

Chapter 4A – A PROPOSED MODEL OF MILITARY RECRUITMENT

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4A.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper presents a conceptual model of military recruitment based on a review of recruitment research conducted on both military and non-military samples and on the efforts of members of the NATO Task Group on Recruitment and Retention of Military Personnel. The model has two major objectives. First, it is intended to support military HR managers in developing their recruitment policy, as the model shows the impact of organizational measures on the individual's decision-making process. Second, the model may serve as a general framework for further recruitment research. The model is composed of organizational- and individual-level predictor variables, and outcome variables. The organizational-level predictor variables relate to the actual environment in terms of objective job (e.g., pay level) and organizational (e.g., size) characteristics. The individual-level predictor variables refer to the perceived environment in terms of individuals' subjective interpretation of the job and organizational characteristics (e.g., image, familiarity). The model's outcome is defined as job pursuit, which can take many forms (e.g., applying, accepting a job offer) according to the recruitment stage an individual is going through. Job pursuit is broken down into the triad attitude-intention-behavior to indicate the mediating role of attitude and intention in the relationship between individual-level variables and job pursuit behavior. We further rely on principles from information and communication theory to describe how information about the organization is transmitted through various information sources to the target population. A distinction is made between sources that are under the direct control of the organization (e.g., advertisements) and sources that cannot be controlled by the organization (e.g., word-of-mouth). Based on the literature review and the proposed model, several suggestions for future research are presented. The paper concludes with a list of practical recommendations and guidelines to help our military decision-makers solving the recruitment problems our organizations are facing today and will be facing in the future.

4A.2 A PROPOSED MODEL OF MILITARY RECRUITMENT INTRODUCTION

Militaries in several nations are increasingly facing difficulties in attracting, enlisting and retaining the required numbers of new recruits (Asch et al., 2002; Bachman, Segal, Freedman-Doan, and O'Malley, 2000; Knowles et al., 2002). Economic and demographic changes have shrunk the recruit pool and there has been a decline in recruit quality that began in the early nineties (Asch, Du, and Schonlau, 2004). A "war for talent" (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, and Axelrod, 2001) has emerged in which the military faces fierce competition from private and public organizations in attracting the most qualified personnel. Competing organizations invest extensive resources in advertising, head hunting and providing incentives to attract the best people to their organization. In response, militaries are increasing their recruitment efforts. For example, from fiscal year 1995 to 2001, the U.S. Army increased its number of recruiters from 4895 to 6194. In 2000, they raised

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basic pay by 4.8 percent. The U.S. also committed to higher than usual pay increases through fiscal year 2006 (Asch et al., 2002). In many European countries the importance of attracting new recruits has been bolstered by the transition to a voluntary military service (Lescreve, 2000; Matser, 2001).

Research interest in the topic of employee recruitment is flourishing. This is evident in the rapid growth of literature on applicant attraction and job choice processes over the past decade. Numerous articles, chapters, books and comprehensive reviews on recruitment have been written (Barber, 1998; Breaugh, 1992; Breaugh and Starke, 2000; Rynes, 1991; Rynes and Cable, 2003; Saks, 2005; Wanous, 1992). Recently the first meta-analysis on applicant attraction was published (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, and Jones, 2005).

Prior to 1990, recruitment research was generally restricted to one of only three topics: recruiters (e.g., Do friendly recruiters make a better impression on job applicants?), recruitment sources (e.g., Do individuals recruited via newspaper ads have a higher turnover rate than individuals referred by current employees?), and realistic job previews (RJPs) (e.g., Does providing realistic job information result in higher levels of commitment and job satisfaction, and lower levels of voluntary turnover?) (Breaugh and Starke, 2000; Rynes and Cable, 2003). Since the early 1990s, new research questions have surfaced, partly as a result of Rynes' (1991) chapter in the second edition of the *Handbook of Organizational and Industrial Psychology*. For example, there has been a significant increase in research examining applicant reactions to a wide variety of selection procedures (e.g., Chapman, Uggerslev, and Webster, 2003; Ryan, Greguras, and Ployhart, 1996; Rynes and Connerly, 1993) and to various types of affirmative action (AA) policies (Cropanzano, Slaughter, and Bachiochi, 2005; Highhouse, Stierwalt, Bachiochi, Elder, and Fisher, 1999a; Truxillo and Bauer, 1999). Considerable progress has also been made in research on the antecedents and consequences of person-organization fit (Cable and Judge, 1996; Judge and Cable, 1997) as well as in the measurement of organizational attractiveness (Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar, 2003).

Despite these major research contributions, researchers have highlighted many questions that remain unanswered (Breaugh and Starke, 2000). For example, Rynes and Cable (2003) suggested examining the influence of technological advances and changing labor markets on the tactics used by organizations to attract new talent. Chapman et al. (2005) called for more research on actual job choice by real applicants, while others (Barber, 1998; Rynes, 1991) emphasized the need for research that is more theory-driven and “designed with an appreciation of the complexity of the recruitment process” (Breaugh and Starke, 2000, p. 430).

The military has a long-standing tradition of recruitment research that can be broken down into three major streams. One stream of research focuses on the effects of RJPs on post-hire turnover (Ganzach, Pazy, Ohayun, and Brainin, 2002; Horner, Mobley, and Meglino, 1979; Ilgen and Seely, 1974; Meglino, Ravlin, and DeNisi, 1997). A second stream examines predictors of military propensity (intention to enlist) and actual enlistment. Examples of these predictors include: demographic, biographic, educational, and family background factors and attitudes toward the military (Bachman et al., 2000; Brown and Rana, 2005); recruiter traits and behaviors (Schreurs et al., 2005); perceptions of job and organizational attributes (Lievens, Van Hove, and Schreurs, 2005); and youth perceptions of parental attitudes about the military (Legree et al., 2000). The third stream consists of economic studies conducted to analyze the effects of allocation of military recruiting budgets on recruiting productivity (e.g., Hanssens and Levien, 1983; Lovell, Morey, and Wood, 1991; Sohn, 1996).

Although studies in the three streams mentioned have furthered our understanding of military recruitment, each stream has developed in isolation from the others much like most of the pre-1990 recruitment research in non-military settings (Rynes, 1991). Rynes demonstrated how this piecemeal approach to research may obstruct theory development and barely contributes to the practical know-how of recruitment, the latter being of utmost importance in view of the applied character of most military research.

This paper attempts to bring together research findings in the different areas of recruitment. The purpose of this paper is to describe a conceptual model of military recruitment that is based on research findings in the area of recruitment. The research that forms the basis of the model will be described. The development of this model is based on a review of recruitment research conducted on both military and non-military populations and on the efforts of members of the *NATO Task Group on Recruitment and Retention of Military Personnel*¹. The model is intended to serve as general framework for further research.

There are several approaches to structuring a review of this nature. This review is organized around the proposed model of military recruitment that is presented in the first section of the article, following the definition of recruitment. In the second section the central outcome variable of the recruitment model, organizational attractiveness, is discussed. In the third section, we zoom in on the predictors of organizational attractiveness. A distinction is made between organizational- and individual-level predictor variables. The organizational-level predictor variables relate to the actual environment in terms of objective job and organizational characteristics. The individual-level predictor variables refer to the perceived environment in terms of individuals' subjective interpretation of the job and organizational characteristics. In the fourth section, we describe how information about the organization is transmitted through various information sources to the target population. A distinction is made between sources that are under the direct control of the organization and sources that cannot be controlled by the organization. Based on the literature review and the proposed model, several suggestions for future research are then presented. The paper concludes with a list of practical recommendations and guidelines to help our military decision-makers solving the recruitment problems our organizations are facing today and will be facing in the future.

4A.3 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

4A.3.1 Definition of Recruitment

Several definitions of recruitment have been proposed over the last two decades. For example, Rynes (1991) defined recruitment as “encompass[ing] all organizational practices and decisions that affect either the number, or types, of individuals that are willing to apply for, or to accept, a given vacancy” (p. 429). A similar definition was offered by Breaugh (1992): “Employee recruitment involves those organizational activities that (1) influence the number and/or types of applicants who apply for a position and/or (2) affect whether a job offer is accepted” (p. 4). Barber (1998) observed that both definitions confuse the recruitment *process* with the recruitment *outcome*. According to these definitions a recruiting program (e.g., a television ad) that failed to attract applicants would not be considered part of recruitment. On the other hand, organizational practices (e.g., war against terrorism) that have the unintended effect of attracting or turning off prospects would be considered as part of recruitment. To avoid defining recruitment in terms of its consequences, Barber adopted a narrower definition: “Recruitment includes those practices and activities carried on by the organization with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees.” Barber’s definition has been the source for several other recruitment scholars to propose their own definition. For instance, according to Taylor and Collins (2000) “Recruitment includes the set of activities undertaken by the organization for the primary purpose of identifying a desirable group of applicants, attracting them into its employee ranks, and retaining them at least for the short term” (p. 306). More recently, Saks (2005), emphasizing the strategic importance of the recruitment function, put forward the following definition: “Recruitment involves actions and activities taken by an organization in order to identify and attract individuals to the organization who have the

¹ In 2003, a NATO Task Group (TG) on *Recruitment and Retention of Military Personnel* was formed in response to interest in military recruitment and retention. The TG’s purpose was to address recruitment and retention issues across NATO countries. This paper is in line with the work conducted by this group. More information on the TG can be obtained from the first author.

capabilities to help the organization realize its strategic objectives. In particular, such activities should generate a pool of desirable candidates; enhance their interest in and attraction to the organization as an employer; and increase the probability that they will accept a job offer” (p. 48). For the purpose of this paper, we adhere to Saks’ definition of recruitment as it highlights the important role of recruitment in helping an organization achieve its strategic objectives.

