

Civilianizing the Military: Effects on Unit Cohesion, Commitment, and Retention



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Agenda

- Use of civilians is a given
- What experiences do service personnel have with civilians?
- What effect is civilian integration having on service members?
- Multiple case studies
- Implications & future directions
- BLUF – mixed bag with need for more systematic examination and disciplined approach to guide civilian integration.

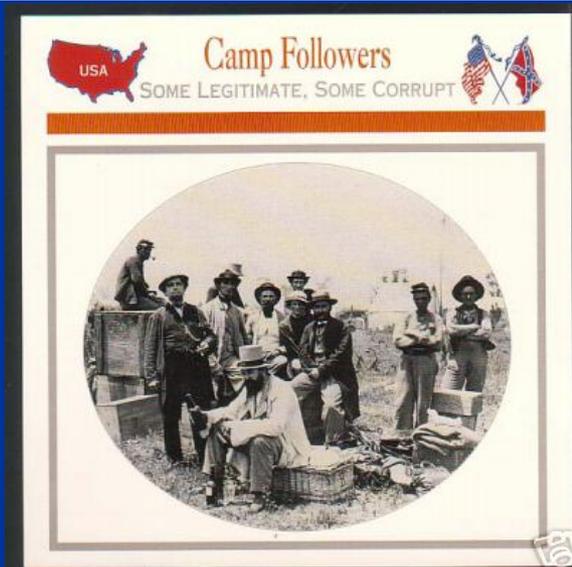
Civilians and the U.S. Military



MOLLY PITCHER AT THE GUN.



敗戦所へ集く大島島の捕虜



U is for Uniforms.

It is summer in Iraq and temperatures are running about 120 degrees. The man on the left is a contractor. His uniform consists of shorts, aloha shirt, sandals and a visor. He also makes a six figure salary. The man on the right is in the military. His uniform consists of ACUs, a kevlar helmet, vest with throat guard, pecker protector, shoulder protectors, ballistic plates, ammunition, knife, pistol, knee pads, ballistic glasses. He doesn't make six figures. Who would you rather be? I'll go with the left.



