

# The Army in the Marketplace: Recruiting an All-Volunteer Force

Beth Bailey

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In mid-March 2003, as American military forces moved toward Baghdad, the U.S. Army replaced its “An Army of One” television recruiting ads with commercials evoking a tradition of heroism and sacrifice. Sepia-toned close-ups of soldiers’ faces fill the screen in “Victors.” In “Creed,” army unit crests proclaim “Not for Ourselves Alone” and “Ducit Amor Patriae,” as elegiac music reminiscent of the sound track from *Band of Brothers*, an acclaimed TV miniseries about World War II, creates a powerful historical connection. Those commercials were light-years from the upbeat message of the recently retired recruiting jingle “Be All You Can Be,” or the grittier but slightly perplexing “An Army of One” campaign that had replaced it in 2001. The language of service and sacrifice, duty and honor, had been almost completely absent from army advertising since the beginning of America’s all-volunteer force. For the past three decades, the (primarily) peacetime army had recruited with promises of individual opportunity: money for college, marketable skills, achievement, adventure, personal transformation. In the first moments of a controversial war, many of those promises sounded inappropriate, if not absurd.<sup>1</sup>

The army would soon enough return to its usual recruiting campaign—and as Operation Iraqi Freedom became an extended conflict, struggle to meet its recruiting goals. And the American public and its congressional representatives would debate the implications of fighting a war with an all-volunteer force instead of one based, at least in theory, on the

Beth Bailey is professor of history at Temple University.

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Readers may contact Bailey at [bbailey@temple.edu](mailto:bbailey@temple.edu).

<sup>1</sup> *Band of Brothers*, dir. David Frankel and Tom Hanks (Dreamworks SKG, 2001). Copies of the commercials are in Beth Bailey’s possession.

notion that military service is an obligation of all citizens. The army's shift in advertising strategies as the United States invaded Iraq, however brief, captures some of the historical tensions that underlie a larger, continuing debate about American military service. The move from a draft-dependent to an all-volunteer military was a shift from an admittedly troubled system based on the obligations of (male) citizenship to a system that relied on the logic of the market. This system functions as a labor market, driven by complex forces of supply and demand. But it is also fundamentally shaped by notions of consumer desire, framed by sophisticated and expensive military advertising campaigns, and built on the results of intensive market research. Making sense of the issues at stake in debates over America's volunteer force and its implications requires a historical understanding not only of the practical transformation of the military but also of the intellectual and cultural logic that moved American armed forces—in this case, the army—into the world of government-sponsored mass-market advertising.

In 1973, soon after the last American troops left Vietnam, the United States abandoned the draft and transformed its military into an all-volunteer force. The Vietnam War-era draft had provoked widespread protest. As its opponents came from the entire political spectrum, by the late 1960s ending the draft seemed politically astute, if practically difficult. However, despite the claim of the chair of the House Armed Services Committee that the only way the nation could get a volunteer military was to draft one, an all-volunteer force was not unprecedented. For most of the nation's history, the draft had been a wartime exception rather than a peacetime rule—though the pre-World War II peacetime military was minuscule compared to its post-World War II Cold War version. But public consciousness of that history had largely disappeared. In the early 1970s the military relied heavily upon the draft and upon draft-induced volunteering, and not just because of the immediate pressure of the Vietnam War.<sup>2</sup> There had been a draft in place, with only a short exception, since 1940—as the United States asserted its military power in World War II, as it claimed superpower status in the Cold War, and, critically important, as it fought in Korea and in Vietnam. The 1973 shift to an all-volunteer force was, from the military's perspective, sudden, rapid, a turn on a dime. It was not welcome.<sup>3</sup> And it was especially difficult because it took place amid the chaos and division and struggle of America in that tumultuous era.

The end of the draft owed much to that unrest, of course. The draft foundered on an increasingly unpopular war and on the growing recognition, throughout the American political spectrum, that the draft mechanism was unfair, that sacrifice was not shared.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Col. David R. Hampton to Col. R. W. Argo, memo, April 27, 1972, "Sub: Four-Year Report of the Chief of Staff," file 327.02, All-Volunteer Army—Misc., Historical Records Collection (Center of Military History, Washington, D.C.). All understood that ending the draft would reduce the number of volunteers. As of 1971, volunteers for combat arms were about twenty-five times lower than the army estimated was necessary for an all-volunteer army. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, House Subcommittee on Communications and Power, *Expenditure of Public Funds for Broadcast Advertising: Hearings on H. R. 215*, 92 Cong., 1 sess., April 22, 1971, pp. 191–94.

<sup>3</sup> For an argument against the "conventional wisdom" that the army opposed ending the draft and "had to be dragged reluctantly into the all-volunteer force era," see the superb institutional history by Robert K. Griffith, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968–1974* (Washington, 1997), esp. 17. However, the army, as an institution, did not "welcome" the shift. For army caution, concern, and opposition, see an address by the assistant secretary of the army (manpower and reserve affairs): William K. Brehm, "The Volunteer Army," Armed Forces Management Association meeting, Aug. 21, 1970, All-Volunteer Army Collection (Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.); and L. James Binder, "Military Service Is Not a Commodity," *Army*, 20 (April 1970), 1.

<sup>4</sup> On the tension between widespread public faith in military service as a universal obligation of male citizenship and the logic of nonuniversal, selective service, see George Flynn, *The Draft, 1940–1973* (Lawrence, 1993). On the

But the force that *shaped* the move to a volunteer force was neither public discontent nor the claims of the youthful protesters in the street. Instead, a group of free-market economists who gained influence in the presidential campaign and administration of Richard M. Nixon provided the initial and determining structure for the all-volunteer force.

Taking advantage of widespread discontent with the draft, including opposition from the Left, those economists promoted a major shift to the right. Instead of framing the transition in terms of citizenship and obligation or shared service and social equality, they offered solutions based on doctrines of free-market economics. While both the administration's political will to act and the public support for such a dramatic change stemmed from the power of turbulent forces in America, these men placed their faith in rationality. The draft, they argued, could be replaced by the free market; whatever inequities and inequalities stemmed from either random chance (the lottery draft system that began in December 1969) or government-driven social engineering (via Selective Service System exemptions) could be avoided by creating a free-market arena in which individuals made decisions based on rational understanding of their own economic best interest.<sup>5</sup>

The shift to an all-volunteer force was, as they believed, a move toward the primacy of the market in American society. But it was not a move toward the rational. The economists' notions of markets were impossibly narrow. The market, at this point in American history, was not simply a realm of individual rational economic choice. It was a site of consumer desire, a volatile space.<sup>6</sup>

Paradoxically, the military officers who managed the transition to the all-volunteer force (AVF) understood the complexity of the market much better than the Chicago-school economists. Perhaps it was because they had dealt more directly with the problem of human motivation, because they were more accustomed to a language of intangibles (as in "Duty, Honor, Country," the motto of the United States Military Academy), or because they were painfully aware of how badly the military fared in current public estimation. Of necessity, they accepted the marketplace model, but not as it was envisioned by the free-market theorists. They understood that they had to compete for young Americans. But they were certain that a sufficient number of eighteen-year-olds would not join the military, particularly in the wake of the Vietnam War, simply because it was an arguably rational economic decision. They moved from models of free-market rationality to models of consumer capitalism, and with mixed feelings, they adopted consumer capitalism's most powerful tools.

The army, which had to recruit far more young men than did the navy, air force, or marines and which fell last of the four in public regard, moved most aggressively into the consumer market.<sup>7</sup> Recruiting for the Modern Volunteer Army (MVA), as it was initially called, was shaped from its beginnings by the best available social science-based market

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lack of public understanding of the "selective" function of the draft and the anger over extensive deferments and the inequities of conscription, see Michael S. Foley, *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance during the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill, 2003); and Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Selective Service Amendment Act of 1969, 83 Stat. 220 (1969).

<sup>6</sup> These economists did not discuss advertising or marketing in their analyses, even though those activities arguably play key roles in contemporary "free markets." On consumption, citizenship, and the state, see Elizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York, 2003); and Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Directorate of Personnel Studies and Research, *PROVIDE: Project Volunteer in Defense of the Nation* (2 vols., Washington, 1970), I, 8.

research. Those managing the transition to the AVF were caught uneasily in the logic of the mass-market advertising of the late 1960s and early 1970s and unwillingly drawn into a complex reframing of (in their language) potential recruits as a “market” and eventually as “customers” and the army itself as a “product.”<sup>8</sup> When the nation adopted a marketplace model for military service in the early 1970s, it joined the power of the state with the less direct but still critical power of major advertising and marketing firms who worked to shape the unruly desires of consumers.

This conjunction had significant implications. First, the market research-based, advertising-driven image of the army (whether as site of individual opportunity or as consumer fantasy) was often in tension with military realities and codes, whether the practices of military hierarchy, the rigor of training, or the simple fact that armies, sometimes, fight wars. In more and less intense ways over the following decades, the army would struggle with those conflicts. Second, as fewer Americans have served in the military—in part because of the end of the draft but also because there are so many more young men and women available than are needed in the armed services—these highly produced government-sponsored images became, for several decades, the representation of military service and its meaning that most frequently reached the vast majority of Americans. Commercial advertising is crucial in recruiting an all-volunteer force, but as in the initial days of the war in Iraq, the military’s use of sophisticated advertising raises important questions about propaganda and the proper limits of the government’s role in broadcast media. Finally, the move to the logic of the market—the particular, late twentieth-century, consumer market—to create and maintain an all-volunteer force has helped transform Americans’ understanding of the rights and duties of citizenship and of the relation of the citizen to the state. The men and women who joined the AVF since 1973 have had diverse and sometimes complicated reasons for enlisting. Nonetheless, in relying on the tools and techniques of a consumer market to help fill its ranks, the U.S. military has replaced public portrayals of shared sacrifice and obligation with a language of consumer dreams and images of individual opportunity. America’s war in Iraq drives home the political and moral complexity of that choice.

