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SIXTH-GRADERS' ATTITUDES ABOUT WAR AND THE MILITARY IN
PORTABLE 6 AT ECKSTEIN MIDDLE SCHOOL IN SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

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SIXTH-GRADERS' ATTITUDES ABOUT THE MILITARY

Abstract

Sixth-graders' attitudes about war and the military in Portable 6 at Eckstein Middle School in Seattle, Washington

Students as young as 10 years old face pressure from the Department of Defense (DoD), which wants to shape young people's opinions toward a pro-military, pro-war bias. The DoD studies learners' opinions and uses digital media to influence them, and when young people start high school, military recruiters have access to student contact information; the recruiters anticipate a receptive audience. It is vital that students think and discuss their opinions about war and the military, for they will soon be asked a question such as, "Have you ever thought about joining the armed forces?"

This study seeks to understand my Eckstein sixth-graders' opinions on the military and war and how those opinions developed. 57 students were given a 17-question survey to test their attitudes on the subject, and three students were interviewed to understand more deeply their opinions and how they developed. After tabulating results from the survey and transcribing the interviews, students showed low to moderate support for the military/war, with females expressing less support than males. Factors influencing student opinions include family, digital media, and having a family member in the military. All students interviewed stated they had not thought much about the subject and/or did not talk about it often.

A broader study is needed about pre-high school students' opinions on the military/war and what influences their attitudes. Teachers should know what their students think about these important questions, and educators should train learners to think critically about the military and war, enabling students to make informed decisions.

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Introduction

Ever since the US military became an all-volunteer force in 1973, it has needed a robust recruiting campaign to sustain its fighting capacity, and since the 1970s, the Department of Defense (DoD) has used corporate advertising agencies to study and influence youth, especially targeting students, ages 10-14 (Bailey et al., 2002, p. 19). After the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), public schools became required to share high school students' data, such as address and phone numbers, with military recruiters, unless students expressly opt-out of the program (Ayers, 2006, p. 18). The tactics of military recruiters can be so aggressive that Major Paraan, head U.S. Army recruiter for Vermont and northeastern New York, remarked, "The only thing that will get us to stop contacting the family is if they call their congressman. Or maybe if the kid died, we'll take them off our list" (2003). Students are not only directly targeted by military recruiters: the DoD has been collecting information on American youth's "media habits" (Bailey et al., 2002, p. 9), if not deliberately attempting to positively influence students' attitudes about the military through media outlets, such as film and video games. In 2012, for example, the movie *Act of Valor* "was commissioned by the Navy's Special Warfare Command to drum up recruits for its elite SEALs program. But this is by no means the first movie made with the military's cooperation" (NPR Staff, 2012).

Students face much pressure from the military, and the DoD is clear in its intentions to influence youth's attitudes, starting from at least age 10. It is imperative that students receive a more balanced view of what war is and what being in the military

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means¹; for my sixth graders, they have already begun to be influenced by idealistic ideas about war, and once they begin high school, military recruiters will undoubtedly be in contact with them. The purpose of this research is to reveal my students' attitudes toward the military and war, and how those attitudes developed; a future study might also ask, "What will change my students' opinions about the military?" Students today will need a realistic view of the military to be able to make an informed decision about whether or not to join.

Review of the Literature

Although the military has been studying American youth since at least the 1970s, there is not a plethora of non-governmental research about students' attitudes toward the military. The few non-governmental studies that do exist usually use a small and limited sample size or focus on stating an opinion, rather than providing research. Below is a summarization of the main studies, including government-supported research.

Non-Government Sponsored Studies

In "Middle Adolescents' Views of War and American Military Involvement in the Persian Gulf" (1994), Daniel F. Schroeder compared his study of adolescents' views of war with two other studies completed in the 1970s and 1980s, and he found that teenage support for war held steady or declined slightly. Schroeder also surmised and concluded that (1) the Persian Gulf War's successful outcome would positively influence teenagers' attitudes about military intervention and presidential leadership; (2) males would be more approving of war than females; (3) minority and lower socio-economic groups would

¹ This study uses the terms "military" and "war" interchangeably. While there may be differences between these terms, those differences are not discussed here. Consequently, this study uses "the military" and "war" synonymously (e.g., phrases such as, "student support for the military/war . . ." are common).

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approve less of war than Whites and higher socioeconomic groups. To arrive at these conclusions, Schroeder surveyed 189 eleventh-graders from three western New York state high schools. The study failed to meet internal and external validity on several levels, with greatest concerns stemming from the limited number of students surveyed, the geographical homogeneity of the sample, and the possible non-randomness of the participants selected.

Another study, about the second Iraq War, sought to uncover the war's affects on American students, grades 2-12: "The Influence of the War in Iraq on American Youth's Fears: Implications for Professional School Counselors" (Burnham & Hooper, 2008). The study endeavored to (1) examine fears of a small sample of US youth after the initial invasion of Iraq, (2) compare their results with a pre-invasion sample, and (3) analyze the responses of the two samples to nine war/terror-related fears (NP). The study hypothesized that (a) there would be significant age, gender, and year differences between the pre/post-invasion samples, and (b) war/terror-related fears would rank in the top 20 most common fears in the post-Iraq invasion sample (NP). Most of the hypotheses were proven; however, a central question about the internal validity of the study is, "How similar were the compared samples, given the length of time between the two studies and the drastic differences in racial make-up of the two communities studied?"

Anti-military presence articles. In "Military Recruiters are Using and Abusing our Children" (2006), William Ayers railed against the culture of militarism in schools and recruitment techniques. The Junior Officer Reserves Training Corps (JROTC) came under particular scrutiny, with Ayers claiming that 40% of JROTC graduates join the military, and that these programs target poor and minority heavy schools, who welcome

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the extra funding that JROTC brings (p. 16). Although Ayers makes a compelling case, because of the lack of supporting references, the article is biased and needs outside data to strengthen the arguments.

