

**Minority Recruiting: The Effects of Diversity in News Coverage of the Military on the Recruitment of Minorities**

Stewart M. Coles  
Patrick Evans  
Dipthi Battapadi  
Robert Lyon  
Eddie Henderson  
San Diego State University

**Abstract**

This study examined the effects of portrayals of diversity and minorities in leadership positions in military news reporting on minorities' attraction to the military as an organization. Subjects ( $N=86$ ) participated in a dual online experiment and survey that exposed them to mock military news stories. Exposure to news stories with minority leaders was found to be related with greater levels of organizational attractiveness among minorities. The study also explored the role that family experience and family support have on organizational attractiveness to the military. Both family experience and family support were found to be positively related to organizational attractiveness.

While the racial demographics of the U.S. have continued to change over the past several decades, levels of diversity within the military have not changed to represent the diversity present in the population as a whole. In addition, the leadership of our nation's military has remained overwhelmingly White and male, despite the growing numbers of minorities and women in uniform. For example, 12.6% of respondents to the U.S. Census identified themselves as Black or African American alone (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). If the military were envisioned as a reflection of the society from which its service members are drawn, then similar numbers of African Americans would be expected in the military. The facts of the matter, however, are much different.

For fiscal year (FY) 2009, African Americans were overrepresented in the active-duty enlisted force at 18.5% and underrepresented in the active-duty officer corps at 8.7% (U.S. Department of Defense, 2009). While African Americans are overrepresented in the Army enlisted force at 21.4% and comparably represented in the Army officer corps at 12.8%, much more stark levels of underrepresentation manifest themselves in the other services (U.S. Department of Defense, 2009). The Marine Corps fared the worst: Only 10.8% of enlisted Marines and 5.2% of officers are Black (U.S. Department of Defense, 2009).

The Military Leadership Diversity Commission (2011) report underscored the snowball effect that a downturn in the recruitment of women and minorities has on military leadership in the future. The result will be a military with varying representations of women and different minority groups, still led almost exclusively by White male generals and admirals. Harris (2009) further discussed why African American officers fail to advance, and why the advancement of minorities is of great concern to military leaders. Weick (1979) presented Buckley's notion of requisite variety as "the variety within a system must be at least as great as the environmental variety against which it is attempting to regulate itself" when explaining that "organizations have to be preoccupied with keeping sufficient diversity inside the organization to sense accurately the variety present in ecological changes outside it" (p. 188). Simply put, any organization that hopes to exist in balance with its environment must maintain the level of diversity found within its environment.

Studies such as the one conducted by Lievens, Van Hove, and Schreurs (2005) demonstrate how organizational image among potential applicants affects their decision regarding whether or not to join the military. Publics develop images of an organization from a number of different sources. Films, video games, acquaintances, and other sources also help shape an outsider's perception of the military, but the one source of information with which individuals are inundated on a daily basis is the news media. Gutiérrez and Wilson (1995) found that "the media's coverage and portrayal of minorities have an effect on members of both minority and majority groups" (p. 56). While several studies have examined the effects of recruitment advertisements on the image of an organization held by minority applicants, few studies have specifically looked at the effects of news reports on an organization and the organizational image of potential applicants. The uncontrolled nature of publicity leaves many factors out of the hands of the professional communicator but it is critical to identify where and how different modes of mediated communication can be synced in order to portray a unified, consistent organizational image.

Knowing how their organizations may be perceived is a fundamental skill for a military public affairs officer or any public relations practitioner. Military public affairs officers are charged with relationship-building and organizational image management, but with only limited control over content and placement. Still, Broom (2009) pointed to public relations sources as

one of the most important sources of information in the news media. Understanding how minorities perceive the military due to the effects of military news coverage, recruitment advertisements, official websites, and other channels, is essential to properly communicating the military's desire to be a heterogeneous, inclusive force.

This study explored the link between portrayals of minority service members in news coverage of the military and how would-be recruits perceive the military as a potential organization of employment. The study analyzed the racial diversity of service members in military news stories and what effect the level of diversity has on the military's organizational attractiveness to minorities. The study also explored whether or not the news story portrayed minorities in supervisory roles, and how that affects minorities' attraction to the military as an organization.

### **Literature Review**

#### *Minorities, Diversity, and Organizational Attractiveness*

A key part of public relations as a management function is projecting the right image of the organization. This does not insinuate projecting a false image, but communicating to various publics the genuine values and goals of an organization. In the case of the U.S. military, this goal is a diverse force with representation throughout its ranks, reflective of the population from which it draws its members. The military services have communicated this goal by increasing the diversity of service members portrayed in its recruitment advertisements.

This study borrowed Ghawuk and Triandis' (1996) definition of *diversity* as the "difference in ethnicity, race, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, age, national origin, and cultural and personal perspectives" (p.85). A homogeneous group implies that all of the individuals within the group are of the same race (White, Black, Asian, etc.). Heterogeneity within a group implies that its members come from two or more racial backgrounds.

