource professionals to translate military skills and certifications into civilian qualifications, mandating the use of TAP throughout DOD, and making all service members aware of what the TAP program can offer.

Regardless of how well DOD officials advertise the TAP program, research by Robertson (2013) suggested a successful transition from a military to a civilian career depends on four factors: (a) a veteran's unique situation, (b) support veterans receive from others, (c) coping strategies, and (d) a veteran's personal financial resources, which could allow them to smoothly conduct a transition over time. Through her research, Robertson discovered a small positive correlation with the duration of a veteran's transition and the amount of support veterans receive. In contrast, a small negative correlation existed between a veteran's income and the duration of their transition to

civilian careers. According to Robertson, these observed relationships could cause undue stress in a veteran's family, particularly during a lengthy transition, and advocated for any programs that could help veterans obtain civilian employment quickly.

As a result of the advocacy for veterans by Robertson (2013) and countless others like her, Congress passed the Veterans Employment Bill in November 2011, which provides tax breaks for businesses employing veterans as well as increased educational benefits for job training. Glassman (2012) discussed these tax breaks in detail. He stated the Returning Heroes tax credit provides benefits to employers who hire veterans unemployed for a short (4 weeks to 6 months) or long term basis (greater than 6 months). For veterans with short-term unemployment, employers receive a tax credit equal to 40% of the veteran's first \$6,000 in wages. In the case of veterans with longer unemployment, employers reap a credit of 40% on the first \$14,000 of wages. If employers choose to hire long-term unemployed veterans who also have a disability, the benefit increases to 40% of the first \$24,000, as a result of the Wounded Warriors tax credit. Glassman stated employers must retain the newly hired veterans for at least 6 months, and complete some tedious paperwork for state and federal agencies but suggested the end result could greatly benefit both employers and unemployed veterans.

In addition to preferential treatment in civilian companies, Lewis (2012) stated veterans also receive preferential treatment in selection for federal civil service jobs. He stated one quarter of all federal employees obtained their jobs as a result of a nationwide effort to reward veterans for their service and sacrifice. According to Lewis, veterans historically have a likelihood 3 to 4 times greater of obtaining a federal job than

applicants who never served in the military, and this pattern holds true regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or education level. Although some politicians debate the fairness of this situation and the effect this situation has on the quality of the federal civilian workforce, this dynamic clearly stands as a benefit to veterans who have served their country.

***Mental health.*** Since its inception, the military has focused on words such as strength, bravery, and perseverance, terms seemingly almost contrary to suffering with a mental health issue. The truth is veterans require strength and courage to overcome the stigma associated with mental health and admit needing help. If more veterans developed the inner fortitude necessary to seek out needed treatment, seeking out treatment could result in them obtaining future employment and becoming functional in society.

Further evidence of the mental health benefits veterans receive comes from the work of Schinka, Schinka, Casey, Kaspro, and Bossarte (2012), who studied suicidal behavior in a national sample of older homeless veterans and discovered that because of factors such as physical health, alcohol abuse, and social isolation, older individuals have the highest rates of suicide in the country. In particular, older men remain 7 times more likely to commit suicide than women. Moreover, because of their higher rates of mental illness and increased knowledge and access to firearms, older male veterans have twice the propensity to commit suicide, compared to older male nonveterans. Despite this challenge, the authors suggested veterans who completed a transitional housing program could once again become functioning members of society, successfully obtaining housing and employment upon discharge from the program. Additional research on the subject of

transitional housing by Tsai, Rosenheck, and McGuire (2012) revealed female veterans who enroll in the program often are younger, have less psychiatric problems, have shorter histories of homelessness, have fewer problems with drug abuse, and have fewer of work history. Even with these differences in characteristics, however, Tsai et al.'s research demonstrated female veterans can enjoy an equal measure of success with the transitional housing program, returning to society with employment and a quality life.

***Reintegration.*** Some veterans do not suffer from these types of mental health issues but instead struggle with maintaining their civilian careers while activated because of their service as a member of the Reserves or National Guard. This struggle led to the creation of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA). According to Ogles (2012), this legislation safeguards a multitude of benefits for citizen soldiers who return to their civilian careers after serving their country on active duty. These benefits include (a) continuing to accrue seniority in a company while away on military duty, (b) protecting the health care benefits for a person's family provided by a civilian employer, (c) accumulating time toward retirement with a civilian company without having the time away on active duty count as a break in service, (d) allowing penalty-free withdrawals from a pension account, with the ability to contribute the funds within 2 years after leaving active duty, and (e) providing service members with flexible options for the repayment of loans at interest rates no higher than 6%.

This legislation, passed under President Clinton, provides valuable benefits to service members and their families. Ogles (2012) suggested these benefits *should* greatly assist veterans returning from war who have become unwilling or unable to continue

servicing and would otherwise have significant difficulty finding a job in today's weakened economy. Many businesses attempt to offer veterans severance packages, which the companies describe as *more beneficial* than the veteran keeping their job. The author suggested, however, federal courts must mandate exactly what *more beneficial* means in terms of who may benefit from proposed severance packages for veterans, for how long, and to what extent. Until this clarity is established, veterans returning from tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan may return to their civilian workplace only to find their employers deemed terminating their employment to be more beneficial than supporting service members who fought bravely in the service of their country.

In addition to encountering difficulties with securing employment upon returning from war, Nichols (2013) discovered that many veterans also have challenges with reintegrating with their families. The results of his research demonstrated that spouses desperately need support when service members return home and help is available through telephone support groups, composed of other military spouses. Service members endure extraordinary circumstances while deployed, which sometimes result in conditions such as alcohol abuse, depression, injuries, and anxiety. Nichols suggested that these telephone support groups not only help military spouses understand what is going on with their loved ones, but can offer helpful recommendations of how to address issues that may arise.

***Societal impact.*** Similarly, the work of Weng, et al. (2015) demonstrates the value of community involvement in helping veterans recover when they return from war. Weng, et al. studied a project called Mission: Healthy Relationships, which paired

Virginia Wounded Warriors and their spouses with students from the School of Social Work Partnership. They discovered that the wounded warriors responded very positively to regular interaction with college students, as a way of relearning how to engage with others, especially their loved ones. As a result of the success of the program, Weng, et al. reported that the project is under consideration for expansion, through the use of an online forum.

In contrast to the challenges some veterans encounter with unemployment and mental health issues, O'Connor (2012) described one example of a former service member who successfully used the benefits of military service to transition to a prospering civilian career. O'Connor conducted an interview with Major General (MG) David A. Rubenstein, who served as the commanding general of the U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School as well as the chief of the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps. His 35 years of military service enabled him to earn many accolades, both academic and professional. His scholarly achievements include a master's degree in health administration, a master's degree in military art and science, and appointment as an honorary graduate professor at Baylor University. On a professional level, MG Rubenstein received recognition on two occasions in *Modern Healthcare* magazine as one of the 100 most influential individuals in healthcare, was inducted into the Army Medical Department's Order of Military Merit, and received the Outstanding Federal Healthcare Executive Award from the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States, the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps Mentor of the Year Award, and the American College of Health Executives 2012 Gold Medal Award. When asked how he



achieved all this recognition, Rubenstein attributed his success to the opportunities the Army provided him, starting with a ROTC scholarship at Texas A&M University, followed by the opportunity to attend medical school through the Army's graduate school program. Rubenstein indicated as he approaches retirement, he wants to give back to his community by focusing on mentoring future leaders in the healthcare industry.

According to Krier, Stockner, and Lasley (2011), individuals such as MG Rubenstein can have a profound economic and cultural impact on veterans of rural America. Krier et al. studied small towns in Iowa from which 3,000 members of the state National Guard deployed in support of the Global War on Terror. The researchers found these service members had a significant impact on rural towns, not just in terms of their purchasing power but also in the military values they bring to the community through their civilian jobs, which illustrates the benefit of the military on society.

Besides a positive attitude and their influence on the community, Jones and Mahon (2012) indicated individuals who served in the military also bring to their civilian careers the ability to transfer knowledge in turbulent work environments. Jones and Mahon studied knowledge transfer in organizations and discovered former service members often excel because of being able to accept and transfer both explicit and tacit knowledge. These authors indicated explicit knowledge includes any kind of information a person can easily remember, such as a conversation or words spoken by a classroom instructor. Tacit knowledge transfer is much more difficult than explicit knowledge transfer because this knowledge involves experiences, observation, and imitation. Jones and Mahon stated most individuals have no problems with explicit knowledge but

struggle with tacit knowledge. Fortunately, because of service members' continual practice of conducting after action reviews to share lessons learned upon the conclusion of any major event, those who served in the military have a unique ability to transfer tacit knowledge. Jones and Mahon suggested when placed in leadership positions, former service members can use this skill to help an organization grow by helping others reflect on events and share their lessons learned with coworkers.

The collective benefits of military service discussed in this section are potentially available to all men and women who join the armed forces. These benefits can help shape the course of a person's life, both during and after their period of service. The true challenge lies in the ability to make a potential service member aware of all these benefits. Referring to the conceptual framework, perhaps the best way to accomplish this awareness is through the umbrella strategy, discussed by Mintzberg and Waters (1985). According to Mintzberg and Waters, within this approach of organizational management, a leader can provide constraints or targets while empowering subordinates to make decisions within this framework in response to changes or market forces. The literature review reveals the dozens of benefits the armed forces provide to attract and retain service members. Given the DOD's heavy reliance on financial benefits, as discussed by GAO (2011) and Hosek and Miller (2011), recruiters may not have capitalized on the promise of these benefits to entice potential recruits. As the DOD provides recruiters with monthly targets, recruiters should maintain a list of all the benefits of military service and then tailor their discussion with individual prospective recruits based on the current situation in the economy, politics, and the personal circumstances of the individual recruit

to demonstrate how the combined benefits of military service could change the recruit's life. This umbrella strategy would allow recruiters to more easily reach their target goals by giving them the latitude to discuss all the benefits of military service with potential recruits and focus on the ones that interest the recruit most. Potential recruits need to understand the benefits a person can reap if they make the military a career choice, even if a military life comes with a unique set of challenges because of the constant demand for sacrifice and the inherent danger of the occupation.

**Recruiting practices and recent trends.** In an effort to more thoroughly discuss these recruiting issues, this section explores the literature pertaining to recruiting practices and trends. More specifically, this review will focus on those practices that have been successful in attracting college-aged potential recruits to various products and careers in the civilian world. It then considers recent trends in Army and Marine Corps recruiting that could provide some insight regarding what today's college-aged potential recruits seek to gain from serving in the military.

**Organizational fit.** Uggerslev, Fassina, and Kraichy (2012) suggested certain predictors of applicant attraction exist in the various stages of the recruiting process. These include job characteristics, organizational characteristics, recruiter behaviors, recruitment process characteristics, perceived fit, perceived alternatives, and hiring expectancies. Uggerslev et al. indicated the recruiting process has three stages: (a) generating applicants, (b) maintaining applicant status, and (c) influencing job choices. Uggerslev et al. commented, however, that recruiters should focus their efforts on the

first two phases, because they have minimal information about what other job choices an applicant may have.

Through their research, Uggerslev et al. (2012) discovered perceived fit is the strongest predictor of applicant attraction, followed by job and organizational characteristics. These authors also learned recruiter behaviors such as friendliness can have a moderate effect on applicant attraction in the beginning of the recruiting process. As the stages progress, applicants become more concerned with the characteristics of the actual recruitment process and organizational characteristics. Uggerslev et al.'s research seems particularly relevant to military recruiting. The DOD's goal should focus on how to have more potential soldiers come to recruiting stations because of perceiving military service as representing a good fit with their plans in life. When this self-selection happens, the services will have an opportunity to reduce the large sums of money currently spent on financial incentives.

Rehman (2012) provided further support for the importance of demonstrating how a job represents a good fit for a potential applicant. Rehman conducted a study of public sector organizations, focusing on recruitment, job satisfaction, and retention. He discovered the most important factor in human resource management lies in providing an accurate representation of the job to potential applicants so the applicants can conduct an honest self-assessment of their knowledge, skills, and abilities to determine if they have the potential to perform well in the job. Rehman also learned potential applicants have an interest in knowing what opportunities await them in the organization if applicants perform as expected, or better. These findings mirror those of Uggerslev et al. (2012) and

provide credence to the notion the DOD should focus on demonstrating how the benefits of military service would provide potential applicants with a way of achieving their goals.

*Human resource practices.* Stahl et al. (2012) suggested organizations must also consider their needs while conducting recruiting efforts and believed organizations can best accomplish this consideration through applying the six principles of effective global talent management. These include alignment with strategy, internal consistency, cultural embeddedness, management involvement, balance of global and local needs, and employer branding through differentiation. Stahl et al. suggested these principles represent the best practices in recruiting and allow organizations to ensure attracted candidates will fit the company's unique needs.

Massey and Campbell (2013) also conducted research on how to ensure companies attract and retain the right personnel for their organization, focusing specifically on human resource management practices in small businesses. Whereas the DOD certainly does not qualify as a small business, the principles apply equally well. The authors stated small businesses displayed weaknesses in the areas of legal compliance, recruiting and hiring employees, employee relations and training, and various HR questions. For the DOD, these issues equate to enabling service members to have access to regulations and personnel who can answer administrative questions that might develop during the course of a career, keeping high standards for military recruitment to ensure the services fill their ranks with qualified individuals, providing the necessary training for new service members to learn and excel at their jobs, and ensuring all service members understand the laws governing their rights and benefits.

Willey, White, Domagalski, and Ford (2012), stated that employers have increasingly started using posts on social media to determine the worthiness of a potential candidate for a job. Willey et al. suggested the information gathered from this medium is often not revealed in resumes, applications, or job interviews. The authors argued that this has become quite a controversial issue, as many people believe their personal lives and social media posts have no bearing on their ability to perform a job. The DOD does not currently use social media screening to select recruits, but as legislation dictates the legality of this practice, perhaps this type of candidate review could enable the military to assign service members to the jobs best suited to each person's unique blend of personality, knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Besides enhanced resumes, Noon (2012) advocated for a concept called threshold selection may provide a way for building the best workforce possible in an organization. The author described threshold selection as a form of positive discrimination in which all candidates must meet a set of minimum standards across a range of criteria before considering the company's diversity goals. He suggested this practice could help make a workforce more representative of a diverse community with disadvantaged groups, without imposing an artificial quota system not considering employee suitability. Within the military, this concept could potentially work well for making decisions regarding promotions and future assignments, but would require several levels of approval before implementation ever becomes possible.

In addition to diversity, age is another form of discrimination employers engage in when considering applicants for a particular position, according to the research of

Richardson, Webb, Webber, and Smith (2013). These researchers had 156 participants (102 students and 54 from companies) evaluate hypothetical job candidates (Richardson et al., 2013). Their study demonstrated that individuals between the ages of 42 to 48 were the most preferred demographic and applicants over the age of 54 became the least selected age group. Richardson et al. attributed this dynamic to factors that change with age, such as reliability, sociability, trainability, and intellectual competence. The study may explain why many service members choose to leave the military as soon as they reach the minimum 20 years of service required for retirement. Service members who have desire to pursue a second career, realize the limited period of time during which the best chance of success exists. In most cases, if service members elect to serve for 30 years or more, likely exceeding the age of 54, which significantly limits options for another career after the military.

Zwick (2012) realized the importance of this issue and conducted research on the consequences of seniority wages on employment structure. He discovered companies can retain their employees longer by rewarding their senior employees with hefty financial benefits, but this practice means hiring fewer older employees. In addition, these types of organizations often prefer to hire individuals with little experience in other jobs and prefer young men over young women. These facts demonstrate companies hiring from within use deferred payments as an incentive for continued service and discouraging individuals who switch jobs or have lengthy experience with other companies. This analysis seems quite fitting for the military. Senior officers, such as generals, receive very generous salaries but only after decades of military service. In addition, very few females

have reached the rank of general officer. Moreover, the military rewards loyalty with additional pay for years of service, because the military desires to have a workforce composed of many college-aged recruits who can be shaped and influenced to become the leaders of tomorrow.

***Talent assessment.*** As recruiters seek ways to attract service members who represent a good fit for the DOD's needs, one way to properly align potential employees with available jobs lies in competency-based talent assessment systems, according to Dai and Liang (2012). These researchers studied the usage and effectiveness of this model of human resource management within China and presented interesting findings. Dai and Liang suggested that competency modeling has three distinct levels: (a) modeling superior performance, (b) achieving strategic alignment, and (c) catalyzing organizational change. They stated that most companies in China remain focused on the first level, in which they explore the capabilities of potential employees to maximize performance. If employees do not know their core competencies, employers can use psychological tests, interviews, and personality assessments to determine what jobs best suit a particular individual. Dai and Liang commented that despite China's current lag behind the industry standard in the application of competency modeling, companies in this country have successfully utilized this technique to improve organizational performance.

The U.S. military has clearly reached the same conclusion regarding the need to determine a person's core competencies before placing them in a job. The DOD developed the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) in 1968, with the original intention of helping high school and college students interested in the military



determine where their skills lie. Since the inception of the ASVAB, the DOD has also developed two complementary programs designed to help the same target demographic discover their personal interests and work values. This complete program is now available to all high schools, including schools choosing not to release any of the results to military recruiters. Fortunately, the program has yielded positive results for the military, with an average of 18% of high school students stating a desire to join the armed forces.

Despite the success of the ASBAV in attracting potential military recruits, the research of Brock and Buckley (2013) highlighted the challenge of building and maintaining a robust workforce in the information society of today. Therefore, Brock and Buckley offered several recommendations for how organizations can effectively conduct human resource management. These include concepts such as valuing personnel, actively recruiting both internally and externally for various positions, utilizing multiple marketing techniques, maintaining a positive image, developing specific job criteria, hiring applicants based on their competencies, evaluating retention regularly, enabling employees to develop and progress, and providing progressive retirement options. Although the DOD already does each of these things, senior leaders realize the military must always adapt to the current situation in the world and regularly modify its human resource management strategies to appeal to the desires of prospective employees and effectively meet its recruiting goals.

Senior leaders in the DOD who continually assess recruiting strategies may want to also consider the work of Gholston (2015), who explored the impact of utilizing

professional development programs as marketing tools. Gholston discovered a positive correlation between perceived organizational attractiveness and a person's intention to apply for a job. Gholston confirmed the work of many previously mentioned researchers, suggesting individuals desire to work in an organization matching their personality and where they have the ability to advance in their skills, responsibility, and commensurate salary.