The effectiveness of high school counter-recruitment (CR) groups was analyzed in “‘Just say No’: Organizing Against Militarism in Public Schools” (Harding, 2011). Harding focused on three examples of CR to highlight different strategies used for successful organizing. To be successful, Harding argues, “CR groups must utilize strategic framing of their activities to broaden public support. In addition, choosing discreet targets of organizing efforts, careful recruitment of allies, and long-term coalition-building appear to be critical to positive outcomes” (p. 81). Harding’s qualitative approach, interviewing three veteran peace activists, offered a refreshing contrast to the other quantitative studies about military recruitment in schools. However, because Harding seemed to universalize his findings, and because there are hundreds of CR groups in the US, the article oversteps its bounds.

Pro-military presence study. In contrast to Ayers and Harding’s articles, Cornell McGee’s dissertation, “The Effect of Middle School Junior Officers’ Reserves Training (JROTC) Programs on Student Achievement, Attendance, and Behavior” (2011), portrayed a much more positive view of the military’s influence on students and schools. McGee argued that JROTC can bring discipline, moral development, and more to students; however, the writer’s research shows a more mixed result: students enrolled in JROTC did not have higher tests scores, but they did tend to show better attendance and suspension rates. A few problems with his research are bias (the writer showing a

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strong pro-military perspective) and limited sample size (only studying JROTC programs in Texas).

Government Sponsored Studies

Different from non-government supported studies, government sponsored research often benefits from larger sample sizes and a greater ability to generalize findings. In 1999 the DoD asked the National Academy of Sciences, through its National Research Council, to establish the Committee on Youth Population and Military Recruitment (CYPMR) to study demographic trends, attitudes, etc., of American Youth and make recommendations for various "recruiting and advertising strategies" (Sackett & Mavor, 2003, 2003, p. 1-2). The study's results were presented in the book, *Attitudes, Aptitudes, and Aspirations of American Youth: Implications for Military Recruitment* (Sackett & Mavor, 2003). One of the key findings from the report was that US youth's propensity to join the military has been declining since the mid-1980s; however, in a reversal, the majority of those who do join the military also intend to go to college (coinciding with the general population trend of higher college attendance). Not surprisingly, the study recommended the military make it easier for students to attend college while in the military and that education benefits for the military be increased (p. 7). The study also recommended recruiters focus more on convincing parents of the positive points of the military, and that advertising focus not only on the extrinsic reasons for joining (e.g., educational funding), but also on the intrinsic reasons (e.g., "serving the country") (p. 8). Rather than conducting its own surveys, the report mostly studied the results of already existent surveys and compiled information from various sources to come to its conclusions.

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In 2000, Bachman, Freedman-Doan, and O'Malley published *Youth Attitudes and Military Service: Findings from two Decades of Monitoring the Future National Samples of American Youth*. The study compiled data of annual random surveys, commissioned by the DoD, from 1976 to 1999 and focused on youth's attitudes about the military. Each year, approximately 16,000 high school seniors were surveyed, and starting in 1991, about 19,000 8th-graders and 15,000 10th-graders were also surveyed annually (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, O'Malley, 2000, pg. 2-3). The researchers found that in the early 1990s, high school students propensity to join the military started to decline; initially the decline occurred within the White population, but propensity among Blacks also declined eventually (although Black students still join at higher rates than Whites).² Similar to others, this study found a direct correlation between students' plans to attend college and a lower propensity for the military. However, the research also concluded that because more people now attend college, college-bound students should not be neglected by recruiters (percentage-wise, college bound students are less likely to join the military, but because of the sheer numbers going to college, the majority of people who now join the military also plan to attend college). Support for the military hit a low point from 1986-1990, but then rose to its highest point in 1999. The report concluded that although males have always given greater support for war than females, youth in 2000 appeared more willing than at any time since 1976 to go to war for reasons other than to defend against an attack on the US (pgs. iii-vii).

After this initial report was published in 2000, three additional polls, also commissioned by the DoD, were published; the first was *Youth Attitudes Toward the*

² "Black" is used to denote students with ethnic origins in Africa (including African-American), while "White" is used to describe Caucasian students.

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Military: Poll 1 (Bailey et al., 2002). One of the main differences with the data published after 2000 was that it was collected by phone, which allowed for quicker data compilation but a smaller sample size (approximately 2,000 youth) (Bailey et al., 2002, pg. 9). Some of the key findings from poll one can be summarized as follows: from 1994-1999, young men's propensity was 26-28 %, and women's was 12-15 %; in 2000, men's propensity was 25 % and women's 11 % (pg. 10). The poll also indicated that "propensity is related to a number of demographic variables, notably age, race/ethnicity, and education and employment status" (pg. 11). Youth ranked family, friends, movies, and TV as being most influential on their views about the military, and about half of respondents said they had a positive view of the military.

In *Youth Attitudes Toward the Military: Poll 2* (George et al., 2002), a similar methodology and amount of students were surveyed, when compared with Poll 1; some questions resembled those in the first Poll, but many questions were different. With the comparable questions, Poll 2 found no main differences from Poll 1, but information from other questions in Poll 2 revealed that looking for work and being competitive had a positive impact on students' propensity. Latinos had the highest rate of propensity, followed by Blacks, and lastly Whites, and lower grades coincided with a higher propensity for the military (pg. 67). Regionally, the South and West had higher rates of propensity, while the Northeast and Midwest had lower rates (pg. 11).

The third and final poll, *Youth Attitudes Toward the Military: Poll 3*" (George et al., 2002), was incidentally conducted directly after September 11, 2001 and used a similar sample size and methodology to Polls 1 and 2. It is no surprise that propensity to join and support for the military increased drastically in the third poll: composite

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propensity to join (includes both men and women) was 24 %, higher than the 20 % and 19 % found in Polls 1 and 2, respectively (pg. 11). 75 % of respondents also had a positive view of the military, compared with 48 % in Poll 1 (pg. 12).

A validity question about the last four large studies is, "Given that the tests are lengthy in nature, and that the later tests were only conducted by telephone, is the sample size representative of the general population, or is it only representative of those who would complete the test?" This question is related to Experimental Mortality. The much smaller sample sizes and change in how the survey was conducted also raise some comparison, if not validity, concerns.

Research Question

Given the current literature available on the subject of students' attitudes toward war and the military, an applicable and important question is, "What are my own students' opinions about war and the military?" This is my main research question, which only studies my sixth-graders' attitudes at Eckstein Middle School. A secondary question is, "How did their opinions develop," or stated another way, "What has influenced their opinions?" Further questions related to what influences my students' opinions include: "Is gender a factor in my students' opinions?" "Does watching violence or war on TV/internet or playing violent video games affect their attitudes?" "Does having a close relative in the military influence their opinions?" "How do family and friends influence my students' attitudes toward the military and war?"