4A.3.2 A Proposed Model of Military Recruitment

The model outlined in Figure 4A-1 is a model of behavioral prediction. In this paper, the behavioral variable is called “job pursuit.” Job pursuit can take many forms (e.g., applying, job offer acceptance) depending on the recruitment stage the (potential) applicant is going through. In line with other models of behavioral prediction, such as the theories of reasoned action (TRA, Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977) and planned behavior (TPB, Ajzen, 1991), we assume that a person’s intention to act is the immediate antecedent of behavior and that intention, in turn, is predicted by the extent to which a person has a positive or negative attitude toward the behavior. The model also includes a variety of predictors that are proposed as determinants of applicant attraction. These predictors relate to individuals’ cognitions (beliefs, perceptions, expectations) and are hypothesized to influence behavior through influencing attitude and/or intention. The model further relies on principles from information and communication theory (e.g., Shannon and Weaver, 1949). Applied to a recruitment context, communication can be conceptualized as the transmission of a message to a target group of (potential) applicants through a specific source or medium (Barber, 1998). The message content relates to information on the available jobs (e.g., type of work to be performed, pay level) and the hiring organization (size, type of industry) that may play a critical role in individuals’ decision-making process. The message is usually transmitted and controlled by the organization as it attempts to identify and attract new employees. Yet, people also receive information about the organization from other sources (e.g., word-of-mouth, publicity), which are not all under the direct control of the organization. Finally, several inter-individual difference variables (e.g., values, needs) are assumed to moderate the relationships depicted in the recruitment model. Each component of the model is described below along with a brief discussion of studies, from both military and non-military populations, that have tested the relationships in the model empirically. We will focus on relationships between, instead of within, classes of variables.

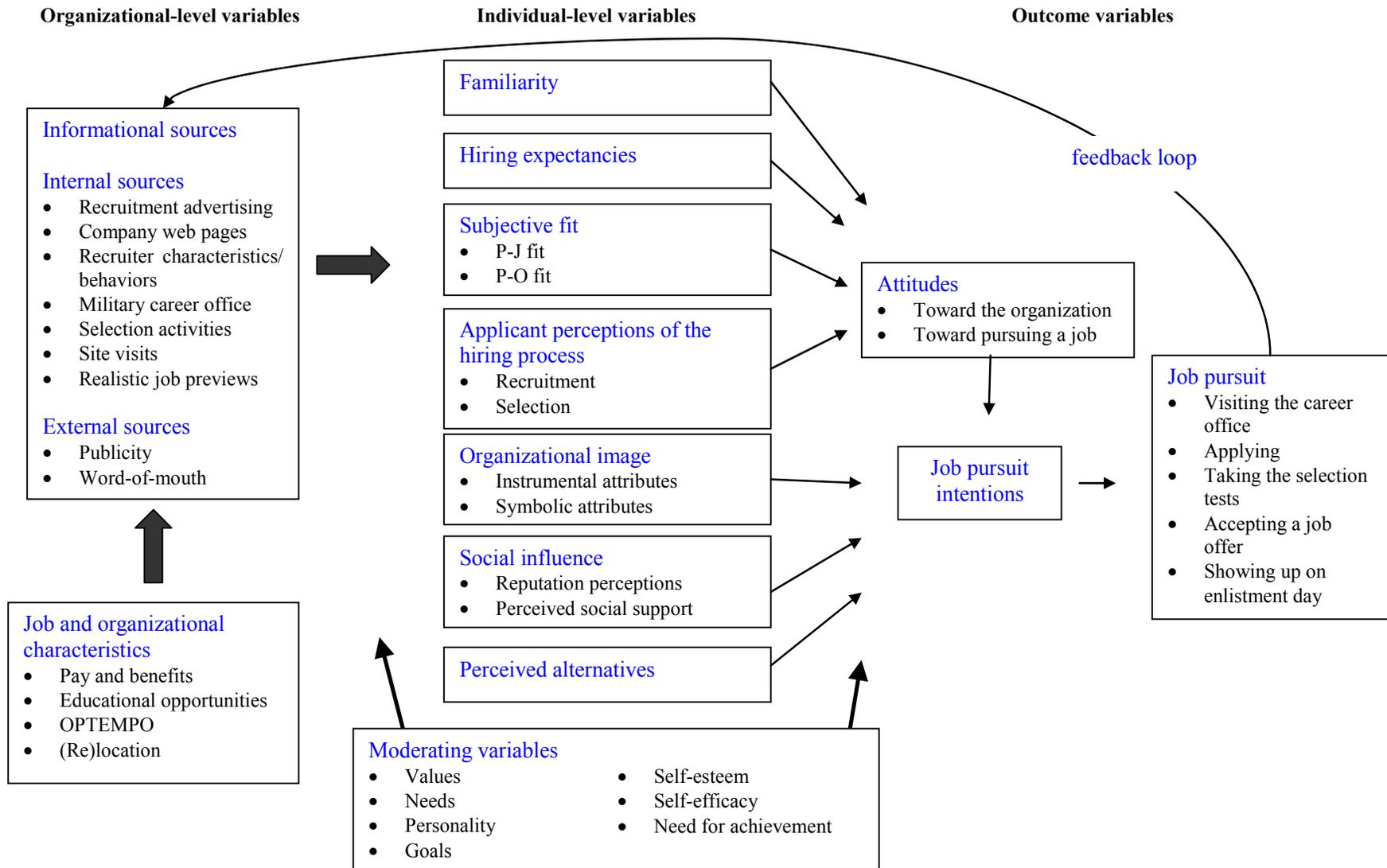


Figure 4A-1: A Proposed Model of Military Recruitment.

4A.4 COMPONENTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL ATTRACTIVENESS

4A.4.1 Job Pursuit

Ultimately, recruitment efforts are aimed at influencing a person's behavior, whether this is applying, recommending the organization to others, or attending a site visit. In the present paper, we use "job pursuit" to refer to a variety of possible behaviors. Some behaviors (e.g., applying) occur in early recruitment stages, whereas other behaviors (e.g., job offer acceptance) are typical for later recruitment stages. Barber (1998) identified three recruitment stages: generating applicants, maintaining applicant status, and job choice. Examples in a military context are as follows: attempts to persuade potential applicants to visit military career offices and to apply for the military (generating applicants); attempts to keep applicants interested in the job, for instance by encouraging them to attend the selection procedure and to take the tests (maintaining applicant status); and trying to convince desirable applicants to accept job offers from the military (over offers from other organizations) and to be present on enlistment day (job choice). As individuals advance through this recruitment cycle, they acquire new information about the organization (through various sources, see below). Therefore, in line with Cable and Turban (2001), the recruitment model contains a feedback loop to indicate that the process of establishing and modifying knowledge about the organization is ongoing.

4A.4.2 An Attitude-Intention Mediated Model of Military Job Pursuit

There is an abundance of measures of organizational attractiveness in past research. Despite the practical and theoretical value of having behavioral measures of attraction, most studies on organizational attractiveness used non-behavioral, indirect measures of attraction as a substitute for behavioral measures. This was presumably because behavioral measures of applicant attraction are hard to obtain. Truxillo, Steiner, and Gilliland (2004) made a distinction between "soft" and "hard" outcomes. Soft outcomes typically include items assessing general company attractiveness, company prestige, perceptions of the organization, job acceptance intentions, intentions to recommend the organization to others, and intentions to withdraw from the selection process (e.g., Highhouse, Beadle, Gallo, and Miller, 1998; Macan, Avedon, Paese, and Smith, 1994; Robertson, Iles, Gratton, and Sharpley, 1991; Smither, Reilly, Millsap, Pearlman, and Stoffey, 1993; Turban, Forret, and Hendrickson, 1998). Hard outcomes include actual applications for employment and ultimately choice of one place to work, organizational commitment and satisfaction, and applicant withdrawal from the selection process (e.g., Ambrose and Cropanzano, 2003; Highhouse et al., 2003; Ryan, Sacco, McFarland, and Kriska, 2000).

To gain insight into the complexity of organizational attractiveness measures, Highhouse et al. (2003) did a factor analysis on items commonly used in past research. They found that three non-behavioral components of organizational attractiveness can be reliably distinguished: attractiveness, prestige and behavioral intentions. Furthermore, according to the authors, the relationship between these components and organization-pursuit behavior corresponds to the TRA (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977). Based on their findings, the authors postulate that intention mediates the effects of company attractiveness (attitude) and prestige (social norms) on organization choice, similar to the mediating role of intentions in the TRA.

Allen, Van Scotter, and Otondo (2004) examined the effects of several recruitment media (e.g., face-to-face, video, audio, text) on attitudes toward the organization, attitudes toward joining the organization, intentions to pursue joining the organization, and behavior associated with joining. Consistent with the TRA and TPB (Ajzen, 1991), the authors found that attitudes toward the organization were positively related to attitudes toward joining, which were positively related to intentions to pursue employment, which were positively related to behavior associated with pursuing employment. This study not only provides support for an attitude-

intention mediated model of job pursuit, it also demonstrates that attitudes toward joining is a better predictor of job pursuit intentions than general attitudes toward the organization (e.g., company attractiveness) (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005).