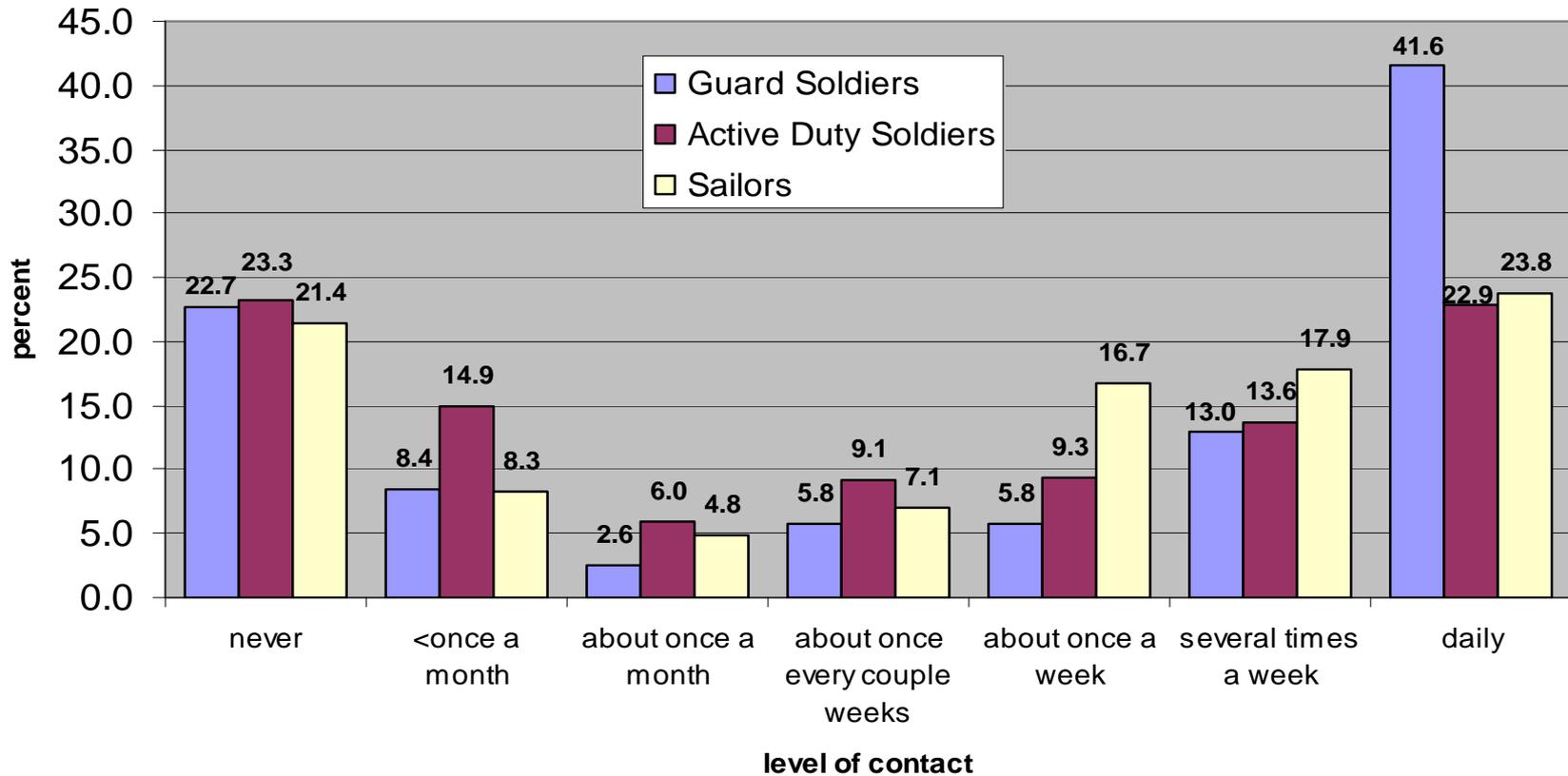
Methods

- **Survey and interview data**
 - **Naval surface ship (1 week back from deployment)**
 - **Active duty Army units**
 - **Infantry battalion (2 months back from deployment)**
 - **Combat aviation battalion (OCONUS)**
 - **National Guard infantry battalion (3 days back from deployment)**