The presidential election of 1968 did nothing to unify a divided nation. It had been a wrenching year, from the Tet Offensive staged by Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces in January and February and the growing certainty that something was very wrong with government claims about the Vietnam War, to the horror of the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. in April and then of Robert Kennedy in June, and on, by August, to troops in the streets of Chicago. Hubert Humphrey accepted the Democratic nomination with an entreaty to Americans to “put aside recrimination and disunion. Turn away from violence and hatred,” but it was an impossible charge. When Richard Nixon accepted the Republican nomination in July, he had been more realistic and more politically savvy. “As we look at America,” he told the nation, “we see cities enveloped in smoke and flame. We hear sirens in the night. We see Americans dying on distant battlefields abroad. We see Americans hating each other, fighting each other, killing each other at home. And as

<sup>8</sup> References to potential recruits as the “market” and to the army as a “product” appear in a report conducted for U.S. Army Recruiting and N. W. Ayer & Son, Inc.: Rome Arnold & Company, “U.S. Army Recruiting Advertising Test,” Sept. 1971, p. 3, All-Volunteer Army Collection.

we see and hear these things, millions of Americans cry out in anguish: did we come all this way for this?" Appealing to the "nonshouters, the nondemonstrators," the "forgotten Americans," Nixon insisted that the answer was no. Humphrey's campaign slogan was "There Is No Alternative." Nixon's was "Vote like Your Whole World Depended on It."<sup>9</sup>

On October 17, 1968, just two and a half weeks before the presidential election, Nixon went on national radio and proposed—at the height of the Vietnam War—to end the draft as soon as was practicable. Nixon made a careful case for the viability of an all-volunteer force. In a nuclear age, he argued, "huge ground armies operating in massive formations would be terribly vulnerable." Because the nature of warfare had changed, the nation needed a smaller number of "motivated men, trained in the techniques of counter-insurgency" and with the "higher level of technical and professional skill" necessary to operate the "complex weapons of modern war." That smaller but more highly trained force, Nixon told his audience, could be created through voluntary enlistments. How? The military, he explained, had been protected by the draft. The armed forces were the "only employers today who don't have to compete in the job market. . . . They've been able to ignore the laws of supply and demand." Higher pay and increased benefits, he claimed, would make military life "more competitive with the attractions of the civilian world" and make an all-volunteer force a true possibility.<sup>10</sup>

Nixon's motivations were political and pragmatic. In 1968 much antiwar protest coalesced around the issue of the draft. Nixon hoped to undermine that association, to take away a powerful organizing force. And his call for a volunteer military was not unprecedented, even in national politics: a group of liberal to moderate Republicans had called for an end to the draft in 1967, and bipartisan bills had been introduced in Congress.<sup>11</sup>

But in policy terms, Nixon's explanation of how the process would work, along with his rationale for it, is critical. His economic argument—that competitive pay and benefits would solve the problem of recruitment—is a free market-driven claim. Nixon's case against the draft relied on the conservative, libertarian belief that liberty is the most central of American values. The draft, he explained, raised "the question of permanent conscription in a free society." Conceding that conscription was the easiest and cheapest way to raise an army, Nixon claimed that the trade-off was too great. He concluded:

Today all across our country we face a crisis of confidence. Nowhere is it more acute than among our young people. They recognize the draft as an infringement on their liberty—which it is. To them, it represents a government insensitive to their rights—a government callous to their status as free men. They ask for justice—and they deserve it. So I say, it's time we looked to our consciences. Let's show our commitment to freedom by preparing to assure our young people theirs.<sup>12</sup>

The force behind Nixon's proposal, and the author of this speech, was the economist Martin Anderson. He was a thirty-year-old assistant professor at Columbia University when he joined Nixon's campaign, for which he eventually became director of research. Anderson, who had spent four years in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) at Dartmouth College and served (voluntarily) as a second lieutenant in the Army Security

<sup>9</sup> David Farber and Beth Bailey, *The Columbia Guide to America in the 1960s* (New York, 2001), 374, 376–77.

<sup>10</sup> Richard M. Nixon, "The All-Volunteer Armed Force," photocopy, address on CBS Radio Network, Oct. 17, 1968, pp. 3–4, file 327.02, folder 1, All-Volunteer Army—Misc.

<sup>11</sup> Robert T. Stafford et al., *How to End the Draft* (Washington, 1967). For a detailed policy history, see Bernard Rostker, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* (Santa Monica, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Nixon, "All-Volunteer Armed Force," 1, 7.

Agency in 1958–1959, was drawn—as an economist—to discussions about the draft that were energizing prominent free-market economists at the time. In late 1966, at a University of Chicago conference on the topic, both Milton Friedman and Walter Oi had urged an end to the draft; the following spring, both had written antidraft articles for a special issue of the *New Individualist Review*, a libertarian journal published by University of Chicago students. That summer Anderson drafted an article titled “An Analysis of the Factors Involved in Moving to an All-Volunteer Armed Force,” which Nixon circulated among his advisers. It was Anderson’s political insight—that coming out against the draft could make a real difference in voter support—that had captured Nixon’s attention, but Nixon also adopted the free-market, libertarian rationale Anderson used to frame his proposal.<sup>13</sup>

With Nixon’s victory, Anderson left Columbia for a staff position in the White House, where he continued to shepherd his plan. On January 29, 1969—just nine days into his presidency—Nixon wrote a memorandum to Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. It began: “It is my firm conviction that we must establish an all-volunteer armed force after the expenditures for Vietnam are substantially reduced,” and it requested that Laird “immediately” begin to plan a commission that could develop “a detailed plan of action for ending the draft.” Laird, who in January 1969 had other things on his mind and who was philosophically committed to notions of shared responsibility rather than defense through free-market principles (he endorsed national service), tried to convince Nixon to spend a good year on an in-house study rather than naming a public commission. Nixon held firm and on March 27 announced the creation of the President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force. It was chaired by Thomas Gates, former secretary of defense under President Dwight D. Eisenhower; Anderson served as White House liaison. Nixon’s charter was clear: the mission was not to evaluate the possibility of ending the draft, but to “develop a comprehensive plan for ending conscription and moving toward an all-volunteer force.”<sup>14</sup>

Five members of the Gates Commission, as the group was known, including its chair and Generals Alfred Greunther and Lauris Norstad, were at the outset opposed to a volunteer force; five members were undecided; five members were in favor. But those in favor included Milton Friedman, W. Allen Wallis, and Alan Greenspan, all free-market economists who had already honed their arguments—and evidence—against the draft. Significantly, four of the five members of the commission’s senior staff (who directed research and were primarily responsible for drafting the report) were anticonscription free-market economists: William Meckling (the executive director), Walter Oi, Harry Gilman, and Stuart Altman.<sup>15</sup>

Minutes of the commission meetings reveal some strongly worded arguments. At the initial meeting, after one commission member advised the staff to “consider labor/capital ‘tradeoffs’ after calculating true manpower costs,” Crawford Greenwalt, former president of Du Pont, expressed “serious philosophical reservations about paying people to

<sup>13</sup> Rostker, *I Want You!* 33–35; Martin Anderson, “An Analysis of the Factors Involved in Moving to an All-Volunteer Armed Force,” typescript, July 4, 1967, Martin Anderson folder, All-Volunteer Army Collection; Marie Smith, “Draft Proposal Drafter,” *Washington Post*, April 24, 1970, p. B1; Sol Tax, ed., *The Draft* (Chicago, 1967).

<sup>14</sup> Richard M. Nixon to Melvin R. Laird, memo, Jan. 29, 1969, All-Volunteer Army—Misc. For Melvin R. Laird’s attitudes, see Griffith, *U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force*, 20–21.

<sup>15</sup> President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, *The Report of the President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force* (Washington, 1970), x.

die for their country.” Friedman then “observed” that “it was far worse to use the draft to force young men to sell their lives cheaply and that it would be infinitely preferable to pay those risking their lives a decent wage.” When Greenwalt ventured (over lunch at a subsequent meeting) that “there was something immoral in seducing people to die for their country” and that “risking one’s life for his country was not just another job,” Friedman replied that “he could not see how morale and effectiveness were enhanced by paying people substandard wages,” for the “logic of such an approach would dictate paying them nothing.”<sup>16</sup>

In general, however, the commission moved steadily toward a market-based analysis as the economists marshaled evidence and as those invited to testify made clear how little support remained for the draft. Selective Service director Lewis B. Hershey did argue that the urge to end the draft was an “overreaction” to Vietnam. James R. Wilson, director of the National Security Commission of the American Legion, made the case that “service to ones country is a privilege and an obligation of citizenship” and that changing the “concept of military service from a citizen responsibility to a ‘paid job’” would not serve the “best interests of the nation.” But opposition was strong, and it came from groups who were otherwise avowed opponents: The leftist U.S. National Student Association stated simply that “conscription is immoral,” while the conservative Young Americans for Freedom called it “involuntary servitude” (while cautioning President Nixon to be careful lest he appear to be caving to “campus unrest”).<sup>17</sup>

In the end, the commission’s decision relied heavily on quantitative economic studies of “flexible elasticity” and the “hidden tax” the draft imposed on conscripts. Members resisted the staff’s desire to begin the report by describing the draft as “involuntary servitude.” Nonetheless, they unanimously endorsed the move to a volunteer force—by mid-1971. The opening chapter of the Gates report, which also ran in the *New York Times* on February 22, 1970, justified the volunteer force as “the system for maintaining forces that minimizes Government interference with the freedom of the individual to determine his own life in accord with his values.” The first and most important step in the transition, it noted, was to “remove the present inequity in . . . pay” between civilian and service scales. The “traditional belief that each citizen has a moral responsibility to serve his country” was dispensed with in a brief paragraph on page 14. Conscription “undermines respect for government by forcing an individual to serve when and in the manner the government decides, regardless of his own values and talents.” Thus, “a voluntary decision to serve is the best answer, morally and practically, to the question of who should serve.”<sup>18</sup>

The army (to speak institutionally) was not happy with these recommendations. Like the secretary of defense, the army had other major tasks in 1969–1970, and as the Vietnam War stretched on, the last thing army officials wanted to do was to encourage schemes for ending the draft. Nonetheless, Gen. William Westmoreland, who became army chief of staff following his return from Vietnam in June 1968, understood what was

<sup>16</sup> Gates Commission, minutes of May 13, 1969, meeting, p. 9, folder 1, box 1, Alfred M. Greunther Papers, 1941–83 (Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kans.); Gates Commission, minutes of Sept. 6, 1969, meeting, p. 23, folder 5, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Gates Commission, minutes of Sept. 29, 1969, meeting, p. 3, folder 6, *ibid.*; American Legion, “Statement of James R. Wilson,” attached to Gates Commission, minutes of Sept. 29, 1969, meeting, *ibid.*; National Student Association, “Statement of Jim Sutton,” *ibid.*; Young Americans for Freedom, “Why ‘Conservative’ Students Support an All-Volunteer Military,” *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Gates Commission, minutes of Oct. 4, 1969, meeting, pp. 49, 33, folder 7, *ibid.*; President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, *Report of the President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force*, 6, 14.