Recently, Chapman et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of the relationships between various recruitment predictors and four major recruitment outcome variables: job/organization attraction, job pursuit intentions, acceptance intentions, and job choice. Job/organization attraction refers to an overall evaluation of the attractiveness of the job or the organization, whereas job pursuit and acceptance intentions indicate a person's willingness to pursue (e.g., attend a site visit or second interview) and accept a job. Both are frequently used as proxies of actual behavior. Job choice, or the decision whether or not to accept a real job offer involving an actual job, is the only "hard" outcome in this list. The results showed that attraction and/or intention mediated the predictor-job choice relationships. More specifically, they found that some predictors (e.g., recruiter characteristics) influenced job choice more through attraction, whereas others (e.g., perceptions of the recruiting process) better predicted job choice through intention. This study is noteworthy for at least two reasons. First, it is indicative of the complexity of the recruitment process as it shows how predictors may differ in their relation to job choice despite their sometimes apparent similar content (for similar conclusions, see also Aiman-Smith, Bauer, and Cable, 2001; Schreurs et al., 2005). Second, it demonstrates the importance of having common definitions and operationalizations for the constructs being measured in order to compare studies and accumulate knowledge.

Based on the above findings, we propose an attitude-intention mediated model of job pursuit with the military. More specifically, we propose that attitudes (toward the military, toward pursuing a job) and job pursuit intention mediate the relationship between recruitment predictors and job pursuit behavior. Yet, we are reluctant to propose a fully mediated model of job pursuit (from attitudes to intention to behavior) since several studies suggested that some recruitment predictors may have a direct effect on job pursuit intention (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Chapman et al., 2005; Schreurs et al., 2005).

4A.5 PREDICTORS OF MILITARY JOB PURSUIT

A distinction is made between *organizational-level* and *individual-level* predictor variables. The organizational-level predictor variables relate to the actual environment in terms of objective job and organizational characteristics. The *individual-level* predictor variables refer to the perceived environment in terms of individuals' subjective interpretation of the job and organizational characteristics. Most of the predictors of job pursuit can also be classified according to Behling, Labovitz, and Gainer's (1968) three "implicit theories" of job choice: objective factors, subjective factors, and the critical contact approach. The objective factors approach assumes that job pursuit decisions are based on weighing the advantages and disadvantages of objectively measurable job and organizational attributes (e.g., pay, type of work, organizational size). Objective factors relate to the actual environment. The subjective factors approach assumes that job pursuit is based on the perceived congruence between the individual (e.g., personality, needs, values) and the organization (e.g., image). They relate to individuals' subjective interpretation of the organization based on the information available to them. In the remainder of this article, objective factors are treated as equivalent to organizational-level variables, and subjective factors are treated as equivalent to individual-level variables. The critical contact perspective assumes that potential applicants often have insufficient information to make well-informed job choices and therefore rely on (early) recruitment contacts to differentiate between organizations. This perspective will be discussed in the section on informational sources.

4A.5.1 Objective Factors/Organizational-Level Variables

Of central importance in recruitment are the characteristics of the hiring organization and of the vacancy. In the discussion of objective characteristics, we focus on the main effects of these characteristics on applicant attraction. However, there is substantial evidence that the attractiveness of job and organizational characteristics differs across individuals. The moderating role of individual difference variables (e.g., needs, values, personality, etc.) has generally been studied under the rubric of subjective factors/individual-level variables (see below).

4A.5.1.1 Organizational Characteristics

Previous research has convincingly shown that organizational characteristics, such as size (e.g., Barber, Wesson, Roberson, and Taylor, 1999), pay system (e.g., Cable and Judge, 1994) and type of industry (e.g., Cable and Graham, 2000) play a critical role in the job choice process. For example, Turban and Keon (1993) found that management students were more attracted to decentralized rather than centralized organizations, and more to organizations that rewarded performance based on merit rather than on seniority. Most organizational characteristics are visible and salient to most job seekers early in the decision process or, in the case of lesser known organizations, can be obtained relatively easily through corporate reports, recruitment brochures, and the business press (Barber and Roehling, 1993; Rynes and Barber, 1990). Therefore, job seekers use organizational characteristics to screen out job opportunities before specific vacancy characteristics are ever considered (Rynes and Cable, 2003). In addition, organizational characteristics may act as signals of the organizational values and culture and, hence, affect a job seeker's decision whether or not to pursue employment (Lievens, Decaesteker, Coetsier, and Giernaert, 2001). For example, Rynes (1987) suggested that "compensation systems are capable of attracting (or repelling) the right kinds of people because they communicate so much about an organization's philosophy, values, and practices" (p. 190).

4A.5.1.2 Job Characteristics

Job characteristics such as salary, benefits, and promotional opportunities have been identified as important determinants of organizational attractiveness (Barber and Roehling, 1993; Cable and Judge, 1994; Rynes, Schwab, and Heneman, 1983; Turban, Eyring, and Campion, 1993). With respect to pay and benefits, Rynes and Cable (2003) concluded that "pay level is at least moderately important in most applicants' job choices. In addition, other forms of pay (e.g., contingent pay increases, benefits) are also important – perhaps increasingly as they become more variable across employers (Heneman, Ledford, and Gresham, 2000) and more volatile over time (e.g., the value of stock options)." (p. 64).

Research on military enlistment and re-enlistment has mainly focused on economic and educational attributes. For instance, raising pay has been found to be an effective measure in influencing re-enlistment decisions (e.g., Hansen, 2000; Hosek and Peterson, 1985), although the effect sizes differed substantially across studies. Lakhani (1988) showed that bonuses are even more effective in retaining military personnel than equivalent increases in salaries. Hosek, Antel, and Peterson (1989) found that the prospect of getting more education (e.g., through training or the use of educational benefits) influenced first-term enlistees' decision to remain in the service after 36 months. Similarly, Tannen (1987) found that by improving educational benefits for Army applicants meeting certain aptitude requirements, the quantity and quality of applicants increased dramatically.

The military frequently requires its members to relocate to remote areas. Research has shown that employees are often resistant to accept positions that require relocation, especially to dissimilar areas (e.g., Grossman and Magnus, 1988; Noe and Barber, 1993; Turban, Campion, and Eyring, 1995). Similarly, research on geographic boundaries in recruitment suggests that the need to relocate may discourage applicants to continue

job pursuit (Ryan et al., 2000), and that potential applicants screen out jobs located outside their preferred geographic area (Barber and Roehling, 1993; Osborn, 1990; Rynes and Lawler, 1983). This finding suggests that the military may benefit from recruiting within the area in which the job is located or within areas that are similar to the job's location in terms of city size, climate, recreational opportunities, and so forth (Barber, 1998). In a related vein, recent research has shown that frequency of deployment, or operations tempo (OPSTEMPO, Castro and Adler, 2005), has a (curvilinear) effect on turnover (Huffman, Adler, Dolan, and Castro, 2005), and that OPSTEMPO is negatively related to several work-related outcomes, such as quality of life (Adams et al., 2005). For more information on the links between OPSTEMPO and recruiting, please read the chapter on PERSTEMPO/Quality of Life and recruiting and retention (see topic chapter *PERSTEMPO/OPSTEMPO and Quality of Life*). Given the impact of OPSTEMPO on the attitudes and well-being of current employees, OPSTEMPO may also affect potential applicants' attraction to the military. Therefore, we recommend that future studies on correlates of military attractiveness include need to relocate and OPSTEMPO (besides several other well-established predictors, such as pay and benefits, and educational opportunities) as potential important job characteristics.

4A.5.2 Subjective Factors/Individual-Level Variables

Obviously, the information on job and organizational attributes transmitted through various channels (see below) result in a set of cognitions from which attitudes and intentions are further developed. These cognitions can be classified as beliefs, expectancies, and/or perceptions.

4A.5.2.1 Organizational Image

Organizational image, or the content of the beliefs that (potential) applicants hold about the organization as an employer (Cable and Turban, 2001; Highhouse, Zickar, Thorsteinson, Stierwalt, and Slaughter, 1999b), is an important determinant of applicant attraction. Although definitions and operationalization of organizational image vary from study to study, there is a consensus that job seekers' early impressions of an organization are related to perceptions of organizational attractiveness and propensity to apply for jobs (Rynes and Cable, 2003).

Gatewood, Gowan, and Lautenschlager (1993) made a distinction between corporate image, or the image associated with the name of an organization, and recruitment image – the image associated with its recruitment message (i.e., advertisement). They found that corporate, as well as recruitment, image was significantly correlated with job pursuit intentions, the latter more strongly than the former.

Belt and Paolillo (1982) examined the influence of corporate image on the likelihood that prospective applicants would react positively to a restaurant advertisement. The results of their study showed that prospects were more likely to react to organizations “with high standing in the community” (p. 111).

Turban and Greening (1997) showed that corporate social performance, a construct that emphasizes an organization's responsibilities to multiple stakeholders, is related to firms' reputations and attractiveness as employers. Similarly, Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) found that business students' perceptions of an organization's ecological rating and lay-off policy were significant predictors of their attitude toward the organization and, to a lesser extent, of their job pursuit intentions.

Recently, recruitment scholars have turned to marketing theory and research to study the impact of organizational activities on job seekers' application decisions. Collins and Stevens (2002), using a within-subjects design, found that early-recruitment practices (i.e., word-of-mouth endorsements and advertising)

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affected job seekers' application decisions through their impact on employer brand image (i.e., applicants' general attitudes toward the company and perceived attributes).

