Anticipating military work; digital games as a source of anticipatory socialization?

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Anticipating work

Anticipating, preparing for, and doing work are central to most lives. Learning about, anticipating and preparing for potential roles and work frames experiences from childhood. Most work occurs in or for organizations, therefore learning about, joining and leaving organizations are also lifelong experiences. Understanding how individuals engage with work and organizations and how organizations attract and change individuals are central to organizational socialization theory, models and processes. Organizational socialization has focused on relationships within, or immediately prior to joining occupations or the workplace. However Jablin’s seminal contributions (1985, 1987 and 2001) reinvigorated scholarship on how ideas, beliefs and attitudes about work and organizations are formed from childhood intentionally or unintentionally.

Anticipatory socialization, the imagining, rehearsing, and preparing for future roles, occupations or organizational memberships, it is argued, frames expectations and choices. Vocational/role anticipatory socialization is the process leading to choices of roles, vocations or occupations. Organizational anticipatory socialization occurs when choices about particular organizations are made, informed to varying degrees by communications from organizations such as recruitment material (Jablin 2001, Kramer 2010).

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1 This paper draws on PhD research which explores the role and significance of digital games in anticipatory socialization. It examines what digital games contribute to imagining, rehearsing, and preparing for future roles, occupations or organizational memberships. It also examines what organizations perceive as the utility of digital games in the anticipatory socialization process. Given representations of military work are an enduring staple of digital games and military organizations increasing engagement, the research focuses on the anticipatory socialization potential of digital games in the context of military work and how militaries perceive their utility.
Sources of anticipatory socialization include family, peers, education, organizational experiences and the media; as well as organizations as individuals ‘close’ in on chosen roles. While the media is perceived as an influential source, in particular television, film, magazines and books, it is invariably characterised as providing misleading, stereotypical or ‘distorted depictions’ of work within popular culture (Jablin 2001:741). Unless balanced, or countervailed by other anticipatory socialization sources, such representations of work may have undue influence or close down options. For instance, if organizational entry and socialization is assisted by realistic expectations or ‘person –organization fit’, individuals with unrealistic expectations may have greater ‘expectation-reality gaps’ (ibid: 757).

Few contemporary work organizations attempt to directly influence popular culture, but most manage image through news and new media. Some work places and occupations have enduring fascination and are frequently subjects of ‘reality’ television and dramas such as the police, airports and hospitals. A significant exception is the military, predominantly but not exclusively in the US, which has proactively utilised popular culture such as film to inform and recruit; films like Top Gun (1986) made with military assistance had a significant impact on recruitment (Robb 2004). This media-military synergy and the insights it offers for understanding the media as a source of anticipatory socialization is overlooked within the organizational socialization literature.

**New media**

The role of new media as a source of anticipatory socialization is relatively unresearched apart from emerging literature on gender roles, professional/organizational virtual communities (Pfahl 2008) and employer websites. For
instance digital games\(^2\) have had a rapid impact on popular culture since the 1980s; although frequently maligned by politicians, press and some academics; they form a pervasive presence in everyday life (Calleja, 2007:11). Work, notably \textit{military work}, features prominently. Digital games have been embraced by Western militaries, the US Army in particular, as a communication, recruitment and training tool. Social network sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter are increasingly utilised as well as blogs and U Tube.

\textbf{An overview of digital games and the military}

Most twenty first century western citizens have little or no direct experience of the military as Carlson and Andress argue;

\begin{quote}
American society already is returning to the real “normalcy” of our deeper historical past, in which only a rather small minority of all men share military experience as a unifying memory (2009:398)
\end{quote}

Indeed as ‘the ‘proportion of veterans shrinks, people may have fewer personal contacts for firsthand knowledge about military service’ (Yeung and Gifford 2010:14). A minority become actively engaged through volunteering for regular or part-time service or join military cadet organisations. The majority experience military life and combat vicariously through the news media, comics, books, films and, increasingly digital games. Public appetites for military/war themed entertainment are persistent and voracious. Across the world millions engage in digital combat against myriad mythical, historical, contemporary and future enemies (earth bound or alien); virtual death and destruction are the mainstay of many digital games.

