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# The changing face of the U.S. military: a textual analysis of U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements from pre-9-11 to six years into the Iraq War

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THE CHANGING FACE OF THE U.S. MILITARY: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF U.S.  
ARMY AND U.S. NAVY RECRUITING ADVERTISEMENTS FROM PRE-9-11 TO SIX  
YEARS INTO THE IRAQ WAR

A Thesis

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in

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by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

In 2009, six years after the initial invasion of Iraq, the attraction of the “War on Terrorism” and the intense patriotism has faded. As a result, the military has watched the numbers of new enlistees steadily drop (Ayers, 2006; “Hell no,” 2007; Tannock, 2005). The present study investigates whether the United States military has adapted its recruitment strategies in television advertisements to change its public image in the wake of the increasing unpopularity of the Iraq War and disillusionment with U.S. military operations in the broader “War on Terrorism.” A textual analysis of U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements that aired on national cable television from January 2001 to January 2009 was conducted to analyze the use of impression management and issues management in strategic messages and themes in the advertisements. The textual analysis of television recruiting advertisements found that issues management strategies were used to address changes in the social and political environment of the period in which they aired. The analysis of recruiting advertisements also found that impression management strategies were used to create a new image of the military and being a soldier in response to shifts in public attitudes that occurred during the period in which the advertisements aired. The findings suggest that the U.S. military can improve its organizational public image by using specific tactics in recruiting advertisements during different periods of wartime.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Before September 11, 2001, national security was not a topic on the radar of the average American. When the World Trade Center buildings were hit by two airplanes from seemingly out of nowhere on 9-11, the importance of national security and the realities of terrorism came into sharp focus. After the tragedy of 9-11, there was an up swell of fierce American nationalism, pride and sense of retribution throughout the country (Lindemann, 2006; Louw, 2003; Stearns et al., 2003). During this time, the U.S. armed services saw a massive surge in new enlistments with a desire to defend their country in the “War on Terrorism.” The September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks were an incredibly powerful recruiting tool, the influence of which lasted for several years (Louw, 2003). Just before the United States entered into the Iraq War, American public opinion indicated that feelings of extreme patriotism were at their highest level since the U.S. entered World War II (Stearns et al., 2003).

A year after the invasion of Iraq, it became apparent that the war in Iraq was going to last much longer than White House officials had anticipated to the American people. According to Louw (2003), the Pentagon must achieve a quick and clean war victory “so that there is no time for negative anti-war U.S. public opposition to emerge, and no stream of body bags back home to unnerve civilian public opinion” (p. 222). On the eve of the six-year anniversary of the initial invasion of Iraq, the attraction of the “War on Terrorism” and the intense patriotism has faded. The lack of evidence found for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, media coverage of the horrific torture of prisoners of war by American soldiers at Abu Ghraib, and the dismal progress made in stabilizing and democratizing Iraq have contributed to Americans disillusionment with U.S. military operations in the Middle East (Bennett et al., 2007; Tannock, 2005). The war in Iraq “is already one of the longest wars in American history” (Hornick, 2009). With each year

that the U.S. remains entrenched in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the American public grows increasingly tired of militaristic actions (Hornick, 2009). As a result, the military has watched the numbers of new enlistees steadily drop (Ayers, 2006; “Hell no,” 2007; Tannock, 2005).

This trend reached a low point in 2007 when several branches of the military failed to reach their officer recruiting targets and 12,057 “moral waivers,” which allow recruits with criminal or drug convictions to join, were given due to the need to meet recruiting numbers (“Filling the Ranks,” 2008). The U.S. Department of Defense appears to have recognized the need to address the recruiting crisis. A critical analysis of recent military recruiting efforts indicated a shift in strategies and tactics, notably in recruiting advertisements in the media.

The present study investigates whether the United States military has adapted its recruitment strategies in television advertisements to change its public image in the wake of the increasing unpopularity of the Iraq War and disillusionment with U.S. military operations in the broader “War on Terrorism.” To answer the research question, this study analyzed military recruiting advertisements on television during the eight-year period of the Bush administration (January 2001-January 2009) to observe how the military’s recruiting efforts have changed. The in-depth analysis of U.S. Army and U.S. Navy advertisements was approached from the theoretical perspectives of public relations and advertising to examine changes in the persuasive communication strategies of military recruiting during this period.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Historical Background of U.S. Military Recruiting

U. S. military conscription was conducted at the national level for the first time when the United States entered WWI (Padilla & Laner, 2002). Since that time, national military recruiting efforts have been centrally managed by the U.S. Department of Defense. When the draft ended in 1973, the military became an All-Volunteer Force (Cooper, 1977). Economist Milton Friedman was one of the most significant engineers and advocates of the All-Volunteer Force (Tannock, 2005). Friedman successfully reasoned that a “*market-model military*” was in line with U.S. ideals of individual freedom and economic efficiency (Tannock, 2005). The switch from conscription to voluntary enlistment has been accepted as a positive move given the military’s experience with the draft during the Vietnam War. However, some have criticized this kind of military force because it turned the soldier into an employee (Moskos, 1977). While critics suggest that joining the military as an occupation has negative implications, the American government and the American people agree that an occupational military produces a better military force because it is voluntary.

With the establishment of an all-volunteer military, recruitment and management of manpower became an essential function of the United States’ military operations (Cooper, 1977; Padilla and Laner, 2002). Military recruiting efforts have been focused in American high schools and on the campuses of state funded universities (Ayers, 2006; Lindemann, 2006). In the past several years, there has been a growing anti-war and anti-militarism sentiment among the American public (Bennett et al., 2007). As a result, many anti-war groups have been established to express their disagreement with U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan “through

public dissent and coercive pressure tactics, seeking to mobilize public support for changes” (Garrett et al., 1989, p. 508).

The “counter-recruitment movement” is an activist group that has achieved national recognition for its resistance to military recruiting in educational institutions (Tannock, 2005). The counter-recruitment strategy works to undermine the U.S. military’s recruiting capabilities materially by gaining support for its “opt out” tactic (Tannock, 2005). A provision included in the recently passed *No Child Left Behind Act*, mandates that all federally funded high schools supply students’ personal contact information to the U.S. military (“Military Occupation,” 2006). The provision assists the military in recruiting young men and women that are nearing high school graduation. However, the provision also allows parents the option of obtaining a form, which requests that their child be exempt from disclosing their contact information. According to Tannock (2005), in July of 2005 the group had been able to get over 9,000 parents to sign opt out forms.

Other anti-war and anti-military activist groups criticize the U.S. military’s \$2.7 billion recruiting budget (Ayers, 2006; Tannock, 2005). Another criticism of military recruiting in the United States is that it exploits those in low socio-economic groups (Warner et al., 2003, Tannock, 2005). The nature of an all-volunteer military requires that recruiters use persuasive messages to attract recruits and the tactic of monetary incentive is enticing, particularly for young people from lower socio-economic demographics. The Iraq Veterans Against The War (IVAW) is another anti-war group that is on the rise. The IVAW group is particularly influential because members of the group are soldiers who provide personal testimonials to encourage other U.S. soldiers not to fight (“Hell no,” 2007). The group said that since the start of the Iraq War over 10,000 U.S. armed service men and women have deserted (“Hell no,” 2007).

In addition, many anti-war groups have protested the military's reliance on recruiting in high schools, particularly the expansion of JROTC programs (Tannock, 2005). These groups argue that the young adult male demographic is especially vulnerable to the tactics of military recruiters because of their desire for a sense of identity and belonging (Ayers, 2006). In recent years, there has been significant growth in anti-military attitudes across the country, especially among student activist groups in high schools. Given that this is a demographic group on whom the military depends heavily for new recruits, it is an opportune time to evaluate how the military is responding to this shift in public opinion and the steps it is taking to improve its image.

## **Military Recruiting and Public Relations**

### International Public Image of the U.S. Military

United States foreign and policies around the world have led to the deterioration of its international relationships (U.S. Department of State, 2005). As a result of this deterioration, the image of the U.S. military in the international community has also been damaged. U.S. military policies in the past decade have been a significant source of international disapproval. After the terrorist attacks on 9-11, the international community was supportive of the U.S. military actions in Afghanistan. However, U.S. military policies soon fell out of favor with the international community when the Bush administration acted without the support of the United Nations and invaded Iraq in 2003.

Recent international public opinion research shows that the United States is currently one of the least respected countries in the world (Wang, 2006). In particular, public opinion of the U.S. is highly unfavorable in the Middle East (Louw, 2003). The U.S. led Afghan War resulted in the Muslim world viewing the West, and the U.S. in particular, as a militaristic and coercive hegemony (Louw, 2003). The U.S. military's presence in Iraq has increased negative public

sentiment abroad but it has also had a significant impact on domestic public opinion. The deterioration in foreign relations and international hostility toward the U.S. created by the war in Iraq has had a negative effect on the public image of the U.S. military as an organization at home.

### Recent Military PR Efforts: Embedded Reporting

During the invasion of Iraq through the first couple of years of the war, the U.S. military enacted a public relations campaign through the media. The U.S. department of State created a strategic embedded reporting program in an attempt to gain public support for military action in Iraq through news coverage of the war (Pritchard, 2003). The government allowed reporters from all the major U.S. news outlets to embed in military divisions on various fronts. These embedded reporters supplied live 24-hour up close and personal coverage of the progress of the war back to the states and into the living rooms of Americans (Pritchard, 2003).

Initially, this program was extremely successful. However, as the war dragged on much longer than officials' expectations had conveyed to the public and the images coming from Iraq became more violent and bloody, public support gradually waned. According to Pritchard (2003), this public relations effort improved the "credibility of the individual soldier, sailor, airman, Marine, and Coast Guardsman" (p. 14). However, the decline in recruiting numbers and public opinion toward the military suggest that this media coverage of the Iraq War did not improve the image of the military as an organization. Although this public relations strategy was effective at creating public interest and support for the war in its early stages, it does not appear to be having the same effect six years into the war. In hindsight, it may have eventually worked against future military enlistment efforts by dampening the allure of the military for potential new recruits.

## Improving Military Recruiting through Public Relations

Public Relations is defined as the management of relationships between an organization and its important publics (Grunig, 1992). The United States military is an organization that exemplifies the importance of maintaining relationships with key publics and a positive public image. The U.S. military relies entirely on an all-volunteer force. Therefore, the successful operation of the U.S. military as an organization depends on the voluntary enlistment of the American people. In this way, recruiting is the U.S. military's most vital tool and the foundation of effective recruiting is relationships with target publics.

The primary public of the U.S. military's recruiting advertisements are potential recruits. According to Padilla and Laner (2002), "recruitment messages are used to capture the attention of potential recruits and to persuade them to sign on to a new way of life." (p. 114). The secondary public, but equally important and arguably inextricable from the primary public, are the American people as a collective public. Specifically, the secondary public includes the parents or guardians of the potential recruits. To maintain a beneficial relationship with these publics the U.S. military must have a positive public image. When the military has a negative public image its relationships with its key publics suffer and subsequently so does recruitment.

