

PROJECT 100,000: NEW STANDARDS MEN AND  
THE U.S. MILITARY IN VIETNAM

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## Dedication

For Amber, the most dedicated and loyal person I know. Your love and commitment made this possible. And for Kelsey and Kieran, one of the greatest things I ever accomplished is being your dad. I am excited for what the future holds for each of you. Finally, for Sandra Bateman, a lifelong educator, she taught me more than she knew. Thanks, Mom.

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## Abstract

### PROJECT 100,000: NEW STANDARDS MEN AND THE U.S. MILITARY IN VIETNAM

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This dissertation examines a Vietnam Era defense manpower program where the Department of Defense lowered the minimum score on the Armed Forces Qualification Test from 31 percent to 10 percent. The Defense Department called the program Project 100,000 because it allowed for 100,000 men per year to serve under the lowered standards. It lasted from October 1966 to December 1971 and resulted in approximately 346,000 men serving in all branches of the military, nearly two-thirds of them in the Army. These New Standards Men, so called since they served under “new standards,” were nearly evenly split between draftees and volunteers. The genesis for Project 100,000 occurred when the 1962 Selective Service Annual Review revealed that one-third of the young men who had reported for their induction examination and physical during that year failed to meet minimum standards—about one-half for low-aptitude and the other half for medical reasons. President Kennedy and later President Johnson commissioned a

senior-level task force to study why this occurred and to develop national level recommendations to address the problem. The Defense Department's contribution to these recommendations culminated in Project 100,000.

The historiography of Project 100,000 is limited. Several works claim or imply the program was the deliberate and calculated effort of the Defense Department and President Johnson's administration to send the most disadvantaged members of society, particularly racial minorities, to fight and die in Vietnam. A large portion of this literature vigorously argues Project 100,000 was responsible for the greater percentage of casualties among black service members in relation to the general population during the early years of the war. Nevertheless, the final accounting of Project 100,000 is a much more complex and complicated story than what numerous scholars, journalists, and other critics have offered in critiquing the program. This dissertation offers a different analysis by documenting how the Defense Department planned for Project 100,000 and the debates that took place among the senior military leadership and the civilian policymakers in the Pentagon. It examines how the military departments implemented the program to include the special training and education New Standards Men received, how these men performed during their service, and what happened to them after they left the military.

Through a detailed investigation of official correspondence and reports from the Office of the President, Congress, Defense Department (in particular the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs), and the military departments, along with defense manpower studies, oral



histories of military personnel who directly supervised New Standards Men as well as senior military officers and government officials, and newspaper and magazine articles of the time, this study argues Project 100,000 was successful in limited ways and proved Secretary McNamara's belief that low-aptitude men could with the proper support system meet minimum standards for success in the military. Furthermore, this study also argues Project 100,000 contributed to the end of the draft and the transition to the All-Volunteer Force. Nevertheless, the efficacy of the program is questionable given the additional cost—both actual and hidden—associated with using low-aptitude men for military service, especially during wartime. The support system of additional training and education, supervision, and other tangible and intangible measures to ensure the success of many of the New Standards Men was an additional encumbrance on an already burdened military.

## I. Introduction

In 1999, *Sports Illustrated* magazine named Muhammad Ali the Sportsman of the Twentieth Century. The three-time heavy weight champion of the world and Olympic gold medalist gave an emotional acceptance speech—his body and voice already ravaged with Parkinson’s Disease.<sup>1</sup> Thirty-five years earlier, Cassius Clay was making headlines of a different sort. Having already registered for the Selective Service when he turned eighteen, Clay reported to the Armed Forces Induction Center in Coral Gables, Florida in January 1964 to take the military entrance examination—the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). He was a poor reader in high school and the reading and mathematics portion of the written exam were especially difficult for him. Clay scored a seventy-eight on the exam, which placed him in the 16th percentile, well below the minimum standard of 31 percent. The Selective Service classified him as Class I-Y,<sup>2</sup> qualified for military service only in time of war or national emergency.<sup>3</sup>

Had the story ended here, Ali would have been just like the millions of other young men in the 1960s that failed to meet the minimum qualification standards on the

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<sup>1</sup> *CNN Website*, “The 20th Century Awards,” available online at <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/features/cover/news/1999/12/02/awards>.

<sup>2</sup> Class I-Y meant the individual was disqualified for failing to meet the minimum score on the AFQT. There was no physical limitation preventing these men from serving.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Hauser with Muhammad Ali, *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 142-144 and Department of the Army Study, *Marginal Man and Military Service: A View* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 1965), 259.

military entrance examination. While Clay's athletic prowess and natural ability enabled him to rise to the pinnacle of amateur and professional boxing, the vast majority of the other young men in the 1960s who failed to meet minimum scores on the AFQT had few opportunities for education and employment within society or the military. Nevertheless, the story of these young men failing to meet minimum standards for military service does not end with them failing the military entrance examination. The Department of Defense was about to embark on one of the most controversial social-welfare programs of the period. Two years after he failed the AFQT and was classified as unqualified for military service except in time of war or national emergency, the Selective Service reclassified Cassius Clay, who had converted to Islam and taken the name Muhammad Ali, as fully qualified for military service. His 16th percentile score was no longer below the minimum 31 percent. The Defense Department had lowered the minimum score on the AFQT for qualification in the military to just 10 percent.<sup>4</sup>

This is a story about how the American military met its manpower needs during the Vietnam War. It is not the familiar story told countless times, encompassing myriad forms in film, novels, historical narratives, periodicals, music, and the shared memories of those who served and those who stayed at home. Rather, this is a story of how the Defense Department and the military branches, even while engaged in the largest limited war<sup>5</sup> the nation had ever fought, were preoccupied with social reform on an

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<sup>4</sup> Anthony O. Edwards, *Muhammad Ali: A Biography* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), Kindle Version, Loc 76 of 2143 and Memo, Alfred B. Fitt to Clark Clifford, 3/20/68, #9, 10, 10a, and 11, "Project 100,000 Reference File, Folder 2H" Vietnam Country File, NSF, Box 76, LBJ Library.

<sup>5</sup> Limited war is a concept of waging war where a society does not fully engage all aspects of national power to their fullest capacity. The Korean War and the Indian Wars are other examples of limited war. In

unprecedented scale. It is a story of how the Defense Department, under the direction first of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and then Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, used its considerable resources to design and implement a vast array of social-welfare programs intended to address specific socioeconomic challenges many Americans faced in the 1960s.

While the Defense Department designed many of these programs with service members in mind, it targets several towards youth and other disadvantaged individuals with no ties to the military. For example, the Defense Department participated in the President's Youth Opportunity Program using military personnel and facilities to provide summer camp and recreational experiences for disadvantaged youth and summer employment opportunities for high school students. The Defense Department provided job training and civilian employment opportunities for high school dropouts as part of its Neighborhood Youth Program at military installations across the country. The Open Housing Program was a Defense Department program that persuaded and pressured apartment managers and homeowners with properties surrounding military installations to rent and sell their properties to any qualified service member, regardless of race. The Defense Department used Project Transition to assist service members leaving the military in job training, job placement, and relocation. There were numerous other social-welfare programs the military participated in—both large and small—to enjoin President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty.<sup>6</sup>

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contrast, total war—like World War II—involves the mobilization of the entire society and all of its instruments of power in order to succeed.

<sup>6</sup> Memo, Fitt to Clifford, 3/20/68, LBJ Library.

President Johnson first introduced the idea of waging a war against poverty in his annual State of the Union address to Congress on January 8, 1964. “Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope—some because of their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both. This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America.”<sup>7</sup> It was an uncertain time in America. The nation was still reeling from the assassination of President Kennedy six weeks earlier and there was a growing sense of unease among many Americans across the economic, social, and political landscape of the nation. It was increasingly difficult to reconcile the persistence of poverty amid the economic abundance of the post-World War II era and the contradictions of democracy in the United States in the face of segregation and lack of civil rights for a large portion of Americans.

While the plight of America’s poor deeply moved President Kennedy, he was unable to effectively address it during his administration and the job fell to President Johnson to find solutions. President Johnson followed up his State of the Union address in March 1964 when he submitted to Congress the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. In a special message to Congress on March 16, President Johnson described in striking detail the broad outlines of his plan to overcome the blight of poverty for millions of Americans. “Today, for the first time in our history, we have the power to strike away the barriers to full participation in our society. We are fully aware that this program will not eliminate all the poverty in America in a few months or a few years. Poverty is deeply rooted and its causes are many. But this program will show the way to new opportunities

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<sup>7</sup> *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), Vol I, entry 91, 112-118.

for millions of our fellow citizens.”<sup>8</sup> Like his State of the Union address that January, President Johnson was prepared to deploy the considerable resources of the federal government—including those of the Department of Defense—to combat poverty in America.

Of all the social-welfare programs the Defense Department engaged in during the 1960s, none was more controversial than Project 100,000. Under this program, young men who had previously failed to qualify for service in the armed forces because they did not meet the minimum standard on the AFQT or had some minor physical defect were declared eligible for service. The program lowered the minimum score on the AFQT from 31 percent to 10 percent and allowed men to enter military service with minor medical conditions correctable within six weeks.<sup>9</sup>

In August 1966, while speaking to a Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Convention in New York City, Secretary of Defense McNamara announced this new social-welfare program for the military. Joining President Johnson’s War on Poverty, McNamara proclaimed that young men whom the military previously deemed unfit for service because of low-aptitude scores or minor medical deficiencies were now acceptable through either enlistment or induction. Beginning with 40,000 during the first year, the program would continue each year thereafter accepting up to 100,000 young men per year who scored from 10 percent to 30 percent on the AFQT or had minor medical conditions.<sup>10</sup> McNamara viewed this as a way for the “poor of America [who] have not had the opportunity to earn their fare share of this nation’s abundance ... to

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<sup>8</sup> *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64*, 375-380.

<sup>9</sup> Memo, Fitt to Clifford, 3/20/68, LBJ Library.

<sup>10</sup> Memo, Fitt to Clifford, 3/20/68, LBJ Library.

serve their country's defense and ... be given an opportunity to return to civilian life with skills and aptitudes which for them and their families will reverse the downward spiral of human decay." In his address to the convention, McNamara declared that it was not Communism posing the greatest threat for conflict within the nations of the world, but rather "the bitter frustrations born of poverty." He went on to say, "Poverty is a social and political paralysis that atrophies ambition, and drains away hope. Poverty begets poverty. It passes from generation to generation in a cruel cycle of near inevitability. It endures until carefully designed outside assistance intervenes and radically redirects its internal dynamics."<sup>11</sup> Known as Project 100,000—since the Defense Department envisioned 100,000 low-aptitude or medically deficient men would serve under the program each year in the armed forces—it lasted from October 1966 to September 1971 and resulted in the enlistment and induction of approximately 346,000 men. These so-called New Standards Men<sup>12</sup> served in all branches of the military, with the majority (almost two-

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<sup>11</sup> Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense; Address Before the Veterans of Foreign Wars; Book 6, Table of Contents and Tabs 60-78; dated July 5 to September 22, 1966; Tab 71, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) No. 703-66, Tuesday August 23, 1966, (10:00 A.M. EDT), National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland (hereafter cited as NARA II).

<sup>12</sup> No women served under Project 100,000. The Selective Service did not draft women and those who volunteered for service did so with very strict guidelines under the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948. For example, mothers with dependent children were ineligible to serve in the military and the military discharged servicewomen with children under the age of eighteen. The military prohibited women from serving on Air Force and Navy vessels and aircraft that might engage in combat. Furthermore, the individual services placed additional restrictions on the numbers of servicewomen in each branch and the jobs in which they could serve. Most women served in the medical field as nurses and physicians' assistants or clerical fields and other technical specialties like air traffic controllers—specialties that would have been difficult for someone scoring in the 10th to 30th percentile on the AFQT. See Women's Research & Education Institute, "Chronology of Significant Legal and Policy Changes Affecting Women in the Military: 1947-2003," [http://www.wrei.org/Women in the Military/Women in the Military Chronology of Legal Policy.pdf](http://www.wrei.org/Women%20in%20the%20Military/Women%20in%20the%20Military%20Chronology%20of%20Legal%20Policy.pdf).

thirds) serving in the Army.<sup>13</sup>

Just six weeks after Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as president following the assassination of President Kennedy, the President's Task Force for Manpower Conservation presented him with a troubling report. One-third of the young men who had reported for their pre-induction aptitude test and physical examination in 1962 had failed to meet the minimum standards.<sup>14</sup> President Kennedy first raised the issue of those youth in America rejected for military service because of low-aptitude and the implications for their future unemployment. He commissioned the Task Force on Manpower Conservation in September 1963, charging its members to determine why one-third of all men reporting for examination in the previous year failed to meet minimum qualification standards—nearly half of them for low-aptitude reasons. When President Kennedy established the task force, he stated, “Today’s military rejects include tomorrow’s hardcore unemployed.”<sup>15</sup>

Individuals from across the federal government to include the Director of the Selective Service System, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and the Secretary of Defense comprised the task force.<sup>16</sup> It examined the Selective Service records of the men rejected for service from 1962 and commissioned a survey of 2,500 young men who failed to meet minimum qualification standards for

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<sup>13</sup> One Hundred First Congress, First Session, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Veteran's Affairs, House of Representatives, February 28, 1990, Serial No. 101-38 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), 1.

<sup>14</sup> *One-third of a Nation: A Report on Young Men Found Unqualified for Military Service* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), Appendix A, “Statement of the President Establishing the Task Force on Manpower Conservation,” September 30, 1963.

<sup>15</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, Appendix A.

<sup>16</sup> Janice H. Laurence and Peter F. Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military: Who Profits, Who Pays?* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 15.



service. The task force's findings were grim. Twenty-five percent of the young men surveyed had dropped out of school to support themselves or their families; 30 percent were unemployed; and 75 percent of those working held unskilled, semi-skilled, or service related jobs.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond simply identifying the problem, the task force developed recommendations in an effort to mitigate the impact of the rejection of disadvantaged youth for military service. These included emphasizing the federal programs already in existence like the Youth Employment Act and the Manpower Development and Training Act and recommending that pre-induction examinations occur as soon as possible after a young man's eighteenth birthday in order to maximize the available time for education and medical care to help those who needed such assistance.<sup>18</sup> Ironically, the report did not contain any specific Defense Department programs or efforts for manpower conservation. Nevertheless, even before America had a large military presence in Vietnam, the U.S. Government was considering manpower policies for broadening the available pool to draft young men into the military and accept volunteers for service. As Janice Laurence and Peter Ramsberger note in *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military: Who Profits, Who Pays?*, "Lowering standards under such conditions [wartime] had been a common practice in previous eras and in all likelihood would have been necessary during this period."<sup>19</sup> Thus, this consideration on the part of the Defense Department and Selective Service to lower standards in order to increase the pool of potential recruits was not

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<sup>17</sup> *One third of a Nation*, Appendix B.

<sup>18</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, 2-4.

<sup>19</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 21.

without precedent and most likely would have occurred even without a specific program like Project 100,000.