\(^2\) The term digital games will be used throughout rather than video, computer or console games
Military themed digital games span all historical ages and game genres such as first person shooters, action-adventure, role play, simulation and strategy. Games focusing on contemporary wars are invariably western orientated and mirror active or potential conflicts. Many games reflect the strategic concerns of the US and Europe and a world perceived to be riven by fluid extra-territorial networks, ‘neo-medieval chaos’, wild ‘frontierlands’ and asymmetric warfare which challenge modern state and state endorsed international organizations and systems (Taylor 2010). The ‘enemies’ or OPFOR (Opposing Forces) are usually current or potential enemies of the US, currently predominantly Arab/Muslim (Sisler 2006) countries and non-state actors. Most military characters within games are male.

Military technology, tactics, uniforms, behaviour as well as the physics of destruction (destroying objects in game, effects of explosions, weapon performance) are all closely modelled to achieve ‘realistic’ and immersive game play. Games military veracity varies, for instance ARMA2 (2009) is a tactical shooter which closely mimics small unit tactical behaviour and weapon effects making it a challenging game to play and suitable for military as well as

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3 Such as Call of Duty; Modern Warfare 2 (2009) where ultranationalists seize control of Russia or ARMA 2: Operation Arrowhead (2010) which features a peacekeeping mission in the fictitious country of Takistan. This hegemony is not entirely uncontested, games like Under Ash (2002) featuring a Palestinian have been produced in Syria.

4 It is important to note that in multiplayer modes (often the most played) gamers choose (or are allotted) either the ‘friend’ or ‘enemy’ role. Whatever they may think about the geopolitical representation within the game (or how much they are influenced by the pro-western/US approach), when it comes to multiplayer games not many seem to care which side they are on. Playing OPFOR is standard. This seems to be overlooked in the recent furor over the ability to play as the Taliban in the forthcoming Medal of Honor.

5 Cf. Trailers for Medal of Honor http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhlk552Rkho http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2VpdI1ILDw

6 Militaries tend to differentiate between entertainment gamers and ‘serious games’; ‘In strictly entertainment games, a number of techniques are often used to stimulate the fun and to skip the not-so-fun stuff. In a serious game, some of these techniques are necessary to have in order to keep up sufficient degree of realism’ Nählinder & Oskarsson (2007:13)
commercial markets. *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* (2009) is immensely popular, looks the part but rarely tactical; in its multiplayer guise players may be allocated to teams but play as individuals with the sole purpose of ‘killing’ more often than being ‘killed’. Indeed commercially successful games such as *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* are a global phenomena with 25 million unique users (Hinkle 2010).

Digital games are also a pervasive presence in western militaries, particularly the US, and increasingly used to communicate and engage with the public (predominantly young people) and prepare soldiers for combat. Western militaries take digital games very seriously. The US military’s persistent engagement with information technology has been the midwife to computers, simulations, games and the internet. From Cold War research spin-offs, the game industry rapidly outstripped military capabilities in digital game technology. As the US military embraced new information technologies, initially through commercial transfers including ‘Commercial off-the shelf (COTS)’ games, the fusion between defence investment, industry and game developers has led to a military/entertainment synergy which has intensified in recent decades.

