

ARMY TELEVISION ADVERTISING: RECRUITING AND IMAGE-BUILDING IN
THE ERA OF THE AVF

by

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Abstract

The United States Army faced a dire challenge when conscription was phased out in favor of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in 1973. The Army was confronted with pressing manning requirements while suffering from the American public's disapproval over the war in Vietnam. The end of the draft in favor of an all-volunteer force did not offer a great deal of promise for filling Army manpower requirements. Army leadership realized that it needed new methods that could recruit quality volunteers while simultaneously reforming the Army's public image. Paid television advertising, able to reach a wide and diverse viewing audience, was pursued as a way to achieve both of those objectives.

This study examines Army television advertisements since the creation of the AVF and analyzes their imagery and messages. Surprisingly consistent themes and messages have persisted in the Army's television advertising for over thirty-five years of the AVF's existence. During that same time, American attitudes toward the military were increasingly characterized by an interesting paradox. The American public overwhelmingly supported the military but grew less inclined to volunteer for military service. The public's good feelings toward the Army and its "support for the troops" were not borne out with strong recruitment numbers during the years of the AVF. This work will argue that the messages in Army television advertising helped change the Army from a vital national institution into just another employer making a basic job offer in the audience's mind while doing little to reform the Army's public image. The ads did

not appeal to America's youth to commit themselves to national service. Rather, the ads promised to help individuals realize their wishes and dreams by focusing on the economic and educational advantages that the Army could deliver. Consequently, the ads cast the Army as a sort of trade school willing to provide young people with marketable skills, educational opportunities and enlistment bonuses in return for a short stint in the service. Public service and duty to the nation were rarely mentioned. The ads portrayed the Army as willing to strike deals with recruits to advance their personal goals and enrichment while demanding little in return.

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CHAPTER 1 - Introduction: Recruitment and Image-Building

This study examines Army television commercials used in recruitment and public image enhancement in the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) era. Examination of the ads of the period reveals recurring themes and messages that the Army and its advertisers hoped would shape attitudes and behaviors among the American people. Army television advertisements consistently offered potential recruits benefits and assurances, while hardly ever making any demands on them. Willing to strike deals with young people, Army advertising rarely showcased the unique institutional values of the service or appealed to recruits' feelings of patriotism or civic duty. Although public support for the military grew beginning in the 1980s, largely due to positive media portrayals and vocal support from influential Americans, advertising messages never effectively capitalized on the sentiment, choosing instead to promise opportunities and material enrichment to recruits on an individual basis. The advertisements' emphasis on material advantages and educational opportunities available through enlistment played an important role in turning the Army from an honored, values-based institution into an ordinary occupation in the public's view.

In the early 1970s, the end of conscription was in sight. Realizing that the end of the draft would eliminate their most reliable source of manpower, the U.S. Army decided to employ paid television advertising to attract potential recruits and to reform its tarnished image in the wake of the Vietnam War. In the era of conscription, Army broadcast advertising had consisted of free public service announcements (PSAs), but the PSAs were typically ineffective due to low production quality and because they were usually aired at the least desirable times on the broadcasters' schedules.

In the early 1970s, the Army settled on two important goals for its advertising efforts: recruitment of volunteers and raising its public image among all Americans. These objectives called for the Army's advertising strategy to produce messages aimed at two distinct audiences: potential recruits and the general public. The Army and its advertising agency, N. W. Ayer and Son, judged that television advertising in prime time was the best method to reach their dual target audiences. Based on careful market research, the Army and the Ayer agency developed themes and messages that they believed would accomplish the two goals of recruitment and public image-reform. Advertising throughout the AVF era ultimately achieved only mixed success.

From 1971 to 2005, Army television advertising consistently promised to provide occupational, educational and monetary advantages to the individual recruit while simultaneously downplaying the Army's demands for sacrifice, conformity and obedience. Although the production values of the commercials improved over time, their basic themes remained surprisingly consistent. The ads highlighted what market research had revealed that American youth wanted to hear, namely, that enlistment offered attractive economic and educational opportunities. Additionally, the ads assured potential recruits that their individuality would be preserved and respected by the Army and that signing up for a short stint of military service was an advantageous economic *quid pro quo*. However, by stressing material and educational advantages, the Army left itself vulnerable to competing messages from universities and other employers that could offer American youth similar advantages but on better terms. The ads from the 1970s to 2005 put enlistment on the same level as any other job while failing to remind the public of the Army's unique and vital purpose to the nation.

In the era of the AVF, promises of educational, economic and occupational opportunity achieved varying success, depending on the availability of alternative educational and employment opportunities. In robust economic times, the Army struggled to meet recruitment goals but met them more easily in hard times.

Selling the Army as just another job choice to recruits did little to improve the public image of the Army. In fact, it was politicians and Hollywood directors who largely shaped the public image of the Army in the post-Vietnam era. Over time, as the Army and its advertisers increasingly focused their efforts on the goal of recruitment, the goal of image enhancement received less and less attention from the service itself. Meanwhile, television shows and movies took the lead in recasting the public image of soldiers. As the Army struggled in its recruitment effort, overall public support for the military grew from the public glorification of the military by the entertainment industry and influential individuals such as President Ronald Reagan. In short, Army advertising focused more readily on the recruitment function of advertising and allowed agents outside of the service to cast its public image. That is, Army recruitment and image-enhancement efforts achieved distinctly different measures of success during the first thirty-five years of the AVF.

Effective advertising conveys its message to a large audience and effects specific behavioral changes. According to a 2003 National Research Council study, the purpose of advertising is to distribute information designed to influence consumer activity in the marketplace. Advertising conveys information to support and promote consumer choices among competing brands (Hallmark greeting cards versus American Greetings) and product categories

(greeting cards versus phone calls).¹ The study notes that the role of advertising in military recruitment “is to support military recruiters as they identify and assist those individuals who show an interest in military service. Advertising messages can help stimulate the interest of the youth population in military service and provide information bearing on the particular Service a youth might select.”² This definition of military advertising leaves out the U.S. Army’s stated goal of enhancing public opinion about the Army. Such an omission is typical of published studies on military advertising.

After dismal recruiting years in the late 1970s, noticeable gains in recruitments numbers and opinion polls expressing youth willingness to enlist in the Army appeared in the early 1980s. However, these trends reversed themselves shortly thereafter, and enlistment rates steadily worsened over time.³ A partial explanation for this decline was the increasing attractiveness of alternatives to military service. As Paul Sackett and Anne Mavor observed, “Although surveys indicate public confidence in military leadership and the military as an institution, military service is not seen as one of the more attractive choices for young people following high school.”⁴ Rather than join the Army, American youth were more interested in finding good paying jobs and/or going to college. The Youth Attitudinal Tracking Survey (YATS), conducted by the Defense Department from 1975 until 2000, asked respondents in 1999 why they might consider joining the military. Material concerns topped the responses. The most common single reason cited for enlistment by 27.1% of respondents was to pay for their education, and 12.6% said they would join in order to develop marketable work skills. Another 10.9% said pay was an

¹ Paul Sackett and Anne Mavor, eds., *Attitudes, Aptitudes and Aspirations of American Youth: Implications for Military Recruitment* (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2003), 225.

² *Ibid.*, 226.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

important consideration, 2.9% cited job security, and 1.9% pointed to retirement benefits.⁵ Only 8.4% of respondents cited duty to country as a reason to join the military in 1999.⁶ Army advertising messages promised assistance to young people in meeting their educational and occupational goals, while military values such as selfless service, commitment and duty were downplayed.

Over time, the declining propensity to enlist combined with an unprecedented level of college attendance led the armed services to compete with each other more intensely for the dwindling pool of prospects. Also, advertising costs rose considerably through the 1980s and 1990s. The result was that the services were paying more money to recruit from a smaller pool of recruits. Army advertising expenditures and recruiting bonuses increased more than threefold from 1993 to 2000.⁷ Army advertising during the AVF era failed to reverse declining youth interest in Army enlistment but never altered its basic approach in any substantial way. Messages promoting public service, volunteerism and the unique institutional values of the Army were never widely employed.

Though the Army struggled with recruitment, its public image improved greatly from the 1970s through 2005, due mostly to the efforts of non-military agents. The U.S. military in general enjoyed greater public esteem than it had enjoyed since Vietnam, largely due to the messages presented by the non-military sources. However, increased public esteem did not translate into a check on declining youth interest in enlisting.

According to Andrew Bacevich, Boston University international relations professor, the popular support for the military during the 1980s and 1990s was hardly surprising. He argues

⁵ Ibid., 230.

⁶ Ibid., 231.

⁷ Ibid., 221.

that “Vietnam was a defining event... Among other things, it gave rise by war’s end to a mood of pervasive and seemingly permanent anti-militarism. But Vietnam also induced a powerful reaction from Americans who refused to accept the war’s apparent verdict and who viewed with the alarm the changes the war gave birth to or encouraged.”⁸ According to Bacevich, Americans developed a new esteem for the military as a way to come to terms with the national failure in Vietnam. Part of the process of dealing with the trauma of Vietnam was that Americans bought into an increasingly cheerful and less realistic Hollywood-inspired vision of the military. Army television advertising of the AVF era was not the primary agent in creating the new image of the military, but it did little to correct the rosy Hollywood images about the Army and its soldiers. As a result, a supportive public cheered America’s volunteer Army even as fewer and fewer Americans volunteered for military service.

The eminent military sociologist Charles C. Moskos has theorized that in the AVF era, the military is no longer an institution but rather a mere occupation, competing for labor in an increasingly competitive market. This shift of the military from an institution to an occupation has consequences, according to Moskos. He writes, “[an] *institution* is legitimated in terms of values and norms, that is, a purpose transcending individual self-interest in favor of a presumed higher good” and that “[m]embers of an institution are often seen as following a calling captured in words like *duty*, *honor*, and *country*. They are commonly viewed and regard themselves as being different or apart from the broader society.”⁹ An occupation, on the other hand, “is legitimated in terms of the marketplace. Supply and demand, rather than normative

⁸ Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 34.

⁹ Charles C. Moskos, “Institutional and Occupational Trends in Armed Forces,” in Charles C. Moskos and Frank R. Wood, eds., *The Military: More than Just a Job?* (McLean, VA: Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, 1988), 16.

considerations, are paramount.”¹⁰ The military’s shift towards the adoption of the “philosophy of the marketplace,” asserts Moskos, was marked by the end of the draft and the adoption of the AVF. “The selective service was premised on the notion of citizen obligation – a calling in the almost literal sense of being summoned by a local draft board – with concomitant low salaries for junior enlisted personnel.”¹¹ With the end of the draft, the Army became just another job, Moskos argues.

Army television advertisements from the 1970s to 2005 contributed significantly to this shift of the Army from a highly-regarded, values-based institution to an occupation. The ads do not require a recruit to transcend individual self-interest: in fact, the advertising pitch primarily explained how enlistment could serve the individual’s educational and employment needs. Two critics of the Army’s lack of emphasis on civic duty in favor of monetary promises in advertising put it thusly: “The old urgent, in-your-face World War II poster, ‘UNCLE SAM NEEDS YOU!’ has been changed by today’s military to read, ‘Uncle Sam wants to make you a job offer you might consider. Got a better offer? Okay, sorry to have bothered you.’”¹²

Noted author and professor of Strategic Studies at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University Eliot Cohen argued in 1985 that American disinterest in military service is nothing new. He asserted that the general disinterest of Americans in military service had been part of American culture since the founding of the nation. Cohen explained that Americans are traditionally interested in military service only when they feel directly threatened. He wrote, “It is regrettable but unavoidable that today, as in the past,

¹⁰ Ibid., 17.

¹¹ Ibid., 19.

¹² Kathy Roth-Douquet and Frank Schaeffer. *AWOL: The Unexcused Absence of America’s Upper Classes from the Military – And How it Hurts our Country* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 205.

Americans turn their attention to military service only under the shadow of its forcible imposition by government. During peacetime, or at least when war is neither recent nor imminent, the citizen regards the study of military service as too mundane for anyone but experts, or as an interesting but purely hypothetical exercise in political philosophy.”¹³ Cohen pointed out that the concept of the “citizen-soldier,” a cherished American archetype, was based on the idea that the most effective defense of the nation rests with the citizenry who have the largest stake in its defense.¹⁴ As previously noted, Army television advertising did little during the first thirty-five years of the AVF to paint military service as a civic duty.

One must consider whether more affluence and less regard for traditional views of civic responsibility could explain the trends of lowered propensity among youth to enlist that emerged in the 1980s. Authors Kathy Roth-Douquet and Frank Schaeffer argue that increasing American “rights consciousness” might have dimmed feelings of civic obligation toward military service. They claim that the mid-twentieth century saw the expansion of individual rights, leading to a rise of “rights consciousness.”¹⁵ As a consequence, Americans felt they had a right to refuse military service and that, for the first time in American history, “citizens in large part felt fully entitled to their citizenship separate from duty such as military service.”¹⁶ Roth-Douquet and Schaeffer suggest that American attitudes toward military service might be colored by the belief that the individual American has the right to define what it means to be a “citizen.” If so, society cannot suggest, much less assert, that military service is a civic obligation of all able-bodied Americans. Rather military service is merely a personal choice by each individual. Therefore,

¹³ Eliot A. Cohen, *Citizens and Soldiers: The Dilemmas of Military Service* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁵ Roth-Douquet, 117.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Roth-Douquet and Schaeffer conclude, “There are no national let alone universal truths, just individual experiences. So the military has to be pitched as just one more personal choice.”¹⁷ Army television advertising, then, may have contributed to such a libertarian turn of American society at the expense of national service.

Much of the literature on Army advertising focuses on the calculable cost-effectiveness of advertising. Existing studies are mostly limited to figuring out how spending “x” amount of Army advertising dollars in various ways has resulted in the recruitment of “y” number of soldiers over the years. James Dertouzos and Steven Garber’s *Is Military Advertising Effective? An Estimation Methodology and Applications to Recruiting in the 1980s and 90s* is a typical example of such a cost-benefit analysis.¹⁸ The previously mentioned National Research Council study and its follow-up, published in 2003 and 2004, respectively, are a more nuanced attempt to devise cost-effective ways of determining youth attitudes in order to craft more effective military advertising.¹⁹ These works are useful in determining how the Defense Department and the Department of the Army allocated funds to support their advertising efforts, but they barely address the content of the advertisements. Only the 2003 National Research Council report mentions possible alternative themes for existing Army advertising. Beth Bailey’s recent article in *The Journal of American History*, “The Army in the Marketplace: Recruiting an All-Volunteer Force,” does an excellent job of explaining the Army’s decision to adopt the “logic of the market” in its advertising efforts in the early 1970s.²⁰ She argues that the Army skillfully used

¹⁷ Ibid., 128.

¹⁸ James N. Dertouzos and Steven Garber, *Is Military Advertising Effective? An Estimation Methodology and Applications to Recruiting in the 1980s and 90s* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2003), iii.

¹⁹ Sackett, vii.