In my initial research proposal, I stated that I hoped to study how factors such as socioeconomic status, family politics, and family educational background influence

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learners' opinions. However, after consideration, it was determined that these factors would be too difficult to analyze, given the scope of this study and the sensitive nature of some questions in a public school setting (e.g., teachers are not given access to information about specific student's free and reduced lunch eligibility in the Seattle Public School District, and teachers are not permitted to ask students about such information). The questions and answers I find in this study uncover much information about my students, and the additional questions not possible to pose at present are an opportunity for further study in the future.

Methodology

Method and Rationale

This study is a non-government-sponsored study. Previous studies of this kind have either (1) sought to research a small sample size and generalize about the larger population or (2) deliver a particular opinion about military recruitment in schools without providing strong data; however, my research does not follow either of these examples. Rather, I chose a small sample size (my classroom), with the intent to only learn about that particular environment. I have not been able to find any other examples of a related research question that focuses on the local level. This research is important because my students are developing their opinions about war and the military. They will soon face military recruiters, and it is essential for the teacher to understand his students and prepare them for what they will face in high school.

The research design I chose for my study is a hybrid of the quantitative and qualitative approaches. Making use of both methodologies is not uncommon, for many

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researchers “use a variety of methods—both qualitative and quantitative—to investigate [a] problem” (Hendricks, 2009, pg. 3). Using these sampling methods enabled both a broad view of my students’ opinions (the quantitative survey), and also an in-depth view through the interviews as well (the qualitative element).

Although my research may seem to function as a Pre-Experimental Design study, it cannot be labeled as such because I am not giving a treatment to participants, and I am not administering a pre-test or post-test. In short, I am not conducting an experiment, but rather studying participants’ attitudes at a fixed point in time.

The hybrid research methodology used in this study enabled me to gain a deep understanding of my students’ attitudes toward the military and war; using only one method would likely only give shallow results. All of the students had a voice in the study through their answers on the survey, and many were also represented through my observations. Finally, three students gave more in-depth responses during the interviews.

Sample

Findings from this study are not generalized beyond my classroom because I am choosing a convenience sample (my students), rather than a random one. Reasons for using this convenience sample include, (1) these are the students I taught during my internship, (2) the limited size allowed me to synthesize results efficiently and stay within the scope of this study, and (3) I am most interested in my own students’ opinions.

I gave 57 of my students a 17-question survey to determine, generally, their attitudes toward war and the military. Some questions on the survey were adapted from other studies (e.g., surveys used in “Middle Adolescents’ Views of War” or *Youth Attitudes and Military Service*). From the survey, I chose three students to interview, as a

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case study. Participants in the three interviews represented, relative to the sample, an anti-military position, a moderate-support-of-the-military position, and a pro-military position. In the interviews, aside from verifying the accuracy of the students' answers, I sought to understand more thoroughly what factors influenced the learners' opinions.

Instrumentation

To analyze the data collected through the surveys, I input the responses into an Excel spreadsheet, which allowed me to see relationships between different answers. For example, I was able to sort students by scores on their surveys, compare male and female respondents, and view the effects of different responses in the survey to students' overall scores. Although I did not conduct formal statistical tests on the data, I was able to rank students' total scores in excel from low to high, then count males and females in each category, number of participants answering a certain way for particular questions in each category, etc.

Transcribing the interviews also allowed me to compare participants' answers side by side. Not only could I easily search for key words after transcription, but also I was able to compare students' answers to similar question in the interviews. Analyzing and comparing the data in this way ensured conclusions that are more accurate.

Analysis/Validity

As already stated, the 57 student surveys were tabulated in an Excel document, which enabled me to compare participants' scores (see spreadsheet in Appendix 2). I created a minimum and maximum score for the survey, representing three different attitudes toward war and the military: a score of 8-22 represented an antiwar/anti-military attitude; a score of 28-42 represented a moderate (mid-way) view of war or the

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military; and a score of 48-62 represented pro-war/pro-military attitude (to view the survey, see Appendix 1 in this study). I calculated these scores by adding the numbers students ranked themselves on the survey (0-5); however, I did not count questions 1, 2, and 15 when calculating scores about attitudes because these questions ask about what might influence students' attitudes (not about what those attitudes actually are). Most questions on the survey are asked in such a way that a higher number represents greater support for the military/war; however, several questions require a participant with an anti-war attitude to give a high number (e.g., questions 3 and 5). Final score tabulations take this into account: a participant with a completely pacifist outlook would still score 8 total points in the tabulation of survey results.

As evident from the spreadsheet in Appendix 2, none of the participants' cumulative results scored in the pro-war/pro-military side (highest participant score was 40). Consequently, I created another threshold to compare participant responses, relative to how all students answered. This threshold takes into account the spread of student scores from 13-40 and allows for a 7-9 point spread in each category. When comparing all of my students, a score of 13-22 represents an antiwar/anti-military attitude (there was no change for this category); a score of 23-30 represents a more moderate (mid-way) view of war or the military; and a score of 31-40 represents a more pro-war/pro-military attitude. As evident from these three categories, the bottom and top categories contain a nine-point spread, while the middle category, which represents the largest amount of respondents, contains a seven-point spread. Each individual student's scores should be considered when attempting to understand a particular participant's opinion, however, for few students' attitudes were strictly antiwar or pro-war for every question.