on the horizon. He had ordered an in-house study on the feasibility of an all-volunteer army during the summer before Nixon made his October 1968 campaign speech. And in January 1969, after someone leaked a copy of Nixon's memo to Laird to army officials, he initiated a more substantial study. Dubbed PROVIDE, for Project Volunteer in Defense of the Nation, it was done through the office of the deputy chief of staff for personnel on a "close-hold," very limited access, basis.<sup>19</sup>

The PROVIDE study urged Westmoreland to "seize the initiative" and so ensure that the army did not end up "in the position of acting wildly to keep up with events rather than controlling them." The study's authors accepted the market model, if not its justifications. To attract volunteers, the report makes clear, the army would have to deal with questions of supply and demand. If the "trend toward greater affluence" continued, the report noted, American youth would have little patience with any form of "economic hardship" and increased pay would be "mandatory." Nonetheless, according to the report, "the presence of income will not necessarily satisfy an individual's motivational needs."<sup>20</sup>

While both Nixon's proposal and the later Gates Commission report treated pay scales as the single most important issue in recruiting an AVF, the army insisted from the beginning that better pay was far from a sufficient answer. Young Americans, the PROVIDE report implicitly argued, were not simply rational economic actors. Nor was the army simply another employer. The PROVIDE report insisted that even with pay increases, "unless the Army is viewed favorably, our ability to attract voluntary personnel will be greatly limited." It also called for the army to move from public-service announcements (PSAs) to large-scale commercial advertising. That was a major proposal, as no federal agency or institution (according to later army research) had ever used commercial broadcast advertising and the legitimacy of such a move was not clear. PROVIDE also emphasized the need for internal reform: "Advertising, salesmanship, publicity, and other techniques of image building are valuable and essential; however, adjustments within the Army are equally important. Reforms will be essential to the creation of an Army image that will attract volunteers."<sup>21</sup>

In the summer of 1969, when William K. Brehm, the assistant secretary of the army for manpower and reserve affairs, briefed the office of the secretary of defense on army needs in any transition to an all-volunteer force, he immediately focused on funding for commercial advertising. "Let advertising do for the Army," he proposed, "what it has done successfully for business." Presenting proposed improvements in army life, from turning kitchen police (KP) and grounds maintenance over to civilians to providing better housing, Brehm characterized them—in pathbreaking language—as "product improvements."<sup>22</sup>

The path of negotiations toward the AVF was enormously complex and complexly political. The Gates Commission had unanimously endorsed the shift to an all-volunteer force in a document that never mentioned the adverse impact of the Vietnam War. Nixon, not surprisingly, was not quite ready in spring 1970 (shortly before the invasion of Cambodia) to announce that the military would end conscription by mid-1971, as the Gates Commission had recommended. Instead, he supported Secretary of Defense Laird's

<sup>19</sup> Griffith, *U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force*, 17, 21.

<sup>20</sup> Lt. Col. Jack R. Butler to Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, memo, Sept. 29, 1969, All-Volunteer Army—Misc.; U.S. Department of the Army, *PROVIDE*, I, 27–28.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *PROVIDE*, I, 3, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Griffith, *U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force*, 32.



plan to extend induction authority, which expired in July 1971, for only two years, to end some draft exemptions, and to move gradually toward a zero-draft military.<sup>23</sup>

Many of those who mattered, from the chairs of the congressional armed services committees to the secretary of the army, concluded that Nixon had gained what he needed politically and that the all-volunteer force would gradually slip from his—and the nation’s—focus.<sup>24</sup> After all, nothing had been budgeted for the transition, either in the immediate fiscal year 1971 budget or in the five-year plan for the Department of Defense’s budget. Nonetheless, pressure from the White House continued. The proposed time frame made it clear that the military might have to shift from conscription-dependent to all-volunteer (or zero-draft) status quickly, and that the lack of funding did not in any way guarantee that the AVF had become an empty campaign promise.<sup>25</sup> More than anything, those circumstances signaled what a difficult task the army would confront.

By late summer 1970 General Westmoreland decided there was no choice but to move ahead. To do otherwise would be to risk losing control of the process. “Those of us in positions of high responsibility,” he told assembled members of the Association of the United States Army, a powerful nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the army’s interests, at their national meeting that October, “must attack this problem with all the vigor and imagination and enthusiasm we can muster.” Soon thereafter, Westmoreland selected Lt. Gen. George Forsythe to develop and coordinate a plan for the army’s move to the AVF. Forsythe recalled insisting, when offered the position, that he had no intention of being a “superduper three-star recruiting sergeant.” In the same 1974 interview, he remembered his words to Westmoreland as: “Recruiting is the sale of the product, but we have an awful lot of work to do in the factory to improve the product.”<sup>26</sup>

As “Special Assistant, Modern Volunteer Army,” or SAMVA, Forsythe assembled a staff of creative and committed younger officers who began a wide-ranging brainstorming process. They discussed the psychologist Abraham H. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs; they studied Ford and General Motors and then Volvo, trying to understand what did—or did not—make work gratifying; they considered the results of Elton Mayo’s discovery, at Western Electric’s Hawthorne Works, that management attention to workers improved productivity and asked how the army might better “pay attention” to its soldiers. The “SAMVA warriors,” as they styled themselves, argued that the army’s major problems in the 1970s would “revolve primarily around people” and pushed “empirical input” from the behavioral sciences—along with other social sciences—as the “solution.”<sup>27</sup>

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs was not the template for transformation to an all-volunteer army, but the language of “needs” and motivations became critically important. As much as those involved hoped to help create a new army culture that would help the institution to “remain an effective, relevant instrument in our changing society” simply for the sake

<sup>23</sup> Rostker, *I Want You!* 92–94.

<sup>24</sup> Lt. Gen. George I. Forsythe (Ret.) interview by Col. Frank L. Henry, Aug. 1974, transcript, pp. 488, 495, Senior Officer Oral History Program (Military History Institute).

<sup>25</sup> Griffith, *U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force*, 48.

<sup>26</sup> Gen. William C. Westmoreland, “(Back Channel to Major Commanders) Westmoreland Sends,” memo [c. 1970], p. 1, Modern Volunteer Army folder, box 86, Women’s Army Corps, RG 319 (National Archives, College Park, Md.); Forsythe interview, 464.

<sup>27</sup> Col. Henry G. Gole (Ret.) interview by Beth Bailey, Dec. 16, 2004, notes (in Beth Bailey’s possession); Gole interview by Bailey, Sept. 28, 2005, audio recording, *ibid.* For an assertion of the importance of behavioral sciences, see Ramon Nadel, “Suggestions for General Westmoreland,” Feb. 1971, All-Volunteer Army—Misc. Abraham Maslow’s psychological theory placed human needs in a five-level hierarchy, rising from physiological to self-actualization. See Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (New York, 1998).

**I WANT YOU**  
From World War II

**I need you again**

Uncle Sam has always found young men ready to answer his call when the security of the nation was in peril...  
This is not a time of war. Yet never before except in wartime has America been threatened with graver danger than today. The democratic peoples of the world look to us as the only power strong enough to hold the balance of peace.  
If we fail them, the day must surely come when we will find ourselves alone and friendless, fighting to defend the last slim footholds of freedom.

A strong America is a peaceful America. But more than that a strong America is a force for peace around the globe.  
You, who have enjoyed the liberty of a free country since your birth, are now faced to face with the duty of protecting liberty. Your conscience—your honor—your patriotism will tell you whether you can shrink that obligation.

\*Joining the Army or the Air Force is an experience you'll never regret. You'll be the comrade of other young men of like ideals—volunteers in a great cause. You'll be a member of an alert, hard-hitting team, thoroughly trained, splendidly equipped. You'll have opportunities for education and travel in a well-paid career. And wherever you go you will be an ambassador of democracy—a guardian of peace.

Uncle Sam needs you now. Talk it over today at your nearest U. S. Army and U. S. Air Force Recruiting Station.

Listen to "Voice of the Army," "Sound Off," "Air Force News," "March On! They're Coming to the Coast" on the radio.  
U. S. Army and U. S. Air Force Recruiting Service

YOUR ARMY AND YOUR AIR FORCE SERVE THE NATION AND MANKIND IN WAR AND PEACE

Facing international instability after World War II, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed a professional standing force could be mobilized more rapidly than a draft-based force. But they could not attract enough volunteers to form a professional military. Congress reinstated the draft in mid-1948, following the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia. This 1948 recruiting advertisement, offering the unwieldy but expansive slogan, “Your Army and Your Air Force Serve the Nation and Mankind in War and Peace,” presents military service as an obligation of citizenship. *Courtesy N. W. Ayer Advertising Agency Records, Archive Center, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution.*

of the army, which by 1971 many agreed was in crisis, they understood the market-driven bottom line. They needed to know how to attract volunteers, which meant they needed to know what would attract young men (women were not yet key). And for answers, they turned to social science research.<sup>28</sup>

The social science research of the late 1960s and early 1970s was—like the Gates Commission’s notion of rational economic actors and the SAMVA warriors’ faith in the transformative force of humanistic behavioral science—shaped by the tumult of the age. It proceeded from an assumption that the nation was going through a sea change, that the meaning of “youth” was contested but the demographic powerful, that culture was a battleground in a divided nation. Those were not unreasonable assumptions. They became much more powerful forces, however, in the dual service of the state and of the professional advertisers charged with the task of transforming the army’s image and drawing large numbers of volunteers from a generally hostile population.

<sup>28</sup> Nadel, “Suggestions for General Westmoreland.”

Military advertising was not new. Because the draft was intended as a backup mechanism, meant to make up any shortage in numbers left by volunteers, all services had established recruiting systems as well as small contracts with major advertising agencies. N. W. Ayer served the army; J. Walter Thompson the marines; and Grey Advertising the navy. (Ayer had the army account briefly in the late 1940s; it won it back in mid-1967.) The U.S. Army was a small account in 1970, worth only \$3 million to an agency that represented corporate giants such as AT&T and Du Pont. Most of Ayer's army ads were public-service messages for radio and to a lesser extent TV. As the people in the SAMVA office were fond of noting, since they generated no revenue for stations PSAs usually showed up right before the networks played the national anthem and signed off for the night—or perhaps just before the 5:30 a.m. farm report the following morning.<sup>29</sup> National print advertising was minimal, but the agency developed prototypes for local ads that were distributed to newspapers throughout the nation.