*Organizational attractiveness* is associated with organizational image. According to Tom (1971), organizational image is the way in which an individual perceives an organization. This perception could refer to a number of different factors, such as whether the organization is perceived as being environmentally conscious, or a good neighbor and member of the community. Botero, McKenna, Morgan, Zartman, and Fabel (2009) defined organizational attractiveness as "how organizations get potential applicants to view the organization as a positive place to work" (p. 4). They discussed different approaches for viewing organizational attractiveness—from the organization's perspective, or from the potential employee's perspective. The former is concerned with the actions the organization takes (through human resources, recruitment, etc.) to attract potential applicants. This study is concerned with the latter approach to organizational attractiveness—that of the potential employee's perspective. Botero et al. (2009) listed several key objectives for potential recruits: "Having a positive affective attitude towards the organization, viewing the organization as a desirable entity, and exerting effort to work for the organization" (p. 4). This last key objective highlights that organizational attractiveness is more than a person's perception of an organization. Attraction to an organization also leads to a behavioral change—seeking to join the organization. Perception is only half the battle; one can argue that getting potential applicants to perceive your organization as a good place to work is useless if no one actually applies for employment. Organizational attractiveness goes beyond merely getting a potential recruit to perceive the organization as a desirable place to work; the ultimate goal is to get the potential recruit to seek to join the organization. What

factors make a potential employee view the organization as a desirable place to work, *and* lead that person to seek employment with that organization? Therefore, this study defined organizational attractiveness as a person's perception of an organization as a desirable organization to join, *and* his or her efforts to join that organization.

The U.S. Department of Defense's Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) program examines factors affecting recruitment in the military. The JAMRS program measures the likelihood of potential recruits joining the military in terms of propensity, which it defined in its 2004 report as potential recruits who identify that they will definitely or probably join the military. The program found that propensity to join the military was related to self-efficacy, or how well an individual felt they could conform to a military lifestyle, and to attitudes toward the military. A third factor, subjective norms, or pressure to join the military from family members, was found to be an indicator of attitudes toward the military. The present study sought to explore potential recruit's desire to join the military using an organizational attractiveness model as it relates to racial diversity.

Using Schneider's (1987) Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) model, Perkins, Thomas, and Taylor (2000) explored the effect of diversity in recruitment advertisements on minority job applicants using an Attraction-Image-Compatibility scale. The Attraction subscale measured applicants' attraction to a fictitious organization, and included items such as "I would like this company to recruit on campus" (p. 253). The Image subscale measures the organizational image as perceived by the applicants, and included items such as "This company appears to care about its employees" (p. 253). The Compatibility subscale measured how well applicants perceived they would fit in with the organization, and included items such as "I would have no problem adjusting to this organization" (p. 253). Perkins et al. (2000) found that the more racial diversity was portrayed in a recruitment advertisement, the more positive the image of that organization was among Blacks, the more compatible with the organization Blacks perceived themselves to be, and the more Blacks were attracted to the organization. The study also found that the racial diversity of the advertisement did not seem to have an effect on White subjects. Villamil (2007) conducted a similar study in which he found that minorities favored diversity management more than Whites did. Because higher levels of racial diversity and diversity management have been found to be aspects of organizational characteristics that are important to minorities, the following hypothesis is presented:

H1: Minorities exposed to military news coverage with a higher level of racial diversity will perceive the military as a more attractive organization than minorities exposed to military news coverage with a lower level of racial diversity.

### *The Leadership Factor*

Developing a positive, racially diverse image of the military is the first step in developing diversity among senior military leaders. The U.S. military seeks to diversify its officer corps by countering the perception that senior leadership is reserved for White males only. This perception comes not just from reality, as previously stated, but also from portrayals in the news media and elsewhere. There is a gap in current research regarding how leadership roles portrayed in media affect organizational attractiveness, whether for the military or civilian sector. Woodman (2001) examined the portrayal (or rather, the marginalization) of African American soldiers in Vietnam War films. Unfortunately, very little content analysis has been done on portrayals of minorities in military news reports.

A *supervisory role* is one where the person filling that role is leading or managing others. Avery (2003) made a further distinction between “first-line” or immediate supervisors, and “higher level executive positions” or senior leadership (p. 677). In the military, a supervisor may be anyone of the same or higher rank to whom a member is accountable. While this includes many mid-level and senior enlisted personnel and warrant officers, this study used the term to signify commissioned officers.