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Because I made it clear to students that they were not required to take the survey or answer any questions that made them uncomfortable, several surveys were returned incomplete (see Appendix 2). One survey was not counted in the final tally because the participant did not answer enough questions for results to be accurate (student's answers and score is listed at the top of the spreadsheet, but her answers are highlighted in grey). This dropped the number of total participants to 56. Nine other students chose not to answer at least one question on the survey, but they answered enough questions that it was possible to calculate an approximate total score for them in the spreadsheet. These nine final scores are highlighted in yellow on the spreadsheet. I approximated these participants' scores by calculating their total score, then dividing that number by the total number of questions they answered; this gave the participants' average score per question. I then compared these students' average score with other students' scores who answered the entire survey, and I adjusted the nine students' final scores to match other scores with similar averages. While including these nine students' surveys has the potential to skew this study's results, their effect on the total scores is minimal for several reasons: (1) a majority of the nine students chose to answer all questions on the survey except one or two (a minority of the nine did not answer three or four questions), and all of these students' scores were averaged (see above) so that only the questions they answered were counted in the total score, and (2) the number of students (nine) who did not fully complete the survey is dwarfed by the number who answered every question (45). Because I encouraged students to only answer questions they were comfortable answering (in order to avoid pressuring participants and to ensure honest answers), and because the number of incomplete surveys and questions unanswered was low (meaning

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they would have a minimal impact on the final study), I chose to average the nine incomplete surveys, rather than disregard them entirely.

In determining factors that influence students' attitudes toward war and the military, I considered students gender and answers to questions 1, 2, and 15, and all of these elements can be compared on the spreadsheet, Appendix 2. I asked additional questions about influences on opinions in the interviews (see Appendix 3).

When confirming participants' survey answers during the interviews, I became aware of some questions that caused confusion for the students interviewed. For example, all three students were unclear about the meaning of question 16 on the survey, "The US military is good." Students wondered if this referred to individual soldiers, policies, or something else, and they wondered what "good" meant. In a future study, this question should be reworded; however, no student interviewed misinterpreted this question to the point of making their answer completely inaccurate (numbers given by students may be slightly lower or higher, but not completely different from their actual opinions), and students answers to this question corresponded to how they answered other questions on the survey. Another example of misinterpreted questions may be 10 and 11. One student interviewed said that he thought question 11, asking if soldiers should fight if ordered, related to question 10 (Everyone should be required to join the military). However, this students' confusion did not seem to be shared by the other students interviewed, and his answer did not drastically impact his final score on the survey. Although a few questions on the survey may provide some individual results that are not completely reliable, the overall score for participants is reliable due to the number

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of questions that reveal an antiwar, moderate, or pro-war stance. A student's confusion on one or two questions on the survey would not skew drastically the final results.

When choosing students to interview, I intended to choose one student reporting an antiwar/military stance, one reporting moderate support, and one reporting relatively strong support for the military/war. After the interviews and tabulating the responses to the surveys, it became apparent that the moderate interviewee, Student 2, actually scored as a stronger supporter of the military (37), and his survey score was actually slightly higher than Student 3, the representative for the pro-military/war side. While the survey score for Student 2 may seem to show no representation of a "moderate" voice in the interviews, Student 2 does answer many questions in a "moderate" way. For example, Student 2 reported he is less likely to join the military than Student 3, and he has a less favorable opinion of the US military ("The US military is good" ranked 2 versus 4 for Student 3). More discussion about the differences between these two interviews can be found in the Analysis section below.

Another way I ensured reliable data was by comparing the results with personal observations I made of my students' attitudes toward war. Learners' reactions to historical events studied in class (including the Greek and Roman conflicts and the Medieval period) and class discussions gave some insight into their attitudes toward modern warfare. Although I did take notes on some individual students' comments in class, the more revealing evidence came from entire-class discussions that showed my students had low to moderate opinions of the military and war. Combining three methods (interviews, surveys, and observation) gives more reliability to this study's results.

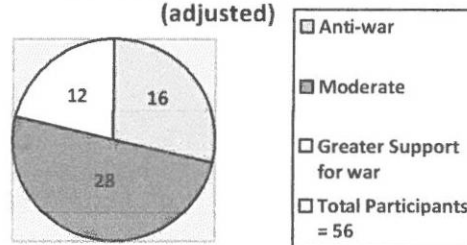
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When students took the survey, the issue of non-anonymity was introduced because participants were required to write their names on the surveys so that I could later determine which participants to interview. To mitigate the non-anonymity concern, I informed students that they were not required to take the survey, there were no right or wrong/good or bad answers, and that the researchers (including cooperating teacher) were not attempting to change their opinions but only understand their attitudes and how they came to them.

A potential threat to the validity of my study is researcher bias. Because I hold critical views of war and do not believe the military should be advertising to, targeting, studying, or trying to influence students in any way, I carefully tried not to influence participants' opinions or interpret their statements in a way that would support my position. To limit this bias further, I used survey questions developed by both other researchers and the military, and I asked my cooperating teacher and another researcher to screen the survey questions for bias. Additionally, to ensure objectivity with the interviews, I video recorded the conversations and transcribed them, and another researcher screened the interviews for faulty methodology and interpretations.

Data

**Table 1: Attitudes about War
(adjusted)**



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Table 2: Total Scores, Males

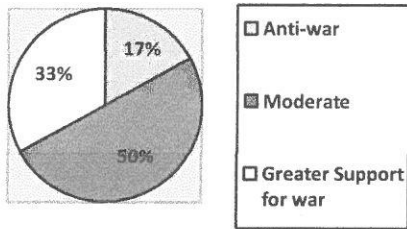


Table 3: Total Scores, Females

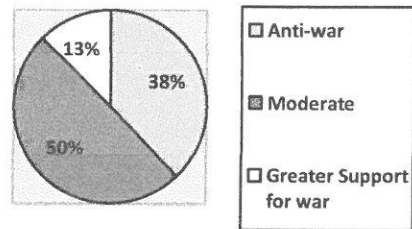


Table 4: Amount of Violence observed in Media (total scores, questions 1-2 for bottom, middle, and top 12 respondents)

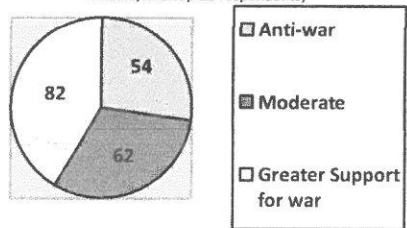
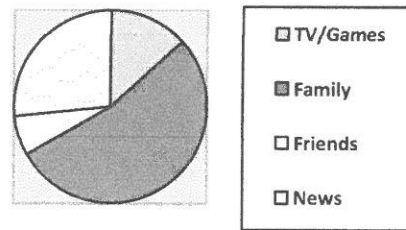


Table 5: Influences on Attitudes, Approximate (self-reported)



Analysis

In analyzing the data presented in the last section and Appendix 2, of the 56 valid surveys, there were 24 male and 32 female responders. Before adjusting classifications for relevancy, 16 responses scored as antiwar/antimilitary, and 40 responses scored as moderate support for war and the military. However, when comparing students in my classes and their responses, it is more relevant to use the adjusted classifications mentioned earlier in the Analysis/Validity section. Using this classification, 16 responses scored as antiwar/antimilitary (scores between 13-22), 28 scored as moderate support for the military/war (23-30), and 12 responses scored as greater support for the military/war (31-40) (see Table 1).