In some ways, Ayer had taken on the army account at a difficult time. By mid-1967, antiwar protest was growing; draft cards were being burned; induction offices were targeted. But in many ways, little was at stake. Army recruiting advertisements were, more than anything else, intended to attract draft-induced volunteers to the army rather than to the other services. And there was, of course, a draft. The deputy chief of staff for personnel, Lt. Gen. A. O. Connor, showed little concern about recruiting numbers in October 1968 when he described the “advertising and publicity plan concept” he desired:

The keystone of the Fiscal Year 1970 Publicity Program will be the image of the Army—an Army which is mission oriented, dedicated, dignified, and disciplined. . . . [an] image of . . . dignity, one of fair treatment to all concerned, regardless of race, color, or creed, . . . of equal opportunity, . . . of competence and ability being the factors that guarantee success, not politics or social background. . . . Our publicity should capitalize on our strengths, such as the Army's contributions to the health and welfare of the people, and its scientific and technological contributions. By so doing, we can counteract elements that are doing all possible to ridicule the Army and undermine its foundations. Presenting the Army truthfully as a serious instrument of national security dedicated to our country's interests will draw intelligent young Americans to our service; therefore, the recruiting message can afford to be subtle.<sup>30</sup>

With this guidance, Ayer developed the subtle and (as later characterized by an Ayer executive) “uninspiring and low visibility” slogan: “Your Future, Your Decision, Choose ARMY.”<sup>31</sup>

The SAMVA office was not impressed. “We need the very best advice and execution from N. W. Ayers,” insisted a memo prepared by a SAMVA warrior for the first of what would be weekly meetings with key representatives from the office of the secretary of the army. That group immediately requested that N. W. Ayer and the U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) present a “full-scale review” of army advertising, giving Ayer two weeks to

<sup>29</sup> Only 4% of army public-service announcements (PSAs) were aired in radio prime time; Subcommittee on Communications and Power, *Expenditure of Public Funds for Broadcast Advertising*, 39.

<sup>30</sup> Lt. Gen. A. O. Connor, “Advertising and Publicity Plan Concept for FY 70,” memo to Commanding General, United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), Oct. 7, 1968, All-Volunteer Army—Misc.

<sup>31</sup> Ted Regan, N. W. Ayer, interview by Robert Griffith, Aug. 25 [1983], Griffith's notes, “USAREC and Recruiting” folder, All-Volunteer Army Collection.

“review the entire advertising campaign, give it imaginative treatment, expand it to match the 18.1 million budget level, and present its ideas.”<sup>32</sup>

“It was a brutal assignment,” N. W. Ayer’s director of creative services said later, “because the Army’s prospects were so low.” Not that anyone at Ayer said that out loud, at least to anyone in the army. Given an ultimatum: produce a “head turner” that will generate “a *dramatic* increase in enlistments” (and, in the SAMVA office’s words: “If N. W. Ayer can’t do it, we’ll find someone who can”), Ayer presented the assignment to the army as “A Copywriter’s Dream”—the “most important assignment in the Advertising Business,” a task “Of critical importance to the country.” (The words Ayer capitalized are worth noting.) But everyone understood that it was probably the worst possible moment in the nation’s history to move to an all-volunteer force.<sup>33</sup>

The Vietnam War was an enormous obstacle. Though American troops were no longer fighting in Vietnam when the military moved to an all-volunteer force in mid-1973, in January 1971 no one knew how long America’s involvement would last. And no one knew how long the experience of Vietnam would shape American youths’ attitudes toward the military, even after the U.S. combat role ended. At the same time, the powerful and growing youth culture seemed antithetical to military life. From the oft-quoted demand to “question authority” to modes of dress and behavior that many adults saw as absolute rejections of discipline and order to many young men’s rejection of traditional models of masculinity to highly visible participation in the antiwar movement, all signs were that this generation would not flock to recruiting centers, no matter how “competitive” the pay. To complicate matters further, growing racial tensions promised problems on all fronts. And no one was sure what the women’s liberation movement would mean for whatever plan the army adopted.

From the beginning of its efforts to envision a volunteer force, the army focused on its public image. PROVIDE’s commissioned social science research discovered, to put it in the mildest possible language, that the army was not well regarded by the public, and most particularly by the nation’s youth. “The image principle,” the authors explained, “functions to shape behavior and attitudes toward the Army as an institution and is the sum of a person’s experiences, impressions, feelings, and knowledge.” Unless the army was viewed “in a favorable light,” it could not expect enough volunteers “to meet even a modest force level.” Breaking from bureaucratese to quote William S. White’s *Washington Post* editorial: “the hang-up against the very term ‘military’ has reached a point little short of hysteria,” the authors of the PROVIDE report defined the army’s public image as a crucial obstacle that must be addressed immediately.<sup>34</sup>

PROVIDE claims about antimilitarism were no surprise to anyone who read the papers, much less to those overseeing the conduct of the Vietnam War, though the quan-

<sup>32</sup> Lt. Col. Broady, “Talking Paper, Subject: Advertising,” Jan. 21, 1971, with “Memorandum for Record” of Secretary of the Army/Special Assistant, Modern Volunteer Army (SA/SAMVA) meeting, Jan. 21, 1971, All-Volunteer Army—Misc. These meetings were held each Thursday, at the request of the secretary of the army (who attended regularly). “Memorandum for Record,” SA/SAMVA meeting, Jan. 28, 1971, *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Regan interview; N. W. Ayer, “United States Army Recruiting Advertising” [Jan. or Feb. 1972], personal files of Tom Evans (copy in Bailey’s possession). Tom Evans was the deputy director of advertising and sales promotion, USAREC. This is a combination of the original presentation from 1971 and one given a year later, on “Today’s Army Wants to Join You.”

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *PROVIDE*, II, chap. 2, p. 1, chap. 15, p. 11. On negative attitudes toward the military, see a report prepared for the SAMVA office: Opinion Research Corporation, *Reaction of 17 to 21 Year Old Males, Not in College, to Enlistment in the Army and Its Combat Branches* (Princeton, 1971).

tified fact that 70 percent of army veterans would advise others to join the air force or the navy instead of the army was unsettling. By 1970 there was a widespread perception in the army that the institution was in crisis and required major reform. Reform was on the agenda, AVF or not. But the need to attract volunteers powerfully shaped the change. General Westmoreland, as chief of staff of the army, laid this case out “bluntly” (his term) in a long speech at the Army Commanders’ Conference in November 1970. References to “dark days” cropped up throughout his talk: he began with the presumption that the army might not yet have “bottomed out” in public and congressional support; he told the assembled commanders that they would be “shocked” by a report on the declining integrity of the officer corps; he noted that “serious errors” and “scandals” had harmed the army’s reputation; and he warned that they should not “be sanguine that all the scandals are behind us.” All this went to his larger point: “flackery” and “press-agentry” would not solve the problem. Instead, the army would “take advantage” of the imperative shift to an all-volunteer force as an opportunity to improve itself.<sup>35</sup>

If they wanted the Modern Volunteer Army to succeed—and Westmoreland insisted they had no choice—they were going to have to figure out how to make the army more attractive to potential recruits. The army, Westmoreland told them, had been “spoiled by the draft.” Being able to “requisition manpower from an open-end account,” he argued, had “shaped [their] practices; . . . influenced [their] attitudes.” With a volunteer force, the old ways would no longer work. “Today our society is more affluent, more informal and more oriented toward personal freedom,” he said flatly. “We simply have to recognize the fact that these changes have occurred and will continue. We cannot alter these trends ourselves, and we should forget about trying.” Westmoreland argued that despite such social change the army could still “satisfy the aspirations of our young people”—aspirations he named as responsibility, respectability, challenge, and adventure. Some changes that would make the army more attractive, such as civilianizing KP and creating modern barracks with semiprivate rooms, would require significant funding. But much, he insisted, could be accomplished by replacing policies and procedures that treated “a man like a juvenile” with policies based on “the principle that if we treat a young soldier like a responsible man he will act like one.”<sup>36</sup>

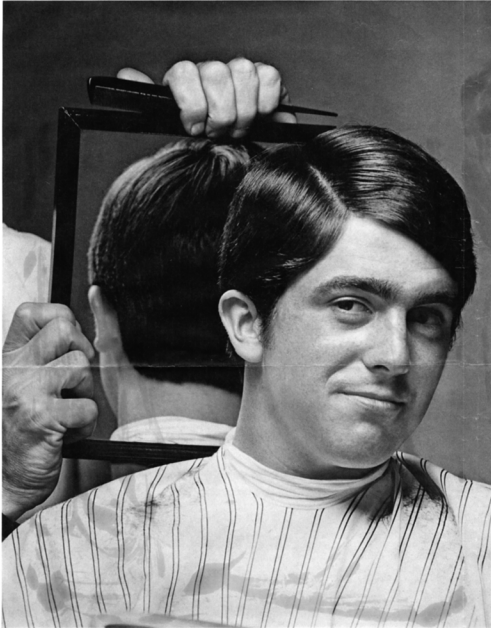
The “keynote” of the Modern Volunteer Army, he announced, would be changes designed to make army service “more enjoyable, more professionally rewarding, and less burdensome in its impact on our people and their families.” He stipulated the end of what the army henceforth referred to as “needless irritants”: the abolition of morning reveille formations, liberalization of pass policies, a halt to “unreasonable (‘spit and polish’ to the extreme) inspection standards,” relaxed restrictions on alcoholic beverages in noncombat areas, no work on Saturdays and Sundays unless absolutely necessary. Underlining his point that the time for debate was over, Westmoreland concluded his address with the direct statement: “I expect your full support.”<sup>37</sup>

Westmoreland’s no-nonsense address to army commanders set the tone and began the slower process of altering the practice. In the meantime, the SAMVA office launched a

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *PROVIDE*, I, 8; William C. Westmoreland, keynote address to Army Commanders’ Conference, the Pentagon, edited transcript, Nov. 30, 1970, pp. 1, 2, 4, 12, All-Volunteer Army Collection. On officer ethics, see Army War College, *Study on Military Professionalism* (Carlisle, 1970).

<sup>36</sup> Westmoreland, keynote address, 4, 7, 11–12.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 6–8, 13. On changes implemented, see Griffith, *U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force*, 81–113.



## We care more about how you think, than how you cut your hair.

You'll find that today's Army is pretty relaxed about how you cut and style your hair. We're a lot more concerned with how you think.

We spend a lot of time and money helping you get exactly the training and instruction that does the most for you.

If you're interested in math, we have some of the best computer courses in the world.

If you're interested in mechanics, we can help you master motors, or space age electronic equipment.

If you're the academic type, well, you won't be the first to go through college at Army expense. In fact, you can go as far as you like. In just about any field.

You'll get a decent paycheck while you learn, too. And great fringe benefits.

Put it all together and you'll find today's Army offers you an opportunity to learn and earn that's hard to beat in any civilian job.

For more information about the more than 300 training and educational opportunities in today's Army, fill out the coupon. You'll discover we care more about your head than we do about your hair.