**Branding.** This notion of appealing to the self-image of individuals in an attempt to sell something or make individuals want to work at an organization has become known as branding. Balakrishnan, Permarupan, Shazneem, and Dousin (2012) conducted research on how this concept can affect consumer preferences. The researchers surveyed 500 young movie viewers in Malaysia to determine the impact of brand placement and recall in movies on brand preference, loyalty, and consumer intentions. Balakrishnan et al. achieved an 80% response rate and discovered brand placement has a significant effect in marketing activities, particularly on younger individuals. Balakrishnan et al. suggested their findings should serve as an indicator to companies with global brands college-aged potential recruits pay close attention to brands highlighted in movies.

This concept of branding does not just affect consumer behavior. According to Franca and Pahor (2012), branding also has a strong influence on potential job applicants. He explored the many attributes associated with what potential employees consider important in choosing a job to pursue. Using this information, Franca and Pahor developed a framework outlining the importance of a company's brand. They suggested applicants first concern themselves with their knowledge of an employer and its public

perception. Applicants should then consider the characteristics of the organization and compare that to their own employment desires to determine if the two align well. If so, applicants who are attracted to the organization will accept a job offer and will continue to work there until their lived experiences no longer match what the organization originally offered or promised.

**Conscription.** Research by Korb and Segal (2011) suggested the Army has not done a good job with using branding as a way of convincing people to join the military. These authors explored the cost of manning and financing the all-volunteer force of today's Army, discovered staggering results, and learned costs for personnel rose significantly compared to the period of time when conscription existed because the DOD needed to shift its focus to recruit and retain highly qualified troops. Korb and Segal stated personnel costs in the military rose from \$77 billion in FY 2001 to almost \$160 billion by FY 2009. Similarly, health care costs increased from \$19 billion to \$50 billion, with an expected 8% increase annually (Korb & Segal, 2011).

In addition to the increasingly large costs to maintain an all-volunteer force, evidence presented by other researchers suggests the United States has good reason to adopt the practice of mandatory service. Perri (2013) indicated prior to World War I, conscription did not focus on specific individuals and draftees could hire individuals to serve in their place. In addition, because conscription during the Civil War encouraged states to use their own funds to pay for military expenses, only 2% of soldiers in the Union Army originated from conscription. Perri suggested this attempt to shift the financial burden of war to the states resulted in much less pressure on individuals and

relieved the federal government of much of this financial responsibility for many years. Perri argued, however, the need for conscription no longer exists because the federal government has grown sufficiently large to fund military operations.

Kriner and Shen (2015) suggested conscription also served as a way to bring together the individuals of the United States. Because the draftee military closely resembled the American population, in terms of race, education, finances, and social classes, conscription served as a way of requiring military service of all Americans, regardless of their heritage or background. These authors discovered a draft force may also increase the political difficulty Congress and the President might have in taking military action against another country. Kriner and Shen suggested conscription makes the public feel more involved in decisions involving the use of military force, particularly if the draft affects members of the upper class, who have a higher chance of serving in uniform through conscription than the all-volunteer force.

These individuals may have family members with significant economic or political power who can help shape decisions of this nature. As the result of a draft force, the United States would likely only engage in military action against other countries when strong public support exists for going to war, such as immediately after the attacks on America on September 11, 2001. Kriner and Shen (2015) noted that despite the public support for war after these terrorist attacks, President Bush missed an opportunity to quickly increase the size of the military when he encouraged Americans to go back to the shopping malls rather than having a national call to military service.

Until such a time arises, however, when a President can speak eloquently enough to convince the entire nation of the need for military service, Siminski (2013) suggested holding a lottery as a quicker and easier way to fill the ranks of the armed forces. These authors highlighted the United States government's use of this methodology prior to the Vietnam era, relying on technology to make the process as fair and equitable as possible. Siminski noted Australia successfully employed the lottery technique during the Vietnam War. Siminski noted that despite the intention of making the lottery as random as possible, the United States eventually modified the process of selection to draft individuals with the appropriate skills and preferences suited for military service, while also allowing a deferral for college students. This phenomenon also occurred in Australia, where the probability of selection declined from 6.3% at the onset of the war to 0.2% toward the end of the conflict. Siminski suggested when the public became aware of these filters, the practice of conscription became far more difficult to implement.

Cebula (2012) and Cebula and Mixon (2012) provided further support for reinstating conscription. These authors demonstrated the end of conscription in the United States caused a decrease in voter participation throughout the United States and indicated this change resulted from voter apathy, because voters no longer cared as much about political decisions when the military changed to an all-volunteer force. Cebula and Mixon acknowledged politicians make decisions about many issues besides the military but contended their statistical data clearly exhibit a connection between the end of the draft and the degree of voter participation. These authors suggested if conscription

returned to the United States, more Americans would have an interest in political decisions and would return to the voting booth.

Despite the benefits of using conscription to increase voter participation and reduce the costs associated with military manpower, Warren (2012) demonstrated neither conscription nor the strategy of a volunteer force achieves the socially optimal number of troops. They developed a mathematical framework for evaluating both systems and determined the government can only achieve maximum efficiency when combining these strategies. Although conscription offers the possibility of high numbers of troops at low costs, the draft forces the military to contend with poor quality soldiers who either do not want to serve or who do not display strong competency for military service. Alternatively, an all-volunteer force usually yields the highest quality force but requires the military to pay high premiums to attract the highly educated and skilled workers who could make a decent living outside of the military. Although Warren did not suggest a plan the government could use to operate both programs simultaneously, their work does provide military and political leaders with reasons to reinstitute conscription in a limited capacity.

**Budgets, retention, and recruiting.** Until conscription once again becomes a reality, however, recruiting stations must increase their efficiency and save money. The unfortunate reality for the DOD is funding will likely decrease sharply over the next 10 years, giving military recruiters far fewer resources to use in attempting to reach their target demographics. A study by Lieber (2012) indicated that defense spending was only at 4.7% of GDP in 2012 and would steadily decline to 3.5%, as military efforts in Iraq

and Afghanistan decrease. Lieber stated that the United States has had years of trillion-dollar deficits and as Congress makes efforts to balance the budget and reduce the national debt, defense spending and veterans' benefits have become likely candidates for cost reductions. These reductions to the military budget are likely a result of the Iraq War. Coyne, Hall, McLaughlin, and Zerkle (2014) stated in their research that the U.S. government has already spent \$1.7 trillion on this effort, but the costs may increase to over \$4 trillion as a result of healthcare for wounded veterans and other hidden costs. Lieber suggested that if the United States desires to remain a dominant world power, it needs to institute policies to reduce government spending and increase the GDP. This theory was confirmed in the work of Stankeviciene and Lakstutiene, (2013), who studied public debt and economic crisis in the Baltic States. They discovered that across the Baltic States, decreases in budget deficit have a positive correlation to reductions in government spending.

**Budget.** The recommendations of Lieber (2012), Stankeviciene and Lakstutiene, (2013), and many other similar researchers and financial advisors, may have influenced President Obama to sign an executive order on March 1, 2013, mandating the budget cuts commonly known as sequestration. Although some may consider these kinds of reductions drastic, Price, Martin, Wu, and Pernin (2011) indicated the Army's budget historically rises and falls in 20-year intervals, which happens to coincide with major military operations. Price et al. indicated the Army may soon have its budget reduced to a level equaling only half of the 2011 outlays as a result of the troop reductions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Price et al. suggested these reductions would occur in multiple areas: (a)

procurement—70%, (b) operations and maintenance—50%, and (c) personnel—40%.

Price et al. commented that former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates anticipated the DOD would eventually encounter decreases of this nature and ordered military leaders to determine areas where the DOD could save money by conducting business more efficiently. These authors suggested sequestration would force military and political leaders to make more severe reductions, despite these efficiencies saving the DOD some resources. These reductions could include the cessation of maintenance and training activities, a reduction in equipment modernization efforts, or a significant decrease in force structure.

In accordance with the demands of sequestration, leaders in the Air Force considered how to reduce their budget. According to Sundberg (2013), the Air Force has begun to explore options for saving money such as reducing organizational depth, removing major commands, relocating headquarters, and simplifying organizational structure. Sundberg indicated military leaders must balance the need for a strong and agile force with the demands for a current and technologically advanced military.

In research on Air Force budgets, Smith (2012) revealed the military services have become so focused on developing high-tech equipment, the services have lost sight of the importance of personnel and readiness. He described examples of expensive acquisition programs, such as the F-35 aircraft, which have cost taxpayers billions of dollars in research and development and may not even have a relevant mission to fulfill by the time these programs become available to military leaders in the field. Smith referenced Secretary of Defense Gates, who suggested the services waste billions of



dollars on developing platforms with overly complex requirements that take too long to develop and field.

Kane and Bartolomei (2013) provided a possible solution to this problem in their examination of the acquisition process of planning, programming, and procurement. Kane and Bartolomei indicated Air Force senior leaders need to develop a long-term vision and provide subordinates with a clear definition of value, in terms of Air Force priorities and requirements. This guidance will enable leaders at all levels to make informed decisions about what to expend resources on and what expenses to delay or forego. Kane and Bartolomei suggested because of sequestration and the gradual cessation of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the services no longer can afford to purchase everything they desire. Senior leaders must focus on what provides the best value for enabling each service to complete its assigned mission without sacrificing national security.

Matiella (2011) suggested as the Army and other services continue to encounter more fiscal constraints, senior leaders must realize the DOD must engage in a *cost war*, which she defined as the challenge of meeting mission requirements with declining resources. Matiella explained the services have become accustomed to having almost unlimited resources in the past 10 years, but the nation's financial problems caused that pattern to stop. She suggested the services have only three options to choose from in fighting this cost war: (a) ask Congress for more resources to meet their increasing demands; (b) resort to a policy called salami slicing, which requires 10% reductions in all areas; and (c) increase cost effectiveness. Matiella indicated the first option will not likely

happen, given all the competing demands in congressional budgets, and the second course of action usually results in poor results because not all budget areas can withstand a 10% budget reduction. Therefore, Matiella advocated the military invest more time in using tools such as cost benefit analysis to determine areas to save money and discover what requirements deserve the most resources. As the assistant secretary of the Army for financial management and comptroller, Matiella has called on the Army to remember the lessons of Valley Forge, when General George Washington managed to win the Revolutionary War despite having scarce resources available for the military.

As another way of saving money, military leaders have begun to question the effectiveness of bonuses offered to soldiers, in both the active and reserve components, as a financial incentive for reenlisting in the Army. Hosek and Miller (2011) revealed five points of interest to Army leaders: (a) reserve enlistment and affiliation bonuses have a positive impact on the Selected Reserve; (b) members of the active component respond to bonuses for both the active and reserve components and will reenlist in whichever component offers the highest bonus; (c) both components would benefit from coordination the amounts of bonuses; (d) deployments by the active component have a negligible effect on reserve enlistment; and (e) prior enlistment rates of the reserve component have decreased since 1999. Hosek and Miller commented although the bonuses did have the intended effect of helping to grow the force during the surges in Iraq and Afghanistan, which expended as the wars continued. They stated an active component soldier who decided to reenlist in 2004 received \$9,000. In 2005, this number climbed to \$12,000 and peaked at \$15,000 per soldier in 2006. In the reserve, during the

same timeframe, bonuses increased from \$1,400 to \$6,000 to \$7,000, in an effort to keep pace with the active component. Despite all the money expended on these bonuses, Hosek and Miller indicated the reenlistment rate in the active component only slightly increased from .42 to .46. Given this fact, questioning whether the marginal effects of dispensing large sums of money will remain a viable recruiting and retention tool in the future is logical.

***Retention.*** Besides discovering new ways to be cost effective, another concern for senior Army leaders is how to retain the required number of officers. This population generally does not receive financial incentives and may consider leaving the Army in an attempt to earn more money in civilian industries, if they do not feel competitive for promotion. Asch, Miller, and Malchiodi (2012) explored gender and minority differences in the career progression of military officers and made some interesting discoveries. They demonstrated in the initial ranks of O1-O4 men of all ethnicities have a statistically significant higher chance of earning the next rank, compared to all women, with the exception of Black women who have almost exactly the same promotion rate as White males. Asch et al. indicated as officers continue to compete for promotion in the field grade ranks of O4-O6, White men have the highest likelihood of promotion, whereas Black women have the worst promotion rates. Although these statistics may provide valuable information for military officers considering their career choices, Asch et al. did not offer any reasons for the differences in promotion rates among demographic groups. Their study had a sole focus on data collection, and they suggested future studies on

officer promotion rates should focus on interpreting trends to provide senior officers with more meaningful information.

If the Army fails to retain the right mix of officers and enlisted personnel or forces them to leave the military because of sequestration, many military and political leaders expressed concerns these kinds of reductions could result in a *hollow force*, a term Feickert and Daggett (2012) indicated the use of in the 1970s and 1990s, which described military forces appearing mission ready but in actuality have severe challenges in areas such as personnel, equipment, maintenance, or training. In a report prepared for Congress, Feickert and Daggett conducted a historical analysis of the term *hollow force*. They indicated, although the term did apply to the military during the 1970s and 1990s, current conditions do not warrant the use of the phrase. The authors suggested part of the reason for this inapplicability may lie in the emphasis by DOD leaders to avoid the mistakes of the past. Feickert and Daggett referenced Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, who emphasized the problem of a hollow force occurred in the past but would not during his tenure. Further research on the concept of a hollow force by Rivera (2012) aligned with these findings but emphasized other unexplored factors may influence the situation, such as how the pending sequestration reductions will affect troop strength and the subsequent ability of recruiters to rebuild the force the next time the US becomes involved in a major conflict.

If the United States does need to quickly rebuild the force in the future because of an immediate threat to the nation, having insights on enlistment decisions from new Army recruits may prove helpful. Rostker, Klerman, and Zander-Cotugno (2014)

explored this issue, focusing on the opinions of 5,000 new recruits over the age of 20.

Although the Army's target demographic remains individuals 18 to 21 years of age, the researchers indicated older youths composed 48% of new recruits across all components and services in 2009. After conducting their research, the authors discovered some very interesting facts.

First, 83% of all study participants had a close family member who had served in the military in some capacity. Breaking this figure down further, 46% of participants had family members who retired from the military and 28% had close family members currently serving on Active Duty. These statistics suggest the military has become a family business, handed down from generation to generation with pride. Unlike younger recruits who joined the military immediately after high school, most older recruits did not learn about the military from a recruiter who visited a school but rather through their own initiative to visit a recruiting station or fill out a request card. When asked why they did not join the military sooner, these recruits had a wide range of reasons. The authors stated 73% sought civilian employment before trying the military but had difficulty obtaining a job or perceived only dead-end jobs in their future, 55% of recruits chose to attend college first, 38% decided to take time off after high school, 25% had someone discouraging them from joining the military, and 22% had concerns about the war. The authors also noted that although older recruits typically performed poorly in college or had a bad experience working as a civilian, they performed just as well or better than younger recruits who joined the military. In addition, older recruits historically have

higher retention and promotion rates than those who join the military immediately after high school.

***Recruiting.*** In this study, I compared recruiting techniques of the Army and Marine Corps. Examining trends in new recruits of the latter, through research conducted by Horton, Phillips, White, LeardMann, and Crum-Cianflone (2014), is therefore important. The authors stated the Marine Corps holds new recruits to a very high standard, with 12% not completing initial training and one third leaving before the end of their initial commitment because of their inability to meet standards.

Horton et al. (2014) surveyed a total of 131,961 Marines in their 10-year study. A newly accessed Marine had an average age of 19.8 years, showing a similarity to the Army's target demographic. When asked why they joined the military, the most common answer was service to country. In 2001, 36% of participants had this response but increased to 48% in 2007. Although the percentage declined from 2008 to 2010, the percentage maintained a positive slope over time. Other popular reasons included education and new jobs skills, but no responses indicated recruits joined the Marine Corps for some kind of financial bonus or incentive (Horton et al., 2014).

The information presented by Rostker et al. (2014), and Horton et al. (2014), could be of critical importance to Army and Marine Corps recruiters in the future. Although the study does not provide information about what specifically motivates older youths to join the military, the study does provide insight into their background and their unique situations. These data, coupled with the results of the study, could provide military recruiters with detailed insights about what motivates college-aged potential

recruits to join the military. This kind of understanding could dramatically help recruiters focus their marketing efforts and save valuable resources, previously expended on lavish bonuses and fruitless campaigns.

A keen sense of understanding is not sufficient by itself for military recruiters to have an effective marketing campaign. Their knowledge should accompany the umbrella approach to leadership (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985), in which a leader can provide constraints or targets while empowering subordinates to make decisions within this framework in response to changes or market forces. If senior military leaders use this leadership strategy, the DOD would retain the responsibility to set recruiting goals, while providing the recruiters with the latitude and flexibility they need to accomplish their mission. As discussed in this section, military recruiters must consider a wide range of factors and make a wide range of decisions as they work to achieve their goals. These factors include which human resources strategies they will employ to attract potential recruits, the best demographic in the region to focus on, how they will assess the potential skills of each applicant, and most of all how they can contribute to the notion of maintaining an all-volunteer force at a point in the nation's history when budgets have become a perennial concern. These types of decisions should not come from senior military leaders but rather should reside with the recruiters who interact with potential service members in their area every day and best know the resources, capabilities, and limitations of their assigned recruiting region. The objective of conducting interviews with former military recruiting professionals was to determine if the DOD has previously

used this umbrella strategy to manage recruiters and if so, how effectively did this strategy help recruiters achieve their goals.

**Strategic communication with the American public.** Since the DOD has the important task of recruiting military professionals, the department must find an effective way to strategically communicate the benefits of military service to prospective recruits. The DOD has adopted a definition of this concept as a result of the most recent quadrennial defense review (found in the Definition of Terms section of the paper). In his research on the concept of strategic communications, Bellou (2014) suggested strategic communications serve as a means of pursuing national strategic objectives and have a critical role in policy making at all levels of government, especially in the area of peacekeeping missions. Bellou, however, recommended a series of changes for government leaders to consider for enhancing the strategic communication of the United States. These changes include (a) establishing a clearer definition of what strategic communications are, and their place in national strategy, (b) reforming how strategic communications are managed within government, (c) taking account of cultural differences in characteristics, beliefs, and customs. Bellou emphasized effective strategic communication requires a sense of ownership, from all levels of government, for the delivered information to possess credibility and establish trust. These factors enable strategic communication to influence the recipient of the message.

**Forms of strategic communication.** Strategic communication can have many forms, depending upon the intended audience and message. Karasek and Bryant (2012) discussed one concept related to strategic communication called signaling theory. They



suggested both individuals and organizations signal messages every day through both their verbal and nonverbal communication. Karasek and Bryant explored research about signaling theory, from both the seminal work and current literature, and developed their own model of how organizations can employ this theory in the future. They suggested previous work on signaling theory served as the starting point for research demonstrating the importance of perceived fit during the recruiting process. Successful organizations should continually signal to potential applicants how their organization will provide candidates with the kind of lifestyle they seek. Karasek and Bryant noted previous research on signaling theory does not account for the cost of signaling or other unintended messages an organization may signal to potential applicants. The authors suggested to overcome these challenges, organizations should consider the cost and value of every signal they convey as well as the cost and value of influencing outside sources of information. Both of these can affect individuals' perception of an organization and strategically communicate how well an organization may fit an individual.