Using the adjusted classifications, it is possible to see a strong link between gender and support for the military/war in my classroom. Only about 17 % of males (4

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males) showed an antiwar/anti-military response, opposed to about 38 % of females (see Tables 2-3). Exactly 50 % of both males (12) and females (16) gave moderate support for the military/war. Only 12.5 % of females gave stronger support for the military/war, while about 33 % (8) males did (see Tables 2-3). These statistics match the trend found in many national surveys as well: a far greater percentage of males support the military/war and are more likely to join the armed forces (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, O'Malley, 2000, pgs. iii-vii; Propensity to serve in the armed forces, 2010). However, unlike national averages, my students appear less pro-war/pro-military. It is beyond the scope of this study to say why this is; however, it is possible to surmise that the region and politics of the Northwest contribute to this phenomenon (the Pacific Northwest tends to be more liberal and less supportive of the military/war, compared with the Southern U.S., for example).

In addition to asking students *what* their opinions were about the military/war, the survey also sought to uncover *why* students might have the opinions they do. Questions 1 and 2 of the survey asked participants about the frequency they view violence on TV, the internet, or video games (see survey, Appendix 1). In comparing student responses, there is a moderate relationship between a student's support for the military/war and the frequency s/he views violence. Specifically, for the 12 participants who scored the most antiwar/military cumulatively, their scores for questions 1 and 2 on the survey totaled 54; for the 12 participants who scored most pro-war/military cumulatively, their scores for questions 1 and 2 on the survey totaled 82; and, for 12 participants who scored more moderate, cumulatively, their scores for questions 1 and 2 on the survey totaled 62 (see Table 4). It is not possible to say that viewing violence on TV, the internet, or video

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games *causes* support for the military/war, however, for it could be that students who already have these opinions seek out the violence in digital media as well. Furthermore, there certainly were participants who showed low support for the military/war but expressed viewing much violence, and there were participants who showed strong support for the military/war but expressed viewing little violence in digital media. Although viewing violence may not be a deciding factor in a student's attitudes toward the military/war, it is most likely a significant aspect.

During interviews, Students 2 and 3, who were more supportive of war and the military, were adamant that there was no connection between the violence they saw on TV/internet/play in video games and their opinions on the subject. Both students stated that they made a clear distinction between something that is not real—video games—and something that is real—death in war. However, when pressed, Student 3 thought that using video game mechanisms might make it easier for someone to operate military equipment. In contrast, Student 1 stated that she usually does not seek out media with graphic violence because it disturbs her and she cannot get the images out of her head. There are multiple reasons why students watch violence on TV, the internet, and video games, but those with antiwar/military views are less likely to seek out violence in digital media (see Appendix 3).

In addition to questions 1 and 2 on the survey, question 15 (I have a close family member in the military) also dealt with *why* students might hold certain opinions on this topic. The data shows a loose relationship between more pro-military/war views and having a family member in the armed forces. Specifically, the 12 respondents showing the least support for the military/war scored a combined 32 for question 15; the 12

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respondents showing the most support for the military/war scored a combined 51; and 12 respondents more in the middle scored a combined 30. While these numbers are not conclusive, there does seem to be a relationship between having a family member in the military and support for the military as a whole.

The interviews conducted with the three students offer a deeper perspective on how students came to their opinions (see excerpts from the interviews in Appendix 3). One factor mentioned in all three interviews as having an effect on participants' attitudes is the family unit. Student 1 reported her parents may feel similar to her but a little more supportive of war, but Students 2 and 3 both said they thought their parents would answer the survey similar to them if their parents took it. Similarly, both Students 2 and 3 attributed their beliefs about war to talking to a family member who had been in a war.

In addition to family members, interviewees were asked if their friends had an impact on their opinions about the military/war. All three participants reported that they did not think their friends had much effect, and all three stated they do not often talk with either their family or friends about the subject.

Aside from personal relationships, the news seems to affect my students more than expected. All interviewees stated the news has some effect on their opinions, and all three showed a surprising knowledge of current events by mentioning happenings in North Korea, Israel, and the US. While Student 1 said she looks at the violence reported on TV and thinks about the futility of war and wonders why she should support one side over another, Student 2 said he hears about people being abused and thinks there are times when the US needs to intervene to help people. Student 3 stated he thought the US

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military was a source of good and that it helped protect the US and its ideals (for an approximate comparison of influencing factors on participants' opinions, see Table 5).

The main differences between the interviewees occur in their answers to questions about a just war. Student 1 was clear that she did not think any war was good. She supported her assertions by saying humans should not attack their own species, that people should think about how many innocent people are harmed by war, and that no one wins in a fight, whether a small one or a war. Only after multiple questions, did Student 1 say that a war might be justified if aliens attacked the earth, but at the end of the interview, Student 1 said she thought perhaps the Civil War was right to "free the slaves."

In contrast to Student 1, Student 2 thought wars could be good or bad, depending on the reason. "Some wars are stupid," he said, "but some wars you have to fight." He saw the US military as a sort of necessary evil (my words), but he said he would consider joining the military if he was fighting for a worthy cause.

Although Student 3 had a slightly lower score on the survey compared to Student 2, he revealed stronger support for war and the US military. However, Student 3 did not think nuclear weapons were a good idea. He said every country, including countries like North Korea, should have an army, and he is seriously considering joining the military when he is old enough.

The most surprising statements to emerge from the interviews were mentioned by all three interviewees. All respondents said that they had not thought much about these questions before, that they did not explicitly talk with their parents about it, and that these answers were only their initial responses. All three participants expressed a willingness to think and talk more about these issues.