In recent years, several factors have contributed to the poor image of the U.S. military. An important factor is the loss of trust and credibility in the U.S. military's policies and operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Other factors include the increasing unpopularity of the Iraq War and its mounting American casualties. In addition, the loss of public trust in the U.S. military as an organization is due to disenchantment with the "War on Terrorism" because of the original expectations given by officials on the timeline of the Iraq War, as well as, the ever-rising numbers of American soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The military has also lost trust and

credibility among enlisted men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan because many soldiers believe that they are being over extended by being forced to serve back-to-back tours of duty or being misled about the length of tours.

A recent Rand study suggested that the military's public image would benefit from the use of advertising and public relations approaches (Larson & Savych, 2005). Advertising and public relations strategies in U.S. military recruiting advertisements can help improve the military's current negative public image in America and bolster recruiting numbers. The U.S. military's current efforts to change the public image of the military and increase enlistment through recruiting advertisements can be analyzed as an integration of advertising and public relations theories. Military recruiting advertisements seek to influence attitudes and behavior but they also aim to communicate a positive image on which to develop a long-term relationship with the public.

While public relations focuses more on the building and maintaining of relationships, advertising and public relations share the same fundamental communication objective: to persuade target publics. Communication research has shown that influencing the publics' attitudes about an organization can predict the publics' behavior toward that organization (Perloff, 2003). Therefore, in any organization that depends on voluntary action from the public, such as the U.S. military, persuading public attitudes is a critical function. The creation and maintenance of favorable public attitudes toward the U.S. military can affect target publics predisposition to join the organization. The U.S. military requires a constant supply of new recruits to operate successfully. To fulfill their organizational needs in an unfavorable recruitment environment, the military's communication strategy must improve its public image.

In analyzing the strategies and tactics of the military's recruiting advertisements, advertising theories will provide the best way for conceptualizing the tactics of the advertisements, such as the use of source factors and message factors in advertising messages. Public relations theories provide the most effective way to conceptualize the communication strategy of the recruiting advertisements, such as the themes and strategic messages used in the advertisements. Two theories of public relations, issues management theory and impression management theory, are most applicable to an assessment of communication strategies in military recruiting advertisements. Issues management theory offers a way to understand and analyze how organizations develop communication strategies in response to various factors affecting the organization and its publics' at a given time.

#### Issues Management Theory

Issues management has been defined as the recognition of shifts in public attitudes that have the potential to become significant problems down the road (Heath & Nelson, 1986). Therefore, an organization must respond to public opinion changes by altering its communication strategies to address the concerns of its key publics'. The development of issues management strategies are based on situational considerations. In an issues management approach, external factors affect the development of the public relations strategies used to communicate with publics.

Lauzen (1997) outlined five specific components of the issues management process: "issue identification, issue monitoring, issue analysis, message formation, and incorporation of the information into strategic and operational plans" (p.67). The first two steps in the process, issue identification and monitoring, explain that organizations should be aware at all times of issues that affect them. The third step, issue analysis, means that once issues are identified, the

organization should carefully examine and understand all facets of the issue in order to address the next steps of the process effectively. In the final steps, message formation and incorporation, the organization must create a message based on the issues in the environment that are important to the organizations key publics' and then implementing those messages into a strategic communications plan.

Issues management is essentially a strategy for averting an issue from becoming a disaster or having some other significant consequences for an organization. Organizations that use issues management effectively can prevent serious problems by detecting concerns that arise in the organizations' publics and addressing those concerns. According to Heath and Nelson (1984), "successful issues monitoring affords companies the alternative of accommodating rather than colliding with public opinion" (p. 14).

Miller (1999) expanded on this concept by explaining that in public relations, dynamic environmental scanning is critical if a strategy for issues management is to be effective. According to Miller, this is a constant process of gathering information about the attitudes and reactions of organizations' publics' towards issues that are important to the organization. As Lauzen (1997) explained, the analysis and incorporation of important issues gleaned from environmental scanning enables organizations to make strategic decisions about communication messages that will best address their publics' concerns. In the case of the U.S. military, the publics' opinion of issues that are important to the successful operation of the military, such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and military policies, should be continually scanned. The U.S. military's recruiting strategies should respond to public opinion that reflects a trend of negative attitudes toward the military by adjusting communication messages.

The U.S. military is an organization whose success depends significantly on a positive public image that can attract new recruits to sign up for a military life. As such, the military must weigh external factors, such as the social and political climate and public attitudes towards these factors, to adapt its recruiting messages to suit the current environment. Issues management theory offers a theoretical perspective from which to assess changes in military recruiting over time and the possible causes of those changes. An analysis of the messages in military recruiting advertisements over the period of time when public opinion toward war shifted dramatically will provide an opportunity to find out if the U.S. military responded to the socio-historic context in its recruiting strategies. Another public relations theory, impression management, can inform the way that persuasive messages in U.S. military recruiting advertisements have changed depending on the image that the organization aims to portray to target publics during a given period.

### Impression Management Theory

Impression management is a public relations theory that developed out of the psychology concept of self-presentation in interpersonal communication (Goffman, 1959). At the organizational level, impression management is defined as the efforts of an organization to attempt to control and shape the way it is perceived by its publics through strategic communications (Sallot, 2002; Allen & Caillouet, 1994; Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989).

Organizations communicate specific information to target publics in order to create a favorable image of the organization in minds of those publics (George, 2000; Sallot, 2002).

Avenarius (1993) points out that an organization is not in complete control of its image because the public “forms its own opinions on the basis of its own comparisons with competing messages and images” (p. 66). In this way, organizations are constantly struggling with external forces, such as the current social and political environment, that affect how the public will

perceive the image that the organization is working to portray to them. Similar to issues management, impression management recognizes that an organizations public image is a dynamic process (Sallot, 2002). Avenarius (1993) explains, “image building is an on-going process of mutual interference between an organization and its publics” (p. 69). The nature of the public image makes it important for an organization to adapt its communication messages to respond to the changing social and political climate in which it exists in order to present an image that will be received positively by its publics.

Ginzel et al.’s (2004) research on Dow Corning’s impression management efforts after public controversy arose over an FDA announcement about the dangers of breast implants illustrates the way that corporation’s use impression management strategies to address issues that are potentially detrimental to the organization. Ginzel et al. identify the important role that key audiences play in informing the organizational response to an issue or event that affects the organization’s desired public image. Ginzel et al. explain that organizational impression management strategy develops through a three stage reciprocal process between the organization and its publics. First, the organization formulates a strategic response based on the “political costs and efficacy of different approaches to resolving interpretive conflict” as well as, the power of key publics, their relationship with the organization, and their predicted reaction to the issue (Ginzel et al., 2004, p. 239). The publics’ reaction to the organization’s message and conflicting interpretation of the issue causes the organization and its publics to engage in “negotiation cycles” in which they reply to each other’s interpretations until a mutual agreement is reached (Ginzel et al., 2004).

Connolly-Ahern & Broadway (2007) examined the use of corporate Web sites to communicate a distinct image to the public. The researchers observed that corporations use

impression management strategies on their Web sites to construct and promote a positive corporate identity (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2007). A content analysis of the impression management strategies utilized on corporate Web sites found that the corporate impression strategies that appeared most prominently included competence, virtue, and likeability (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2007). Similar to organizational image building efforts, Versar & Wicks (2006) identify that political figures engage in impression management through their official Web sites to project a particular image during campaigns for public office. According to Versar & Wicks (2006), in the 2000 campaign, presidential candidates used impression management strategies in their choices of visual images on their Web sites in order to create a particular idea, feeling, or impression about the candidate in the eyes of the audience.

Organizational impression management has also been used as a method for integrating public relations and marketing strategies in the image building and promotion efforts of educational institutions in their target communities (George, 2000). Large universities have employed institutional impression management as a way to improve their image in response to issues or events that negatively affected key publics' perceptions of the institution. George (2000) identifies that organizations use the "*self-promotion and highlighting its important role and accomplishments in its community*" techniques of impression management to create and control their public image (p. 21).

Public relations strategies, such as those used in impression management theory and issues management theory, can be used in Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC). IMC is the integration and application of advertising, marketing, and public relations. In modern society, advertising, marketing, and public relations are increasingly used in combination with one another to enhance the effectiveness of persuasive communication strategies.

## **Advertising Theory and Military Recruiting Strategy**

### Society, Culture, and Advertising

Advertising is an important recruiting tool used by the U.S. military. Advertising began as a functional purpose in modern culture by connecting individuals' in a society to the products and services that met their needs (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Today advertising is tool that is used for many purposes other than selling a tangible product or service in society. However, advertising in communication areas other than the sale of goods and services retains the same conceptual purpose. Advertising is fundamentally a persuasive communication that intends to influence attitudes or behaviors (Nan & Faber, 2004). Scholars have also recognized that advertising messages often reflect and respond to the social context and culture in which it exists (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Sadow, 2002; Stearns et al., 2003; Vanden Bergh & Stuhlfaut, 2006). According to Stearns et al. (2003), "advertisers have a long history of monitoring public sentiment to improve creative strategies" (p. 509).

The social systems model of creativity posits that the creative content of advertising messages is shaped by the society and culture in which they are created (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Vanden Bergh and Stuhlfaut (2006) found that culture and societal context are the primary sources of creative ideas in advertising messages. In particular, researchers have found that the creative messages of advertisements are influenced by significant and relevant social, political, or cultural events (Sadow, 2002; Stearns et al., 2003). A social systems approach to analyzing advertising messages explains the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between an organization's strategic communication efforts and the public. An in-depth examination of the source factors and message appeals in U.S. military recruiting advertisements provides way to

observe how the social and political climate of the eight-year period of the Bush administration affected the message strategies in recruiting advertisements.

### Source Factors

Perloff (2003) identifies the three main source factors used in persuasive communication messages: authority, credibility, and social attractiveness. This study analyzes the source factors of credibility and social attractiveness. Source credibility is the message receiver's perception that the message communicator possesses certain personal qualities that make the communicator a credible source (Perloff, 2003, p. 159).

In advertising, the credibility of the source is an important characteristic that can affect how effective the message is at persuading the public. According to Nan and Faber (2004) "attributes of the source of a message can impact attitude change" (p. 13). Therefore, to improve their image with the public through advertising, an organization must build positive relationships with their target publics by developing credibility and trust. Given these concepts, U.S. military recruiting advertisements may employ strategic messages that aim to rebuild their credibility with the public in order to regain their trust.

Advertising is generally recognized by the public as an attempt to get the audience to think, behave, or act in a way that will benefit the advertiser. Therefore, the credibility of the source is often seen as inherently questionable by the public. For this reason, source credibility is a significant determinant in whether the advertised message is able to cause attitude or behavior change in the target audience (Nan & Faber, 2004). Therefore, it can be important for strategic messages in U.S. military recruiting advertisements to focus on showing that they are providing the potential recruit with something that will benefit the recruit.