Lievens and Highhouse (2003), drawing from the instrumental-symbolic marketing literature, made a distinction between perceptions related to job and organizational characteristics and perceptions of organizational traits. The former describes the job/organization in terms of objective, concrete and instrumental attributes a job/an organization either has or does not have (e.g., pay, benefits, bonuses). These attributes primarily trigger interest among applicants because of their utility (i.e., maximizing benefits and minimizing costs). The latter refers to symbolic attributes prospective applicants assign to a particular organization in the form of imagery and trait inferences (e.g., innovativeness, prestige). In a recent study, Lievens et al. (2005) found that symbolic attributes, namely excitement, cheerfulness, and prestige, accounted for incremental variance in the Belgian Armed Forces' attractiveness as an employer, over and above a large set of instrumental job and organizational characteristics. Other (non-military) studies also found that people ascribe personality trait inferences to organizations, and that these inferences are related to organizational attraction (e.g., Slaughter, Zickar, Highhouse, and Mohr, 2004; Timmerman, 1996).

In a recent meta-analysis (Chapman et al., 2005), perceptions of job and organizational attributes (e.g., perceptions of work environment) were found to have a direct influence on job pursuit intention. Based on these meta-analytic results, we also propose a direct relationship from organizational image to job pursuit intention, as an indication of their prominent role within the job choice process.

In summary, there is substantial empirical evidence that shows that the image of an organization plays a critical role in influencing the applicant decision-making process. In our model, image corresponds to (potential) applicants' "subjective" beliefs about job and organizational characteristics.

4A.5.2.2 Organizational Reputation, Perceived Social Support

Fombrun (1996) defined corporate reputation as the "affective or emotional reaction – good or bad, weak or strong – of ... the general public to the company's name" (p. 37). The construct of organizational reputation is closely related to that of organizational image, yet based on Fombrun's definition, two important differences stand out (Cable and Turban, 2001). First, image does not include an affective evaluative component whereas reputation does; second, image refers to a person's own beliefs about the organization, while reputation refers to people's assessment of how others (the general public) evaluate the organization relative to other organizations (see also Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail, 1994). Reputation focuses on aspects of an organization subject to social influence and therefore is closely related to the subjective norm component of the TRA/TPB (Highhouse et al., 2003). As organizational image, reputation is multidimensional since a reputation can be simultaneously positive and negative (Ferris, Berkson, and Harris, 2002). For instance, the military's reputation of being "down-to-earth" may be negative to higher-educated prospects, yet positive to lower-educated prospects, whereas its social reputation may be generally held in a positive light for both groups.

Several studies have investigated the relation between organizational reputation and applicant attraction, with somewhat mixed results. Turban et al. (1998) examined the effect of applicants' perceptions of an organization's reputation prior to the campus interview on their attraction to that organization both before and after the campus interview. They found that reputation was positively related to applicants' pre-interview attraction and to their perception of several job and organizational attributes (e.g., work environment, challenging work), but was negatively related to applicant attraction after the interview.

Most other studies, however, have indicated that organizational reputation has a strong positive effect on attracting applicants. For instance, Cable and Turban (2003) examined how and why organizational reputation

affects job pursuit intentions. The results from their study suggest that job seekers' reputation perceptions affect job pursuit because individuals use reputation as a signal about job attributes, and because reputation affects the pride that individuals expect from organizational membership. In another study (Turban and Cable, 2003), they found that organizations with better reputations attracted more applicants of higher quality. Similarly, Collins and Han (2004) found evidence that early recruitment practices, corporate advertising, and organization reputation each had direct positive effects on applicant pool and quality. Also, Fombrun and van Riel (1997) found that students were most attracted to companies that were in *Fortune* magazine's list of *100 Best Companies to Work For*, which is often used as a (1-dimensional but objective) measure of organizational reputation (e.g., Cable and Graham, 2000).

A military study conducted by Legree et al. (2000) surveyed 2,731 young men and their parents about their attitudes and intentions toward the military to understand factors associated with military enlistment. The results from this study indicated that, regardless of actual parental attitudes toward the military, youth perceptions of parental attitudes were significantly related with stated enlistment propensity, which predicted actual enlistment. The path coefficient ($\beta = .55$) (indicating the strength of the relationship) between perceptions of parental attitudes and intentions-to-apply was even higher than the path coefficient ($\beta = .31$) between personal Army attitudes and intentions-to-apply. A possible explanation for this finding is the lack of compatibility between the measures of attitudes and intentions used (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005). The authors measured youth attitudes toward military-advertising themes (e.g., cash for education, physical challenge, leadership skills) instead of their attitude toward applying (at a certain place, within a certain time span).

Similarly, in a qualitative study on applicant withdrawal in the Belgian military, Schreurs (2003) found that 10 percent of the applicants who self-selected out indicated that perceived lack of support from significant others was the primary motive for withdrawal. Furthermore, for many, significant others' opinion about the military played a role in their decision, but was not the main reason for withdrawal. For example, some individuals preferred their current job to a military occupation because their parents had convinced them that this was the right thing to do. It should be noted that at the time of the data collection for the Schreurs' study, the Iraqi war had just begun. For most applicants this was not an issue, but withdrawals often mentioned that their parents were strongly opposed the possibility that their child would go to war.

Taken together, the studies reviewed in this section indicate that (potential) applicants' job pursuit intention and decision to join an organization are influenced by their beliefs of how that organization is regarded by the public and significant others. Yet, based on the available evidence it is unclear whether the effect of reputation on job pursuit intention is direct or indirect (through attitudes). With some reservations, we propose a direct relationship to job pursuit intention, consistent with the role of the subjective norm component of the TRA/TPB.

4A.5.2.3 Employer Familiarity

Several studies have addressed the role of employer familiarity, or "the level of awareness that a job seeker has of an organization" (Cable and Turban, 2001, p. 124), in constituting image/reputation. Most studies found that familiarity is significantly related to job seekers' perceptions of an organization, with more familiar organizations being perceived as more attractive. For instance, Gatewood et al. (1993) found that corporate image was strongly related to overall familiarity, knowing someone who works for the company, using the products or services of the company, having studied the company in class, and the frequency of contact with company advertisements. Recruitment image was strongly related to the amount of information presented in the recruitment advertisement and to having worked for the company in the past. These results suggest that providing more information will result in more interest on the part of applicants. It should be noted; however, that most advertisements only contained positive information.

Cable and Graham (2000), using different methodologies (e.g., verbal protocol analysis), also found that job seekers' familiarity with companies was positively related to their perceptions of those companies' reputations. Yet, organizational attributes (i.e., opportunities for personal growth, type of industry) were even better predictors of reputation. Cable and Graham put forward the possibility that "familiarity is most important as a predictor of job seekers' reputation beliefs when information about other organizational attributes is unavailable" (p. 943).

Turban and his colleagues (Turban, 2001; Turban and Greening, 1997; Turban, Lau, Ngo, Chow, and Si, 2001) found support for the hypothesis that familiarity is positively related to organization attraction, with familiarity accounting for approximately 5 percent of the variance. Similarly, Lievens et al. (2005) found that familiarity with the Belgian military was positively related to potential applicants' perceived attractiveness of the military. In addition, the results showed an interaction effect between familiarity and instrumental/symbolic attributes, with the relationship between instrumental/symbolic attributes and applicant attraction being stronger when familiarity was high. Conversely, the relationship between instrumental/symbolic attributes and attractiveness was weaker or non-existent when familiarity was low.

The above findings not only seem to be very straightforward—higher familiarity leads to increased liking, they are also theoretically embedded in the social psychology literature on "mere exposure" (Zajonc, 1968). Mere exposure refers to the observation that an increased familiarity with previously neutral objects leads to an increase in liking. Furthermore, marketing and advertisement practices are founded on the premise that increased exposure to a product or company increases attraction to that product or company. Nevertheless, we believe some caution is warranted. Most of the above studies were conducted within a single (actual or hypothetical) organization. More importantly, a recent study (Brooks, Highhouse, Russell, and Mohr, 2003) convincingly demonstrated that more familiar organizations elicit more positive *and* more negative reactions than less familiar organizations. For instance, respondents generated more reasons for and against working for more familiar organizations than they generated reasons for and against working for less familiar organizations. Apparently, familiarity serves as an anchor to which other information is attached (Aaker, 1991; Cable and Turban, 2001; Keller, 1993), whether that information is positive or negative. Practically, this finding suggests that advertisement strategies aimed at increasing the increasing familiarity may not have the desired effect of increasing attraction: "Although many of these strategies employ techniques designed to do more than just increase familiarity, firms should bear in mind that increased familiarity might have costs as well as benefits" (Brooks et al., 2003, p. 913).

4A.5.2.4 Subjective Fit

Fit can be broadly defined as "the compatibility between an individual and a work environment that occurs when their characteristics are well matched" (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson, 2005, p. 281). This definition reflects the most comprehensive type of fit, person-environment (PE) fit. Because of its generality, researchers started to focus on several subtypes of PE fit. In the context of recruitment, two types of fit have received considerable research attention: person-job (PJ) fit and person-organization (PO) fit. PJ fit refers to compatibility between a person's characteristics, such as knowledge, skills, abilities and needs, and the requirements of the job or tasks that are performed at work, whereas PO fit addresses the compatibility between people and entire organizations in terms of values, goals and personality (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005)².

² A detailed overview of these and other types of fit goes beyond the scope of this paper, and can be found elsewhere (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Another useful distinction is that between subjective fit (also called perceived fit, Chapman et al., 2005) and objective fit. Subjective fit stems from the compatibility between a person's characteristics and the perceived job and organizational characteristics, whereas objective fit refers to the match between a person's characteristics and the actual work environment (Ehrhart and Ziegert, 2005). As research has shown that the relationship between objective fit and applicant attraction is mediated by subjective fit (Cable and Judge, 1996; Judge and Cable, 1997), we focus on the latter.