**Today's Army  
wants to join you.**

<small>General Information:</small> Dept. 200, Hershey, Pa. 17033 Please fill in for more about training and educational opportunities in the Army		<small>Form 100-10</small>
Name	Last, first, middle	
Address	Street, Apt. No.	
City	State	Zip
Day	Phone	
Home	Phone	

Civilian young men in the early 1970s wore their hair long, and for many the standard military haircut symbolized the loss of personal freedom and the surrender of individuality. Here, "Today's Army" promises potential recruits: "We care more about how you think, than how you cut your hair." *Courtesy N. W. Ayer Advertising Agency Records, Archive Center, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution.*

series of experiments (called VOLAR, for "volunteer army") that gave commanders at selected posts limited funding and full authority to try out techniques—such as rap groups (a term with a different meaning in the 1970s than it has in 2007), beer in the barracks, dormitory dividers and freedom to decorate living spaces—meant to raise the morale of enlisted men. While Westmoreland and the SAMVA office were clear that the days of the dated "brown-shoe army" (so named for a change in regulation footwear from brown to black in 1956) were over, the changes they dictated were extraordinarily unpopular with lots of career army people, especially noncommissioned officers (NCOs).<sup>38</sup>

That was the situation confronting N. W. Ayer in early winter 1971, when it took on the task of completely recasting army advertising. Ayer was inspired by the rapid rise in the army advertising budget; it seemed certain that the work would not be wasted on a \$3 million account. Army advertising was budgeted at \$18.5 million in fiscal year (FY) 1971, \$10 million of that for a "test" of army advertising on commercial broadcast television and radio, and the figure of \$60 million for the future campaign was floating around.<sup>39</sup> Prospects for a lucrative relationship were good. Nonetheless, Ayer had to come up with a campaign for an unpopular "product" that seemed to be in the midst of a controversial internal transformation. The "market" for the product (research discovered repeatedly)

<sup>38</sup> Griffith, *U.S. Army's Transition to an All-Volunteer Force*, 101–14; Office of the Chief of Information, Department of the Army, "Special Events Speech for the Modern Volunteer Army, No. 1" [early 1970s], p. 1, file 327.02, All-Volunteer Army—Misc.

<sup>39</sup> For the figure of \$60 million, see Forsythe interview, 27; for that of \$18.5 million, see Lt. Col. Stromberg, "VII. Modernizing the Army, for use in Four-Year Report of the Chief of Staff," April 26, 1972, All-Volunteer Army—Misc.

was generally hostile to it. Even if the Vietnam War were over—and that was a big “if”—young American men feared that if they joined the army, they would lose their personal freedom, would be submerged in an institution that showed no respect for individuality.

Ayer representatives, in language that should probably have given the army pause, described the problem they faced as “like trying to sell a double-breasted suit to a Phi Beta Kappa.” But the agency people had good instincts. They made clear that the first step was to hear from the army—and not “some junior official who is handling advertising.” They asked for meetings with the secretary of the army and the chief of staff. They got them. The Ayer executives and their creative people came down to Washington, to a meeting in the Pentagon with General Westmoreland and members of the SAMVA office. Westmoreland and his people waited for the briefing to begin. And the Ayer people, skilled in presentation, simply sat there. Finally, one of the Ayer execs said, “Sir, we’re here to listen to you.”<sup>40</sup>

Westmoreland made the pitch he was perfecting: the army is a young man’s business; the army likes young people and understands them; the army can help young Americans develop a value system, and in exchange, young people can give the army energy and enthusiasm. The volunteer army, he said, should be a partnership between an old institution and a new generation of Americans. And he emphasized the changes the army was making, from civilianizing KP to getting rid of the skinhead haircut. The Ayer people said they understood, and they went back to Philadelphia for a couple of weeks of intense work.<sup>41</sup>

The Ayer group was briefly inspired to try a hip campaign and flirted with the idea of using a picture of a chicken wearing dog tags with the title “Bye, Bye Birdie.” They figured everyone would understand it: an army without “needless irritants” (more commonly known as “chicken” or “chickenshit”). No one seems to have commented on the awkwardness of using a photo of a chicken to advertise the U.S. Army. And the “Army generals” reportedly “loved it.”<sup>42</sup> But the idea fell by the wayside. The Ayer group was certain that it must convey, in a single “surprising” expression, two concepts: “join” and “‘improved’ product.” Copywriting toward the idea yielded some slogans that made “Your Future, Your Decision, Choose ARMY” sound inspired:

Join the New Army.  
 Enlist in the New Army.  
 Join a Better Army.  
 Join an Improved Army.  
 Join a Changing Army.  
 Join Today’s Army.  
 Today’s Army Wants You.<sup>43</sup>

When the Ayer group met with Generals Westmoreland and Forsythe again, in the Pentagon, they pitched a single idea. They showed the Army officials a photograph of a young man—a civilian—with the caption: “Today’s Army Wants to Join You.” As General Forsythe described the army’s reaction (in an interview conducted three years later): “We all looked at it and thought, ‘They can’t be serious. A big outfit like this and they

<sup>40</sup> Forsythe interview, 27.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 28–29.

<sup>42</sup> Regan interview.

<sup>43</sup> N. W. Ayer, “United States Army Recruiting Advertising.”

can't come up with something better than this?" Ayer executive Ted Regan remembered that General Westmoreland asked, "Do you have to say it that way?"<sup>44</sup>

The Ayer staffers had two answers. Most fundamentally, they argued, the ad campaign was not meant to appeal to generals. It was meant to grab the attention of young men who might possibly be prompted to contact a recruiter or ask for information about joining the army. It was clear, even from the limited amount of research already done, that traditional appeals would not work. To get the attention of the new generation, they insisted, the campaign had to show a clear break with the past. Their term was "interruptive."<sup>45</sup>

They believed that "Today's Army Wants to Join You" turned the traditional call to service on its head. Instead of summoning young men to service with a stern-featured Uncle Sam and a declarative command, this slogan would leave young people thinking that "the Army is interested in *me*, in *my* needs as well as its own." Replacing "I WANT YOU" ("as in 1917") with "*we* need each other as in 1972" would re-create the relationship between the army and the recruit. As the army suggested, "Let's get together for *mutual* gain," young people would think: "There is something in it for me." And the slogan, they insisted, would help transcend the bitterness, the hostility, the antimilitarism of American society. "The Army wants to 'join the people,'" they explained, was a "public assertion of the Army's concern over the many forms of 'divisiveness' confronting our society—including some *Anti-Militarism* sentiment." "Today's Army Wants to Join You," Ayer implied, could help "pull this country together." The army representatives still hated it—though perhaps not so much as most other people in the active army would once the ads started appearing—but Westmoreland took a deep breath and set the campaign in motion.<sup>46</sup>

Signing on for "Today's Army Wants to Join You" was a key moment in the shift to the logic of the market. Despite their discomfort with almost everything about the Ayer proposal, Westmoreland, as chief of staff, along with Secretary of the Army Robert Froehlke and General Forsythe (as SAMVA) decided to defer to the expertise of advertisers and marketers. The perceived "needs" of American youth would drive the campaign.

All involved understood that the new army recruiting ads had to reach the complex market of American youth, that they had to compete in the world of consumer advertising—with Coke and Ford. Quality of production and innovativeness of design were both important; the army had to become visible in the consumer marketplace. In this new world, the army would have to sell itself as a specific product (in competition with other products—the navy, air force, and marines), but within a category that left most potential consumers cold. Few consumer goods had to overcome a general hostility to the product category itself: Ford did not have to convince people that cars were desirable, just that they'd rather drive a Mustang ("Sitting still . . . it looks invincible") than a Corolla ("You can fit a lot of important things in Toyota's \$1876 Wagon"). For the army, the advertiser's task was not capturing consumer desire, but creating it—or, at the very least, undermining the consumer resistance that was amply demonstrated in ongoing social science research.

<sup>44</sup>Forsythe interview, 30; Regan interview.

<sup>45</sup>William Kelley interview by Griffith, Aug. 25 [1983], "USAREC and Recruiting" folder, All-Volunteer Army Collection.

<sup>46</sup>N. W. Ayer, "United States Army Recruiting Advertising"; "A Note on the Army's Theme," speech, Sept. 1971, All-Volunteer Army Collection.



That said, few of those involved lost sight of the fact that joining the army was a more significant “consumer decision” than buying a Coke or even a car. And while members of the SAMVA office and of the Recruiting Command often claimed that an all-volunteer force could not be created or maintained without large-scale commercial advertising, most did not see the advertising as selling the “high-cost” act of enlisting so much as the low-to-moderate-cost act of writing for information or contacting a recruiter. Nonetheless, those involved in the move to the consumer market understood the larger challenge. Even if they imagined their task as motivating the low-cost phone call rather than the high-cost enlistment, they believed that everything hinged on recuperating the army’s public image, especially among youth.

Social science research indicated that the army’s best prospects (those most likely to volunteer) were poorer, younger, less educated, and from rural or small-town America. But the initial advertising campaigns focused much more broadly. The young men inclined to volunteer, according to research, were more likely to watch television than to read magazines. Thus prime-time television offered the best targeting of “good prospects.” In the early 1970s, prime-time television in essence meant the three major networks and shows that drew wide, not narrowly targeted, audiences. Both Ayer and the army found such placement useful, for in attempts to improve the army’s image with the general public, advertising that reached a broad market that included their good prospects was more useful than that narrowly targeted at eighteen-year-old rural youth. Finally, army officials were concerned about the declining “quality” of volunteers as compared to inductees, and so advertising tended both to picture and to appeal to desirable recruits: high school graduates, young men from a broadly defined middle class—not the “good” but less desirable prospects who had dropped out of high school or who saw few other options in their futures.<sup>47</sup>

In working with the army, the Ayer team claimed expertise based on past creative success. But even more than creativity, the team stressed state-of-the-art social science marketing research. Ayer, like most American advertising agencies that tried to sell to young people, had already turned to the sort of youth-oriented market research that Eugene Gilbert had pioneered in the 1950s. Ayer offered to let the army piggyback on consumer research it had already commissioned for large clients. And as funding became available, the SAMVA office and Ayer jointly commissioned research on American teens and young adults, trying to understand their world views, their goals, their needs and desires. The Department of Defense was fully on board; by the early 1970s it sponsored Gilbert’s surveys on youth and the military and made them available to appropriate army officials. And in 1975 the department began the long-lived Youth Attitude Tracking Study, or YATS, a semiannual survey of young men aged 16–21 (extended in 1980 to include young women).<sup>48</sup>

As the army relied on market logic in its attempts to create and maintain a volunteer force, it defined the market as a site of consumer desire. The advertising that became cru-

<sup>47</sup> Brig. Gen. Robert Montague Jr., “Talking Paper on Paid Army Television and Radio Advertisements,” Aug. 1972, All-Volunteer Army Collection. There is a continuing misperception that military recruiting targets those who cannot succeed in civilian life, who have no other options.