Avery (2003) examined the effects of portrayals of African Americans in higher and lower status positions in recruitment advertisements, finding that “[B]lack viewers were more attracted to organizations depicting Blacks in both higher and lower status positions than to those wherein Black representation was limited to the entry level” (p. 676). The presence of Black managers in Avery’s (2003) study did not have an effect on White subjects—this is similar to the lack of effect of diversity on Whites that Perkins et al. (2000) experienced. However, Avery (2003) found that some Whites reacted more favorably to recruitment advertisements where Blacks were only shown in subordinate, entry-level positions. This supported Gutiérrez and Wilson’s (1995) idea that both minorities and members of the majority are affected in some way by the media. Therefore, the following hypothesis is presented:

H2: Minorities exposed to military news coverage in which minorities are portrayed in supervisory roles will perceive the military as a more attractive organization than minorities exposed to military news coverage in which minorities are not portrayed in supervisory roles.

### *The Role of Family Experience*

The concept of *family*, in the context of this study, consisted of parents, siblings, and extended members, such as first cousins, uncles, and aunts. Hill (1998) reinforced this concept when he defined African American families as a “constellations of households” that included blood or marriage relations (p. 18). More specifically, African American families were seen as a network of immediate and extended relatives who may live together or in different households but provide the needs and functions of a related unit. In addition, Billingsley and Caldwell (1991) and Roberts (1980) considered individuals and groups associated with such institutions as the church and schools as extended family members, because they, along with the immediate family, are three critical institutions integral to the viability of the African American community.

The concept of *experience* is defined as knowledge or familiarity gained through involvement or observation. Familiarity is often equated with an entity having knowledge of another entity through direct or indirect experience (Bromley, 2000). Moreover, Bromley (1993) posited that an individual could gain knowledge of an organization via secondhand experience. Grunig and Hung (2002) advanced that notion, developing the term *reputational relationships* to describe an organizational-public relationship (OPR) based on secondhand experience. Schmitz & Boyer (1996) found “the presence of veterans under age 65”—those most likely to be parents of potential military recruits—“to be perhaps the single most important factor for explaining enlist behavior” within a population, indicating that secondhand experience from veterans may affect an individual’s decision to join the military (p. 5). Still, research indicating a relationship between an individual knowing more veterans and his or her organizational attractiveness to the military is lacking. In addition, research from Grunig and Hung (2002) concluded that a public’s experience was positively correlated with the quality of OPR, even if that relationship is reputational (secondhand). Therefore, this study proposes to examine the following hypothesis:

H3: Positive family experience with an organization is positively related to attraction to that organization.

### *The Role of Family Support*

Scholars have found that *family support* influences behavior. The JAMRS program (2004) found that pressure to join the military from family members was an indicator of more positive attitudes toward the military, which increased propensity to join. Bandura (1991) pointed out that children are exposed to standards and behavior patterns from various sources—family members, siblings, peers and other adults. Maton, Hrabowski, and Greif (1998) indicated a positive relationship between parental involvement and African American males doing well, staying focused, and overcoming challenges. This supportive relationship also had an impact on the relationship between minorities and an organization.

When pursuing minorities to join higher education institutions or other organizations, education scholars (Cabrera, Nora & Terenzini, 1999; Stewart, Russell & Wright, 1997; and Thomas & Thurber, 1999) have argued that it is important for colleges, universities, and professional institutions to get families and communities involved in the recruitment process, because they are extremely important in the recruitment, transition, and retention process. Schneller (2008) observed this when he interviewed some African American and Hispanic students at the Naval Academy as part of the Navy review of racial policies. A significant majority of the students told Schneller that their families, friends, and peers often tried to dissuade them from entering officer programs. Schneller was also told that school counselors, too, were uninformed about officer program requirements, benefits offered by the Navy, and scholarships. The JAMRS program (2004) found that Blacks perceived lower levels of family support for joining the military than Whites or Hispanics, and also less influence from fathers and more influence from church or religious group members. The study also noted that sometimes there can be a gap between parental attitudes regarding military service and children's perceptions of their parents' attitudes, which it attributed to the low frequency at which parents discuss military service with their children. Still, they concluded that perceptions of those attitudes "do significantly affect military enlistment, independent of parents' true attitudes" (p. 32). These findings underscore two important considerations regarding family support among minorities: Support from non-parent family members may be of increasing importance for some minority individuals, and a potential applicant's perception of parental attitudes is a better indicator of organizational attractiveness than parents' actual attitudes toward military service.

One of the most challenging aspects of this study is the fact that very few researchers have focused on the interactions of race, ethnicity, and gender with career patterns (Smith, 1980). In fact, Witherspoon and Speight (2009) found no far-reaching model used to study minority career development. Therefore, this study reviewed literature from the field of education, which has embarked on an effort to recruit more African American males to become teachers. Analysis of the literature in the recruitment process found an initial review of theories on occupational choice and career development, but those theories used studies with White, middle-class men as the sample, which did not address how race, ethnicity, and culture influenced decisions to pursue teaching or other career choices in general (Education Alliance at Brown University, 2004).