Implications/Recommendations

Because students at least as young as 10 years old are being targeted and influenced by the Department of Defense, and because they will likely face pressure from military recruiters in high school, it is imperative that middle school students think and talk about their attitudes toward war and the military. Aside from DoD sponsored studies, little research has been done on what students younger than high school age think about this subject. In training students to become informed citizens, teachers should encourage and stimulate their students to think about these issues.

Data from my classroom show traditional trends regarding gender opinions about the military/war, and it reveals the importance of family and the viewing of violence in affecting students' opinions. Students also clearly stated that they had not specifically considered beforehand their opinions on this subject.

Students need to explicitly think about these questions and develop their opinions, for otherwise, they will be subconsciously affected by who they know and what they see on TV, play in video games, and more. It is the teacher's job (especially Social Studies teachers) to train students to become informed citizens and decision makers. However, before teachers can begin this task, they should know their students. More studies of young people's opinions on this subject are needed. Specifically, those in education need to know how pre-high school students' opinions about the military/war develop and what influences those opinions. While this study sought to uncover answers to these questions in my classroom, the results here would likely not apply to another classroom. Consequently, teachers need to ask these questions of their own students, and larger studies of general trends at local and national levels are needed.

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Future studies should also seek to expound on this research. Specifically, educators need to understand how factors such as socioeconomic status, family politics, and family educational background influence learners' opinions. Once there is a thorough understanding of *what* students' opinions are about the military/war, and once it is understood *why* learners come to the opinions they do, then the question of *how* educators might influence or change student opinions should also be addressed. Although this last question is a controversial one, it is important to consider the role teachers have in shaping students' beliefs. At the very least, teachers should encourage learners to think critically about these questions and equip students to support their opinions with valid points.

Conclusions

Students face strong but often covert pressure from the DoD, which wants to shape young people's opinions toward a pro-military, pro-war bias. The DoD studies learners' opinions and uses digital media to influence them, and when young people start high school, military recruiters have access to student contact information; the recruiters anticipate a receptive audience.

Teachers need to know their students' opinions about war and the military and encourage learners to think explicitly and critically about these issues. This study sought to discover my Eckstein sixth-graders' opinions on the military and war and how those opinions developed. Generally, students demonstrated moderate to low support for the military/war. Opinions on the subject often differed by gender, and factors such as

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family, digital media, and family members in the military played a role in shaping students' attitudes.

More study is needed about pre-high school students' opinions on the military/war and what influences those attitudes. Once educators understand *what* students' opinions are on this subject and *why* learners develop the beliefs they hold, teachers should consider *how* they might influence or change learners' attitudes.

Students fresh out of middle school will be asked questions such as, "Have you thought about joining the military?" and teachers need to prepare students to know how to answer such an important question.

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Appendix 1

Student Survey

Name:

Period:

Date:

Directions: Answer the questions below on a 0-5 scale. Circle the number you choose.
0 = "I do NOT agree at all," and 5 = "I completely agree."

1) I see violence or war on TV, the internet, video games, etc. at least once a week.

0 1 2 3 4 5

2) I play video games that show violence, killing, or war at least once a week.

0 1 2 3 4 5

3) All war is wrong.

0 1 2 3 4 5

4) Wars are sometimes necessary.

0 1 2 3 4 5

5) It is possible to keep peace without the use of armies.

0 1 2 3 4 5

6) A war is good for the US if the US wins.

0 1 2 3 4 5

7) Peace is boring.

0 1 2 3 4 5

8) The US should make war to help other people if they are being abused.

0 1 2 3 4 5

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9) Someday I will join the military.

0 1 2 3 4 5

10) Everyone should be required to join the military.

0 1 2 3 4 5

11) Soldiers must fight if they are ordered to.

0 1 2 3 4 5

12) It is OK to use nuclear weapons in a war if we think it will save lives later.

0 1 2 3 4 5

13) War is exciting.

0 1 2 3 4 5

14) Humvees (jeeps), tanks, fighter jets, and other military equipment are cool.

0 1 2 3 4 5

15) I have a close family member who has been in the military.

0 1 2 3 4 5

16) The US military is good.

0 1 2 3 4 5

17) I would talk to a military recruiter about joining the military if they talked to me.

0 1 2 3 4 5

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Appendix 2

Data for Surveys of 6th-Grade Student Attitudes about War and US Military, organized by total score (least to greatest)

Student	Gender	Ques. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total Score
2. Student	F	2	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	5	1	0	13
50. Student	M	0	0	2	3	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	5			15
1. Student	F	1	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
3. Student	F	4	1	5	0	5	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	1	15
5. Student	M	3	1	4	1	5	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	5	1	0	16
51. Student	M	4	3	5	0	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	5	1	0	16
55. Student	F	3	0	3	3	3	0	0	4	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	16
4. Student	F	4	4	5	4	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	18
40. Student	F	5	0	3	2	5	0	0	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	5	2	0	18
56. Student	F	5	5	4	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	1	1	2	0	18
37. Student	F	3	0			5	1	1		0	0	0	0	5	1	0		0	19
6. Student	M	5	1	4	1	5	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	1	19
16. Student	F	1	0	3	4	4	4	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0		0	21
54. Student	F	5	0	4	5	5	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	21
9. Student	F	1	0	0	3	4	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	3	1	5	3	3	22
36. Student	F	3	0	5	1	4	1	0	3	0	1	3	1	0	1	0	2	0	22
39. Student	M	4	4	4	1	5		0	2	0	0	0	4	0		5	3	1	23
52. Student	F	1	0	4	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	5	5		0	23
15. Student	F	1	0	4	5	4	3	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	3	0	24
19. Student	F	2	1	2	4	3	4	0	3	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	5	0	24
35. Student	F	1	0	3	2	5	2	0	4	1	0	0	2	0	0	5	4	1	24