<sup>48</sup> Social science research projects are listed in Office of the Assistant Secretary, Department of the Army to Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), memo, received Dec. 29, 1971, “Subject: Experiments Associated with the Modern Volunteer Army Programs,” All-Volunteer Army—Misc. Market Facts, Inc., *Youth Attitude Tracking Study, Fall 1975, a Report Prepared for the Department of Defense* (Chicago, 1976), 1; Rostker, *I Want You!* 608.

cial to recruiting campaigns was consumer driven, even as the consumer was constructed through research profoundly shaped by historically specific assumptions about everything from psychological development to family structure, peer culture, and the meaning of masculinity and femininity. And the focus on the “psychological needs” and wants of potential volunteers was given added weight by the market surveys and social science research projects that offered quantitative evidence about the desires of young men and women.<sup>49</sup>

It is probably not surprising, given the increasingly therapeutic culture of the age, that studies conducted in the very early 1970s emphasized psychological needs or that they discovered young men had psychological needs to be treated as individuals and to have “freedom.” Those initial findings were supported by other surveys commissioned by SAMVA and Ayer. The Opinion Research Corporation in Princeton, New Jersey, reported in 1971 that in addition to pay increases, young men wanted more freedom in their use of personal time and practices that allowed each to “retain his individuality.” The report concluded: “potential recruits want reassurance on key issues of individual treatment, respect and the chance to achieve important goals.” And in 1972 the Cinecom Corporation in Cambridge, Massachusetts, found that the AVF would work if the army had a “clear recognition of the several needs, attitudes, and expectations” of prospective volunteers. This author argued that many volunteers, especially those most likely to choose combat arms, saw themselves in situations of “failure” and believed the army offered a low-risk escape and opportunity to start over. In response to those needs, the army must show that it would meet the “youth’s perceived need for a *structured situation in which he may gain maturity.*” At the same time, “he expects to be treated with dignity—as a *volunteer* in a volunteer system which . . . *has respect for his individuality.*” Surveys were constructed so that those psychological needs were listed as options for respondents to choose. But respondents chose them in great numbers, and both the advertising agency and the army focused on those responses.<sup>50</sup>

There was, however, a fundamental disconnect between the felt needs of potential recruits in the early 1970s and the reality of army life. It was hard to present desires for individuality and freedom as reasons to join the army. But that is what the army did. The signature advertisement for the “Today’s Army Wants to Join You” campaign, created in April 1971, appeared the following fall in *Senior Scholastic* magazine, a periodical distributed in high school classes. The ad was a two-page spread. On the left were nine portrait shots of young men, three rows with three portraits on each, the men’s pictures separated from each other only by thin black lines. The young men were clearly chosen to illustrate diversity, not only of race and ethnicity but also within youth culture. In 1971 they probably looked a bit—though not profoundly—conservative; their hair was far from short by today’s standards, but every single haircut left ears visible. The right page led with the army’s new slogan in heavy boldface text, followed by (in large font) a carefully produced list of acknowledgments and inducements:

We know you have pride in yourself and in what your Country can be.  
We know you have a brain and your own ideas.

<sup>49</sup> For the term “important psychological needs,” see Opinion Research Corporation, *Reaction of 17 to 21 Year Old Males, Not in College, to Enlistment in the Army and Its Combat Branches*, xxxiii.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii, xxxiii; Scott M. Cunningham, *The Volunteer Soldier: His Needs, Attitudes, and Expectations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), vii, 8.

We know you'd like to share these ideas with hundreds of young men and women from all parts of this Country.  
 We know you'd like to build your mind and body.  
 We know you'd like to further your education, become expert at a skill, have opportunity for advancement, travel, and 30 days vacation a year.  
 We also know you put a price on these things. The price is your individuality. And you question the Army's willingness to pay this price.  
 Today's Army is willing to pay this price.  
 We're committed to eliminating unnecessary formations, skin-head haircuts, signing out, signing in, bed checks, and "make work" projects. You'll find more mature policies at every level.  
 If you'd like to serve yourself as you serve your Country, Today's Army wants to join you.

An almost identical version of the ad appeared the following month, with illustrations of young women instead of young men. It, however, also assured its readers, "In today's Army a girl can be a girl. Live her own life on her own time. Date. Marry if she wants to." Relatively few ads were then directed to women, as in 1971 the army was primarily concerned with recruiting for combat arms, in which women were (and are) not allowed to serve.<sup>51</sup>

The handling of race in advertising was a complicated issue, for one major criticism of plans for an AVF was that it would be dominated by poor African Americans. That concern crossed the political spectrum. Some worried about the exploitation of black Americans, in part because of a powerful and persistent belief that African Americans had been treated as cannon fodder in the Vietnam War and in part because of a belief that volunteers drawn heavily from the nation's most disadvantaged group would not be true volunteers. Others feared an army composed of poor—and thus presumably angry, degenerate, or unskilled—black men. Some such arguments were clearly racist, others more complexly situated in the often violent racial tensions of the time, and others purportedly based only on the need for "quality" in a new, smaller, more technologically sophisticated force.<sup>52</sup>

Army advertisements for "general interest" publications were usually either carefully racially inclusive or pictured only whites, and advertisements picturing only black men and women ran in publications directed at African Americans, such as *Essence* or *Ebony*. Research found that young black men were more concerned about salary than were young white men and that they wanted assurance they would be joining an institution that treated people fairly irrespective of race. But advertising in the initial campaign rarely offered racially targeted appeals. One series, headed "When was the last time you got promoted?" had four versions: white man, black man, white woman, black woman. The male version was shot on a loading dock; the female one in an office (she stood beside a mail cart). Sex

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Army advertisement, "Today's Army Wants to Join You," *Senior Scholastic*, Oct. 4, 1971; U.S. Army advertisement, "Today's Army Wants to Join You," *ibid.*, Nov. 29, 1971. Army planners believed that the only way to meet recruiting goals was to increase the number and percentage of women in the army, but the early campaigns did not focus on women.

<sup>52</sup> Concerns about a majority-black army are ubiquitous; Richard M. Nixon addressed them in his initial 1968 speech, "The All-Volunteer Armed Force." On the impact on advertising decisions, see Tom Maxey interview by Bailey, Nov. 8, 2004, audio recording (in Bailey's possession). Maxey was president, vice chairman, and chief operating officer of N. W. Ayer during Ayer's years as the army's ad agency.

## When was the last time you got promoted?

When the only jobs you can get are the jobs anyone can do, they're not very likely to get you anywhere. Like delivering the office mail, or

waiting tables at the local pizza parlor.

Jobs with a future take skill and experience. Today's Army can give you both.



We have over 400 jobs in fields that offer you a future in the Army or in civilian life. Data processing, intelligence, air operations support, medical, communications, administration, to name a few.

They're jobs we'll pay you to learn. At the same starting salary our men get. \$288 a month. With the same opportunity for regular promotions and raises. And the salary you earn in today's Army goes a long way when you consider your meals, housing, medical and dental care are all free.

You can save most of your salary, or spend it on the 30 days paid vacation you'll get every year. Or stretch it by buying the things you want at post exchanges where prices are lower than in civilian stores.

And if you would like to continue your education while in the Army, we'll help you. Then help you again after you're out with 36 months of financial assistance at the college of your choice.

If you're looking for a job with a future, but want some time off first, we can arrange that too. With our Delayed Entry Option you can sign up for the training you want today, and take up to six months before coming in.

For more information, talk it over with your nearest Army Representative.

**Today's Army  
wants to join you.**

Army planners understood that to meet recruiting goals they would have to attract women. Most woman-oriented army advertising from the early 1970s emphasizes the feminine attributes of women soldiers and reassures young women that they can “date, even marry.” This advertisement, unlike most, emphasizes equal opportunities for women. The representation of race in this pair of ads is as significant as that of gender: black and white women are interchangeable; the text and the office background remain the same. *Courtesy N. W. Ayer Advertising Agency Records, Archive Center, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution.*

changed the surroundings dramatically; race changed nothing. For people of the same sex, the settings were identical, white and black people completely interchangeable.<sup>53</sup>

While some ads in the initial campaign emphasized job experience or skill training, many emphasized individuality and personal freedom. One ad promised: “We care more about how you think, than how you cut your hair.” Another offered: “We’ll make you an expert at whatever turns you on.” One of the most widely used series of advertisements

<sup>53</sup>U.S. Army advertisements, “When was the last time you got promoted?,” 1973, folder 5, box 3, N. W. Ayer Collection (National Museum of American History Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.). On the “special interests of black Americans,” see Opinion Research Corporation, *Reaction of 17 to 21 Year Old Males, Not in College, to Enlistment in the Army and Its Combat Branches*, xxiii–xxv, xxxiii.

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We have over 300 jobs in fields that offer you a future in the Army or in civilian life. Data processing, intelligence, air operations support, medical, communications, administration, to name a few.

They're jobs we'll pay you to learn. At the same starting salary our men get. With the same opportunity for regular promotions and raises. And the salary you earn in today's Army goes a long way because we provide your meals and housing while medical and dental care are free.

You can save most of your salary, or spend it on the 30 days paid vacation you'll get every year. Or stretch it by buying the things you want at post exchanges where prices are lower than in civilian stores.

And if you would like to continue your education while in the Army, we'll help you. Then help you again after you're out with up to 36 months of financial assistance at the college of your choice.

If you're looking for a job with a future, but want some time off first, we can arrange that too. With our Delayed Entry Option you can sign up for the training you want today, and take up to six months before coming in.

For more information, talk it over with your nearest Army Representative.

**Today's Army  
wants to join you.**

was for enlistment in the combat arms, which posed the greatest challenge in recruiting a volunteer force. "Take the Army's 16-Month Tour of Europe," the ads offered. The photo illustrations varied, from a small shot of a smiling flight attendant (because most people still thought troops traveled on troopships) to a montage of the tourist sights of Germany to a photo using the classic advertising techniques of the age. The young man in this image—in civilian clothes and a haircut that could pass for civilian—sits at an outdoor café table with a young blonde woman. We see him in semiprofile; the audience's view is directed toward her. She listens intently as he speaks. The background is suggestively foreign, shot in soft focus. The small table between the man and the woman is filled with a collection of phallus-shaped objects, including a small wine carafe and a large salt shaker. In case someone missed all that effort at subconscious association, the woman holds an open lipstick toward her face. For those not convinced by the blonde, an alternate version offered the buddy option: "Mike, Leroy, Rocky, Vince and Bunts Are Taking The Army's 16-Month Tour of Europe. Together."<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup>U.S. Army advertisements, Ayer Collection; U.S. Army advertisement, "16-month tour," 1971, folder 3, box 2, *ibid.*; U.S. Army advertisement, "Mike, Leroy, Rocky," *Senior Scholastic*, Nov. 8, 1971.