Since there is little research analyzing recruitment and retention of minorities for careers as military officers, this study focused on some of the literature involving recruiting and retaining minorities into the educational field. In particular, Bandura (1991) contended that

support from immediate or extended family members can have a direct influence on the decisions of young people. Therefore, this study presents the following hypothesis:

H4: The level of support to join an organization an individual perceives from family members is positively related to an individual's attraction to that organization.

## Methods

### *Participants*

The respondents in this study were undergraduate students ( $N = 86$ ) enrolled at San Diego State University. Of the respondents, 23% were freshmen ( $n = 20$ ), 11% were sophomores ( $n = 9$ ), 33% were juniors ( $n = 28$ ), and 34% were seniors ( $n = 29$ ). The respondents ranged from 18 to 25 ( $M=20.5$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ ). In addition, 31% of respondents were male ( $n=27$ ) and 69% were female ( $n = 59$ ). Among the respondents, 11% identified themselves as American Indian or Alaskan Native ( $n = 9$ ), 43% as Asian ( $n = 37$ ), 17% as Black or African American ( $n = 15$ ), 8% as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander ( $n = 7$ ), and 21% as White Hispanic ( $n = 18$ ). Participants were recruited using a nonprobability sampling strategy, and offered a chance to win Aztec Shops gift cards as an incentive to participate. Participants were given a link to an online website on which the study was being conducted.

### *Experimental Design*

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using experimental design. The experiment used a 2x2 posttest-only independent group factorial design to test two levels for the diversity variable (low/high diversity) and two levels for the leadership variable (minority/White leader). These four groups were subjected to various treatments. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of these groups upon visiting the study website. Each treatment used the same story text. Differentiation between the treatments was accomplished by altering the associated photographs and captions with the story to depict different levels of racial diversity of the characters, and to depict either a minority or White character as the supervisor. The low racial diversity treatments contained photographs showing more White characters than minority characters, while the high racial diversity photographs showed more minority characters than White characters. The minority supervisor treatments contained a photograph identifying a Black character as the supervisor, while the White supervisor treatments contained a photograph identifying a White character as the supervisor. Because the characters depicted in the photographs were wearing military uniforms and gear that covered most of their bodies, a character was only considered identifiable if some area of his skin (face or hands) can clearly be seen. All of the photographs in the treatment were actual images captured by military and civilian journalists in Afghanistan and published by civilian or military news agencies.

### *Survey Design*

Hypotheses 3 and 4 were tested via the cross-sectional survey method. The family experience independent variable and family support independent variable were evaluated by asking the respondent questions regarding their family's experiences with, interaction with, and attitudes toward the military. The questionnaire used a series of Likert-type questions to determine the participant's level of family experience with the military as an organization, their level of family support to join the military, and to what extent the participant agreed with statements regarding leadership and advancement opportunities and racial diversity in the military. Questions regarding a subject's family's experience with the military were used to

generate the Family Experience index, and questions regarding a subject's family's support for joining the military were used to generate the Family Support index.

Family Experience and Support Indices	
Concept	Measures
Family Experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How many people do you know (family members, friends, or acquaintances) who currently serve or have served in the U.S. military? (Options given from 0-20, then "More than 20")</li> <li>2. <i>**Frequency of which the respondent speaks with service members about their military experience.</i></li> <li>3. <i>**Whether service member or respondent initiates military-related conversations.</i></li> <li>4. <i>**The service members I know enjoyed their experience of being in the military. (5-point "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" scale)</i></li> <li>5. <i>**I would consider working for an organization even if no one I knew ever worked for that organization. (5-point "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" scale)</i></li> </ol>
Family Support	<p>(All items measured on a 5-point "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" scale)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In general, my family would support me joining the military.</li> <li>2. In general, my family has a positive opinion of the military.</li> <li>3. <i>*I would not go to work for an organization even if my family, in general, did not think highly of the organization.</i></li> <li>4. In general, my family believes military service is honorable.</li> <li>5. A family member has encouraged me to join the military.</li> </ol>
<p><i>Note 1: Items with two asterisks were not included in the final Family Experience index.</i></p> <p><i>Note 2: After testing for reliability, the italicized item with one asterisk was removed from the Family Support index. Cronbach's alpha for the adjusted Family Support index was .81.</i></p>	

Questions regarding a subject's feelings toward the military as a place of potential employment were used to generate indices for organizational attractiveness. The organizational attractiveness indices, detailed below, were derived from the Attraction-Image-Compatibility (AIC) scale used by Perkins et al. (2000). Items were been modified or added as necessary so the indices and questions apply to the current study. The Leadership index was created specifically for this study to measure whether a respondent felt that the military would provide the opportunity to serve in a supervisory or leadership position over others. In terms of the perceptual and behavioral characteristics of organizational attractiveness, the Compatibility index measures the behavioral aspect of organizational attractiveness by more closely addressing whether the respondent would join or would feel comfortable serving in the military, whereas the Attraction, Image, and Leadership indices more closely address how the respondent perceives the military as an organization.