Based upon theoretical models like Schneider's (1987) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework, it has been suggested that individuals are attracted to organizations that best fit their needs, values, goals, and personality. Research has convincingly demonstrated the role of PJ and PO fit perceptions in predicting several pre-hire outcomes (e.g., attraction, job pursuit intention, job offer acceptance). For example, Cable and Judge (1996) found that job seekers' PO fit perceptions significantly predicted job choice intentions. PO fit perceptions mainly emanated from the congruence between job seekers' perceptions of organizations' and their own values. Schmit and Ryan (1997), in a study on applicant withdrawal from a selection procedure for police officers, found that perceived lack of PJ and PO fit was an important reason to self-select out. Some withdrawals were of the opinion that the job was not right for them; others argued – rightfully or wrongfully – that they did not have the required qualifications for the job.

Several studies on applicant attraction measured PO fit indirectly through interactive person and organization characteristics. For example, Lievens et al. (2001) found that highly conscientious people were more attracted to large organizations than people low on conscientiousness. Turban and Keon (1993) found that upper-level students high on self-esteem were more attracted to decentralized and larger organizations. They also showed that students high on need for achievement preferred organizations with a merit-based pay system to a tenure-based pay system. Similarly, Cable and Judge (1994) found that job seekers high on self-efficacy were more likely to pursue an organization with individual-based pay than were those with low-self-efficacy. In a recent study for the Belgian military, Schreurs and Druart (2006) found that students low on conscientiousness were more attracted to the military when perceiving the organization as exciting. The reverse pattern was observed for highly conscientious students.

In a recent meta-analysis, Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) found that PJ fit correlated³ .48 with organizational attraction; PO fit had a correlation of .46 with organizational attraction (.60 when only subjective PO fit was taken into account) and .24 with applicant job acceptance. Chapman et al. (2005) reported similar results from their meta-analysis: PO fit correlated .46 with job-organization attraction, .62 with job pursuit intentions, and .18 with job choice. PJ fit correlated .45 with job acceptance intentions. Contrary to expectations, the authors found that intention rather than attitude mediated the relationship between perceived fit and job choice (as is depicted in the model).

Based on the above findings it can be concluded that fit plays an important role in the applicant decision-making process. Individuals differ in their preferences for job and organizational attributes (e.g., size, pay and benefits, excitement) and are differentially attracted to organizations according to their own personal characteristics (needs, values, goals, personality, self-efficacy, self-esteem). Therefore, for the military (as for any other organization) it is paramount to ensure that recruitment efforts attract the kind of people the organization really wants. For instance, enlistment bonuses might be especially appealing to extrinsic-driven job seekers, whereas the military may be more interested in applicants who are motivated by other, more intrinsic work values (e.g., education, altruism, patriotism).

³ A correlation indicates strength of relationship. Correlations range in strength from 0 to 1.

4A.5.2.5 Perceived Alternatives

An applicant's perception of his or her employment alternatives (sometimes referred to as "perceived marketability") has also been suggested to be an important factor influencing job pursuit. According to Soelberg's (1967) generalizable decision-processing model, individuals implicitly choose a job (i.e., the implicit favorite) among an indefinite number of viable alternatives based on a set of criteria that reflect their ideal work environment. Therefore, evaluations on the attractiveness of a job (or organization) are not independent (Power and Aldag, 1985). Similarly, image theory (Beach, 1990) suggests that job choices are made based on an evaluation of how alternative options fit one's image of how things should be. Several studies provided support for the role of perceived alternatives in job choice. For example, Ryan et al. (2000) found that those who self-selected out of a selection procedure for police officers reported having more alternatives than those who stayed in and failed (but did not differ from those who stayed in and passed). Results from interviews that were held with those who self-selected out also indicated that alternatives were a major reason for withdrawing (for similar findings see, Ryan and McFarland, 1997; Ryan, Ployhart, Greguras, and Schmit, 1997; Schmit and Ryan, 1997). In some cases, those who withdrew believed they could get a better job or had already taken another offer. In other cases, one's current job was seen as the better alternative. As noted by Ryan et al. (2000), these results are consistent with findings on the role of perceived employment alternatives in turnover (Gerhart, 1990) and in military re-enlistment (Steel, 1996). Finally, Chapman et al. (2005) found that perceived alternatives predicted job choice through job pursuit intentions (instead of through attitudes). However, the overall effect sizes for perceived alternatives were marginal: .16, -.06, and -.02 for job pursuit attitudes, intentions, and job choice, respectively.

Empirical evidence from the limited research on the role of perceived alternatives in job choice suggests that applicants usually consider more than one potential employer in their job search. The military may want to explore what the most popular employment alternatives are according to military applicants (e.g., police), and why (qualified) applicants prefer the one organization to the other in order to strengthen its labor market position.

4A.5.2.6 Hiring Expectancies

Expectancy (VIE) theory (Vroom, 1966) states that individuals choose among a set of employment alternatives on the basis of the motivational force of each alternative. The motivational force is a multiplicative function of expectancy (i.e., the individual's belief that he or she would be successful in obtaining the job offer), instrumentality (i.e., the evaluation of the likelihood that the job has certain attributes), and valence (i.e., the attractiveness of those attributes). Thus, according to expectancy theory, positive hiring expectancies are predicted to lead to a greater effort to obtain employment (Rynes and Lawler, 1983). Several studies have found support for this prediction. For example, Collins and Stevens (1999) found that hiring expectancies were significantly related to applicant attraction ($r = .41$) and intentions-to-apply ($r = .55$). Even after controlling for organizational image, the relationship between expectancies and intentions-to-apply remained highly significant. Chapman et al. (2005) found that hiring expectancies predicted job choice through a positive relationship with job pursuit attitudes. The total effect sizes of hiring expectancies were .33, .26, and .06 for attitudes, intentions, and job choice. The authors refer to Janis and Mann's (1977) bolstering theory of decision making to explain these findings. According to this theory, individuals initially have a tendency to elevate choices that are more likely to happen by inflating the positive aspects of that alternative and deflating the negative aspects.

4A.6 INFORMATIONAL SOURCES

Recruitment is a series of activities, any one of which is a potential source of information and can affect an applicant's decision to (continue to) pursue employment with an organization (Barber, 1998). Dozens of recruitment practices have been scrutinized regarding their influence on applicant attraction. Recruitment research has focused on the impact of one such recruitment activity, namely the initial screening interview for a long time. More recently; however, scholars have started to examine the influence of other recruitment practices (e.g., advertising, word-of-mouth, site visits, sponsorship activities, company web sites) on applicant attraction. Although not commonly discussed as a part of recruitment research, selection procedures can also transmit organizational information, and hence, influence applicants' attitudes and behaviors toward the organization (Anderson, 2001; Ryan and Ployhart, 2000). Finally, recruitment literature has paid considerable attention to the impact of realistic job previews (RJPs) and recruitment sources on *post-hire* organizational outcomes, such as job satisfaction, performance, and turnover. Only recently, partly due to the boom of company Web sites, have scholars started to examine their influence on *pre-hire* outcomes. Before reviewing some of the literature on each of these recruitment topics (for a thorough discussion see, for example, Breaugh and Starke, 2000; Rynes and Cable, 2003; Saks, 2005), we clarify Behling et al.'s (1968) critical contact perspective on job choice, as many studies on the effect of recruitment activities on job pursuit have developed from this approach.

4A.6.1 The Critical Contact Perspective

The critical contact perspective (Behling et al., 1968) suggests that applicants' job pursuit decisions are based on their interpretation of various aspects of the recruitment and selection process (e.g., characteristics of the recruiter, perceived job relatedness of selection tests). In the absence of other information about the organization, applicants interpret information they receive in the course of the recruitment process as "signals" about what it would be like to be employed by the organization (Turban, 2001). This assumption stems from propositions from signaling theory (Spence, 1973; Spence, 1974). Spence's signaling theory, developed by applying it to the labor market, states that highly productive people will seek more education than less productive people. Specifically, his theory was developed using the problems that employers face in the recruitment process, given that they have no prior information about people's skill sets. This will prompt employers to take higher education as a signal, and offer higher salaries to such employees. Similarly, prospects and applicants will make inferences about the organization from various aspects of the hiring process if the information is not clearly provided by the organization. For example, if the computer used to test a candidate for a job broke down during testing, this may signal to the candidate that the organization does not invest money in information technology and result in decreasing attraction to the organization. As all hiring practices to some extent convey information about the organization's values and culture to some extent, it may be useful to seek for a way to classify these informational sources.

4A.6.2 A Classification of Information Sources

Traditionally, research on job information sources has drawn a distinction between formal and informal recruitment sources. The former involves the use of formal intermediaries such as placement offices, and recruitment advertisements, whereas the latter does not involve the use of formal intermediaries (e.g., friends and relatives) (Saks and Ashforth, 1997). As mentioned above, the majority of studies using this distinction (e.g., Kirman, Farley, and Geisinger, 1989; Saks, 1994) have focused on post-hire outcomes (e.g., turnover). The results generally indicate that applicants who are recruited through informal recruitment sources tend to stay in the job longer than applicants hired through formal sources. More recently, Cable and Turban (2001) conceptualized the various informational sources along two dimensions: an internal-external dimension,

and an experiential-informational dimension. Internal sources (e.g., recruitment advertising) are largely under the control of the organization and are used to disseminate recruitment-related information to potential applicants, whereas external sources (e.g., word-of-mouth, publicity) are not under the direct control of the organization and generate information that is available to the general public. Experiential sources (e.g., interviews) require applicants to personally experience some aspect of the organization to obtain information, whereas informational sources include media coverage, advertisements, and annual reports that contain “pre-processed: information. We used Cable and Turban’s internal-external continuum to classify the various sources that are included in our recruitment model. In the remainder of this section, we will briefly discuss some of the most important informational sources.