*“If you torture numbers enough,
they’ll confess to anything.”*

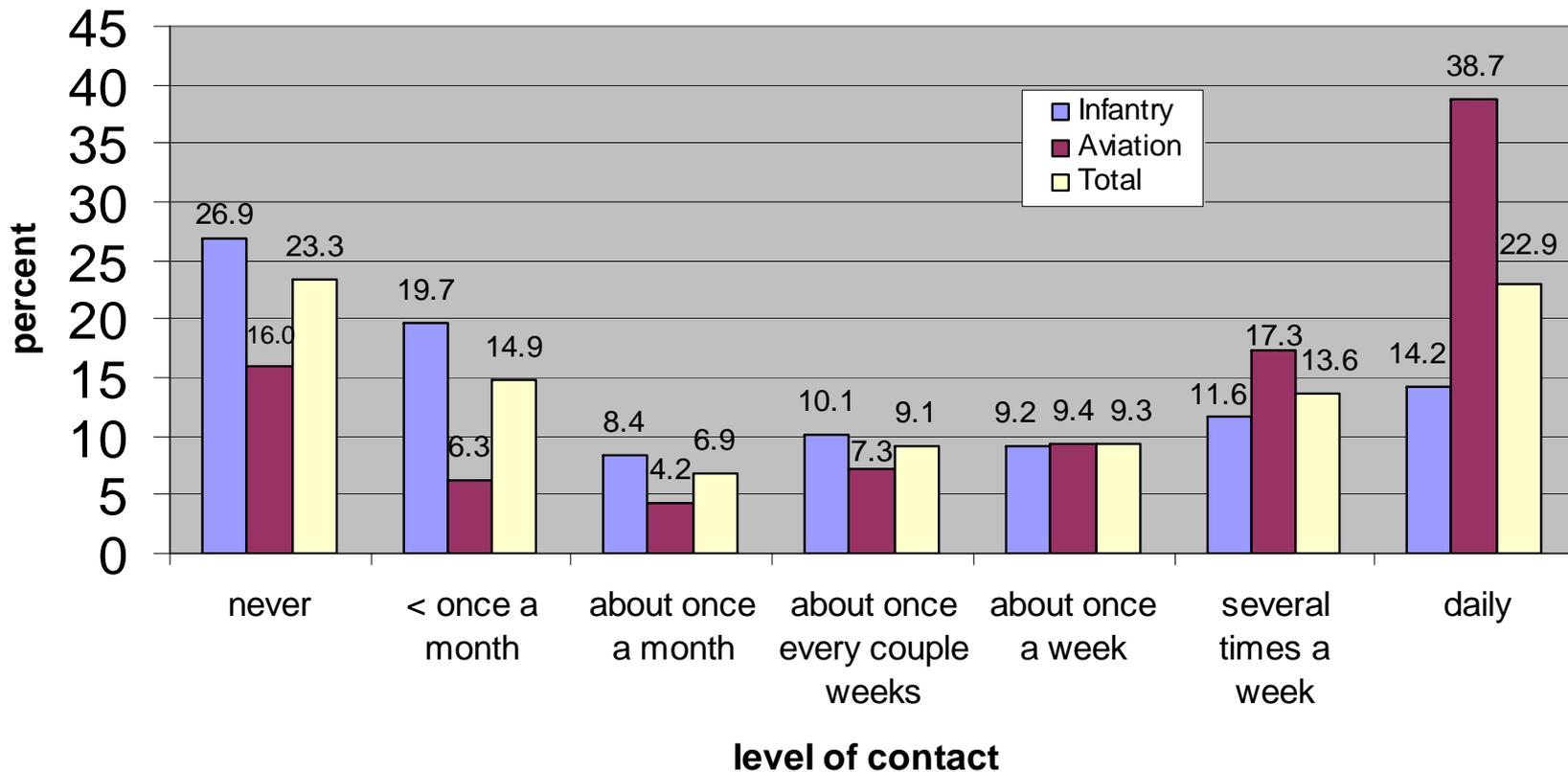
Gregg Easterbrook

Service Members' Level of Contact with Civilians



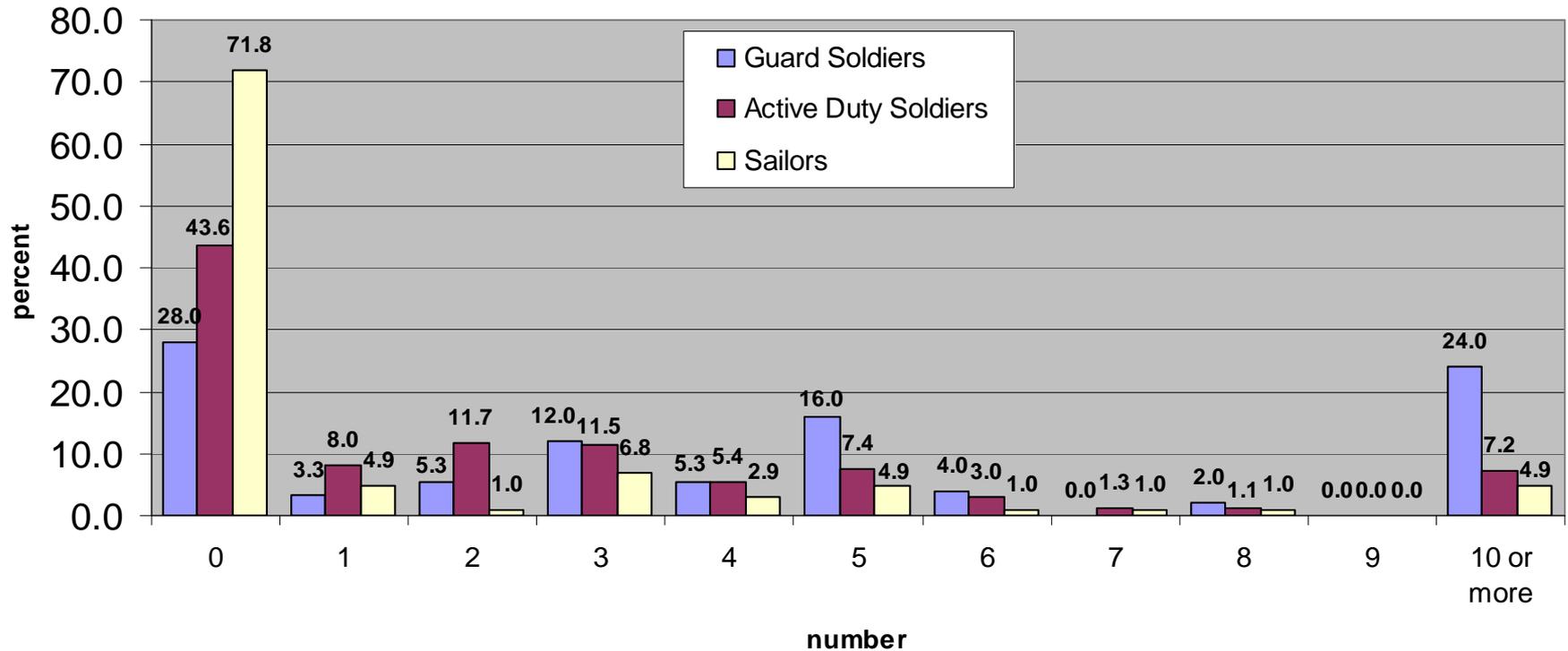
- A majority of service members worked with civilian contractors/mariners at least once a week
- Approximately quarter did not work with civilians at all

Active Duty Soldiers' Level of Contact with Civilian Contractors (n=537)