The new army recruiting ads relied on standard advertising techniques of the time. Phal-lus-shaped objects reinforce the implicit message of this 1971 advertisement: enlistment in armor, artillery, or infantry could lead to adventure and romance. *Courtesy N. W. Ayer Advertising Agency Records, Archive Center, National Museum of American History, Bebring Center, Smithsonian Institution.*

## Take the Army's 16-month tour of Europe.

Right out of high school.

In today's Army you can enlist for European duty that guarantees at least 16 months with one of seven crack outfits stationed in Germany.

France, Denmark and Switzerland are just across the border. Within easy reach of any free weekend. Italy and the Riviera are just a few hours away. Just waiting for you on some of that 30 days paid vacation you earn each year in the Army.

This is your chance of a lifetime. To live and work in Europe. To get to know places like no tourist ever can. To get to know the people. Pick up the language.

If you want to live and work where tourists only visit, drop us the coupon. Or talk to your nearby Army representative about enlisting in Armor, Artillery or Infantry for European duty.

**Today's Army  
wants to join you.**

Army Opportunities	Date _____	280 6-71
Dept 200-Hampton, Va 23369		
I'd like to spend 16 months in Europe.		
Send me more information on European duty in today's Army		
Name _____	Date of birth _____	
Address _____		
City _____		Country _____
State _____	Zip _____	Phone _____
Education _____		

There was some element of cynicism in those ads, the sort of understanding that led Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera, the moving force behind the shift to "An Army of One" in early 2001, to argue that it does not matter if that slogan's focus on the individual obscures the "no-I-in-team" nature of army life. The point, he claimed, is to attract young people to enlist; once they are in, the army can train them for teamwork.<sup>55</sup> That justification fits squarely in the wisdom of the market: advertising never sells the product; instead it sells the dreams of the consumer (whether of blondes or of buddies).

A less cynical version draws on wisdom that might be described as parental: Maybe the kid will eat spinach if you play airplane with the spoon. That analogy, of course, depends on believing that joining the army would be good for someone. And though Ayer was right about powerful antimilitary sentiments in 1971, many in the army strongly believed that military service offered young men the discipline and leadership skills that would transform their lives: witness General Westmoreland's comment that in exchange for the energy and enthusiasm of the young, the army would teach them values.

A final version looks to the relative nature of truth: compared to the old "brown-shoe army," the MVA did offer more freedom (the end of bed check and reveille, liberalized pass and alcohol policies) and more tolerance for individuality. The narrator for a 1971 episode of the television program *The Army Reports*, "Today's Army . . . Is It Your Bag?,"

<sup>55</sup> Louis Caldera interview by Bailey, June 23, 2004, audio recording (in Bailey's possession).



## If you think you'll miss the guys, bring them along.

We know how it is. The good times. The jokes. The horsing around. You'll miss them, right?

So, the Army doesn't want to break it up. In fact, the Army wants to accommodate you. And the guys.

If you and the guys enlist together, you can take basic training together. And we'll guarantee it. In writing.

Not only that, we'll guarantee that you and the guys get a choice of hundreds of job training courses.

Your pal Joey likes wheels? We have more wheels to choose from than GM.

Freddy's an electronic nut? We have circuits that do everything but dance.

Big Mike likes to make noise? We have noisemakers that can be heard ten miles away.

Talk it over with your local Army Representative. Ask about enlisting together, training together. Or send us the coupon.

Talk it over with the guys. Tell them that the gang that enlists together, stays together.

**Today's Army  
wants to join you.**

Send this coupon to: Army Recruitment Center Dept. 302, Washington, DC 20315	NAME _____
NAME OF FRIEND OR NEIGHBOR (Print Name & Address)	ADDRESS _____
NAME OF GROUP (If any)	CITY _____
STATE _____	ZIP _____
DATE _____	

In a version of the “buddy option,” this advertisement offers young men emotional reassurance: you will not have to face basic training alone. But such advertising claims as “the Army wants to accommodate you” horrified many military officials. *Courtesy N. W. Ayer Advertising Agency Records, Archive Center, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution.*

promised that the army was responding to the need for “free choice.” “What is ‘Today’s Army?’” he asked and then offered this answer: It is “made up of individuals who reflect the complexities, contradictions, and strengths of America today. . . . Today’s Army is changing to meet the needs of its soldiers, so that they will be able to fulfill themselves while contributing to the defense of the country.”<sup>56</sup>

The notion of service and contribution did not completely disappear from army advertisements and representations, even as it was subordinated to a promise of self-fulfillment. Despite their willingness to look beyond pay issues and embrace efforts to create a good image, the army officials involved were not quick to relinquish the language of service. “Service” also remained in use, most likely, because these early advertisements coexisted with the draft as the war continued with no clear timetable for an American exit. Advertising a new army in 1971 without mentioning Vietnam was a stretch; mention of service or defense, even in a supporting role, made the ads seem more credible.

For the SAMVA office, much hinged on a ten-week test of commercial television advertising that the army and N. W. Ayer conducted in spring 1971. The plan had drawn hostility from representatives of the other services, which were much smaller and had smaller recruiting/advertising budgets. They worried that the army’s move to commercial advertising would destroy the public-service advertising access on which their smaller campaigns depended. The SAMVA office saw the test as the way to demonstrate that com-

<sup>56</sup> “The Army Reports—Today’s Army . . . Is It Your Bag?,” 1971, videotape, U.S. Army Audiovisual Center, Office of the Chief Signal Officer (1860–1982), RG 111 (Motion Picture, Sound, and Video Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park).

mercial advertising was absolutely necessary for the army's recruiting plans—and thus justified as a significant expense in the army's recruiting budgets. SAMVA staffers had arranged both a report on commercial-generated telephone responses and a major social science follow-up survey to demonstrate that point quantitatively. Unfortunately, the quantitative evidence was grim. The study conducted by Rome Arnold & Company found that the percentage of men in test areas who reported they would definitely “like to enter the Army” dropped from 4 percent in pretest sampling to 3 percent after the test, while the percentage who “probably” or “definitely” would not like to enter the army rose from 86 percent to 88 percent. While the changes are marginally significant at best, they hardly made a strong case for large-scale commercial advertising.<sup>57</sup>

What the survey discovered, however, was that young men registered the transformation of the army's appeal. (The most popular ad offered the chance to “drag race a tank,” but few remembered the advertising message.) Young men who liked the army commercials described an army that was “becoming more ‘relevant.’” The commercials, they suggested, “made Army service seem to be ‘fun’ or ‘more of a pleasure,’” and in general “the Army was seen to be other than a military duty. The job training, European option and variety of fields offered made the Army seem ‘more like an opportunity and not an obligation.’” Young men who were not persuaded by the commercials, however, described them as “misleading,” “unreal,” “dishonest,” “slick garbage,” and “bullshit.”<sup>58</sup>

As army officials struggled to explain the limited or seemingly negative effect of television advertising, they noted that the “television advertising elicited a great response and projected a very positive view of the army at, as fate would have it, the height of the Calley trial.” In fact, many phone calls in response to the army ads were from people who wanted to register their opinion, one way or the other, about the My Lai massacre, Lt. William Calley's actions, and the eventual verdict. My Lai was not the army's only public problem that spring; American newspapers, magazines, and television news were full of stories about the collapse of morale in the army, rampant drug use, corruption, desertion, racial conflict, and fragging (grenade attacks by soldiers on their own officers or senior NCOs). It was not a good time to experiment with selling the army, though that was, of course, the climate in which the army was expected to recruit tens of thousands of volunteers.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the bad news, people from both N. W. Ayer and the SAMVA office were encouraged that the new slogan had captured the public's attention. By December 1971 “Today's Army Wants to Join You” easily beat “Ford has a better idea” and 7-Up's “The Uncola” in public recognition. And they emphasized the good news: television advertising had generated steadily increasing numbers of live leads and of subsequent enlistments, which dropped when the test ended and only public-service announcements aired.<sup>60</sup>

The disappointing quantitative data were not the major problem. Instead, the House Armed Services Committee, which had to approve the army's plan and its budget, became

<sup>57</sup> Rome Arnold & Company, “U.S. Army Recruiting Advertising Test,” 3.

<sup>58</sup> Description of commercial from Rep. Lionel Van Deerlin, in Subcommittee on Communications and Power, *Expenditure of Public Funds for Broadcast Advertising*, 38. Rome Arnold & Company, “U.S. Army Recruiting Advertising Test,” 12, 17.

<sup>59</sup> The army estimated it would require 180,000 to 200,000 non-prior service (NPS) volunteers in FY 1974. See Griffith, *U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force*, 173. In FY 2006, the army's goal was 80,000 NPS recruits. U.S. Army Recruiting Command G7/9, “U.S. Army Recruiting Command Goals,” <http://www.usarec.army.mil/hq/apa/goals.htm>.

<sup>60</sup> N. W. Ayer, “United States Army Recruiting Advertising”; “Talking Paper: Status of Advertising,” SA/SAMVA meeting agenda, July 1, 1971, All-Volunteer Army—Misc.



the major hurdle. F. Edward Hébert, the committee chair, was adamantly opposed to paid commercial advertising, no matter what the advertising test had revealed. (He did not support the shift to an all-volunteer force, either.) Hébert legitimately believed that television recruiting advertising should be handled through PSAs, which networks were obliged to run as a legal condition of their continued access to the public airways.