Just as the Defense Department was figuring out large numbers of men failed to meet minimum qualification standards each year, there was an increased awareness about the poor of America. When President Kennedy addressed Congress on welfare programs in 1962, he instituted the Public Welfare Amendments and first Manpower Development and Training Act. President Kennedy intended for these laws to provide training for displaced workers.<sup>20</sup> After President Kennedy's assassination, President Johnson continued the administration's focus on the poor of the nation. Beginning in 1964, he signed into law programs for public housing, job training, community anti-poverty programs, Medicare, and Medicaid. President Johnson was launching his own War on Poverty just as the nation was expanding its role in Vietnam. In this context, Project 100,000 was just one of the numerous federal programs designed to assist impoverished and poorly educated Americans.

In his address to the VFW, McNamara described poverty as a disease and likened it in the United States as a social cancer, hidden from view and eating away at the strength and vitality of the nation. Citing statistical evidence that poverty locked its grip on one out of every six Americans, McNamara stated: "These 32 million Americans live in every state, in every county, and in every city of the nation. Nearly half of them are children—their lives still before them, yet already blighted from the beginning if the

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<sup>20</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 17.

poverty-pattern in which they are trapped is allowed to play itself out.”<sup>21</sup> He provided specific details about how the cash income of the poor in America was woefully insufficient to meet their basic everyday needs—citing the figure of \$1.40 available each day for the poor to provide “housing, clothing, transportation, education, health, recreation, and the whole spectrum of goods and services that all of us in this room take for granted.”<sup>22</sup> The Defense Department envisioned Project 100,000 as its weapon in the War on Poverty that would offer an opportunity to the disadvantaged young men of America to break out of this poverty-pattern.

While the Defense Department originally intended the program as its contribution to President Johnson’s War on Poverty, Project 100,000 became the pathway for hundreds of thousands of young men—many of them racial minorities or from impoverished families—to serve in the military. But there was widespread resistance from across the federal government to Project 100,000 from its beginning. Senior military leaders opposed accepting large numbers of individuals who failed to meet minimum qualification standards and the anticipated reduction in efficiency that would presumably occur. Congress had similar concerns and opposed approving the additional funds required to implement such a program.<sup>23</sup> Anti-war activists contended that this exploited vulnerable Americans and used them as cannon fodder. Historical treatments of Project 100,000 tend to echo these contemporaneous critiques, emphasizing the program’s racial and economic demographics as evidence that Vietnam was indeed a “working class

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<sup>21</sup> McNamara, Address Before the Veterans of Foreign Wars, August 23, 1966, NARA II.

<sup>22</sup> McNamara, Address Before the Veterans of Foreign Wars, August 23, 1966, NARA II.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas G. Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth: Policy and Training Methods from the Military Experience* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987), 37-38.

war.”<sup>24</sup> I would argue, however, that historians and other scholars have not fully understood the impact of these men on military manpower and the Vietnam War, or the impact of Project 100,000 on their lives.

This disparity and overrepresentation of African Americans in the New Standards Men population has led numerous authors to argue that President Johnson’s administration deliberately targeted them as part of Project 100,000.<sup>25</sup> Before Project 100,000, black service members constituted about 10 percent of the strength of the military and a similar proportion of new recruits. In contrast, approximately 40 percent of all New Standards Men for the entire period of Project 100,000 were African American. But this was not an intentional design by Project 100,000 planners. During this time in American history, black men generally had fewer educational opportunities or came from socioeconomic environments where education was less important than it was for their white peers and thus did not score as well on the military entrance exams.<sup>26</sup>

Historians have written little on Project 100,000. George Herring in *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, one of the standard texts on America’s involvement in Vietnam, contains numerous passages on draft resistance, the Selective Service System, race relations, and even veterans’ issues, but does not mention

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<sup>24</sup> Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers & Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 6. Appy argues, “Roughly 80 percent [of those who served in Vietnam] came from working-class and poor backgrounds. Vietnam, more than any other American war in the twentieth century, perhaps in our history, was a working-class war.”

<sup>25</sup> See Myra MacPherson, *Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984), 558 and Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars: 1945-1990* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 320.

<sup>26</sup> See Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 43-46 for more on the demographic and entry characteristics of New Standards Men.

Project 100,000.<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey Record in *The Wrong War: Why We Lost in Vietnam* briefly discusses personnel policies relating to President Johnson's refusal to mobilize the reserve forces and the length of combat tours, but fails to address Project 100,000.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, Stanley Karnow's *Vietnam: A History* and General Bruce Palmer's *The Twenty-Five Year War: America's Role in Vietnam* provide some discussion on the characteristics of combat troops and personnel issues, but neither offers any details on Project 100,000.<sup>29</sup> Even the broadly based *Dictionary of the Vietnam War*, edited by James Olson and Harry Summers' *Vietnam War Almanac* are silent on Project 100,000.<sup>30</sup> Christian Appy rightly notes, "Never well known, Project 100,000 has virtually disappeared from histories of the Johnson presidency."<sup>31</sup>

Other works touch briefly on personnel management policies and manpower requirements. Andrew Krepinevich, in his book *The Army in Vietnam*, discusses Army personnel management policies and the length of combat and command tours of duty, but does not mention Project 100,000.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, Lewis Sorley's *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* briefly discusses manpower requirements and provides a discussion on the characteristics of the Vietnam veteran, but like Krepinevich's *The Army in Vietnam*, does not address Project

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<sup>27</sup> George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975, 4th Edition* (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> Jeffrey Record, *The Wrong War: Why We Lost in Vietnam* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1998).

<sup>29</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997) and General Bruce Palmer, Jr. *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam* (The University Press of Kentucky, 1984).

<sup>30</sup> James S. Olson, ed. *Dictionary of the Vietnam War* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988) and Harry Summers, *Vietnam War Almanac* (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> Appy, *Working-Class War*, 32.

<sup>32</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army in Vietnam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 205-210.

100,000.<sup>33</sup> In *A Soldiers Reports*, General William Westmoreland's personal account of commanding U.S. military operations in Vietnam from 1964-1968, the narrative revolves around Westmoreland's views on personnel policies, draft deferments, anti-war protests, and the transition to the All-Volunteer Army. While never directly mentioning Project 100,000, Westmoreland alludes to it when discussing the My Lai Massacre. He attributed the failure of command and lack of discipline within the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry responsible for the massacre to the Army's personnel policy of lowering enlistment and induction standards.<sup>34</sup>

B.G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley, independent scholars writing for a popular audience in rebuttal to prominent narratives that cast Vietnam veterans as victims, offer one of the few examinations of Project 100,000. Their work, *Stolen Valor: How the Vietnam Generation Was Robbed of its Heroes and its History*, addresses some of the more controversial issues surrounding the Vietnam War, including race and class, while uncovering many of the phony veterans who falsely claim to have served in combat and received awards for valor.<sup>35</sup> Their discussion of Project 100,000 revolves around a critique of Myra MacPherson's *Long Time Passing*. Relying almost exclusively on secondary sources, MacPherson, a journalist, asserts that Project 100,000 was a way for the Johnson administration to funnel large numbers of poor, the minorities, and the

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<sup>33</sup> Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Books, 1999), 126-127 and 301-304.

<sup>34</sup> General William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldiers Reports* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), 296-298 and 374-375.

<sup>35</sup> B. G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley, *Stolen Valor: How the Vietnam Generation Was Robbed of its Heroes and its History* (Dallas, Texas: Verity Press, Inc., 1998).

mentally deficient that had no other options in life but to fight and die in Vietnam.<sup>36</sup> By contrast, Burkett and Whitley argue, “In reality the force that fought in Vietnam was America’s best-educated and most egalitarian in the country’s history.”<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps the most cited work on Vietnam manpower policies and the first major work dedicated solely to the topic is the study by Lawrence Baskir and William Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War and the Vietnam Generation*. Both Baskir and Strauss served as senior members of President Ford’s clemency board for draft evaders. While not an exclusive work on Project 100,000, Baskir and Strauss devote a significant portion of one chapter to discussing the program. Like MacPherson and others, Baskir and Strauss base their discussion of Project 100,000 almost exclusively on secondary sources and anecdotal evidence, consequently the cases they highlight are extreme and represent only a tiny fraction of the actual participants in the program.<sup>38</sup>

Christian Appy’s *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers & Vietnam* is for many American historians the definitive work on Vietnam manpower policies and the characteristics of the Vietnam War veteran. Appy does not so much as describe Project 100,000 as he indicts it. “It was conceived, in fact, as a significant component of the administration’s ‘war on poverty,’ part of the Great Society, a liberal effort to uplift the poor, and it was instituted with high-minded rhetoric about offering the poor an opportunity to serve. Its result, however, was to send many poor, terribly confused, and

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<sup>36</sup> MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 558-560, 640, and 663.

<sup>37</sup> Burkett and Whitley, *Stolen Valor*, 55.

<sup>38</sup> Lawrence M. Baskir and William A. Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War and the Vietnam Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

woefully uneducated boys to risk death in Vietnam.”<sup>39</sup> Appy quotes Baskir and Strauss in arguing, “The ostensible purpose of the manpower programs of the 1960s was to apply military training and discipline to the rehabilitation of America’s disadvantaged youth. While these men were volunteering and filling draft quotas, their more favored peers were staying in college, joining the reserves, or figuring ways to stay home from Vietnam.”<sup>40</sup> While Appy correctly provides the Defense Department official position for Project 100,000, he is unwavering in his central thesis of its horrendous impact on the lives of the less fortunate among America’s youth.

Beyond Appy, and Baskir & Strauss, a few sociologists have conducted some very in-depth studies of Project 100,000 and its impact on the military and the individuals who served under this program. Thomas Sticht et al. in *Cast-off Youth: Policy and Training Methods from the Military Experience*, a report the Ford Foundation commissioned as part of its Program on Urban Poverty, provides a significant discussion of Project 100,000. The findings of Sticht et al. coincide with other sociologists who argue that Project 100,000 was a success. They contend that most individuals with low-aptitude make acceptable members of the military, although generally they do not perform as well as persons who achieved higher test scores.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, Janice Laurence and Peter Ramsberger argue in *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military: Who Profits, Who Pays?* against using persons with low-aptitude in the military, claiming these

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<sup>39</sup> Appy, *Working-Class War*, 32.

<sup>40</sup> Baskir and Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance*, 123.

<sup>41</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Chapter 4: “Vietnam and Project 100,000,” and Chapter 6: “Cast-off Youth in Perspective.”



individuals do not perform as well, require additional training and supervision, and therefore are not as cost effective as those who score higher on aptitude tests.<sup>42</sup>

The greatest strength of these sociological studies is their reliance on careful scientific and statistical examination of data about the men who served in the military under this program. These studies are also successful at placing Project 100,000 in context with other periods in military history—particularly times of war—when the U.S. military utilized individuals with lower aptitudes in order to meet manpower requirements. Nevertheless, these studies lack historical context about the genesis of Project 100,000, the reaction of the military departments to it, how the military implemented it, its termination, and its impact on the military and the men who served because of the program.

Several journalists and other authors have written works on Vietnam that touch on Project 100,000, but discussions of it tend to devolve into polemics about class and racial politics. Many of these authors, often with their own agendas, relied on flawed and incomplete research to support their arguments. Most of these treatments claim or imply that the program was the deliberate and calculated effort of the Defense Department and President Johnson’s administration to send the most disadvantaged members of society, particularly racial minorities, to fight and die in Vietnam. A large portion of this literature vigorously argues that Project 100,000 was responsible for the greater percentage of casualties among African Americans in relation to the general population. For example, in *Long Time Passing*, MacPherson contends the U.S. government deliberately targeted

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<sup>42</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, Chapter 2: “Project 100,000.”

young black men, the military never provided any of the promised training, and most Project 100,000 veterans received bad conduct discharges further ruining their lives, if they survived the war at all.<sup>43</sup>

While MacPherson is one of the relatively recent authors to address Project 100,000, others, like journalist Robert Sherrill, condemned it even while it was underway. He argues in his 1969 book, *Military Justice is to Justice as Military Music is to Music* that many of the New Standards Men got into trouble almost immediately and stayed in trouble while in uniform.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, Sherrill uses the same statistics as MacPherson from the 1969 Defense Department Report on Project 100,000 indicating New Standards Men were court martialed at a rate of 3.7 percent while non-program service members were court martialed at a rate of 1.5 percent.<sup>45</sup> While it is true that the rate for New Standards Men was more than twice that of non-program personnel, this kind of rhetoric fails to account for the 96.3 percent of New Standards Men who were not convicted in courts martial. Furthermore, Sherrill only uses figures for New Standards Men in the Army.<sup>46</sup> The figures for the Defense Department as a whole were somewhat better—3.0 percent of New Standards Men across the entire Defense Department were convicted while 1.4 percent of non-program personnel were similarly convicted.<sup>47</sup> When considering American society as a whole, the combined rate of violent and property

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<sup>43</sup> MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 640 and 663.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Sherrill, *Military Justice is to Justice as Military Music is to Music* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

<sup>45</sup> Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), xxi.

<sup>46</sup> Sherrill, *Military Justice is to Justice as Military Music is to Music*, 219.

<sup>47</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, xxi.

crime (courts martial level offenses) in 1969 was 3.68 percent.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, men in the military were less likely to offend than civilians regardless of their status as New Standards Men or regular recruits. The difference between the New Standards Men courts martial rate and American society violent crime rate is even greater when considering service members can receive a courts martial for non-violent offenses like disobeying a lawful order or going absent without leave.

Peter Barnes in his book, *Pawns: The Plight of the Citizen Soldiers*, contends the military used Project 100,000 to specifically target African Americans in poor, inner city neighborhoods in order to meet manpower requirements for Vietnam.<sup>49</sup> Paul Starr in his work on Vietnam Veterans, *Discarded Army: Veterans After Vietnam*, argues Project 100,000 was further evidence of how unjust the military manpower policy was during Vietnam.<sup>50</sup> Clark Dougan and Samuel Lipsman, *A Nation Divided*, argue despite the high-minded rhetoric, Project 100,000 quickly became the pathway for hundreds of thousands of poor, uneducated youths to fight and die in Vietnam.<sup>51</sup> James Gibson, *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam*, argues because of the ever increasing demand for manpower, Project 100,000 changed the standards so that those at the bottom could be sent to die in Vietnam.<sup>52</sup> Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990*, contends Project 100,000 was deliberately aimed at African Americans and then channeled these

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<sup>48</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics Database," <http://ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/State/RunCrimeStatebyState.cfm>.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Barnes, *Pawns: The Plight of the Citizen Soldiers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1972).

<sup>50</sup> Paul Starr, *Discarded Army: Veterans After Vietnam* (New York: Charterhouse, 1973).

<sup>51</sup> Clark Dougan and Samuel Lipsman, *A Nation Divided* (Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1984).

<sup>52</sup> James W. Gibson, *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986).

men into combat.<sup>53</sup> Since Appy published his work in 1993, there has been little serious historical scholarship on the nature of military manpower in Vietnam and nothing on Project 100,000. Most historians confine their treatments of the American War in Vietnam to questions regarding the efficacy of America's involvement, the strategies the United States employed to wage the war, and how, why, or even if America won or lost.