Organizational Attractiveness Indices	
Concept	Measures
	(All items measured on a 5-point "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" scale)
Attraction	1. <i>*I would request additional information regarding military service opportunities.</i>



	2. I would like the military to recruit on campus. 3. <i>*I would speak to a recruiter about the possibility of joining the military.</i> 4. I think the military is an attractive organization. 5. I would recommend military service to a friend. 6. I like the military.
Image	1. The military appears to care about its service members. 2. The military has a favorable image. 3. <i>*The military would be a good organization to work for.</i>
Compatibility	1. I would feel at home serving in the military. 2. I would very much like to join the military. 3. This organization will likely meet my desires and needs. 4. I would have no problems adjusting to the military. 5. <i>*There are people just like me in the military.</i>
Leadership	1. The military can provide me with an opportunity to lead others. 2. The military can provide me with opportunities for advancement. 3. <i>*I can see making the military a career.</i>
<i>Note 1: After factor analysis, the italicized items with an asterisk were removed from the indices to which they belonged.</i>	

The 90% decision rule ( $\alpha = .10$ ) was used in one-tailed tests of statistical significance because the sample size was less than 100.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 17 items of the organizational attractiveness indices. Four distinct factors emerged. Factor 1, which corresponds to the Compatibility index of the organizational attractiveness scale, accounted for 48.58% of the total variance (eigenvalue = 8.26). Factor 2, which corresponds to the Attraction index of the organizational attractiveness scale, accounted for 10.73% of the total variance (eigenvalue = 1.82). Factor 3, which corresponds to the Leadership index of the organizational attractiveness scale, accounted for 7.05% of the total variance (eigenvalue = 1.20). Factor 4, which corresponds to the Image index of the organizational attractiveness scale, accounted for 6.10% of the total variance (eigenvalue = 1.04). Five items were dropped because they loaded on more than one factor or did not load on any factor.

Factor Loadings for Organizational Attractiveness Indices				
Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
I would have no problems adjusting to the military.	.822			
I would very much like to join the military.	.793			
The military would likely meet my desires and needs.	.756			
I would feel at home serving in the military.	.745			
I think the military is an attractive organization.		.804		
I would recommend military service to a friend.		.774		
I like the military.		.716		
I would like the military to recruit on campus.		.671		

The military can provide me with an opportunity for advancement.			.860	
The military can provide me with an opportunity to lead others.			.804	
The military appears to care about its service members.				.835
The military has a favorable image.				.811
Eigenvalue	8.26	1.82	1.20	1.04
Variance Explained	48.58%	10.73%	7.05%	6.10%

After factor analysis, reliability checks were performed on the remaining items for the organizational attractiveness indices. Cronbach's alpha for the adjusted Compatibility, Attraction, Leadership, and Image indices were .89, .87, .89, and .69, respectively. Means and standard deviation for the adjusted Compatibility index were, Attraction, Leadership, and Image indices were 1.84 and .88, 2.65 and .98, 3.45 and 1.21, and 3.14 and .89, respectively.

### Results

H1 predicted that minorities exposed to military news coverage with a high level of racial diversity would perceive the military as a more attractive organization than minorities exposed to military news coverage with a low level of racial diversity. To confirm whether or not the manipulation was successful, a one-way ANOVA test was run to compare the differences in perceived diversity between those exposed to the low diversity news stories and those exposed to the high diversity news stories. The difference between the two was found to be statistically insignificant:  $F(1, 84) = .81, p = .37, \eta^2 = .01$ . The manipulation was not successful, so H1 was not tested.

H2 predicted that minorities exposed to military news coverage in which minorities were portrayed in supervisory roles would perceive the military as a more attractive organization than minorities exposed to military news coverage in which minorities were not portrayed in supervisory roles. To confirm whether or not the manipulation was successful, a one-way ANOVA test was performed to compare the differences in perceived minority leadership between the groups exposed to news stories with a minority leader and groups exposed to news stories with a White leader. The differences between the two groups was statistically significant:  $F(1, 84) = 27.88, p < .01, \eta^2 = .25$ .

A one-way ANOVA test was performed to test the relationship between minority leadership and organizational attractiveness. A statistically significant relationship was found between being exposed to a news story with a minority leader and the Compatibility index:  $F(1, 83) = 4.42, p = .04, \eta^2 = .05$ . A statistically significant relationship was also found between being exposed to a news story with a minority leader and the Attraction index:  $F(1, 82) = 3.50, p = .07, \eta^2 = .04$ . Thus, the second hypothesis was partially confirmed.