Millions play *America’s Army* (2002) an online game (and on cell phones, arcades and the ‘Virtual Army Experience’ travelling exhibition) launched by the US Army in 2002 ‘to provide civilians with insights on Soldiering from the barracks to the battlefields’ as well as a training tool (US Army, 2007, America’s Army, 2009). The US Navy, Air Force UK, New Zealand and Australian forces
also utilise games on careers websites, many aimed at young teenagers\(^7\). In 2008 the US Army sponsored *Halo 3* (2007) online match competitions and virtual recruitment islands in *Second Life* (2003)\(^8\). According to the US Army’s PEO STRI (Programme Executive Office for Simulation, Training and Instrumentation); ‘Every Soldier who deploys uses some type of simulation to train critical Warfighting skills’, (2009) including adapted versions of commercial games such as *ARMA 2* (2009)\(^9\), *Full Spectrum Warrior* (2004) and *Delta Force* (1998). The Department of Defense (DoD) funded the Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) from 1999 bringing together ‘leading technologists in artificial intelligence, graphics, and immersion’ and ‘the creative talents of Hollywood and the game Industry...(2008) to create military gaming products including *Full Spectrum Warrior* \(^{10}\). The US Army and United States Air Force are developing virtual worlds as the ‘basis for future training and education of the military’ (Macedonia, 2008).

**The military and digital game debate**

Games, the military and war have an entwined history, as Halter notes; ‘As long as humans have waged war, they have also played it’ (2006:5). Games have been popular representations of warfare, training and planning tools as well as providing an enduring metaphor; ‘Ever since words existed for fighting and playing, men have been wont to call war a game’(Huizinga, 1955:89). Digital games have breathed new life into the game/war relationship through offering

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\(^{7}\) For instance; *Typhoon Quest* and *Group Captain Suave* (RAF), *Australian Army Artillery and Battleships Extreme* (ADF). [http://www.raf.mod.uk/altitude/explothereaf/games.cfm](http://www.raf.mod.uk/altitude/explothereaf/games.cfm)  

\(^{8}\) The USAF also has a Second Life presence.  
[http://www.bisimulations.com/](http://www.bisimulations.com/) Utilising a similar game engine to Virtual Battle Space2, Bohemia Interactive and used by the USMC, UK Forces and Australian Defense Force (ADF)

\(^{9}\) *Full Spectrum Leader* (2005), *FS Command* (2003) and *FS Warrior*
ever more ‘realistic’, accessible and affordable representations/simulations and the perceived ability to model warfare’s complexity, appealing to both gamers and the military. As modern war digitalized, war and digital war games appeared to resemble each other; ‘war as a video game’ became a widespread metaphor following the 1991 Gulf War as the distinction between ‘reality’ and simulation appear to blur (King and Krzywinska, 2006:200). For Stahl, ‘the video game is increasingly both medium and metaphor by which war invades our hearts and mind.’ (2006:126)

Unabated military investment into games, military/game developer synergy and gamers appetite for war/military themed games has led to some media and academic debate on military intentions. Compared with the film, news media and war literature, and considering the volume of digital war games produced, the literature is negligible. With notable exceptions, there is little primary research or theoretical development. Insights into ‘what the military is thinking when producing computer games’ are rare according to Schubart (2009:8). Much of the literature located outside games studies verges on polemic, mapping the rise of a ‘military-entertainment complex’ or Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network (Der Derian, 2009) and ‘militainment’11, and make sweeping claims (unsupported by research) about games ability to influence recruitment and as propaganda vehicles. There has been sustained discourse on violence and digital games which reflects the polarisation in media effects research between ‘active media’ and ‘active user’;

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11 1. A portmanteau which consists of military and entertainment.2. Entertainment with military themes.3. A form of entertainment that features and celebrates the military.4. A form of entertainment controlled by the military. [http://www.wordinfo.info/words/index/info/view_unit/1311](http://www.wordinfo.info/words/index/info/view_unit/1311)
The ‘active media’ approach is identified with a broadly behaviourist argument: researchers ... generally seek evidence of direct harmful effects...the ‘active user’ approach is social scientific in orientation. This research seeks to situate the use of games in the context of wider social and cultural factors, and to assume that players are active and sophisticated ... (Buckingham, 2007: 27).