The social attractiveness of the source is also important in persuasive communication strategies, such as those used in advertising, because it increases the success of persuading the audience (Perloff, 2003). Three attributes are identified as constituting a socially attractive source: likability, similarity, and physical appeal (Perloff, 2003). Similarity is the social attractiveness attribute most useful for the context of this study. Similarity of the communicator and the receiver has been found to be most effective in communication situations where the receiver is making a personal or emotional decision (Goethals & Nelson, 1973). The attribute of similarity is an important message strategy given that U.S. military recruiting advertisements are aimed at persuading the audience to make a life-changing decision.

### Message Factors

Perloff (2003) identifies that two main factors of persuasive communications are the language and symbols used in the message and the content of the message. According to Perloff, the language used in messages includes symbols. Symbols, or images that are symbolic representations, are important in analyzing persuasive communications on television. In television advertisements, the images and symbols used are an essential component of the communication strategy.

The content of persuasive messages includes the types of appeals used and the arguments made in the message (Perloff, 2003). The two categories of message appeals that are most often used in advertisements are pathos, emotional appeals, and logos, logical appeals (Nan & Faber, 2004, p. 14). One message content component identified by Perloff (2003), evidence, is frequently used in advertising appeals. According to Perloff, examples of evidence include “eyewitness statements, narrative reports, testimonials, or opinions advanced by others” (p. 180). Evidence can be used as a logical or emotional appeal in persuasive advertising (Perloff, 2003).

Research has found that evidence appeals are most effective when paired with a source that the receiver perceives to be highly credible (Perloff, 2003).

The persuasive strategies of U.S. military recruiting advertisements have traditionally relied heavily on emotional appeals. However, the current negative public attitude toward military operations in the Middle East, particularly the Iraq War, has weakened the effectiveness of emotional appeals to patriotism and nationalism. In light of the present climate of public opinion, military recruiting strategy may infuse more appeals using evidence in conjunction with credible sources in their recruiting messages in order to build a new public image.

### Television Advertisements as a Military Recruiting Tactic

While the U.S. military's primary recruiting resources and efforts are concentrated on engaging young people in high schools and on college campuses, television advertisements are also important recruiting tools. According to McGuire (1969) messages that are seen and heard are more likely to be persuasive than those that are read.

Television recruiting advertisements are effective in several ways that military recruiters are not. Advertisements are passive; therefore, potential recruits can receive and absorb the information and appeals without face-to-face confrontation. In particular, advertisements may be more effective tools for getting through to young people who had never considered military enlistment before and therefore, may avoid or be turned off by the pressure of a face-to-face encounter with a recruiter. This approach can be effective because it places less pressure on the potential recruit and in turn, they may be more receptive to the idea of enlistment in the military. In military recruiting messages, as in product advertising, persuasion is generally viewed with skepticism by the audience because they recognize the recruiter's self-interested motivations. According to Friestad and Wright's (1994) Persuasion Knowledge Model, skepticism may cause

the audience to block the message, which will prevent them from fully receiving and understanding the message. U.S. military recruiting advertisements may need to focus on the reciprocal and mutually beneficial appeals of military service.

Recruiting advertisements on television are important in today's anti-war and anti-military climate because they have the ability to reach not only potential recruits but also the influential people in their lives. Reaching and persuading the parents or guardians of potential recruits can be as essential as persuading the recruits themselves. This is particularly true for recruiting younger target audiences, such as high schoolers. Younger age groups are often still under the strong influence of parents or guardians that may be opposed to the idea of military enlistment and therefore, may convince the potential recruit not to join.

In addition, military recruiting advertisements may be effective at reaching potential recruits who are beyond high school and college age and therefore, are unlikely to encounter a military recruiter. Television recruiting advertisements have the potential to gain the attention of this older demographic. Recruiting advertisements on television have an advantage for reaching this age group, as well as others, because television allows for strategic targeting. Military recruiting advertisements on television can employ advertising concepts of audience segmentation (Nan & Faber, 2004). This allows the U.S. military to maximize its recruiting resources with as little waste as possible.

This study examined changes in U.S. military recruiting advertisements on television during the eight-year period of the Bush administration, which began before the "War on Terrorism" existed in the public consciousness through 9-11 and the war in Afghanistan and into the sixth year of the Iraq War. The objective of this analysis is to discover how the U.S. military recruiting strategies changed in the midst of these social and political crises and in the midst of

wartime. The goal of this study was also to analyze whether there was a relationship between changes in recruiting strategies during the period of interest and the changing socio-historic contexts of the period. This study approached the research question from theoretical perspectives of public relations and advertising. Public relations and advertising theories were applied in order to understand how persuasive messages in military recruiting advertisements were tailored to accommodate shifts in public attitudes during the period of interest.

### **Research Questions**

The textual analysis of U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements during the eight-year period of the Bush administration (January 2001-January 2009) addressed the following research questions:

**RQ 1:** Have military recruiting advertisements changed since before 9-11 to six years into the Iraq War in relation to the socio-historical context of the period?

**RQ 2:** Have military recruiting advertisements employed issues management strategies to address changes in the social and political environment of different periods?

**RQ 3:** Have military recruiting advertisements employed impression management strategies to create a new image of the military and being a soldier in response to shifts in public attitudes?

**RQ 4:** How have the components, sources, appeals, and images, used in military recruiting advertisements changed?

**RQ 5:** How have the key publics' targeted in military recruiting advertisements changed?

## **CHAPTER 3: METHOD**

### **Textual Analysis**

This study used qualitative approaches to researching the ways in which U.S. military recruiting strategies and tactics have changed during the period of interest. A textual analysis of U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements from the eight-year period of the Bush administration (January 2001-January 2009) was conducted to analyze changes in military recruiting advertisements on television. The Army and the Navy branches of the U.S. military were chosen because they have typically been the branches that experience difficulty reaching recruiting targets when there are lulls in military enlistment numbers (Warner et al., 2003).

The textual analysis approach has been used as a systematic exploration and interpretation of data (Djafarova, 2008; Prividera & Kean, 2008). Textual analysis has been used in advertising research to observe thematic trends and examine the use of punning in product advertisements (Djafarova, 2008; Prividera & Kean, 2008). This research approach is the most effective method for the purposes of this study because it lends itself to in-depth analysis. An in-depth textual analysis of U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements allowed the researcher to make detailed comparisons and determine changes in strategies and tactics during the eight-year period of the Bush administration.

### **Sample**

The researcher analyzed the entire population of U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements that were broadcast on national cable television from January 2001 to January 2009. The U.S. Army advertisements were produced by McCann-Erickson Worldwide. The U.S. Navy advertisements were produced by Campbell-Ewald Advertising. In total, 90 U.S. Army and U.S. Navy television recruiting advertisements were examined. The population breakdown by

branch was 82 Army advertisements and 8 Navy advertisements (See Appendix A and Appendix B). Each television recruiting advertisement was classified according to military branch and date of broadcast. The text of the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements were examined for the presence of strategies and tactics employing theories of advertising and public relations. The messages in the advertisements were examined for public relations theories by the use of impression management and issues management strategies.

Analysis of the use of impression management strategies in the communication messages were examined for the themes present in each recruiting advertisement (See Appendix C).

Strategic themes were guided by nine theme categories based on the appeals, images, symbols, and dialogue used in the advertisement. The theme categories were adapted from those proposed by Padilla and Laner (2002) in their study on print recruiting advertisements from 1954-1990:

Patriotism (appeals to duty, honor, defense of American freedoms and values);

Adventure/Challenge (action-oriented appeal, e.g., paratroopers jumping out of a plane, flying a jet);

Job/Career/Education (appeals to gaining technical skills or a trade, receiving funding for higher education); Technology (working with state of the art computer systems and equipment);

Social Status (joining the military boosts social prestige); Money (appeals to monetary

incentives, soldier's earnings); Travel (seeing exotic places and cultures, experiencing the world).

The researcher also created two additional theme categories: Humanitarian (appeals to 'doing good in the world'), and Personal integrity/development (appeals to individual growth and pride in oneself). Throughout the research process, these theme categories were adjusted to better describe the messages, appeals, and images that arose from examination of the advertisements. The examination of themes present in recruiting advertisements developed

further to include themes of pride, becoming part of a team, technology that reduces soldier casualties, and professional development. The guiding themes of the advertisements were identified by examining the types of appeals, messages, and images found in the advertisements.

The use of issues management in the messages of the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements was analyzed by comparing and contrasting the thematic trends found in the advertisements and the period during which those advertisements aired on television with the socio-historic context of that period. A comparative analysis of the themes present in the advertisements and the socio-historic context provided a way to analyze how the recruiting strategies changed over the period of interest in relation to the socio-historic context. The socio-historic periods were determined after the examination of the entire population of U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements was completed. The analysis examined relevant social and political events and issues that affected the U.S. military during the eight-year period of the Bush administration as point of comparison to the themes that were found in recruiting advertisements. The socio-historic periods developed out of the examination of distinct points of change that were observed in the themes present in Army and Navy recruiting advertisements and the socio-historic events and issues that occurred when the advertisements aired on television. The socio-historic periods were identified as the Pre-9-11 Period (January 2001-September 2001), the Early War in Afghanistan and “War on Terrorism” (initial invasion and main U.S. military offensive) Period (October 2001-2002), the Early Iraq War Period (March 2003-2004), and the Late Iraq War, Afghan War, and “War on Terrorism” Period (2005-2009).

The messages in the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements were also examined for advertising theories through the presence of source factors and message factors (See Appendix C). Source factors were used to analyze the target audience of the advertisement.

Source factors were examined by the source of the message and the credibility and social attractiveness. The identity of the source was categorized by voice-over, testimonial of member of organization (recruiter, recruit, officer, etc.), testimonial of non-organization member (parent, teacher, employer, etc.). The credibility of sources was examined by three characteristics that research has shown make a source credible: “expertise,” “trustworthiness,” and “goodwill” (Perloff, 2003). The social attractiveness of the source was examined by the identity of the source of the message and the similarity of that source to the implied target audience.

Message factors were analyzed by examining the message content and symbols (See Appendix C). Message content was examined by the appeals used in the message. Appeals were initially guided by the broad categories of emotional and logical appeals. As the research was conducted, the examination of appeals used in recruiting advertisements further developed into types of appeals that were more descriptive and contained a variety of message specific appeals. The types of appeals included intangible benefits to recruits, such as character building qualities and doing something bigger than yourself (patriotic), and tangible benefits to recruits, such as material incentives and functional assets for the individual (education and resume building). The symbols in the message were identified by an examination of the images used in the advertisement. The examination of images used in the advertisements was guided by the categories used to examine the strategic themes found in the advertisements. The images were examined through observation of the type of attire of the people (uniform, civilian clothes, etc.), the objects (weaponry, military equipment/vehicles, etc.), the setting (domestic, civilian, foreign), and the activities (military operations, kinds of occupations portrayed).