H3 predicted that having positive family experience with an organization is positively related to attraction to that organization. Positive family experience predicted attraction towards the military among minority individuals, with  $\beta = .42, t = 4.18, p < .01$ . Positive family experience also explained a significant proportion of variance in attraction to the military, with  $R^2 = .17, F(1, 82) = 17.46, p < .01$ . Positive family experience predicted minority individuals seeing themselves in leadership roles in the military, with  $\beta = .29, t = 2.72, p < .01$ . Positive family experience also explained a significant proportion of variance in the Leadership index, with  $R^2 = .07, F(1, 84) = 7.41, p < .01$ . Further, positive family experience predicted a positive

image of the military among minority individuals, with  $\beta = .23$ ,  $t = 2.14$ ,  $p = .04$ . Positive family experience also explained a significant proportion of variance in minority individuals having a positive image of the military,  $R^2 = .40$ ,  $F(1, 84) = 4.58$ ,  $p = .04$ . Our third hypothesis was partially confirmed.

H4 predicted that the level of support to join an organization an individual perceives from family members is positively related to an individual's attraction to that organization. For minority individuals, family support towards joining the military predicted minority individuals feeling that they would be compatible with the military, with  $\beta = .43$ ,  $t = 4.32$ ,  $p < .01$ . Family support also explained a significant proportion of variance in minority individuals feeling compatible with the military,  $R^2 = .17$ ,  $F(1, 83) = 18.62$ ,  $p < .01$ . Family support predicted minority individuals feeling attraction towards joining the military, with  $\beta = .56$ ,  $t = 6.16$ ,  $p < .01$ . Family support also explained a significant portion of the variance in attraction, with  $R^2 = .31$ ,  $F(1, 82) = 37.97$ ,  $p < .01$ . For the minority individuals in this survey, family support also predicted perceiving leadership opportunities in the military, with  $\beta = .41$ ,  $t = 4.12$ ,  $p < .01$ . Family support also explained a significant portion of the variance in leadership, with  $R^2 = .16$ ,  $F(1, 84) = 16.93$ ,  $p < .01$ . Finally, family support predicted minority individuals would have a positive image of the military, with  $\beta = .53$ ,  $t = 5.65$ ,  $p < .01$ . Family support also explained a significant portion of the variance in having a positive image, with  $R^2 = .27$ ,  $F(1, 84) = 31.92$ ,  $p < .01$ . Thus, the fourth hypothesis was confirmed.

### Discussion

Testing H1 proved difficult because the treatments did not invoke the desired perception of diversity among the respondents. Previous research on organizational demography, recruiting advertisements, and racial balance found that the demographic composition of a group can affect the perception of racial diversity within the group, indicating that the concept of racial diversity is more contextual and subjective (Avery, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2004; Davis, Strube, & Cheng, 1995; Pfeffer, 1985). Further research is needed to determine how race and racial diversity can be conveyed in mediated communication.

For H2, a significant relationship was detected between exposure to a minority leader and a higher reading on the Compatibility and Attraction indices, partially confirming the hypothesis. The other indices (Image and Leadership) did not yield significant results. H2, therefore, concludes that exposing minority individuals to military news reports in which the leader is a minority leads to the subject feeling more compatible with and attracted to the military, which is consistent with previously mentioned findings regarding the impact of media on members of racial minority and majority groups (Gutiérrez & Wilson, 1995; Avery, 2003). That exposure to a minority leader was related to higher readings on the Compatibility index, which more closely captures the behavioral aspect of organizational attractiveness, suggests that exposure to a minority leader may have more of an effect on minorities' actual enlistment behavior than on just improving minorities' organizational image of the military. Further research should be conducted to determine if this effect exists. One practical implication for the findings in H2 is that military public affairs practitioners should be aware of the effects of portrayals of minorities in leadership roles in military-related news reports. The paradox to the previous statement, however, is that "[t]he U.S. military is too white [*sic*] and too male at the top and needs to change recruiting and promotion policies" (Jelinek, 2011). Efforts must continue to develop a continuing stream of successful, demographically diverse leaders who can be appropriately portrayed in public affairs efforts. Additional research should be conducted to consider whether representing actual

minority service members as lead subjects in news reports is more or less effective in increasing levels on the Compatibility index than actors representing minorities in recruiting advertisements.

For H3, findings detected significant relationships between knowing more service members and higher readings on the Attraction, Image, and Leadership indices. Therefore, H3 was partially confirmed. These findings further Schmitz & Boyer's (1996) research that indicated the presence of parent-age veterans in a population as the most accurate indicator of enlistment behavior, by showing that the more service members an individual knows, the more attracted to the military the individual will be. It should be noted that a statistically significant relationship was not found between knowing more service members and higher readings on the Compatibility index. Because the Compatibility index is a better indicator of the behavioral aspect of organizational attractiveness, the lack of a relationship between Compatibility and knowing more service members could mean that knowing more service members improves minorities' image of the military, but does less to influence their behavior to join. The relationship between family experience and the Attraction index was stronger than the relationship between exposure to a minority leader in news coverage and the Attraction index. This finding and the additional statistically significant relationships found between family experience and the Image and Leadership indices indicates that the secondhand experience potential applicants get through interpersonal relationships with service members has more effect on organizational attractiveness than mediated communication. This suggests that the military should continue developing more innovative ways to involve its service members and veterans in the recruitment of potential minority applicants. More research in this area is strongly recommended, since current research is limited. Because this study did not examine the race or military leadership roles of the service members that the respondents knew, further research should also seek to determine if those circumstances moderate the effects of family experience.