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42. Student	F	3	1	3	3	4	3	1	2	0	2	1	0	2	1	0	2	0	2	0	2	5	1	1	24
43. Student	M	5	5	3	3	4	4	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	5	1	1	24	
31. Student	F	5	1	4	5	5	2	0	3	0	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	0	2	25	
33. Student	M	4	2	3	3	3	3	1	4	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	4	0	25	
38. Student	F	5	3	2	5	4	0	0	3	1	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	5	5	3	3	3	3	25	
45. Student	F	3	3	5	5	3	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	3	0	3	0	0	25	
46. Student	F	4	1	4	3	5	0	0	3	1	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	4	1	25	
32. Student	F	5	1	4		3	2	2		2	1		2	1	2	1	0			3			3	26	
8. Student	F	4	0	2	4	5	1	0	5	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	3	26	
25. Student	M	5	5	3	3	2	1	0	1	1	4	0	3	4	3	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	0	26	
47. Student	F	4	5	4	4	5	3	0	4	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	4	4	4	4	4	0	26	
57. Student	F	1	0	4	5	5	0	0	1	0	4	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	26	
12. Student	F	4	0	4	4	5	0	0	2	0	4	3	0	1	0	1	3	3	4	0	3	4	0	27	
14. Student	M	0	0	3	3	2	3	1	2	0	3	3	1	4	4	0	0	4	0	2	0	2	0	27	
48. Student	F	2	1	3	4	1	1	0	0	3	3	0	1	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	27	
11. Student	M	4	3	2	4	5	2	0	3	0	3	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	3	2	28	
34. Student	M	4	3	3	4	5	2	1	3	0		2	2	3	5					5			0	29	
22. Student	F	4	1	3	3	4	3	0	1	1	0	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	29	
23. Student	M	5	4	4	2	4	1	1	4	0	1	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	29	
21. Student	M	0	0	1	5	5	1	0	2	1	1	3	0	3	0	3	0	0	5	5	5	5	3	30	
27. Student	M	5	2	3	3	4	1	1	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	30	
28. Student	M	5	5	3	4	2	2	4	3	0	0	3	3	4	5	2	4	5	2	5	5	2	0	30	
30. Student	M	4	2	3	3	4	2	2	3	0	3	1	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	30	
26. Student	F	1	0	3	4	4	2	1	3	0	3	1	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	1	31	
29. Student	F	1	0	4	4	4	3	0	4	0	2	2	0	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	0	31	
41. Student	M	4	5	4	5	3	1	1	4	0	2	4	1	5	5	1	5	5	1	5	5	1	0	31	
10. Student	M	5	4	4	4	2	1	0	3	3	2	1	2	4	2	4	4	5	3	5	5	3	3	32	

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13. Student	F	4	0	5	1	5	3	0	0	3	3	0	4	5	5	0	32
44. Student	M	4	4	3	4	5	3	0	0	4	3	1	3	5	3	0	32
17. Student	M	5	5	0	5	4	3	4	0	3	1	0		3	4	3	33
49. Student	M	5	5	5	0	5	0	0	0	4	2	0	5	4	4	5	33
7. Student	M	3	1	2	4	4	2	0	2	2	3	1	3	3	2	3	37
18. Student	M	5	5	3	4	3	4	1	0	3	3	3	4	4	4	2	37
24. Student	F	5	1	0	5	5	2	4	0	2	1	3	5	5	3	3	37
20. Student	M	5	5	4	4	5	3	2	0	5	0	3	5	5	5	1	40

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Appendix 3

Excerpts from Transcripts, Student 1

T: OK, and you said, "The US should make war to help people if they're being abused," you said "absolutely not," is that right, you don't believe the US should make war to help people if they're being hurt?

M: Well, first of all, it would hurt, like, if you're trying to, like, stop people being abused, it might hurt the person being abused even more or affect them in ways you don't want.

T: OK, good. Umm, you also said, "Absolutely not," for use of nuclear weapons for any reason, is that right?

M: Yeah, because, I mean, the reason that there's nuclear weapons is, like, to destroy something, and you can't really say that using a nuclear weapon would save lives later because it's actually going to kill lives, probably actually more than it's going to save. It will cause a lot of damage.

...

T: Alright. You also said you would not talk to a military recruiter about joining the military, is that right?

M: Yeah, because if you're a military person, you're probably going to be responsible for some lives being lost, so it might be helping someone a little bit, but it would probably, like, hurt someone too, and you'd probably feel guilty about it because you're responsible for the losses of people's lives.

...

T: OK, alright. Thank you. So, let me return, now, to this question: In general, how did you come to believe the things that you do, here, regarding the military and war?

M: Well, basically, like sometimes on the news, they're saying, some certain military generals died in a war, or like, I don't know if this ever happened, but they say "we killed the leader of some group." And, if you look at it with no bias or prejudice, then you'll see that it really is not fair on either side because either way, lives are be lost, whether it be on the enemy side or the US side. And, for all you know, the person who died on the enemy side maybe had, like, a family, and now they can't support them. So basically, you're breaking apart families and putting people on the streets for like war and stuff.

T: Uh-huh. So, you're saying your opinions developed just from watching the news and thinking about the other side?

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M: Well, plus, there's also, sometimes, like, homeless veterans on the streets, and they're affected by the war, even though they didn't . . .

. . .

T: Alright. I notice that you answered in your questions here, that you don't really watch violence on TV or video games or the internet, and you don't really play video games that use violence. Why is that?

M: I mean, like, it's not really, like, um, I choose to do that, it just doesn't happen. Sometimes I might watch some PG-13 movies or whatever with a little bit of violence or something, but it's kind of disturbing if there's a lot of violence.

T: It disturbs you.

M: Yeah, it's kinda like, you leave with images in your head, and it stays with you and you can't really get it out.

T: Uh-huh. Umm, do your parents have similar views to you about the military and war?

M: Not really. They never really, um, exactly talk to me about this stuff, but I have a general idea about what they would think.

T: You think they would agree with you?

M: Kind of, yeah. But, I think they might think, a little bit, that war is, um, ok, that the US military is good in some sort of way, because of it helping people sometimes.

T: So you may actually be more against war than your parents.

M: Yeah, I guess.

T: OK, what about your friends? Do you think your friends have similar views to you about war?

M: I guess so, slightly.

. . .

T: OK. So you see yourself more against war than almost anyone else.

M: I guess for me I don't, just, think about it, like, every single day, but when I'm questioned about it, that's how I feel, because I don't really have much interaction with war.

. . .

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T: Is there anything else that you would say has influenced your opinions about this?

M: I guess like kind of, I mean, war is like a big umm, if you think of war as a different scale of ratios, maybe, like if you think of a little fight, maybe at school or whatever . . . either way, people get hurt, and if you think of that with thousands or hundreds of people, than you can imagine what war is like. So then, if you see, like, fights or whatever . . .
. . .