But the behind-the-scenes story was more complicated. Hébert (along with President Nixon and many other major government officials) believed that American television network news was undermining the U.S. military mission in Vietnam. As a strong supporter of the armed forces (according to his understanding of their needs), Hébert was suspicious of the major networks. But he had been pushed past reason by *The Selling of the Pentagon*, a major CBS documentary that aired in February 1971. *The Selling of the Pentagon* stepped into America's increasingly angry debate about the war in Vietnam with all the credibility of network news (no irony intended) and all the most persuasive techniques of documentary filmmaking. *The Selling of the Pentagon* argued that the Department of Defense was using its public relations funds (approximately \$30 million, by CBS's estimate) "not merely to inform but to convince and persuade the public on vital issues of war and peace." Much of its charge, however, was in its visual, not its verbal, argument: correspondent Roger Mudd's careful narration was accompanied by shots of American children seemingly seduced by weapons of war and by military propaganda and of paunchy and graying "influential civilians" playing at war on a Pentagon-sponsored "guided tour" complete with "four-star chaperons." As Mudd told viewers that "nothing is more essential to a democracy than the free flow of information," Hébert, who was pictured proclaiming that "the most vicious instrument in America today is network television," did not come off well.<sup>61</sup>

Virtually all involved in the struggle between the army and the House Armed Services Committee over commercial television advertising understood that Hébert's intractability stemmed from *The Selling of the Pentagon*. He had vowed that as CBS had produced and aired what he saw as "one of the most un-American things I've ever seen on a screen—on a tube," "the greatest disservice to the military I've ever seen on television, and I've seen some pretty bad stuff," it must not profit from army advertising.<sup>62</sup> *The Selling of the Pentagon* provoked a congressional investigation of alleged bias against the Department of Defense, and the ensuing controversy over freedom of the press and government interference roiled the American media for months. That controversy established the context in which the army tried to make its case for commercial recruiting advertising.

On April 8, 1971, the House Commerce Committee served CBS a subpoena demanding all materials related to the production of *The Selling of the Pentagon*. On April 21 and 22, 1971, a subcommittee of the House Commerce Committee held a hearing on House Concurrent Resolution 215, a "sense of Congress" resolution that "the Federal Government . . . and departments and agencies thereof should not expend public funds to purchase time for the carriage of advertisements by radio or television broadcast stations." The resolution specifically identified the army advertising test and warned that broadcast

<sup>61</sup> *The Selling of the Pentagon*, prod. CBS News, Peter Davis, Perry Wolff, written by Peter Davis, reporter Roger Mudd (CBS, Feb. 23, 1971), transcript in Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc., *From Subpoena to Recommitment* (New York, 1971), 1, 15.

<sup>62</sup> *The Selling of the Pentagon: Postscript*, transcript in Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc., *From Subpoena to Recommitment*, 2, 1. F. Edward Hébert's comments about CBS quoted in Subcommittee on Communications and Power, *Expenditure of Public Funds for Broadcast Advertising*, 173.

stations' opportunity to profit from government funds "raises the specter of Government influence over this sensitive media." The hearing focused solely on the army's use of commercial advertising.<sup>63</sup>

Underlying definitions of market structured some of the debate, as House members adopted the rational-choice labor market model and suggested that the military pay raise—perhaps in conjunction with a "liberalized . . . life-style"—should be sufficient to draw the required number of volunteers. And the Department of Defense was not solidly supportive, as the other branches worried that they would lose their PSAs if the army began paying for television and radio time. (As evidence of tension: the marines created a recruiting ad that included the line, "But don't kid yourself: nobody's joining you, you are joining *us*." The army protested through the office of the secretary of defense, and the line disappeared.)<sup>64</sup>

But larger philosophical issues about government power and freedom of the press were also invoked, especially since U.S. newspapers were full of such debates in the growing controversy between CBS and the House Commerce Committee over the subpoena for *The Selling of the Pentagon* materials. How much power would the dispensing of large advertising budgets give the government in its relations with the broadcast media? Might the move to paid broadcast advertising harm the freedom of the press? And, as one representative observed, borrowing his language from a recent editorial in *Advertising Age*, the "official organ for the advertising industry": "We're troubled by the specter of the Federal Government pouring millions of dollars into ad budgets aimed at molding public opinion in favor of one Government program or another. . . . There is great temptation to use Government advertising for partisan purposes, and as far as we can see there aren't any built-in safeguards against this sort of misuse."<sup>65</sup>

The House of Representatives in the end supported CBS's stand on freedom of the press and ended the Commerce Committee's efforts to subpoena journalistic materials. It also supported the "sense of Congress" ban on federal departments and agencies using commercial broadcast advertising. The army, stymied at this critical moment, nonetheless managed to get a significant increase in its advertising budget and turned heavily to print advertising. The ban on paid broadcast advertising lasted five years, until Representative Hébert ended his term as chair of the House Armed Services Committee. In some ways, both congressional acts are victories for freedom of speech and freedom of the press. In the late stages of the Vietnam War, they show limited support for public dissent and concern about proper limits on government power. As one representative told the assembled committee at the hearing on the legitimacy of paid recruiting advertising, commercial advertising seemed "an unfortunate weapon to deal with the problem [of attracting volunteers]."<sup>66</sup>

The complication was that there were few real choices of weapon. Moved—largely against its will—into the marketplace, an old and proud institution was struggling to figure out how to prevail in unfamiliar territory. As the Ayer executive (and former army

<sup>63</sup> Subcommittee on Communications and Power, *Expenditure of Public Funds for Broadcast Advertising*, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Rep. Parren J. Mitchell, Subcommittee on Communications and Power, *Expenditure of Public Funds for Broadcast Advertising*, 148–49; John G. Kestor, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) to Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), memo, May 10, 1971, "Proposed Marine Corps Advertisement," All-Volunteer Army Collection.

<sup>65</sup> From editorial in *Advertising Age*, March 15, 1971, quoted by Mitchell, in Subcommittee on Communications and Power, *Expenditure of Public Funds for Broadcast Advertising*, 149.

<sup>66</sup> "The Military's Four-Year Crusade to Break into Broadcast," *Media Decisions*, 11 (Oct. 1976), 67.

lieutenant colonel) William Kelley explained, “It hurt the Army’s ego. After all the years of service to the country the Army saw itself as having to stoop down to the 18 year old’s level.”<sup>67</sup> But the army, charged with shifting to an all-volunteer status at perhaps the worst possible moment in its history, showed enormous flexibility and initiative in adopting the best weapons possible. It embraced the use of state-of-the-art market research and sophisticated advertising techniques. It adopted an advertising campaign geared toward the problematic youth market of the early 1970s, even though the notion that the army “wants to join you” appalled some large number of those in the active army. And perhaps most impressively, the army faced its own problems and attempted real reform, using the moment of transformation to try to create a stronger, more people-oriented, and more professional force.

High-cost, high-quality commercial advertising and major ongoing market research allowed the army to compete in a marketplace that transcended both the labor market and the market of rational economic choice. As tools—or weapons—advertising and market research lack great precision. But they are nonetheless powerful. And they have significant consequences for both the army and American society.

While the House subcommittee had difficulty comprehending that the army could not compete in the marketplace without using the tools of the marketplace, the philosophical questions it raised remain significant. What forms, if any, of government-sponsored advertising are legitimate? The army commercials that accompanied the U.S. invasion of Iraq were emotionally moving. They conveyed some sense of what soldiers are asked to do—for a nation that has been asked to make no sacrifice. But just as they honored America’s soldiers (and avoided the awkward conflation of military service and adventure sports or the uncomplicated offer of money for college), they also functioned as sophisticated propaganda that linked the invasion of Iraq with America’s commitment in World War II.

Recruiting advertising also shapes the army. That is not to suggest that young men and women join the army because they have seen a commercial. As more than one who knows has told me, if they were that stupid, they probably would not get in. Military advertising tries to prompt the relatively low-cost act of contacting a recruiter or going to the army Web site; the decision to enlist follows conversations with a recruiter and career counselor and most likely with parents, friends, and other influencers. But recruiters face enormous pressure to meet their numbers, and most use what they can. Recruiting campaigns are built around information from increasingly sophisticated and savvy marketing studies that try to discover what American youth want and then to “sell” it back to them. Recruiting advertisements are carefully scrutinized for accuracy, but the dreams of the consumer marketplace fall beyond enforcement. Who can say, precisely, if the army helped one “Be All You Can Be” or “Find Your Strength”? But those market-researched intangibles have been consistently more persuasive as initial appeals to America’s youth than ads offering “\$288 Dollars a Month.”<sup>68</sup>

In the 1970s many of those charged with training and supervising the new volunteers were concerned by what they encountered. There are many reasons: the army had to re-

<sup>67</sup> Kelley interview.

<sup>68</sup> The power of intangible benefits is a continuing theme in the army’s *Recruiter Journal* (which bore various titles) over the years. Ayer describes pay as an “important fringe benefit,” but not a “fundamental reason why most young men join the Army.” N. W. Ayer, “Highlights, U.S. Army Enlistment Study,” in Opinion Research Corporation, *Attitudes and Motivations of Young Men toward Enlisting in the U.S. Army* (Chicago, 1971), 7.

cruit large numbers of young men from a racially, culturally, and politically divided society in the wake of a very bad war. For a couple of years, the entrance qualification test was misnormed, exaggerating the “quality” of the volunteers. But many of those in charge also insisted publicly, and in writing, that young men drawn by promises of “individuality” and “freedom” (and blondes and buddies and the tourist sites of Germany) were difficult, at best. And recruits often felt the same way. A late 1970s study by a congressional representative from Tennessee charged that recruits felt “misled” by army advertising. In response, the army and N. W. Ayer introduced the “This Is the Army” campaign, whose ads bore such headlines as “In Europe You’re on Duty 24 Hours a Day, but the Rest of the Time Is Your Own.” More recently, Patricia Madrid, the attorney general of New Mexico and a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives in 2006, told an interviewer (speaking about the military reserves): “We have so many young men and women who join . . . to get an education and a job—and we are sending them into this [Iraq] war.”<sup>69</sup>

The young men who commented on the army’s initial all-volunteer advertising campaign in the early 1970s understood the sales point very well: The army was not about obligation, but opportunity. The army often has failed to live up to the consumer dreams of its market, but the post-Vietnam peacetime army has offered concrete opportunity to many Americans.

The increasingly sophisticated effort to discover the desires and psychological needs of America’s youth and to offer the army as their fulfillment has helped cement that shift from the obligations of citizenship to the opportunities of the marketplace. It is a framework that makes sense in a society of consumer-citizens; it works well in an era of limited deployments or (relative) peace. It works less well in time of war. But over the past three decades, the military’s shift into the logic of the market has become naturalized and virtually invisible. It was an unintended consequence of the shift to the all-volunteer force, but it was one of the most significant.

<sup>69</sup>Tom Evans, “Recruiting Advertising,” July 27, 1983, p. 19, All-Volunteer Army Collection. The deputy director of advertising and sales promotion, USAREC, wrote this overview essay to prepare Lt. Gen. Elton for testimony on Capitol Hill about army advertising. Tom Evans interview by Bailey, Dec. 23, 2005, audio recording (in Bailey’s possession). “Candidate Spotlight: Attorney General Patricia Madrid,” *Notes from Emily: The Newsletter of Emily’s List, A Donor Network for Democratic Women* (Feb. 2006), 4.