Bearing in mind the definition of strategic communication and its relevance in the U.S. government, the importance of communication among members of the DOD is easy to understand. The media through which Americans prefer to receive information, however, have changed over the years. For this reason, the military has recently focused energy on a form of communication gaining in popularity in recent years, social networking. Military services already use social networking sites such as Facebook to provide information to local communities about upcoming events. When organizations use social networking sites properly, they can have a profound effect on the behavior of

individuals, according to Fagerstrøm and Ghinea (2013). They studied the impact of social marketing strategies on the information-seeking behaviors of college students by conducting a recruiting campaign in which students joined a Facebook group that pertained to their interests. Fagerstrøm and Ghinea discovered this campaign resulted in increased group membership as well as significant financial contributions. The authors attributed this success to the benefits that Facebook provides, such as an active dialogue, access to information, transparency, and helping students determine their interests. The authors suggested a similar study, if replicated on a larger scale for a longer period of time, could demonstrate even more positive effects for modifying the behavior of college students through social networking messages. Given this capability of social media to influence behavior, the military could potentially generate countless new recruits by communicating with today's youth in a format they understand and use by deciding to invest the necessary resources to take full advantage of this medium.

In addition to marketing campaigns aimed at modifying individuals' behavior, the influence of social networking sites can also extend to the field of human resource management, according to Aspridis, Kazantzi, and Kyriakou (2013). They studied the use of social media for recruiting new employees and made some interesting discoveries. First, Facebook has become the most preferred social networking site, particularly among females ages 18 to 24. The authors also learned Facebook has become popular among those with advanced degrees as well as those who currently attend school or are seeking employment. Although Aspridis et al. did not imply members of other demographics do not have an interest in Facebook, they indicated the highest concentrations of Facebook

users represent ideal candidates for organizations wishing to recruit new employees. The authors' research also suggested individuals likely add a company's page to their profile based upon the organization's reputation or their personal knowledge of the company. This statistic remained true regardless of age, sex, education level, profession, or marital status. This finding implies well-known companies have the best chance of attracting potential recruits through social networking sites. Finally, the authors commented less than 25% of the population they surveyed viewed social networking sites as an acceptable alternative to traditional methods of recruiting and would willingly invest the time and energy required to engage in this process. Even with this low number, the authors contended social networking sites represent a way to attract potential recruits who may not have otherwise demonstrated an interest in working for a particular company.

Davison, Maraist, Hamilton and Bing (2012) also supported this assertion. They explored the pros and cons of using social networking sites for human resource decisions. They discovered social networking sites have not yet reached their maximum effectiveness, although many organizations currently use this medium for making recruitment decisions. Davison et al. attributed this incompleteness to both a lack of policy for using social networking sites as well as a shortage of information (such as best business practices) regarding how to implement this strategy. The authors suggested the process could yield effective results for companies as social networking matures and companies increasingly use this venue to reach potential applicants.

Dhamija (2012) also explored the concept of e-recruitment and discovered additional advantages and disadvantages of using this novel approach. The author stated

e-recruitment appeals to many employers because this form of recruiting offers multiple benefits. These include (a) shorter recruiting cycling time, (b) attracting passive job-seekers, (c) continuous global coverage, (d) focusing on specific market niches, (e) reaching a high number of potential applicants, (f) maintaining a current image for the company, (g) eliciting a higher quality response at a low cost, (h) making applying for a job easier, (i) offering smaller companies more opportunities, and (j) attracting young potential candidates who have education and computer experience.

E-recruitment also has some faults, however, such as (a) discrimination against non-Internet users, (b) inappropriateness for selecting top management, (c) providing an overwhelming number of unqualified or poor quality candidates, (d) possibly resulting in outdated resumes, and (e) not providing potential candidates with human interaction. Despite its downfalls, e-recruitment offers twice as many advantages than disadvantages. Dhamija (2012) suggested as time progresses, e-recruitment will continue to grow in popularity and the disadvantages will decrease. Given the evolution of the Internet and the increasing use of technology over the past 10 years, this assumption seems reasonable.

Before the DOD could implement some of these recommendations, however, the military would need to overcome an inherent challenge in communicating information. The predominant model of communication for the military is top-down. Military educational institutions teach this approach to their students, and this style often continues throughout service members' careers. Although the military requires a reporting mechanism, most of the communication involves issuing orders and providing

guidance (Indriksons, 2012). If the military could learn to seek the feedback of its junior service members regarding their experiences, the military could populate Facebook with countless success stories of those already serving, thereby encouraging more individuals to join the ranks of the military. This concept supports the findings of many other researchers who all understand the critical importance of providing the American individuals with information they can trust, rather than just a pamphlet or 30-second television commercial.

**Sending a clear message.** If military marketing and recruit professionals cannot improve their methods for strategic communication with the American people, the potential impact of losing service members will require leaders to more carefully consider how to spend the limited resources Congress provides to the military and capitalize on new technological developments, according to US Air Force General Edward Rice (2012). Rice indicated the DOD has already lost \$450 billion because of the Budget Control Act of 2011. This figure pales in comparison to the potential effects of sequestration, caused by the failure of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to arrive at an agreement on how to reduce the deficit by \$1.5 trillion in 10 years. Rice, like many any other military leaders, realized future budget cuts seemed inevitable. Unfortunately, President Obama proved Rice correct when he signed the sequestration cuts into law on March 1, 2013. Given the circumstances of this new reality, the challenge lies in maintaining keeping the military strong and appealing to tomorrow's youth as a promising way to serve their country, earn a living, and see the world.

Despite the best efforts of recruiters to strategically communicate the benefits of military service to potential applicants, Friesen (2014) provided evidence of groups across the United States working to counteract the efforts of military recruiters. They highlighted many counter-recruitment groups believe recent events have made the present a critical time to attempt to reduce the influence of the military. Friesen indicated historic levels of spending in the Pentagon, the long-term occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, and an expanding military presence in places like Yemen and Pakistan caused the military to grow out of control and resulted in the loss of many service members. In response to this argument, the message of strategic communication should be service members willingly give their lives to prevent another attack from occurring on American soil.

Although American service members have fought and died for citizens of the United States for over 227 years, Lagotte (2012) demonstrated some individuals in the United States view military recruiters as predators, who stalk high schools and colleges with the intention of harming impressionable students. Lagotte indicated despite the belief older adults in the military have a high propensity for mental health risks, substance abuse, and suicide, research demonstrates younger soldiers actually suffer the worst health effects, suggesting military service has a disproportionate effect on this age group. The researchers suggested because of the risk to young students, parent-teacher associations across the country should work to change the No Child Left Behind Act, which mandates schools allow military recruiters onto their grounds.

In response to these types of comments, military leaders should focus their strategic communication messages on how military service contributes to having a safe and protected nation, according to Yan, Hyllegard, and Blaes (2012). They studied the influence of brand name and message explicitness on the decision of young people to purchase environmentally friendly products. They discovered people in this demographic respond well to advertisements that feature positive attitudes toward a brand and detailed information of how these products contribute to a better society. While serving in the military does not affect the environment, it certainly benefits society and contributes to the safety of the country. Military recruiters, therefore, should modify their strategies to focus less on financial incentives and capitalize on the desire of college-aged potential recruits to make meaningful contributions to their country.

***Political influence.*** One of the best times to approach college-aged potential recruits about the impact they can have on their country by serving in the military may come in the wake of terrorist attacks, such as those of September 11, 2001, when Americans become most interested in political issues. Klemmensen et al. (2012) studied the relationship between political participation and civic duty. They discovered when Americans feel involved in a political issue, such as terrorist attacks, they feel compelled to engage in some form of civic duty. Klemmensen et al. also noted that an individual's desire to perform their civic duty does not arise from genetic factors, but more likely socialization, acculturation, and environmental factors. This theory may account for the decline in support for military action in recent years, as the death of figureheads like

Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden has caused Americans to have less interest in political issues such as military involvement around the world.

Coe (2012) suggested when individuals have strong emotions about a topic, politicians can use a process called priming, in which they continually appeal to individuals' emotions, in preparation for an upcoming war. The researchers studied social identity processes and the dynamics of public support for war. They discovered over the past 60 years support by the public for military action remains high when the media provide continuing news coverage on conflicts. When war coverage leaves the front page of newspapers, however, public support for the conflict sharply drops. Coe suggested this phenomenon likely occurs because continuing news coverage helps the public identify with the importance of the current situation and prompts them to want to do something. In some cases, this desire may encourage citizens to join the military, but at a minimum public support provides political leaders the flexibility to take actions they deem necessary to defend the country without worrying about repercussions.

According to Kam (2012), a plethora of war coverage by the media can also have a profound influence on public support for future military interventions. They conducted a study of public support for intervention in the 2008 conflict in Darfur in an effort to determine the effect of risk tolerance on American public support for war. They discovered public support for the conflict decreased among both conservatives and liberals when they were primed to consider the potential risks involved, but support remained relatively high when risk priming did not occur. This concept of risk priming had a similar effect during the recent escalation with Syria, when President Barack



Obama considered a limited military engagement. This notion quickly dissipated, however, when the President and America's allies from other nations could not garner sufficient public support because individuals believed the situation resembled the conflict in Iraq too closely and involved a high degree of risk.

Regardless of public support for future wars, Hodges (2014) suggested members of the military deserve appreciation for their acts of volunteerism. He researched the link between military service, particularly in the Marine Corps, and civic engagement. Hodges discovered a positive relationship between serving in the military and volunteering in society. He noted that Marines view themselves as civic assets, who have acquired the skills and values necessary to make valuable contributions to society. This evidence suggests military service not only benefits the service members but also the communities in which they live, especially faith-based organizations. Although Hodges could not determine a specific factor for why individuals volunteer, he hypothesized military service members do so out of a feeling of civic responsibility and a strong devotion to country.

*A lesson from history.* As the DOD works to develop and enhance its message of strategic communication, maintaining a balanced point of view is important. Although military service members provided security for the United States for over 240 years (Johnson, 2014), the DOD does have its flaws. Throughout the military's history, service members of all ranks have committed acts considered illegal, immoral, or unethical, including the most recent example of former General David Petraeus. They commit these acts for a variety of reasons, including lust, greed, problems with drugs and/or alcohol, or

a desire for career advancement. Regardless of their motivation, these acts are wrong and have a lasting negative effect on families and society.

Over 50 years ago, during his farewell address to the nation, President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned the American people crimes of this sort could start to occur as the military-industrial complex increased in size. He indicated as a result of the four major wars of the 20th century, the DOD realized relying on makers of plowshares was no longer a valid strategy to produce swords and other weapons (Smith, 2015). The DOD, therefore, had to enable the growth of an immense arms industry to complement and support the sizable forces of the United States. He cautioned military and political leaders must remain aware of the implications as these developments occurred. President Eisenhower suggested a large military-industrial complex would alter the structure of society, at the local, state, and federal levels. He urged American leaders to remain on guard against the acceptance of unwarranted influence and the rise of misplaced power. He emphasized only through the successful meshing of the military-industrial complex with peaceful methods and goals could the United States hope to achieve liberty with less security (Smith, 2015).

President Eisenhower's remarks about the military-industrial complex serve as the most important aspect of the strategic communication message the DOD must develop. This leader did not have radical antiwar ideas and had served as a five-star general in the military immediately prior to his election to the Presidency. His words stand as a reminder to the American individuals to balance the need for a military-industrial complex with an earnest desire for peace. The DOD should emphasize to future recruits,

at any rank, service members have a sacred responsibility given to them by the citizens of the United States to lead and protect the national treasure of America's sons and daughters. Although military service does offer a wide range of benefits, the most important one is the privilege of serving with other Americans while helping to maintain the freedoms of the United States and peace around the world.

This message of the importance of service and other similar ones portraying all the positive aspects of serving in the military require well-planned forms of strategic communication to have any impact on potential recruits in the target market of military marketing professionals. A centralized approach, however, in which the DOD mandates how recruiters reach out to people within their community would likely not do an effective job of communicating to people in a meaningful way. The aspects of strategic communication discussed in this section, such as utilizing social media and tools for e-recruitment, require different types of messages within different types of communities. An advertisement for the military appealing to a town primarily composed of successful business executives might not have the same effect in a neighborhood with low-income families struggling to find employment. For this reason, military leaders employing the umbrella strategy discussed by Mintzberg and Waters (1985) in the area of strategic communication seems appropriate. Senior military leaders should have the important task of establishing overall recruiting goals based on their total assessment of the need for military forces and the available budget for the DOD. The task of developing marketing materials and communicating to communities what the military offers, however, should remain with people who know the people the best.

### **Transition**

Section 1 of this study provided a thorough and detailed description of the topic and why it was important. The background of the problem offered a brief introduction to the issue, which was further elaborated on in the problem statement. The purpose statement and description of the nature of the study described the details of the study, including the research method and design. Next came the research, focus group, and interview questions, which guided the study. This was followed by an assessment of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study, as well as the potential significance of the study to the existing body of knowledge. Finally, the literature review represents the comprehensive effort I have undertaken to understand all aspects of current research related to the doctoral study topic. The review discussed the many benefits of military service, past and current challenges associated with recruiting, and numerous recommendations for different methods of strategic communication. The next section presents the plan for how field research was conducted on this topic. Section 3 presents the findings, developed after approval of the proposal. The results of the study should prove military service provides a myriad of benefits to service members, and, more important, if more individuals understood these benefits, the DOD could save millions of dollars on recruiting and retention.

## Section 2: The Project

This section begins with a review of the purpose statement to reinforce the purpose of the study. Next, this section includes a discussion of the role of the researcher and the intended participants of the study. Subsequently, as a way of providing further detail about the study, this section also contains information about the research design and method, the intended population, sampling procedures, and techniques for data collection, organization, and analysis. This section concludes with a discussion about reliability and validity to provide assurance the study will remain free from bias and contain valuable recommendations based on scholarly research suitable to help military recruiters conduct their job more effectively and save valuable resources in the future.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this exploratory, qualitative case study was to determine what marketing strategies successful recruiting professionals use to motivate 18 to 22-year-olds to join the military. The population consisted of two former recruiters, one from the Army and another from the Marine Corps, as well as 38 college students located in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. The first step in conducting the study was to critically analyze the current marketing materials of the Army and Marine Corps, to determine the effectiveness of the information presented for motivating individuals to join the military. The second step was to interview two former recruiting professionals from the Army and Marine Corps to obtain their perspectives on successful recruiting strategies. The third step was to conduct three focus group sessions (Marshall & Rossman, 2014), with sets of 10 to 15 individuals each in the target demographic age group. The goal was to collect

their perceptions about the wants and needs of people in their age group and how well the marketing materials from both the Army and Marine Corps address these desires. The results of the study could lead to social change by providing military recruiting professionals with valuable information regarding what motivates individuals to join the military.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role in the study was to serve as the primary research instrument as a scholarly practitioner who collects, organizes and analyzes data (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). In relation to my research interest in the topic, I became an Army recruit at the age of 17 and know former recruiters of the Army and Marine Corps, had a working relationship with a human resources professor, and have had 17 years of active military service. My background and military experience have made me very interested in learning what motivates individuals to serve in the armed forces and how to inform more potential recruits of the full range of military benefits. I did not, however, have any kind of relationship with potential participants of the focus groups or their family members.

During the research, I treated each participant in an ethical manner and adhered to the Belmont Report guidelines (Office of National Research Protection, 2014). These guidelines require researchers to be fair to all persons, practice beneficence or doing more good than harm, and adhering to justice during the conduct of the research. The Belmont Report contains a set of basic ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in

resolving any ethical problems that might surface during the conduct of research with human subjects (Office of National Research Protection, 2014).

The data collection tool was face-to-face focus groups with willing participants who would discuss their perceptions of current marketing materials of the Army and Marine Corps and their opinions about what motivates individuals in the military's target demographic to join the armed services. Three groups of college students, each composed of 10 to 15 individuals, participated in a focus group, with a set of open-ended, semistructured questions developed for the study and intended to gather information from the participants without influencing their answers. As these focus group discussions took place, I exercised caution not to interject personal views or biases about military benefits into the interview process but rather just ensured complete understanding of the responses of the participants and listened attentively throughout each session. Chan, Fung, and Chen (2013) described this process of controlling for bias and avoiding undue influence as bracketing, suggesting scholarly interviewers attempt to explore situations from a fresh perspective by temporarily discarding past associations, understandings, and biases. Similarly, DeMassis and Kotlar (2014) stated researchers are responsible for mitigating and eliminating as much bias as possible, which begins with strong interview questions. Unbiased interview techniques supported the conduct of all focus groups and interviews. Questions were posed in a neutral manner. The opportunity was given to participants to respond to each question and to offer additional insights and perspectives on the recruiting methods of the Army and Marine Corps. Each session was recorded to ensure accuracy and reliability.

Based on the research of Marshall and Rossman (2014), focus groups and interviews would provide an excellent medium for gathering the information for the study. These authors stated interviews and focus groups provide a unique way for researchers to stimulate conversation, absorb what participants say, and then synthesize, analyze, and present their data. Interviews and focus groups also provide researchers with the ability to observe body language and other forms of nonverbal communication, resulting from differences in culture and contextual and personal influences. This unspoken information enables the researcher to adjust the approach, change the questions, or make any modifications necessary to make the participant feel comfortable enough to share meaningful data.

### **Participants**

The study had focus group participants who met the following eligibility criteria: (a) over the age of 18, (b) an undergraduate student of King's College, (c) no obvious connection to the military, (d) do not belong to any protected class, (e) available for an hour-long focus group discussion, and (f) no physical or mental handicap. Although this approach resulted in a small population, Yin (2014) and Houghton et al. (2013) both recommended keeping the sample size to a small number when the goal of the research focuses on obtaining the rich, vivid details of the thoughts and opinions of the participants. Although military installations do have American college students in the target demographic, these individuals would likely have had a strong bias because they live among service members and their parents currently serve in the armed forces. This



fact made students attending civilian colleges in the United States much more appropriate for the study.