Apart from Grossman (1995) active media discourses have not focused on military game applications or the ramifications of military sponsorship of ‘violent’ games. Active user discourses rarely ‘engages directly with questions about harmful effects... and makes quite problematic claims about beneficial effects’ (Buckingham, 2007: 27). Active user discourses tend to focus on the ideological, persuasive or propaganda potential of military themed games and are frequently suspicious of military intentions. Although more measured than non-game academics, there remains a curious tendency within active user discourses to dismiss any claims of direct harm from digital games but allow for indirect ‘ill effects’.

On the whole, the digital war game literature lacks a nuanced understanding of military perspectives; this may be due to neglecting insights from military history, sociology and psychology. The military suffix is enough for the literature to be regarded as ‘politically and morally questionable’ (Lynn, 1997:782). Furthermore, the real and perceived close association of academics to the military ‘casts the suspicion of collaboration with the “military industrial complex and militarists in power”’ (Morillo and Pavkovic 2006: 115). However, debates within military literatures (such as on military culture, recruitment, group/combat
cohesion) can illuminate and strengthen an appraisal of military perceptions of the utility of digital games.¹²

**Military work**

In the *Utility of Force*, General Rupert Smith (2005) reminds us that the core purpose of military work is to kill people and destroy things. The core function of military institutions is to prepare, threaten and apply organised violence usually on behalf of the state. Killing people and destroying things is not necessarily straightforward even for the most technologically advanced militaries. As Clausewitz notes; ‘Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult’ (2007 [1976]:65). War is invariably chaotic; militaries attempt to exert order and control to minimise what Clausewitz described as the friction of war. Friction is central to Randall Collin’s (2008) concept of incompetent violence and achieving *competent organised violence* is the prime goal of all militaries. To deliver (or threaten) competent organised violence militaries need to accumulate, train and organise the means of violence; people and materiel which ‘are suitable in quantity and quality’ (Smith, 2005:19).

**Legitimising military work**

To accumulate the means of violence in modern societies, militaries require legitimacy. To threaten, kill or destroy things, militaries require the legitimacy to and policy on, how, when and on whom to apply organised violence. Military power in western societies is legitimised, framed and resourced by the state in

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¹² Within the military, again particularly the US, there is a developing literature on digital games and war, including primary research with military ‘gamers’ largely orientated within behaviourist traditions (including ‘active media’). The literature is generated through military funded research (internal and external), academics within military educational institutions and a burgeoning military simulation/game industry which publishes magazines and supports conferences.
particular and society in general. Emphasis given to the preparation, use or threat of organised violence varies over time and space, as well as military influence on decision making. Like most institutions, militaries are single minded in the pursuit of achieving core purpose and prefer to be in control of their own destiny; therefore they are simultaneously functionally and politically orientated. The military competes for power, attention, cash and people. Within military institutions, military organisations also compete for profile, role allocation and resources (cf. Collins, B 2008). While how much and how effectively the military controls or influences the state and public opinion and actions is contested, what is evident is that militaries have long utilised the perceived persuasive power of media and popular culture in attempts to persuade, inform and provoke to achieve institutional and organisational ends; competent organised violence and legitimated military power.

**Encompassing tendencies**

Military specialists increasingly tend to be separated and distinct from society, claiming ‘uniqueness through wielding and managing death’ (Basham 2006: 53). Civil-military separation (or gap) has intensified in the west as militaries became capital rather than labour intensive and volunteerism replaced conscription. However separate and distinct, western militaries rely on the state in particular and society in general to legitimise and frame how and when they should apply violence as well as accumulating the means of violence; people and materiel which ‘are suitable in quantity and quality’ (Smith, 2005:1)

Goffman argues ‘every institution has encompassing tendencies’ and ‘capture’ the ‘time and interest’ of their members and ‘provides something of a world for them’. Institutions which exhibit more encompassing tendencies than others, in
particular those which have physical ‘barriers to social intercourse’ such as prisons, boarding schools and secure hospitals, Goffman describes as total institutions (op cit). Total institutions encompass and control most aspects of member’s lives and largely exclude non-members. While the military is often described as a total institution, in particular initial training centres which provide ‘intensive and severe socialization’; the extent the contemporary military a whole can be characterised as such is debatable (Trainor 2004:14). Militaries do see themselves as culturally distinct as well as physically separate to a degree (Basham 2006). Given that most western military institutions rely on volunteers, they also attempt to encompass the time and interest of potential members and expose them to military work through cadet forces, events and popular culture.