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

U. S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting television advertisements demonstrated changes during the Bush administration (2001-2009) in relation to the socio-historic context of four important periods during the eight-year contextual framework analyzed in this study. The Pre-9-11 Period (January 2001-September 2001), Early War in Afghanistan and “War on Terrorism” Period (October 2001-2002), Early Iraq War Period (2003-2004), and Late Iraq War, Afghan War, and “War on Terrorism” Period (2005-2009) illustrated distinct socio-historic contexts. The examination of the socio-historic context of each period provides a portrait of relevant issues and significant events affecting American public opinion and military recruitment during the period.

The textual analysis of U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements found that issues management strategies were used to address changes in the social and political environment of the period in which they aired. Analysis of television recruiting advertisements found that impression management strategies were employed to create a new image of the military and being a soldier in response to shifts in public attitudes that occurred during the period in which the advertisements aired. The sources, appeals, images, and themes in U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements changed in relation to the impression management and issues management strategies used in advertisements.

The most dramatic changes in themes, appeals, and images occurred between the Early Iraq War Period (2003-2004) and the Late Iraq War, Afghan War, and “War on Terrorism” Period (2005-2009). During these two periods, significant social and political issues and events caused changes in the way the American public viewed military operations in the Middle East which had a negative impact on military enlistment. Shifts in public attitudes toward the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the way that the Bush administration was conducting the broader “War

on Terrorism” corresponded with changes in the impressions and themes portrayed in U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements on television. These findings suggest that the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy employed impression management and issues management in the strategic messages used to attract new recruits in television advertisements.

### **Pre-9-11 Period (January 2001-September 2001)**

#### Socio-Historic Context

Prior to September 11, 2001, the last significant and well-publicized military conflict that the United States had been involved in was “Operation Desert Storm” and “Operation Desert Shield” in 1990-1991. The Gulf War was the most recent military engagement with a foreign power that required substantial numbers of U.S. troop deployments overseas. The Gulf War lasted less than a year and media coverage of the war for the most part depicted a relatively clean war with few, 28 total, American soldier casualties (“1991 Gulf War chronology,” 1996). The Gulf War was primarily conducted by precision air strikes and relatively few American boots were actually on the ground engaged in combat (Louw, 2003).

During the period before 9-11, the generation of young men and women in the U.S. military’s target recruiting demographic (18-23) were entering adulthood during peacetime. The young adults in this generation consisted of the early portion of “Generation Y,” or the Millennials, who grew up in the 1980’s and 1990’s (Safer, 2007). This was the computer generation that was coming of age during the era of “Nintendo” warfare, conducted with smart weapons and air attacks without the bloodiness of on the ground combat (Louw, 2003). The choice of military service, instead of going off to college or into the workforce after high school graduation, was an option not tainted by any firsthand experience with wars like Vietnam and no likelihood of war loomed on the horizon. The military recruiting environment at this time was

favorable because the social and political climate of the U.S. was free from serious large-scale international conflicts. U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements that aired on national cable television reflect the relatively neutral social and political climate in the U.S. during the Pre-9-11 period.

### Message Content

The appeals, images, and symbols used in U.S. Army recruiting advertisements on television during the period before 9-11 focused on portraying in detail what it looked like to join the Army. The Army advertisements portrayed this through a series of advertisements titled “Basic Training: The Making of an Army of One,” that were informational narratives from the perspective of a new Army recruit. The “Basic Training” series consisted of nine advertisements each depicting the focus of a week in the military’s nine-week basic training program or “boot camp.” Each advertisement provided a portrait of a new recruit’s experience during a given week of basic training.

The appeals in the “Basic Training” series were emotional. The emotional appeals in the advertisement messages during this period focused on the intangible qualities that recruits attain from becoming a soldier. The main emotional appeals in the advertisements were gaining the confidence to be able to conquer challenges and becoming a better individual through joining the Army and completing basic training. In the “Victory Tower” advertisement, the drill sergeant instructs the recruits: “your duty today is personal courage.” In “Basic Rifle Marksmanship,” the recruit illustrates the quality of conquering challenging tasks and gaining confidence: “I’m a little nervous because I’ve never done this before. It’s all about precision and confidence. If I hit 36 out of 40 targets today I’ll be an expert. That’s what I want to do.” The recruits in “Fitness Test” also exemplify how the Army has given them the confidence to overcome challenges:

“I’ve never pushed myself harder [ . . . ] It’s taken a lot of motivation, discipline, and confidence [ . . . ] I think mostly it’s taken a lot of mental work.”

The advertisements during this period used images of new recruits at U.S. Army training facilities performing military training exercises and operations. The images in the advertisements are filmed in black-and-white and appear gritty and realistic. The footage is intended to look as though the advertisements were mini-documentaries. The music in the advertisements was upbeat and energetic but background to the dialogue of recruits and drill sergeants with the exception of the “Graduation” and “Victory Forge” advertisements. In these two advertisements, the music was more prominent and had patriotic and stirring qualities.

The majority of advertisements focus on recruits’ physical training, learning to use weapons, combat training, and completing simulated combat missions. In “Pugil Stick Training,” the recruits are learning hand-to-hand combat in two-man bouts using thick, padded sticks intended to simulate a weapon. The drill sergeant instructs the recruits: “The red end is your bayonet end. The black end is the blunt stock of your weapon. You better come out here, be aggressive and fight your buddy.” In the “Defensive Live-Fire” and the “Victory Forge” advertisements, recruits are portrayed in full camouflage uniform and camouflage face paint with M-16 rifles conducting simulated combat operations in a forest training area. The combat operations in the advertisements depict intense and dramatic action scenes.

The appeals, images, and symbols used in U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements during the Pre-9-11 Period portrayed the fast paced, exciting, and challenging jobs and experiences for recruits that choose to “accelerate their life” in the Navy. The appeals used in Navy recruiting advertisements on television during the Pre-9-11 Period were mainly logical but also contained emotional appeals. The advertisement “Rocket Science” illustrated an appeal to logic and

emotion with the message: “In the United States Navy you’ll get hands on training with the most sophisticated equipment in the world. Because rocket science is more fun when you actually have rockets” The advertisement “Colors” also illustrated the use of combined logical and emotional appeals in Navy recruiting advertisements with the message: “Earn a college degree in the United States Navy and proudly display your school colors.” The movie-like advertisement portrays action packed Navy operations with actor-like soldiers whose camouflage painted faces are displaying their “school colors.” The one Navy advertisement that primarily appealed to the emotions of potential recruits was “Minivan.” The advertisement began by portraying a variety of exciting and fast-paced Navy military operations in the ocean, including Navy soldiers operating machine guns mounted on the front of Navy boats crashing over waves at high speeds. The scene then cuts to an average Joe-type man standing in front of a tan minivan in a car dealership lot looking pitiable and the voice-over states: “And to think, somewhere, some poor guy is buying a minivan.”

The images used in Navy recruiting advertisements portrayed military operations, equipment, and weapons unique to the Navy. Advertisements depicted fast-paced scenes such as missiles launching from a Navy ship in the ocean and jets taking off from aircraft carriers. Advertisements also portrayed Navy soldiers in boats and rafts with machine guns mounted on the fronts speeding through the ocean and Navy divers jumping out of helicopters into the ocean and swimming underwater with guns aimed as a seal swims away. The scenes in Navy recruiting advertisements during this period were exciting and action-packed. The music in Navy recruiting advertisements during this period was a prominent feature and the same music was used in all four advertisements. The music was heavy metal and it had highly aggressive and intense qualities.

## Sources and Target Audience

The social attractiveness of sources used in U.S. Army recruiting advertisements on television during 2001 was depicted through ethnic and gender diversity. Sources portrayed in advertisements represented African-American, Caucasian, and Hispanic ethnic groups. The age demographic of sources in the advertisements included recruits aged 19-23. The social attractiveness of the sources suggests that the target publics' of Army recruiting advertisements during this period were men and women from diverse ethnic backgrounds in their late teens and early twenties. Source credibility was portrayed through expertise and trustworthiness. The use of testimonials by real Army recruits illustrated the trustworthiness of sources. The recruits in the advertisements portrayed expertise by their ability to complete the mental and physical challenges of U.S. Army basic training.

The social attractiveness of sources in U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements on television during 2001 was illustrated by African-American and Caucasian ethnicities and the young age demographic represented by the Navy soldiers in the advertisements. The sources in Navy advertisements during this period were predominantly male. The sole female portrayed was a young African-American computer operator in the "AEGIS" advertisement. The dialogue in the advertisements was delivered as a voice-over and the source of the voice-over was an older, African-American male. The social attractiveness of the sources suggests that the target publics of Navy recruiting advertisements during this period were African-American and Caucasian men between the ages of 18-23. The credibility of sources in Navy recruiting advertisements was illustrated through the expertise of sources. Source expertise was portrayed through the attribution of authority to the older, African-American male source of the voice-over.

## Themes

The main themes found in U.S. Army recruiting advertisements on television during 2001 were challenge, personal development, and becoming part of a team. The advertisements “Victory Tower” and “Fitness Test” exemplified the theme of facing challenges and pushing individual limits to reach your fullest potential. In the advertisement “Fitness Test,” recruits have reached week seven by pushing themselves to their physical and mental limits to prove that they can overcome any challenge and are capable of making it as a soldier. In the “Victory Tower” advertisement, a new recruit conquered his fear of heights by accomplishing a 40-foot high wall climbing exercise.

The themes of challenge and becoming part of a team are illustrated in the advertisements “Confidence Course” and “Defensive Live-Fire.” In “Confidence Course” recruits are portrayed in completing a challenging obstacle course as squad. The recruit profiled in “Confidence Course” states: “All I keep thinking about is we need to get through this together. This ain’t easy but we can do it. Everybody gets the same training [ . . . ] here we’re all one.” The recruit profiled in the “Defensive Live-Fire” advertisement states: “I know that I’m not by myself anymore. I’m part of a team. They’re going to take care of me and I’m going to take care of them.”

The advertisements “Graduation” and “Victory Forge” illustrate all three themes of challenge, personal development, and becoming part of a team. In “Graduation,” the mother of a recruit speaks about how her son has changed since being in the Army: “He has said that if he makes it through basic training he’ll never be afraid of anything [ . . . ] I hear a new tone, a new richness, a new person growing within him.” In “Victory Forge,” the drill sergeant addresses recruits:

“I want you to think about what it took to get here. I want you to think about the pain and the gain [ . . . ] the fire burning before you represents the soldiers who

have completed basic training before you and those yet to come. The fact that you are standing here means that you have what it takes to be a soldier.”