The primary strategy for accessing people in this population was through my ongoing relationship with a former human resources professor who works at King's College, Dr. Marc Marchese. Students in the field of human resources and marketing may have had an interest in this study, and he informed them about the need for focus group participants and provided them with my contact information. Upon receiving notification from each King's College student of his or her willingness to participate, via phone call or e-mail, I sent each student an initial contact e-mail (Appendix D). This allowed me to convey the details of the focus group research, discuss the privacy of participants, collect signed consent forms, and handle participant questions and concerns. Houghton et al. (2013) suggested qualitative researchers emphasize the strategy of selecting participants who meet the purpose of the study. In addition, the participants received lunch immediately before the focus groups to establish rapport and enable me to begin to understand their personalities. Carenza (2011) stated meeting face-to-face with participants prior to the interview processes will help researchers and participants become familiar with each other, and enable the researcher to establish a meaningful working relationship with participants. This purposive sample of students aligned with the overarching research question because they met the eligibility criteria and had an interest in human resources as well as the subject of the focus groups.

The interview portion of the study focusing on former military recruiters followed the same procedures as outlined for the focus groups, for initial and follow-on contact. As

a result of my 17 years of military service, I have developed ongoing relationships with former recruiters from both the Army and Marine Corps, who were glad to participate in the study and were easily contacted via Facebook. These individuals were not college students in the target demographic, but they did represent key potential sources of data, as a result of their recruiting experiences. These experiences also provided direct alignment to the overarching research question: What marketing strategies do successful recruiting professionals use to motivate individuals to join the military? In addition, both individuals were over the age of 18 and no longer had a connection to the Active Duty military, enabling me to bypass procedures outlined in Appendix G for conducting studies with members of the DOD.

### **Research Method and Design**

Yin (2014) indicated case study research is a qualitative approach in which the researcher explores a bounded system through which detailed data collection occurs. Qualitative research is a method for discovering and understanding the perceptions of individuals or groups assigned to a social or human problem. The purpose of qualitative research is to explore, observe, and comprehend a common experience (Houghton et al., 2013). The qualitative exploration method offers scholarly researchers an extensive range of techniques with which to collect data and is still a developing field (Fletcher, De Massis, & Nordqvist, 2015; Whelan & Markless, 2012). The qualitative research method was inherently practical and applicable to improving military marketing techniques.

## **Research Method**

The qualitative method was used for the study, which allows an investigator to use observation, along with interviews, to collect data to help address the research question (Yin, 2014). Houghton et al. (2013) suggested the qualitative method also uses activities to help investigators understand the everyday experiences explored by the participants in a study. Yin suggested the selection of the research method should be based on the following criteria: (a) the desire to gain an in-depth understanding of individuals in a bounded system; (b) a complete description of the phenomena to be studied; and (c) a description of intangible phenomena such as thinking, beliefs, and reasoning. The qualitative method uses a conceptual framework essential to studying current marketing campaigns of military recruiters.

Quantitative research provides quantifiable information about a topic through a formal, objective, and systematic process involving the use of numbers. Lillegaard, Overby, and Andersen (2012) indicated that quantitative data describes tests, explores the causes and effects of relationships between variables, and the testing of hypotheses. Bernard (2013) stipulated that quantitative research focuses on numbers, statistics, and the relationships between events and numbers. For this reason, quantitative research was inadequate for environmental contexts (Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie, & Green, 2012). The nature of the quantitative method limits the human aspect because numbers cannot adequately describe rich data from interviews. Therefore, the quantitative approach was not appropriate for the study.

Bernard (2013) indicated mixed method is an appropriate choice for widening the scope and enhancing the analytic ability of the investigator within a study. Bernard also suggested that, with the mixed-method approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods provides complimentary data. Thus, a mixed-method approach allows both types of inquiry to occur in the same study, providing a clearer understanding of the issue. Although an exhaustive exploration of the issue was desirable, the qualitative method was the best choice for the study to discover what motivates individuals in the target demographic to join the military and their perspectives about the current marketing literature of the Army and Marine Corps.

Bernard (2013) stated that an investigator using qualitative research focuses on developing themes in an attempt to make connections and search for deeper meanings. Specific techniques of qualitative research, such as the interview, allow the researcher to collect information regarding the qualitative attributes of the research topic, understand the perspectives of participants, and gain information about the individuals connected to the research question (Houghton et al., 2013). In addition, qualitative research ensures credibility, reliability, and validity for the interpretation process with participants (Hoe & Hoare, 2012).

The following three researchers, who graduated from Walden University, explored similar business problems through the use of the qualitative method to learn specific information about a military population. Alegre (2012) explored the experience of U.S. Army soldiers with cross-communication. Staier (2013) investigated senior officer diversity in the U.S. Coast Guard. Willette (2014) studied the emergence of a

complex adaptive system in the defense acquisition structure. In all three cases, these Walden graduates successfully used the qualitative approach to conduct a meaningful study about specific aspects of the military without quantifiable data.

### **Research Design**

The case study design was used for this qualitative study because it was appropriate for understanding the perceptions of military recruiting professionals on the effectiveness of current marketing materials, in relation to the reactions of college-aged potential recruits. Yin (2014) suggested the case study design is appropriate for exploring decision patterns of target populations but only when evaluated within context. The focus group approach to the case study explored how college-aged potential recruits make decisions about military service, based on marketing materials, but my military experience and knowledge provided an appropriate lens to evaluate the relevance of the findings for the study.

In the qualitative approach, the formal case study provides an in-depth analysis of a case or system through a diverse array of data the researcher must place in context (Yin, 2014). Different research designs are acceptable for a doctoral study (Marshall & Rossman, 2014) but were not appropriate for this research. These forms of analysis include the phenomenological and ethnographic designs. Working with a phenomenological design, a researcher seeks to describe the meaning of perceived and lived experiences of individuals (Moustakas, 1994). In contrast, an ethnographic design studies a cultural or social group through a prolonged period of analysis and observation (Agar, 2014).

The qualitative study included a case study design and focus groups with college students in the military's target demographic. This design allowed the use of specific statements from subjects to derive themes and meaning. The intended participants did not have any obvious connection to the military and their collective opinions represented general attitudes of individuals in the military's target demographic. This made a qualitative case study design appropriate for obtaining answers to the research questions regarding what motivates 18 to 22-year-olds to join the military and how well current marketing materials of the Army and Marine Corps addressed those motivations.

Support for this assertion comes from Yin (2014), who suggested a case study design is appropriate to study complex phenomenon within their contexts. Houghton et al. (2013) supported this approach with their assertion that researchers use qualitative studies to understand the nature of social practices and beliefs along with the meaning of human experiences from the participants' point of view. Further support for this design was present in the research of two Walden graduates who also conducted qualitative studies using a case study design. Acosta (2012) used a qualitative approach in his case study of the Army's cost/benefit analysis process. Newcomer (2013) chose a case study design in his study of the effectiveness of the U.S. Air Force developmental teams. Although these scholars sought answers to different research questions, they all decided the case study design would provide the best results to research questions requiring an understanding of complex phenomenon within unique contexts.

Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) studied how to assess and demonstrate data saturation in qualitative research. They described saturation as the point

in research when themes reoccur and no new information becomes available. For example, in her research on electronic marketing, Ashworth (2011) achieved data saturation after collecting data from only 19 fashion websites. She acknowledged the results of her findings may not apply to every single instance of a marketing website, but her purposeful sample combined with data saturation in her data enabled her to demonstrate reliability in her study. In their qualitative research on patients with rheumatoid arthritis, Coenen, Stamm, Stucki, and Cieza (2012) determined their sample size by the saturation of data, which they described as the collection of sufficient data from field research to develop a comprehensive analysis. The success of these previous researchers in attaining data saturation suggested data saturation may occur by the end of the first focus group iteration, and would almost certainly occur by the third iteration. This assumption proved correct, as no new data emerged in the second or third focus group, achieving the goal of data saturation.

### **Population and Sampling**

Bernard (2013) stated scholarly researchers use four kinds of sampling in qualitative studies. These include quota sampling, purposive sampling (sometimes referred to as judgment sampling), convenience sampling, and snowball sampling. Bernard indicated quota sampling is most often used for election polls because this sampling method involves stratified sampling without random selection. He suggested only using convenience sampling as a last resort because of the method's haphazard nature and the fact it does not truly represent a population. Snowball sampling, similarly, may only offer limited data because this method relies on chain referrals to locate study

participants. Purposive sampling is useful when the desired members of a population for a study are difficult to locate in society. Houghton et al. (2013) also studied purposive sampling and stated this method is commonly used in qualitative studies when looking for certain characteristics in participants. Elo et al. (2014) explored the trustworthiness of different forms of qualitative research and suggested purposive sampling is the best choice for qualitative studies when the interested participants have the best information on a particular area of research.

The purposive sampling method was the most appropriate choice for the study because the participants were a unique demographic who met the eligibility criteria and aligned with the purpose of the study. The data collection method was three focus groups, of 10 to 15 people each, as well as two interviews with former military recruiters from the Army and Marine Corps. The sample size of each of the three focus groups did not exceed 15 individuals because the chosen design involved in-depth questions (Marshall et al., 2013). Each of the participant's responses required extensive transcription and contained rich, vivid descriptions of what motivates individuals in the target demographic to join the military and what they thought of how the current marketing materials of the Army and Marine Corps address these motivations. Although 15 individuals may seem like a small number, compared to the number of individuals in the target demographic, three focus groups of 10 to 15 individuals each allowed for saturation, in which repetitive themes and answers occurred during the focus group process and no new information was presented. O'Reilly and Parker (2013) supported a small sample size and suggested a sample population adequate for a qualitative study concerns the topic, participant



availability, and the sufficiency of the sample size for permitting the exploration of the study's research questions. Similarly, Dworkin (2012) asserted qualitative researchers should determine sample size based on the study purpose and an assessment of the diversity of the opinions and perspectives offered by study participants.

The selected population for the focus groups and interviews met the eligibility criteria: (a) over the age of 18, (b) an undergraduate student of King's College or former recruiting professional, (c) no obvious connection to the military, (d) do not belong to any protected class, (e) available for an hour-long focus group or interview, and (f) no physical or mental handicap. The focus groups occurred at King's College in an atmosphere in which the participants felt comfortable, and the interviews with the recruiters occurred at locations of each participant's choosing, specifically their offices. These settings allowed the participants to feel at ease, making them more likely to share their personal thoughts.

### **Ethical Research**

Marshall and Rossman (2014) suggested any research design must include a plan for ethics, data management, and security of the information obtained. The highest ethical standards from the Belmont Report (Office of National Research Protection, 2014) guided this study to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants in a number of ways. Bellavance and Alexander (2012) discussed the need for treating all research participants in a uniform manner as well as adhering to the Belmont principal, which mandated the use of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. Approval from the Walden University IRB prior to the start of the participants' involvement in the study

ensured the guidelines, procedures, and protection of the participants of the study met federal regulations in human rights and ethical treatment (IRB Approval Number: 10-06-15-0254701). In an effort to ensure the ethical conduct of the research, on April 17, 2015, I successfully completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Web-based training course *Protecting Human Research Participants* provided by the NIH Office of Extramural Research. My certification number is 1747057, shown in Appendix H.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), informed consent and the preservation of confidentiality are critical for maintaining the ethicality of research. Following the recommendation of these authors, all participants received a consent form that details the procedures for the focus group or interview and requests their consent to the digitally recording the audio of each session. Participants signed this consent form and returned the form before the start of the study. Contact information was available on the informed consent in case questions or concerns arose before, during, or after completion of the study. Participants were able to withdraw from the study by notifying me via e-mail or by phone they wish to leave the study. None of the participants decided to withdraw from the study, so records did not need to be redacted. In addition, before beginning each focus group or interview, participants received notification of their ability to skip a question or completely stop their participation in the focus group or interview at any time should a particular question or topic make them feel uncomfortable.

The study remained free from any form of coercion because participants were not currently serving on active duty, where rank can sometimes exert undue influence. In addition, the participants did not receive any kind of financial incentive, which enabled

them to answer questions freely without feeling compelled to provide a certain kind of response. Upon transcription of the focus groups and interviews, I permanently erased all audio recordings from the electronic storage device. Next, the transcripts and any other documents relating to the study were stored in a locked cabinet for a period of 5 years to maintain the confidentiality of the data.

In an effort to protect the participants' anonymity, each participant received separate folders designated by his or her assigned number. Participants' names were necessary to complete the consent form, but the folders did not indicate the names of any individuals who participate in the study. The folders included the participants' signed informed consent, as well as notes from the interview or focus group. The use of a number protected participant privacy. A number code assignment ensures the protection of personal information of participants, such as a name. Assignment of a specific number for each participant ensured participant privacy and served as organization for collected data for analysis. Consistent use of assigned code numbers from data collection to the final reporting stages occurred. These procedures mimic those used by previously successful Walden researchers, such as Acosta (2012), Gholston (2015), and Flewelling (2012). Because they conducted similar studies on a military population, they served as good examples of how to conduct ethical research in the study.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

As the researcher, I served as the primary data collection instrument in the study. Focus groups and semistructured interviews served as the secondary data collection instruments. Marshall and Rossman (2014) indicated researchers could use four types of

interviews in scholarly work: informal interviews, unstructured interviews, semistructured interview, and structured interviews. These four methods span the continuum of control a researcher desires to exercise in the interview situation. Unstructured interviews completely lack structure, whereas the informal interview at least presents a clear plan of what the researcher wishes to accomplish. Semistructured interviews include an interview guide to focus the interview on a series of topics and questions. Semistructured interviews also enable the researcher to use probing questions and modify the interview questions based upon the responses of the participant. Finally, the structured interview has the most rigidity and does not allow the interviewer to ask follow-up questions based upon the responses of the participant. The use of semistructured interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2014) was appropriate because of its successful usage in previous Walden studies by Acosta (2012), Shannon (2013), and Gholston (2015). These scholars also conducted case studies about military topics and realized semistructured interviews would provide them the most flexibility in obtaining rich, vivid answers to their overarching research questions.

Strict adherence to the procedures outlined in the case study protocol guided the focus groups and interviews (Appendix B). The protocol clearly states every step for the focus groups and interviews as well as the tools to conduct the analysis of the data, such as coding and member checking. In addition, the protocol highlights the methods for demonstrating the dependability, credibility, and transferability of the study. These methods include multiple data sources, an assessment of rival explanations, research bias identification, member checking, and rich descriptions of the study sample population.

### **Data Collection Technique**

For the research, data collection involved a protocol (Appendix B) intended to make each focus group and interview participant feel comfortable while achieving the desired result of rich, vivid descriptions of their perspectives of what motivates individuals in the target demographic to join the military and how successfully current marketing campaigns of the Army and Marine Corps address those motivations. The data collection for the focus groups began with an e-mail to the academic leadership of King's College, requesting permission to conduct the focus groups on their premises (Appendix C). I then contacted Dr. Marc Marchese, a former professor of mine who was serving as a human resources instructor at King's College, for assistance in locating students who would be willing to participate in a focus group. These students would either be his former students or other students who are not in his classes. The request for help informed Dr. Marchese of the criteria focus group participants need to meet: (a) over the age of 18, (b) an undergraduate student of King's College, (c) no obvious connection to the military, (d) do not belong to any protected class, (e) available for an hour-long focus group, and (f) no physical or mental handicap. Upon receiving notification from each King's College student of his or her willingness to participate, via phone call or e-mail, I sent each student an initial contact e-mail (Appendix D). Students who agreed to participate then received an informed consent form, which they were asked to sign and return via e-mail.

As these documents arrived, I created a folder for each participant, which included their informed consent, a copy of the focus group questions, a template for

recording answers during the focus groups, and marketing materials of the Army and Marine Corps for the participants' review. Once enough participants agreed to participate, three focus groups of 10 to 15 people were scheduled to occur over a period of 1 week (in an effort to accommodate for the varying class schedules of participants) and did not last longer than one hour each. In addition, as a gesture to thank the participants and build rapport before the focus groups began, the participants received a free lunch of pizza and soda.

On the day of the scheduled focus group, I arrived at the designated location 30 minutes ahead of time to prepare and reminded the participants upon arrival that their review of current marketing materials from the Army and Marine Corps will serve as a source of data, as will a corresponding set of questions intended to obtain their perceptions about these materials. The objectives of the study were reviewed with the participants and they were reminded that each focus group will be digitally recorded using an Apple iPad application called AudioMemos to allow for transcription later. The signed informed consent form was checked, a number was assigned to each participant, and each participant's comfort was assured.

Before beginning the discussion, the participants were reminded they can stop at any time, their information was confidential, and they could ask for clarification if they did not understand a question. The participants reviewed the research log template developed to record answers (Appendix F) and provided in their folder. I then determined the participants were comfortable with the template and it did not require any changes.

The procedures for conducting the semistructured interviews were identical to the procedures of the focus groups, with the exception of three procedures. First, I made initial contact with the interview participants through Facebook, because of our friendship, and then sent them a more formal e-mail (Appendix E) requesting their participation. Second, the interview took place at a time and place of each participant's choosing, specifically their office, to make them feel more comfortable and save them unnecessary commuting time. Finally, member checking with the interview participants occurred through a follow-up phone call rather than during the initial session as with focus groups. This process provided sufficient time to review and interpret their answers before verifying my correct understanding of everything they said and that they did not have any new information to add.

Similar to the approach for ensuring the ethics of the research, I developed this protocol through a review of the work of scholars such as Gholston (2015), Sodhi and Tang (2014), and Shannon (2013). They also conducted semistructured interviews because this technique gives researchers the ability to prepare questions in advance, allowing the interviewer to be confident, appear competent to the participant, and provide the participants maximum opportunity to express their opinions (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). As with the study, Gholston (2015) and Shannon (2013) did not conduct a pilot study after IRB approval because they were not developing an instrument that needed data for reliability and validity purposes for the items in a questionnaire. Yin (2014) noted, however, the disadvantage in using semistructured

questions in the interview process is the need to ensure questions are not prescriptive or misleading.

### **Data Organization Technique**

The template developed (Appendix F) as the research log served to keep track of data and catalog information. Reflective journals and cataloging/labeling systems to organize the data helped to develop emerging understandings of the themes in conducting data analysis. Houghton, et al. (2013) suggested this process of organizing information and ideas can become difficult and therefore prior to coding researchers must understand the various definitions and concepts involved in this process to establish relevance in the data output. Using these notes and an Apple iPad application called AudioMemos, I transcribed the notes using a software package called LiveScribe Echo Pen. This approach has support in the work of Marshall and Rossman (2014), who suggested using an information system to hold large quantities of data collected during qualitative research. Each participant's consent form and hard copy of the transcript was stored in their folder. I entered the data into software to analyze the findings. All hard copy data will be saved for 5 years in a secure location in a fireproof safe and electronic data in a password protected file with encryption software in an Apple laptop and all data will be destroyed after a 5-year period (Reardon et al., 2013).