Nevertheless, the Department of Defense conducted significant staff work in manpower planning, requirements, and analysis at all levels of the department and across the military branches throughout the duration of Project 100,000. Beyond the Defense Department, several other organizations in the federal government were directly or indirectly involved with Project 100,000. The Executive Office of the President, the Congress, the Department of Labor, the Selective Service, and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare were all concerned with the plight of disadvantaged Americans to varying degrees. The United States would have significant challenges and a dim future if it did not address the increasing numbers of young men who were unable to qualify for military service and were unable to find employment or stay in school. It was the intersection of these two realities—increasing rates of youth unemployment and one third of men in 1962 failing to meet minimum qualification standards for the military—that served as the impetus for Project 100,000 and other government programs of a broader, collective effort to improve the lives of Americans.

This dissertation explores the history of Project 100,000, its impact on the military, and the men who served under this program. It documents how the armed forces

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<sup>53</sup> Young, *The Vietnam Wars*.

planned for Project 100,000 and the debates that took place among the senior military leadership and the civilian policymakers in the Pentagon. It examines how the armed forces implemented the program to include the special training and education New Standards Men received. It addresses several key questions. How did the New Standards Men perform and what was their impact on the services? Did the increased numbers of mental category IV (CAT IV) personnel lead to a greater decline in efficiency? Did Project 100,000 contribute to the end of the Vietnam Era Draft and the transition to the All-Volunteer Force? Finally, what were the impacts of 100,000 on the New Standards Men, their service, and their lives after the military?

Beyond the effects of Project 100,000 on the military and those who served under the provisions of the program, there are much broader implications for consideration. What is the efficacy of aptitude testing as a predictor of potential or future ability? Does success in testing translate to success in training? If aptitude testing is the primary means the military uses to determine the suitability of potential service members, how does this approach account for the effect of education and other geographic, historic, economic, social, and political factors on the success of young men when they reported to Armed Forces Induction Centers for aptitude testing? The implications of this study on common practices within the military's manpower system are profound.

In seeking to answer these questions and understand their broader implications, this dissertation is organized into several chapters. Each one centers on one or more of these main questions and is intended to address key issues in the history of Project 100,000. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II: "Project 100,000—Planning

and Debates” explores the planning and debates that surrounded Project 100,000 and the use of low-aptitude men for military service. Several senior officers in the military and members of Congress opposed the program from its inception, believing that accepting large numbers of men with low-aptitudes would have debilitating effects on the readiness, health, and welfare of the force.<sup>54</sup> Secretary of Defense McNamara was not the first to suggest using men who scored in the lower percentiles for military service; President Kennedy also raised the issue. He commissioned the Task Force on Manpower Conservation in September 1963 and charged its members with determining why one-third of all men who reported for the draft in the previous year failed to meet minimum qualification standards, nearly half of them for low-aptitude.<sup>55</sup>

Chapter III: “Project 100,000—Special Training and Education” is an examination of how the military provided New Standards Men with additional training and education to ensure their success not only in the military, but also in civil society after they left the service. As discussed earlier, one of the greatest criticisms of Project 100,000 is that the military never delivered on the promise of additional training and education for New Standards Men and that for the most part, these men returned to civilian life just as ill-equipped, confused, and bewildered as when they left it. Their military experience, as many authors argue, left them in worse shape than if they had never served at all. This chapter explores how the military developed and executed these special training and education programs and whether or not these programs had any effect on the success of Project 100,000 and the men who served under the program.

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<sup>54</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 37-38.

<sup>55</sup> *One Third of a Nation*, 20.

Chapter IV: “New Standards Men: Performance, Standards, and Discipline” investigates what effects the New Standards Men had on unit performance—especially those units that saw combat action in Vietnam. It will also explore how these men affected standards and discipline and whether or not their presence was a positive or negative influence on the military units in which they served. Much of the criticism surrounding Project 100,000 during its inception was that the men serving under this program would not be able to perform as well as men scoring higher on aptitude tests and there would be a concomitant decline in unit performance, standards, and discipline.<sup>56</sup> This criticism continued as the military executed the program and even after both Project 100,000 and the Vietnam War ended. Indeed, the New Standards Men were the subject of several derisive names, the worst of which was “McNamara’s Morons.”<sup>57</sup> There is much anecdotal evidence suggesting that the decline in unit performance, standards, and discipline occurred. Nevertheless, when primary documents like the 1969 Defense Department report, *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performances of “New Standards” Men* and its 1971 Final Report with the same title, correspondence between the Secretary of Defense and the secretaries of the military departments, government reports to the White House, and oral histories from field commanders during the Vietnam War are examined, a different story emerges.

Chapter V: “Project 100,000 and the Transition to the All-Volunteer Force” explores how Project 100,000 affected attitudes about the draft and how these negative and positive views contributed to the end of the draft and the transition to the All-

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<sup>56</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 37-38.

<sup>57</sup> Burkett and Whitley, *Stolen Valor*, 54 and Appy, *Working-Class War*, 25.

Volunteer Force. As early as 1964, President Johnson was exploring ways to end the draft and transition the military to an All-Volunteer Force—a draftee military is inherently inefficient and by this time the United States had relied on the draft to supply the majority of its military manpower needs for nearly twenty-five years both in peacetime and wartime.<sup>58</sup> The Gulf of Tonkin incident and subsequent congressional resolution led to sharp increases in military manpower requirements for America’s growing commitment in Vietnam. As the war progressed and the unrest at home increased over America’s involvement, there was a renewed emphasis on finding a solution to the demands for military manpower other than the draft.

One of President Nixon’s campaign pledges in the 1968 election was ending the wildly unpopular draft. Consequently, he formed the President’s Commission on the All-Volunteer Force—also known as the Gates Commission—to explore how to do so. The commission released its findings in 1970, and congressional legislation enacted in 1971 ended peacetime conscription in 1973.<sup>59</sup> Senior military officers and congressional leaders argued that without the draft, the military would not be able to recruit, enlist, retain, and induct the kind of higher aptitude individual the military felt it needed and that it believed could only be secured through conscription.<sup>60</sup> Project 100,000 invalidated this rhetoric, as it demonstrated through the performance of New Standards Men that lower

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<sup>58</sup> James M. Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy: Issues in Military Manpower Procurement, 1945-1970* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971) and *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64*.

<sup>59</sup> *The President’s Commission on the All-Volunteer Force* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970) (hereafter referred to as the Gates Commission Report).

<sup>60</sup> Sticht et al. *Cast-off Youth* and Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*.



aptitude individuals could, with the proper training, education, and supervision, succeed in the military.

Chapter VI: “The Early All-Volunteer Force, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Miscalculation, and Project 100,000 Revisited” examines the decade following the Vietnam War, as the military transitioned to the All-Volunteer Force, when another instance of large numbers of low-aptitude personnel served in the military. From 1976 to 1980 grading tables used to convert the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)<sup>61</sup> raw scores to percentile scores for the AFQT provided incorrect information that resulted in a miscalculation. Thus, when an individual took the ASVAB as part of their enlistment process, and their raw score was converted to a percentile to determine if they met the minimum 31 percent, the resulting percentile score was erroneously reported as above the minimum standard for hundreds of thousands of personnel. By October 1980, the Defense Department had accepted over 300,000 recruits who had scored below the minimum 31st percentile—nearly as many as the number of New Standards Men who had been accepted through Project 100,000 from 1966 to 1971. For example, in fiscal year 1979, the Army believed that only about 9 percent of its recruits were CAT IVs during the miscalculation, in reality, the figure was 46 percent—nearly one half of all Army enlistees for the entire year.<sup>62</sup> This chapter also examines how the men who entered military service under the miscalculation compared to the New Standards Men and higher aptitude recruits from the same time period.

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<sup>61</sup> The ASVAB—Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery—was one component test of the AFQT.

<sup>62</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 67.

Chapter VII: “Conclusion—Reconstructing Our View of Project 100,000, New Standards Men, and the U.S. Military in Vietnam and Beyond” provides details on the men who served—their length of service, the character of their service, what programs they took advantage of while in the military, and what their lives were like when they returned to civilian society. This chapter also includes a discussion on whether or not these men received the benefits that Project 100,000 envisioned. The New Standards Men served during a period of great turmoil, not only in the military, but in American society as well. Most of these men had already endured severe personal hardship in their home life, schooling, and employment before their service in the military. Military service was, for the vast majority of New Standards Men, a positive experience that provided opportunities for employment, education, and health care that they would not have had in civilian life.

The concluding chapter also includes a brief examination of how the Defense Department considered expanding the pool of available manpower during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The military planned and began the initial execution of both conflicts without consideration for how long the conflicts would last and the pace and tempo of combat deployments required to fight these wars. By the time of the Iraq War Troop Surge in 2007 and the subsequent Afghanistan War Troop Surge in 2009, the military, in particular the Army and Marine Corps, was scrambling to man, train, and equip sufficient combat units to meet operational requirements. Military planners considered ways to broaden the pool of available manpower through relaxing enlistments standards in

aptitude, age, and civil convictions. This was not a new approach to increasing numbers of eligible individuals for military service.

The American War in Vietnam was one of the most divisive periods in recent American history. Even after forty years since hostilities ended and the Vietnam Era Draft came to an end, there is still considerable debate among scholars, politicians, the media, and the general public on why America fought and how or even if it lost. Project 100,000 contributed in several ways to this debate. Millions of young men in the 1960s failed to meet the minimum qualification standards on the military entrance examination or were physically disqualified for service in the military. The vast majority of them never served. For the 346,000 men who served under Project 100,000 their story is one that has received little attention. Most accounts are overly negative and tell only a portion of how the military planned and executed the program and little of what happened to the men while they served and their lives after the military. There was broad criticism of and resistance to Project 100,000 from its inception. Much of this centered on issues of readiness, cost, the potentially adverse effects on the military, and whether or not the men who would serve under the conditions of the program would be better off for their service. This dissertation presents a different account of Project 100,000 and the New Standards Men. This is their story.

## II. Project 100,000 Planning and Debates

Cassius Clay was just one of the nearly two million young men who failed to meet the minimum standard of 31 percent on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) in 1964. He had been a poor reader in high school and the reading and mathematics portion of the written exam were especially difficult for him. He scored a seventy-eight on the exam, which placed him in the 16th percentile—well below the minimum standard of 31 percent.<sup>63</sup> When Clay reported to the Armed Forces Induction Center in Coral Gables, Florida in January for testing, President Johnson received the report from the President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation. Several months earlier on September 30, 1963, President Kennedy had commissioned members of the task force, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and the Director of the Selective Service, to investigate and recommend courses of action for responding to two separate, but related developments—the continued rise in youth unemployment and the failure of one-third of the young men in 1962 to meet minimum qualifications on the military entrance examination for either low-aptitude or medical reasons.

This chapter explores the planning and debates that surrounded Project 100,000 and the use of low-aptitude men for military service. Contrary to the popular view, the

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<sup>63</sup> Hauser with Ali, *Muhammad Ali*, 142-144.

Defense Department planned and implemented Project 100,000 as a sincere attempt to provide an opportunity for disadvantaged young men to gain valuable training, education, and services and thus return to civilian society as more productive members and break out of the cycle of poverty. Despite criticism to the contrary, increasing the available pool of eligible men for military service was secondary. Prior to Project 100,000, much of the population of young men, aged eighteen to twenty-five were simply unqualified for military service.<sup>64</sup> The Defense Department was aware that without increasing the pool of available men who were eligible to volunteer, it would not meet its manpower requirements without the draft. But this was true even before Vietnam significantly increased the demand for military forces, a fact that uncouples criticism of Project 100,000 from criticism of the war itself.<sup>65</sup>

Understanding how the military categorized men based on aptitude scores and medical examination is important to the overall understanding of Project 100,000 and the performance of New Standards Men. Roy Davenport, Deputy Undersecretary of the Army for Personnel Strength during the Johnson administration, described in detail the Mental Standards Category System the Selective Service and Defense Department used in a letter to Harry MacPherson, Special Counsel to President Johnson, dated July 12, 1965.<sup>66</sup> Davenport was concerned the Selective Service and the military departments used the label Class I-Y for men scoring in the 10th to 30th percentile and CAT IV-F for men

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<sup>64</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, 1-2.

<sup>65</sup> Transcript, Alfred B. Fitt Oral History Interview, Tape 1, October 25, 1968, by Dorothy Pierce, page 19, LBJ Library and Transcript, Lewis Blaine Hershey Oral History Interview, Tape 1, November 22, 1968, by Paige E. Mulhollan, page 29-30, LBJ Library.

<sup>66</sup> Letter, Roy K. Davenport to Harry C. McPherson, 7/12/65, "Project 100,000 Reference File, Folder 2H" Vietnam Country File, NSF, ND 9-4, FG120, LBJ Library.

scoring below the 10th percentile, which indicated relatively low general ability, as meaning the individual could not succeed in adequately performing military skills. It was standard practice to assign IQ scores in relation to a man's AFQT score even though there was little evidence to suggest that an individual who scored in the bottom third of the AFQT was mentally deficient. The AFQT was much more of an indication of education level attained (in particular reading comprehension) and aptitude for military training rather than intelligence alone.<sup>67</sup> Davenport believed, and Defense Department regulations confirmed, that a low AFQT score only limited the variety of occupations in which the military services could train and assign to these individuals—it was not necessarily an indicator of future performance in the military. Indeed, countless men in uniform raised their AFQT score during their service either as a condition for continued service, promotion, or to transfer to another specialty.<sup>68</sup> Davenport argued that once in service, the CAT IV label on an individual was insignificant and that aptitude and performance while in uniform were more important than the AFQT score.<sup>69</sup>

Congress identified the AFQT in 1951 as the primary instrument for determining eligibility for military service and codified this in federal statute as part of the Universal Military Training and Service Act of 1951. A minimum score of 10 percent was required for qualification and the Selective Service presumed that 90 percent of the population could attain a score at or above this mark. This prohibited men who were CAT IV-F (less than 10 percent on the AFQT) from serving in the military except in times of war or

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<sup>67</sup> Department of the Army, *Marginal Man and Military Service: A Review* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 1965), 9-10.

<sup>68</sup> *Marginal Man and Military Service*, 22-23.

<sup>69</sup> Letter, Davenport to McPherson, 7/12/65, LBJ Library.

national emergency.<sup>70</sup> Congress included this language in response to the World War II experience where large numbers of CAT IV-F men were inducted—some of them were so illiterate that they had to receive remedial literacy training before they could even take the AFQT.<sup>71</sup> In July 1958, Congress amended this legislation so the president could during peacetime modify this minimum standard. In August of that year, an Executive Order authorized the Secretary of Defense to amend the mental standard for those men who were classified as CAT IV. The amended standards included additional and more specific qualifications that each CAT IV individual had to demonstrate through performance or other measures of aptitude. These changes included scoring at least 90 percent or higher in two other areas of aptitude.<sup>72</sup> The purpose of these changes was to empower the Defense Department to conduct additional testing on individuals who scored below 31 percent on the AFQT and ensure they had some suitability for military service.

In May 1963, the Defense Department again amended these additional standards by adding the requirement for CAT IV personnel to score a minimum of 80 percent in the General Technical area. This exacerbated the situation for low-aptitude individuals already designated as a CAT IV since the General Technical area test was heavily weighted in math and verbal skills and the AFQT was heavily weighted in the same areas.<sup>73</sup> This meant a CAT IV individual who had already scored in the bottom third in a

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<sup>70</sup> United States Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, *Universal Military Training and Service Act of 1951* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1951).