Militaries seek to encompass ideas, people or products which may have utility. Militaries constantly seek to improve the means of violence through appropriating and/or stimulating scientific, technological, economic and cultural knowledge. From the military perspective the pursuit and application of knowledge is perceived as a matter of life and death; preventing their own and the state/ civil populace while maximising, if necessary or required, the deaths of others. For critics, the militaries’ encompassing tendencies are evidence of inappropriate accumulation of military power and the militarization or weaponisation of ideas, people and things. For Laswell:

The distinctive frame of reference in a fighting society is fighting effectiveness. All social change is translated into battle potential (1941:458)
Whether utilising knowledge generated indirectly (civilian) or directly (military procurement) - the distinction is frequently blurred- the end result is often a symbiotic relationship which intensifies militarization. In other words militaries utilise anything, if allowed, which they perceive as giving them an edge.

**Combat, order and chaos**

Military work is of necessity focused on combat and the seemingly never ending struggle to perform (when it matters) better than any opponent, real, potential or imagined. Combat performance, according to Smith (2005), demands a coherent fusion of ideas, peoples and things; purpose, policy, doctrine, organisation, troops and materiel. Military work is often portrayed in the media as a juxtaposition of extreme order and chaos; in particular land warfare. Order is symbolised by rigid hierarchical discipline, drill, standardisation of dress, behaviour and barracks and highly orchestrated ceremony. Chaos, as far as it can be represented, is the extreme violence, sensory overload, fear, mud and blood of the battlefield. The overwhelming problems militaries faces in combat are chaos and fear. If chaos overwhelms, coherence is lost and units disintegrate. If fear overwhelms, the soldier may give into the ‘deep-lying tendencies to retreat from death and mutilation’ (Laswell 1941:465). For Collins most violence is incompetent and few do violence well, including trained soldiers;

The problem of tension/fear is what fighting organizations, of whatever kind, have to deal with: the nature of the organization and its performance is shaped by what devices it adopts to deal with it. (2008:53)
Winslow argues that combat is the army’s raison d’être’ and ‘the dialectic between order and chaos constitutes the real heart of army culture (2007:84). Furthermore, military work is situated within a ‘rational organization’ which attempts to order an ‘irrational environment’ which ‘demands that soldiers be warriors who can kill or be killed’ (2007.84).

**Competent organised violence**

Bousquet suggests the ‘practise of warfare’ is the attempt to ‘impose order over chaos, to exert control when it most threatens to elude and to find predictability in the midst of uncertainty’. Maintaining order and coherence amongst the ‘centrifugal forces of chaos’, while maximising the enemies disorder is central to military success (2008:918). How to maintain order amongst chaos and engender competent organised violence are central, timeless and frequently contentious concerns of military work. For militaries competent organised violence is engendered through the doctrine, organization and technology, plus symbolic order\(^\text{13}\) and group/task cohesion. Military organizational socialization focuses on individual and group resilience required to manage within chaos. Anyone can learn to shoot; learning to shoot in combat (and not let anyone down) is a different matter. Loyalty and belief, belonging and bonding are arguably more important than mere technical ability in military work\(^\text{14}\).

\(^{13}\) Symbolic order is a crystallization of historical practises and culture integral to military organization which contributes (or is believed to) cohesion such as the UK regimental system.