T: OK, good. I appreciate your answers so far. So, let's maybe return to a few of these questions, briefly. When you say all war is wrong, would you say there is never anytime, any good time, any good reason, to have war?

M: I guess if, I guess like the only reason, like . . . now, war is wrong, any war, like in the past or whatever, but I guess there's maybe one circumstance where you could do war, maybe. Cause I don't think this would actually happen or anything, but maybe if there were some sort of aliens or something . . . but you shouldn't, like, attack your own species. Because if it happens, it happens, and you can't change it.

T: So, I hear you saying it's a lot about fairness and thinking about the other side. And your ideas aren't based on religious beliefs or anything else?

M: Yeah, because, it's like, your own race, and you can't, like, attack it, and if you do have war against that race, you're killing your own kind, and you're saying you don't want humans to evolve any more.

T: OK. Good. So, have you done any reading about this, or is it just the thinking that comes to your mind.

M: Maybe, umm, a little bit of, uh, the civil war. That was slightly OK because they were helping against slavery, and I guess that would be fair . . .

Excerpts from Transcripts, Student 2

T: OK, so we'll come back to these questions a little bit later, I just first of all want to ask you, in general, considering these questions, how did you, you do you think you came to your views about the military and war?

F: Umm, a lot of it had to do with talking to my granddad. How he gave me these very vulgar explanations of what happened when he was there. He talked about how one of his friends died, and how watched the whole thing. So, that had to do a lot with it. Also, because of the news right now, there's always some sort of thing about Afghanistan or something and how that affects what we're doing right now.

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T: OK. Do you watch the news at your house? Your parents, you watch it along with them, maybe?

F: Yeah. Not exactly with them. I don't watch TV a lot. Like, I do sometimes, regular, but I watch the news a lot.

...

T: OK. Is there anything else? You've talked about your granddad, the news a little bit. Anything else that you would say influenced your opinions?

F: Definitely my parents. They talk about it.

...

T: OK. So, do you think that if they looked at this, that they would answer similarly to you?

F: Uhh, I think on most of the questions, yeah.

...

T: So mostly is it TV, the internet, or something?

F: Yeah, mostly TV. Sometimes there's pop up videos or something on the web, so . . .

T: Do you feel like those influence you at all?

F: They don't influence me, they just, like, if they're from actual news databases and stuff, I trust that a lot more than just videos from someone.

T: Uh-huh. OK. Umm, are there other events? I mean, you talked about the stuff going on in Afghanistan, umm, and maybe other places. Are there other events that you think may have influenced your opinions on this?

F: Umm, not really. Maybe, North Korea right now. It's crazy, so I guess that kind of, a little bit, but not that much.

...

F: Yeah, like, um, some wars are just not made to do anything but havoc and stuff. The ones that are worth fighting for, like, it's kind of hard to think from a different person's perspective, from, like, someone in Afghanistan right now who's now fighting against US and how they would think of it, but yeah, so, kind of . . . Some wars are just dumb, they shouldn't be happening, I guess, is what I'm trying to say.

T: OK.

F: But some have to happen just because it, like, we have to protect people or do something like that.

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...

F: Well, uh, obviously nuclear weapons just, like, I think at least, pretty much shouldn't have happened, umm, just because, the bombing in Japan, a while back, that, uhh, killed so many innocent people, and that shouldn't have happened at all. Sometimes, I guess, it has to, and I don't think, I think they're wrong and stuff, but if there comes a time when you actually need them, which I doubt there will be, I think it would be OK if, if some people sacrificed for the greater good of like everyone.

...

F: Uhh, uff, I think it depends on the person a lot. Like, uh, sometimes if they don't, like, have a mindset of what they're doing right now, then it could mean that, yeah, that could happen. But I think that most, not smart, but regular people, it would still be a lot different because it's not real, like you know, in your mind, when you're playing those games, that it's not real and it's not going to hurt anyone and you're not doing anything to anyone. And, umm, I think it's a lot different than that.

Excerpts from Transcripts, Student 3

M: Well, my uncle, for one, was in the military.

T: Uh-huh.

M: He's one of the people who made me choose that. And then, I think his oldest son also was.

...

T: Alright, good. I think we understand how you answered on that. Now, just in general, taking a step back from the survey, for a second, umm, how do you think, what, how do you think you came to your views about the military?

M: Mostly, like, studying, and like I said, my uncle, and my parents told me war isn't always bad, like, it could be good, depending on what it is about, but it wouldn't be good for war to be just without reason.

T: OK, so would you say your parents would answer fairly similar to you if they took a survey like this?

M: Probably.

T: OK. Is there anyone else, any other person that you think has influenced your views about the military or war?

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M: Like, the news, and research online, but not really a particular one person that I know.

...

T: OK, so going back to these questions and how you answered on the survey, "All war is wrong," again, you put 0 there, so can you tell me anything else about that?

M: Well, if the cause is good, like, if the Allies hadn't gone to war, then things, like, would've been really bad, so in that case, it wouldn't be necessarily wrong to fight.

...

T: OK. What about a military for a country you maybe don't admire, say North Korea, for example?

M: Well, I think it's important for a country to have a military, maybe it would be slightly less, depending on, well, I'm not really an expert, but if, like, they abuse people or something, then maybe it [my support] would be a good deal lower. But, I do think it's important for countries to have a military.

T: OK. What is the purpose of a military?

M: I think, like, to defend the country. And to prevent, like, for the United States, at least, to uphold our ideals.

...

T: Alright. But you do feel like at least your family members, if you don't talk about it, you're pretty certain they would feel fairly similar to you.

M: M-hmm.

T: And, do you feel like that the video games and the TV and things you see on the news and what not, does that influence your opinions about the military and war?

M: Umm, in the news a little bit, but not video games.

...

T: What about where, you know, because we do have technology now where people can sit back and operate a drone from the other side of the world. Do you think that is in any way similar to playing a video game, or is that still quite a bit different?

M: It would still be quite a bit different, in the same respect as pulling the trigger on somebody; I mean, maybe the controls wouldn't be, like, different. It would be more similar with the controllers, but it would still be a lot harder, mentally.