U.S. Army recruiting advertisements during this period communicated the impression that becoming a soldier in the Army helps recruits build character through the physical and mental challenges. The sources, appeals, and images in the advertisement indicated that the Army aimed to appeal to young men and women looking for membership in a group and personal growth. The “Basic Training” series indicates that Army recruiting did not have a particular social or political event to drive recruiting themes and messages.

The themes found in U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements on television during 2001 were technology, adventure and challenge, and social status and pride. The Navy recruiting advertisements during this time focused on the themes of technology and challenge in the “AEGIS” and “Rocket Science” advertisements. “AEGIS” portrays a Navy soldier working rapidly on several different computer screens inside in the command control room of a Navy ship and the voice-over states: “Imagine tracking over one hundred enemy targets, on land, sea, and in the air, from thousands of miles away. It’s the most powerful weapons system ever invented and it’s just one of the amazing technologies you’ll find.” The advertisement “Rocket Science” depicts the theme of technology with the message: “You’ll get hands on training with the most sophisticated equipment in the world” and its portrayal of a sleek, futuristic-looking military watercraft. In “Colors,” the themes of adventure, social status and pride were exemplified by the message “proudly display your school colors” and the portrayal of what a college education looks like if you earn your degree in the U.S. Navy. The adventure, social status, and pride that are attributed to being a soldier in the U.S. Navy was also illustrated in the “Minivan” advertisement by the contrast of the life of a Navy soldier and the life of a civilian.

U. S. Navy recruiting advertisements conveyed the impression that the Navy offers challenging experiences and adventures to new recruits and also, provides recruits with the opportunity to work with state of the art weapons technology. The Navy recruiting advertisements conveyed the impression that being a Navy soldier was like living in a James Bond-esque action film. The appeals, images, and themes found in Navy recruiting advertisements indicated that the attractiveness of military combat operations was not affected by negative images and events of U.S. military warfare during this period.

### **Early War in Afghanistan and “War on Terrorism” Period (October 2001-2002)**

#### Socio-Historic Context

On September 11, 2001, a well-orchestrated and devastating set of simultaneous terrorist attacks were carried out in the United States by terrorists of Al Qaeda. Up to that time unknown to the American public, Al Qaeda was one of the largest and well-organized international terrorist organizations in the world. Al Qaeda used, so-called suicide bombers, Islamic fundamentalists that give their lives in terrorist attacks on the West for Jihad (holy war), to carry out the 9-11 attacks (Louw, 2003). Al Qaeda’s suicide bombers overtook four U.S. commercial airliners and crashed them into the World Trade Center “Twin Towers” in New York City, the Pentagon, and in a field in the Pennsylvania countryside that was intended for the White House. In the four airplane crashes and the Twin Towers a total of 2,973 Americans lost their lives in the 9-11 terrorist attacks (“U.S. deaths in Iraq, war on terror surpass 9/11 toll,” 2006).

The tragedy of the events of 9-11 shook Americans to the core. Before 9-11, the national security of the United States had not been breached on such a scale and caused such devastation since the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. One of the most lasting effects of 9-11 was that Americans strong sense of invincibility was shattered in a few hours. The sobering realization

that the U.S. was not impregnable and the fear that this realization created in the American public also proved to be a significant motivator in the events that followed, the “War on Terrorism,” the War in Afghanistan, and the War in Iraq.

The 9-11 terrorist attacks, galvanized the public's support for military action in Afghanistan against the Taliban and the Al Qaeda terrorist organization (Louw, 2003; Sterns et al., 2003). Americans, with the support of the international community, demanded that the U.S. government respond militarily to this new and dangerous threat that was capable of reaching American soil (Louw, 2003). The Bush administration responded swiftly to the 9-11 terrorist attacks by invading Afghanistan to destroy the Taliban regime, which was harboring and supplying resources to the Al Qaeda terrorist organization (Louw, 2003). The war in Afghanistan, “Operation Enduring Freedom,” began on October 7, 2001. Military operations in Afghanistan consisted primarily of airstrikes and precision bombings and the main offensive ended quickly with U.S. forces suffering relatively few casualties. According to Louw (2003), “the impression of a bloodless Nintendo war was successfully portrayed in the West” (p. 224). Low levels of U.S. troops remained in Afghanistan to maintain stability.

In the minds of the American public, the invasion of Afghanistan appeared to be a decisive victory. The initial phases of the “War on Terrorism” were staunchly supported by the American people and the international community. All branches of the U.S. military were meeting their enlistment quotas during this period and the recruiting environment was highly favorable due to the intense feelings of anger and patriotism still lingering from the 9-11 terrorist attacks. U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements that aired on national television during this time reflect that enlistment of new recruits was high. The U.S. Army aired only three recruiting advertisements during this period. The U.S. Navy aired the same recruiting

advertisements during this period as the previous period. The four Navy recruiting advertisements that aired during the Pre-9-11 period continued to air on television through 2005.

### Message Content

The appeals used in U.S. Army advertisements during this period combined emotion and logic. The use of emotional and logical appeals was portrayed in the messages: “I wanted to get ahead, to be part of something better” (“Jogging,” 2002) and “Challenges aren’t easy but I’ve never backed down. I wanted hi-tech training, I got it. I wanted to make important decisions, I do” (“Multitasking,” 2002). The advertisement, “Signs” also used emotional and logical appeals in the message: “They train and serve in the Army Reserve, part-time but fully committed. They found over 180 ways to succeed in the Army Reserve.”

During this period, the images used in U.S. Army recruiting advertisements on television depicted military operations and careers in the Army. The advertisement “Signs” profiled the positions of three soldiers in the Army Reserve, a telecommunications operator, a cable systems operator, and a microwave systems operator. “Jogging” portrayed an Army officer instructing soldiers in combat training operations and leading soldiers parachuting out of a plane. The music contained upbeat drum sounds but did not play a prominent role in advertisements.

### Sources and Target Audience

The sources portrayed in U.S. Army recruiting advertisements during this period were the testimonials of Army soldiers of Hispanic ethnicities representing mostly men in mid-twenties to thirties with the exception of one woman portrayed in the Army Reserve advertisement. The social attractiveness of the sources to a Hispanic demographic suggests that target publics’ of Army recruiting advertisements during this period were primarily Hispanic men. Source credibility in the advertisements was portrayed by the qualities of trustworthiness: “Others

depend on me” (“Multitasking,” 2002) and goodwill: “I lead others to become more than they ever imagined” (“Jogging,” 2002).

### Themes

The themes found in U.S. Army recruiting advertisements on television during this period were challenge, technology, career, and patriotism. The advertisement “Signs” illustrated the themes of career and patriotism through a montage depicting Army Reserve soldiers in their civilian lives and their Army jobs. The theme of technology and challenge was exemplified in “Multitasking” which portrayed a soldier in an air traffic control tower operating hi-tech computer systems to orchestrate the simultaneous landing of three military helicopters. The theme of patriotism was also portrayed by the messages: “Serve your country while living in your community” (“Signs,” 2002) and “I lead others [. . .] to become the strength of a nation” (“Jogging,” 2002).

U.S. Army advertisements during this period communicated the impression that the Army offers challenging career opportunities and hi-tech training to Hispanic men. The addition of patriotic appeals used in the advertisements indicates that the cultural context of the War in Afghanistan and the “War on Terrorism” period affected the U.S. Army recruiting messages.

### **Early Iraq War Period (2003-2004)**

#### Socio-Historic Context

In late 2002 and early 2003, on the heels and momentum of a seemingly successful and completed war in Afghanistan, the Bush administration began making its case for the invasion of Iraq. During a September 2002 interview, Donald Rumsfeld, then Secretary of Defense, warned the American public: “Imagine a September 11 with weapons of mass destruction. It’s not 3,000, it’s tens of thousands of innocent men, women, and children” (Purdum, 2002). On March 19,

2003, in a televised announcement to the American people and the international community, President Bush announced that the United States would take military action to “disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger” (Hornick, 2009).

In May 2003, President Bush gave his now infamous “Mission Accomplished” address to the American people on the deck of the *USS Abraham Lincoln* announcing that major combat operations on the ground were over (Bennett et al., 2007). The administration indicated to the American public that the role of U.S. military soldiers in Iraq would be rebuilding infrastructure, training an Iraqi military, and rebuilding a representative Iraqi government. American public opinion during the Early Iraq War Period indicated that there remained a strong sense of patriotism and commitment to the purpose of “Operation Iraqi Freedom.” Americans believed that the U.S. military’s mission to overthrow Saddam Hussein’s regime and bring democracy to Iraq was important to America’s national security. The military recruiting environment was positive because the majority of Americans still strongly supported the war. U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements that aired on national cable television during this period reflected the American public’s patriotism and support of the Iraq War and the “War on Terrorism.”

#### Message Content

The appeals in U.S. Army recruiting advertisements during this period were predominantly emotional. Advertisements that appealed to logic contained emotional appeals interconnected with the logical appeals, as in the message of “Stand Ready:” “We stand up for the things we believe in. Our training and our experience make us stronger as citizens and as soldiers.” Recruiting advertisements during this period appealed heavily to patriotic feelings, such as in the advertisement “Creed with Iraq” which portrays the different creeds of the Army including “We Will Always Win” and “Ducit Amore Patriae” meaning “Led by Love of

Country.” The images used in recruiting advertisements during this period depicted many scenes of American soldiers conducting various military missions and operating military weapons, such as scenes with tanks rolling through the desert and soldiers in camouflage uniforms with M-16 rifles engaged in combat operations the Middle East. The music in Army recruiting advertisements during this period took on a more prominent role. The music contained dramatic tones and had inspirational and moving qualities.

### Sources and Target Audience

The sources in U.S. Army recruiting advertisements during this period portrayed diverse ethnic, age, and gender demographics. The sources in the advertisements represented African-American, Caucasian, and Hispanic ethnic backgrounds and, although not as frequently as men, there were significant numbers of women portrayed. The ages represented were predominantly soldiers in their twenties, however, a wide range of ages from eighteen to thirty were present in the advertisements during this period. During this period, Army recruiting advertisements began using a number of African-American, Caucasian, and Hispanic parental sources. Advertisements portrayed the interaction between potential recruits telling their parents about their intention or desire to join the Army.

The credibility of sources in Army recruiting advertisements was portrayed through the expertise of soldiers and officers in the Army and the experience of parental figures. Source credibility was also depicted through trustworthiness by using the testimonials of real soldiers to convey the message. The social attractiveness of the sources depicted in recruiting advertisements during this period suggests that the target publics’ of the U.S. Army covered the spectrum of the American population and included both potential recruits and their parents.