For H4, a statistically significant relationship was found between family support to join the military and all four organizational attractiveness indices. Therefore, H4 was fully confirmed. These findings support research by the JAMRS program (2004). This supportive relationship also had an impact on the relationship between minorities and an organization. In addition, these findings support previous research that indicated that a supportive relationship between minority parents and children positively affects the perception of an organization. (Stewart et al., 1997; Maton et al., 1998; Cabrera et al., 1999; Thomas & Thurber, 1999). At a practical level, these findings indicate military organizations should consider efforts that focus on attracting family members in recruiting efforts.

### *Limitations*

Though the use of a nonprobability sampling strategy limits the generalizability of the study's findings to a larger population, it was necessary to recruit a sufficient number of subjects. In addition, a less stringent decision rule ( $\alpha = .10$  instead of  $\alpha = .05$ ) was applied to the study results due to the small sample size, increasing the likelihood of a Type I error. Further research should attempt to use a probability sampling strategy to recruit a larger sample.

Another limitation to the study was that H1 (the relationship between exposure to high versus low levels of racial diversity and organizational attractiveness) could not be fully tested because the manipulation failed. Why the manipulation did not work is unclear but possible explanations to consider could be found in a flawed experimental design or treatments, the fact

that all of the characters in the treatments were males while the majority of respondents were females, or the respondents' perception of diversity. Clearly, further research is needed.

The composition of the Image and Leadership indices led to issues once a factor analysis was conducted and only two items each were included on these indices. While Cronbach's alpha for the Leadership index remained strong (.89), the reliability of the Image index suffered (.69). This may have led to the inability to find a statistically significant relationship between exposure to a minority leader and higher readings on these indices. Organizational Image and Leadership indices should be developed to be more robust in future research.

Finally, a more comprehensive Family Experience index must be developed. Initially, the Family Experience index was intended to account for the number of service members a subject knew, as well as other factors such as how often the subject spoke to service members about the military, and whether or not those service members communicated good impressions of military life. Because of it was difficult to develop an index to account for all factors involved, family experience was measured simply by the number of service members the subject reported knowing. This may have led to the inability to find a statistically significant relationship between family experience and compatibility.

#### *Implications for Further Research*

Overall, more research should focus on the interactions of race, ethnicity, and gender with career patterns, specifically as it relates to military organizations. These findings support previous research indicating a supportive relationship between minority parents and children positively impacts the perception of an organization (Stewart et al., 1997; Maton et al., 1998; Cabrera et al., 1999; Thomas & Thurber, 1999). At a practical level, these findings indicate military organizations should consider efforts that focus on attracting family members in recruiting efforts. In addition, military organizations should consider increasing efforts to use current and retired minority military members in efforts to recruit and retain minorities in the military. These efforts could include incentives for the current and retired minority military members to participate. Further research should seek to determine which specific factors of interaction with service members and veterans have the most effect on organizational attractiveness. The ways that race and racial diversity can be conveyed in mediated communication should also be examined further.

Diversity management within an organization has become a focus area. Military organizations need to develop systematic efforts for recruit and retain qualified minorities. The results of this study have theoretical and practical applications that can help organizations develop streamlined and cost-effective diversity initiatives to recruit, train, and retain the best and brightest individuals.