²⁰ Beth Bailey, “The Army in the Marketplace: Recruiting an All-Volunteer Force,” *The Journal of American History*, No. 4, Vol. 1, (Jun 2007), 47.

advertising in the wake of the Vietnam War to inform potential recruits about opportunities and adventure available in an evolving Army. However, Bailey does not address the Army's secondary aim of improving its public image through the advertisements. Additionally, Bailey's articles deals exclusively with print advertising in the 1970s and does not address the medium that the Army leadership believed would be the most effective in reaching the largest audience: television. Although not specifically dealing with Army advertising, Andrew Bacevich argues in *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War* that Americans embraced militarism in the era of the AVF and, as a nation, are bent on maintaining global military supremacy. Bacevich's work explores the creation of the mythic soldier in popular culture as well as the paradox of high public support for the military while willingness to enlist in the military continues to decline.²¹ In "Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity," anti-sexism activist Jackson Katz argues that military advertising links masculinity and force in order to attract young working-class males. While he concedes that the ads "sometimes" promote educational and financial benefits, Katz asserts that what the military ads are really selling to working-class males is an adventurous, aggressive and violent vision of masculinity.²² An examination of the advertisements' content will show that Katz minimizes the central messages promising financial and educational advantages while overemphasizing the aggressiveness and violence that he sees in military advertising. Robert K. Griffith and Bernard Rostker provide excellent narratives of the early years of the AVF in their respective works *The*

²¹ Bacevich, 1-2.

²² Jackson Katz, "Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity," in Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez. *Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Text-Reader* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995), 136-138.

*U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968-1974*²³ and *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force*.²⁴ Griffith focuses on the transition of the Army from conscription to volunteer enlistments and provides valuable insight into how Army leaders met the challenges of recruiting for the all-volunteer Army. Rostker's voluminous and exquisitely detailed work traces the AVF's history over a thirty-year arc. While Griffith and Rostker's works provide wonderful details and background information about the Army's transition from conscription to volunteer recruitment and the role that advertising played in that process, neither work looks at the content of the commercials of the time to discern what messages or images were directed at the target audiences.

This study will examine the content of Army television ads to determine how the Army "packaged" itself as a "product" to two distinct groups of consumers: potential recruits and the general public. By looking at the content of sample commercials from the early 1970s up to 2005, this work will highlight recurring messages and themes presented in the ads. Studying the ads themselves will demonstrate that the continual promises of economic advantages and educational opportunity played a central role in transforming Army service from a profession into just another occupation even as public support for soldiers increasingly grew.

²³ Robert K. Griffith, Jr., *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968-1974* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, United States Army, 1997).

²⁴ Bernard Rostker, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force*, (Pittsburg: RAND Corporation, 2006).

CHAPTER 2 - Dealing with Recruitment and Public Image Issues

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, as the end of the draft became increasingly apparent, the U.S. Army was forced to consider methods to induce young people to enlist. Aside from increasing the attractiveness of volunteering, Army leadership endeavored to educate America's young people about the opportunities available through serving. Utilizing sophisticated research methods, the Army ultimately resolved to reach out to America's youth through paid broadcast advertising. Through such advertising, the Army would be able to pose a tempting offer to America's youth, while simultaneously reforming public opinion of the institution whose standing had been damaged during the Vietnam War.

Conscription during the Vietnam era hurt the public image of the U.S. Army. The draft was increasingly seen by Americans as an undemocratic process that favored some classes of eligible young men over others. The root of this apparent inequity was that by the late 1960s, the pool of draft-eligible young men in America far exceeded military requirements. Military demands dictated that barely half of the men subject to the draft would serve in the military, even though the country was at war.²⁵ Deferments were used to excuse selected young men from military service. Military historian Robert K. Griffith succinctly stated, "[T]he Selective Service System was running out of legitimate ways to defer men from induction. As the baby boom generation approached eligibility for military service, it appeared evident that increasing numbers of men qualified and available for induction would never be called because the military

²⁵ Cohen, 166.

could not absorb them.”²⁶ When only some but not all young men would get the call to duty, the question arose of who would serve and how would they be chosen. As Eliot Cohen notes in *Citizens and Soldiers*, the 1960s conscription system faced a problem: “No longer, as in the 1950s, would virtually every young man serve in the military; rather, even during a war, barely half of them would.”²⁷ As Cohen aptly notes, the key problem was determining who would have to serve in the Vietnam. The draft deferments of the time subjected those who lacked educational opportunities, namely the poor, to a greater probability of being drafted. Increasingly, the public called on the military and policymakers to distribute the burden more fairly across the socioeconomic spectrum.

By the end of the 1960s, the American public and policy makers increasingly regarded the Selective Service System as outdated, “a mistrusted institution, composed, in the popular mind, of fossilized and callous old men.”²⁸ Americans in the 1960s, more sensitive to individual liberties because of the civil rights movement and the “war on poverty,” increasingly questioned the fundamental premise of conscription and began to look for an alternative.²⁹

In 1968, presidential candidate Richard Nixon proposed an all-volunteer military force. Nixon’s belief in the viability of an all-volunteer military was influenced by the ideas of several conservative University of Chicago economists. The most influential of them, Milton Friedman, argued in 1967 that the economic situation of a draft-eligible male would determine whether he would volunteer for the military. According to Friedman, “When he is forced to serve, we are in effect imposing on him a tax in kind equal in value to the difference between what it would take

²⁶ Griffith, 10.

²⁷ Cohen, 166.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

to attract him and the military pay he actually receives.”³⁰ According to Friedman, the Defense Department could save money by using an all-volunteer force “because the armed forces would then be manned by men for whom soldiering was the best available career, and hence would require the lowest sums of money to induce them to serve.”³¹ Here is where the shift from compulsory service to economically motivated volunteerism had its ideological roots.³² For Friedman and others like him, rational economic choice would fill the ranks of America’s Army. Nixon’s appointment of a presidential commission to study the implementation of an all-volunteer force committed the administration to the idea, and so Washington turned its attention to the practical problems and challenges of making such a system work.

President Nixon appointed the Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force on 27 March 1969. Nixon charged the commission “to develop a comprehensive plan for eliminating conscription and moving toward an all volunteer armed force.”³³ The commission was to consider the advantages and problems that the implementation of the all-volunteer format would have on the military and on American society as a whole. One of the central questions was how the military would be able to attract a sufficient number of “quality” volunteers. A new emphasis would have to be placed on recruiting methods and military advertising.

The University of Chicago economists on the commission, including Friedman and Alan Greenspan, dominated the intellectual tone of the commission’s discussions. Their guiding assumption was that *economic* interests would motivate people to volunteer for the military.³⁴

³⁰ Rostker, 48.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Bailey, 48.

³³ Griffith, 13.

³⁴ Cohen, 168.

Roughly 2.5 million personnel were needed to meet the military's manpower demands.³⁵ The overarching concern of the commission was “whether sufficient numbers of capable men could be attracted by voluntary means.”³⁶ In short, what economic incentives could the Army and other services offer that would make the military an attractive career choice? A less obvious but related question was, if the military could construct an attractive incentive for America's youth, what would be the best means of making this offer known?

Presented to President Nixon on 20 February 1970, the Report of the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Force (more commonly known as the “Gates Commission Report”) endorsed the AVF concept. In his introductory letter to Nixon, former Eisenhower Secretary of Defense and committee chair Thomas S. Gates wrote, “We unanimously believe that the nation's interests will be better served by an all-volunteer force, supported by an effective standby draft, than by a mixed force of volunteers and conscripts; [and] that steps should be taken promptly to move in this direction.”³⁷

The report noted that while the shift to an all-volunteer force would result in higher initial costs, the costs of sustaining the AVF would be lower in the long run than for a mixed system of conscripts and volunteers. Following Friedman's lead, the commission asserted that conscription served as a “tax in kind” and that it imposed a social and human cost on those inducted not reflected in budgetary dollars and cents.³⁸ The commission asserted that conscription provided the services with inexperienced and untrained men, and thus savings in training costs could be

³⁵ Ibid., 167.

³⁶ Ibid., 169.

³⁷ *The Report of the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), i.

³⁸ Ibid., 12

secured by recruiting and retaining career volunteers.³⁹ In response to the charge that the AVF would create an undemocratic and unrepresentative force that could threaten American democracy, the commission argued that it was conscription, with its perceived inequities, that undermined the public's respect for the government and that the AVF would actually complement democratic practices in the services.⁴⁰ "A force made up of men freely choosing to serve should enhance the dignity and prestige of the military. Every man in uniform will be serving as a matter of choice rather than coercion."⁴¹

The Gates Commission dedicated an entire chapter of its report to recruitment methods for a truly all-volunteer military. The commission noted, "An *expanded and more effective recruiting effort* will help supply an all-volunteer force with the desired quality of enlistees."⁴² Effective recruiting would require advertising campaigns to inform the target audience of the benefits of the new AVF. "*More advertising in mass media will be both required and rewarding* once an all-volunteer force has been instituted, for the elimination of conscription will coincide with improved incentives in the military."⁴³ The Gates Commission also claimed that advertising could improve the military's public image.⁴⁴

The Defense Department allowed each of the services to develop its own methods for reaching its target audience. As the largest of the armed forces and with the most to lose once conscription ended, the Army faced the biggest challenge in mitigating its potential manpower losses. In the late 1960s, the Army leadership preferred conscription as a dependable source of

³⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 13-14.

⁴¹ Ibid., 18.

⁴² Ibid., 82, emphasis added.

⁴³ Ibid., 84, emphasis added.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

manpower and was comfortable with its use. The end of the draft would require a “major undertaking that presented many uncertainties.”⁴⁵

However, reports of widespread drug use, insubordinate behavior and unmilitary manner in the mixed draftee-volunteer ranks were disturbing to Army leaders, and some saw the draft’s end as a chance to change those trends. According to those Army leaders, including Army Chief of Staff General William Westmoreland, the AVF represented an “opportunity to restore a concept of military professionalism which they believed had been lost during the turmoil of the Vietnam era when so many unwilling conscripts had flooded the Army’s ranks.”⁴⁶ In September 1968 (a month before Nixon announced his campaign promise to end the draft), General Westmoreland ordered a study of the effects of ending the draft and what the Army could do to recruit an all-volunteer force.⁴⁷

For those forward-thinking Army leaders, breaking the links in the public’s mind between the Army and the inequities of the draft was crucial to restoring the Army’s prestige and public image.⁴⁸ Seizing the initiative, Westmoreland and the Army gave serious thought about how to make the Army more appealing to potential recruits and how to rebuild the public’s esteem for the institution. Discussions between Westmoreland’s headquarters staff and U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) officials about the end of the draft were far-ranging and “would come to encompass everything from the war in Southeast Asia to demographic trends in

⁴⁵ Griffith, vii

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the United States and from the style of an individual soldier's haircut to the prose of the Army's advertising jingles."⁴⁹

In October 1968, the study Westmoreland had ordered was published by Lieutenant Colonel Jack R. Butler as "The Career Force Study." It contained many important assertions and assumptions that would guide the Army's advertising efforts over the course of the AVF era. Butler concluded over a year before the Gates Commission did that the end of the draft would mean that "increased expenditures would be necessary in the areas of recruiting, public information and advertising."⁵⁰ Butler advised Westmoreland not to oppose the adoption of the AVF, as Army opposition might further fuel anti-draft and anti-war protests, further damaging the Army's public image.⁵¹ Butler's work emphasized the need for further study to develop ways to improve the Army's public image.

After reading the study, Westmoreland concluded that additional research on an all-volunteer force was required. The resulting study, called Project Volunteer in Defense of the Nation (PROVIDE), was published in January 1969. The PROVIDE staff was struck by just how poorly the Army was regarded by the public. Opinion polls revealed that the general public and educators ranked the Army last among the services of preferred enlistment.⁵² The study concluded that rebuilding the Army's public image was a prerequisite for success with an all-volunteer force.⁵³ The PROVIDE study thus established the dual-purposes of Army advertising: recruitment of quality volunteers and rebuilding the Army's public image.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 18.

⁵¹ Ibid., 19.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 22.

The PROVIDE study led the Army leadership to adopt the methods of the marketplace and they accepted advertising as the key means to attract youth in a competitive labor market. Based on demographic research and polling, PROVIDE informed the Army leadership that young Americans would not join the Army based on rational economic decisions, as the Gates Commission had concluded. Advocates of economic rationality, such as Friedman, asserted that a man would enlist if the military service was the best available occupation. Army research revealed that the choice was not automatic and that the Army would have to make a tempting offer in order to win over potential recruits. The Army leadership concluded that they had to “move from models of free-market rationality to models of consumer capitalism, and with mixed feelings, they adopted consumer capitalism’s most powerful tools.”⁵⁴ The most important of those tools was paid television advertising. Potential recruits and the public-at-large would be the “market,” and the Army was to be a “product.”⁵⁵ The Army would have to negotiate with individuals for their enlistment, and television advertising would publicize the Army’s offer.

⁵⁴ Bailey, 49.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 49-50.

CHAPTER 3 - Initial Forays into Paid Broadcast Advertising

After committing themselves to using a market-based approach to recruitment and image reform, the Army turned to its market research and its advertising agency, N. W. Ayer & Son, to produce advertisements that would appeal to the target audiences. The Army would have to overcome its traditional reliance on public service announcements (PSAs) and trust in its advertisers to produce a new style of television ad to capture the public's attention and to inform Americans that the Army was changing. Development of advertising messages and imagery was left largely to the advertisers to craft ads that could avert potential manpower shortfalls once the draft was ended. Army leaders relied on the judgment and experience of their advertisers to produce messages that would aid in recruitment and allow the general public see the Army in a new light. Once the Army and the Ayer agency agreed upon the content of the messages, the Army and the advertisers enthusiastically pushed them on the air in 1971. The basic themes introduced in the 1971 television advertising test, such as respect for individualism and promises of material gain, were enduring ones that would be used throughout the AVF era.

Army leaders were enthusiastic about the prospects offered by paid recruitment advertising. Among the most enthusiastic in promoting the new market-based approach to recruitment was William K. Brehm, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. In July 1969, Brehm called on the Defense Department for “a large increase in Recruiting Command's advertising budget – now.”⁵⁶ Brehm proposed raising the 1971 Army advertising budget from \$3 million to \$36 million, which he believed was necessary “to let

⁵⁶ Griffith, 32.

advertising do for the Army what it has done successfully for business.”⁵⁷ Brehm sought permission to purchase commercial radio and television airtime to reach the new target audiences. Brehm believed that traditional public service announcements (PSAs) would no longer be enough for promoting the Army.

In October 1970, the Department of the Army created the Office of the Special Assistant for the Modern Volunteer Army (SAMVA) to oversee the Army’s transition to an all-volunteer format. Along with U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), SAMVA was responsible for developing new techniques to attract volunteers. Westmoreland selected Lieutenant General George Forsythe to lead the new office.