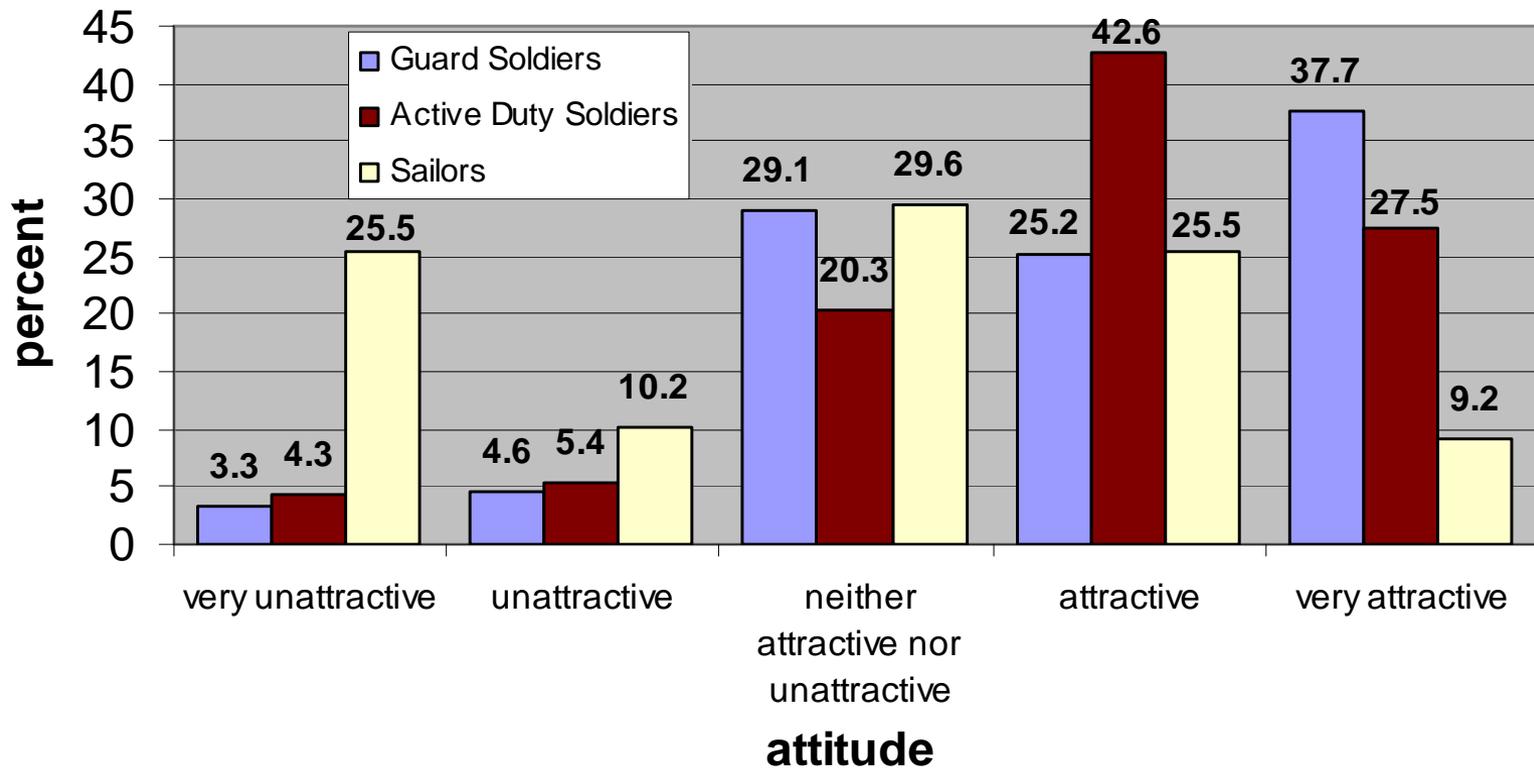
- Significant differences between active duty soldiers' experiences by unit affiliation
 - Those in combat aviation unit work much more closely with contractors than do soldiers in infantry unit

Number of Friends Who Left Military Service and Now Work as Civilian Contractor/Mariner



- Sailors were least likely to know fellow service members who separated to work as civilian force multipliers
- Guardsmen data is bimodal at zero and ≥ 10
- Among service members who do have friends now working as contractors, most commonly they know only a few

Service Member Attitudes toward Being a Contractor



- **Soldiers are overwhelmingly positive about the possibility of working as a civilian contractor (63%-70% positive).**
 - **Less than 10% report negative attitudes toward being a contractor**
- **Structural factors influence a third of sailors to have negative views toward becoming a contractor.**

Predictors of Desire to Work as a Civilian Contractor

(Active Duty Infantry Soldiers n=286)