4A.6.3 Internal Sources

4A.6.3.1 The Initial Screening Interview

For over 30 years now, recruitment studies have been examining applicant reactions to recruiters conducting the initial screening interview. In general, the results indicate that applicant attraction to the organization is positively related to perceptions of recruiter warmth (also called “personableness,” “affect,” “enthusiasm,” and “empathy”) and to perceptions of recruiters’ willingness to provide information (i.e., recruiter informativeness).

There is evidence, although scarce, that recruiter demographics (e.g., age, gender, educational background) influence applicants’ overall evaluations of organizations. Yet, the effects are small in magnitude, not often replicated across studies, and there is little evidence that recruiter demographics influence applicants’ intentions to pursue jobs (Barber, 1998).

Results regarding the effects of recruiter training, experience and functional area on applicant reactions have also been mixed (Breaugh and Starke, 2000).

As mentioned above, one popular explanation for the effect of recruiter characteristics is signaling: recruiters would act as signals or symbols of broader organizational characteristics in addition to or instead of other information on the job and organization (Rynes, 1991). Hence, recruiter characteristics would essentially have an indirect effect on applicant attraction, through influencing perceptions of job and organizational attributes. Several studies provided evidence in support of signaling theory. For example, Turban (2001) found that recruitment activities (i.e., campus activity) influenced company attractiveness through influencing perceptions of the company image and the extent to which the work is challenging.

Second, recruiter credibility might help explain the differential effects of recruiters on applicants. Recruiter credibility depends on two factors, expertise and trustworthiness (Ilgen, Fisher, and Taylor, 1979; Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). Recruiter expertise refers to the extent to which applicants perceive recruiters as providing information that has direct relevance to what it is like to work as an employee in an organization. Recruiter trustworthiness refers to the extent to which a recruiter provides information that accurately, or truthfully, describes what it would be like to be an employee of an organization (Cable and Turban, 2001). Personally relevant and trustworthy recruitment messages are more likely to be processed in a systematic (as opposed to heuristic) manner (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993), and will therefore result in different perceptions of the environment.

Third, recruiters differ in the amount of information they provide. As mentioned above, recruiter informativeness is generally positively related to applicant reactions. However, some studies found the exact opposite (Schreurs et al., 2005; Turban and Dougherty, 1992; Turban et al., 1995). Thus, although informativeness is generally well

received by applicants, more information may have an inhibiting effect on job pursuit as well. For example, spending (too) much time discussing the job might be interpreted as indicative of potential problems in the organization (Turban et al., 1995; Turban and Dougherty, 1992). It is also possible that some applicants are not able to cognitively process the amount of information recruiters are providing (informational overload), resulting in a negative attitude toward the organization (Barber, 1998). Finally, it is likely that with more information provided there is an increased chance of applicants withdrawing from the selection process as the recruitment message probably contains some elements throwing doubt on whether the job will be satisfying (Breugh and Starke, 2000). The latter explanation is also known as the “self-selection” effect (Wanous and Colella, 1989), one of the mechanisms by which RJPs are expected to influence employee turnover. In the following section, the main research findings on RJPs are discussed briefly. A detailed review of RJPs goes beyond the scope of this paper and can be found elsewhere (Breugh, 1983; Meglino, Ravlin, and DeNisi, 2000; Phillips, 1998; Premack and Wanous, 1985).

4A.6.3.2 Realistic Job Previews

RJPs are designed expressly for the purpose of conveying realistic information about the job and/or organization to applicants (Anderson and Ostroff, 1997) and are probably the most well known recruitment technique with regard to the communication of both favorable and unfavorable job information. RJPs may range from videotaped demonstrations of the job to having the applicant talk directly with current employees, but usually RJPs are administered via a written booklet or brochure (Saks and Cronshaw, 1990), or by recruiters during the employment interview or orientation (post-hire) (Griffeth and Hom, 2001). The military typically makes use of recruiting centres to convey realistic information to potential applicants (Schreurs et al., 2005) or alternatively includes information on RJPs as part of their regular selection and assessment program (Bradley, Lawrence, and Noonan, 1998).

RJPs have been generally found to have a small but significant effect on several *post-hire* organizational outcomes, such as employee turnover, job satisfaction, commitment, and performance (McEvoy and Cascio, 1985; Phillips, 1998; Premack and Wanous, 1985; Wanous, Poland, Premack, and Davis, 1992). Evidence regarding the effect of RJPs on *pre-entry* outcomes, in particular pre-entry attraction, is mixed. Several studies found evidence that RJPs are negatively related to job acceptance rates (Meglino, DeNisi, Youngblood, and Williams, 1988; Premack and Wanous, 1985; Suszko and Breugh, 1986; Wiesner, Saks, and Summers, 1991). The theoretical rationale for this effect is that applicants provided with realistic information are supposed to be better able to decide whether the job is consistent with their preferences and needs, and those applicants who find the perspective described by the RJP to be unacceptable will self-select out of the process (the “self-selection” effect, Wanous and Colella, 1989). On the other hand, a meta-analysis by Phillips (1998) found a weak relationship (average correlation of $-.03$) between RJPs and applicant withdrawal from the selection process. Due to the large number of subjects involved, this correlation was statistically significant. However, it is likely that this correlation indicates the absence of a relationship rather than the opposite (Rynes and Cable, 2003). In addition, Highhouse, Stanton, and Reeve (2004) studied individuals’ online reactions to simulated computer-based recruitment messages and found that negative information about prospective companies was discounted more than positive information. Based on these findings, the authors suggested that negative information in recruitment messages “may not be as harmful to attraction as some have suggested” (p. 94), and that the potential adverse impact of negative information is cancelled out by the positive information included in the message.

Furthermore, several studies have found that the effects of RJPs on job acceptance may depend on other variables. For example, Meglino et al. (1993) found that applicants with prior job exposure had lower job acceptance rates than those without prior job exposure, probably because applicants with prior exposure are

more likely to overemphasize negative job information. Other studies have found that RJPs are most likely to result in lower job acceptance rates when subjects have a job alternative presented to them via a traditional job preview (Saks, Wiesner, and Summers, 1994; Wiesner et al., 1991). Saks, Wiesner, and Summers (1996) found evidence that the negative effects of RJPs on attraction somewhat decrease when the pay level of the RJP job exceeds that of a traditional job preview (TJP) job alternative.

Bretz and Judge (1998) examined whether self-selection based on job expectation information may be adverse from the organization's perspective. That is, whether the best qualified applicants are most likely to self-select out when presented with negative information about the organization. The results of this study yielded mixed support for the adverse self-selection hypothesis. That is, high quality applicants placed more weight on negative information than lower quality applicants. Ryan et al. (2000) found that applicants who dropped out of the selection process for police officers tended to have less commitment to law enforcement, suggesting that self-selection was beneficial from the organization's standpoint. However, they concluded "we need better means of assessing whether self-selection is adverse, both from the organizational and the individual perspective" (p. 177).

4A.6.3.3 Advertisements

Kotler (2000) defined advertisement as any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of an organization as an employer by the organization itself. Examples are job postings and recruitment brochures. Advertisements are a popular, but expensive, means to attract applicants and have been the subject of a number of recruitment studies (e.g., Barber and Roehling, 1993; Belt and Paolillo, 1982; Bretz and Judge, 1994; Gatewood, Gowan, and Lautenschlager, 1993; Highhouse et al., 1998; Highhouse et al., 1999a; Mason and Belt, 1986; Roberson, Collins, and Oreg, 2005). These studies generally yield the same results as studies on the effects of job and organizational characteristics: applicants are more attracted to organizations that present a favorable image (in terms of pay and benefits, location, staffing policies, human resource systems, etc.) and include more specific information in the recruitment advertisement.

Saks (2005) recently noted that recruitment advertising research is really no different than research on vacancy characteristics "expect that an advertisement is used as the method for describing the characteristics of the job and organization" (p. 57). He suggested that future research should focus on the effects of the characteristics of advertisements (e.g., newspaper versus targeted magazines, design, color, photos) beyond job and organizational characteristics (by holding them constant). Similarly, Barber (1998) noticed that questions on advertisement style and format have largely been the monopoly of recruitment practitioners (contrary to scholars).

In an experimental study, already mentioned earlier, Allen et al. (2004) started to address this issue by investigating the effects of different types of recruitment media on applicant attraction. A recruitment message for the military was transformed into four different media types (i.e., face-to-face, video, audio, text). Participants were asked to rate several media features (i.e., amount of information, 2-way communication, personal focus, social presence, symbolism) and several indicators of organizational attractiveness. The results showed that different media resulted in differences in perceptions of media features (e.g., amount of information was higher for video than for face-to-face and text). These features were positively related to message credibility and communication satisfaction, which in turn were positively related to applicant attraction.

Boller and Blackstone (2002) reviewed some of the U.S. Navy's advertising practices. They concluded that insufficient attention is given to assessing and measuring the Navy's advertising effectiveness. They emphasized that measuring effectiveness in this regard goes further than merely evaluating ad awareness

and slogan recall. To warrant a more scientific treatment of this subject, the authors provided the Navy with a set of “alternative” measures of effectiveness (e.g., attitude and intention measures, comparative beliefs). We believe that not only does the U.S. Navy suffer from inefficient measurement, other militaries may profit from these recommendations as well.