For the Defense Department Fiscal Year (FY) 1971 budget, the Army asked Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird for \$131 million to fund some of the recruitment incentives devised by SAMVA and USAREC.⁵⁸ While Laird did not authorize the additional funds, he allowed the Army to reprogram available, non-committed funds to the effort. The Army immediately dedicated \$10.6 million to paid radio and TV ad campaigns for that year.⁵⁹ SAMVA and USAREC began to consult with their advertising agency to develop a new advertising campaign, which would include the Army’s first paid television advertisements.

N. W. Ayer & Son had been the Army’s advertising agency since 1967, under contract for \$3 million annually to produce public service announcements for radio and television.⁶⁰ PSAs were not an especially effective means of military recruitment advertising, however, since they were usually only broadcast late at night or in the very early morning hours. Airtime was

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Rostker, 153.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Bailey, 57.

provided only because station owners' FCC licenses required it.⁶¹ Since there was no money to be made from them, the PSAs were buried in the broadcasters' daily schedules. The result was that the target market had virtually no chance of seeing the PSAs.⁶² It is perhaps just as well, since the Ayer campaign theme was a rather uninspiring, "Your Future, Your Decision, Choose Army" slogan, with which SAMVA was very unimpressed. General Forsythe and SAMVA began weekly meetings with the Secretary of the Army to find a new direction for Army advertising.⁶³

SAMVA was filled with young, innovative thinkers. Forsythe referred to them as the "SAMVA warriors" and instructed them to employ the latest studies in behavioral and management studies to gain insight into America's youth. This insight would shape the tone of advertising messages then in development.

In November 1970, USAREC hosted a Joint Recruiting Conference with the other services. At the conference, the Army formally unveiled its plan to conduct a paid broadcast advertising test in prime time.⁶⁴ The Army planned to study local and national markets with phone surveys before and after a broadcast test period.⁶⁵ The other services, recognizing the Army's plans were well ahead of their own, complained to the Defense Department. SAMVA and USAREC defended their plans, asserting that "to achieve the goal of voluntary accessions, it will be necessary to greatly increase the reach and frequency of our advertising delivery, particularly against the prime target audience of young men."⁶⁶ Colonel Henry Beuke, USAREC

⁶¹ Griffith, 117.

⁶² Bailey, 57.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Griffith, 119.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 120.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 121.

Director of Advertising and Information, explained that PSAs were no longer adequate. “Free air time is welcome, but when the need exists to strongly increase reach and frequency against our young men target audience, clearly, public service broadcast cannot be expected to deliver. We must follow the lead of the razor blades, shaving creams, and automobiles, and buy the time necessary to deliver the audiences we need to reach.”⁶⁷ Although the Department of Defense (DoD) leadership, including Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, generally did not favor purchasing airtime for recruiting commercials the Army was allowed to push ahead with its planned test.

Having done their market research, SAMVA believed that the Army was making great “product improvements” that would appeal to youthful volunteers, such as improved pay, better living conditions and relaxed attitudes toward discipline. The key would be making those improvements known to the target audience. As Brehm’s deputy John Kester told a DoD representative in December 1970, “The full and immediate potential of these actions [Army lifestyle-enhancing initiatives], however, cannot be realized unless the public is informed through an extensive and innovative advertising campaign which includes paid radio and TV [advertising].”⁶⁸

To capture the public’s attention, SAMVA told N. W. Ayer that for the advertising test it would have to produce a “head turner” of an ad campaign that would generate “a *dramatic* increase in enlistments,” or SAMVA would “find someone who can.”⁶⁹

N. W. Ayer had to develop a new approach to Army advertising that would “attract public attention, inform the viewers and listeners of the new direction the Army was heading in,

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 122.

⁶⁹ Bailey, 58.

and at the same time, ‘go for accessions.’”⁷⁰ The largest obstacle to overcome was the target audience’s low regard for the Army. As even the PROVIDE study had acknowledged, the Army was not particularly well regarded by American youth. “[Y]oung American men feared that if they joined the Army, they would lose their personal freedom, [and they] would be submerged in an institution that showed no respect for individuality.”⁷¹ The Ayer agency had to craft a message that would allay those fears while promoting the lifestyle improvements that the Army was instituting.

The Ayer agency elected to focus on General Westmoreland’s initiatives to replace “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.’”⁷² N. W. Ayer felt the television ads should stress Westmoreland’s view that Army service should be “more enjoyable, more professionally rewarding, and less burdensome in its impact on our people and their families.”⁷³ Those experimental improvements in Army life and less restrictive policies, collectively known as the Volunteer Army experiments (VOLAR), would play a central role in the messages of the 1971 advertising test.

On 26 January 1971, representatives for N. W. Ayer met with Westmoreland, Forsythe and ranking USAREC officers to consider the central messages of the advertising test. When the advertisers asked Westmoreland what he hoped the ads would look like, he said that he believed the volunteer army should be a partnership between an old institution and a new generation of

⁷⁰ Griffith, 141.

⁷¹ Bailey., 61.

⁷² Ibid., 59.

⁷³ Ibid..

Americans.⁷⁴ Westmoreland pointed to the VOLAR initiatives as proof that the Army was adapting to the changing wants and needs of potential recruits. From that time onward, according to Ted Regan of N. W. Ayer, “VOLAR became for us a U.S.P. [unique selling proposition].”⁷⁵ For Regan, VOLAR sent a message to the potential consumers: “We saw an Army changing to accommodate a different kind of young prospect. I heard the Army saying, ‘The Army is changing; the Army wants to meet you half way.’”⁷⁶

N. W. Ayer came up with several recruiting slogans: “Join the New Army,” “Enlist in the New Army,” “Join a Better Army,” “Join an Improved Army,” “Join a Changing Army,” and “Join Today’s Army.”⁷⁷ The agency eventually presented the Army leadership with “Today’s Army Wants to Join You” and received a less than overwhelming response. General Forsythe recalled, “We all looked at it and thought, ‘They can’t be serious. A big outfit like this and they can’t come up with something better than this?’”⁷⁸ A senior USAREC officer recalled, “God, I just wanted to vomit.”⁷⁹ General Westmoreland asked the ad men, “Do you have to say it that way?”⁸⁰ The agency reminded the generals that the ad campaign was not intended to appeal to men like them, but rather to American youth with a less than positive view of the Army. For N. W. Ayer, the genius of the proposed campaign was that it made enlistment in the Army seem like an exchange between equal parties. “Instead of summoning young men to service with a stern-featured Uncle Sam and a declarative command, this slogan would leave young people thinking

⁷⁴ Ibid., 61.

⁷⁵ Griffith, 141.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Bailey, 61.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 61-62.

⁷⁹ Griffith, 142.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

that ‘the Army is interested in *me*, in *my* needs as well as its own.’”⁸¹ This theme of the Army’s interest in the individual’s needs and wants remained central to the Army’s television commercials throughout the AVF era. Beyond its reassurances that the Army was interested in the needs of the potential recruits, the ads portrayed the Army as a unifying agent in American society in divisive times, advancing the Army’s public image in a time of social upheaval.⁸²

Despite their misgivings, Westmoreland and Forsythe gave their approval to N. W. Ayer’s concept. Apparently no one was more surprised that the Army leaders relented than the ad agency. According to Regan, “We were surprised that the Army bought it.”⁸³ Beth Bailey argues that this deference on the part of the Army leadership to the expertise of the advertisers marked an important shift toward the Army’s acceptance of the role of “the logic of the market” in recruitment advertising.⁸⁴

Paid recruitment advertisements proved to be a stroke of marketing genius. The “SAMVA warriors” and N. W. Ayer had done their homework. Their market research showed that young men inclined toward military service would be more likely to watch television than to read magazines, so they concentrated on producing television ads to be aired during prime-time when the majority of the viewing public would be gathered around their televisions. Prime-time television ads reached the primary target audiences of potential recruits and the general public much more effectively than the old PSAs.⁸⁵ Network television in the 1970s consisted of three major networks that drew wide, diverse audiences.⁸⁶ The target audiences need only look as far

⁸¹ Bailey, 62.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Griffith, 142.

⁸⁴ Bailey, 62.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

as their televisions to see that the Army was changing and that it might be worth reconsidering their opinions about it.

The paid broadcast advertising test began on 1 March 1971. N. W. Ayer purchased airtime on 581 TV stations and 2,200 radio stations.⁸⁷ The ads that ran during the thirteen-week test consisted of twenty-two different radio and television advertisements, half of which stressed the enlistment in combat arms (infantry, armor and artillery), while the other half were “theme” ads that emphasized the Army’s new, recruit-friendly direction.⁸⁸ The ads established themes that would characterize Army advertising through the ensuing decades. Some of the ads shown during the test emphasized job experience or skill training, while others emphasized individuality and personal freedom.⁸⁹ They allowed Americans to see the Army as a benevolent institution, hoping to reconnect with America and its youth without forcing military service on anyone. Themes emphasizing individual opportunity in the Army were showcased, while ideas of public service were absent. The Army, using Moskos’s definitions, was promoting itself, first and foremost, as an occupation as opposed to an institution.

The Department of Defense required that the results of the test be gathered in a scientific and fair manner, “strictly monitored” by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manning and Reserve Affairs).⁹⁰ The ASD(M&RA) told the Army that “[W]e must know and approve in advance messages to be used and the location of the proposed test broadcasts...[and] either (a) to examine and approve the Army’s plan for evaluating the results or (b) to arrange for an outside evaluation by an independent organization obtained by OSD

⁸⁷ Griffith, 142.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Bailey, 66.

⁹⁰ Griffith, 154.

[Office of the Secretary of Defense].”⁹¹ Eager to get started, however, the Army contracted N. W. Ayer as the outside monitoring organization for the test. Obviously, this created a conflict of interest. The advertising “test” was in truth not a test at all, but rather a full-scale implementation of the Army’s “Today’s Army Wants to Join You” campaign. The Army had largely sidestepped the intent of the ASD(M&RA) directives by running the ads in several key markets without an objective monitoring agency. The era of paid television advertising was thus begun with a bit of chicanery on the part of the U.S. Army.

However, the success of the test was readily apparent. During the run of the test, Army enlistments increased by 4,000 new soldiers over the same period of the previous year.⁹² Two significant surveys validated the success of the test, since N. W. Ayer was not a disinterested third party. The first survey, “U.S. Army Recruiting Advertising Test,” was conducted by the polling firm Rome, Arnold & Company of Chicago at the request of N. W. Ayer and USAREC. The second survey commissioned by SAMVA, “Effectiveness of the Modern Volunteer Army Advertising Program,” was conducted by the Stanford Research Institute, an independent non-profit research group. Rome, Arnold & Company evaluated “pre” and “post” telephone surveys on a “random national sample of young civilian men aged 17-21” in late February and on “a different but comparable group in May at the close of the campaign.”⁹³ They evaluated similar phone interviews with fathers of men aged 17-21. “The objective of these surveys was to measure the awareness among the target audience of specific benefits mentioned in the Army’s

⁹¹ Ibid., 155.

⁹² Ibid., 142.

⁹³ Rome, Arnold & Company, “U.S. Advertising Recruiting Advertising Test, September 1971: Executive Summary,” Folder 12: Official Papers, Reports, United States Army Recruiting Advertising Test conducted for United States Army Recruiting and N.W. Ayer and Sons, Inc., Sep 1971, n.d., Box 8: Official Papers, Reports, All Volunteer Army Collection, United States Army Military History Institute, 1.

advertising campaign and to measure the advertising recall of the commercial's copy points."⁹⁴ An additional goal was to "measure the gains in favorability toward the Army as a result of the advertising."⁹⁵ The surveys showed the advertisements had raised awareness and recall of the new Army ads, although the ads apparently had only a minimal effect in changing the audiences' perceptions of the Army. Recall of Army advertising over the course of the paid advertising test rose from 38% to 84% among the young men surveyed and from 14% to 70% among fathers surveyed.⁹⁶ Thirty-four percent of the young men surveyed recalled the Army's new slogan, "Today's Army Wants to Join You," while thirty-five percent of fathers surveyed could recall it.⁹⁷ The report noted, "The study does not demonstrate any gains in young men's verbal attitudes toward the Army, as a result of the advertising,"⁹⁸ but "advertising did produce among fathers, limited but measurable gain in attitudes - particularly in reducing strong negative feelings toward the Army."⁹⁹ In sum, the Rome report concluded that the Army's advertising test was "highly effective in reaching the primary target audience of 17-21 year old men,"¹⁰⁰ while awareness of Army advertising among fathers had "also increased significantly."¹⁰¹ In addition, the Rome report showed that television advertising "overwhelmed all other media as the source of exposure to the new Army advertising campaign," with sixty-nine percent of young

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 4.

men and seventy-one percent of the fathers reporting that they had seen the ads on television as opposed to any other medium.¹⁰²

The Stanford Research Institute (SRI) report supported the Rome report's conclusions. The SRI study similarly concluded that the Army's paid advertising "was very effective in increasing awareness of Army advertising among young male Americans" and that it "was effective in motivating some of these young men to the action represented by making personal inquiry about the Army service for themselves."¹⁰³ The report lauded the placement of the ads "adjacent to programs considered to have high appeal to the primary audience of 17-to-21-year-old males and other persons believed to be able to influence the primary audience," such as "Laugh In," "The Flip Wilson Show," "Bonanza," "Mannix," and "Wide World of Sports."¹⁰⁴ The report also commended the ads' introduction of humor into Army advertising. For instance, one ad featured a man "extolling the features of a tank in the patter of an automobile salesman," prompting a young would-be recruit to exclaim, "I'll take it!"¹⁰⁵ Incidentally, the SRI report noted that the tank commercial was the one most recalled by young men and fathers polled in the Rome report.

The Rome and SRI reports both indicated the power and reach of paid television advertising and served as a vindication of the Army's paid advertising test. Those successes led N. W. Ayer and the Army to plan for another round of paid advertising tests to be conducted

¹⁰² Ibid., 7.

¹⁰³ Stanford Research Institute, "Effectiveness of the Modern Volunteer Army Advertising Program," Folder 11: Printed Materials, "Effectiveness of the Modern Volunteer Army Advertising Program," Stanford Research Institute, Dec 1971, n.d., Box 18: Printed Materials, All Volunteer Army Collection, United States Army Military History Institute, 5.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 94.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 98.

from 26 July to 3 September 1971 for an additional \$3.1 million.¹⁰⁶ However, unforeseen circumstances and the resistance of the influential House Armed Services Committee Chairman, Representative F. Edward Hebert (D-LA), led to the cancellation of the second round of tests. Although the 1971 had indicated the strong potential of paid broadcast advertising in advancing the Army's recruitment and public image reform goals, the positive results of the test were drowned out by congressional criticisms. In the end, Army advertising in the mid-1970s reverted back to the use of PSAs.

¹⁰⁶ Rostker, 156.