\(^{14}\) There is a considerable literature on military group/task cohesion and soldiers inaction in combat following on from S.L.A Marshall’s *Men Against Fire* (1947).
Digital games and competent violence

Digital games have increasing utility for militaries in achieving competent violence. Particular attention is given to education and training, the perceived fit between gaming generations and military skills, awareness and recruitment raising.

Western militaries have encompassed digital games to delivery marketing, education training, simulations and wargaming from the combat to strategic levels (Frank 2005:12). Game technology has been integrated into to weapon systems\(^\text{15}\). Digital games perceived realism, immersive and persuasive qualities, cost effectiveness (over live training) and resonance with younger generations which contribute to competent violence has driven military investment. All aspects of US military training (and increasingly European forces) has utilised games/ game technology. A recent report for the UK Defence Academy highlighted the following advantages of ‘serious games’\(^\text{16}\) in military training; motivation, learner-centricity, personalisation, safe failure, immediate feedback, and extensive practise and reinforcement, collaboration and group/teanwork. The report noted;

It often comes as a surprise to those who see gamers as loners to discover that online communities of gamers are amongst the largest and most vibrant on the web (Caspian Learning 2008:29)

The US Army Science Board 2001 summer study on manpower (sic) recognised the link with generational ‘technical familiarity’ (2001:14) and increasing requirement for soldiers to undertake ‘very complex tasks’ such as


\(^{16}\) Sometimes referred to as Immersive Learning Systems (ILS)
controlling remote sensors, robotic vehicles and indirect fire systems (2001: 16)

In discussing Future Combat Systems (FCS) the report argued;

The blinding speed and sheer volume of information will overwhelm and inundate the FCS operators and decision-makers. The information must be integrated and filtered (fused) appropriately. Sensor-to-shooter operations will become increasingly complex and will pose formidable training challenges. Extensive knowledge and substantial inferential capability are required to interpret sensor data, generate hypotheses about their meaning, and propose courses of action, particularly when multiple sensors, weapons, and tactical situations are involved (2001: 16)

In a primer for serious game developers, Michael and Chen state that the gamer generation brings numerous advantages to the military (see box below). While elements of the list are contentious (desensitization in particular) and unproven, it is easy to understand, when coupled with the Science Board’s comments above, why games/gamers are attractive to the military.

- Improved hand eye coordination
- Improved multitasking
- Ability to teamwork with minimal communication
- Desensitization of shooting human targets

Adapted from Michael & Chen (2006: 58-59)

- Ability to process fast changing visual information
- Improved target differentiation
- Target prioritization
- Willingness to take aggressive action

Nieborg (2010) highlights the soft power of games such as America’s Army and their role as ‘advergame’, ‘edugame’, propaganda and strategic communication. Indeed, some argue that given the US-centric nature of military themed games they contribute significantly to ‘the normalization of military paradigms of thought, action and policy’ (Graham 2010: 60). Furthermore, Nieborg suggests that America’s Army;
[D]isseminates U.S. Army ideology and thus indirectly U.S. foreign policy into a global popular culture. By showing a global audience why and how the U.S. Army fights, the game has become an example of public diplomacy (2006:11)

Generational resonance also contributes to the rise of digital games as recruitment tools. Family, peers and education are perceived as the key agents of organizational socialization even though ‘disentangling the influences’ of multiple sources ‘represents a formidable challenge (Jablin 2001:741). A 1996 US Army Research Institute for the Behavioural Sciences meta-analysis on the enlistment literature noted that ‘historical interest’ was a key motivation factor which ‘represents long held interest in a military career, usually stemming from family history or exposure to the media’ ( Italics added) ( Lawrence & Legree 1996:1). Given that most families or peers have no direct military experience and even with positive views about the military do not necessarily encourage their child/friends enlistment and schools are largely de-militarized\(^{17}\) the military have a problem\(^{18}\) compounded by their cultural and physical separation from civilian society.