### **Data Analysis**

The practice of triangulation, first introduced by Denzin (1970), was utilized in the data analysis. Denzin described four types of triangulation: (a) data triangulation—collecting data through multiple strategies, involving different times, situations, and



individuals; (b) investigator triangulation—using more than one researcher to collect and analyze data; (c) theoretical triangulation—interpreting data through the use of more than theory or position; and (d) methodological triangulation—collecting data with more than one method. Denzin (2012) discussed triangulation further and stated triangulation provides a deeper understanding of a situation by causing a researcher to introduce more complexity and depth of analysis. An example of triangulation in practice exists in the work of Flewelling (2012), which demonstrated multiple sources of information coming together to clarify findings. For this doctoral study, the methodological triangulation served as the best way to validate the findings of the focus groups and interviews. For instance, if participants of the focus groups stated certain factors motivate individuals in the target demographic to join the military, my own military experience coupled with scholarly research on the effectiveness of military marketing campaigns served to support the participants' opinions.

After establishing complete confidence in the quality of the transcript, I coded the data to determine common themes and descriptions, as described by Yin (2014), Marshall and Rossman (2014), and Houghton et al. (2013). This coding involved a manual process of highlighting and inserting key words on the transcript text as well as using Atlas software to organize the raw data and prepare the data for further analysis. This process included a table outlining all the codes and themes developed in the coding process, which highlighted the most important direct quotes from the respondents.

Yin (2014) suggested researchers can choose one of several techniques when conducting qualitative case study analysis. These include pattern matching, explanation

building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis. When conducting pattern matching, the researcher compares observed patterns with predicted patterns, to help develop a theory to understand a complex phenomenon. In contrast, explanation building modifies a predicted pattern over several iterations, changing the proposition as new findings become available. In conducting a time-series analysis, a researcher compares a predicted time series with a trend seen in a series of observations. Logic models, in contrast, connect a series of observed events with predicted outcomes, utilizing dependent and independent variables. Finally, in cross-case syntheses, a researcher explores independent case studies to further analyze a problem or situation. Because of the nature of the problem I sought to understand, the pattern matching technique provided the most effective way of analyzing the results of the focus groups and interviews. Using this strategy enabled me to thoroughly analyze the responses of the participants to determine both what motivates individuals in the target demographic to join the military and how effectively current marketing materials of the Army and Marine Corps address those motivations.

In conducting the data analysis, the key themes identified in the literature review and conceptual framework were the objects of analysis. In particular, because planning in an organization occurs somewhere on the continuum between planned and emergent strategy (Neuebauger et al., 2014), identifying where on this continuum recruiters tend to operate serves the purposes of the study. Second, determining whether the umbrella strategy, advocated by Mintzberg and Waters (1985), works best for strategically communicating the benefits of military service to potential recruits fit the needs of the

study. Finally, understanding if recruiters need to incorporate aspects of both planned and emergent strategy in their recruiting practices to accommodate for a constantly changing environment (Dibrell et al., 2014) proved to be useful. As the analysis proceeded, research updates from Google scholar provided notifications of new research findings regarding the concept of emergent strategy theory developed since the writing of the proposal.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity have different meanings in qualitative and quantitative research. Foley and O’Conner (2013) suggested the former utilizes semistructured interview protocols to achieve commonality and strengthen a study’s consistency, reliability, and validity. The latter, however, focuses on the quality of a measurement, its consistency, and the ability to repeat the findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Since this is a qualitative study, I focused my efforts on achieving standards of reliability and validity that are pertinent to this research method.

#### **Reliability**

Ali and Yusof (2012) suggested a study has achieved reliability when future researchers can arrive at similar conclusions, when duplicating a scholar’s procedures and protocols. Yin (2014) postulated that researchers could enhance the reliability of a study through the convergence of information collected from multiple sources, as well as through detailed documentation of the research procedures. In this study, I have followed these recommendations through the development of a Case Study Protocol (Appendix B).

**Validity.**

According to Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala (2013), the importance of validity in the context of a qualitative study depends on credibility, integrity, and transferability, making the study defensible when challenged. Similarly, Ali and Yusof (2012) advocated qualitative validity must achieve a litmus test of auditability, creditability, and trustworthiness. According to Marshall and Rossman (2014), the trustworthiness of a study is very important for developing and maintaining the integrity of data collection and the findings of a study. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested in developing qualitative research, the following criteria needs to support trustworthiness: (a) dependability, (b) credibility, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability.

**Dependability.** Following the recommendation of Yin (2014), I used member checking and transcript review to demonstrate case study dependability. Member checking serves as one of the leading methods to ensure dependability because it provides participants the opportunity to confirm the researcher's interpretation of the collected data aligns with what participants stated. Numerous researchers have used this practice in their research with effective results. For example, Stewart, Polak, Young, and Schultz (2012) conducted follow-up interviews with seven of their participants to confirm the results of their analysis. Similarly, Travers (2012) and Stipp and Kapp (2012) conducted follow-up interviews with individuals in key leadership positions to verify their survey results. In all cases, these researchers added dependability to their final results by implementing the practice of member checking. For the study, member checking occurred with the focus groups by reviewing my understanding of the

discussion with the participants before they left, serving as part of the validation of the data. This process ensured all questions have been thoroughly covered, the participants' thoughts and ideas have been correctly interpreted in the notes, and they had no new information to offer. Full copies of all transcripts are available upon request. After the semistructured interviews, a follow-up phone call with the participants ensured the interpretation of what they said matches their thoughts and they did not have any new information to offer.

**Credibility.** According to Denzin (2012) as well as Marshall and Rossman (2014), qualitative researchers ensure the integrity of their research by implementing measures to ensure study credibility. Therefore, in an effort to demonstrate the validity of the study, I incorporated the following methods to ensure the credibility of the research: (a) the assessment of rival explanations, (b) researcher bias identification, (c) triangulation, and (d) data saturation.

Yin (2014) suggested the assessment of rival explanations could help enhance the credibility of a study. Yin acknowledged although rival explanations for phenomena may pose a challenge to the interpretation of study findings and the formulation of study conclusions, they do not undermine case study designs or procedures. Similarly, Wahyuni (2012) concluded researchers wanting to demonstrate the credibility of their studies must identify and rule out competing explanations for their findings.

Researcher bias identification served as a second strategy for ensuring the credibility of the case study. Yin (2014) stated researchers' theories, personal values, or preconceptions might influence the structuring and conduct of their intended studies.

Similarly, Houghton et al. (2013) argued researchers must engage in self-reflection prior to the conduct of qualitative studies to identify and articulate attitudes about the research topics that may influence the collection and analysis of data. Therefore, I conducted a personal assessment of biases prior to initiating data collection for the study. The bias assessment matrix included each identified bias and a narrative description for each bias. Consultation of the bias identification matrix throughout the data collection and analysis process and during the preparation of study findings and conclusions enabled the effective management of recognized biases.

The practice of methodological triangulation, first introduced by Denzin (1970), served as a third technique to demonstrate credibility. Denzin described four types of triangulation: (a) data triangulation—collecting data through multiple strategies, involving different times, situations, and individuals; (b) investigator triangulation—using more than one researcher to collect and analyze data; (c) theoretical triangulation—interpreting data through the use of more than theory or position; and (d) methodological triangulation—collecting data with more than one method. Elo et al. (2014) discussed the use of multiple sources of information during the conduct of case studies to enhance credibility. Likewise, Davis (2013) used document reviews, interviews, and direct observations to achieve study credibility and enhance the quality of a case study. Denzin (2012) discussed triangulation further and stated triangulation provides a deeper understanding of a situation by causing a researcher to introduce more complexity and depth of analysis. Similarly, I gathered study data from the review of documents and

information from focus groups and then used the information gathered from both sources to triangulate findings and enhance overall study quality.

The final method for demonstrating the credibility of the study was through data saturation, the point in research when themes reoccur and no new information becomes available (Marshall et al., 2013). The success of previous researchers in attaining data saturation, such as Ashworth (2011) and Coenen et al. (2012) suggest data saturation in the study may occur by the end of the first focus group iteration and will almost certainly occur by the third iteration. As focus groups were conducted, data saturation was reached by the third iteration and no new information emerged, so additional focus groups were not necessary. Additionally, as interviews were conducted with the former recruiters of the Army and Marine Corps, the participants repeated the same themes heard from the focus groups, achieving data saturation.

**Transferability.** Marshall and Rossman (2014) as well as Denzin (2012), suggested in addition to credibility, qualitative researchers must also focus on the transferability of study findings. Wahyuni (2012) argued case study researchers enhance the transferability of case studies by providing rich descriptions of the rationale for the selection of case study populations and describing the details of case study contexts. Bernardi (2012) asserted qualitative researchers conducting qualitative case studies demonstrate the transferability of studies by providing clear descriptions of the rationale for study population selections and the study contexts. Elo et al. (2014) argued qualitative researchers demonstrate the transferability of study findings by providing rich

descriptions of the populations studied and the demographics and geographic boundaries of the studies.

**Confirmability.** Elo et al. (2014) indicated the concept of confirmability corresponds to the notion of objectivity in qualitative research. The implication is the findings are the result of the research, rather than an outcome of the biases and subjectivity of the researcher. Similar to dependability, one of the vital elements of an effective confirmability is the maintenance of an audit trail (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). An audit trail was created through the use of recorded notes, which are part of the data collection process. The study methodology included research logs, a template for recording answers to each question, and an Apple iPad application called AudioMemos to digitally record each conversation. These methods ensured the confirmability of the study and that I have not injected any bias into the findings of the research.

### **Transition and Summary**

This section described the intent of the study, clearly stated the role of the researcher and of the interviewees, explained the research method and design, discussed the techniques for data collection, organization, and analysis, and explored the reliability and validity of the study. This section also provided a detailed description of the trustworthiness of the study, through dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. In addition, the section included a discussion of how I conducted research in an ethical manner and references the tools and instruments of the study, shown in the appendices. The next step of field research, described in Section 3, enabled me to collect information relevant to the experiences of individuals who served in the military.



### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this exploratory, qualitative case study was to determine what marketing strategies successful recruiting professionals use to motivate 18 to 22-year-olds to join the military. In this final section, I present my findings from the three previously mentioned methods of investigation: a personal analysis of marketing materials, interviews with former recruiters of the Army and Marine Corps, and three focus groups composed of college students in the target demographic. The next part of this section focuses on application to professional practice, where recommendations are discussed for how the findings of the study can benefit marketing and recruiting professionals of the DOD. Following this, an examination of implications for social change is offered, where the significance of the study beyond the DOD is described. This leads to the next logical step of recommendations for action, in which a clear course of action is explained for how the results of the study can be briefed to senior leaders within the DOD who can effect change. Because the study will become available for future researchers, some of who may have interest in the same subject matter, suggestions are offered for how scholarly practitioners can expand upon my efforts in the future. The section concludes with final thoughts about my time as a student at Walden University, lessons learned from this experience, and a clear take-away message to marketing and recruiting professionals within the DOD.

## **Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question for this study was this: What marketing strategies do successful recruiting professionals use to motivate individuals to join the military? The practice of triangulation provided a means to explore this question from three different perspectives. First, a personal analysis of current marketing materials based on my own military experience yielded an assessment of how well advertising literature of the Army and Marine Corps described all the benefits of military service. Second, interviews with former Army and Marine Corps recruiters provided a striking comparison of how different services achieved their individual recruiting goals. Third, focus groups of college students in the target demographic reinforced the findings from the personal review of the marketing materials and the experiences of the former recruiters. These three approaches enabled the study to reach a point of data saturation where no new themes emerged, as described by Marshall et al. (2013).

### **Personal Analysis of Marketing Materials**

I obtained current marketing materials of the Army and Marine Corps through a visit to the local recruiting office. Each service had a plethora of advertising literature, which they gladly disperse to any interested person. Although the recruiting offices of the Army and Marine Corps are positioned in close proximity to each other, separated only by an entryway, the ways they provide information could not be farther apart.

The Army had 12 different marketing brochures, all with a slightly different focus. Topics included life in the Active Army and Army Reserves, training as a warrant officer pilot, becoming a commissioned officer, military occupational specialties (MOSs),

educational benefits, and the process of transitioning from civilian to soldier. Based on the research of Uggerslev et al. (2012), the Army's marketing specialists may have some potential for improvement. These researchers suggested the best way to attract potential applicants is through demonstrating how an organization represents the best fit for a candidate, based on all the facets of the job, and how these various aspects of the position could lead to satisfaction in the future. Given my research on the wide range benefits of military service, provided in the literature review, the Army's marketing specialists have not fully conveyed the full breadth and depth of what it means to be a soldier through their advertising literature.

The Army's marketing specialists did a very thorough job of discussing potential educational benefits, including how to apply and for exactly how much money an individual may qualify, closely matching the educational benefits of military service described by Martorell and Bergman (2013). In addition, the Army's marketing specialists have also done an excellent job of communicating the wide range of MOSs available to potential recruits and how the training and experience from these positions could easily translate into civilian careers later in life, as discussed by Faurer et al. (2014) and Jones and Mahon (2012). The last area the Army's marketing specialists covered well is the subject of comprehensive soldier fitness, explored by Lester et al. (2015). The very motto of this branch of service, *Army Strong*, implies fitness, and the Army's marketing specialists clearly described how serving as a soldier could lead to both physical and mental well-being.

In other portions of the marketing materials, the Army's marketing specialists briefly mentioned some other benefits of military service but did not discuss these at a meaningful level of detail. This information gap could potentially cause recruits to have more questions than answers about these programs. Benefits that need more explanation in the marketing materials, but are thoroughly discussed in the literature review, include expedited citizenship (Cunha et al., 2014), life insurance (Davis & Fraser, 2012), health insurance (Cebula, 2011), military pay and retirement (Hosek et al., 2012), a smooth transition to adulthood (Karney et al., 2012), community impact (Krier et al., 2011), and travel opportunities (Reider, 2012).

Even more disturbing than the Army's cursory description of some benefits is its complete disregard for other important aspects of serving in the military. For example, Karney et al. (2011) discussed how serving in the military could bring stability to marriages, but this fact is not mentioned in the marketing materials. Likewise, the survivor benefits plan and Family Medical Leave Act described by Davis and Fraser (2012) and Malone (2012), respectively, did not appear in the advertising literature. The Army's marketing specialists have also avoided benefits such as suicide prevention, veterans' employment, mental health treatment, and returning to a civilian job upon the conclusion of a deployment as a reservist. Scholarly authors such as Power and McKeon (2012), Glassman (2012), and Ogles (2012) all emphasized in their writing how important these benefits can become for service members, yet the Army did not mention these subjects even once in their marketing materials. Based on the work of Rehman (2012), this custom of not providing potential recruits with all the relevant aspects of

military service is a bad business practice. Rehman advocated providing an accurate representation of a job to potential applicants so the applicants can conduct an honest self-assessment of their knowledge, skills, and abilities to determine if they have the potential to perform well in the job. Rehman also suggested potential applicants have an interest in knowing what opportunities await them in the organization if applicants perform as expected, or better. No job is perfect, and the Army certainly has its drawbacks, but it is far better to let potential recruits and their families know the Army cares deeply for every single soldier and benefits and programs exist to care for these men and women during periods of difficulty.

Despite the Army's limited description of the benefits of military service, their marketing materials do a far better job than those of the Marine Corps in describing what a person can derive from choosing to serve their country. I have never served in the Marine Corps, but the benefits described in the literature review apply to both branches of service. The Marine Corps, however, made no mention of any of these benefits in their seven available brochures. Instead of focusing on what the Marine Corps can do for a person, the Marines' campaign focused on how the Marines Corps sets itself apart from the other branches of service. Their marketing materials were replete with references to terms such as *standards*, *an elite force*, *core values*, *a chosen few*, *honor*, *tradition*, *physical fitness*, and *the pride of belonging*. Their brochures clearly gave the impression that Marines do not join the Corps for scholarship money or a better future. Marines join the Corps to be part of *the few and the proud*, an elite force that is always ready for battle. Marines pride themselves on their uniform, their brotherhood, and their ability to focus

on training for combat above all else. Although these notions of patriotism, service, and sacrifice certainly stir the heart, they do nothing to put at rest the concerns of young college students who want to serve their country, but not at the expense of a bright future.

### **Interviews with Former Recruiters**

Examination of the study's primary research question formulated three classifications: sense of self, marketing strategies, and organizational strategies. Several themes emerged by bracketing textual descriptions describing the participants' collection of experiences, derived from their responses to the research questions under evaluation. Fit for duty, networking and teamwork, and tell the story, among others, emerged in the investigation. Participants engaged in transcript review and member checking to ensure the accuracy of the information presented.

**Sense of self.** The research topic explored with this theme was to have participants describe experiences or situations that brought to mind a sense of belonging to the military. Examination of data included in the qualitative case study gained attention as I reviewed the total counts for codes relating to the category of sense of self. Table 1 shows themes: purpose, pride, and prestige; tell the story; and networking and teamwork.

Table 1

*Sense of Self*

	Purpose, pride, loyalty	Tell the story	Networking & Teamwork	Distinction between services combined with PPL	Tough duty	Sense of support	Bonding, belonging	Love for recruiting
Participant 1	54	18	16	12	10	14	44	34
Participant 2	6	4	4	9	5	6	9	32
Total Codes	60	22	20	21	15	20	53	66

**Theme: Purpose, pride, and loyalty.** History and tradition are the cornerstone of the Marines' standards with some characteristics in place for more than 200 years. Marines exclusively guard U.S. Embassies around the world. The Corps has provided security for every sitting President since Roosevelt and has continued to fly the Presidential Squadron since Eisenhower's time in office. "Few titles are harder won or more proudly held than that of a Marine" (Participant 1). Illustrating the level of pride, commitment, and acclaim ignites a recruit's sense of patriotism and forges a sense of honor of becoming one of the few, the proud, the Marines! Each Marine has just one goal: to be on the front lines. "We want to attract people who have a feeling of duty to protect and serve" (Participant 1). Marines engage the enemy. Rostker et al. (2014) discussed this type of deeply-rooted feeling of pride and tradition, suggesting the military has become a family business, handed down from generation to generation.

Participant 1 showed a great sense of honor with regard to his tour of duty. His recruiting territory spanned several states but he was excited to return to the Mid-South

where he grew up. Although the duty was stressful, traveling and being away from his family, he found significant satisfaction bonding with the young recruits and taking measures to ensure his trainees had everything required. I found notable the participant chose to stay 4 months longer until his successor was in place.