CHAPTER 4 - Using the Lessons Learned from the 1971 Test

The Army's plans to continue paid television advertising after the 1971 "test" did not survive congressional criticism. Despite the promising results of the 1971 test and the findings of the Rome and SRI reports, paid television advertising was dropped as a way to communicate the Army messages to its target audiences. However, during the suspension of paid television advertising, N. W. Ayer took the lessons learned from the 1971 test to develop further the messages and imagery of the PSAs. Even though PSA broadcasts were, once again, a low priority for the television station owners, Army message strategy and image development progressed through the mid-1970s.

As previously noted, Representative F. Edward Hebert led the charge against paid military advertising. He strongly felt that government money should not be spent on publicly owned airwaves.¹⁰⁷ Hebert's opposition to broadcast advertising might well have been a budgetary concern, but various authors have indicated that Hebert, a newspaperman in his home state of Louisiana, may have had other reasons for opposing paid broadcast advertising by the military. A CBS documentary called *The Selling of the Pentagon*, a critique of the defense industries and their influence in Washington, had aired in January 1971 and elicited Hebert's ire for the broadcast media.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, radio and television station managers who had not been included in the Army's test complained to their congressmen about the selective distribution of public funds.¹⁰⁹ Other advertising agencies complained to Congress that N. W. Ayer was

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Bailey, 71.

¹⁰⁹ Griffith, 144.

receiving a “sweetheart deal” from the government because the advertising contract for the test ads had been made without a bidding process.¹¹⁰

Secretary of Defense Laird, now past his initial resistance to paid military advertising after hearing of the Army test’s success, complained to President Nixon in August 1971 that the loss of paid broadcast advertising would be an “obstacle to continued progress in Army enlistments,” noting with alarm that the “Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee has indicated a strong determination to prevent further use of paid TV/radio advertising for recruiting.”¹¹¹ The new Secretary of the Army, Robert F. Froehlke, said Hebert’s refusal to allow paid advertising “makes it extremely difficult for us to maintain the momentum of our current effort... and diminishes the Defense Department’s prospects for a volunteer force in the longer term.”¹¹² But Froehlke himself noted in a memo dated 29 July 1971 that, “using paid radio/TV advertising was dead for the time being.”¹¹³ The Army was forced to accept that, for the foreseeable future, television advertisements would revert to PSAs banished to the least desirable time slots on the broadcasters’ schedules. However, N. W. Ayer and the U.S. Army had seen the effect that television commercials with high production quality could have on the target audiences.

With paid television advertising removed as an option for recruiting, the Army began to ponder how it could attract “quality” volunteers. Army leaders regarded recruits entering the service in 1972 as not of the highest caliber.¹¹⁴ In January 1973, USAREC applied higher standards to incoming recruits for recruiters to get credit towards their monthly quotas. The

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Rostker, 172.

¹¹² Griffith, 145.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Rostker, 265-266.

changes in the Army's standards of acceptance resulted in a recruitment shortfall of 12,000 new soldiers in May 1973.¹¹⁵ The Defense Department and Congress began to suspect that the Army, still smarting from the decision to end paid broadcast advertising, was purposely missing its recruitment goals in an effort to sabotage the AVF. Although this charge was never conclusively proven, it remains an interesting possibility. Regardless of the reasons, USAREC reinstated the previous, lower quality requirement for new soldiers in July 1973.¹¹⁶

Army television advertising reverted to PSAs from 1971 to 1976. These PSAs relied on selling points that had been developed for the paid television advertising test of 1971. Like the test ads, the PSAs of the early 1970s never attempted to appeal to recruits' sense of patriotism or civic obligation, and certainly made no mention of combat.

The "John Travolta" PSA from 1973 was typical of the appeal to recruits' monetary consideration. In the 30-second ad, a recruit in Army fatigues (portrayed by a very young John Travolta) stands in front of an Army pay officer, who is behind a stark white counter. Travolta's soldier is clean-cut, but his hair resembles a longer, civilian cut and not a traditional military-style shave. A monotone narration says the soldier is getting his starting pay of \$288 a month pay. Travolta, assisted by a lovely young woman in uniform, then pushes a shopping cart down the counter, where a model of a barracks building is placed on the cart. The narrator then notes that the soldier may not even need the monthly pay, as his housing is free. Moving further down the counter, Travolta meets a beautiful, exotic-looking woman who places a lei around his neck and kisses his cheek as the narrator notes that soldiers receive thirty days of paid vacation a year. The narrator then asks, "What are you going to do with that \$288 every month?" then slyly

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 267.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 271.

notes, “You’ll think of something” as Travolta drives away in a new car.¹¹⁷ The ad’s intent is to get potential recruits thinking of the material gains (and possibly romantic/sexual opportunities) that could be theirs if they sign up for the Army. No mention is made of what Travolta’s soldier actually does in the Army, nor is there any mention of national service. Nothing is being asked of Travolta’s soldier, he does not even need a military-regulation haircut, while his every material wish is literally being handed to him. According to this PSA, Army service is a one-way street, with the Army paying a young man’s way through life and presenting him with a way to gain material advantages (paid vacations, free housing and a new car) while expecting nothing in return for this largesse.

Another sample PSA from this period similarly stresses what a new recruit can expect from the Army while making no mention of the expectations or demands placed on soldiers. In “Goodbye,” a PSA from 1973 produced as part of N. W. Ayer’s “Join the People Who Have Joined the Army” campaign, another young man is telling a succession of beautiful girls that he has joined the Army and must sadly tell them goodbye. The young man tells each of them that he wants her “to be the first to know” of his enlistment. He is handsome, with a civilian-style haircut, and appears to be something of a “ladies’ man.” The punchline for the ad is delivered when one of the girls asks the recruit, “When did you join?” to which he replies with a sly smile, “Oh, actually, last July,” with a voice-over narration explaining that the Army’s Delayed Entry Program (DEP) option allows new recruits up to twelve months to enter the Army after signing the enlistment contract.¹¹⁸ Humor in recruiting advertising, first utilized in the 1971 advertising

¹¹⁷ “30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: John Travolta, 1973”, *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

¹¹⁸ “30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Goodbye, 1973”, *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

test, thus reappeared as the lighter side of a young man's decision to join the Army. Here the Army's DEP enlistment option was portrayed as an opportunity for new recruits to enjoy their personal freedom for a while longer prior to their Army service with, again, no demands or expectations from the Army. The individual's wants, needs and comforts, not the demands of Army life, are the centerpiece of the advertisement.

An Army Reserve commercial from 1974 reflects some new thinking about the Army's target audience for recruitment. Titled "This Weekend," the commercial is aimed specifically at young women, a demographic that the Army and Ayer had not considered important during the 1971 advertising test. The ad shows a series of attractive young women being accosted by would-be suitors. The men ask the various women, "What are you doing this weekend?" with the women's replies varying from tracking a hurricane to packing parachutes and jumping from airplanes. The narrator informs the female audience that they can join other women at a "challenging job" for one weekend a month in the Army Reserve as yet another attractive woman descends a staircase in dress Army uniform to link arms with her civilian beau.¹¹⁹ Unlike the previously mentioned commercials, this one implies that the Army Reserve would demand something of its recruits and notes that the Army Reserve would be challenging. But the "challenge" was not the central theme of the advertisement. Instead, the viewer is left with the impression that the Army Reserve offers a unique adventure for women looking for something different and unusual, instead of a routine life of looking pretty and having an active social life. Realistic depictions of Army life remained largely absent from the PSAs throughout the mid-

¹¹⁹ "30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: This Weekend, 1974", *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

1970s; the focus remained on bargaining with young people on an individual basis in exchange for material benefits.

Paid television advertising was never far from the minds of the Army and DOD leaders during the 1971 to 1976 stoppage. Speaking to Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John Stennis in 1972, Secretary of Defense Laird stressed the potential for television advertising in Army recruiting. Laird told Stennis that “[e]stimates indicate that by using television and radio advertising and without increasing its FY 1973 expenditure for advertising, the Army could obtain more than 10,000 additional male enlistments. . . . We believe that we should have the flexibility to test this option if necessary under careful control by the Office [of the] Secretary of Defense.”¹²⁰ Stennis was more open to the potential of paid advertising than Hebert had been in 1971. When Hebert was ousted from the chairmanship of the House Armed Services Committee by liberal Democrats in 1975, the road appeared open for the military to take another look at paid television advertising.

However, the Defense Department and Army had to demonstrate to Congress that paid advertising was more effective than PSAs. Dr. Al J. Martin, the Defense Department’s Special Assistant for Accessions Policy, devised a new criteria for testing ad effectiveness. Following the basic methodology of the 1971 Army test, Martin used telephone surveys before, during and after some paid radio commercials aired in October 1975. The study reported that “[e]nough statistically significant results were found in excess of the number expected by chance to warrant the conclusion that paid radio made an incremental contribution to the advertising and recruiting programs of the Services as a whole in test markets where used in conjunction with other media

¹²⁰ Rostker, 282.

advertising.”¹²¹ This confirmed the findings of the Army’s test in 1971. As a result, paid advertisements were again allowed by Congress for use in military recruiting efforts beginning in October 1976.¹²²

Despite the continued development and increasing sophistication of Army PSA advertising and the reintroduction of paid advertising in 1976, Army recruiting in the late 1970s was in a moribund state. The Army missed its recruiting goals in 1979 by 17,000 recruits. Less than stellar recruiting numbers, combined with reports of unethical recruitment practices (including falsifying high school diplomas and concealing recruits’ police records) led policymakers and some military leaders to consider that the AVF might very well have been a mistake and that the low quality of volunteers threatened the nation’s security. As the baby boom generation grew older, the pool of military-eligible young men was growing smaller.¹²³ To make matters worse, research revealed that among this smaller population, willingness to serve in the military was gradually eroding. Increased aspirations to attend college and a general disinclination toward public service characterized youth attitudes of late 1970s. This lack of interest, combined with the problems of crime, demoralization and prevalent drug use within the Army, led the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Edward C. “Shy” Meyer, to label the late 1970s force as the “Hollow Army.” As the decade closed, Army advertising appeared to be failing in both its recruitment and public-image enhancement functions. If the situation had not changed, the success of AVF itself might well have been threatened.

¹²¹ Ibid., 350.

¹²² Ibid., 283.

¹²³ David C. King and Zachary Karabell, *The Generation of Trust: How the U.S. Military Has Regained the Public’s Confidence Since Vietnam*, (Washington, D.C.: The AEI Press, 2003), 71.

CHAPTER 5 - **Early 1980s: Success in Recruitment and Public**

Image Enhancement

Army recruitment at the dawn of the 1980s appeared to be a lost cause. Increasing disinterest among youth, recruiting scandals and lingering low public esteem for the Army threatened recruitment efforts. Beginning in 1980, under the vigorous leadership of General Maxwell Reid Thurman, U.S. Army Recruiting Command made great strides in turning the desperate situation around. During Thurman's tenure, USAREC and N. W. Ayer created one of the most successful advertising campaigns of all time, "Be All You Can Be." At the same time, politicians such as President Ronald Reagan along with the media publicly praised the nation's military. Portrayals of the services in public discourse and in popular entertainment began to raise public esteem for the military just as advertising was showing Americans a new, "can-do" Army armed with the latest technology. For Army television advertising, the early 1980s were a golden age. However, as in the 1970s ads, the "Be All You Can Be" campaign continued to emphasize the Army's willingness to negotiate with individuals while deemphasizing the demands of Army life and the institutional values of the service. All the while, Hollywood, media pundits and politicians increasingly took over the image-crafting function that had originally been intended as a component of Army advertising.

In 1979, facing grim recruiting prospects, General Meyer appointed General Thurman to take over and revitalize USAREC. In 1992, Thurman recalled how he received the assignment: "So, one morning along about mid-November [1979], I got a call from the Chief, General Shy Meyer. He had a direct line to my phone. He said, 'Come over here; I want to talk to you.' So I

went over there. He said, “You are going to go out and command the Recruiting Command.’ I said, ‘Who are you talking to? You aren’t talking to me.’ I turned around and he said, ‘Now look, you son of a bitch, you are going to go out and command the Recruiting Command. I want you there in two weeks to take it over.’”¹²⁴ Despite his seeming lack of enthusiasm at the outset, the man regarded by many authors as the single most important individual to Army advertising took over the troubled command.¹²⁵

Almost immediately, Thurman decided that changes needed to be made to both USAREC and the existing advertising. He wanted the organization to take new steps to advance the dual purposes of making the service more appealing to potential recruits and improving the Army’s image. After implementing new oversight procedures at recruiting stations around the country, Thurman turned his attention to the state of Army advertising. Thurman derisively referred to N. W. Ayer as “the people who had given the Army the famous, ‘The Army wants to join you,’ and other such not so great slogans.”¹²⁶ Thurman intended to “grab hold of the advertising business... to change the product.”¹²⁷ For Thurman, Army advertising was “to orient [the] product on the person to whom the sale was meant to be made,” which he believed USAREC advertising in the 1970s had failed to do.¹²⁸ Thurman believed that USAREC officials should learn more about advertising and that the Ayer agency should be producing commercials under closer direction from USAREC. Thurman wanted Army advertising to convey the advantages of

¹²⁴ Maxwell R. Thurman, *Oral History* [Transcript], 1992, Tape T154 - Side 2, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 188-189.

¹²⁵ Rostker, 387.

¹²⁶ Maxwell R. Thurman, *Oral History* [Transcript], 1992, Tape T157- Side 1, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 197.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

Army service. For Thurman, promising young people material comfort in exchange for signing up was not the central message that the Army should be sending. Thurman recalled a “come to Jesus” talk with the account executives at N. W. Ayer in Chicago, in which he fired the account manager and informed the agency “that I was in charge of advertising. They weren’t in charge of it, I was.”¹²⁹ After this harsh beginning, Thurman later recalled, USAREC and N. W. Ayer “became a team” that worked together (under Thurman’s stringent terms) to produce a new vision of the Army. The result was the “Be All You Can Be” campaign of 1980, one of the most memorable campaigns in the history of advertising.¹³⁰

In a 1996 book on the AVF, Thurman described thirteen important actions that turned the 1979 recruiting failure around. One of the actions he listed was the development of a new marketing research program aimed at gaining a better understanding of America’s youth and what advertising messages would appeal to them.¹³¹ The research initiative was a joint venture conducted by USAREC, N. W. Ayer, the RAND Corporation, the United States Military Academy at West Point, and the Army Research Institute (ARI). The research relied heavily on data collected by the Defense Department’s Youth Attitudinal Tracking Surveys (YATS), an annual survey that gauged youth attitudes toward the armed services. Additionally, marketing focus groups were used to determine the types of imagery and messages that most appealed to the youthful audience. Thurman claimed that this joint research venture in market research was extremely valuable in guiding his decisions regarding advertising, because “[u]nderstanding the

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Rostker, 390.