- having more friends working as contractors
- having positive attitudes toward contractors
- being black (vs. white)

Additional Differences by Race & Ethnicity (active duty infantry soldiers, n=286)

- Hispanics' attitudes toward contractors are significantly less favorable than both Whites' and Blacks' attitudes towards contractors
 - Numbers of Hispanic service members is rising
- Whites are significantly more likely than blacks to think contractors are advantaged over soldiers

Social Comparisons Favoring Contractors: Active Duty Soldiers

- Better pay*
- Less risk (Soldiers)
- Greater job autonomy
- Less controlled by employer
- Better relations with co-workers
- Better cared for by employer
- Work fewer hours
- Less time away from family
- More freedom in contract negotiation
- Fewer negative impacts on family happiness



Neutral Social Comparisons



- Task variety
- Quality of leadership
- Leadership support for completion of job tasks
- Gaining feeling of accomplishment from work

Social Comparisons Favoring Soldiers



- NONE clearly favor soldiers
- Two items slightly favor soldiers
 - Benefits
 - Feel one's work makes positive contribution to society

Soldiers' Voices

Recognition of value added (core mission)

“There is nothing more disheartening than not being able to go my job.” (sailor medic)

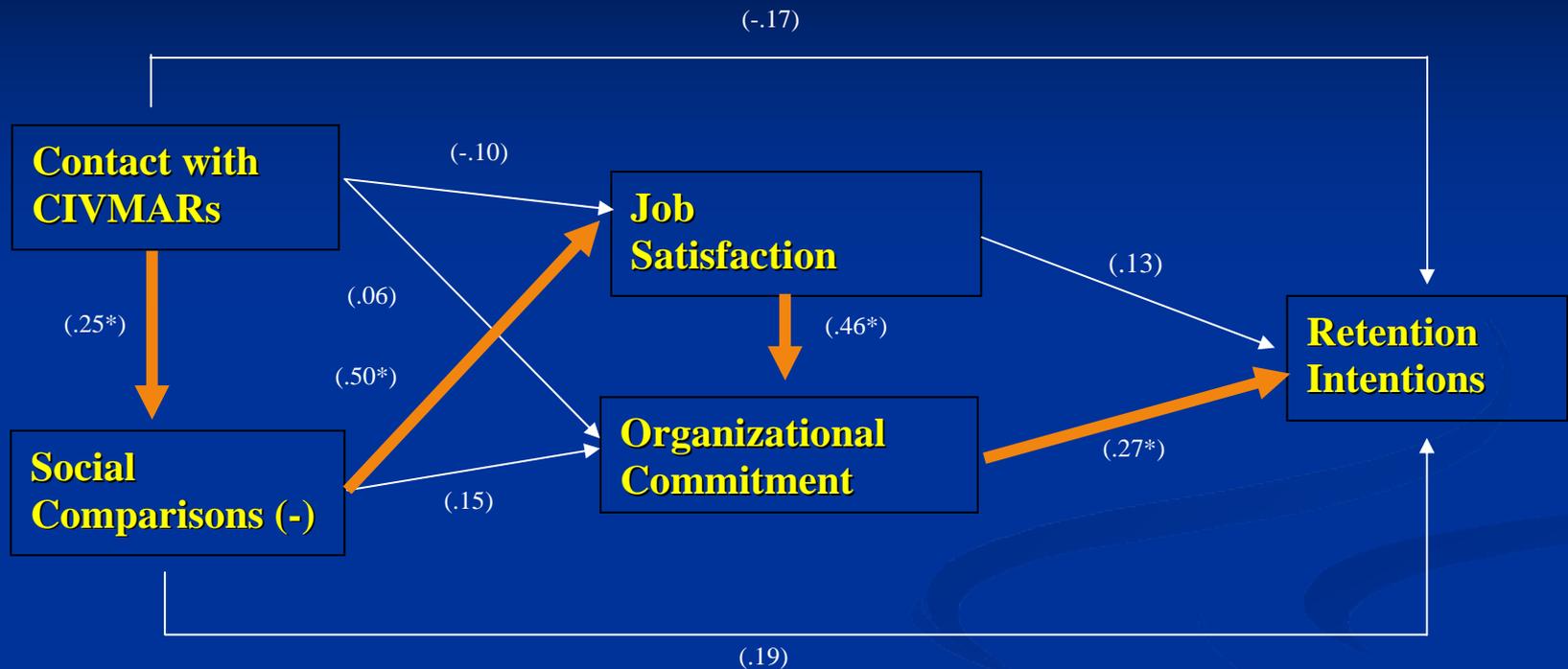
Pay is a huge focus of a larger equity issue.