4A.6.3.4 Military Career Office

The military typically uses career offices to establish the first interpersonal contact with potential applicants. The objective of the career office consultation is to generate applicants, that is, to get a sufficient number of visitors interested in applying to the military. However, career counselors are not allowed to coarsely distort reality. In many nations’ militaries, the career office consultation has a mere recruitment-focus, contrary to a mere selection-focus or a dual focus. Until now, only one study (Schreurs et al., 2005) has examined the effects of military career counselors’ behaviors on applicant attraction. Consistent with previous findings from research on applicant reactions to the initial screening interview, career counselor warmth was positively related to prospects’ attitudes and intentions to pursue a job with the military. Career counselor competence was positively related to actual job pursuit behavior. Contrary to earlier findings was the observation that career counselor informativeness correlated negatively with job pursuit attitudes and intentions. The authors suggest that the negative relationship may indicate a self-selection effect (Wanous and Colella, 1989), or, alternatively, point towards “informational overload.”

4A.6.3.5 Company Web Sites

Nowadays, organizations have widely accepted the use of Internet-based recruitment. In fact, in 2001, it was estimated that more than 90 percent of large U.S. firms had established company Web sites that are primarily dedicated to communicating recruitment information to potential applicants (Cappelli, 2001). In 2003, 94 percent of the world’s largest 500 companies (Global 500) had a corporate career Web site (iLogos Research, 2003). Moreover, these Web sites are consulted by millions of job seekers to acquire pre-contact organizational information (Cober, Brown, Levy, Cober, and Keeping, 2003). The military has not lagged behind and has also turned to the Internet to address recruiting issues (Boller and Blackstone, 2002; Newman, 2000).

Despite the widespread use of company Web sites by both job seekers and organizations, research on the effects of Web site characteristics on applicant attraction is still in its infancy. One of the key findings from the few available studies is that job seekers are more attracted to organizations when they are satisfied with the company’s Web site style. In particular, there is some evidence on the favorable effect of navigational ease or usability on applicants’ perceptions of the organization (Braddy, Thompson, Wuensch, and Grossnickle, 2003; Cober et al., 2003; Williamson, Lepak, and King, 2003).

In another study, Dineen, Ash, and Noe (2002) found that feedback regarding individuals’ potential PO fit conveyed through company Web sites influenced their level of attraction in the direction of that feedback. The authors concluded that if applied well, such a feedback tool “might strengthen the psychological contract between a new employee and the organization (Rousseau, 1995) or lead to greater commitment (e.g., Breugh, 1983)” (p. 733). In addition, PO fit feedback might enhance an organization’s reputation through perceptions of honesty, and might decrease adverse self-selection.

Like many other organizations, militaries in many countries use the Internet to communicate organizational values to potential applicants. Given the importance of credibility in recruitment research (Cable and Turban, 2001) it is paramount that the message and the medium used are congruent. For example, the military may claim that it is forward-thinking, technologically advanced, and consisting of a world wide team of highly

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trained professionals on its Web site. However, when that same Web site also includes a short recruiting video game that is below the current industry standard (Boller and Blackstone, 2002), it is unlikely that the Web site is going to be effective in attracting the employees it is targeting.

4A.6.3.6 Selection Methods

Traditionally, selection methods have been considered as neutral predictors of applicant suitability and subsequent job role performance (“psychometric perspective” Borman, 2001; Guion, 1998; Schmidt, Ones, and Hunter, 1992). Obviously, selection methods do act as predictors, but at the same time they are much more than that. A completely new research area has developed since the 1980s that focuses on how applicants perceive and react to selection procedures. Similar to signaling theory, a fundamental postulate of applicant reaction research is that organizations, often unintentionally, convey information to applicants through their selection practices. Applicants will further actively extend and extrapolate from the available information to develop enduring expectations and obligations of the future work relationship (Anderson and Ostroff, 1997). According to this “social process perspective” (Herriot, 1989), recruitment and selection practices represent the cornerstones on which the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995) is built. It is further suggested that selection practices can have a substantial impact on applicants’ attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Iles and Robertson, 1997). For example, Macan et al. (1994) examined the influence of manufacturing applicants’ perceptions of an assessment center on their attitudes and intentions toward the hiring organization. They found that applicants’ perceptions were significantly related to job acceptance intentions, even after controlling for applicants’ pre-test attitudes toward the organization.

Although many theories have been proposed studying applicant reactions to selection procedures (“social psychological process,” Herriot, 1989; “social validity,” Schuler, 1993; Rynes, Bretz, and Gerhart, 1991, “signaling theory”), the organizational justice framework (Greenberg, 1990) is by far the most popular among applicant reaction scholars. Gilliland (1993) was the first to apply this organizational justice framework to a selection context, proposing a model of applicant reactions to employment selection systems. According to the model applicants’ perceptions of the selection process fairness (i.e., procedural justice) and outcome fairness (i.e., distributive justice) would be significantly related to applicants’ self-perceptions (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy) and several important pre- and post-hire outcomes (e.g., test motivation, recommendation intentions, job acceptance). Several studies (e.g., Bauer, Maertz, Dolen, and Campion, 1998; Ployhart and Ryan, 1997) provided support for Gilliland’s model, and more recent models of applicant reactions (Chambers, 2002; Hausknecht, Day, and Thomas, 2004; Ryan and Ployhart, 2000) continue borrowing from his framework.

In Saks’ (2005) definition, recruitment only involves actions and activities initiated by, and under the direct control of the organization. The information sources we described so far are to a large extent under the direct control of the organization (internal sources). However, organizational information can also be obtained from sources that are not under the direct control of the organization (external sources) (Cable and Turban, 2001). As this information has the potential to influence job seekers’ attitude-intentions-behavior toward the organization, we will briefly discuss the most important external sources (i.e., word-of-mouth, publicity), although most recruitment researchers would probably argue that these can hardly be considered as recruitment activities.

4A.6.4 External Sources

4A.6.4.1 Word-of-Mouth

Recently, research attention has shifted from internal sources to sources that are not under the direct control of the organization. Word-of-mouth is an example of the latter. “Word-of-mouth involves an interpersonal

communication, independent of the organization's recruitment activities, about the organization as an employer or about specific jobs" (Van Hoyer and Lievens, 2005, p.180). Based upon evidence from marketing research (e.g., Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, and Donthu, 1995) and a few available recruitment studies (e.g., Collins and Stevens, 2002; Van Hoyer and Lievens, 2005), it seems that word-of-mouth has a strong effect on influencing potential applicants' attitudes toward the organization and their perceptions of job and organizational attributes. Information conveyed through word-of-mouth is found to be more credible than information conveyed by sources under the direct control of the organizations (Fisher, Ilgen, and Hoyer, 1979), yet until now there is no evidence that credibility mediates the relationship between word-of-mouth and applicant attraction (Van Hoyer and Lievens, 2005).

In a recent qualitative study, Lievens and Van Hoyer (2005) found that potential applicants for the Belgian military relied mainly on word-of-mouth to obtain information about the organization. Information provided by these "social" sources (e.g., friends, relatives, acquaintances) was generally positive and more credible than organizational information sources (e.g., Web site). Furthermore, social sources had a greater impact on potential applicants' attitudes toward the organization than non-social information sources. Interestingly, most social sources worked or had once worked for the Belgian Defence. From a practical point of view, the authors recommend the military take advantage of this observation by ensuring that all employees have easy access to accurate and complete information about the organization and possible jobs. They also advise increasing the impact of non-social information sources by improving their credibility, formulating clear expectations, and being more personal.

4A.6.4.2 Publicity

Recruitment-related publicity refers to information about an organization as an employer, typically conveyed by editorial media, such as newspaper articles and television news items, and usually not under the direct control of the organization (Collins and Stevens, 2002; Van Hoyer and Lievens, 2005). Despite the apparent importance of publicity on organizational attractiveness, recruitment scholars have only very recently started to center on this topic. Collins and Stevens (2002) found that positive publicity was positively related to job seekers' attitude toward the organization and to their intentions-to-apply (but not to their actual application decisions), and that the effect of publicity was stronger when it was used in conjunction with other recruitment sources. Van Hoyer and Lievens (2005) examined the effects of negative publicity followed by a second information source (i.e., advertising, word-of-mouth) on organizational attractiveness. The results showed that potential applicants' perceptions of organizational attractiveness improved significantly by exposing them to a second information source, and that the effect of negative publicity was at least partially canceled out.

To the best of our knowledge, no studies have been published that address the issue of recruitment-related publicity in a military context. There is; however, some anecdotal and preliminary research evidence that movies that portray the military in a favourable way (e.g., *Top Gun*) can have a serious impact on military recruitment (Gouden, Devitt-Chacon, McGuire, and Rivas, 2001; Trammell, Turner, and Briggs, 2000). Besides films, several military video games are on the market (e.g., *Pearl Harbour*) that may influence youth attitudes toward the organization. It is not clear to what extent these media are under the direct control of the organization (Robb, 2004). As these media are part of everyday life of most teenagers in most Western countries, it is clear that individuals do not enter organizations as "blank slates" (Cable and Turban, 2001).

4A.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In addition to the suggestions already formulated throughout this paper, we now present several other promising avenues for future research.