¹³¹ Maxwell R. Thurman, “On Being All You Can Be,” in Eric J. Fredland, Curtis L. Gilroy, Roger D. Little, and W.S. Sellman, eds. *Professionals on the Front Line: Two Decades of the All-Volunteer Force* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 1996), 59-60.

market is crucial to business success.”¹³² The Army’s research showed that while potential recruits still sought acknowledgement of their individual identities, educational opportunities and learning marketable skills were also important to them as they faced a recession in the early 1980s. The “Be All You Can Be” campaign was tailored to assure potential recruits that the Army could provide those things, a durable message that would remain in Army advertising for decades. However, despite Thurman’s assertions to the contrary, the 1980s messages with their continued willingness to strike bargains with individual recruits in exchange for their enlistment were not terribly different from those of the 1970s.

Thurman credited the Army’s “Be All You Can Be” campaign with changing the public’s perception of the Army from “Willie and Joe” to the “high-tech Army of Desert Storm featuring Abrams tanks, Apache helicopters and, most important, quality people.”¹³³ Television ads were the centerpiece of the campaign, which premiered in 1980. The Army’s “blitz” campaign attempted to ingrain Army imagery into youthful minds through broad exposure and repetition. Besides broadcast and print advertising, half a million bumper stickers were printed, and “Be All That You Can Be!” music was distributed to 16,000 high school band directors.¹³⁴ The new campaign was aggressive and upbeat and promised American youth adventure, skill training and a dependable income while acknowledging and respecting their individualism. Patriotic appeals for national service were absent from the Army’s messages of the early 1980s.

The memorable 1982 ad, “9 a.m.,” is typical of Thurman’s new Army ads. Set to the upbeat Army tune, “Be All That You Can Be!” that contains lines such as “You’re reaching deep inside you” and “It’s been rough – tough going – but you haven’t gone alone!” the ad depicts an

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 60.

¹³⁴ King, 73.

early morning airborne drop from the perspective of a young soldier. Featuring impressive military machines (an Air Force C-130 transport aircraft and a wheeled personnel transport dropped by parachute), the commercial shows airborne soldiers dropping to the ground, recovering the vehicle and moving out smartly as the narrator notes that “We do more before 9 a.m. than most people do all day.” The ad ends with the young African American soldier sitting on the ground drinking from a tin canteen cup, cheerfully saying, “Hey, First Sergeant. Good morning!”¹³⁵ While the ad’s themes of personal challenge and high-tech Army equipment largely depart from 1970s ads featuring pay and benefits, the focus in the ad remains on the individual soldier, just as in those earlier ads. He is clearly a competent young man who, with his Army training, met the challenges he has faced and became better for the experience. He is a member of a team and is readily accepted by his teammates. No mention is made of his pay or benefits, just as his motivation for enlisting in the first place remains unknown. The demands placed on the soldier are also absent from the ad. The ad is a straightforward offer of social acceptance, job training and confidence-building in the face of adversity. Like the ads of the 1970s, this ad is an offer from the Army to the individual, with no mention being made of what the Army would expect in turn.

A different theme, “opportunity,” is featured in another commercial from that ad campaign. In “Theme Rev.” from 1982, a small, racially-mixed high school class of men and women is featured in the opening shot. The narrator acknowledges that “Right now, the one thing you want most is an opportunity.” The rest of the commercial features an assortment of soldiers performing various Army activities including jumping from airplanes, working with

¹³⁵ “30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: 9 a.m., 1982”, *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

high-tech radar scopes, writing Korean-language characters on a blackboard, and running through the woods with camouflage-painted faces. It ends with a young soldier, surrounded by two smiling friends, being handed his sergeant stripes by a smiling, older-looking soldier (presumably his first sergeant).¹³⁶ This ad provides a new take on the recurring theme of the Army providing for its recruits while asking for precious little in return. The message conveyed was that regardless of whether the person was a technophile, an adrenaline junkie, or mechanically inclined, the Army could suit his or her individual tastes with a job doing whatever it was that appealed to him or her.

The Army College Fund (ACF) was a new program featured in the campaign's advertising to entice recruits with college aspirations. In the ad "Good Company," the ACF is the centerpiece. The narrator begins, "Last year, 90,000 high school graduates joined the Army." Against a backdrop of soldiers exercising, riding in armored personnel carriers and tanks, and conducting field training, the narrator explains that some of those graduates joined for the challenge, some for the excitement, while others came for the new ACF. He then explains the terms of the ACF, where for every dollar a soldier contributed toward his education, the Army would contribute "five or more" for a total of \$15,200 of college money after two years of enlisted service. The ACF informational booklet is featured in its own shot near the end of the ad.¹³⁷ This ad is the clearest yet in stating a *quid pro quo* exchange to America's youth: sign up for the Army, and the Army will help provide for your education. Just as in the 1970s, the Army is presenting itself as a short-term means to better one's lot in life.

¹³⁶ "30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Theme Rev., 1982", *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

¹³⁷ "30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Good Company, 1983," *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

New technologies and weaponry figure prominently in the ads of the early 1980s, demonstrating that the Army would expose recruits to cutting-edge technology. “Bradley” is one such advertisement showcasing Army technology. The ad features an infantry team returning from a night mission in some misty, wooded terrain. They are heavily camouflaged, with night-vision goggles and a sophisticated FM radio to communicate with a nearby M-2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV). The vehicle commander receives the infantrymen’s message from his position inside the vehicle, while the narrator explains that “in today’s Army” infantrymen are “armed with technology.” The vehicle commander declares that with the thermal sights of his Bradley, he “can turn night into day, and guide his unit home.”¹³⁸ The ad promises America’s youth that, in the Army, they will learn the latest in technology, with an underlying suggestion that this will serve them well in their post-Army careers. This advertisement offers imagery meant to appeal to the adrenaline junkies who might enjoy the combat-oriented aspects of Army life (as portrayed by the dismounted but still technologically outfitted soldiers) as well as to recruits who might be enamored with high-tech gadgetry. The ads did not depict a combat scene or give any impression of what a Bradley was actually supposed to do in battle. The imagery and the Army’s offer are simple and non-threatening: join the Army and get a unique chance to play with some amazing toys.

The promise of high-tech training pervades many of the ads of the 1980s. In “Space Age,” a young soldier looks straight into the camera and tells the viewer, “Technology is taking over the world. You can keep up with it, or you’re going to be left behind. That’s why I joined the Army.” As the viewer is treated to images of soldiers at work inside a radar station, the

¹³⁸ “30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Bradley, 1983,” *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

narrator tells the viewer that the “world’s largest school for high-tech skills is the Army.” The soldier, upon the successful completion of his mission inside the station, informs the viewer, “I don’t intend to get left behind.”¹³⁹ The dialogue is intended less to highlight the high-tech skills the Army offered new soldiers than to threaten young people with occupational obsolescence. It conveys the idea that technology is moving quickly and that some would be “left behind.” The ad holds up the Army as a chance for young people to gain marketable skills in a technologically demanding environment. The ad’s tone is so urgent that it seemingly leaves the viewer with a momentous choice: join the Army and remain marketable, or run the risk of being unemployable in a world where technology is “taking over.”

Patriotism, commitment and selfless service remained absent from the Army’s advertising campaign of the early 1980s. Appealing to young Americans’ hopes to improve their economic, educational and social mobility, the Army’s ads conveyed a familiar message: join the Army for the short term, and your dreams of a promising future after your time in the service will be realized. The ads were not selling the Army’s mission to fight and win the nation’s wars, the demands of an Army career, or patriotism as a public virtue. Yet it was in the early 1980s that public patriotism and an idealized image of soldiers began to emerge in the public consciousness. Army television advertising was not the impetus for this emergence, however. Important sources for this resurgence in patriotic fervor included President Ronald Reagan and Hollywood.

President Reagan continually praised the men and women of America’s armed forces and held them up as exemplars of civic virtue. Reagan wished to bolster the image of servicemen

¹³⁹ “30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Space Age, 1984,” *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

and women and to reverse the prevalent anti-militarism of the Vietnam and Watergate era. Andrew Bacevich noted that President Jimmy Carter seemed to forget to ask for the public's support of the military, whereas Reagan emphasized the importance of creating a new, mythic image for soldiers. According to Bacevich, "Carter managed to convey the impression that he took American soldiers for granted. Ronald Reagan made a point of emphasizing that he did not."¹⁴⁰ Reagan spoke often of servicemembers in his public addresses and told Americans that they were special people. Reagan's exultation of the military evoked the "good old days" of public, vocal patriotism.

Reagan's reasons for elevating soldiers to this lofty position of public regard were simple, according to Bacevich. He argues in *The New American Militarism*, "Celebrating the American in uniform, past and present, offered Reagan a means of rallying support for his broader political agenda. His manipulation of symbols also offered a sanitized version of U.S. military history and fostered a romanticized portrait of those who made it. These were essential to reversing the anti-military climate that was a by-product of Vietnam and by extension essential to policies that Reagan intended to implement."¹⁴¹

Reagan's elevation of the American soldier influenced how Americans viewed their civic responsibilities. Reagan's public support for the troops set America's military on a pedestal *apart from* mainstream America. Reagan had helped to create a myth of a noble class of soldiers, exemplifying all that was good in America, but somehow not part of day-to-day America.¹⁴² While Reagan and others praised the U.S. military, the interest of young people in military service steadily declined during this same period.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Bacevich, 105.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., 109.

Americans had been losing a sense of identification with the military before the 1980s. In the 1950s, public opinion data showed that Americans had gained knowledge of the military largely from family members or friends who had served. Exposure to the military in this earlier generation did not depend on the mass media or public figures; they experienced it through the memories of those close to them.¹⁴⁴ In the draft era, the rotation of citizens through the ranks created a large population of veterans, obviating the need for myths and rendering idealization of the military and warfare impossible.¹⁴⁵ However, beginning in the 1960s, media depictions of the armed services became much more influential in shaping the public's perception of its military. Most Americans of military age in the 1960s were not needed for military service, barring the outbreak of World War III. So the public began losing its ability to identify with soldiers and that trend continued through the 1970s and beyond. The lack of familiarity with veterans contributed to the growing disinterest among America's youth in military service in the 1980s, even as the president and the mass media were extolling the virtues of America's service members.¹⁴⁶

The aura of the American soldier removed him from the purview of the American citizen, enabling the young to trust that someone else would shoulder the burden. Americans bought into the idea that there was a separate class of people who would fill the ranks of the U.S. military. According to authors Roth-Douquet and Schaeffer, Middle America believed it had moved "beyond" military service. "With all those college degrees and the upward mobility, the idea of

¹⁴³ Sackett, 158-159.

¹⁴⁴ Lisa M. Munday, *Images of the Armed Forces in American Popular Culture, 1945-1970*, Doctoral Dissertation, (Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University, 2006), 15.

¹⁴⁵ Bacevich, 98.

¹⁴⁶ Sackett, 223.

military service had been abandoned.”¹⁴⁷ “Citizenship” in Reagan’s America did not require a commitment to national service; “the assumption was that one’s children didn’t need to do anything to earn citizenship other than get good grades and then a good job as fast as possible.”¹⁴⁸ Affluence and the material comforts provided by a good-paying job outside of the military increasingly trumped the offers being made by the Army’s advertisements. “When recruitment appeals are essentially occupational, a young man is unlikely to enlist if doing so makes no sense in occupational terms. The army’s ‘Be All That You Can Be’ advertising slogan – the ultimate me-decade line – cannot be effective in recruiting those for whom the army clearly does not offer a plausible means for maximizing their potential.”¹⁴⁹ By the early-to-mid 1980s, it was becoming increasingly clear that since the Army had opted to compete with other employers for the pool of American youth, its offers had to remain competitive in order to keep the youths’ attention.

As President Reagan praised America’s men and women in uniform, an outpouring of support arose from Hollywood and the media. While Army ads busied themselves making *quid pro quo* deals with individuals, movie and television producers took it upon themselves to tell Americans what values guided the military. In its portrayal of the military, Hollywood increasingly stressed just how different military men and women were from other Americans.

Andrew Bacevich observes, “[T]here can be no doubt that prevailing attitudes toward the armed services underwent a sea-change during the Reagan era. Nowhere was this transformation more clearly in evidence than in Hollywood.... [S]ome filmmakers began to evolve a more

¹⁴⁷ Roth-Douquet, 100.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁴⁹ John H. Faris, “The Influence of Bureaucratic Rationalism,” in Charles C. Moskos and Frank R. Wood, *The Military: More than Just a Job?* (McLean, VA: Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, 1988), 66.

sympathetic portrayal – in essence producing celluloid adaptations of various Reaganesque motifs. In the course of doing so, they made a great deal of money and – whether intentionally or not – helped to etch more deeply into the popular consciousness interpretations of war, military life, and recent U.S. military history that Reagan himself was enthusiastically promoting.”¹⁵⁰ Hollywood created a new icon: the “action-adventure hero.” Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone and others created roles that emphasized guns, explosions and speedy getaways. Like the mythic soldier, action-adventure heroes were a breed apart from everyday Americans. Both the mythic soldier and action hero could resolve problems through firepower and action, while possessing moral self-assuredness. One explanation for the success of military and action films is that working-class white men (the primary audiences for 1980s action films) “had to contend with increasing economic instability and dislocation, the perception of gains by people of color at the expense of the White working class, and a women’s movement that overtly challenged male hegemony. In the face of these pressures, then, it is not surprising that White men (especially but not exclusively working-class) would latch onto big, muscular, violent men as cinematic heroes.”¹⁵¹ According to Jackson Katz, for white males threatened by a perceived loss of status, accepting Hollywood images of manly action heroes provided “a concrete means of achieving and asserting ‘manhood.’”¹⁵²

The “war picture” had been a Hollywood staple since the beginnings of the film industry. Depictions of war and soldiers provide drama and action for audiences. In the 1980s, images of American armed forces were overwhelmingly positive. Many military-themed films of the 1980s did exceptionally well at the box office and provided Americans with a new, idealized

¹⁵⁰ Bacevich., 111.

¹⁵¹ Katz, 134.

¹⁵² Ibid., 135.

vision of those who served in America's Army even as the gulf between the public and the military grew. Americans became enamored with an image of its military. The reality of military service, however, held increasingly little appeal for Americans.

Military-themed movies were among the biggest box office draws in the early-to-mid 1980s. In 1982, *An Officer and a Gentleman* was the year's third grossing film with \$129 million.¹⁵³ The *Rambo* series of films portrayed the near-superheroic efforts of a forgotten soldier from the Vietnam War who embodied honor and love of country but found himself battling not only foreign enemies, but ignoble, "oily and conniving politicians" at home.¹⁵⁴ The biggest military film of the 1980s was Tom Cruise's *Top Gun* (1986). Andrew Bacevich notes that "[w]hereas *First Blood Part II* picked at old wounds, *Top Gun* magically made those wounds disappear.... [I]t offered a glittering new image of warfare especially suited to American strengths.... [I]t invested military life with a hipness not seen even in the heyday of World War II propaganda movies."¹⁵⁵ *Top Gun* was the top grossing movie of 1986 with \$176 million in earnings.¹⁵⁶ The film conveyed the message that war is a sanitized, technology-based affair in which the good guys face challenges, but win out in the end over a nameless, faceless enemy.¹⁵⁷ *Top Gun* depicted America's warrior class with "individual daring and heroism, mastery of technology, patriotism, masculine power."¹⁵⁸ Hollywood depictions of new, technology-based "clean" warfare executed by highly competent and clean-cut warriors prepared

¹⁵³ Bacevich, 111.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁵⁸ Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard. *The Hollywood War Machine: U.S. Militarism and Popular Culture* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), 170.