<sup>71</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 17.

<sup>72</sup> Letter, Davenport to McPherson, 7/12/65, LBJ Library.

<sup>73</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 7 and *Marginal Man and Military Service*, 163-164.

test that emphasized math and verbal skills took another test utilizing an assessment tool covering the same sort of material. This change in standards with the additional testing requirements led to a near doubling of the CAT IV personnel who were accepted for induction in the military from 1962 to 1964. The percentage rose from 6.2 percent to 11.4 percent during this time and coincided with the rise in the number of young men who were failing minimum standards in their pre-induction examinations, which was the impetus for President Kennedy forming the President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation.<sup>74</sup> Even before the implementation of Project 100,000, the military was already accepting increasing numbers of CAT IV personnel.

Procedures for testing among the different military departments varied in terms of how each department assessed a CAT IV individual and requirements for additional aptitude tests and a high school diploma. This resulted in a convoluted and disparate Selective Service model where men rejected for service in one military branch were qualified in another. Indeed, Davenport argued the ranks of the Army were often swelled with CAT IVs who were unqualified for the other military branches as volunteers.<sup>75</sup> The Army's CAT IV population among draftees had at times exceeded 40 percent, especially during World War II and Korea.<sup>76</sup> Given such a system, it was hard to find equity among the branches of the military for how men were inducted or qualified for enlistment. This inequity, coupled with the differences in the numbers of men needed each month for each military service—the Army needing far more than the other services, with the Navy and Air Force needing the fewest—created conditions whereby annually, thousands of young

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<sup>74</sup> Letter, Davenport to McPherson, 7/12/65, LBJ Library and *Marginal Man and Military Service*, 268.

<sup>75</sup> Letter, Davenport to McPherson, 7/12/65, LBJ Library.

<sup>76</sup> *Marginal Man and Military Service*, 163-164.



men who had some aptitudes useful to the military were denied enlistment or failed to qualify for induction.<sup>77</sup>

The genesis for Project 100,000 began in 1963 with the intersection of two seemingly unrelated, but very troubling developments. The first was a Selective Service report finding that one-half of the men called for draft registration and pre-induction examination in 1962 were unqualified for military service. Of the 306,000 young men who reported for these examinations, 153,500 or 49.8 percent failed to meet minimum standards in either the medical or education categories. The failure rate was nearly evenly split with 24.5 percent failing the mental qualification test and 22.7 percent failing the physical examination.<sup>78</sup> The second development was the continued rise in youth unemployment. During the years 1948 to 1963, rates of unemployment for white males ages fourteen to nineteen had doubled, while the same rates for non-white males in the same age group had nearly tripled. This growing increase in the number of young people out of school and out of work had already emerged as one of the more serious social issues America faced in the 1950s, even before the nation felt the effects of the Baby Boomer population growth. The unemployment rate for all male teenagers in 1963 was 21 percent, the highest since the Great Depression.<sup>79</sup>

Much of the scholarly discourse surrounding Project 100,000 has focused on the impact of accepting large numbers of otherwise unqualified men for service in the military during the Vietnam War, or it has devolved into polemics about the sincerity of the program to help disadvantaged young men. There was widespread criticism from the

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<sup>77</sup> Letter, Davenport to McPherson, 7/12/65, LBJ Library.

<sup>78</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, 1-2.

<sup>79</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, Chart A, 6.

onset, especially from senior people in the military branches, Department of Defense, and the Congress, that lowering standards in the mental and medical qualifications would serve to reduce unit effectiveness and adversely impact unit morale. This criticism during implementation, after it ended, and in the decades since the war ended, has contributed in large measure to the popular narrative that America sent its socially and economically dispossessed to fight and die in Vietnam, while others who were more privileged escaped having to serve.<sup>80</sup> Conversely, there were also several senior civilian and military personnel who believed the military was exactly the right institution with the right kind of infrastructure and experience to develop disadvantaged young men for success.

Early criticism centered on the Army's proposed Special Training and Education Program (STEP) in 1964, a forerunner of Project 100,000. Since neither STEP nor Project 100,000 required legislative approval, Congress had to rely on the appropriations process during its review of the Department of Defense's annual budget to state its views on the program. Mr. David E. McGiffert, Assistant to Secretary McNamara for Legislative Affairs, detailed the congressional opposition to STEP in a memorandum to Mr. Lawrence F. O'Brien, Special Assistant to the President on May 29, 1965. Secretary McNamara knew President Johnson was particularly interested in STEP and hoped he could engage with individual members of Congress who would vote on the 1966 Defense Department Appropriations Bill and persuade them of the efficacy of the program.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Appy, *Working-Class War*; MacPherson, *Longtime Passing*; and Young, *The Vietnam Wars* are some of the most critical of these works.

<sup>81</sup> Memo, David E. McGiffert to Lawrence F. O'Brien, 5/29/65, "ND 9-4 Conscription-Induction-Draft 11/19/64-12/1/65," Box 148, LBJ Library.

Earlier in 1965, the Senate Armed Services Committee had blocked the Defense Department's attempt to reprogram part of its budget to pay for STEP after it had failed to include language in the 1965 Defense Department Appropriations Bill. Now the department had included language in the 1966 version of the bill, but Secretary McNamara was keenly aware of the bill's precarious status of getting passed with the STEP language included. Representative George H. Mahon (Democrat, Texas) and the Department of Defense Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee he chaired were set to start the mark-up of the bill the very next week after McGiffert sent his memorandum to O'Brien. McGiffert detailed how despite extensive testimony and personal visits to members, a majority of the subcommittee members were still opposed to funding STEP. Congressional objections to STEP were generally along the following: the military should not be a Job Corps, STEP would create instant veterans with the associated benefits among those who did not complete the additional training, and STEP involved lowering Army enlistment standards. McGiffert was also acutely aware that even if the Appropriations Bill passed the House, the Senate would be even tougher and additional presidential engagement would be necessary.<sup>82</sup>

Congress never approved the STEP language in the appropriations bill. The Appropriations Subcommittee stripped it out and the Army was unable to execute STEP. Nevertheless, McNamara still believed in the usefulness of allowing men who had failed to meet minimum standards to serve if, the Defense Department provided the proper remedial training and required medical care to correct minor medical deficiencies. He

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<sup>82</sup> Memo, McGiffert to O'Brien, 5/29/65, LBJ Library.

presented his thoughts to President Johnson in a status report memorandum on the draft study dated April 5, 1965, nearly two months before Congress blocked the Army's STEP program. In the wake of the President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation January 1964 report, Johnson had asked McNamara for a comprehensive study of the draft in April 1964. The major purpose of this study was to assess the feasibility of meeting the nation's military manpower requirements solely on a volunteer basis.<sup>83</sup>

McNamara reported to the president on a variety of issues surrounding the draft study and the feasibility of transitioning to solely using volunteers for military manpower requirements. Based on the findings to date, McNamara concluded a continuation of the draft at the current time was necessary in order to meet manpower requirements. Some of the key findings included: an estimated 40 percent of the enlisted men and junior officers serving on initial tours of duty only volunteered because they had a draft obligation, known as draft-motivated volunteers; a close correlation between unemployment and enlistments; and an overall recent decline in recruitment. McNamara attributed this decline to public speculation about the possibility of an early termination of the draft. The correlation between unemployment and enlistments illustrated how increases in the unemployment rate led to a corresponding increase in men seeking employment through enlisting in the military.<sup>84</sup>

In related, but separate findings, the President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation found that men who failed to meet minimum standards were also the most likely to be unemployed, just as McNamara reported to Johnson that men with

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<sup>83</sup> Letter, Robert S. McNamara to the President, 4/5/65. "McNamara Papers," Ex ND 9-4, FG 115, LBJ Library.

<sup>84</sup> Letter, McNamara to the President, 4/5/65, LBJ Library.

qualifications for training in the military's technical and professional fields were the least likely to volunteer.<sup>85</sup> Specifically, McNamara reported 30 percent of enlisted applicants in the fall of 1964 were employed at the time of their application. He even alluded to how difficult it would become to find suitable volunteers for military service in the wake of national employment goals and the expansion of civilian job and training opportunities for the nation's youth.<sup>86</sup> Thus, from 1962 to 1964, the general findings on men who were unable to qualify for military service were consistent. Men who were the most likely to be unemployed, lacking job skills or prospects or employment opportunities, were the most likely to fail minimum qualification standards for military service.

Even though McNamara knew in the near-term the Defense Department could not meet its manpower requirements without using the draft in some capacity, he ultimately wanted to increase the number of volunteers and reduce the Defense Department's reliance on the draft. "Although continuation of the draft authority is clearly needed, I am convinced that our objective must be to greatly strengthen our voluntary recruitment effort and thereby minimize reliance on the draft."<sup>87</sup> In order to accomplish this and in the absence of eliminating educational deferments or mobilizing reserve component forces, the Defense Department would have to widen the pool of available and qualified men. The goal, however, was not to increase the number of men eligible for the draft; the goal was to increase the number of men who were qualified to enlist as volunteers.

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<sup>85</sup> The Manpower Conservation report's findings were based on its survey of 2,500 men who failed to meet minimum qualification standards in 1962 and McNamara based his findings on data from the Selective Service for the year prior to his report to the president (fall 1964).

<sup>86</sup> Letter, McNamara to the President, 4/5/65, LBJ Library.

<sup>87</sup> Letter, McNamara to the President, 4/5/65, LBJ Library.

McNamara concluded his April 1965 draft study memorandum to Johnson with an offering of several recommendations:

A number of measures are under study which will help move us toward reduced reliance on the draft: variable reenlistment bonuses as a recruitment incentive; improvements in selection and training methods designed to increase the proportion of qualified men who can prove useful in service; increased utilization of civilians rather than military to both reduce military personnel strength and increase combat effectiveness; use of existing civilian manpower training and development programs to help qualify young men for military [service], as well as civilian careers.<sup>88</sup>

He also stated the Defense Department was assessing current draft selection policies within the broader context of future population trends in order to develop alternative policies for manpower procurement. In closing, McNamara stated these alternatives would have implications for the military services, the civilian economy, and the young men of the nation.<sup>89</sup> Here, in a memorandum to the president, eighteen months before he conceives and implements Project 100,000, McNamara distinctly frames the draft study as not about increasing the available manpower pool for the draft, but rather increasing the number of men who are eligible to volunteer. Furthermore, McNamara is clearly aware in this memo of the economic, social, and political implications of lowering entrance standards for military service.

Similar congressional criticism to STEP emerged about fifteen months later in August 1966 when Secretary McNamara initiated Project 100,000, but since Congress did not write another appropriations bill and was getting ready for its August recess, none of the criticism rose to such a level as to prevent McNamara from implementing the

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<sup>88</sup> Letter, McNamara to the President, 4/5/65, LBJ Library.

<sup>89</sup> Letter, McNamara to the President, 4/5/65, LBJ Library.

program. In fact, Alfred B. Fitt, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs from 1967-1969, details in his oral history from the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library how he tried to convince McNamara that the timing was wrong for announcing Project 100,000 given the congressional disapproval of STEP. Nevertheless, McNamara moved forward. Indeed, it was Alfred Fitt who wrote McNamara's speech announcing Project 100,000 to the VFW in New York City.<sup>90</sup>

Congress continued to press the Defense Department for details of the new manpower program and how it impacted military readiness, how the Defense Department would use the additional manpower, and whether or not it required additional funding. Answering these questions, preparing congressional testimony, and appearing before various congressional committees and subcommittees consumed Defense Department staff members, in particular the Assistant Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. There are several interoffice memos (the 1960s version of email) between Alfred Fitt and Mr. Irv Greenberg, Director of Project 100,000, that reveal just how cognizant the Defense Department was of the criticism of the program. A series of interoffice memos from October 1967 to January 1969<sup>91</sup> detail how concerned Fitt was with not only the criticism about Project 100,000, but also his attention to detail for safeguarding the integrity of the staffing process and ensuring sufficient data was available from the military services to demonstrate the efficacy of the program. Fitt provides guidance, direction, and requests additional information on numerous subjects. He continually engaged his staff for answers on how each military branch utilized New Standards Men,

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<sup>90</sup> Transcript, Fitt Oral History Interview, page 10-12, LBJ Library.

<sup>91</sup> By this timeframe, Project 100,000 had been in existence from 12 to 27 months.

the characteristics and performance of New Standards Men, and how these men compared to non-program personnel. He also recommended changes to accession quotas, wanted to know trends of Project 100,000 accessions by week, and numerous other issues related to tracking New Standards Men and their performance.<sup>92</sup> It is apparent from these interoffice memos that Fitt believed this kind of detailed staff work was necessary to ensure the success of the program.

Fitt understood how easy it was for Congress and public opinion to sway in one direction or another, often influenced by issues of perception. His emphasis on detailed staff work on New Standards Men utilization, character, and performance emanates from this understanding. Throughout these interoffice memos and his own oral history interview, Fitt is always mindful of the potential for negativity to adversely impact the program. He had served as the Deputy Under Secretary of the Army for Manpower from 1961 to 1962, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civil Rights from 1963 to 1964, and then as General Counsel of the Army from 1964 to 1967. He was well versed in Defense Department manpower policy and his work on civil rights for the department had a profound impact on his later work. The table of contents for the transcript of his oral history interview reads like a cornucopia of social issues for the military from the 1960s. Civil works programs, integration of off-base housing, charges the military was sending a disproportionate number of black service members to hazardous duty and limited promotion opportunities for African Americans, using military service as an instrument in social problems, equal opportunity policies, drafting of graduate students,

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<sup>92</sup> Various Memos and Letters, Alfred B. Fitt to Staff, Alfred B. Fitt Papers, Box 4, "Correspondence – Memos to Staff 9/28/67 – 8/30/68," LBJ Library.



returning deserters to the military and sending them to Vietnam, and a host of other issues are all addressed in his oral history.<sup>93</sup>

Criticism from military personnel outside of the Pentagon was also widespread—much of it after the Defense Department initiated and implemented the program. As mentioned previously, General William C. Westmoreland, Commander of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, 1964-1968 and then Chief of Staff of the Army, 1968-1972, attributed the My Lai Massacre, which occurred eighteen months after the Defense Department implemented Project 100,000, and the inept leadership abilities of Lieutenant William Calley to the lowering of standards in the Army, especially in the quality and quantity of entrance standards for Officer Candidate School. Westmoreland contended that had it not been for the educational deferment policies and the resulting lowering of standards, Calley would never have become an officer.<sup>94</sup> Besides senior officers, numerous company and field grade officers having direct contact with Project 100,000 personnel were critical of the program.

Much of this criticism appears in retrospect and came from senior officers within the Pentagon. One such officer was General James K. Woolnough, who served as the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel during the early stages of Project 100,000 and then later commanding general of the Continental Army Command where he was responsible for all Army training installations and programs. He was particularly critical of what he believed was political pressure from Secretary McNamara and President

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<sup>93</sup> Transcript, Fitt Oral History Interview, LBJ Library.