For Bailey (2009) military service is by choice rather than obligation, recruitment in volunteer militaries is driven by the logic of the labour market; ‘prospects’ have to be enticed through sophisticated marketing appealing primarily to self interest. Eighmey argues that the ‘motivational views of the youth population define the limits of military resources’ (2006:327)\(^{19}\). Whether motivation is occupational (pay, training, travel), institutional (loyalty, duty,

\(^{17}\) The decline of school based cadet forces , although there appears to be rise in the USA

\(^{18}\) Increasingly technologically sophisticated militaries need quality recruits; contrary to popular belief the US Army is ‘fairly solidly middle class’ (Bailey 2010:258).

\(^{19}\) The US military require approximately 200,000 new entrants per annum
sacrifice) or both is central to recruitment tactics. Eighmey suggests that fidelity, dignity and benefits to self and others provides a conceptual framework for understanding youth ‘propensity’ towards enlistment (see below).

(From Eighmey 2006:325)

The organizational socialization and military socialization literature points to the importance of organizational/institutional – person fit before entry in subsequent socialization and cohesion. Equally, propensity towards military service requires nurturing. Decisions to join up are rarely spontaneous (Top Gun or 9/11 withstanding) or because of particularly enticing advertising, rather a culmination of anticipatory socialization experiences. The US Army in particular has recognised the added value of digital games in this process.

**Anticipating military work**

According to Caspian Learning;

Current recruits are likely to have a view of the military shaped through the lens of military gaming. In many cases this will have been hundreds
of hours of military gaming...Increasingly recruitment draws on game
culture as potential recruits are likely to be gamers (2008:82)

*America’s Army*\(^{20}\) is the most sophisticated (and constantly developing) digital
game operated by a military for public use. It provides a massive, persistent
online presence providing ‘basic training’, multiplayer team games, gamer
community sites, competitions as well as a Facebook and U Tube presence.
Virtual and real recruiters are only a click away. From an organizational
socialization perspective it has the potential to frame vocational/ role
anticipatory socialization as well as organizational anticipatory socialization.
Whether this proves to be the case requires research, however the US Army
clearly hopes so.

According to the games Director, Colonel Wardynski ‘when you look at the kind
of games kids play, they look a lot like the Army’ (quoted in Huntemann
2010:188). *America’s Army* aims to give an immersive and realistic experience
of soldiering as well as to ‘redress misconceptions of the Army as identified in
market research’ (quoted in Lenoir 2003). Wardynski is concerned that
traditional recruitment practises, law\(^{21}\) and resources prevent the army ‘to get
there early enough’ in teenagers lives;

> With game technology we can make something very vivid. We can deliver it into pop culture...So now we are not going to get there last, we’ll get there about the same time as other ideas for what to do with your life.

(quoted in Huntemann 2010:179).

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\(^{20}\) *America’s Army* is increasingly used within the military for training as well as modelling new weapon systems. Free to download from [http://www.americasarmy.com/](http://www.americasarmy.com/)

\(^{21}\) US law prohibits signing up recruits until they are least 17.
For Wardynski *America’s Army* creates a ‘better prepared customer’ with ‘information symmetry’; asymmetry may produce a recruit but an ‘unhappy soldier’;

If people play our game, they had a higher level of comfort with the idea of being *in* the army...We’re not after recruits, we’re after competent, confident soldiers. (quoted in Huntemann 2010:185)

Dietz (1998) first suggested that digital games were a new source of anticipatory socialization; a suggestion not picked up in the organizational socialization or game studies literature. In imagining, rehearsing, and preparing for future roles, occupations or organizational memberships, digital games are potent tools. New media enhances the access of individual to information or virtual experiences useful for the anticipatory socialization process, access (sometimes directly) to organizations and in some cases, direct access to recruiters. Equally, organizations have new relatively low cost communication tools, new media markets to advertise in as well as unprecedented direct access to potential employees through social networks, websites and games. Potentially digital games are not only a new source of anticipatory socialization, but a means for organizations to actively engage in and influence anticipatory socialization processes at a relatively early stage.

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