Americans “for Desert Storm with the glorification of military heroism mixed with a fetishism of high-tech weaponry.”¹⁵⁹ According to Bacevich, 1980s America was ready to believe in the abilities of the new, mythic warriors depicted by Hollywood. Bacevich argues that the films “created a second competing narrative [in opposition to 1970s anti-militarism], one that depicted soldiers, military life, and war itself in ways that would have been either unthinkable or unmarketable in the immediate aftermath of Vietnam.”¹⁶⁰

Jackson Katz also asserts that it was not just Hollywood that advanced a new image of manliness in the 1980s. He argues that both Army and non-military advertising promoted products that appealed to white male consumers looking to capture and project a manly, adventurous image for themselves.¹⁶¹ Although some Army advertising of the 1980s showed the “gung ho” type of imagery Katz is discussing, the prevailing messages of the Army’s ads had more to do with promising opportunities to new recruits and preparing them for their post-Army careers than with soothing white, working-class male egos.

The early-to-mid 1980s presented a paradox for Army recruiting. The president and the media were crafting a mythic class of virtuous and noble warriors whose purpose was to defend the nation. At the same time, America’s youth, with fewer and fewer first-hand ties to the military, was growing increasingly enamored with the upward mobility and affluence promised through college attendance and a high-paying job. Military service, while enjoying elevated public status and image, was increasingly losing its appeal among youth, resulting in growing challenges for the Army’s advertisers and recruiters.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 172.

¹⁶⁰ Bacevich, 116.

¹⁶¹ Katz, 135.

CHAPTER 6 - Promises of Educational and Occupational Opportunities

As the 1980s wore on, Army television advertising focused more on explicit promises of educational opportunity and preparing recruits for their future careers after their Army service. Explicit messages equating Army service as a *quid pro quo* exchange with individuals to realize their future career and educational goals dominated Army television advertising of the late 1980s through the 1990s. While television advertising around the time of the 1991 Gulf War featured some patriotic imagery and messages, the overwhelming majority of advertisements of the period focused recruits on promises that the Army could make dreams of a good job and college attendance come true. The Gulf War-inspired ads and PSAs notwithstanding, patriotism and public service remained absent from most Army advertising. Ads from this time also did little to advance the Army's efforts to improve its image with the public; media coverage of the victory over Iraq in 1991 did more to enhance the military's public image than advertising messages possibly could.

The Army's focus on more explicit offers of educational and occupational assistance in exchange for a few years of service appears to have coincided with a change in advertising agencies. In 1988, the advertising firm Young & Rubicam took over the Army's account from the Ayer agency. They continued the "Be All You Can Be" campaign, but supplemented it with a new slogan, "Get an Edge on Life." The new campaign pushed the idea of Army service as an opportunity to learn marketable skills for a post-Army career. While this theme had always been a part of Army advertising, the explicitness of the theme in the Young & Rubicam's ads beginning in the late 1980s is striking. Indeed, Army service was not the focus of the ads at all.

Rather, the Army was portrayed as merely a means toward a better and more lucrative job sometime in the future. Acknowledging the new emphasis among American youth towards upward mobility, Young & Rubicam and the Army stressed how enlisting in the Army could help America's youth achieve future material success.

The 1988 ad "Survey" opens with the narrator explaining, "According to a national survey, employers are looking for people who can handle heavy responsibilities," as an Abrams tank crests a hill. The viewer is informed that employers are looking for "people who can overcome obstacles," as three soldiers cross a rope bridge in full combat gear. Employees who can "perform under pressure," demonstrated by a soldier rappelling down the face of a rock cliff, are desired. Employers want "someone who can work well with others," just like the team of armed soldiers moving into the landing zone of a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter. The advertisement concludes with the narrator stating, "Which is why some of the most successful people in the white-collar world, start off green," as an armed soldier in full combat gear jumps from the back of a Bradley IFV and transforms into a stereotypical 1980s businessman, brandishing a briefcase and red "power tie."¹⁶² The appeal to young, career-minded potential recruits is unmistakable. Young & Rubicam's advertisement, while showing action packed depictions of Army life, is attempting to depict temporary Army service as laying the groundwork for some future, affluent career. As America's youth were looking toward college attendance and civilian employment to get high-paying careers, the Army was presenting itself as an alternative means toward that goal. Instead of capitalizing on an improved public image fostered by 1980s mass media, Army advertising by 1988 was appealing to American youths'

¹⁶² "30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Survey, 1988," *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

dreams of economic comfort. Commitment, national service and civic responsibility were not featured in the Young & Rubicam “Get an Edge on Life” series of advertisements.

Another example of Young & Rubicam’s explicit appeals to youth career aspirations is the 1988 advertisement “Take off.” Opening with UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters landing on a hilltop (the same helicopters featured in the “Survey” ad), the narrator states, “If you want to land a good job, you have to know what most employers want: like how to motivate yourself; how to lead others; how to perform under pressure.” As he says this, a team of armed soldiers in full combat gear move towards the landing Blackhawk, as the team leader shouts “Let’s go! Let’s go!” The narrator assures the viewer that “You can learn all these things in the Army. So no matter what career you choose, you’ll really be ready to ‘take off,’” as the team embarks on the Blackhawk and depart the landing zone. The “Be All You Can Be” music plays, as the text “Get an Edge on Life” is displayed, followed by a frame with the text “Army. Be All You Can Be.”¹⁶³

Young & Rubicam and the USAREC advertising managers, painfully aware of the growing preference of American youth for finding the road to success without serving in the Army, seemed almost desperate to convey the notion that career success and Army service were not mutually exclusive. As seen in the “Survey” advertisement, the Army seemed to understand that it was losing the battle to capture youth interest and was therefore presenting itself as helpful route to achieving non-military career success. The values of Army service itself were not presented. The Army in these ads was merely a stepping stone to another career that offered more material comforts and more money.

¹⁶³ “30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Take off, 1988,” *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

Army advertising's golden age of the 1980s presented messages that were similar to those of the 1970s. The advertisements still offered recruits *quid pro quo* deals. Promises of marketable skill training, educational opportunities and exposure to high-tech equipment merely replaced the earlier promises of free housing and concern for a recruit's individuality. As the Army continued to strike individual bargains with recruits through its advertising, the media and prominent Americans created a mythic image of soldiers that Americans could get behind. The Army focused on the recruitment function of its advertising, while the image-enhancement function was taken over by other sources not directly connected to the Army. The new imagery raised the public esteem of soldiers but did little to fill the ranks of the service or to check the growing lack of interest toward military service among American youth in the 1980s.

By invading Kuwait in the late summer of 1990, Saddam Hussein set into motion a series of events that would change the messages in U.S. Army advertising in the early 1990s, but only for a very limited time. The American military's success in liberating Kuwait in Operation Desert Storm cemented the mythic image of the American soldier as a respected, competent and valuable member of American society. Aided by the latest high-tech weapon systems, the Army's exploits in the Kuwaiti deserts in 1991 were broadcast to a captivated nation on the 24-hour news network CNN. The apparent ease of defeating the Iraqi invaders, the low numbers of American casualties, and the near-unlimited reach of America's high-tech weapons all lent themselves to national self-congratulations and a lasting high regard for the Army and its soldiers. The "stain" of Vietnam had seemingly been purged from both the Army and the nation's conscience by the military success in Kuwait. The raised esteem for soldiers would shape Army television advertising of the early 1990s. But even as Americans celebrated the conclusion of a "good war," recruitment difficulties, fueled by continued youth disinterest in

military service and a booming economy, plagued the Army in the 1990s. By the end of the decade, limited youth interest and a “reduction in force” conducted by the Defense Department left a much smaller force than the one that deployed for Operation Desert Storm.

The military’s performance in Kuwait demonstrated to the American people that the military was a quality force, capable of handling a serious threat to international peace while employing only as much force as necessary. The Gulf War was a limited war with limited objectives, led by experienced professionals and manned by true volunteers. The force that won the “100 hours war” on the ground in Kuwait exemplified the image of professional competence and compassion that Americans had come to believe characterized their armed forces.

Americans were united behind their military in a way that had not been experienced since before the Vietnam era. The 1980s Hollywood imagery of “the soldier” seemed to have been realized in the Gulf War. The differences between soldiers and the rest of America seemed more pronounced after the war. A *Newsweek* correspondent noted that the men and women of the armed forces “looked like a Norman Rockwell painting come to life. They were young, confident, and hardworking, and they went about their business with poise and élan.”¹⁶⁴

Soldiers, the media in 1991 trumpeted, were more virtuous and happy than the rest of America. Historian Victor David Hanson claimed that the armed forces had “somehow distilled from the rest of us an elite cohort” that represented values from a bygone and better America.¹⁶⁵

The Gulf War, watched by millions of Americans nightly, was a true media spectacle.¹⁶⁶ All Americans had to do was turn on the television to feel like part of history in the making. War, a dangerous and dirty affair, was suddenly sanitized and safe to witness for the entire

¹⁶⁴ Bacevich, 23.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁶⁶ Boggs, 130.

nation. The destruction of the Iraqi Army was presented to the American public “as an entertaining spectacle, a kind of hyperinflated series of video games ideal for home-TV consumption.”¹⁶⁷ War had become a spectator sport, where the American public could “support” and feel connected to the soldiers fighting in Iraq but know that they were not being called upon to sacrifice the safety of their living rooms. “Reinforcing this enthusiasm was the expectation that the great majority of Americans could count on being able to enjoy this new type of war from a safe distance.”¹⁶⁸ Bacevich summed up Americans’ perspective thusly, “As with their favorite professional football team, Americans cheer[ed] the troops on with verve and enthusiasm. Increasingly, however, they [had] about as much in common with real warriors as they [did] with the gridiron warriors inhabiting a typical NFL locker room.”¹⁶⁹

Army advertising from the early 1990s capitalized on the renewed public sentimentality for the Army and its soldiers, but would do so only for a short time. The ads immediately after the war introduced patriotic imagery and concepts such as commitment and national service, which had been absent in Army advertising over the previous twenty years. The advertisement “Freedom Isn’t Free” ran as a paid ad and as a PSA in 1991. It starts with various images of soldiers performing exciting, dangerous feats such as high altitude parachuting and rappelling down a rock wall. Next, a black frame appears with “Courage” written in large white letters. More images appear showing an Apache attack helicopter in flight and a female soldier working at a high-tech radar scope. The music is subdued, but with a military drum roll. “Competence” is the next frame that appears on a black background. Soldiers in desert camouflage are shown running in a desert environment (presumably Kuwait) next to a desert-painted Bradley IFV.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 173.

¹⁶⁸ Bacevich, 24.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 28.

“Commitment” is the next word featured, followed by the words “Because” and “Freedom Isn’t Free.” The music then turns into a rock and roll song called “My Hometown.” For the first time ever in an Army commercial, an American flag is featured fluttering in the breeze as Boy Scouts salute it. The songs lyrics “My hometown... is not like this” blare as two soldiers run down a sand dune with weapons drawn. As more running soldiers, tanks and vehicles pass on the screen, the song proclaims that it was “alright with me” that the battlefield was not like home, “because I’m out here... for my hometown, because freedom isn’t free!” as scenes from back home (teenagers kissing at a drive in restaurant, veterans running the flag up a pole, a beautiful girl of about eleven years old holding her hand over her heart) appear on the screen.¹⁷⁰ The advertisement is a reinforcement of the “good soldier” image popularized in the 1980s and verified in the just-completed Gulf War. The theme is that courageous, competent professionals are in a very inhospitable place to allow Americans to lead normal lives in “my hometown.” Oddly the advertisement makes no appeal for Americans to join the Army in this vital mission of preserving freedom. The ad appears to be telling the viewer, “Remember that there are Americans in harm’s way tonight, but they can manage America’s enemies without you. Enjoy your freedom, courtesy of the U.S. Army.” This ad, then, was aimed at the Army’s secondary goal, public relations enhancement, without addressing the primary goal of personnel recruitment.

The flag waving and feel-good imagery of the 1991 ad campaign were relatively short-lived. The target demographic for recruitment remained more interested in attending college and landing a high-paying job than paying a price for “freedom that wasn’t free.” In “Survey II,”

¹⁷⁰ “30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Freedom Isn’t Free PSA, 1991,” *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

techno music plays as images show soldiers engaged in high-tech and exciting activities (high altitude airborne jumps, running in the desert next to a Bradley IFV, laying bridges, running in formation, flying helicopters). Black screens appear that say “Army training develops qualities” “9 out of 10 employers look for.” The last shots show a high-altitude jumper’s feet hitting the ground, but the camera pans up to show him wearing a collared shirt, tie and hard hat, rolled up plans under his arm, amid a construction site.¹⁷¹ American flags fluttering in the breeze were no longer apparent and defending one’s hometown was no longer a reason to enlist. USAREC and Young & Rubicam had gone back to promoting the Army only as a means to achieve a lucrative future career.

The 1993 advertisement “Résumé” is another example of the return to explicit promises to provide recruits with career-enhancing skills. The ad features fast-paced images of high-tech Army equipment (helicopters, radars, and computers) and Army personnel who possess marketable skills (computer programmers, doctors, and air traffic controllers). Black screens ask the viewer “So” “What’s On Your Résumé?” More images appear, then the black screens proclaim “Army Training Develops Qualities” “9 Out of 10 Employers Look For.” More images appear and then, on black screens: “Be” “All” “You” “Can” “Be.”¹⁷² Again, as in the late 1980s, potential recruits are promised future rewards for short-term service.

Shortly after forces returned home from Southwest Asia, the Defense Department began a widespread personnel reduction. The era of the large, Cold War-era Army was coming to a close. Operation Desert Storm appeared to have been the Army’s last big battle. With the post-

¹⁷¹ “30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Survey II, 1991,” *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

¹⁷² “30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Resume, 1993,” *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

war reduction in force, the services began to de-emphasize recruiting. Advertising expenditures across the services fell by forty-four percent.¹⁷³ The logic of the decision was undeniable; after all, why spend money on recruitment advertising during a time of personnel downsizing? However, the decision to de-emphasize recruitment in the early 1990s had lasting harmful effects.

The recruiting environment of the 1990s was not promising for the U.S. Army. The U.S. economy in the 1990s was strong, offering young people decent wages with or without college attendance. In the early 1980s, the Army College Fund promised aspiring college students money as a “unique selling point” of Army service. By the 1990s, ACF had lost its uniqueness, as competitors “stepped in to match or exceed the army’s offer.”¹⁷⁴ By 1997, college entrance was at an all-time high of sixty-seven percent of America’s military-eligible youth.¹⁷⁵ While America’s young people supported the military, they were not interested in serving while other options were open to them. “In a 1983 survey of high school seniors, 17.5 percent said that they ‘want to serve in the armed forces.’ By 1994... the percentage dropped to 11.8. In 1997 that number stood at 12.9 percent of high school seniors.”¹⁷⁶

Writing in 1995, Edwin Dorn, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, claimed the falling youth propensity for enlistment in the 1990s had several causes. He wrote, “Publicity about downsizing and cutbacks, coupled with sharply reduced television advertising, seems to have persuaded the public that we are no longer hiring – or, perhaps, that

¹⁷³ Sackett, 2003, 226.