“We think we get paid too little for doing the deadliest jobs, while they are making much more for not doing much.” (soldier)

“Since we’ve deployed back to home station all we have done... is cut grass, pick up trash, clean the motor pool and company area offices as well as move the battalion to a new building... In the mean time the civilian mechanics are working in our motor pool bays working on our vehicles and we aren’t allowed to help. Most of the young soldiers are very angry at this situation and are already planning on leaving the Army because they aren’t allowed to do their jobs. They didn’t sign up to do lawn maintenance, which we left to complete this survey.”

(soldier)

Predictive Model of Sailor Retention

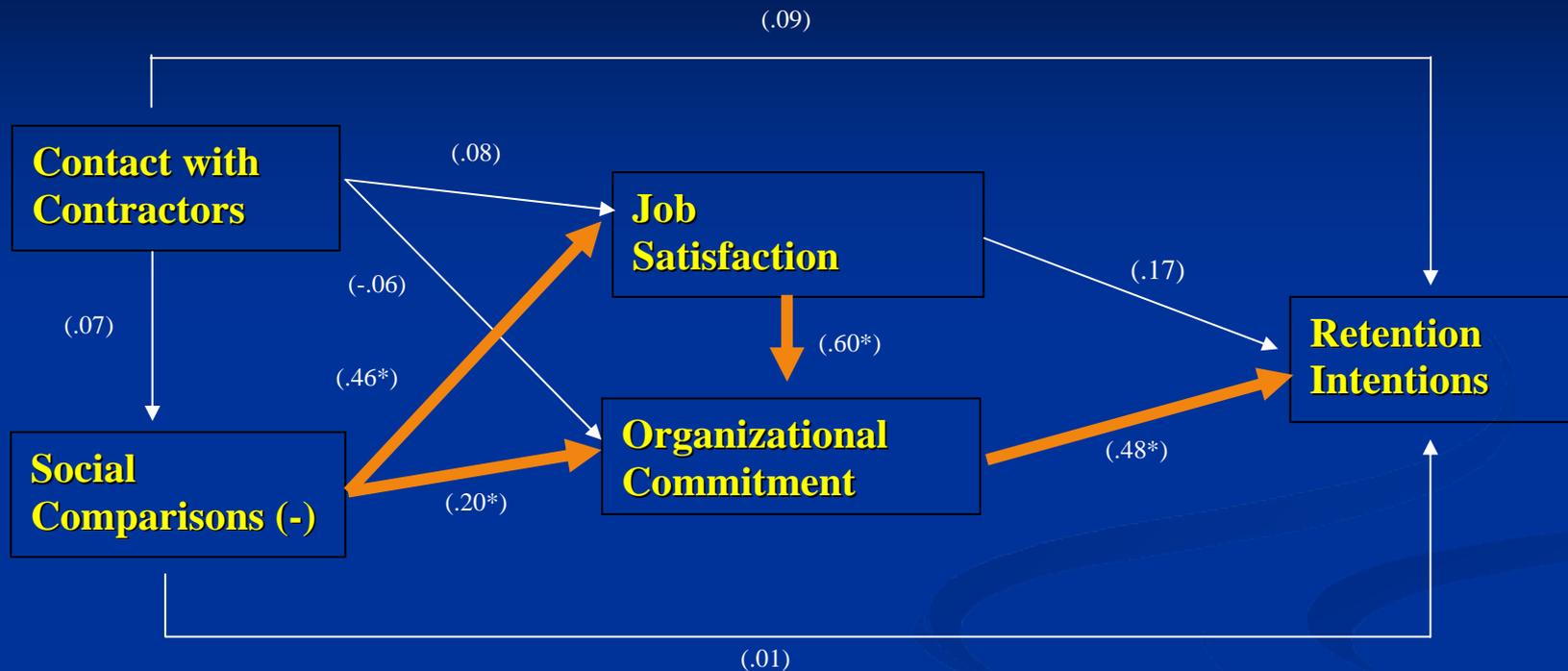


N=84

* p < .05

- Social comparisons indirectly decrease retention.
- Neither civilianization variable has a direct effect on retention attitudes.