<sup>94</sup> Transcript, General William C. Westmoreland Oral History Interview, Volume I, Tape W-134, Side 1, by LTC Martin L. Ganderson, William C. Westmoreland Collection, Box 69, Folder 4, Project 1982-F, page 240, The United States Army Heritage and Education Center (hereafter referred to as USAHEC).

Johnson to lower standards. In 1971, shortly after he relinquished command, he gave an oral history interview at the Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. In his interview, he describes how the Army had devoted a substantial amount of time and effort to raising minimum standards for service in the Army following World War II and the Korean War. He contends that by the beginning of the 1960s, the Army was very happy with progress it had made in recruiting and induction, because its soldiers were better educated, more physically fit, and more psychologically adapted than at any period in the Army's history.<sup>95</sup>

General Woolnough recalled that "when the buildup for the Vietnam War began, it became quite evident that there were going to be much larger manpower requirements for the services, and a great deal of political pressure began to be brought to lower the standards so that we would get a more across the board draw down on our manpower." He recalled how it was the politicians who were pushing for the lowering of standards while those in uniform fought very hard to keep them where they were. He gave his interview in March 1971, as Project 100,000 was coming to a close and remarked how the situation was changing and the Defense Department was trying to get some of the lower class individuals and African Americans out of the draft to avoid these groups from carrying a disproportionate share of casualties in Vietnam.<sup>96</sup>

There was also concern among administration officials that the public would view the program negatively and accuse the administration of merely seeking to expand the

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<sup>95</sup> Transcript, General James K. Woolnough Oral History Interview, Interview #3, by LTC W. M. Stevenson, James K. Woolnough Collection, Box 1, Volume I, Copy 1, March 4, 1971, USAHEC.

<sup>96</sup> Transcript, General Woolnough Oral History Interview, USAHEC.

available manpower pool as the need grew for more and more personnel in Vietnam.<sup>97</sup> This concern is evidenced in numerous Defense Department memorandums and internal communications. It first emerged in the congressional opposition to STEP and continued through the implementation and execution of Project 100,000. A 1965 Army information paper on STEP detailed some of the congressional concern over perceptions of seeking to find more manpower for Vietnam at the cost of lowering standards. Alfred Fitt described this in his oral history interview. Of note, he stated: “I don’t know how many people were aware of it within the Army, but the manpower pool in the fall of 1966 was dwindling in the face of the build-up which was then occurring in the Army. They would have had to lower standards anyhow in order to satisfy the build-up of requirements. So to the extent that it had to be done anyhow, it kind of took the steam out of people who objected to the idea of lowering standards.”<sup>98</sup> In fact, the nation had lowered standards during every major conflict of the twentieth century to expand the pool of eligible men for military service when manpower requirements exceeded what was available. During the Vietnam War Era, the military needed manpower not just for operations in the theater of war; it needed a far greater number of personnel for requirements in Europe and the United States.

Even though McNamara and other senior defense officials knew the Defense Department would have to lower standards, protecting Project 100,000 from the perception the department was simply lowering standards to fill the ranks of combat units headed to Vietnam was of real concern. In an interoffice memo dated March 18, 1968 to

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<sup>97</sup> Transcript, Fitt Oral History Interview, page 19, LBJ Library.

<sup>98</sup> Transcript, Fitt Oral History Interview, page 19, LBJ Library.

Irv Greenberg, Fitt reiterates this concern. “Does the Marine Corps have a rational target for New Standards combat assignments, or are they just seeing what happens? We’ve got to protect Project 100,000 against a cannon fodder charge.” Just four days earlier, he had requested Greenberg provide him a report on exactly what the Marine Corps was doing “to reduce the grossly disproportionate combat arms input of New Standards men.”<sup>99</sup> Fitt’s concern stemmed not only from protecting the program from the “cannon fodder charge,” but also from one of the main purposes of the program. Project 100,000 was supposed to provide opportunities for men to gain valuable skills and training they could then apply in their civilian lives. Skills developed in combat occupations, while vital to military service, were more difficult to translate into job skills required in the civilian work force.

The use of marginal men for military service was not a new concept. During times of war or national emergency, the military planned on using men from the lower end of the mental capacity scale when manpower needs were greater than the available pool. This had occurred in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. Large-scale aptitude testing on military recruits first began in World War I. It is unclear how the results of this early form of aptitude testing affected recruitment and whether or not men who scored below a certain threshold were excluded from service. The tests did have a significant effect on officer screening and selection with the number of officers in the

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<sup>99</sup> Memo, Alfred B. Fitt to Irv Greenberg, 3/18/68, Alfred B. Fitt Papers, Box 4, “Correspondence – Memos to Staff 9/28/67 – 8/30/68,” LBJ Library.

Army and National Guard increasing from approximately 9,000 at the beginning of the war to over 200,000 by the end.<sup>100</sup>

During World War II the military had to accept low-aptitude men in order to meet manpower requirements through volunteer enlistments and the draft. An estimated 250,000 men were rejected for military service because of low-aptitude with an additional 122,000 men separated early as a result of their inability to adapt to military service. This loss of 372,000 men was nearly equal to the number of U.S. service member deaths the military suffered during the war. During the Korean War, Congress lowered the minimum score on the AFQT to 13 percent in July 1950 and then lowered it again one year later to 10 percent. This resulted in the enlistment and induction of hundreds of thousands of low-aptitude men primarily in the Army and Marine Corps.<sup>101</sup>

In all three of these conflicts, the military was forced to accept large numbers of low-aptitude men in order to meet manpower requirements when it could least afford to expend resources and experiment on the training and education methods these men needed. The military branches characterized these men as having high attrition rates, poor discipline, and becoming “career privates” if allowed to stay in the military with little hope for advancement or productive service.<sup>102</sup> Thus, the military’s experience with low-aptitude men had already sensitized senior military planners (both uniformed and civilian) to the inherent problems of using such individuals in large numbers for military service.<sup>103</sup> It was within this context of the military services’ experience with low-

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<sup>100</sup> Sitch et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 18-19.

<sup>101</sup> Sitch et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 28-32 and 35.

<sup>102</sup> Eli Ginzberg et al., *The Lost Divisions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 166.

<sup>103</sup> See also Transcript, General James K. Woolnough Oral History Interview, USAHEC.

aptitude men and the growing numbers of young men who were found unqualified for military service that President Kennedy formed the Task Force on Manpower Conservation to study the problem and recommend solutions.

President Kennedy gave his reasons for establishing the Task Force on Manpower Conservation at a press conference on September 30, 1963. “I am convinced ... that a large scale manpower conservation operation is both feasible and urgent, and could mean large savings in lives and dollars. Today’s military rejects include tomorrow’s hardcore unemployed.”<sup>104</sup> The task force’s ensuing report, *One-Third of a Nation: A Report on Young Men Found Unqualified for Military Service*, was alarming in its findings. W. Willard Wirtz, the Secretary of Labor and chairman of the task force, quoted President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1939 inaugural address in his transmittal letter to President Johnson, “A generation ago President Roosevelt spoke of seeing ‘one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished.’ Since that time the wealth of the United States has doubled, and then doubled again. Yet poverty persists.”<sup>105</sup> Here in the very beginning of the report, Wirtz frames the study as an examination of the connections between poverty, low-aptitude, and poor health. This finding would have a profound impact on McNamara’s work as a member of the task force and his efforts to reform how the Defense Department procured military manpower as he sought ways to join President Johnson’s War on Poverty.

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<sup>104</sup> “U.S. Planning Aid to Draft Rejects: Kennedy Picks Panel to Map Training for Thousands,” *The New York Times*, October 1, 1963, Special, 31, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1963/10/01/89961844.html>.

<sup>105</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, Transmittal Letter.

The findings indicated one-third of all young men in the nation turning eighteen would be found unqualified if they were examined for induction into the Armed Forces, about one-half of these men would be rejected for aptitude reasons and the other for medical reasons. The findings also indicated the majority of those disqualified were victims of inadequate education and insufficient health services—poverty had already significantly and adversely affected these men. Secretary Wirtz stated that one point above all others discovered in the task force investigation was “youths who failed the military service tests came from poverty, from homes where poverty is in the second and third generation, homes in which to be found are poverty, divorce, and illiteracy.”<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, the task force found that the rate of failure varied widely among different states and regions of the nation; among urban, suburban, and rural areas.

The summary of the 1962 Selective Service examinations found that the state with the highest proportion of persons failing the mental examination had a rate nineteen times greater than the state with the lowest rate. The *Chicago Tribune* reported on President Johnson’s response to the report and quoted him from a White House press release. “The findings of the task force are dramatic evidence that poverty is still with us, still exacting its price in spoiled lives and failed expectations. For entirely too many Americans, the promise of American life is not being kept. In a nation as rich and productive as ours, this is an intolerable situation.”<sup>107</sup> This broken promise of the unfulfilled America Dream

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<sup>106</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, Transmittal Letter.

<sup>107</sup> Robert Young, “Orders Tests at 18 for All Registrants: Seek to Find, Aid Unfit Youths Johnson Orders Tests of All Youths at 18,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 5, 1964, 1, ProQuest Historical Newspapers *Chicago Tribune* (1849 - 1986), Document ID: 624421232.

would shape President Johnson's views on not only the military, but on the very vitality of the nation.

Both President Kennedy and President Johnson viewed this dilemma not as a shortage in qualified and available manpower for the military, but rather as a social blight with long-term and negative consequences for the health of the nation. Following President Kennedy's assassination, President Johnson focused his attention on solving America's social woes. He considered the failure of America's youth in qualifying for military service as a key component of the national unemployment problem—the number one issue affecting the nation's economy and he promised to address it quickly. He announced in conjunction with the Manpower Conservation Report that he would deliver to Congress a program designed to attack the root of poverty in America's urban and rural areas.<sup>108</sup> While President Kennedy considered those young men rejected for military service as the nation's future hardcore unemployed, President Johnson viewed them as symbolic of America's failure to ensure the realization of the American Dream for all its citizens. "I wish to see an America in which no young person, whatever the circumstances, shall reach the age of 21 without the health, education, and skills that will give him an opportunity to be an effective citizen and a self-supporting individual."<sup>109</sup> While President Johnson was concerned about the inability of young men to qualify for military service, this was only a symptom of a much larger problem. His focus was on

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<sup>108</sup> Young, "Orders Tests at 18 for All Registrants," *Chicago Tribune*, January 5, 1964, 1.

<sup>109</sup> Carroll Kilpatrick, "President Starts Program to Help Youths." *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 5, 1964, A8, ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The Washington Post* (1877 - 1993), Document ID: 155803452.



waging a war on poverty and finding ways to use disadvantaged and low-aptitude men for service in the military was just one way to fight that war.

Further evidence demonstrating that the Johnson administration used the findings in *One-Third of a Nation* to focus its efforts on attacking the social ills of the country is found in President Kennedy and President Johnson naming Willard Wirtz, the Secretary of Labor, rather than Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense, as the chairman of the task force. Wirtz had been a lawyer and law professor and served on the War Labor Board during World War II. He also served as the chairman of the National Wage Stabilization Board in 1946 and was well suited for the Secretary of Labor post and served in that capacity throughout the Kennedy and Johnson presidencies. Wirtz was particularly interested in creating a national manpower conservation program to assist those men who failed to meet minimum standards in aptitude or physical health at the military induction centers. He was keenly aware that the Selective Service mental and medical examination represented the only standardized testing of America's young men regardless of their social, economic, or educational background. The findings of the report indicated that these men were on a path towards a lifetime of unemployment; forced to depend on the state for basic care. Thirty-one percent of those surveyed who failed to meet minimum standards on the AFQT did not have jobs and their rate of unemployment was four times greater than young men of similar age. The majority of those who were employed were working jobs that required the least skill, provided the lowest earnings, and provided the greatest vulnerability to unemployment.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, 1-2.

Finding ways to qualify low-aptitude men for military service was about addressing their economic and social disadvantages. A secondary effect was that it also increased the pool of available manpower for military service. President Johnson expanded on this just four months after receiving the Manpower Conservation Report from Wirtz and the other members of the task force when he directed McNamara to find ways to reduce the Defense Department's reliance on the draft. There was growing concern that not only was the draft inequitable, but the men who were qualified to serve were disproportionately from the middle to lower middle classes. Men from the lower socioeconomic class were most likely to be unqualified for military service, whereas men from the upper socioeconomic classes were most likely to take advantage of educational deferments.<sup>111</sup>

It was the low-aptitude men who were overwhelmingly from the lower socioeconomic class of society that needed the most help. They were least likely to have graduated from high school and had very limited prospects in society for employment. Wirtz hoped to develop and implement a manpower conservation program to alleviate the burden these men posed on society. He viewed these men much the same way as President Kennedy and President Johnson viewed them—men whom, if given the proper education, training, health rehabilitation and related services, would have the opportunities to enable them to become effective and self-supporting citizens. He was with President Johnson in Austin, Texas when the president released the task force report and commented on its findings and the proposed national manpower conservation

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<sup>111</sup> Paper, "The Issue of Draft Equity," 11/65, Papers of LBJ, POTUS, "National Security – Defense (Ex ND 9-4 Conscription – Induction – Draft 11/19/64 – 12/1/65), LBJ Library.

program. “This will be the most important human salvage program in the history of our country,” Johnson said.<sup>112</sup>

The Defense Department based the medical standard for military service upon a physical examination designed to select men who were fit for the physical demands required to serve in the military. There were additional standards to qualify for certain specialties, for example flight duty or submarine duty, but there were common standards across all the military services and occupational specialties. Men who had medical conditions or defects that might endanger other service members, require extensive medical care, cause excessive time away from duty, place restrictions on duty locations, or become aggravated through the performance of duties were all subject to medical disqualification. The Selective Service system was designed so that young men with obvious medical conditions like blindness, deafness, loss of a limb, or other congenital or physical defects would never be required to report for examination. Other not so obvious medical conditions were frequently discovered during the physical examination. These might include partial vision or hearing loss, severe dental problems, flat feet, diabetes, allergies, asthma, sexually transmitted diseases, or being over or under height or weight standards. Before the Manpower Conservation Program, most of the young men who failed the medical examination were not informed why they failed; nor were they given any information on what health services were available to help them.<sup>113</sup> This only

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<sup>112</sup> The Associated Press, “Draft Physicals to be Given at 18: Johnson Orders Program to Correct Defects in Youths Registering for Service,” *The New York Times*, January 5, 1964, 1, ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The New York Times* (1851 - 2006), Document ID: 101492190.

<sup>113</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, 25 and Paper, Irv Greenberg, “Project 100,000 Information Paper,” 1972, Laird Papers. DOD Papers: Baroody Subject File. House Committee on Appropriations – Subcommittee on Defense – Biographies, 1972. Box A74, folder: Human Goals, 1969-1972, Gerald R. Ford Library.

contributed to furthering the conditions that left these men disconnected and adrift from society.