¹⁷⁴ James A. Knowles, et. al., “Reinventing Army Recruiting.” *Interfaces*, Vol. 32, No. 1, January-February, 2002, 81.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ King, 18.

we are not a secure employer.”¹⁷⁷ The previously mentioned RAND Corporation study from 2003 found that in the 1990s, “the strong economy meant that returns to education were relatively high and jobs for inexperienced youths were plentiful, and thus many potential recruits had attractive educational and nonmilitary employment options after graduating from high school.”¹⁷⁸ The study also noted that changing youth attitudes about military service were brought about by “Desert Storm, the end of the Cold War, and the downsizing of the military.”¹⁷⁹ The study concluded that a lowering of advertising expenditures by the Defense Department and the Service had lessened the Army’s visibility among the target audience, resulting in growing unfamiliarity with the Army among its primary target audience.

As USAREC and the Defense Department were reconsidering the cost effectiveness of military advertising, the Army ads continued to promise career and educational opportunities. While such promises dominated the advertising themes of the 1990s, an old theme of “personal challenge” was resurrected. Personal challenge was first noted in the “9 a.m.” ad of the early 1980s but had not been featured prominently since then and certainly had not been a part of the Young & Rubicam ads featuring educational and occupational opportunities. “Basic Training” follows a young recruit through his first months in the Army at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. The recruit says he is serving for “Reverend O’Brien, who always told me to give it my best shot;” “for my grandmother,” shown in a wheelchair, “who showed me what real courage is,” and “for myself, who found it.” As the recruit rapels down a wooden tower, with his fellow recruits looking on, the words “Meet the Challenge” fill the screen. The ad also directs recruits

¹⁷⁷ Edwin Dorn, “Sustaining the AVF,” in J. Eric Fredland, Curtis L. Gilroy, Roger D. Little, and W.S. Sellman, eds., *Professionals on the Front Line: Two Decades of the All-Volunteer Force*, (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 1996), 7.

¹⁷⁸ Dertouzos, 69.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

to visit the Army's new interactive website where they can watch Army videos, learn more about the Army, and locate local recruiters.¹⁸⁰ The theme of personal challenge, sometimes coupled with the other traditional promises of occupational and educational opportunities, would be developed further and become a prominent feature of the "Army of One" ad campaign introduced in 2001.

Ads promising to help pay for college were still used in the 1990s. In "Uncle Sam 40K," the narrator begins by saying, "If your parents can't afford \$40,000 for college..." as a young woman listens intently and nods, and continues, "Ask your uncle!" as the classic Uncle Sam recruiting poster appears to the tune of "Yankee Doodle." The narrator explains that the Montgomery G.I. Bill and the Army College Fund could offer a new recruit up to \$40,000 for higher education and encourages young people to call a recruiter.¹⁸¹ The short commercial makes a straightforward pitch: contact the Army if you need funds for college, because it might be the only way for you to attend school.

A more interesting commercial, "Uniform," begins with a soldier putting on his dress green uniform as an American flag waves in the background. "To most people, this is just a uniform," the narration says, "but to me, it's something more. Every time I put it on, it makes me feel better and stronger than I was yesterday. When I'm in this uniform, I know no limits. You gotta see the pride in my mom's eyes, or the way my friends look up to me. But none of that matches the satisfaction I feel inside. That's the pride of being a soldier in the U.S. Army!" The camera pans back to reveal the fully dressed soldier, an elite Army Ranger. Confetti rains

¹⁸⁰ "30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Basic Training, 1997," *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

¹⁸¹ "30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Uncle Sam 40K, 1997," *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

down on the ranger as he stands next to the Army and American flags. The music then turns into a guitar-driven rock and roll tune, and the images change to footage of an airborne drop while other sharply dressed soldiers appear. The narrator promises “new incentives,” including the \$40,000 offer for college, an offer to repay student loans up to \$65,000 and enlistment bonuses up to \$12,000. The narration ends after an invitation to find out how the Army can “bring out the best that’s inside you.”¹⁸² The commercial is an interesting mix of traditional Army bargaining, the new style of “personal challenge” Army advertising and, with references to the pride the soldier’s mother felt and how his friends looked up to him, a reminder of the public’s high esteem for soldiers. All in all, this commercial is a frenetic effort to “cover all the bases” of Army messages. The dismay among the advertisers, the Defense Department and the Army about growing youth disinterest in enlistment and growing questions about the effectiveness of Army advertising seemed to have forced Young & Rubicam to create a commercial that targeted America’s youth with no single, discernable focus.

A 2003 RAND study pointed out that the media had evolved in the era of the AVF. Since 1971, the Army had favored television as the medium of choice. In 1997, the Army spent just over 60% of its total advertising budget on that medium.¹⁸³ However, most Americans’ viewing habits had changed, and television no longer consisted of three major networks. The study noted that “as new participants have entered the market, traditional media outlets have become less attractive advertising options. Most apparent is the decline and fragmentation of television audiences. Primetime viewing of the three major networks, which used to represent 90

¹⁸² “30 Years of U.S. Army Commercials: Uniform, 1997,” *DVD - U.S. Army Historical Reel*, Office of Media, Web, and Licensing, U.S. Army Accessions Command, 2008, used with permission.

¹⁸³ Dertouzos, 9.

percent of all viewers, has fallen to below 70 percent.”¹⁸⁴ DoD and USAREC began to question whether television was losing its effectiveness in reaching young Americans and the public.

From the 1970s through the early 1990s, the Army had promised career success in exchange for a few years of military service. By the prosperous mid-1990s, however, the question arose of why a young person would need Army experience when educational and employment opportunities were already abundant. A 1997 survey revealed American youth believed that civilian employment offered more important benefits and incentives than military service.¹⁸⁵ Doubts about the Army’s dated “Be All You Can Be” campaign began to surface among the Army’s senior leaders and within USAREC.

In March 1999, Secretary of Defense William Cohen ordered a review of all Defense Department advertising and public relations programs. The Eskew-Murphy study interviewed Defense officials, met with ad agencies, and held “focus group meetings” with recruiters, potential recruits and recent recruits.¹⁸⁶ The study concluded that the “largest recruiter of youth [Defense Department] does not adequately understand its target.”¹⁸⁷ Since 1975, the Department of Defense had relied on the annual Youth Attitudinal Tracking Survey (YATS) to produce advertising with youth appeal. The Eskew-Murphy study revealed various flaws in the YATS methodology, leading to doubts about the relevance of its results. YATS was discontinued in 1999, and the Defense Department turned instead to commissioned studies about youth attitudes. The Army recruitment numbers from 1998 and 1999 brought some urgency to the matter: the

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Knowles, 84.

¹⁸⁶ Rostker, 666.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

1998 recruiting shortfall was 801, while the 1999 shortage was a substantial 6,290.¹⁸⁸ USAREC and the Defense Department recognized that the recruiting environment had changed and they needed to act quickly in order to reverse the trends.

The Army's answer to its recruiting challenges of the late 1990s was a new focus for its advertising campaign and a "repositioning of its recruiting force to reconnect America with its army," that is, new messages and new media.¹⁸⁹ The changing focus and methods of Army advertising in the late 1990s helped to achieve a surplus of 113 soldiers over the recruitment goal of 80,000 for FY2000.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ U.S. Army Recruiting Command G7/9, "Army Recruiting, 1974-2007," <http://www.usarec.army.mil/hq/apa/goals.htm>, accessed 20 January 2009.

¹⁸⁹ Knowles, 91.

¹⁹⁰ <http://www.usarec.army.mil/hq/apa/goals.htm>, accessed 20 January 2009.

CHAPTER 7 - The New Millennium: Struggling to Make the Numbers

Through the 1990s, USAREC struggled to understand the changing recruiting environment characterized by declining interest in military service, record-level college attendance and a robust economy. The Army's 1998 and 1999 recruitment goals were not met. Changes were needed in order to remind the target audiences that the Army was still hiring. The Army altered not only its advertising message but also its advertising means to combat declining enlistments. The most important new method to connect to young people was the Internet. By 1999, the Army had created "an advertising blitz in markets of opportunity using new channels, such as direct Internet mailings and Internet cyber-recruiter chat rooms, to help it compete with the education and industrial sectors." At the same time, the Army expanded recruitment activities on college campuses to capture the college dropout market, classified as "high-grads."¹⁹¹ While public image did not appear to be a problem for the Army around 2000, recruitment shortfalls had to be addressed in short order. The Army and its new advertising agency, the Leo Burnett Agency, believed changes to the Army's overall campaign and its advertising messages would help the service meet its recruiting challenges.

Army advertising content headed in a new direction as it bid farewell to the "Be All You Can Be" campaign. In 2000, a new Army advertising campaign was revealed just as new national security threats were emerging. In 2000, the U.S. Army and the Burnett agency

¹⁹¹ Knowles, 91.

unveiled an ad campaign designed to engage young Americans in a new way. The Burnett agency and the advertising managers at USAREC had researched youth-oriented themes and concluded that an individualistic approach would be the best one to use. The “Army of One” campaign had a “hip,” contemporary feel. While job skills and educational opportunities were still featured, the central message was the Army’s promise to respect one’s individuality upon entering the service. Just as in the 1970s ads, the Army was telling youths that it wanted them for their individual talents and would not rob them of their identities.

Criticisms of the individualism promoted in the ads appeared quickly inside the Army’s ranks. Recruits joining an “Army of One,” the critics reasoned, would not fit into the force that valued teamwork and selfless service. The ad campaign had a distinctively different tone from the opportunity-based ads of the 1980s and attempted to attract the next generation of recruits with promises of individual glory.¹⁹² Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera justified the new direction of Army advertising, saying that it did not matter if the slogan’s focus on the individual obscured the “no-I-in-team” nature of Army life as long as young people enlisted. Once they were in the ranks, the Army could train them for teamwork.¹⁹³

Beginning in 2001, Army television commercials directed young people to check up on the lives of new Army recruits in a web series featured on www.goarmy.com. Similar to reality television, the web episodes introduced real recruits and followed them through Basic Training. Through the commercials and web episodes, viewers could trace the new recruits’ transformation from civilians (not so different from the viewers) into soldiers. The viewer met the new soldiers as they departed the reception station for their Basic Training course. In “Shipping Out,”

¹⁹² King, 74.

¹⁹³ Bailey, 68.

viewers were put in the new recruits' place. The narrator, speaking as the viewer's "inner dialogue," notes that their preconceptions about what "Basic" would be like have been proven wrong and that they are ready to make the transition from civilian to soldier. The viewer is introduced to the individual soldiers by their first names; "Ben, 23," "Richard, 19," "Jermaine, 19," "Ever, 19," and "Michelle, 21." As they are introduced, the close shots of their faces let the viewer identify with them individually. Just when it appears that "Basic" might not be as bad as they believed, drill sergeants appear on the scene, shouting at the new recruits and exposing both recruits and viewers to the gritty "reality" of Basic Training.¹⁹⁴ This is the Basic Training that viewers had seen in countless movies such as *Stripes*, *An Officer and a Gentleman*, and *Full Metal Jacket*.

The ads follow the recruits over the twelve-week course. Through the rest of the series, the viewer sees the major weekly training events typical of Basic Training. The viewer vicariously experiences the challenges and triumphs of the recruits: "Richard, 19" is terrified of heights but faces and conquers his fear while scaling "Victory Tower" during Week 2;¹⁹⁵ "Michelle, 21" is nervous about firing her M-16 semi-automatic rifle in Week 4, but tells the viewer how her training has allowed her to face the challenge;¹⁹⁶ in Week 5, "Jermaine, 19"

¹⁹⁴ "Shipping Out 60," *Basic Training Series, 2001*, United States Army Accessions Command, G-7 – Strategic Communications, Marketing and Outreach, http://www.usaac.army.mil/sod/tv_ad_archive.htm, accessed 20 January 2009, used with permission.

¹⁹⁵ "Victory Tower 60," *Basic Training Series, 2001*, United States Army Accessions Command, G-7 – Strategic Communications, Marketing and Outreach, http://www.usaac.army.mil/sod/tv_ad_archive.htm, accessed 20 January 2009, used with permission.

¹⁹⁶ "Basic Rifle Marksmanship 60," *Basic Training Series, 2001*, United States Army Accessions Command, G-7 – Strategic Communications, Marketing and Outreach, http://www.usaac.army.mil/sod/tv_ad_archive.htm, accessed 20 January 2009, used with permission.

gains an appreciation for the teamwork required for his squad to negotiate an obstacle course.¹⁹⁷ Potential recruits caught glimpses of the challenges that awaited them at Basic Training if they enlisted. Additionally, the ads promote a familiarity between the audience and the new recruits, ordinary kids, presumably just like those in the target audience. Through the new recruits' trials, tribulations and triumphs, the viewer is assured that if he takes on the challenge of Army Basic Training, then he too is likely to succeed and graduate, just as "Ever," "Jermaine," and "Michelle" do in the final episode, "Graduation." The diverse individuals introduced in the first episode emerge from Basic Training as well-trained, fit soldiers who are still *individually* recognizable to the viewer. The message is clear: through all of the stress, fear and challenges, the recruits made it while maintaining their individual identities.

Television commercials promoting the website www.goarmy.com continued in 2003-2004 with the "2400/7 series" of advertisements. Similar to the "Basic Training series," 2400/7 focused on the "8 True Stories" of "8 Real Soldiers" serving in the Army.¹⁹⁸ With blaring guitar music and quick, jerky cinematography, the commercials resemble music videos. The images depict exciting Army activities such as jumping from airplanes, flying helicopters and working on the side of a volcano. The soldiers featured in the ads introduce themselves to the viewer, and their faces are clearly shown. Again, as with the Basic Training ads, the viewer is meant to identify with the individual soldiers. As the soldiers tell their stories in the series, the viewer

¹⁹⁷ "Confidence Course 60," *Basic Training Series, 2001*, United States Army Accessions Command, G-7 – Strategic Communications, Marketing and Outreach, http://www.usaac.army.mil/sod/tv_ad_archive.htm, accessed 20 January 2009, used with permission.

¹⁹⁸ "True Stories," *2400/7 Series, 2003-04*, United States Army Accessions Command, G-7 – Strategic Communications, Marketing and Outreach, http://www.usaac.army.mil/sod/tv_ad_archive.htm, accessed 20 January 2009, used with permission.

learns that while each had gained valuable skills and did exciting things, their personal identities were never at risk in the “Army of One.”