Participant 1 had a love for recruiting from the beginning of his career. He earned a prestigious award for his hard work and dedication at a young age by lowering attrition rates of new recruits to almost 10%. Participant 1 showed his commitment to his job. The factor he believed was the turning point was that he instilled a sense of accountability and responsibility in his subordinates, and he led by example. His caring and compassionate demeanor was foremost because he wanted to ensure everyone coming out of boot camp was successful and had a chance to fulfill their dreams. He found a sense of joy by helping his young talent develop into strong men and women who would experience all of the opportunities the Marine Corp has to offer, such as the Marine Corps Musician Enlistment Option Program (MEOP).

Participant 2 served as the Professor of Military Science for a university's ROTC program, an assignment he requested. He did not consider his military role as a recruiting position, although he did have people in his command working in that role, but felt his primary responsibility was leading the ROTC program where one of the sub-mission requirements was to acquire enough people to keep the program viable. His supervisor expressed significant concerns to him about the health of the program and suggested it would be dissolved if the commissioning rate did not dramatically increase. Participant 2 carried a wide range of experience and felt ready for the challenge ahead. He was a



battalion commander and served with the British Army for a few years. He also ran training units and acted as an adviser to the National Guard. His experience provided a fresh outlook, and perhaps a wider vision, over his predecessors. Less successful individuals who served in his position in the past focused primarily on tactical training, whereas he assigned a recruiting officer in that role so he could focus his attention on a larger scope operation. This change in attitude and perspective demonstrates the umbrella strategy, discussed by Mintzberg and Waters (1985), in which a leader can provide constraints or targets while empowering subordinates to make decisions within a framework in response to changes or market forces.

Participant 2 found working in the military was very rewarding and was not quite ready to retire; therefore, moving to an ROTC position was a good way to transition from the military to a civilian job. He recounted the time the university's administrator suggested he could retire from the military and join the College Admission's department, as a direct result of his work ethic and military experience. Promoted to Director of Admissions a short time later, the participant quickly understood the job would not meet his long-term career goals. Similar to Participant 1, he led a search committee to find his replacement, while subsequently in charge of the university's commencement activities. He later rose to President of the university's Senate. His ability to quickly ascend through the university ranks reflects the work of Jones and Mahon (2012), who discovered former service members often excel because of being able to accept and transfer both explicit and tacit knowledge. The university recognized Participant 2 did commendable work

with bringing students into the ROTC program and realized he could bring this expertise to bear in the university's admissions office and more senior positions.

Participant 2 also enjoyed working in the capacity as an ROTC officer for the Army because his detachment at the university allowed him to work in conjunction with an Air Force ROTC detachment, which also offered classes at the university. He had an allegiance not just to his own Army ROTC program, but also to the overall success of the university and the military. Participant 2 believed if a special event occurred at the university, both ROTC programs should participate in order to encourage more students to attend the university and join a branch of the military.

**Theme: Tell the story.** Participant 1 stated that in recruiting school, an instructor's goal is to help students learn strategies to become successful recruiters. Recounting personal stories and positive experiences is an important strategy in which to connect with new recruits. Each prospective walks away with a feeling of belonging, and a sense of commitment, honor, and pride. The sense of oneness is not something recruiters can teach; rather, "It is something you have to go through before you can fully understand" (Participant 1). Recruiting strategies that especially target student athletes, whether in college or high school, include connecting with the applicant and discussing steps, perhaps even starting in the reserves, which could lead to higher ranks. Recruiters explain the benefits, such as college and ways in which joining can help to change one's life to showcase all of the opportunities available. This method of recruiting, especially with the focus on oneness and a sense of belonging, reflects the work of Franca and Pahor (2012) who suggested branding can serve as a powerful tool for attracting applicants.

An interesting story emerged discussing a prospective recruit's perceived fit with the Marine Corps, and in the contributor's opinion, any service. Participant 1 described sheep, sheepdogs, and wolves, where wolves are the enemy and need to be stopped. Sheep are people that would never join, and truthfully, do not have the character to succeed. Then, there are the sheepdogs - the protectors: people on the streets who help someone in trouble. Sheepdogs have a strong desire for change and have a good sense of community. Recruiting people who naturally fit the sheepdog category is the goal.

Participant 2 noted that several years ago, enlisting in the Army was, in a sense, the survival of the fittest. Factors such as a student's merit standing helped a prospect secure his or her desired path, competing against perhaps less-fit individuals who would receive the remaining positions. In the environment in which society rests, Participant 2 feels "if things do not strategically change," soldiers will not reenlist for multiple deployments, which could become problematic for all military forces. This striking difference in attitude between the two services may explain why Korb and Segal (2011) stated the personnel cost of manning the all-volunteer Army has risen from \$77 billion in FY 2001 to almost \$160 billion by FY 2009. People who join the Marine Corps seem to view themselves as constant guardians; whereas, people who join the Army do so not to fight in wars but because of opportunities it may offer for the future.

If Participant 2 is correct in his belief that the escalating and persistent conflicts around the world may cause a recruiting and retention problem for the Army, perhaps Army leaders would be well served to heed the research of Mintzberg and McHugh (1985). These researchers suggested the best strategies form in an adhocracy, a complex

and dynamic organization with highly trained experts in specialized units/teams, who rely on mutual adjustment to each other's unpredictable work and have the authority to make decisions when the experts possess the information and expertise necessary to deal with a particular situation. Participant 1 and 2 both had good ideas for bringing people into the Marine Corps and Army respectively; but during times of military build-up, it may prove helpful for them to exchange ideas on how to attract young people to military service.

*Theme: Networking and teamwork.* Teamwork is an organizational strategy that helps nurture a culture of hope where people support one another (Fernandez & Grand, 2015). Participant 1 noted the strong relationship formed in working and sharing experiences with other military commands, such as people serving in the Army and Air Force. He valued the experiences and high level of accomplishment realized by his counterparts. He was appreciative of the sense of brotherhood between the groups and felt honored to collaborate with such talented people. Participant 2 shared the same experience working alongside the university, the Army, and the Air Force.

Hodges (2014) discussed this concept of networking and teamwork and suggested military personnel could create a strong alliance and make significant contributions in the areas of mentoring, networking, and recruiting; as a result of their experience, ideas, and wisdom. Another example of military personnel working together is an organization called Military Student Services (MSS), discussed by Wilson (2014). MSS works with the Veterans Administration to assist military students in a number of ways, including sponsorship of a group called the Student Veterans Alliance, a student organization operated by veterans that provides military Veterans, Active Duty, Reserve, National

Guard and their dependents with the resources, support, and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education. Mintzberg and Waters (1985) described these types of partnerships as a blended strategy, where leaders in an organization provide vision but require strategies to develop from the shared beliefs of all actors.

**Marketing strategies.** Examination of participant responses gained attention to the phenomenon of marketing strategies to include billboards, advertising approaches, and recruitment training. Similar to the previous category, themes were derived by examining codes that described recurring words and phrases participants used in their responses. Table 2 below shows the relevant coding for the category of marketing strategies.

Table 2

*Marketing Strategies*

	Training	Advertising	Billboards	Sense of duty	Communication techniques	Received recognition	Shared experiences
Participant 1	39	25	5	16	16	5	2
Participant 2	18	31	20	2	0	3	0
Total Codes	57	56	25	18	16	8	2

**Theme: Billboards.** The codes of billboards and advertising strategies captured the perceptions of marketing techniques that worked. The billboard, zero cost strategy, was a product of public service announcements paid for by cities across America. Participant 1 noted the group was able to help the Army adopt the same strategy to build a strong footprint and attract new trainees. Participant 2 developed tailored recruiting materials but admittedly, the quality was not very good, compared to current day

marketing materials of the Army, which Participant 2 referred to as “pretty nice stuff.” He developed a simple recruiting web page on the university’s website when the Internet was becoming a high-tech solution for many businesses. He tailored the information toward the university rather than the Army, hoping to recruit several cadets each year. The participant was well aware of how natural attrition would affect the ROTC program so the pressure to meet his mission, about ten people per year between two schools, was a goal he was concerned about achieving.

A more modern version of billboards and rudimentary websites, which may serve as a powerful recruiting tool, is Facebook. Fagerstrøm and Ghinea (2013), discovered when organizations use social networking sites properly, they can send strategic messages, which have a profound effect on the behavior of individuals. Given this fact, the military could potentially generate countless new recruits by communicating with today’s youth in a format they understand and use, without expending any advertising dollars. In addition, Mintzberg and McHugh (1985) labeled this type of strategy formation as grass roots and asserted leaders must do six things in order for it to become effective: a) allow patterns to emerge without artificial constraints or burdens; b) realize new ideas can emerge wherever subordinates have the capacity to learn about new forces in the market or environment; c) develop new strategies as different actors in the organization recognize the same emerging pattern and make the strategies pervasive throughout the organization; d) accept the process of proliferating the new strategy does not necessarily require formal procedures but rather can occur through informal channels; e) realize the cultivation of new strategies across an organization usually occurs in

distinct periods naturally existing in the cycle of the organization; f) only intervene when leaders believe the emerging pattern could become destructive to the organization.

**Theme: Advertising strategies.** Public relations strategies illuminate the admiration and respect shown to Marines worldwide while displaying a professional image. A simple marketing flyer or TV commercial illustrates daily drills and training regiments performed in unison and exemplifies the bond between brothers and sisters. Recruiters might target specific talent to backfill vacancies left by people retiring or leaving the military in general. If a person is musically inclined, for example, the recruiter will look to fill the void by indicating the recruit would "ship out" as a musician should someone qualified emerge (Participant 1). Karasek and Bryant (2012) described this form of strategic communication as signaling theory. They suggested both individuals and organizations signal messages every day through both their verbal and nonverbal communication. These messages could serve as the starting point for demonstrating the importance of perceived fit during the recruiting process. The researchers proposed successful organizations should continually signal to potential applicants how their organization will provide candidates with the kind of lifestyle they seek.

Participant 2 also shared similar tactics for seizing recruiting opportunities targeting high school seniors. Newsletters, flyers, and holding open-house recruiting events took place, although the strategies did not prove successful. Participant 2 lacked a feeling of acceptance between himself and the university. The reason for this perception may lie in the work of Lagotte (2012), whose research demonstrated some individuals in

the United States view military recruiters as predators, who stalk high schools and colleges with the intention of harming impressionable students. Participant 2 had a change of heart, however, when a very successful strategy arose from the university agreeing to provide free room and board to individuals holding high school scholarships, particularly in sports. Fit individuals, drawn to the university's benefit, allowed the ROTC program to flourish. This success story is another example of the previously mentioned umbrella strategy, discussed by Mintzberg and Waters (1985). Participant 2 realized his advertising approach was not having the intended effect, but he was able to quickly react to the university's need for graduating high school athletes; and utilized this knowledge as a means to increase recruit enrollment in his own program.

**Theme: Training.** Participant 1 shared a significant amount of detail explaining the differences between branches of service leading to a feeling of a Marine's self-worth. From relentless training regiments to physical-fitness routines, Marines prepare. Sharing a common thread shows the world, "You are either with us or against us, and if you are against us, you will die" (Participant 1). The Marines have strong values and take one's duty seriously. Marines stand beside one another in combat and at home.

The Marines have a unique process to recruit for positions within the Corps and not every position includes the same regiment (Participant 1). Some recruiters begin with learning how to obtain student rosters from high-school administrators and systematically evaluate each prospective student to determine the fit. Some recruiters canvass campuses and begin a dialog with people who are physically fit. Results showed recruiters who were able to set the most appointments and ask for referrals were more successful.



Within a Marine Corps recruiting station, the Commander entrusts the E-8's, and E-9's to conduct training for all the enlisted men and women. Seminars and different conferences help provide the information, which trainers bring back to the group. Utilizing the instructors helps save money by avoiding the need to send several people outside of the area to acquire the knowledge needed in the field.

All of these strategies for training, for both Marines and Marine recruiters, exemplify the work of Brock and Buckley (2013). These researchers suggested the challenge of building and maintaining a robust workforce can best be accomplished through concepts such as valuing personnel, actively recruiting both internally and externally for various positions, utilizing multiple marketing techniques, maintaining a positive image, developing specific job criteria, hiring applicants based on their competencies, evaluating retention regularly, enabling employees to develop and progress, and providing progressive retirement options. Judging by the low attrition rate of 10% for new Marine recruits, mentioned earlier by Participant 1, these strategies are certainly effective.

Participant 2 held quarterly brigade seminars to review training materials; and he wrote a *cookbook* to illuminate monthly recruiting strategies to bring in potential candidates and demonstrate successful advanced camp techniques, aimed to help increase retention rates. The manual also showed schools and locations; whereas, some individuals attended universities in England, West Point, and other sites worldwide.

Participant 2 stated the university established a good-size nursing program, and he was instrumental in coordinating a relationship between the Cadet Command and the

university to develop the Center of Nursing Excellence Academy. ROTC cadets who entered the nursing program would receive a significant scholarship opportunity, enabling the Army to contract several aspiring nurses for the ROTC Program. This type of symbiotic relationship demonstrates the validity of research by Dai and Liang (2012), who suggested employees perform best in jobs closely aligned with their dominant personality traits and competencies and stated employees could further develop their core competencies through meaningful incentives and training. Participant 2's ability to identify this unique opportunity with nurses is another example of the umbrella strategy (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985), where a leader can make decisions within a framework in response to changes or market forces. Participant 2 knew the ROTC program was struggling and made strategic choices to improve its viability.

**Organizational strategies.** Examination of participant responses gained attention to the phenomenon of organizational strategies to include maintaining standards, persons of influence, and fitness for duty. Utilizing the same process as the first two categories, themes were derived by examining codes that described recurring words and phrases participants used in their responses. Table 3 below shows the relevant coding for the category of marketing strategies.

Table 3

*Organizational Strategies*

	Persons of influence	Fit for duty	Readiness to join and train	Discrepancy between services	Maintaining standards of attitude	Budgets
Participant 1	11	46	37	27	7	11
Participant 2	1	9	2	4	1	16
Total Codes	12	55	39	31	8	27

**Theme: Maintaining standards of attitude and appearance.** Participant 1 noted a significant difference between branches of service in the military. The Marines physically train hard to keep physically fit and maintain a high standard of expectations that might not be prevalent in other commands. Recruiters will ensure the trainees maintain an active regiment of exercise and project a positive attitude. Participant 1 noted one significant difference in the dress code policy between Marines and the Army; whereas, the Army recruiters will wear fatigues at the local office while Marines reserve that gear for combat. The Marines have a strong mindset as to the importance of the uniform, so much so, the Army's practice of not maintaining the same level of importance is problematic for the Marines. A sense of pride; therefore, comes with wearing the uniform and every individual is committed to presenting himself or herself to the best of one's ability. The uniform illustrates the symbolism of American Pride and the strong connection to individuals wanting to enter the Marines. The high standards established within the Corps is another marketing strategy used by recruiters to form a connection with young people and it illustrates the work of Noon (2012). This researcher advocated a concept called threshold selection, described as a form of positive discrimination in

which all candidates must meet a set of minimum standards across a range of criteria before considering the company's diversity goals. Given the positive results this kind of strategy has had for Marine Corps recruiters, the strategy may serve as an example of a way for building the best workforce possible in an organization.

Participant 2's strategy was to be visible and stated his philosophy was to "be everywhere, all the time, for everybody." He would attend the graduating ceremonies of high school students who were recipients of the scholarships to present the awards. The Color Guard would also support the local community by collaborating with the city's activities and infuse Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion, and Reserve Officer Association members into events. People from these organizations regularly give back to their communities and exemplify the belief of Van Wart (2013), who suggested the training a soldier received helps prepare the individual to make a strong impact in the world because one's dedication and commitment does not stop at the barrack gates. The defenders of our nation leave the military with a servant-leadership mindset, which does not go unnoticed, and is illustrated by one's authentic interactions in maintaining high standards of integrity and empathy. Krier et al. (2011) also supported this idea and stated service members have a significant impact on rural towns, not just in terms of their purchasing power, but also in the military values they bring to the community through their civilian jobs.

Although Participant 1 and Participant 2 had different approaches for how to engage in the community and attract recruits, both of them performed equally well. Their ability to achieve success relates to two of the four categories of contingency factors,

discussed by Neubauer et al. (in press), who built on the emergent strategy theory developed by Mintzberg and Waters (1985). Specifically, these leaders understood the conditions of the environment in which they worked as well as their own background, personality, strengths, and weaknesses. They combined these factors to develop effective recruiting strategies for their organizations, which can serve as a model for future recruiting officers in the Army and Marine Corps.

***Theme: Persons of influence.*** Both participants had respect for the positive and negative influences that have shaped young minds and did not underestimate how family, friends, and sometimes, even strangers affect one's life. Transparency, therefore, is important when reaching out and recruiting talent so internal factors, such as family, are aware of the intentions of the recruit.

Participant 1 showed the government is not immune to the same problems civilians face. With less than 6% of the DOD military budget, we simply do more with less; especially compared to our Army counterparts, whose footprint is so large. Budget cuts hurt everyone, and the Marines are no exception (Participant 1). This concern about the DOD budget is likely driven by the impact of sequestration across the military. Smith (2012) stated the DOD budget will reduce by approximately \$450 billion over the next 10 years. This could have a dramatic impact on recruiting, given the Government Accountability Office (2011) stated the DOD spent \$11 billion on recruiting and retention from 2006 to 2010. The prospect of having to cut people, generally in the middle ranks, is difficult. Most individuals who join the Marines stay for 4 years, but there are those who have a *calling*, who remain until retirement. Careful analysis of the staggering discharge

rates revealed approximately 10% of the attrition was because the *influencer* did not have a voice in the process. The Marines enacted a marketing strategy to ensure the candidate's *influencers* were involved the moment conversations began in the recruiting office. Participant 1 reiterated the belief that inclusion would not circumvent the decision-making process between a recruit and his or her *influencer*; rather, recruiters foster a dialog between everyone involved.

Participant 2 also understood the importance of an *influencer*. He stated even during his time in the Admissions department, if someone came in to discuss the university's ROTC program, the participant would speak to the prospective recruit and their sponsor before guiding the individual over to the detachment, in order to provide a holistic perspective of what the ROTC offers. The premise was to show the function of the ROTC and illuminate how the individual could grow; thereby emphasizing leadership opportunities. Participant 2 showed how, by joining the program, the prospect will emerge a strong leader and not only gain valuable insight, knowledge, and experience but also manage technical fields of operation. This type of recruiting strategy confirms the research of Gholston (2015), who discovered a positive correlation between perceived organizational attractiveness and a person's intention to apply for a job. Gholston confirmed the work of many previously mentioned researchers, suggesting individuals yearn to work in an organization matching their personality where they have the ability to advance in their skills, responsibility, and commensurate salary.