The task force found that about 75 percent of the young men who failed the medical examination would benefit from some form of medical treatment. Only about 10 percent of those who were medically rejected could undergo short-term treatment and correct the deficiencies that resulted in their medical disqualification. These included dental problems, infectious diseases like tuberculosis and syphilis, conditions requiring minor surgeries like hernias and cleft palates, and the overweight or underweight. The vast majority of the men who were medically disqualified would never be able to serve in the military, but they could benefit enormously from the proper care and treatment for their condition. Since most of these young men came from impoverished backgrounds, their access to medical and dental care was extremely limited if it existed at all. The task force tasked the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to provide support to these men and help them gain access to local agencies to assist them with their medical issues.<sup>114</sup>

The mental standard was far more convoluted than the medical one and was based primarily on the AFQT. The objective of this test was to determine a young man's general aptitude, that is, his ability to understand and internalize military training within a reasonable amount of time. It included questions on word knowledge, reading comprehension, arithmetic, mechanical understanding, and the ability to understand forms and patterns. It was not an intelligence test, nor was it an indication of education

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<sup>114</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, 25-27.

level attained, although the military and educators had long used a person's score to gauge with a fair amount of accuracy the grade level in school successfully completed. For example, scoring in the 10th percentile of the AFQT was considered the equivalent of a fifth grade education. Generally speaking, if a young man scored 31 percent or higher on the AFQT, he was considered fully qualified in the mental category for military service. Different occupational specialties required different minimum scores above the 31st percentile. The 1958 Selective Service Act required all men who scored in the 10th to 30th percentile to take an additional battery of aptitude tests to determine their suitability for military service.<sup>115</sup>

There were different requirements depending on whether or not the individual was a high school graduate. For example, if a young man scored in the 16th to 30th percentile, had a high school diploma, scored satisfactorily (90 percent) in two additional areas of the Army Qualification Battery, and satisfactorily (80 percent) in the General Technical area, he was considered qualified for service. If he did not meet these additional standards or scored in the 10th to 15th percentile of the AFQT, he was considered mentally unfit for military service except in times of national emergency or full mobilization. Cassius Clay was one of the nearly two million men in 1964 that fell into this latter category when he scored in the 16th percentile and failed to meet the additional standards and it was these men that the Manpower Conservation Program was supposed to help. Federal law barred men who scored below the 10th percentile from serving in the military. Finding ways to allow men who scored below the 31st percentile

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<sup>115</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 42-43.

to serve in the military was challenging. It was not a matter of simply lowering the minimum standards—the task force had to address a whole host of issues with respect to screening, training, education, and other support services to facilitate the success of these men.<sup>116</sup>

Aside from the medical and mental qualifications, there were also moral qualifications that young men had to meet in order to qualify for military service. The Selective Service used the term “moral qualifications” to describe a young man’s history of criminal convictions, drug or alcohol abuse, and other issues affecting his character. Generally speaking, those who failed in the moral category comprised a much smaller percentage than those that failed in the medical or mental category. These were young men whose moral qualifications were lacking as a result of significant criminal records, anti-social tendencies like alcohol or drug addiction, or some other character trait that made them unsuitable for military service.<sup>117</sup>

The task force determined that the young men who were rejected for military service in 1962 were nearly evenly split between mental qualification failures and medical qualification failures. It was understood that there were some portion of the medical qualification failures that could be helped; it was the mental failures that were of much greater concern. The task force believed that the qualities to succeed in the military were exactly the same as those needed to be successful in a variety of civilian occupations. “Most of those who fail the military service aptitude tests can be expected to lack many of the qualities needed to lead self-sufficient, productive lives in the civilian

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<sup>116</sup> Sticht et al., 42.

<sup>117</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 45-46.

economy.”<sup>118</sup> Wirtz was aware that the AFQT was one of the very few near universal standardized measurements of young men and their mental acuity in America. It was particularly disturbing that one-third of the nation’s young men had scored less than 31 percent on the AFQT. Here was the genesis of using service in the military as a social program. Indeed, many of the young people in the nation’s history from World War II to present have seen military service as a means to “grow up” and gain life skills to make them more productive as adults in civilian life.<sup>119</sup>

In order to gain a better understanding of the socioeconomic profiles of the young men who failed to meet the minimum standards of the AFQT, the Department of Labor in conjunction with the Selective Service in November 1963 interviewed 2,500 young men from across the nation who had recently failed the AFQT. The findings were hardly surprising. Their unemployment rate was nearly 30 percent, four times greater than for all young men of similar age. Eighty percent of them had dropped out of school, half of them before they turned seventeen. Forty percent of these indicated that they had left school in order to help support their families or were forced to in order to support themselves. Only about 75 percent of the mental failures had completed the fifth grade as compared to nearly 95 percent of all young men of similar age. Average income for these men was

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<sup>118</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, 13-15.

<sup>119</sup> See Robert D. Kaplan, *Imperial Grunts: On the Ground with the American Military, from Mongolia to the Philippines to Iraq and Beyond* (New York: Random House, 2005), Prologue: “Injun Country,” and Chapter 6: “From the Army to the Marines—Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune, North Carolina”; Kathy Roth-Douquet and Frank Schaeffer, *AWOL: The Unexcused Absence of America’s Upper Classes from Military Service—and How it Hurts Our Country* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), Chapter 3: “The Military’s View of What it Does”; Thomas A. Ricks, *Making the Corps: 61 Men Came to Parris Island to Become Marines* (New York: Scribner Publishing, 1997), Prologue: “Mogadishu, December 1992,” and Chapter 7: “Back in the World”; Ken Scharnberg, *Voices: Letters From World War II* (Nashville: Premium Press America, 1993), Chapter 15: “Uniformed War Effort”; Sticht et al., 46-47; and Studs Terkel, *“The Good War”: An Oral History of World War II* (New York: The New Press, 1984), Book One: “Reflections on Machismo.”

approximately \$1,850 per year, nearly \$1,000 less than the general population as a whole. Significant portions, about one third, were living on incomes of \$1,000 or less per year and were well below the poverty line for 1963. Even more troubling was that only about 15 percent of the unemployed were receiving unemployment benefits and 2 percent of the remaining unemployed were not receiving any form of public assistance. The men surveyed who had failed the AFQT were either denied unemployment benefits or did not understand how to obtain them.<sup>120</sup> Accepting these men for military service would be a way to help them acquire life skills and acquaint them with the numerous federal, state, and local agencies designed to assist them.

The public employment service counselors and the job placement specialists that conducted the interviews determined that about 80 percent of the mental category failures that were unemployed needed job counseling, literacy training, job training, or some combination of these. In short, they needed basic life skills to be an adult in America. Furthermore, about 25 percent of the unemployed needed additional education in basic reading, writing, and arithmetic. Despite the dire portrait of the socioeconomic characteristics of these men, a surprising majority of them were eager and willing to take steps to improve their personal situations. The survey results indicated 80 percent of these men said that they would accept the offer of basic education—even those who had full time employment.<sup>121</sup>

Many of them had tried to volunteer for enlistment in the military as a means to a more stable and secure income. They recognized that if they were able to receive

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<sup>120</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, Appendix C: Technical Appendix—Survey of 2,500 Rejectees.

<sup>121</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, Appendix C: Technical Appendix—Survey of 2,500 Rejectees.



education and training to improve their scores on the AFQT, they might be able to obtain the path to a better future.<sup>122</sup> This desire to improve their situation would fuel the development of scores of government funded centers across the nation designed to help young men who had failed the AFQT improve their reading comprehension, mathematic, and basic reasoning skills in an effort to assist them in passing.<sup>123</sup> Here were the battlegrounds of the War on Poverty. Providing these men with the means to improve their social and educational status was at the center of the task force recommendations and was the impetus for McNamara to develop and implement Project 100,000.

The task force concluded that the rate young men were failing the mental and medical examinations for service in the military was a matter of grave national concern. “The national defense, no less than the national welfare, clearly requires that a conservation program be undertaken by the federal government with the fullest possible cooperation of state and local bodies, to provide persons who fail to meet the qualifications for military service with the needed education, training, and health services that will enable them to become effective citizens and self-supporting individuals.”<sup>124</sup> The members of the task force, all cabinet level secretaries whom President Kennedy appointed to study the problem, were well aware of the consequences—not just from a military manpower perspective, but also for the very livelihood of the nation.

Wirtz, along with the other members of the task force, developed key guidelines for how the task force would develop the Manpower Conservation Program. One of the

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<sup>122</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, Appendix C: Technical Appendix—Survey of 2,500 Rejectees.

<sup>123</sup> “Armed Forces Rejects Get 2d Chance: Voluntary Program Most Are Dropouts,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, October 16, 1966, M2, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, Document ID: 183931862.

<sup>124</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, 29.

key components of this was how the Selective Service managed the ever increasing numbers of eighteen-year-old men each year—far more than the military needed for its manpower requirements. The Universal Military Training and Service Act of 1951 (with amendments) established the requirement that all young men register with their local Selective Service draft board when they turned eighteen. Once registered, the Selective Service in conjunction with the Defense Department would examine and classify them for military service based upon a mental, physical, and moral assessment. The Selective Service in conjunction with the Department of Defense conducted these examinations at centers staffed with Selective Service and military personnel scattered across the country at the regional, state, and local level.<sup>125</sup>

The post-World War II population growth had created a substantially larger number of teenage young men by the early 1960s than in previous generations. An estimate of the number of eighteen-year-old men during the 1964-1970 period was approximately 1.7 million each year, or about 36 percent more than in the 1956-1963 period.<sup>126</sup> Consequently, the Selective Service was constantly trying to “catch-up” in examining the ever-expanding pool of eighteen-year-old young men. While a young man was required to register as soon as possible after his eighteenth birthday, he most likely would not be called for examination until he was twenty-two. If he was eligible for military service and drafted it most likely would not occur until after his twenty-third birthday. The trend for several years up to this point had been induction for military

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<sup>125</sup> At the time of the report, there were 76 Armed Forces Induction Centers.

<sup>126</sup> *Annual Report of the Director of Selective Service for Fiscal Year 1962 to the Congress of the United States pursuant to the Universal Military and Training Act as Amended* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 3, 1963), 25-27.

service of single men between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-six. This was also in accordance with the Johnson Administration's policy of "oldest drafted first."<sup>127</sup>

Members of the task force found that this method of examination and induction tended to exacerbate the problems of those found mentally and medically deficient. Since the young men who were disqualified were given no formal reasoning as to why they were disqualified and for many they may not even have been aware that they had a medical or mental deficiency, precious time was lost while they were still in their teens to seek help for any problems. Indeed, the further away from their eighteenth birthday they were, the more difficult it was for them to make any progress in overcoming their disabilities. For the 2,500 men who were surveyed, an overwhelming number of them had dropped out of school and by eighteen were unemployed and without prospects for employment or job training.<sup>128</sup> If they needed assistance like literacy education or job training, they certainly needed it then. One of the first priorities for the task force was to recommend to the president that testing of registrants begin as soon as possible following their eighteenth birthday and to inform those applicants who were disqualified of the exact reasons regarding their mental or medical test failures.<sup>129</sup>

There was public concern over early testing in the belief that it would lead to early induction and that somehow young men in their early twenties would escape the draft in favor of men who were eighteen.<sup>130</sup> This appeared to be such a concern that the

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<sup>127</sup> *Annual Report of the Director of Selective Service for Fiscal Year 1962*, 25-27.

<sup>128</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, Appendix C: Technical Appendix—Survey of 2,500 Rejectees.

<sup>129</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, 2.

<sup>130</sup> See Willard Clopton, "Flunking Draft Gives some Boys a Break," *The Washington Post, Times Herald* October 18, 1964, <http://search.proquest.com.nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/docview/142118756?accountid=12686> and "Early

task force and the Johnson administration took preemptive measures in an attempt to alleviate any fears. The written report noted immediately following the item on early testing that “Examination and classification of 18-year-olds will have no effect on the time when young men will actually be called for induction. The present order of induction, under which older registrants (under age 26) are called first, would not be changed.”<sup>131</sup> President Johnson also addressed the concern when he released the report and endorsed its findings in January 1964. His statement on January 5, 1964 reiterated that early testing would not change the order in which men were called for the draft. The policy would remain with oldest men called first.<sup>132</sup>

The task force also determined that the young men who were rejected for military service should have an understanding of the reasons they were disqualified. Up to this point, when a young man reported to the local armed forces induction center for examination, the staff provided him no reason if he failed to meet mental or medical standards. This was an important step and members of the task force felt it would do much to help the young men who failed to meet minimum standards. When a medical examiner determined a man had physical problems, the center staff advised him to seek medical attention. The staff also provided counseling about educational and vocational programs at the state and local level that could provide assistance to those men who failed to meet mental standards. The task force believed these efforts combined with federal programs like the Youth Employment Act, the Manpower Development and

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Draft Tests to Spot, Aid Rejectees,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, L6, June 28, 1964, <http://search.proquest.com.nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/docview/142242817?accountid=12686>.

<sup>131</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, 3.

<sup>132</sup> Statement, President Johnson on Report “One-Third of a Nation,” LBJ Papers, POTUS, National Security – Defense (GEN ND 9-2-2/H), Box 147, “ND 12/23/63 – 2/29/64,” LBJ Library.

Training Act, and numerous state and local programs would do much to correct the situation of these men.<sup>133</sup>

The role of the Defense Department was minimal, and there was no indication in the task force report that it would have any role beyond providing facilities for the increased testing that would occur in order to test young men as soon as possible following their eighteenth birthday. The Johnson administration's emphasis continued to be social welfare to help these young men live better lives and become better citizens rather than finding ways to increase the manpower pool for the military. Nevertheless, by this time President Johnson had already directed Secretary McNamara to undertake a comprehensive study on the efficacy of the draft and determine if the nation's military manpower requirements could be met through the use of volunteers.<sup>134</sup>

Throughout the early part of 1964, the debate over the manpower conservation program occupied more of President Johnson's time. The Executive Office of the White House even drafted a letter from the president to young men who had failed to meet the minimum standards of the AFQT. The president emphasized that the prospect of future employment for these men was grim unless they let the "government help them help themselves." He urged them to visit their local employment office for advice and job training in order for them to find the best job that they were qualified for. The tone and

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<sup>133</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 15-16.

<sup>134</sup> Memo, McNamara to the President, 4/5/65, LBJ Library.

content of the letter is not just about these men making a better life for themselves, but also ultimately to help their country.<sup>135</sup>

There were already several federal and state programs available for these young men. The Manpower Development and Training Program, the Vocational Education Program, and prospective measures such as the Youth Conservation Corps and the National Service Corps were just a few of the numerous public programs designed to provide aid through training and educational opportunities. From a strictly fiscal perspective, the task force believed that no additional major legislation was required to launch a manpower conservation program and that any additional funding would more than pay for itself in the future with the higher tax revenues generated from those men who had been rejected for military service but would presumably be earning more as a result of their improved lives. It was on this basis that McNamara undertook provisions to lower minimum standards for enlistment and use Defense Department resources to help disadvantaged young men.<sup>136</sup>

Work began immediately and throughout the spring of 1964 several federal agencies and departments formed working groups, drafted policies, and implemented programs to join the battles the Johnson administration was waging in the War on Poverty. In addition to the programs already in existence, the task force, with its new executive authority and endorsement from the president, developed several recommendations for new programs. The task force tasked the Public Health Service of

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<sup>135</sup> Memo, W. Willard Wirtz to Theodore C. Sorenson, 4/28/64, LBJ Papers, POTUS, 1963-1969, National Security – Defense (GEN ND 9-2-2/H), Box 147, “ND 9-4 Conscription-Induction-Draft, 3/1/64 – 11/18/64,” LBJ Library.