## Themes

U.S. Army recruiting advertisements on television during this period showed an increase in the use of war specific and patriotic themes. “Victors” illustrates the use of war specific themes in its portrayal of American soldiers making statements of commitment and affirmation of the mission of the war in Iraq and the broader “War on Terrorism,” such as “No second place. There is only the victor and the vanquished and we know where we stand.” The advertisement “Cut from the Same Cloth” portrays a montage of footage of American soldiers in wars throughout history, including WWII, the Korean War, Vietnam, and compares them to American soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. The voice-over narrates:

“What we did is the same thing American soldiers have been doing for generations [ . . . ] There’s the same courage, the same determination, the same willingness to serve. We all took the oath [ . . . ] the spirit of a soldier, that’s never changed, that’s never going to change, that’s what makes the difference. Make history. Become a soldier.”

During this period, the themes in recruiting advertisements that were not directly portraying the war in Iraq or the “War on Terrorism” contained elements of patriotism. An example of this is the advertisement “Strength,” which illustrates the state of the art technology behind the equipment and weaponry of the Army and ends with the message: “But the strength of a nation lies in a simple piece of aluminum.” The advertisement “Make a Difference” combined the themes of personal integrity and patriotism in the message: “An American soldier is [ . . . ] a selfless defender of our rights and freedoms. He is proof that one soldier can and does make a difference.” Personal strength and integrity conveyed through patriotism was also illustrated in the advertisement “The Right Thing,” which portrays a montage of scenes of

American soldiers in the desert performing military operations juxtaposed with American soldiers in past wars. The message of the voice-over states:

“It’s never been about the hardships, the sleepless nights, how scared we were, how hot or cold it was or how much we missed home. It’s never been about the glory, the medals [. . .] it’s only ever been about doing the right thing and it still is.”

The advertisement “Always There” also exemplifies the theme of personal integrity and patriotism with the message: “An uncertain world is upon us. But our Army will always be there. It’s made up of a million soldiers who all believe that one person can make a difference.”

Themes of unique and challenging careers and hi-tech training in the context of patriotism were found in recruiting advertisements portraying a variety of positions in the Army involving military operations and missions and the experience gained from having a job as a soldier in the Army. The theme of unique and challenging Army careers and patriotism was found in the advertisement “Currently,” which shows an empty desk in an office, the empty locker room office of a sports coach, and an empty mechanics work station in a garage. The messages posted on the screen after each scene read: “Currently training Iraqi police officers,” “Currently spending the weekend training to fight terrorism,” “Currently hunting Osama Bin Laden,” “It’s not your everyday job.”

U.S. Army recruiting advertisements during this period communicated the impression that the Army offered opportunities for Americans to support their country, in active duty or reserve, in challenging jobs and gain unique training that makes them stronger individuals and citizens. A significant portion of the recruiting advertisements during this time focused on themes that specifically portrayed the Iraq War and the broader “War on Terrorism.” The

recruiting advertisements during this period reflected the social and political context and the strong public support of the U.S. military operations in the Middle East.

### **Late Iraq War, Afghan War, and “War on Terrorism” Period (2005-2009)**

#### Socio-Historic Context

American public support for the U.S. military operations being conducted in the Middle East began to weaken significantly by 2005 due to a combination of negative media coverage and events. By 2005, the number of deaths of American soldiers seemed to be continuously rising in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2005, revelations of major intelligence errors regarding the connections between Iraq and Al Qaeda and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) received significant coverage in the mainstream media (Bennett et al., 2007; Schorn, 2006). The most notable of these intelligence errors was the scandal of the identity leak of CIA agent Valerie Plame. The leak was retaliation for her husband, former U.S. diplomat Joseph Wilson, bringing to the public's attention that the ‘intelligence’ of Saddam Hussein's attempt to purchase bomb-grade uranium from Africa was manufactured by the Bush administration to gain public support for the war in Iraq (Bennett et al., 2007).

In January 2005, the Bush administration officially ended its search for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and weapons stockpiles in Iraq (“Official: U.S. calls off search for Iraqi WMDs,” 2005). The government's inability to find solid evidence that Saddam Hussein was possessed WMD's led to the deterioration of American public opinion about the U.S. military presence in the Middle East (Bennett et al., 2007; Schorn, 2006). The public also grew impatient with the government's failure to capture Osama Bin Laden. In late 2005, the appalling and inhumane torture of suspects being held as prisoners of war by American soldiers in the U.S. military's Abu Ghraib detention center became well-known due to Senator John McCain's public

condemned the practice (Bennett et al., 2007). The shocking inhumanity depicted in the photos and horrific stories about Abu Ghraib that were reported in the media brought the darker side of the “War on Terrorism” home to the American public.

In addition to the waning rationale for the war in Iraq, military service was growing less attractive to potential recruits. During this time, the media reported on the military’s heavy reliance on reserve soldiers and national guardsmen who were increasingly required to remain overseas for extended and back-to-back tours of duty (Office of Speaker Nancy Pelosi, 2007). By 2005, the number of U.S. soldier casualties in both Iraq and Afghanistan had reached over 2,000 and continued to rise rapidly as conditions in Iraq began to deteriorate severely (“Death toll for U.S. troops in Iraq reaches 2,000,” 2005). It became clear that U.S. troops were going to be entrenched in guerilla warfare for an indefinite period of time. The public’s new awareness of the realities of the Iraq War, Afghan War, and the “War on Terrorism” has taken its toll on U.S. military recruitment as echoes of “Vietnam Syndrome” resonate among the American public.

Although the situation in Iraq improved as of January 2009, primarily due to the U.S. troop surge in 2007, the new administration’s plans to significantly decrease troop levels makes the likelihood of stability in the region low (Hornick, 2009). In addition, insurgency, violence, and U.S. troop deaths in Afghanistan rose dramatically at the end of 2008 and into early 2009. The new administration plans to send an additional 20,000-30,000 troops to Afghanistan to attempt to re-stabilize the region by the summer of 2009 (“Up to 30K New U.S. Troops to Afghanistan,” 2008; “Surge ‘no solution in Afghanistan,’” 2009). All of these factors contributed to the decline in U.S. military enlistment and created a difficult recruiting environment for the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy.

## Message Content

The changes in the appeals used in U.S. Army recruiting advertisements on television during this period demonstrated an increase in messages that appealed to logic and the material benefits of joining the Army. Recruiting advertisements also increased appeals to parents using both logic and emotion. In the advertisement “Dinner Conversation,” a potential recruit exemplifies the use of emotion and logic in recruiting when he explains to his mother: “I found someone to pay for me to go to college [ . . . ] I can get training in just about any field that I want and besides, it’s time for me to be the man.” In “Starting Out,” the message uses logical appeals to communicate with parents of potential recruits: “They can be aviation electricians, pharmacists, computer technicians [ . . . ] and I can get money to go to college.” A dramatic example of the changes in message strategies and appeals was seen in “Set Your Sights,” an advertisement that was updated in 2006 to focus on appeals to logic by providing information on attractive monetary and career benefits for recruits. The message in “Set Your Sights” states: “You could get up to \$40,000 in enlistment bonuses today. Plus up to \$71,000 for education or up to \$65,000 to pay off college loans. Gain the experience and firm financial footing you’ll need to succeed tomorrow.”

During this period, the U.S. Army jobs and training portrayed in the recruiting advertisements also emphasized technical and computer-oriented positions and fewer combat positions depicting soldiers with M-16 rifles. The advertisement “Barbershop” portrays an Army soldier in an office working on computers with the soldier explaining to his friends: “Thanks to the training I’m getting in the Army Reserve, I’m going to have my own computer consulting company in no time.”

Many of the advertisements portray soldiers having success in their post-Army civilian jobs, such as an aircraft engineer (“In My Last Job,” 2005) and a firefighter (“Fire Truck,” 2005), because of their Army training and experience. The advertisement “Get Noticed” illustrated these changes through its portrayal of former Army soldiers in their civilian careers as doctors, businesspersons, and other professionals and the message: “As it turns out, camouflage is a great way to get noticed. One hundred and fifty careers and the strength America’s top employers are looking for.”

U.S. Army recruiting advertisements also used fewer images of soldiers in camouflage uniforms engaged in combat operations and predominantly pictured Army soldiers in civilian settings and wearing civilian clothes. In the advertisement “School,” these changes are illustrated through scenes of college lecture halls, idyllic college campuses, and students in civilian clothes walking leisurely with book bags. The scene transitions into a group of soldiers being saluted by an officer during a military ceremony and the audience discovers that the school that is being depicted is actually the Army. The music had a motivational quality but did not take on a prominent role.

U.S. Navy recruiting messages used emotional appeals in all of the advertisements on television during this period. Recruiting messages appealed to positive emotions through messages such as the one in “Ribbons:” “If you want to do great things in your world, spend some time in ours.” Appeals and images emphasized the less militaristic side of being in the Navy, such as the images in the advertisement “Wave” which portrays a mass of Navy helicopters flying over the ocean carrying huge crates of aide and supplies intended for victims of the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia. In “Ribbons,” Navy soldiers are pictured in boats saving small children from flooded neighborhoods in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The images in U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements during this period portrayed few scenes with soldiers engaged in combat operations. The advertisement “Drones” portrays the use of hi-tech devices and equipment that allow Navy soldiers to remain at a distance from the danger of military missions, such as a remote controlled camera drone that can complete reconnaissance missions in buildings in urban areas to ensure it is safe for soldiers. The Navy advertisements that depicted military operations portrayed covert activities of the Navy seals. “Footprints” portrays the scene of waves breaking on an empty beach in the moonlight and after a passing cloud blacks out the screen for a moment, only the footprints of Navy seals are visible in the sand. Music took on more prominence and had inspirational and uplifting qualities.

#### Sources and Target Audience

The sources in U.S. Army recruiting advertisements during this period portrayed male and female soldiers from late teens to mid-twenties and represented diverse ethnic backgrounds. The sources depicted during this period indicate that the Army was aiming to attract diverse recruits within a young age demographic. The sources of messages included potential recruits, soldiers currently in the Army, former Army soldiers, and the parents of potential recruits and current Army soldiers. The use of testimonials by current and former Army soldiers conveyed the trustworthiness of the sources. The goodwill of sources was also conveyed in recruiting advertisements during this period through the increased use of parental sources and the emphasis on source testimonials that communicated the material benefits in their lives as a result of becoming a soldier in the Army.

The sources in U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements during this period were notable for the limited depictions of soldiers themselves. With the exception of “Ribbons,” Navy soldiers were not prominently pictured in scenes. In the advertisement where soldiers were portrayed

prominently, ethnic and gender diversity of Navy soldiers was limited. In the advertisements, a few African-American men and one Caucasian female were represented but the majority of Navy soldiers were Caucasian men. The social attractiveness of the sources in the advertisements suggests that the target publics' of the U.S. Navy were Caucasian males during this period. The credibility of sources in Navy recruiting advertisements was illustrated through the goodwill of Navy soldiers conducting global relief efforts and the expertise of the Navy seals.