Despite continual budget cuts, both participants successfully engaged prospective recruits and their *influencers* in an effort to convey what their particular branch of service

has to offer. Their approach focused on the other two categories of contingency factors, discussed by Neubeauer et al. (in press). They informed potential recruits of the size of their organization, its stage of development, available resources, and its past and present performance. They also understood the decision-making process in a family includes the complexity, urgency, and uncertainty associated with a choice such as joining the military.

**Theme: *Fit for duty.*** The Marines make every attempt not to turn people away who are trying to improve one's life. Understanding that people make mistakes growing up, the Corps has a process called green waits. Waived infractions include a few instances of smoking marijuana or misdemeanor traffic violations. A red waits category shows the potential recruit is not a candidate to join for conditions of drug or alcohol abuse, incarceration, or having multiple children. The Marine Corps' has limits to their leniency, as demonstrated by the research of Horton, Phillips, White, LeardMann, and Crum-Cianflone (2014). The authors stated the Marine Corps holds new recruits to a very high standard, with 12% not completing initial training and one third leaving before the end of their initial commitment because of their inability to meet standards. Participant 1 discussed a recruit's readiness for joining the branch, indicating Marines are not afraid of conflict; but rather, run towards the sound of chaos.

Participant 1 was vocal in his distinction between the Army and Marine Corps' recruiting tactics. The Army's focus is on attracting individuals with promises for the potential of scholarships, training, employment, and a bright future (Participant 2); whereas, the Marines stand on the principle of serving our country. Horton et al. surveyed

a total of 131,961 Marines in their 10-year study. A newly accessed Marine had an average age of 19.8 years, showing a similarity to the Army's target demographic. When asked why they joined the military, the most common answer was service to country. In 2001, 36% of participants had this response but increased to 48% in 2007. Although the percentage declined from 2008 to 2010, the percentage maintained a positive slope over time. Other popular reasons included education and new jobs skills, but no responses indicated recruits joined the Marine Corps for some kind of financial bonus or incentive.

Participant 2 might have confirmed this perception of distinction as he recounted his strategy for *making things work* for two ROTC students whom he considered patriotic. These cadets majored in occupational therapy and physical therapy, but needed to complete additional schooling after their first four years of college. Participant 2 arranged an educational delay for them, enabling them to receive their commission as Army officers upon graduating college, but not enter Active Duty until they had completed their necessary follow-on schooling.

Participant 2 discussed another situation where a recruit could not pass the physical fitness test because of an injury he sustained in high school. As the Captain of a hockey team, the recruit broke his arm and the fracture did not heal properly. When the recruit was completing push-ups in advanced camp (the final phase of testing before commissioning), he failed because he could not do the pushups correctly with the lingering injury. After a brief discussion with the General, in the presence of the Brigade Commander and the incumbent Region Commander, the participant's description of the cause of the problem did not change the outcome, until the Region Commander



confirmed the assertions of the participant and declared the recruit would pass the following year. As a direct result of the participant's efforts, the recruit was able to earn his commission and delay his entry onto Active Duty until he completed law school. This recruit later entered the 82nd Airborne as a lawyer, served in Congress as a United States Representative for Pennsylvania's Eight District, and was recently appointed by President Barack Obama to serve as the next Under Secretary of the Army.

Clearly, the Army and Marine Corps have different perceptions of what fit for duty means and what strategies recruiters should use to make this assessment. An answer may lie in the research of Dibrell et al. (2014), who studied strategy formation in 448 companies and its effect on firm growth. They concluded the highest rate of firm growth occurs at the midpoint of the strategy continuum, where both planning and emergent qualities exist. Their research indicated whereas purely planned strategies can lead to a false sense of control and an inability to learn from prior mistakes, a purely emergent strategy leads to an overly reactive and ad hoc organization. The Army may seem a little more forgiving of mistakes recruits make, but it also has produced amazing leaders who have made significant contributions to society.

### **Focus Groups**

I conducted three focus groups, each composed of 10 to 15 students from King's College, in an effort to understand the perceptions of people in this demographic regarding the effectiveness of current marketing materials of the Army and Marine Corps. Each focus group provided nearly identical answers, eliminating the need to conduct more than three iterations. Careful analysis of their responses led to the

formation of three categories: Alignment of Marketing Materials with Wants and Needs, Information Gaps, and Critical Information for Marketing Specialists. Participant responses are indicated by their focus group (A, B, or C), and a number derived from their position in the classroom. For example, the person in the first seat of the first focus group is denoted by A-1, while the participant occupying the last chair in the final focus group is denoted by C-15.

**Alignment of marketing materials with wants and needs.** Members of each focus group were first asked to describe their wants and needs, both for the immediate future and the next five years. Their responses closely matched what I expected from people in this demographic, given they are quite young and have not established themselves yet. In the short term, participants wanted to receive an internship (C-7, C-12, C-13) and finish their college education (A-3, A-10, B-8). For the long term, the concerns of participants became more numerous and family-oriented and included financial security (A-5, A-8, B-6, B-7, C-3, C-12), job stability (A-5, A-8, B-6, B-9, C-3, C-10), good health (A-1, B-3, C-11), buying a home (A-1, B-1, C-10), starting a family (A-11, B-9, C-3, C-12), repaying college loans (A-1, B-4, C-3), traveling (B-6, C-7), and starting a business (B-5, C-5, C-9).

Upon fully understanding the wants and needs of participants, I then asked them how they feel service in the Marine Corps and Army might align with their wants and needs, based on the benefits of each service described in the marketing materials. An astounding number of participants believed serving in the Army could provide an individual with more benefits and a pathway to a better life (A-1, A-6, A-7, A-8, A-9, B-

1, B-2, B-4, B-5, B-6, C-3, C-5, C-8, C-9, C-10, C-12). Similarly, a large number of participants viewed service in the Marine Corps as more of a call to action, based on pride and loyalty (A-3, A-8, B-2, B-3, B-4, B-8, B-10, C-3). The differences in the marketing materials were strikingly apparent to Participant B-9, who stated, “It's almost like the Army incentivizes you, or tries to say, ‘Here's money if you join us. We'll pay for this, we'll pay for that. We'll do this for you.’ Whereas the Marines, it's like, ‘You're a Marine, that's what you get.’” Participant C-13 had similar feelings, suggesting it seems as if anyone can join the Army, but the Marines are an elite force who deserves more respect. Participant C-3 also commented the Army will teach a person technical skills, but the Marines will train an individual to become a warrior. Participants stated that despite the differences between the Army and Marine Corps, they do share common traits of training individuals to become leaders (C-7), providing a steady source of income (C-11, C-13) and instilling long-term values such as resiliency (C-11).

**Information gaps.** The next two questions I asked participants attempted to ascertain their level of knowledge about what benefits a person could derive from military service and if their beliefs about military service were influenced by a friend or family member. Surprisingly, their responses resembled my own personal analysis of the marketing materials. Participants stated benefits such as money for education (A-6, B-2, B-4, C-8, C-12, C-13), MOS choice (A-9, B-8, B-9, C-8), combat training (A-1, A-6, B-10, the ability to travel (A-10, B-7, C-7), free health care (A-1, B-10, C-6, C-7, C-12), enlistment and retention bonuses (B-4, C-8) and retirement after 20 years (C-3, C-7, C-11).

Although participants could enumerate these benefits after reviewing the marketing materials, when they were asked for detailed information, they had very little in-depth knowledge regarding any of the benefits except education and job choice. On several occasions, participants asked me to explain these benefits to them, from my experience as a military officer. In order to keep the conversation unbiased, participants were told that I would refrain from answering those types of questions until the focus group session concluded, but would gladly talk to anyone who wanted to know more about the military after the session had ended.

Participants also demonstrated an information gap when asked about friends or family members who have previously served in the military and whose experience would influence their decision of whether or not to join the armed forces. Many participants recounted stories of their loved ones who had served, but those with negative perceptions about the military did not understand the benefits currently available for service members. For example, participant C-12 had family in the Army and Air Force, but would not join because of the belief that the military did not take care of the family financially after the death of a loved one who served. Davis and Fraser (2012), however, describe the numerous financial benefits provided to family members during times of grief, such as the \$100,000 death gratuity and \$400,000 of life insurance. Similarly, Participants C-3, C-4, and C-9 described how their loved ones experienced as PTSD and contemplated thoughts of suicide during their time of service. Langford, Litts, and Pearson (2013) describe how the military has become acutely aware of mental health issues and resources are available to service members suffering from distress.

*Critical information for marketing specialists.* Before concluding each focus group, I asked the participants if they had any other comments or thoughts, regarding the issue of recruiting, which had not been discussed yet. The feedback they provided could prove instrumental in helping marketing specialists better communicate with individuals in this demographic. For example, participants A-8 and C-4 made the observation that the Marine Corps marketing materials contain no photos of females and even the Army marketing materials only have a small amount of pictures of females. These participants believed this kind of omission makes a bold statement that women may not be welcome in the Marine Corps and are less valued in the Army than their male counterparts.

Another interesting comment came from participants A-3 and B-2 who emphatically stated that despite the somewhat limited information presented in the marketing materials, this advertising literature does a far better job of communicating what it means to serve in the Army and Marine Corps than commercials presented by each service. These individuals believe the commercials offer no value and do not describe the benefits of military service in any detail.

In addition, participants B-8, B-9, C-8, C-11, and C-13 all believe the marketing materials of both the Army and Marine Corps need improvement. The Marine Corps needs to discuss benefits much more thoroughly, while the Army needs to explain the impact an individual can have on the country or the world by deciding to become a soldier. These participants believe the marketing materials should answer nearly every conceivable question a recruit might have, including a recruit's contractual obligation, how service members are cared for after developing problems resulting from war, and the

physical requirements an individual must meet in order to successfully enter military service. Participant C-13 believes marketing materials should even discuss negative aspects of the military, such as deployments and PTSD, stating, “I want to know. I want to know the pros and the cons, not only the pros.”

The participants in these focus groups had absolutely no knowledge of my own assessment of the marketing materials or that interviews would be conducted with former recruiters of the Army and Marine Corps. Their responses conclusively demonstrate a few key facts. The Army marketing materials have a very strong focus on describing benefits, rather than patriotism, but do not cover the full range of the benefits of military service. The marketing materials of the Marine Corps, conversely, do an excellent job of conveying a feeling of pride and belonging, but barely discuss the benefits of military service. Both the Army and Marine Corps have successfully recruited individuals to join their ranks since their inception, but the results of the study suggest recruiting and marketing specialists from each branch may be able to become more effective and save money in the performance of their duties by adopting some techniques of other military services. This idea is reinforced by the work of Mintzberg and Waters (1985), who suggested as enclaves begin to work together, leaders of organizations use a consensus strategy, wherein emergent ideas come together through mutual adjustment.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

Judging by the exhaustive work that was completed for the literature review, no scholarly researcher has conducted a study such as this one in the past. This effort began when I learned first-hand, during a tour of duty in the Pentagon, of the exorbitant costs of

recruiting and retention in the DOD, such as the \$11 billion spent on enlistment and retention bonuses from 2006 to 2010. Senior military leaders became forced to make difficult decisions as a result of sequestration, which would reduce the DOD budget by \$450 billion over 10 years, according to Rice (2012). Matiella (2011) described this as a *cost war*, which she defined as the challenge of meeting mission requirements with declining resources. Price, Martin, Wu, and Pernin (2011) indicated this cost war usually occurs in 20-year intervals, which happens to coincide with a decline in major military operations. Price et al. suggested as budgets decline, senior leaders can reduce funding in three major areas: (a) procurement, (b) operations and maintenance, and (c) personnel. Feickert and Daggett (2012) suggested the men and women serving in uniform often becomes the *casualties* of this *cost war*, resulting in a *hollow force*, a term used in the 1970s and 1990s to describe a non-combat-ready military. Smith (2012) confirmed this assertion, stating the military services have become so focused on developing high-tech equipment; the services have lost sight of the importance of personnel and readiness. He described examples of expensive acquisition programs, such as the F-35 aircraft, which have cost taxpayers billions of dollars in research and development and may not even have a relevant mission to fulfill by the time these programs become available to military leaders in the field. Smith referenced Secretary of Defense Gates, who suggested the services waste billions of dollars on developing platforms with overly complex requirements that take too long to develop and field.

The results of this study, however, could help to counteract the negative effects budget reductions often have on military personnel. If recruiting and marketing

specialists in the DOD accept my recommendations, military services could potentially achieve much higher recruiting rates with significantly lower investments. The key for successful recruiting strategies lies in aligning with the wants and needs of individuals in the target demographic. When this happens, young people will likely be so enticed with the idea of military service that recruiting and marketing professionals will be overwhelmed by the number of people who want to join the military and can reduce their budgets with no effect on the overall recruiting mission.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Aside from improving the effectiveness of recruiting and marketing professionals, the findings from the study have important implications regarding social change. Evidence from a personal analysis of the marketing materials, interviews with former recruiters, and focus groups with college students all indicate that neither the Army nor Marine Corps do a sufficient job of informing the American people of what it means to serve in their branch. Army marketing materials leave people with the impression that a soldier's life is so full of hardship that the Army has to bribe people with financial incentives and other benefits for a person to willingly join its ranks. The Marine Corps, conversely, conveys the idea that if a person chooses to become a Marine, there are no benefits received other than the privilege of the title *Marine*. I believe both of these perceptions are inaccurate representations of the Army and Marine Corps, but these misconceptions will continue to be prevalent among the American people until marketing and recruiting specialists change their tactics, techniques, and procedures. Careful attention to the wants, needs, feelings, and perceptions of individuals in the target



demographic could result in the Army and Marine Corps being viewed by society as what they really are - professions of arms with long histories of service, tradition, and sacrifice in which individuals can live out their ideals of patriotism but also have a comfortable quality of life and provide for their families through the many benefits afforded to those who serve in the military.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The findings of the study have prompted the development of four recommendations for recruiting and marketing specialists of the Army and Marine Corps. First, each of these two services needs to modify their marketing materials to incorporate the successful strategies of the other branch. The Army marketing specialists must convey more feelings of patriotism associated with serving as a soldier, while the Marine Corps marketing specialists must demonstrate the personal benefits an individual receives for their service as a Marine.

Second, in addition to learning from each other, marketing specialists of the Army and Marine Corps need to also modify their marketing materials so they address every conceivable question a potential recruit might have. As Participant C-13 stated, young people want to know all the information they possibly can about the pros and cons of serving in the military before they make the decision to join. Although some marketing professionals might be hesitant about highlighting the cons of military service, these aspects of serving in the Army and Marine Corps could be represented in a positive light by demonstrating to potential recruits all of the mechanisms and programs the military has instituted to help service members and their families during times of hardship.

Third, recruiting and marketing professionals should heed the observations of focus group participants, who quickly noticed the limited number of pictures of females in marketing materials, or the complete lack thereof in the case of the Marine Corps. Women have consistently made significant contributions in the history of the Army and Marine Corps. For example, General Ann E. Dunwoody of the Army became the first female to ever earn the rank of four-star general. Similarly, Major General Angela Salinas became the first Hispanic woman to become a general officer in the Marine Corps and the sixth female in the history of the Marines to earn the rank of Brigadier General. Women should be highlighted in marketing materials, not hidden, in order to send the clear message to all potential recruits that females are valued in the military and can achieve the highest ranks of military service.

Finally, recruiting and marketing specialists of the Army and Marine Corps should consider ceasing all advertising through television commercials. Focus group participants indicated these have little to no value and would not influence their decision to join the military. These commercials likely cost millions of dollars to produce and have on television networks during peak times, but are too short to convey any kind of meaningful information. Senior leaders could redirect the money previously spent on these commercials to improving marketing materials or other key areas of military spending deemed as critical.

The results of the study, and the associated recommendations, should be presented to key leaders in the Pentagon for review and consideration. Senior leaders responsible for recruiting in the Army and Marine Corps could quickly disseminate their

guidance to recruiting and marketing specialists for new tactics, techniques, and procedures. These changes could be directed through official memorandums, technical bulletins, conferences, and changes to regulations. Although, it may take some time to fully implement all of the stated recommendations, the potential cost-savings for the DOD and improved effectiveness for recruiting professionals would make the effort worthwhile.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Although the results of this study may save valuable resources for the DOD and significantly assist marketing and recruiting professionals to become more effective, areas can be identified for future researchers to improve upon. First, considering the limitations section of the study, future researchers could conduct a similar study but have focus groups composed of individuals in the target demographic who have chosen to enter the workforce rather than go to college. This subset of society may have a different set of wants and needs, as well as a different perspective on the information provided by the marketing materials.

Second, the study could be expanded to a mixed methods approach, incorporating a statistical analysis of the effectiveness of commercials of the Army and Marine Corps. Researchers could devise a survey intended to capture the thoughts of television viewers about this form of advertising. Results from this type of analysis could lead to additional improvements in the effectiveness of recruiting and marketing professionals.

Third, future researchers could expand the scope of the study to include the Navy and Air Force. I selected the Army and Marine Corps to focus on because of my

background and experience, having served in the Army for 17 years and having worked with Marines at different points in my career. A holistic examination of recruiting practices in the DOD, however, could lead to more cost savings and increased effectiveness for recruiters in the Navy and Air Force.

Finally, future researchers could conduct a study on the causes of suicide throughout the military services. Participant 1 raised this as an important issue during our discussion and I believe he is correct. Working hard to recruit individuals to join a particular branch of service has no value if these same recruits commit suicide for any reason during their tour of duty.

### **Reflections**

Completing this doctoral journey has become the most challenging and rewarding experience of my entire life. Upon embarking on this path 6 years ago, I considered myself an intelligent and fairly well educated individual, who should have no problem completing some classes and writing a lengthy paper, even if ten years had passed since the completion of my master's degree. This notion of a doctorate being easy to achieve was quickly dispelled after enrolling in the first class and having a professor make several dozen comments on the quality of my writing. Since that point, the critique of my writing abilities and lessons in humility did not stop. Every time my proposal went forward to committee for review, the proposal came back with more comments and corrections than seemed possible. This process of continual revision to my proposal began to weaken my self-esteem, until others who have gone before me on this doctoral journey provided support and encouragement, inspiring me to keep pressing forward. Now, as graduation

approaches, the long hours of writing and constant revision to my proposal have become something to be proud of and remember. If my future includes teaching at the college level, my days with Walden University have provided me valuable information to pass on.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

Serving in the United States Army as a commissioned officer for the past 17 years has been a privilege and the greatest honor in my life. As I approach the end of my military career, my sincere hope is the next generation of young people carries on the tradition of service. Often times, people have thanked me for serving, but state they never joined the military themselves because they did not know much about it and feared they could not have a good life if they joined. My message to marketing and recruiting specialists of the Army and Marine Corps is three words, *Tell Our Story*. People deserve to know the benefits of military service.