<sup>136</sup> *One-third of a Nation*, 32.

the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to develop a program so that men rejected for medical reasons could be referred on a voluntary and confidential basis to their local public or private community facilities for comprehensive health services. It tasked the Department of Labor with placing representatives in local employment offices to offer job counseling, job referral, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation. The programs were extensive and President Johnson was pressing his staff for full implementation by the summer. In all cases, whether the military was involved or not, the programs the task force developed were focused on social warfare and improving lives rather than increasing manpower pools for military service.<sup>137</sup>

The Defense Department was moving decisively to accomplish its responsibilities. In a memorandum to Mr. Lawrence O'Brien (Special Assistant to the President) in May 1964, Secretary McNamara detailed his department's status on implementation of Manpower Conservation programs:

Plans are being developed to begin examining 18-year-old registrants at the Armed Forces Examining Stations throughout the country as soon as Congress acts on a supplemental appropriation request for the Selective Service, now being processed by the Bureau of the Budget. Following this, Selective Service Boards will start sending youths, except students and married men, who have reached 18 and have registered for military service, to Armed Forces Examining Stations for a complete medical and mental examination. If disqualified for any reason, they will be informed of the reason for their failure to pass the tests, and will be advised of counseling and referral services available for the treatment of remedial defects or for training for employment.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Various Memos and Letters, LBJ Papers, POTUS, 1963-1969, National Security – Defense (GEN ND 9-2-2/H), Box 147, “ND 9-4 Conscription-Induction-Draft,” LBJ Library.

<sup>138</sup> Memo, Robert S. McNamara to Lawrence F. O'Brien, 5/12/64, LBJ Papers, POTUS, 1963-1969, National Security – Defense (GEN ND 9-2-2/H), Box 147, “ND 9-4 Conscription-Induction-Draft,” LBJ Library.

McNamara believed after a phased build-up in operations, about 60,000 eighteen-year-olds could be examined each month, in addition to enlistees and regular inductees.<sup>139</sup>

The Selective Service in conjunction with the Defense Department would continue throughout 1964 and into 1965 with the early examination of young men to determine eligibility for military service. Late in 1964, McNamara shifted the department's emphasis from merely identifying these young men who failed to meet military entrance requirements to a more active approach of providing direct assistance not only in passing the AFQT, but also in remedial instruction and basic medical care. McNamara's motivations stemmed from his belief that improving the quality of life of the young men who failed to meet minimum standards on the AFQT or the medical examination would also reduce the number of young men drafted to meet manpower requirements. That is, he wanted to increase the pool of men available for manpower requirements, but he wanted to increase it so that more men would be eligible to volunteer. If, as a consequence, more men were also eligible for induction, this would serve to spread the responsibility of military service across a larger segment of the population, thus addressing the question of equity in the draft.<sup>140</sup>

In September 1965, McNamara directed an experimental revision in the entry qualification standards for enlistment and induction into the Armed Forces to broaden the number of men qualified for the draft—addressing the draft equity issue—and to increase the military's intake of volunteers. The basic premise behind the revision was that the military would accept any man who was a high school graduate and otherwise physically

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<sup>139</sup> Memo, McNamara to O'Brien, 5/12/64, LBJ Library.

<sup>140</sup> Letter, McNamara to the President, 4/5/65, LBJ Library.



qualified regardless of what he scored on the aptitude tests. In a memorandum to President Johnson dated March 2, 1966, McNamara provided a progress report on the results of the revised qualification standards for enlistment and induction. He reported that the Defense Department had achieved success in the qualification of an additional 50,000 men during the fiscal year under the revised aptitude standards. McNamara went on to report that he planned a further revision in testing standards and hoped to qualify an additional 12,000 men over the next year.<sup>141</sup>

Alfred Fitt recalled during his oral history interview how McNamara viewed this as an opportunity to reduce the size and frequency of draft calls. In 1964, the Army was the only branch of service relying on the draft to meet its monthly manpower requirements. The other military services were able to keep their ranks filled with volunteers. The Army had its share of volunteers too, but the sheer size of the Army required that it also rely on the draft to meet its manpower requirements. McNamara hoped that by providing remedial courses in education and training to Selective Service registrants who had failed to pass the entrance exam he could create a larger pool of qualified volunteers and thus reduce the Army's reliance on the draft. The plan was for the Army to take thousands of young men each year and provide them remedial education and training utilizing military personnel and facilities. Once these men were able to meet minimum standards for enlistment, the Army would send them to regular basic training. The goal was take these marginal men and make them satisfactory soldiers.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Memo, Robert S. McNamara to the President, 3/2/66, "Project 100,000 Reference File," ND 9, ND 9-4, FG 115, LBJ Library.

<sup>142</sup> Transcript, Fitt Oral History Interview, page 9-10, LBJ Library.

In 1964 and again in 1965, McNamara proposed the Special Training and Enlistment Program (STEP), which he envisioned as a period of “pre-basic” training for those with low-aptitude or minor physical defects. McNamara believed that the assistance the Army provided these men during this phase would help them succeed in basic training and ultimately in the military. He stipulated that the program would only be available to volunteers who scored between 15 and 30 percent on the AFQT or with physical deficiencies that military doctors could correct within six weeks. For the young men who entered the program because of low-test scores, the Army would emphasize improving their verbal, arithmetic, and mechanical abilities. The Army would conduct the program at Fort Leonard Wood, a sprawling Army post located in south central Missouri. The Defense Department estimated that it would cost \$31.5 million annually and hoped to train about 15,000 men per year in the program. If STEP could help these men succeed in the military, the Defense Department would reduce the Army’s dependence on the draft to meet its manpower requirements and considered the additional cost as a prudent investment.<sup>143</sup> This sort of experimental approach to revising entry qualification standards for enlistment was well suited to McNamara’s managerial style and belief in systems analysis. He was well known both in the business and public policy worlds for his emphasis on data collection and scientific analysis over military advice from senior military officers.<sup>144</sup>

Before the Defense Department and the Army could implement STEP, both organizations required additional funding. Secretary McNamara sent the Army’s senior

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<sup>143</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 16.

<sup>144</sup> Debra Shapely, *Promise and Power: The Life and Times of Robert McNamara* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 13-14.

leadership to Capitol Hill to present the military's case for the additional funds needed to train low-aptitude men. The Senate Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations called the Secretary of the Army Stephen Ailes and Vice Chief of Staff of the Army General Creighton Abrams to appear before the subcommittee. Secretary Ailes testified, "The purpose of the STEP program is to increase the number of volunteers accepted by the Army without lowering our standards." Increasing the numbers of volunteers the Army used to meet its manpower requirements would have the net effect of reducing turbulence across the force. Volunteers served a minimum three-year enlistment, while draftees served a two-year enlistment. Thus, for every two men who volunteered for STEP, the Army could replace three draftees. General Abrams added in his testimony that STEP soldiers would not decrease the overall effectiveness of the Army since they would not proceed to Basic Training until they had successfully completed their "pre-basic" training, and would still be held to the same standards as non-STEP soldiers. He also argued the program would serve as a means to prepare the nation for full mobilization if needed. Recalling the problems the military suffered during World War II and the Korean War with low-aptitude men, General Abrams believed that the experiences the Army gained through STEP would prove invaluable when mobilizing vast numbers of men for service during wartime since the armed forces (especially the Army and Marine Corps) would most likely have to lower enlistment standards in order to meet manpower requirements.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of the Army Special Training Enlistment Program (STEP)*, Hearings before a Subcommittee on the Committee on Appropriations, 89th Congress, First Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 34.

The Senate Subcommittee on Defense Department Appropriations did not approve the additional funds required in the defense budget for the program. The committee argued the Army was not organized for such a mission and embarking on social programs was not within the purview of the military. It believed civilian agencies like the Office of Economic Opportunity were far better suited for such an undertaking. It also believed that with the growing buildup of forces for the war in Vietnam, any program like STEP would place too great of a burden on the already limited training facilities of the Army.<sup>146</sup> The committee crafted legislative language in the 1966 Defense Appropriations Act to ensure the Defense Department would not be able to divert funds for STEP or similar programs. The legislation stated: “None of the monies included in the act shall be available for the expenses of the Special Training and Enlistment Program or similar programs.”<sup>147</sup> STEP ended before it ever began. Alfred Fitt recalled,

McNamara was quite put out at having met this defeat of a project that seemed to have a very high potential for good without any real degradation in the military readiness. We still wanted to get something of this kind started because there was a strong conviction on McNamara’s part and mine and on the part of several others that the resources available to DoD—their expenditure and their allocation for military purposes—have an enormous impact on our civilian society.<sup>148</sup>

According to Fitt, McNamara believed that it was better to organize this impact in ways that were consistent with domestic policy and stability rather than simply by accident.<sup>149</sup>

During an interview with Thomas Sticht, coauthor of *Cast-off Youth: Policy and Training*

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<sup>146</sup> Transcript, Fitt Oral History Interview, page 9, LBJ Library and *Department of the Army Special Training Enlistment Program (STEP)*.

<sup>147</sup> Section 641, DoD Appropriation for FY 1966, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, cited in Department of Defense, *Reference Materials, Department of Defense Study of the Draft*, (Washington, DC: Assistant Secretary of Defense, 1966).

<sup>148</sup> Transcript, Fitt Oral History Interview, page 10-11, LBJ Library.

<sup>149</sup> Transcript, Fitt Oral History Interview, page 10-11, LBJ Library.

*Methods from the Military Experience* on April 26, 1985, McNamara recalled how he knew the military was going to have to lower standards in order to meet manpower requirements. Consistent with his image as a “bean counter” that privileged statistical methods above other forms of data, McNamara wanted to manage and control this process to the greatest extent possible rather than simply let it happen. In fact, he called it his controlled experiment.<sup>150</sup>

Secretary McNamara would not allow Congress to deter him. President Johnson’s War on Poverty and focus on social programs gave him the impetus to continue attempting to use military resources to help disadvantaged young men. The Antipoverty Bill of 1964 set in motion a huge federal effort that included public housing bills, job training, community antipoverty programs, Medicare, Medicaid, and VISTA (AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America). Jobs and job training were the central focuses of these programs and by 1969 at least seventeen programs were generating more than 10,000 manpower “projects” of varying size and scope.<sup>151</sup>

It was the Marine Corps that convinced McNamara he could act even after the 1966 Defense Department Appropriations Committee denied funding for STEP. In 1966, the Marines had instituted a program called Recruit Depot’s Special Training Branch consisting of repetitive training and special corrective efforts for men who had scored as low as the 10th percentile on the AFQT. Through this program, these low-aptitude men—all volunteers as the Marine Corps was not yet using the draft to meet manpower

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<sup>150</sup> Sticht, et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 192.

<sup>151</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men*, 17 and Charles Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 83.

requirements—were made into successful Marines.<sup>152</sup> In July 1966, The Marine Corps briefed McNamara and his staff on the program and how proud it was of the results noting that it was able to salvage recruits who otherwise would have been discharged without the additional training for failing to meet minimum standards. McNamara was very interested in the Marine Corps methods and directed Alfred Fitt to study the Marine Corps program and determine its utility for the other military services. He was especially attracted to the program because it did not violate the congressional ban on creating special programs for low-aptitude men and the Marine Corps was able to conduct the training using available funds within its normal recruit training budget.<sup>153</sup>

Convinced more than ever that low-aptitude men could make successful members of the military and undeterred by Congress and the legislation in the 1966 Defense Appropriations Bill, McNamara reformulated STEP and had Alfred Fitt write a speech for him to announce the new program in August 1966 at a VFW convention.<sup>154</sup> The plan was to use the basic premise of STEP without assembling the men into large groups at Fort Leonard Wood. All branches of the military would have quotas of low-aptitude men to accept for training. The objective was to allow these men to go through normal training spread across the military branches at the various training installations with the expectation that the skills and attitudes they would absorb during their service would greatly benefit them when they returned to civilian life. Fitt disagreed with the timing of

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<sup>152</sup> The Marine Corps believed it was better to accept low-aptitude volunteers than higher aptitude draftees. It felt that it could mold these men into Marines and since volunteers had a minimum initial enlistment of three years versus the two years for draftees it also believed there would be less personnel turmoil for Marine units. See Captain David A. Dawson, *The Impact of Project 100,000 on the Marine Corps* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps), 76-79.

<sup>153</sup> Dawson, *The Impact of Project 100,000 on the Marine Corps*, 76-79.

<sup>154</sup> Sticht, et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 192.

the program and the venue of its announcement. He recommended McNamara wait a few months until Congress was not in session to introduce the program and forgo any formal announcement. Fitt believed that since they were not going to ask Congress for additional monies to fund the program, there was no need to draw attention to it.<sup>155</sup> Nevertheless, McNamara introduced Project 100,000 during his speech to the VFW Convention in New York City on August 23, 1966. The Defense Department would begin the program immediately with 40,000 low-aptitude men through the end of Fiscal Year 1966 (June 1967)<sup>156</sup> and it would continue each year accepting up to 100,000 young men who scored between the 10th to 30th percentiles on the AFQT.

Historians and scholars like Christian Appy, Myra MacPherson, and Marilyn Young have cast Project 100,000 as the deliberate and calculated effort of the Johnson administration to funnel large numbers of low-aptitude, dispossessed, racial minorities into the military for the Vietnam War.<sup>157</sup> In fact, the process was much more complex. An examination of the primary source documents from the Defense Department, the President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation, the White House, and the Selective Service reveals Project 100,000 first and foremost as a social program with its impetus coming from McNamara's work on the President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation. The Defense Department designed the program to use the considerable resources at its disposal to provide an opportunity for disadvantaged young men to gain

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<sup>155</sup> Transcript, Fitt Oral History Interview, page 11-12, LBJ Library.

<sup>156</sup> The fiscal year calendar during this time was July 1 to June 30.

<sup>157</sup> See Appy, *Working-class War*, 32-33, and 37; MacPherson, *Longtime Passing*, 558-562; and Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, 319-320.

valuable training, education, and service and thus return to civilian society as more productive members and break the cycle of poverty.

Thus Project 100,000 began, setting in motion one of the largest social welfare manpower programs in the history of the armed forces. While it began as a promising Defense Department contribution to the War on Poverty, Project 100,000 became one of the most maligned military programs of the era, one that the public discourse surrounding Vietnam has linked more to the war itself than to Johnson's grand vision of an expanded welfare state. Antipathy for the program's imagined rationale spilled over into criticism of its architects, such that criticism of Project 100,000 was a major contributing factor to McNamara's vilification in the press and public discourse.