Without a doubt, recruitment has been influenced by technological advances (Chapman and Webster, 2003). For example, the use of organizational Web sites as a recruitment source has already become standard, organizations receive applications through the Web and e-mail, job seekers share job and organizational information through chat rooms, and resumes are screened and scored automatically. The military utilizes advanced recruitment technology as well. For instance, on-line talent auctions and on-line video games presented on the U.S. Navy's Web site were developed to increase the fill rate of unpopular occupations by increasing their attractiveness (see topic chapter *Compensation: U.S. Navy Research Initiatives and Applications*; Boller and Blackstone, 2002). Yet, with the exception of Internet recruiting (see Lievens and Harris, 2003), virtually no research has explored the effects of recruitment-related technology on applicant attraction. As noted by Anderson (2003), little research, if any, has critically evaluated whether more highly advanced technological hiring methods actually perform better than traditional methods in terms of quantity and quality of applicants. The use of new technology may influence job seekers' perceptions of the organization and their job pursuit decisions in a different manner than more traditional forms of recruitment. Furthermore, as accessibility to new technologies is likely to differ according to socio-economic differences (Sharf, 2000, cited in Anderson, 2003), the potential for new technology to influence adverse impact in recruitment and selection must be considered.

Only recently research started to examine how information sources other than recruitment practices influence job seekers' early impressions of employing organizations. Word-of-mouth and media coverage are two external sources that offer many interesting avenues for future research. For example, as the military traditionally has high annual turnover rates, future studies might want to investigate the impact of former recruits' word-of-mouth on the attractiveness of the military in their environment. Furthermore, the media usually comments critically on the military. Although there is some preliminary experimental evidence suggesting that the impact of negative publicity can be mitigated by influencing potential applicants' perceptions of organizational attractiveness through other (internal) sources (Van Hove and Lievens, 2005), future research is needed to generalize this finding to real-life situations.

To increase its attractiveness as an employer, militaries in several nations offer short-term monetary incentives (e.g., signing bonuses). Future research should investigate the impact of these incentives on post-hire outcomes, such as commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and turnover. It is possible that individuals attracted most by these incentives hold values that differ significantly from the organization's values. To avoid mismatches and their damaging organizational consequences, the military should not only select applicants that are compatible in terms of personality, but also in terms of (work) values. In addition, future research may examine fit issues with respect to cognitive ability (Rynes and Cable, 2003), as some military occupations may demand different cognitive abilities (e.g., spatial orientation) than others.

4A.8 PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Some practical recommendations are presented in the following section. All recommendations made are listed in Table 4A-1. Rather than developing an endless list of recommendations, we present a selection of measures that are firmly supported by the literature that illustrate how the recruitment model can be helpful in strengthening organizational recruitment programs.

Table 4A-1: Recruiting Issues

Topic	What the research says	Practical explanation of the research	Recommendation(s) to address the issue
Job and organizational characteristics	<p>Large main effects for job and organizational variables, such as pay level, performance-based pay, individual- rather than team-based pay, flexible benefits, fair treatment, concern for others, and achievement orientation.</p> <p>Main effect of location on applicant attraction.</p>	<p>Applicants are mainly attracted to organizations based upon what they offer in terms of pay and benefits, and other employment inducements.</p> <p>Potential applicants screen out jobs located outside their preferred geographic area.</p>	<p>Offer flexible work arrangements, opportunities for training, benefits, and, if possible, high pay.</p> <p>Recruit within the area in which the job is located or within areas that are similar to the job's location in terms of city size, climate, recreational opportunities, and so forth.</p> <p>Conduct job satisfaction and employee opinion surveys to modify those job and organizational characteristics that are most likely to result in discontent among employees.</p>
Image	<p>The image of the organization explains variance over and above the variance explained by job and organizational characteristics.</p>	<p>Applicants are not only attracted by what organizations offer in terms of tangible, instrumental attributes, but also by non-instrumental (symbolic) perceptions of the organizations.</p>	<p>Develop a strong recruitment image by focusing on attributes that differentiate the military from competing organizations.</p> <p>Conduct image audits on a regular basis to gather information regarding which subjective attributes to focus on.</p>
Familiarity	<p>Familiarity is positively related to attractiveness.</p>	<p>Better known organizations tend to be more popular among job seekers.</p>	<p>Use a variety of recruitment sources to increase job seekers' familiarity with the military.</p>
Recruitment advertising	<p>The amount and specificity of recruitment messages are positively related to applicant attraction.</p>	<p>Job seekers prefer advertisements that contain information highlighting more positive and more specific job attributes.</p>	<p>Provide adequate concrete information on what the organization offers. Consider advertising starting salaries.</p>
Perceived alternatives	<p>There is a negative relationship between perceived alternatives and job choice.</p>	<p>As applicants consider more than one potential employer in their job search; the more possibilities they have, the less likely they are to apply for the military.</p>	<p>Explore what the most popular employment alternatives are according to military applicants, and why (qualified) applicants prefer one organization over another.</p>
Realism	<p>Unmet expectations stem from a discrepancy between the recruitment message and reality. They are negatively</p>	<p>Unrealistic information leads to inflated expectations. Unmet expectations lead to dissatisfaction with the job, low commitment, and ultimately to turnover.</p>	<p>Provide realistic information.</p> <p>Involve jobholders in fine-tuning and updating the recruitment materials.</p>

A PROPOSED MODEL OF MILITARY RECRUITMENT

Topic	What the research says	Practical explanation of the research	Recommendation(s) to address the issue
	related to job satisfaction, commitment, and retention.		Examine the views of current employees to get an indication of the 'internal image' of the military.
Recruiters	Recruiter warmth and informativeness correlate positively with applicant attraction.	Applicants prefer recruiters that are knowledgeable about the organization and are willing to provide information in a friendly, personable way.	<p>Select recruiters that are knowledgeable about the entire organization who can provide correct and detailed information.</p> <p>Select recruiters that have a customer-oriented attitude.</p> <p>Invest in recruiter training.</p>
Selection	Selection methods implicitly convey information about the organization's values and culture.	Applicants use selection methods to derive information on how it would be to work in that organization.	<p>Use work samples, situational judgment tests, and assessment centers to inform applicants about their future jobs.</p> <p>Ensure that equipment and materials used in the selection process are of good quality and use up-to-date technology.</p>
Time delays	Time delays are positively related to applicant withdrawal from the hiring process.	Applicants who are facing long time delays between selection hurdles are more likely to withdraw from the process.	<p>Avoid long delays between selection hurdles as much as possible.</p> <p>Maintain contact with applicants throughout the process.</p>

The most effective (but probably not the most economical) way to increase the number of applicants is to make the organization more attractive in terms of objective job and organizational characteristics. It is true that person-environment interaction (i.e., fit) contributes significantly to predicting attraction, yet it is equally true that most studies found even larger main effects for job and organizational variables, such as pay level, performance-based pay, individual- rather than team-based pay, flexible benefits, fair treatment, concern for others, and achievement orientation (Rynes and Cable, 2003). Rynes and Barber (1990) introduced the term “employment inducements” to refer to job and organizational attributes that are deliberately modified by the organization for the explicit purpose of increasing the organization’s attractiveness as an employer. They also conclude that employment inducements are major determinants of applicants’ attitudes and behaviors. Saks (2005) recommended hiring organizations to “offer a variety of employment inducements (e.g., flexible work arrangements, opportunities for training, benefits, etc.), especially high pay” (p. 55). However, raising pay may not be the best possible solution for the military for the following reasons. First, at this point it is still unclear whether the “right people” are attracted by monetary incentives (as discussed above). Second, as a government organization, the military cannot autonomously determine its members pay levels. As an alternative, we advise the military to conduct job satisfaction and employee opinion surveys, and to modify those job and organizational characteristics that are most likely to result in discontent among its jobholders (e.g., OPSTEMPO). This will not only increase employee job satisfaction and retention (see “A proposed model of military turnover”), but also organizational attractiveness, as the positive organizational changes are communicated to the target population through internal (e.g., web site, news letters) and external (e.g., positive word-of-mouth) information sources.

From a practical point of view, organizational image may be more malleable than objective job and organizational characteristics. Barber (1998) noticed that changing image in the minds of naïve job seekers (in contrast to executives) may simply be a question of increasing exposure through advertising campaigns, campus visits, or other means. However, she also added “existing image research only begins to scratch the surface of what we ought to know” (p. 37). Saks (2005) is somewhat less optimistic. He recommend advisable to minimize the time gap in between selection hurdles and to maintain contact with applicants throughout the recruitment process.

4A.9 CONCLUSIONS

In this article, a conceptual model of military recruitment is proposed based on a review of recruitment research conducted on both military and non-military samples, and on the efforts of members of the NATO Task Group on Recruitment and Retention of Military Personnel. The model consists of organizational-level and individual-level predictor variables, and outcome variables. The organizational-level predictor variables relate to the actual environment in terms of objective job (e.g., pay level) and organizational (e.g., size) characteristics. The individual-level predictor variables refer to the perceived environment in terms of individuals’ subjective interpretation of the job and organizational characteristics (e.g., image, familiarity). The model’s outcome is defined as job pursuit, which can take many forms (e.g., applying, accepting a job offer) according to the recruitment stage an individual is going through. Job pursuit is broken down into the triad attitude-intention-behavior to indicate the mediating role of attitude and intention in the relationship between individual-level variables and job pursuit behavior. Principles from information and communication theory were relied on to describe how information about the organization is communicated through various information sources to the target population. A distinction is made between sources that are under the direct control of the organization (e.g., advertisements) and sources that cannot be controlled by the organization (e.g., word-of-mouth). Several suggestions for future research are also presented. The paper concludes with a list of practical recommendations and guidelines to help our military decision-makers solve the recruitment problems our organizations are facing today and will be facing in the future.