Predictive Model of Soldier Retention

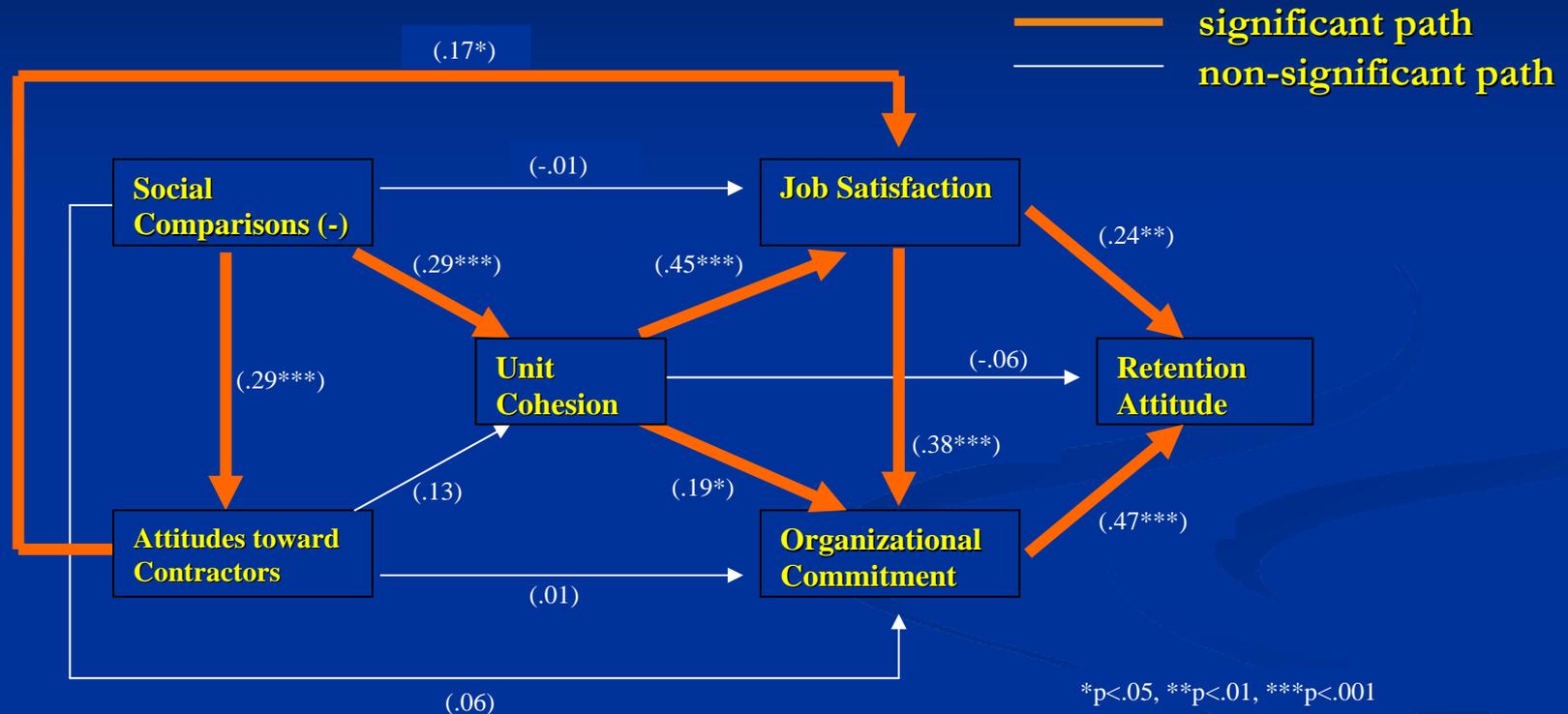


N=171

* $p < .05$

- Social comparisons indirectly decrease retention.
- The mere presence of contractors decreases retention.

Predictive Model of National Guard Soldiers' Cohesion & Retention



- Social Comparisons have significant negative impact on perceived unit cohesion and attitudes toward contractors
- More positive attitudes toward contractors increases soldier satisfaction
- Comparisons with civilians significantly decreases intent to remain in the Army National Guard, operating indirectly through perceived cohesion, satisfaction and commitment

Positive Attitudes toward Contractors

Active Duty Soldiers n=537

- Soldiers are comfortable working with contractors
- Soldiers prefer to have contractors as work-mates
- Increase efficiency
- Increase effectiveness
- They do not negatively impact morale
- They do not increase soldier attrition
- Contractors free soldiers up to focus on core military duties
- Increase flexibility
- At least as committed as soldiers
- Equally motivated as soldiers to do a good job
- Comparable levels of expertise as soldiers
- Soldiers are impressed with contractors' abilities