The advertisement “Legions” best typifies the individualistic character of the “Army of One” campaign. A soldier on a hillside speaks through the narrator: “I am a soldier... an Army of One.” The soldier’s comrades are barely visible in the background behind him. The voiceover continues, “Even though I am part of the strongest army in the world, I am my own force – with the latest technology, training and support, who I am has become better than who I was. And I’ll be the first to tell you, the might of the U.S. Army doesn’t lie in numbers, it lies in soldiers like me, Specialist Mark Decarli.[sic] I am an Army of One.” He concludes with a reference to the website: “and you can see my strength,” with the www.goarmy.com link appearing onscreen.¹⁹⁹ Throughout the ad, the young soldier’s face is shown in close-ups and he emerges as a distinct, competent individual who has found his strength while serving in the Army. The Army hoped young viewers would be able to identify with him and see themselves serving in the young specialist’s place.

Additionally, the “Army of One” ads introduced something new to Army advertising: an easily identifiable logo. A gold-bordered black box with a white star over a smaller black box with “U.S. Army” in white letters joined the golden arches, the Nike swoosh and the sweeping script on Coca-Cola bottles, as product identifiers. The Leo Burnett Agency, using accepted advertising techniques, had taken one more step toward turning the U.S. Army into an easily identifiable product for sale.

¹⁹⁹ “Legions 30,” *General Market Series, 2003*, United States Army Accessions Command, G-7 – Strategic Communications, Marketing and Outreach, http://www.usaac.army.mil/sod/tv_ad_archive.htm, accessed 21 January 2009, used with permission.

After the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and in New York City on September 11, 2001, the Army's promises of educational opportunities and marketable skills for recruits somehow seemed out of place. U.S. Army Accessions Command (USAAC), USAREC and the Burnett agency decided to take the "Army of One" campaign in a new direction that would capitalize on America's outrage over the attacks while simultaneously reinforcing the positive public image of soldiers. In an effort to comfort a shaken nation, the ads portrayed the soldier as someone who would set things right. At the same time, American youth received a call to arms to defend the homeland and to make the terrorists pay.

After the September 11th attacks, a new "rally around the flag" sentiment possessed the country, especially among young people. As David King and Zachary Karabell asserted in *The Generation of Trust*, the post-9/11 patriotism was partly driven by a new generation of Americans, largely from Generation X (born from 1962 through 1975) and especially among Millennials (born after 1975). King and Karabell contended that young people trusted the government, and especially the military, more deeply than their baby boomer parents ever had.²⁰⁰ They noted that "a whopping 93 percent of college undergraduates [claimed] to be patriotic Americans, with 'very patriotic' the largest response category at 49 percent."²⁰¹ King and Karabell credited the positive mass media imagery of the military throughout the 1980s and 1990s as key to the youthful support after 9/11. However, King and Karabell described an important paradox in youth attitudes: despite their professed patriotism, only fifteen percent of those young Americans polled planned to enlist to fight terrorism.²⁰² The Army met its recruitment goals from 2000 until 2004, but the numbers were never overwhelming. In FY2002,

²⁰⁰ King, 2.

²⁰¹ King, 15.

²⁰² King, 15.

the first after the terrorist attacks, the Army exceeded its recruitment goal by 604 recruits, the largest surplus between 1999 and 2005.²⁰³ While youth support for the military might have been strong, even in the aftermath of 9/11, youth interest in enlisting remained low.

After 9/11, an initial postponement of commercial films with overwhelming violence “gave way to a trend toward films involving war and espionage with positive portrayals of the men and women responsible for defending the country. *Black Hawk Down* and *Windtalkers* portrayed the heroism of soldiers past and present.”²⁰⁴ The Defense Department cooperated with Hollywood studios to create positive portrayals of American soldiers, casting them as able defenders of the American way of life. Hollywood movies began to link virtues between the soldiers of the past, especially from World War II, with the soldiers of the new millennium. Productions such as *Saving Private Ryan* and HBO’s miniseries *Band of Brothers* indicated that the post-9/11 Army was guided by the same courage and compassion as that of the “greatest generation” of soldiers. As Bacevich noted, the Hollywood depictions created “an apparently seamless historical narrative of American soldiers as liberators, with Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003 becoming a sequel to Operation Overlord in June 1944.”²⁰⁵ The Global War on Terror (GWOT) was explicitly linked to World War II in both Hollywood productions and Army television commercials. The Burnett Agency included World War II imagery in its advertisements to create an explicit link between the “good” and “necessary” war fought by the “greatest generation” and modern soldiers serving in the GWOT. American political leaders made comparisons between Adolf Hitler and Saddam Hussein when U.S. attention turned to the perceived threat from Iraq. As Hollywood and politicians reassured the public that the mission

²⁰³ <http://www.usarec.army.mil/hq/apa/goals.htm>, accessed 12 March 2009.

²⁰⁴ King, 76-77.

²⁰⁵ Bacevich, 98

and soldiers of the present were as worthy as those of the past, the Defense Department became increasingly willing to assist the filmmakers in managing the military's image. Just as in the 1980s, Hollywood depictions of brave soldiers, past and present, helped advance one of the goals of Army television advertising, the projection of a positive public image for the service, while doing little to promote enlistment.²⁰⁶

The Burnett agency's post-Iraqi invasion television ads featured unprecedented scenes of combat from Iraq. Army television advertising, from its earliest days, had scrupulously avoided depictions of combat. They had feared that explicit acknowledgement of combat would scare off recruits and lessen parental support. But beginning in 2003, the "Army of One" ads highlighted the shortness of the war and the fall of Baghdad. The ads proclaimed U.S. success in the GWOT; one needed only to look as far as Baghdad to conclude that American soldiers were unbeatable. The ads called on young Americans to join the winning team while reassuring the rest of America that the troops were liberating the people of Iraq. The Iraq War of 2003 was thus a worthy sequel to the "good wars" of America's past.

The Leo Burnett ad "Generations – Iraq" depicts the invasion of Iraq as a benevolent service for the Iraqi people. American soldiers in the ad appear well-intentioned and helpful towards the Iraqis. The music is a single piano playing a sentimental tune as soldiers in desert combat gear, apparently on the road to Baghdad, flash on the screen. Smiling Iraqi civilians surround smiling American soldiers. A black screen with gold text follows, stating "Every generation has its heroes." A column of desert-camouflaged Bradley IFVs is shown, followed by another screen of text that assures the viewer, "This one is no different." Another smiling American soldier shakes hands with an Iraqi girl as other Iraqi children look on, smiling with

²⁰⁶ Boggs, 5.

approval.²⁰⁷ The message is that American troops in Iraq are carrying on the just cause of liberation that has been inherited from World War II. Americans, the ad suggests, should feel good about the effort in Iraq and about the men and women performing it. No direct appeal to enlist is made, but the implication is that enlisting can enable one to participate as part of the noble effort.

As long as the invasion of Iraq went well with relatively few American casualties and Hussein successfully driven from power, recruiting efforts benefitted. Recruiting in FY2004 exceeded the 77,000 target figure by more than five hundred new recruits.²⁰⁸ Once the insurgency in Iraq picked up momentum, however, enlistments fell. As the popularity of the war in Iraq plummeted among the American public, recruiting became increasingly difficult. Near the height of public dissatisfaction with the Iraq War in 2005, the Army fell short of its recruitment goal by 6,627 new soldiers.²⁰⁹ Army recruitment advertising needed another remake.

Despite their continued support for the troops, Americans had grown disillusioned with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan by 2005. College and civilian employment remained viable alternatives to military service without the risk injury or death. Youth propensity to join the military was at an all-time low during the first decade of the 21st century.

Criticisms of the “Army of One” campaign within the Army’s ranks proved to be too much for it to continue. The campaign was unpopular with many soldiers and leaders within the Army who believed that it pandered to youth culture and that it denied the importance of

²⁰⁷ “Generations – Iraq 30,” *General Market Series, 2003*, United States Army Accessions Command, G-7 – Strategic Communications, Marketing and Outreach, http://www.usaac.army.mil/sod/tv_ad_archive.htm, accessed 20 January 2009, used with permission.

²⁰⁸ <http://www.usarec.army.mil/hq/apa/goals.htm>, accessed 20 January 2009.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

teamwork and selfless service in Army life. The Army's relationship with the Leo Burnett agency was a tumultuous one with both sides claiming that the other disregarded their points of view, resulting in ads with which no one was happy. U.S. Army Accessions Command complained to senior Leo Burnett officials that the account and production management team handling the "Army of One" account were "resistant to accept [Army] input and are reluctant to accept or use learning from research [to shape advertising]...which results in less productive creative review sessions."²¹⁰

The Army opened bidding for an all-new ad campaign that would encourage youth interest in the military while allowing for a harmonious relationship between the Army and a new advertising agency. The new ad agency, McCann Worldgroup, worked with the Army's advertising and media personnel to analyze the challenges of the rapidly changing recruiting environment. The Army was looking for McCann to deliver a new message that would specifically convey the unique qualities of the U.S. Army. The resulting campaign was "Army Strong," unveiled in November 2006. It initially appeared as though the "Army Strong" campaign would strike the balance between promoting the material benefits of enlistment and highlighting the values that shaped the service. Eventually, however, the "Army Strong" commercials reverted to the traditional "Be All You Can Be"-style promises of job skills training and educational opportunities. Despite the promising start to the ad campaign in 2006, "Army Strong" resorted to bargaining with young Americans.

The first decade of the new millennium was characterized by a difficult recruiting environment for the Army. Record college attendance and a strong economy had reduced the

²¹⁰ Kathy J. Dobeck, "Letter to Ray DeThorne, Executive Vice President, Leo Burnett, USA Inc., 23 May 2002, copy provided by U.S. Army Accession Command Historian.

appeal of an Army career for many young people, despite the high public esteem for the service. Recruiting prospects dimmed even further as post-9/11 outrage cooled and the insurgency in Iraq gained strength. Army television ads of the time tried a fresh approach, one aimed at humanizing soldiers and assuring young Americans that their individuality would not be threatened once they enlisted. However, disapproval of the campaign's message within the ranks, a struggling recruiting effort in wartime and a tumultuous working relationship between the Army and the Leo Burnett Agency ensured that the distinctive "Army of One" campaign was scrapped.

CHAPTER 8 - Conclusion

The draft enabled the Army to fill its ranks without regard to how the public perceived it as an institution. However, in the 1960s, potential recruits and the general public became overwhelmed with negative views of the Army because of the war in Vietnam. Because it had not previously needed one, the Army had no ready-made method to counter the decline of its public image. The Army did little to revamp its image among the public or potential recruits, but continued to rely on conscription to fill the ranks.

Richard Nixon's campaign promise to end the draft forced the Army's leadership to consider the impact of its poor image. Suddenly, the question of how to encourage enlistments and repair the Army's public image became paramount. With the end of the draft looming, Army leaders and advertisers employed ingenuity and initiative in creating a new imagery and messages to achieve both of those vital aims. Employing market research, the Army settled on paid broadcast advertising to deliver its messages to a large audience. Television, with its ability to reach both of the Army's "target audiences" (potential recruits and the general public), became the centerpiece of the Army's promotional efforts.

The Army's adoption of paid television advertising was revolutionary, while the content of its messages and imagery changed the conception of military service among America's youth. For young people, the Army became only one job opportunity among others. Additionally, the content of Army television commercials for the first thirty-five years of the AVF did little to change the overall public's views of the Army as an institution; Hollywood and prominent public figures did more to improve public esteem for the Army. The Army's dual purposes for its advertising were never fully realized. While the Army increasingly focused its advertising

efforts on recruiting quality volunteers, image enhancement was largely left to Hollywood producers, news commentators and politicians to handle.

Army commercials from 1971 to 2005 focused on different particulars, but common themes ran throughout. In the commercials of the era, Army television advertisements presented the service as willing to strike bargains with individuals. As first envisioned by the N. W. Ayer advertising agency in 1971, Army ads continually presented enlistment as an exchange between equal parties. From the Ayers agency ads of the 1970s through the “Be All You Can Be” ads of the 1980s to the Burnett agency “Army of One” ads in the new millennium, young people were encouraged to think that the Army wanted to make contracts with them as individuals. The advertisements promised the means to achieve their educational and occupational goals. Army service itself was rarely ever the central feature of advertising from 1971 to 2005; rather it was the *quid pro quo* exchange between the Army and the *individual*. While the production values, sophistication and cost of Army commercials grew between 1971 and 2005, the fundamental message that the Army was looking to hire short-term help in exchange for material benefits remained constant.

As noted by Charles Moskos, when young people were exposed to the message of the Army’s television ads, military service took on the appearance of an ordinary occupation, a commodity to be traded for in a marketplace. The Army never used calls for public service or reminders of civic duty in its advertising for any length of time. By presenting their message this way, the Army and its advertising agencies reminded potential recruits that they had a choice *not* to serve. Casting the Army as just another job offer left the service’s recruitment effort vulnerable to the vagaries of the labor market. Recruitment numbers went up or down according to the availability of jobs and financing for higher education. In its first and most important

objective in advertising, recruitment, the Army ceded the initiative to the volatilities of the labor market.

In the second objective of Army advertising, the promotion of a positive public image, again the Army abandoned the initiative. Army advertising from 1971 to 2005 did little to build the Army's image in the public mind. The commercials focused almost exclusively on *quid pro quo* bargaining and did little to promote the values and principles that guide the Army as an institution. Rather, the Army allowed politicians, public figures and the mass media to define its public image. Concepts of civic obligation and the transcendence of self-interests were more readily found in movies and television shows such as *Saving Private Ryan* and *Band of Brothers* than in Army ads. The end result was the perpetuation of a fictitious image that increased public support for the Army but provided no recruitment benefit for the service or check against the growing disinterest of American youth in actually enlisting.

Alternative advertising messages, ones that promoted the Army as a values-based institution first and foremost and that highlighted its commitment to a higher purpose, might have effectively achieved the intended recruitment and image-enhancement purposes. Compared to the Army, U.S. Marine Corps television ads in the AVF era provided a much different message. Marine advertising stressed the importance of noble virtues and the value of people who never fail to defend those virtues. The Marine television commercials spoke of honor, courage, commitment, and pride. The messages emphasize that there will always be a need for people who can live up to these values.²¹¹ Marine advertising powerfully portrayed the USMC as an elite force dedicated to something beyond the individual interests of those who served in it. The Marine Corps television commercials achieved what the Army had intended for its

²¹¹ Sackett, 229.

advertising to do all along: enhancement of enlistments while simultaneously bolstering public image. The 2003 National Research Council study found that “[o]nly advertising for the Marines consistently addresses the noble virtues that can be associated with military service. The capability of Marine advertising to generate interest in military service is reflected in the comment of an Army recruiter who was interviewed as part of this project. The recruiter spoke of the impact of Marine advertising on the youth he approached and stated that his recruiting problems might be lessened if the Defense Department invested more resources in advertising for the Marines.”²¹²

If the Army advertising had crafted similar messages from 1971 to 2005, its recruiting and public image management efforts might have been more successful.

²¹² Ibid.

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