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## Appendix A: References Breakdown

<p><b>Total # of References: 129</b>  <b>Total # of Peer Reviewed References: 119</b>  <b>Total # of Peer Reviewed articles, more than 5 years old: 9</b>  <b>Total # of Dissertations: 9</b>  <b>Total # of Peer Reviewed articles, less than 5 years old: 101</b>  <b>Total # of Peer Reviewed References, less than 5 years old: 110</b>  <b>Total # of Nonpeer Reviewed References: 10</b>  <b>Total # of NonPeer Reviewed articles: 5</b>  <b>Total # of Scholarly Books: 5</b>  <b>Total % of Peer Reviewed Work: 85.27%</b></p>			
<p><b>Source—list in alphabetical order and include every source</b></p>	<p><b>Peer Reviewed</b></p>	<p><b>Nonpeer Reviewed</b></p>	<p><b>Source will be over 5 years at CAO approval</b></p>
<p>Acosta, G. (2012). <i>A review of the Department of the Army's decentralized cost benefit analysis process</i> (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3539046)</p>	X		
<p>Agar, M. (2014). An outsider's ethnographic thoughts about design. <i>Arts and Humanities in Higher Education</i>, 13(4), 404-411. doi:10.1177/1474022214531478</p>	X		
<p>Alegre, D. M. (2012). <i>U.S. Army soldiers' experiences in cross-cultural communications: A phenomenological study</i> (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3510604)</p>	X		
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<p>Asch, B. J., Miller, T., &amp; Malchiodi, A. (2012). <i>A new look at gender and minority differences in officer career progression in the military</i>. Santa Monica, CA: RAND. Retrieved from <a href="http://www.rand.org">http://www.rand.org</a></p>	X		



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<p>Bernard, H. R. (2013). <i>Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches</i> (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p>		X	
<p>Bernardi, S., Merseguer, J., &amp; Petriu, D.C. (2012). Dependability modeling and analysis of software systems specified with UML. <i>ACM Computing Surveys</i>, 45(1), 1-48. doi:10.1145/2379776.2379778</p>	X		
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## Appendix B: Case Study Protocol

### A. Case Study Introduction

1. Overarching Research Question: What marketing strategies do successful recruiting professionals use to motivate individuals to join the military?
2. Conceptual Framework: Emergent Strategy Theory

### B. Protocol Purpose and Intended Use

Protocol to be used by the researcher to guide and inform all data collection, analysis, findings and conclusions of the study

Researcher will use the protocol to ensure dependability of case study methods, findings, and conclusions

### C. Data Collection Procedures (Focus Group)

1. Email to academic leadership of King's College, requesting permission to conduct study (Appendix C)
2. Contact Dr. Marc Marchese, a former professor mine who is currently a Human Resources teacher at King's College, for assistance in locating students who would be willing to participate in a focus group. These students would either be his former students or other students who are not in his classes. Dr. Marchese's role will be limited to making students at King's College aware of my desire to conduct focus groups and providing them with my contact information.
3. Focus group participants will meet the following criteria: (a) over the age of 18; (b) an undergraduate student of King's College; (c) no obvious connection to the military; (d) do not belong to any protected class; (e) available for an hour-long focus group; and (f) no physical or mental handicap.
4. After receiving a list of contact information for potentially interested participants, I will send each student an initial contact email (Appendix D).
5. Students who agree to participate will receive an informed consent form (Available upon request), which they will be asked to sign and return via email.
6. Create a folder for each participant (folder to include informed consent, focus group questions, template for recording answers, marketing materials of the Army and Marine Corps for participant's review).

7. Schedule three focus groups, of eight to 12 people each, which will occur over a period of 1 week (in an effort to accommodate for the varying class schedules of participants) and will not last longer than one hour each.
8. Schedule a time when lunch can be provided for the focus groups, as a gesture of thanking them for their participation and an opportunity to build rapport with them before the focus groups begin.
9. Arrive at the designated location thirty minutes ahead of scheduled focus groups.
10. Data collected from focus groups will come from their review of current marketing materials from the Army and Marine Corps and a corresponding set of questions intended to obtain their perceptions about these materials.
11. Review the objectives of the study with participants and remind them each focus group will be digitally recorded using an Apple iPad application called AudioMemos, to allow for transcription later.
12. Ensure participants have signed the informed consent form.
13. Assign a number to each participant.
14. Provide privacy and comfort of the participant
15. Reinforce that a participant can stop at any time, information is confidential, and if a participant does not understand the question, the participant can ask for clarification
16. Ask the participants to review the template for recording answers (Appendix F), provided in their folder. Determine the participant's comfort level with the template and make changes as necessary.
17. Show participants the marketing materials of the Army and Marine Corps and give them a few minutes to absorb and reflect on the information provided.
18. Begin discussion with participants, using preselected focus group questions.
19. Take notes of conversation using agreed-upon template.
20. Have participants validate notes for accuracy (member checking)
21. Transcribe notes with LiveScribe Echo pen.

22. Place participant's consent and hand copy transcript in participants' folder.
23. Enter data into software.
24. Save all hard copy data for 5 years in a secure location in a fireproof safe and electronic data in a password protected with encryption software in an Apple laptop.
25. Destroy all data after a 5 year period.

#### D. Data Collection Procedures (Semistructured Interviews)

1. Contact via Facebook LTC (Retired) Joe Wetherell and Dr. Chad Shannon, both of whom are friends of mine and were formerly recruiting officers, for the Army and Marine Corps respectively.
2. After receiving their email address, send these potential interview participants an initial contact email (Appendix E).
3. Semistructured interview participants will meet the following criteria: (a) over the age of 18, (b) an undergraduate student of King's College, (c) no obvious connection to the military, (d) do not belong to any protected class, (e) available for an hour-long interview, and (f) no physical or mental handicap.
4. If these individuals agree to participate in the study, they will receive an informed consent form (Available upon request), which they will be asked to sign and return via email.
5. Create a folder for each participant (folder to include informed consent, interview questions, and template for recording answers).
6. Schedule a time and place, at the convenience of the participants, for the interviews to take place. Explain to the participants the interview will not last longer than one hour.
7. Schedule a time when lunch can be provided for the interview participants, as a gesture of thanking them for their participation and an opportunity to build rapport with them before the interviews begin.
8. Arrive at the designated location thirty minutes ahead of scheduled interviews.
9. Data collected from the semistructured interviews will come from a preplanned set of questions intended to obtain their opinions about how best to conduct recruiting for the military, based on their experiences.



10. Review the objectives of the study with participants and remind them the interview will be digitally recorded using an Apple iPad application called AudioMemos, to allow for transcription later.
11. Ensure participants have signed the informed consent form.
12. Assign a number to each participant.
13. Provide privacy and comfort of the participant
14. Reinforce that a participant can stop at any time, information is confidential, and if a participant does not understand the question, the participant can ask for clarification
15. Ask the participants to review the template for recording answers (Appendix F), provided in their folder. Determine the participant's comfort level with the template and make changes as necessary.
16. Begin discussion with participants, using preselected interview questions.
17. Take notes of conversation using agreed-upon template.
18. Transcribe notes with LiveScribe Echo pen.
19. Contact participants and ask them to validate interpretation of interview conversation.
20. Place participant's consent and hand copy transcript in participants' folder.
21. Enter data into software.
22. Save all hard copy data for 5 years in a secure location in a fireproof safe and electronic data in a password protected with encryption software in an Apple laptop.
23. Destroy all data after a 5-year period.

#### E. Data collection tools

1. Template for recording answers
2. Focus group
3. Interview questions
4. Apple iPad application called AudioMemos for digitally recording the conversation

5. LiveScribe Echo pen to transcribe the conversation

6. Researcher field notes

7. Case study (folders)

8. MAXQDA software

9. Microsoft word

F. Outline of Case Study Report Contents

1. Overview of study

2. Presentation of the findings

3. Applications to professional practice

4. Implications for social change

5. Recommendations for action

6. Recommendations for further study

7. Reflections

8. Summary and study conclusions

G. Focus Group Questions

1. What are your top five needs and top five wants, both for the immediate future and long term (the next 5 to 10 years)?
2. How do you think the marketing materials developed by the Army and Marine Corps align with the wants and needs you just discussed?
3. What particular aspects of the marketing materials of either service do a better job of addressing your wants and needs to motivate you to join the military?

4. What benefits of military service are you aware of, based on the marketing materials I showed you and your own previous knowledge?
5. What extent do the experiences of any your friends or family members who have served in the armed forces influence your likelihood to join the military to satisfy your wants and needs?
6. In what ways do the ending of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan relate to your wants and needs, which could influence your decision to join, or not join, the military?
7. Is there anything else important you can tell me about this issue?

#### H. Interview Questions

1. How long did you work as a recruiter and where?
2. What branch of service did you work for as a recruiter?
3. What kind of recruiting materials did you use as a recruiter?
4. What was your most effective technique in convincing college-aged potential recruits to join the military?
5. What kind of training did you receive to become a recruiter?
6. What do you think motivates college-aged potential recruits to join the military today, given the various conflicts with other nations and the budget cuts caused by sequestration?
7. Is there anything else you can tell me about what you think is important for recruiting college-aged potential recruits?

#### I. Data Analysis Techniques and Tools

Coding, bracketing, and member checking

J. Analysis tools

1. MAXQDA

2. Microsoft word

K. Study Dependability, Credibility, and Transferability Methods

1. Dependability methods

a. Case study protocol use

b. Case study database creation

2. Credibility and transferability methods

a. Multiple data sources (credibility)

b. Assessment of rival explanations, research bias identification, and member checking (credibility)

c. Rich description of study sample population and context (transferability)

## Appendix C: E-mail to Academic Leadership of King's College

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

My name is Lieutenant Colonel Paul McCullough. I am a 1998 Summa Cum Laude graduate of King's College and I am currently pursuing a Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) degree through Walden University. My doctoral study project, "A Comparison Of Marketing Techniques Among Military Recruiters" represents my effort to provide senior leaders in the DOD and military recruiters with a better perspective of what motivates college-aged potential recruits in their target demographic to join the military.

Because the Army's target demographic concentrates on 18 to 22-year-olds, I would like to conduct three focus groups, of eight to 12 people each, composed of undergraduate students of King's College. Dr. Marc Marchese, a former professor of mine, will have the limited role of making students at King's College aware of my desire to conduct focus groups and providing them with my contact information. These students would either be his former students or other students who are not in his classes.

The purpose of the focus groups is to understand the perceptions of this demographic, regarding existing military marketing materials and their opinions about what benefits an individual can gain from serving in the military. The focus groups will not exceed 60 minutes, but I will need to make a digital, audio recording of the session, so I can later produce a complete and accurate transcript of our conversation.

Understanding the results of the study could help recruiters improve their success rates by modifying their marketing materials to better communicate to college-aged potential recruits how the benefits of serving in the armed forces can help them achieve their objectives. If military recruiters successfully learn how to modify their approach to appeal to what matters to college-aged potential recruits, the study has the potential to assist the DOD in reducing the amount of money it spends annually on recruiting, because recruiters will no longer have to rely on hefty financial incentives to entice prospective recruits.

Should you agree to allow me to conduct these focus groups on your premises, rest assured the participation and personal information of all participants would remain protected as per Walden University's confidentiality guidelines. Upon receiving notification of your support, I will work with Dr. Marchese to identify students who would like to participate in my study. After making initial contact with them, I will send them a consent form via email outlining their rights during the focus group process and the purpose of my doctoral study. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. You can reach me at 804-243-2242 or [paul.mcculloughiii@waldenu.edu](mailto:paul.mcculloughiii@waldenu.edu).

## Appendix D: Initial Contact E-mail for Focus Groups

Dear college student,

My name is Lieutenant Colonel Paul McCullough. I am currently pursuing a Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) degree through Walden University. My doctoral study project, “A Comparison Of Marketing Techniques Among Military Recruiters” represents my effort to provide senior leaders in the DOD and military recruiters with a better perspective of what motivates college-aged potential recruits in their target demographic to join the military. Understanding the results of the study could help recruiters improve their success rates by modifying their marketing materials to better communicate to college-aged potential recruits how the benefits of serving in the armed forces can help them achieve their objectives. If military recruiters successfully learn how to modify their approach to appeal to what matters to college-aged potential recruits, the study has the potential to assist the DOD in reducing the amount of money it spends annually on recruiting, because recruiters will no longer have to rely on hefty financial incentives to entice prospective recruits.

Because the Army’s target demographic concentrates on your age group, I would like to conduct a focus group with you and some of your fellow students, regarding your perceptions of existing military marketing materials and your opinions of what benefits an individual can gain from serving in the military. The focus group will not exceed 60 minutes, but I will need to make a digital, audio recording of the session, so I can later produce a complete and accurate transcript of our conversation.

Should you agree to participate and help me in the pursuit of my degree, rest assured your participation and personal information would remain protected as per Walden University's confidentiality guidelines. Upon receiving notification of your support, I will send you a consent form via email outlining your rights during the focus group process and the purpose of my doctoral study. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. You can reach me at 804-243-2242 or [paul.mcculloughiii@waldenu.edu](mailto:paul.mcculloughiii@waldenu.edu).



### Appendix E: Initial Contact E-mail for Semistructured Interviews

Dear Potential Interview Participant (Name omitted for privacy),

My name is Lieutenant Colonel Paul McCullough. I am currently pursuing a Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) degree through Walden University. My doctoral study project, “A Comparison Of Marketing Techniques Among Military Recruiters” represents my effort to provide senior leaders in the DOD and military recruiters with a better perspective of what motivates college-aged potential recruits in their target demographic to join the military. As a result of your background and experience working as a military recruiter, I would like to interview you, regarding your perceptions of existing military marketing materials and your opinions of what recruiting strategies you found most effective. The interview will not exceed 60 minutes, but I will need to make a digital, audio recording of the session, so I can later produce a complete and accurate transcript of our conversation.

Understanding the results of the study could help recruiters improve their success rates by modifying their marketing materials to better communicate to college-aged potential recruits how the benefits of serving in the armed forces can help them achieve their objectives. If military recruiters successfully learn how to modify their approach to appeal to what matters to college-aged potential recruits, the study has the potential to assist the DOD in reducing the amount of money it spends annually on recruiting, because recruiters will no longer have to rely on hefty financial incentives to entice prospective recruits.

Should you agree to participate and help me in the pursuit of my degree, rest assured your participation and personal information would remain protected as per Walden University's confidentiality guidelines. Upon receiving notification of your support, I will send you a consent form via email outlining your rights during the interview process and the purpose of my doctoral study. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. You can reach me at 804-243-2242 or [paul.mcculloughiii@waldenu.edu](mailto:paul.mcculloughiii@waldenu.edu).

## Appendix F: Template for Observations/Note-Taking

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Response: \_\_\_\_\_

Body Language: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up Question/Comment \_\_\_\_\_

Response: \_\_\_\_\_

Body Language: \_\_\_\_\_

Time taken on question: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G: DOD Rules for Conducting Army-Related Studies

**Attitude and Opinion Survey:** A survey is a systematic data collection, using face-to-face or telephonic interviews, or self-administered questionnaires (including Web surveys), from a sample of 10 or more persons as individuals or representatives of agencies (44 USC § 3502). The questionnaires or interview protocols contain identical questions about attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and related demographic information. The results of the survey will be used to assess and guide current and planned Army policies, programs, and services. The findings can be generalized to all members of the target population.

### Applicability:

1. All attitude and opinion surveys of Active Army personnel conducted in two or more major commands (Army Commands, Army Service Component Commands, or Direct Reporting Units, see Figure 1) must be approved by ARI prior to administration. (For this guidance, "Major Subordinate Commands" are not considered as major commands.) Requests for survey approval from ARI shall be forwarded to ARI (DAPE-ARI-PS) and must provide the information outlined in Figure 2 (see AR 600-46, Attitude and Opinion Survey Program).

2. Attitude and opinion surveys conducted solely within a single command (e.g., ACOM, division, brigade, battalion, company/detachment) must be approved by the unit commander.

3. Attitude and opinion surveys of military members conducted in two or more DoD Components (Services) must be approved by the Defense Manpower Data Center, IAW DODI 1100.13 (Surveys of DoD Personnel).

4. Surveys also must be submitted to the appropriate Human Use Committee.

**Standards:** A survey will be approved only if—

(1) The need for information warrants the expenditure of resources associated with survey development, administration, and analysis.

(2) The survey is designed to produce reliable and valid information without bias while imposing minimum burden on respondents and supporting organizations.

(3) Survey design, content, and administration protect the anonymity and respect the personal rights and privacy of individuals selected as respondents. Surveys will avoid offensive or degrading topics. Responses will not be personally identified with the respondents without consent, nor made a part of their personnel files. (The governing Institutional Review Board will assist in making this determination.)

(4) Justification is furnished to support the need for all questions in the survey.

(5) The type of information required is suitable for survey methodology.

(6) The occurrence of events has caused previously collected information to become suspect in terms of

accuracy or completeness, or sufficient time has passed to warrant the collection of trend data.

(7) Information does not exist in other forms or cannot be obtained through other sources.

(8) When requested by ARI, proponents must obtain a Report Control Symbol (RCS) from their agency. Usually, the RCS for ARI's surveys will be assigned.

### Examples:

1. Assuming the planned survey of Army personnel will be conducted in two or more major commands, the following surveys are examples that would require ARI review and approval:

- Survey of Army Families
- IG Supervisors Survey
- Army Leadership Assessment Survey
- Army War College Alumni Survey
- Medical Specialist Corps Survey
- Human Relations Survey
- G-1 Incentives Survey

2. The following survey and types of surveys are examples that would not require ARI review and approval:

- Survey of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team
- Clinical Investigations
- Command Climate Surveys (within a command)
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys

It is recommended that Clinical Investigations include only those attitude and opinion questions that are directly related to the health and treatment matters.

### Survey Control Number

ARI authorization of all approved attitude and opinion surveys will be indicated by a survey control number (SCN). The series will change each fiscal year. The SCN will be on the first page of the instrument or web site in the following format:

SURVEY APPROVAL AUTHORITY: U.S. ARMY  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE BEHAVIORAL AND  
SOCIAL SCIENCES  
SURVEY CONTROL NUMBER: DAPE-ARI-AO-xx-xx  
RCS: ~~xxxxxx~~

### Submit Request to:

Army Personnel Survey Office  
U.S. Army Research Institute  
for the Behavioral and Social Sciences  
2511 Jefferson Davis Highway (U.S.P.S. mail)  
2530 Crystal Drive, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Arlington, VA 22202-3926  
(703) 602-7858/7877, DSN 332-7858/7877  
ARI\_ARLINGTON\_APSO@hqda.army.mil

## Appendix H: NIH Certificate