### Themes

U.S. Army recruiting advertisements on television during this period demonstrated a notable increase in themes of career, education, and money. The advertisement "Fitting the Pieces" portrayed a soldier repairing a helicopter and transitioned to the soldier as a civilian instructing a class of mechanics how to repair car engines and conveyed the message: "The strength to build a better future can be found in the Army." An increase in advertisements for the Army Reserve that used themes of career and money was also found. The "Airport" advertisement conveys these themes: "Gain the skills and confidence to succeed in both your civilian and Army careers. Plus get help paying for college and see if you qualify for an enlistment bonus, all while pursuing your civilian career." The 2006 version of the Army Reserve advertisement "Stand Ready" illustrates the use of career, education, and amount-specific monetary themes that were not found in any recruiting advertisements in the periods before 2005. The message of the updated version of the "Stand Ready" advertisement states:

"With up to \$20,000 in enlistment bonuses, plus up to \$23,000 to continue your education while you serve, or up to \$20,000 to pay off college loans [ . . . ] you'll also get a savings plan and experience that will benefit you far into the future."

The 2009 advertisement “Company” further illustrated the changes in the impression conveyed in Army recruiting advertisements through the distinctly different language and images used. “Company” exemplified how Army recruiting advertisements had changed from the previous period by emphasizing the future of an Army soldier and showing few images of the actual military experience. In “Company,” a sleek office building is pictured and inside men and women in professional business suits are climbing up a wall in the middle of the foyer as other businesspersons walk around. The message states: “There is a company that is like no other company in the world. CEO’s got started here, astronauts, and software engineers [ . . . ] this company is filled with dreamers that have courage, strength and honor.” At the end of the advertisement the audience finds out that this company is the Army. The “Company” advertisement creates the impression that the Army is for individuals with professional goals and the few military images depicted include a soldier in dress uniform walking toward an office building on an Army base and a group of saluting soldiers at an Army ceremony.

The increased use of career and education appeals, themes, and images, as well as the introduction of monetary themes, indicate that the Army changed their recruiting strategies in response to relevant events and issues in society that affected enlistment. During this period, the Army continued to use appeals to personal development, challenge, and some appeals to patriotism. However, these appeals were used in the context of themes of technical careers and recruits futures after the Army.

The advertisements “Do It All” and “Convincing” illustrate these changes. “Do It All” portrays soldiers in various technical fields of the Army, such as teaching in a classroom, learning computer programs, operating an X-ray machine in a medical facility, and instructing another soldier about helicopter mechanics in an airplane hangar. A soldier in the advertisement

is also depicted working on electrical wiring for computer systems in his Army fatigues and then shown in civilian business attire as a computer networking professional. The voice-over conveys the message: “It’s not just the strength to learn, but the strength to teach. Not just the strength to follow, but the strength to lead. It is not just the strength to wake up your life, but the strength to live out your dreams [ . . . ] Learn about the Army’s 150 different career opportunities.” In the advertisement “Convincing,” a soldier is portrayed leading a group of soldiers as they parachute out of a helicopter and the message states: “If you’re ever in an interview and asked if you have leadership experience, try not to smile.” The changes in U.S. Army recruiting advertisements during this period emphasized the tangible benefits of being a soldier in the Army as their principal persuasive message and theme.

The themes found in U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements during this period were technology and humanitarian. Technology themes focused on conveying the impression that Navy technology helps keep soldiers safe. The “Drones” advertisement creates the impression that soldier casualties will be limited by increasingly sophisticated Navy technology. The voice-over in “Drones” delivers the message: “Working everyday to unman the front lines.”

Humanitarian themes in Navy recruiting advertisements were illustrated by the message in the “Wave” advertisement: “7:59 am, the sea delivers untold devastation to a huge area of Southeast Asia. Soon after, it delivers something else.” Humanitarian themes were also prominent in the advertisement “Ribbons,” which depicts scenes of Navy soldiers providing aid all over the world. The advertisement highlights scenes of Navy supply ships such as the *USNS Mercy* in the South Pacific and Navy soldiers handing out food and supplies to victims of the tsunami. “Ribbons” also portrays Navy soldiers playing with poverty-stricken children and other global outreach efforts in Indonesia, such as Navy soldiers helping to rebuild structures.

Themes in U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements during this period showed that recruiting messages began to portray an image of the Navy that highlighted their non-military operations worldwide. The changes in appeals, images, and themes in U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements illustrated that the Navy responded to the decline in new enlistment due to the negative attitudes and deteriorating support for U.S. military operations in the Middle East, particularly the Iraq War, among the American public during this period.

U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements indicated that both the Army and the Navy adjusted their recruiting strategies to improve attitudes toward military enlistment by managing the impressions of their organizations. The changes in the impressions portrayed in Army and Navy recruiting advertisements corresponded with important socio-historic periods during the eight years of the Bush administration that demonstrated shifts in public sentiment relevant to U.S. military recruiting.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **Changes in Military Recruiting Strategies**

A comparative socio-historic analysis found that the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy responded to the downturn in military enlistment due to anti-war and anti-militarism climate by shifting the focus of message strategies in recruiting advertisements that aired on television. By late 2006, public opinion research showed that 67% of Americans were opposed to the war in Iraq (CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll). The Late Iraq War, Afghan War, and “War on Terrorism” Period (2005-2009) demonstrated that recruiting messages began to focus on aspects of joining the military and being a soldier that were less militaristic and more on the benefits that being in the military provides the individual. The tactics used to emphasize benefits to the recruit in television advertisements included themes of monetary incentives, career, education, and a better future as well as increased appeals to logic.

Analysis of the target publics’ implied in the U.S. Army recruiting advertisements over the eight-year period demonstrated an increased focus on specific targeting of Hispanic ethnic groups beginning in 2002 through 2009. A 2007 Army advertisement titled “Hispanic Salute” was dedicated entirely to recognizing Hispanic soldiers in the Army. A 2006 advertisement, “Weigh the Most,” also portrayed only Hispanic soldiers. In addition, all of the Army advertisements during 2002 were directed specifically at Hispanic recruits with the tagline “Yo Soy el Army.”

The majority of Army advertisements across the eight-year period showed that the target publics’ that were implied in recruiting advertisements were ethnically and gender diverse. During the Late Iraq War, Afghan War, and “War on Terrorism” Period (2005-2009), the U.S. Army began increasing the use of African-American sources in recruiting advertisements, which

implied that the Army specifically targeted African-Americans during this period. The sources used in U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements from 2001-2004, implied that the Navy primarily targeted African-Americans and Caucasian ethnicities and men during this period. U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements during 2005-2009 began to portray more women and other ethnicities, which suggests that the Navy may have expanded its target publics' in response to decreased enlistment. During this period, the sources used in Army and the Navy recruiting advertisements implied that both branches mainly targeted publics' between the ages of eighteen to twenty-three with the exception of Army Reserve advertisements that portrayed slightly older age groups.

The U.S. Army recruiting advertisements demonstrated important changes in sources between the Early Iraq War Period (2003-2004) and the Late Iraq War, Afghan War, and "War on Terrorism" Period (2005-2009). In 2004, the U.S. Army introduced recruiting advertisements that targeted the parents of potential recruits. These advertisements appealed to parents using themes of personal development, challenge, job, and education. The messages in the advertisements highlighted the patriotic aspects of being a part of something important and the character building benefits of joining the Army. The intangible benefits were emphasized and themes of education and career were secondary. During the period from 2005-2009, Army recruiting advertisements targeting parents also used themes of personal development and appeals to character building benefits of becoming a soldier. However, the advertisements demonstrated changes with the introduction of the theme of money for education in the appeals to parents and education and career played more prominent roles in the messages.

The focus in Army recruiting advertisements on television on targeting Hispanic ethnicities during the Early War in Afghanistan and "War on Terrorism" Period (2001-2002) suggests that other ethnic groups did not need to be heavily recruited. This, as well as, the overall

small number of Army recruiting advertisements aired during this period was likely because the 9-11 terrorist attacks succeeded in increasing enlistment to allow the Army to spend limited effort on recruitment advertising on television.

The in-depth analysis of the changes in the impressions communicated in U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements demonstrated that impressions changed in response to issues and events during the Bush administration that negatively affected both organizations' images and caused a decline in enlistment. The changes in the persuasive messages and appeals employed in U.S. Army and U.S. Navy television recruitment advertising during the eight-year period of the Bush administration suggests that both organizations used impression management and issues management strategies to develop a positive impression of joining the military and becoming a soldier.

The most significant shifts in images and themes were observed during the period after 2005 when public attitudes toward the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began to deteriorate. During the Early Iraq War Period (2003-2004), recruiting advertisements, particularly the Army advertisements, showed many images depicting the Iraq War and soldiers engaged in warfare in the deserts of the Middle East. During the Late Iraq War, Afghan War, and "War on Terrorism" Period (2005-2009), the justification for going to war began to unravel, the death toll of American soldiers rose, and the public realized that the end of military operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan would drag on indefinitely. Enlistment in the U.S. military began to drop as public support for the wars and rationale for the deaths of so many American soldiers deteriorated. According to public opinion research, 66% of Americans felt that considering the costs to the U.S., the Iraq War was not worth fighting (ABC News/Washington Post Poll, 2007).

Recruiting advertisements during this period showed a marked decrease in images depicting soldiers engaged in combat warfare in the Middle East.

During the Late Iraq War, Afghan War, and “War on Terrorism” Period (2005-2009), the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy recognized the need to modify the focus of their recruiting messages because themes emphasizing patriotism, specifically in relation to the Iraq and Afghan wars, and images of war had become less appealing. The present study also found these trends increased as the Late Iraq War, Afghan War, and “War on Terrorism” (2005-2009) Period progressed. During this period, the use of images of military weaponry and messages appealing heavily to patriotism in Army and Navy recruiting advertisements decreased significantly from the previous periods. For Army advertisements, the use of career, monetary, education themes and images of members of the Army in civilian settings and involved in non-combat activities became more frequent. For Navy advertisements, the use of humanitarian themes and images became more prominent. The use of these themes and images in Navy advertisements indicate that the U.S. Navy implemented public relations strategies in an effort to re-brand itself “as an organization that is “doing good” in the world, through relief efforts like those in post-tsunami Southeast Asia or in post-earthquake Pakistan” (A few good ad men,” 2008). These changes in the persuasive strategies of the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements corresponded with social and political events that affected the U.S. military’s success as an organization.

## **Recommendations**

The findings of this study demonstrated that the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy used impression management and issues management in recruitment advertising on television during the eight-year period of the Bush administration. Public attitudes and impressions are difficult to

change and organizational efforts to change its public image often require a lengthy amount of time to affect the publics' impression of the organization. The U.S. military is a large organization with significant operational resources and the findings of the present study imply that the U.S. military's strategies were well researched and executed and have the potential to improve public impressions and increase enlistment. These findings suggest important implications for the future of U.S. military recruiting strategy in different socio-historic contexts.