### References

- Avery, D. R. (2003). Reactions to diversity in recruitment advertising—Are differences black and white? *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*(4), 672-679. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.88.4.672
- Avery, D. R., Hernandez, M., & Hebl, M. R. (2004). Who's watching race? Racial salience in recruitment advertising. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 34*(1), 146-161.
- Bandura, A. (1991). Social cognitive theory of moral thought and action. In W. M. Kurtines & J. L. Gewirtz (Eds.), *Handbook of moral behavior and development* (pp. 45-103). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Bhawuk, D. P. S., & Triandis, H. C. (1996). Diversity in the workplace: Emerging corporate strategies. In G. R. Ferris & M. R. Buckley (Eds.), *Human resource management: Perspectives, context, functions, and outcomes* (pp. 84-95). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Billingsley, A., & Caldwell, C. H. (1991). The church, the family, and the school in the African American community. *The Journal of Negro Education, 60*(3), 427-440.
- Botero, I., McKenna, T., Morgan, B., Zartman, W., & Fabel, A. (2009). *Are you attracted to this organization? The effect of information presented in organizational ads on applicant perceptions*. Paper presented at the 2009 National Communication Association Conference, Chicago.
- Bromley, D. B. (1993). *Reputation, image, and impression management*. Chichester, United Kingdom: Wiley.
- Bromley, D. B. (2000). Psychological aspects of corporate identity, image, and reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review, 3*, 240-252.
- Broom, G. M. (2009). *Cutlip and Center's effective public relations* (10th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Cabrera, A. F., Nora, A., & Terenzini, P. T. (1999). Campus racial climate and the adjustments of students to college: A comparison between white students and African American students. *The Journal of Higher Education, 70*(2), 134-160.
- Davis, L. E., Strube, M. J., & Cheng, L. (1995). Too many Blacks, too many Whites: Is there racial balance? *Basic & Applied Social Psychology, 17*(1/2), 119-135.
- Education Alliance at Brown University. (2004). *Report of Minority teacher recruitment, development, and retention*. Retrieved from [http://www.lab.brown.edu/pubs/minority\\_teacher/minteachrcrt.pdf](http://www.lab.brown.edu/pubs/minority_teacher/minteachrcrt.pdf)
- Grunig, J. E., & Hung, C. J. F. (2002, March). *The effect of relationships on reputation and reputation on relationships: A cognitive, behavioral study*. Paper presented at the Conference of Public Relations Society of America, Educator's Academy, Miami, FL.
- Harris, G. A. (2009). Recruiting, retention, and race in the military. *International Journal of Public Administration, 32*(10), 803-828. doi:10.1080/01900690902905485
- Hill, R. B. (1998). Understanding Black family functioning: A holistic perspective. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 29*(1), 15-25.
- Jelinek, P. (2011, March 7). Report: Too many whites, men leading military. *ABC News*. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory?id=13077018>
- Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies Program. (2004). *Youth poll report May 2004*. Retrieved from [www.hsdl.org/?view&did=459134](http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=459134)
- Lievens, F., Van Hoye, G., & Schreurs, B. (2005). Examining the relationship between employer knowledge dimensions and organizational attractiveness: An application in a military

- context. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 78(4), 553–572.  
doi:10.1348/09631790X26688
- Maton, K. I., Hrabowski, F. A., & Greif, G. L. (1998). Preparing the way: A qualitative study of high-achieving African American males and the role of the family. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 26(4), 639–668.
- Military Leadership Diversity Commission. (2011). *From representation to inclusion: Diversity leadership for the 21st-century military*. Retrieved from <http://www.usafa.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-110315-066.pdf>
- Perkins, L. A., Thomas, K. M., & Taylor, G. A. (2000). Advertising and recruitment: Marketing to minorities. *Psychology & Marketing*, 17, 235–255.
- Pfeffer, J. (1985). Organizational demography: Implications for management. *California Management Review*, 28(1), 67–81.
- Roberts, J. D. (1980). *Roots of a Black future: Family and church*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- Schmitz, E. J., & Boyer, A. (1996). *Socio-demographics and military recruiting – The role of veterans*. Arlington, VA: United States Navy Recruiting Command.
- Schneider, B. (1987). The people make the place. *Personnel Psychology*, 40, 437–453.
- Schneller, R. J. (2008). *Blue & gold and black: Racial integration of the U.S. Naval Academy*. College Station, Texas: A&M University Press.
- Stewart, G. L., Russell, R. B., & Wright, D. (1997). The comprehensive role of student affairs in African American student retention. *Journal of College Admission*, 15(4), 6–11.
- Smith, E. (1980). Career development of minorities to nontraditional fields. *Journal of Non-White Concerns*, 8, 141–156.
- Thomas, T. C., & Thurber, H. J. (1999). *Strategies for the recruitment and retention of Native American students. Executive summary*. Northern Arizona University, Institute for Human Development. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No: ED435514).
- Tom, V. R. (1971). The role of personality and organizational images in recruiting process. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 6, 573–592.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). 2010 Census Data. Retrieved September 24, 2011 from <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/>
- U.S. Department of Defense. (2009). *Population representation in the military services: Fiscal year 2009 report*. Retrieved from <http://prhome.defense.gov/rfm/MPP/ACCESSION%20POLICY/PopRep2009/download/download.html>
- Villamil, A. (2007). *Perceptions of diversity management and organizational attractiveness: Exploring the gender, ethnicity and type of recruitment advertisement effects*. Paper presented at the 2007 National Communication Association Conference, Chicago.
- Weick, K. E. (1979). *The social psychology of organizing*. Reading, MA: Addison–Wesley.
- Wilson, C., & Gutiérrez, F. F. (1995). *Race, multiculturalism, and the media: From mass to class communication* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Witherspoon, K. M., & Speight, S. L. (2009). Beliefs in traditional and nontraditional careers: An exploration of African Americans' interests and self-efficacy. *Journal of Black Studies*, 39(6), 888–904.
- Woodman, B. J. (2001). Represented in the margins: Images of African American soldiers in Vietnam War combat films. *Journal of Film & Video*, 53(2/3), 38.