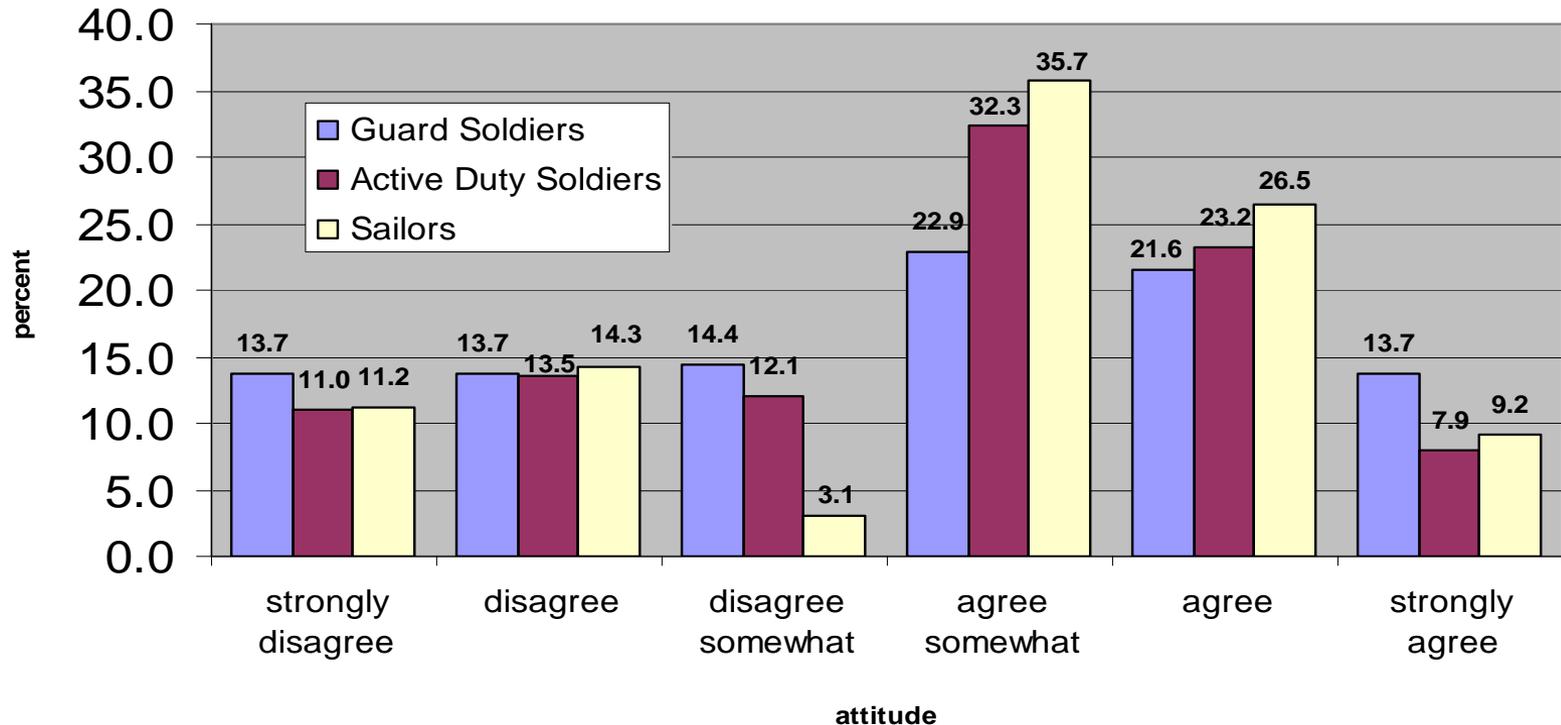
Negative Attitudes toward Contractors

- Contractors are not cost effective
- They do not work as hard as soldiers
- They do not work as many hours as soldiers

Active duty soldiers
n=537



Service Members' Attitudes toward Civilian Contractors/Mariners as Part of "Total Force"



- Approximately 2/3 view contractors as part of the total force
- Of active duty soldiers, aviation unit soldiers are significantly more likely than infantry soldiers to agree contractors are part of total force
- Comparisons by race, sex and years of service not significant

Implications of Civilian Contracting (1)

1. **The structure of the organization matters**
 - Are they integrated?
 - How are civilians integrated?
2. **Can we vs. Should we**
 - Internal capacity
 - Public interest
 - Neutral on use of service members if civilians can do the job
 - Unit effects
3. **Decisions to use contractors needs to be more systematic and disciplined**
 - Define what is military as a guide for civilianizing military jobs – National level discussion needed

Implications of Civilian Contracting (2)

4. **Unanticipated Consequences of Military's Organizational Structure on Service Members**
 - **Mixed feelings toward contractors has negative impacts**
 - **Diversity issues for the “total force”**
5. **Irrationality of Rationality**
 - **Retention of military personnel to perform core functions is negatively impacted by contractor integration**
6. **Increase use of social science to better inform decisions to outsource military jobs**
 - **“more money – more research”**

Next Steps

- Larger studies with greater generalizability
- More on effects on diversity of military/total force
- Better understanding of those who are part of the civilian “force multipliers”
- Effectiveness (to include network analysis)
- Consideration of U.S. use of contractors in Coalition Force operations

Questions & Discussion