The U.S. military can improve its organizational public image by using specific tactics in recruiting advertisements during different periods of wartime. The findings of the socio-historic analysis of recruiting advertisements during the Early War in Afghanistan and "War on Terrorism" Period (2001-2002) and the Early War in Iraq Period (2003-2004) demonstrated that when the country is engaged in a war that is strongly supported by the American people, recruiting strategies should use images, themes, and appeals that reinforce the sentiment of the American public. Recruiting advertisements should employ appeals to patriotism and American ideals. Recruiting messages that communicate the impression that the U.S. military is fighting for freedom, justice and the national security of the United States are effective.

The findings of the socio-historic analysis of recruiting advertisements during the Late War in Iraq, War in Afghanistan, and "War on Terrorism" Period (2005-2009) suggest that the types of tactics used in times when the American public supports U.S. led wars are not effective when those same wars become highly unpopular. During periods when U.S. military war operations become unpopular, branches of the U.S. military must change the strategies used in recruiting advertisements. When the U.S. is engaged in a war that the American public has come to strongly oppose, recruiting advertisements should not focus on appeals that directly call to mind war, particularly war-specific themes and images of soldiers in combat operations in that

war. Recruiting tactics that are more effective during periods of widespread anti-war attitudes among the American public include emphasizing the tangible benefits that the military offers to enlistees, the non-combat positions offered, and aspects of being in the military that do not highlight warfare. In addition, recruiting tactics should include highlighting the credibility of the message through testimonials of former soldiers. The use of parents of current soldiers and recruits as sources can also help to convey the impression that the military is a trustworthy organization.

As an organization, the U.S. military must find effective strategies for recruiting new enlistees if it is to have operational success as an organization. Importantly, the U.S. military is also an organization that is dependent on maintaining a relationship that is built on honest communication with the American public if it is to have long-term success. The findings of the analysis of recruiting advertisements suggest that the U.S. military does provide a wide variety of capacities for new recruits that decide the U.S. military is the appropriate choice for them. The recommendations presented here suggest that the U.S. military should employ all aspects and all opportunities offered from being a member of the organization. However, the U.S. military should not use these strategies in a manner intended to deceive or mislead its publics. The suggestions offered here, advise that the U.S. military utilize its many facets to promote itself openly and positively to its publics.

These findings also suggest that it may be important for other branches of the military to consider the socio-historic context and relevant issues and events in the construction of persuasive recruiting messages. The U.S. military is an organization that depends on voluntary enlistment and this requires that they maintain a favorable public image. When external conflicts such as the realities and costs of war are no longer viewed by the public as justifiable, these

events and issues can create negative attitudes toward the functions of the organization. In cases such as the one faced by the U.S. military during the eight-year period of the Bush administration, the use of public relations strategies of impression management and issues management can be beneficial to the organization.

The number of U.S. soldier fatalities in Iraq and Afghanistan combined, as of March 2009, reached 4,865 (“Faces of the Fallen,” 2009). Present U.S. troop levels in Iraq and Afghanistan combined are estimated at 183,000. The new administration is currently considering plans to send an additional 20,000-30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan by this summer (“Up to 30K New U.S. Troops to Afghanistan,” 2008). These facts suggest that the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy recruitment environment will continue to be challenging and the need to adapt recruiting strategies will remain an important concern if the military is to attract new recruits.

### **Limitations**

The scope of the present study is limited in its focus on the Army and Navy branches of the U.S. military. Researching changes in the recruiting strategies of other branches, such as the Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, or National Guard, may provide support for or contradict the findings of this study. The present study was also limited to one type of recruiting tool, television advertisements. The present study did not research other methods of recruiting such as changes in print recruiting advertisements or interactive face-to-face recruiting strategies. The present study also approaches the analysis of military recruiting strategies from a broad perspective. A research study that examines a single specifically targeted recruiting campaign launched by the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy during the eight-year period of the Bush administration, such as the “Army Strong” campaign, might provide more detailed or different insights into military recruiting strategies during this period.

## **Future Research**

Future research could develop the present study further with a comparative analysis of the differences between the themes and strategic messages that were found in U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting advertisements. Future research into U.S. Army and U.S. Navy recruiting campaigns might also include conducting survey research to evaluate the implications of the findings of the present study. Survey research of Americans attitudes toward joining the military could provide a measure of the effectiveness of the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy's efforts to adjust recruiting strategies in their television advertisements. A survey measuring the impressions of the Army and Navy among the target publics' would indicate the success of changing the image of the Army and Navy and may indicate an increase in favorable attitudes toward military enlistment.

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**APPENDIX A INDEX OF U.S. ARMY ADVERTISEMENTS AIRED ON NATIONAL  
CABLE TELEVISION FROM 2001-2009**

**2001**

“Shipping Out”  
“Victory Tower”  
“Basic Rifle Marksmanship”  
“Confidence Course”  
“Pugil Stick Training”  
“Defensive Live Fire”  
“Fitness Test”  
“Victory Forge”  
“Graduation”

**2002**

“Jogging” (English Version)  
“Multitasking” (English Version)  
“Signs” (English Version)

**2003**

“True Stories”  
“Fire in the Hole”  
“Ice Soldiers”  
“The Doctor”  
“Surveillance”  
“Legions”  
“Made Of”  
“Make a Difference”  
“Victors”  
“Coming Home”  
“Creed with Iraq”  
“Generations – Iraq”  
“Diving” (English Version)  
“Delivery” (English Version)  
“Surveying” (English Version)  
“Planning” (English Version)

**2004**

“Cut from the Same Cloth”  
“Always There”

“Currently”  
“Responsible Choice”  
“Set Your Sights”  
“Right for Me”  
“Something Important”  
“Protect and Defend”  
“Nice Plan”  
“Fasten your Seatbelt”  
“Final Mission”  
“Led the Way”  
“Miles Ahead”  
“The Right Thing”  
“Success Story”  
“Strength”  
“Stand Ready”  
“Achieve” (General)  
“Everyday” (General)

## **2005**

“Spot the Enemy”  
“Smart Guy”  
“Jog”  
“Fire Truck”  
“Good Training”  
“Barbershop”  
“Still Doin’ It”  
“In My Last Job”  
“All the Camaraderie”  
“Dinner Conversation”  
“Two Things”

## **2006**

“Stand Ready” (Financial Heavy Up)  
“Stand Ready” (Total Value Prop)  
“Set Your Sights” (Financial Heavy Up)  
“Set Your Sights” (Total Value Prop)  
“Weigh the Most”  
“Do It All”  
“A Different Type of Strength”  
“Army Strong”

“Convincing”  
“Starting Out”  
“Interview”

**2007**

“Airport”  
“Challenge”  
“Hispanic Salute”  
“Two Years Plus Training”

**2008**

“Brand Ethos Updated”  
“Fitting the Pieces”  
“Get Noticed”  
“Look Up”  
“Reserve Move”  
“Hand Signals”

**2009**

“Company”  
“School”  
“Team”

**APPENDIX B INDEX OF U.S. NAVY ADVERTISEMENTS AIRED ON NATIONAL  
CABLE TELEVISION FROM 2001-2009**

**2001-2004**

“AEGIS”

“Colors”

“Minivan”

“Rocket Science”

**2005-2009**

“Footprints”

**2006-2009**

“Drones”

“Wave”

“Ribbons”

## APPENDIX C SAMPLE ADVERTISEMENT EXAMINATION SHEET

**Branch of Military:** NAVY

**Name of Ad:** Drones

**Year:** 2006 aired through 2009

### **TEXT**

#### **Source Factors**

- 1. Source** (E.g. voice-over, testimonial by member of organization [recruiter, recruit, officer, etc.], testimonial by non-member of organization [parent, teacher, employer, etc.]):

Voice-over: represents perspective of organization (Navy)

Navy soldiers (members of organization)

- 2. Source credibility** (expertise, trustworthiness, goodwill):

Goodwill conveyed through message of dialogue spoken by voice-over

Expertise conveyed through experience attributed to implied age of voice-over

- 3. Social attractiveness of source** (similarity between source and target audience):

Voice-over: sound of voice implies an older adult, African-American, male

Navy soldiers: faces obscured (side shots, shadowed), appear to be young demographic (aged 18-23), mostly male, one woman; diverse ethnicities

#### **Message Factors**

- 1. Content** (appeals [E.g. emotional, logical, both, etc.]):

Message dialogue: "Working everyday to un-man the front lines."

Implies Navy technology helps to reduce soldier casualties – evokes emotion

- 2. Symbols** (images: E.g. attire [uniform, civilian clothes, etc.], objects [weaponry, military equipment/vehicles, etc.], setting [domestic/civilian, foreign, military activity/operation, etc.] :

Nighttime scene – soldiers at a significant distance from a building operating a remote control device that is operating a video camera mounted on a piece of equipment on wheels moving toward the building in the distance

Scene cuts to video “drone” entering the dark building, cuts to soldiers in distant location watching on a computer screen, what the drone camera is transmitting, showing the inside of the building as it moves through it

Scene of early morning, Navy soldier in moving vehicle holding a mini-airplane “drone,” soldier releases the mini-airplane and controls it’s flight path from the remote location

Cuts to soldier in Navy raft in ocean, soldier releases what looks like mini-submarine “drone” and tracks and controls it from a safe location as the drone seeks out underwater land mines

Cuts to control station inside a Navy ship, where a soldier is operating a computer – the screen shows an unmanned remote controlled airplane flying over a building in a distant locale

The minimal role of soldiers in ad is striking – “drones” are focus of ad – soldiers are background/ shown very little – portrayal of “un-manning” front lines – visually reiterates the message supports message

**Themes** (E.g. Patriotism, Adventure/Challenge, Job/Career/Education, Technology, Social Status/Pride, Money, Travel, Humanitarian, Personal integrity/development, or Multiple Themes Present):

Advances in Navy technology – various machine “drones” – help to keep soldiers safe and limit human casualties

### **Style**

**1. Footage** (E.g. staged or captured):

Staged to re-create soldiers using real Navy technology

**2. Music** (type):

No music – “quiet” ad compared to Navy ads from previous period – no explosions are heard – just hear the sounds of the machine “drones: operating (humming sounds of drone moving underwater, beeping sounds)

## VITA

Maryann Rowland is a native of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She received her Bachelor Degree in English from the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida. In 2006, she moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to pursue a master's degree and accepted a position at the Manship School of Mass Communication. Prior to entering her graduate study program, she worked in as a corporate and special event organizer at a historic Louisiana plantation on the National Register of Historic Sites. She also worked as a client liaison and convention planner for a non-profit organization. Her master's research interests included public relations and advertising. After graduation, she is interested pursuing a career in marketing research and account planning. She is also interested in the increasing convergence and integrated marketing communication (IMC). The idea behind the present study grew out of her interest and future career goals in strategic communications for U.S. military recruitment.