### III. Project 100,000—Special Training and Education

Most of the men who entered military service under Project 100,000 had struggled in school, especially in reading and mathematics, and their test scores reflected this. In particular, the reading and arithmetic comprehension levels for New Standards Men were substantially lower than for men who had met minimum standards for the AFQT. A review of the test scores and individual profiles of the men who had failed to meet minimum standards in 1962 revealed the median reading comprehension level was the sixth grade, with 14 percent of the men reading below the fourth grade level. In 1968, using a sample of 46,000 New Standards Men, these figures had ballooned to an astonishing 68 percent of men reading at or below sixth grade level, with 31 percent reading at or below fourth grade level.<sup>158</sup> Project 100,000 planners knew these were serious deficiencies and adjustments to military training and education methods were required in order to accommodate New Standards Men and help them overcome these challenges, especially in the areas of literacy and arithmetic. Even before Project 100,000 began, the military was making adjustments to its training regimens to accommodate societal and educational changes. Significant improvements occurred in the completion

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<sup>158</sup> Department of Defense Manpower Report 1963-1969, Vol IV, 230, LBJ Papers, POTUS, 1963-1969, Administrative History, Department of Defense Volumes IV & V, Box 2, LBJ Library and Howard H. McFann, Human Resources Research Organization, "HumRRO Research and Project 100,000," Paper presented at the American Psychological Association Convention (Miami Beach, Florida, September 1970), 5.

rates of basic training primarily because of steps the military branches took to raise the selection standards, training, and prestige of drill sergeants.<sup>159</sup>

This chapter examines the special training and education programs the military devised to assist New Standards Men in their transition to military life and help them become successful members of the military. It also addresses whether or not these programs had any effect on the success of Project 100,000 and the men who served under the program. One of the main criticisms about Project 100,000 was the Department of Defense never provided any of the promised training and education to help these men while they were in the military and for the most part, these men returned to civilian life just as ill-equipped, confused, and bewildered as when they left it. Their military experience, as many authors argue, left them in worse shape than if they had never served at all. These types of criticisms rely almost exclusively on secondary sources and anecdotal evidence and fail to account for extensive data and reports the Defense Department gathered over the course of the program.

Myra MacPherson, in *Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation*, is particularly critical of the program. “In reality, Project 100,000 turned out to be one of the most shameful aspects of our Vietnam policy. The much-touted training skills were seldom taught. The program sent several thousand men to Vietnam and several thousand to their deaths.”<sup>160</sup> She fails to provide a citation for this assertion, so it is impossible to verify her claim. While MacPherson is speaking in generalities about skills training, the Defense Department never intended to provide additional skills training other than what

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<sup>159</sup> Department of Defense Manpower Report 1963-1969, Vol IV, LBJ Library.

<sup>160</sup> MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 559.

any service member would receive as a matter of course while attending basic training and occupational skills training for the specific job each would perform in the military. Later in her narrative, she provides details from an interview she conducted with a man who had served as an officer in the Army and was at the time the director of a New York City discharge-upgrade and employment program for veterans. She quotes him as he provides his view of Project 100,000: “Many weren’t even on a fifth grade level. And the Army was supposed to teach them a trade in something—only they didn’t.”<sup>161</sup> Writing more as a journalist, than a scholar, MacPherson relies on this type of source material throughout her book, which makes it nearly impossible to verify her claims or corroborate the stories she shares from first person accounts.

Christian Appy is equally critical of Project 100,000 in his book *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers in Vietnam*. “The effect of Project 100,000 was dire. The promised training was never carried out. Of the 240,000 men inducted by Project 100,000 from 1966 to 1968, only 6 percent received additional training, and this amounted to little more than an effort to raise reading skills to a fifth grade level.”<sup>162</sup> Unlike MacPherson, Appy does cite his sources, but unfortunately they are secondary sources that do not provide any details on where these figures originate. Appy’s sources for this passage are Peter Barnes’ *PAWNS: The Plight of the Citizen-Soldier* and Lawrence Baskir and William Straus’ *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, The War and The Vietnam Generation*. The page Appy cites in Barnes’ book does not provide any clarifying information and the pages he cites for Baskir and Straus do not provide any

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<sup>161</sup> MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 560.

<sup>162</sup> Appy, *Working-Class War*, 32.

details on the source material for the figures they provide.<sup>163</sup> Appy's statement that the promised training was never carried is unsubstantiated as detailed in both the Defense Department's 1969 and 1971 report. He also incorrectly cites the numbers of men accepted into the program. From October 1966 to September 1968, Project 100,000 only accounted for 140,667 men accepted for military service, not the 240,000 he states. It would take another year through September 1969 for the programs numbers to reach 246,040.<sup>164</sup>

Marilyn Young, like Appy and MacPherson, relies heavily on Baskir and Strauss in her critique of Project 100,000. Her book, *The Vietnam Wars: 1945-1990*, provides an unapologetic account of the effects of Project 100,000 and its lack of training and education for New Standards Men. "Court-martialed at double the usual rate, over eighty thousand of these veterans left the military without the skills and opportunities McNamara assured them would be theirs, and many of them with service records that would make civilian life far more difficult than if they had never served at all."<sup>165</sup> Young cites the same pages in Baskir and Strauss that Appy does. Relying on this secondary source, it is unknown whether or not Young considered the primary sources or if like Appy, simply accepted the narrative of Baskir and Strauss. Like MacPherson and Appy, Young incorrectly condemns Project 100,000 based on an incomplete understanding of the available information.

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<sup>163</sup> Barnes, *PAWNS: The Plight of The Citizen-Soldier*, 68 and Baskir and Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance*, 126-130

<sup>164</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, Table A-4 and Appy, *Working-Class War*, 33-34.

<sup>165</sup> Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, 320.

Baskir and Strauss, writing about Project 100,000 in 1978, seven years after the program came to an end, provide the specific details Appy and Young use.

“Rehabilitation programs became but a shadow of what McNamara originally had in mind. About 17,000 recruits took courses designed to improve their reading skills to fifth- and sixth-grade levels, and little more than 6 percent took advantage of a transition program that offered education and vocational training.”<sup>166</sup> Like the other scholars, Baskir and Strauss do not fully account for the available information.

Trying to ascertain where Baskir and Strauss got these very specific numbers is problematic. They use a method of citation whereby they provide information in a narrative form about source material for each chapter. A careful examination of this “notes narrative” at the end of the book reveals they are referencing Paul Starr’s *The Discarded Army: Veterans After Vietnam*. This 1973 report for Ralph Nader’s Center for Study of Responsive Law devotes a small chapter (twelve pages) entirely to Project 100,000. Chapter 7, “A Prelude: How the Great Society Went to War” provides specific numerical evidence for Starr’s indictment of Project 100,000. These twelve pages in a 1973 secondary source are the foundation for much of the criticism of Project 100,000 and the assertion that the Department of Defense never provided any of the promised training and education to help these men while they were in the military. MacPherson, Appy, Young, and Baskir and Strauss all directly or indirectly lead back to Starr and this one twelve-page chapter.

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<sup>166</sup> Baskir and Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance*, 127.

Paul Starr, with assistance from James Henry and Raymond Bonner, relies on the Defense Department's December 1969 report *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men* for the information in Chapter 7, "A Prelude: How the Great Society Went to War." His reliance on primary source material is promising and the data he quotes from the Defense Department report portrays a dismal account of the limited numbers of New Standards Men who received the additional training and education McNamara had promised.

The Pentagon released statistics on the experience of the first three years of the program. In that period 246,000 New Standards Men were accepted; of this number, 19,000 were medical remedial cases (men with correctible physical problems), while 225,000 were admitted under the reduced mental standards. According to the Pentagon's records, 12,632 completed reading courses in the Army, 2,019 in the Navy, and 2,554 in the Air Force. In other words, approximately 7.5 percent of the New Mental Standards Men received remedial education.<sup>167</sup>

This is the rare occurrence of the secondary literature directly quoting a primary source document about the inadequacies of Project 100,000. Unfortunately, Starr misreads the information contained in the Defense Department report and draws conclusions that are inconsistent with a full reading of the data and placing it in context with the overall approach to training the military services were conducting at the time.

First, none of the services began special education programs for the New Standards Men when Project 100,000 began in October 1966. McNamara announced the program at the end of August 1966 and within about six weeks the military was accepting men under the revised standards. Although the Defense Department provided the overall

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<sup>167</sup> Paul Starr with James Henry and Raymond Bonner, *The Discarded Army: Veterans After Vietnam. The Nader Report on Vietnam Veterans and the Veterans Administration* (New York: Charterhouse, 1973), 194.

planning guidance and direction for Project 100,000, the individual military services had to execute the program on a continual basis. Indeed, providing remedial training and education programs to New Standards Men as part of Project 100,000 was never a requirement from the Defense Department. In fact, Congress had rejected such programs in its review of the earlier Special Training and Enlistment Program in June 1966.<sup>168</sup> Nevertheless, the military services, with the exception of the Marine Corps, began such programs on a volunteer basis soon after Project 100,000 began and opened them to all trainees based on reading grade level. Second, the special education programs were voluntary. This was reflective of Secretary McNamara's desire and that of other senior leaders in the Defense Department not to single out, and therefore stigmatize, New Standards Men by identifying them and compelling them to undergo remedial training or education.

The vast majority of military training and education courses designed for service members to receive training and education in a specific specialty were technical and vocational in nature. Consequently, the military services determined a fifth grade reading level was the minimum necessary for success in military training and education courses, which were naturally then designed and implemented with that fact in mind.<sup>169</sup> In this context, the New Standards Men seem scarcely any different than volunteers, pointing to the structural classism of the military as a whole. Because Starr analyzes the data from the military branches as a whole rather than by separate military service, his 7.5 percent figure of New Standards Men who completed remedial training and education is

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<sup>168</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 53.

<sup>169</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, 44.

technically correct, but interpretationally deficient.<sup>170</sup> Seven-point-five percent might seem low, but it was all that was needed.

The Army initiated its remedial reading program, called Army Preparatory Training (APT) in April 1968; eighteen months after Project 100,000 began. Each soldier in APT received four hours of reading instruction, one hour of arithmetic, one hour of social studies, and two hours of military instruction per day. The course was six weeks long, but soldier assessments during the third week allowed the Army to send those New Standards Men who achieved the minimum fifth grade reading level to basic training or skills training, since they achieved the standard. Initially, the Army provided APT after a soldier completed his basic training. This approach resulted from the Army's concern that it would expend resources on men who would fail to complete basic training and be discharged as a result, thus validating one of the congressional criticisms of the program. By September 1968, however, it began offering soldiers the opportunity for APT before basic training began. The Army found soldiers who were able to read on a fifth grade level and had also received some remedial instruction in both arithmetic and social studies had a greater success rate for successfully completing basic training. By the time the Army initiated APT, it had already accepted approximately 67,500 men under Project 100,000. Whether or not any of these men would have advantaged themselves of APT if the Army had offered it is unknown.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Starr et al., *The Discarded Army*, 194.

<sup>171</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, Table A-3.



Starr contends only 12,632 New Standards Men in the Army completed APT.<sup>172</sup> While this number is accurate within the Defense Department's 1969 Project 100,000 report, Starr does not account for the variations of the report and the data contained in it. A more nuanced way of considering the data is to account for the number of New Standards Men in the Army who volunteered for APT, rather than those who had completed it. When the Army reported its data for the December 1969 report, 871 men were still in APT and 737 men had started APT over the course of the program but were administrative losses—these could have been for reasons like inability to complete training, family emergency, or unsuitability for service. Starr deducts these numbers from the total the Army reported since he was focused on reporting New Standards Men who had completed remedial reading training. These 1,608 Army New Standards Men had volunteered for the remedial education, and they were either in the process of completing it or had already been discharged from the Army. Adding this number to what Starr reports raises the Army's total to 14,240 men who volunteered for APT and had either completed it, were still enrolled in it, or the Army had discharged them for a variety of reasons during the three years of Project 100,000 from October 1966 to September 1969.<sup>173</sup>

A further examination of the 1969 report and the data the Army reported reveals that several thousand New Standards Men who had volunteered for APT were already reading on the fifth grade or a higher level. The Army did not accept them for APT since

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<sup>172</sup> Starr et al., *The Discarded Army: Veterans After Vietnam*, 194.

<sup>173</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, Table I-1.

these men already met minimum standards for reading level comprehension.<sup>174</sup> Starr did not include these 4,029 Army New Standards Men who volunteered for APT, but were not accepted for training; instead he focused only on those who completed the reading course. When constructing his narrative, he emphasized the lower number of men who had completed the reading course as a way to indict the Army for not providing training to all of the New Standards Men. While technically true, his narrative provides an inaccurate portrayal of how the Army considered the need for remedial reading courses, the number of New Standards Men who volunteered, and which of the New Standards Men the Army sent to these courses.

Thus, rather than the 12,632 number Starr uses for New Standards Men in the Army who completed reading courses, a more nuanced measurement in September 1969 would be 18,269 New Standards Men in the Army who had already attained a fifth grade reading level when they reported for APT, successfully completed APT, were still enrolled in APT, or were administratively discharged while enrolled in APT. When this number is compared against the approximately 95,000 New Standards Men the Army accessed from Project 100,000 over the eighteen-month period from April 1968 to September 1969 when it offered APT, the ratio of Army New Standards Men who volunteered for APT is over 19 percent, nearly three times the 7.5 percent figure Starr calculates for those men who completed the remedial training. When comparing the adjusted number against the total number of Army New Standards Men for the entire

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<sup>174</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, Table I-1, see note a.

period, the ratio is 11.25 percent—over one and half times the percentage Starr uses.<sup>175</sup>

Unfortunately, much of the existing scholarship on Project 100,000 is predicated on Starr's data, which while not technically incorrect, is deliberately ungenerous to the program.

The Marine Corps did not implement any remedial education programs because it did not believe in the long-term efficacy of such programs, preferring instead to recycle trainees through elements of basic training or skills training until they met standards. The Navy and Air Force, however, both offered remedial programs to New Standards Men.<sup>176</sup> The Navy began its remedial education program in January 1967. The Remedial Literacy Training (RLT) varied in length, but was four weeks long as of September 1969 with a provision for additional time if needed. The Navy did not conduct specific screening like the Army, rather Navy personnel identified men during basic training who were struggling because of poor reading ability and offered RLT to them as a way to improve their abilities and subsequently their chances for successfully completing basic training. Oddly, the Navy did not establish a minimum reading grade level, but like the other military services generally used the fifth grade reading level as the metric for minimal qualification needed for successful completion of basic training and skills training. Like the Army, the Navy also provided basic military instruction during RLT to maintain physical conditioning and retention of military skills already learned. Once men completed the training, they were reintegrated into basic training where they had left off.

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<sup>175</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, Tables A-3 and I-1 and Starr et al., *The Discarded Army*, 194.

<sup>176</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, 44-45 and Starr et al., *The Discarded Army*, 195.

The Navy did not offer its RLT until January 1967, three months after the beginning of Project 100,000. During this time, the Navy accepted nearly 1,000 New Standards Men. It is unknown whether or not any of these men would have volunteered for RLT if the Navy had offered it.<sup>177</sup>

As with the Army, Starr uses the stated figure of 2,019 New Standards Men for the Navy who completed RLT in the Defense Department 1969 Manpower Report to illustrate the Defense Department's failure to adequately provide remedial education for New Standards Men. Like the Army figures, Starr does not account for the variations and nuances in the data. While not as significant as the Army, a careful reading of the Navy's data reveals a slightly different story than what Starr offers. Accounting for the 203 men who were still in RLT at the time of the 1969 data call and the 163 who the Navy had discharged because of unsuitability or medical reasons, the number of Navy New Standards Men who volunteered for remedial education was 2,385. When this number is calculated as a percentage of the total number of Navy New Standards Men for the reporting period (31,811), less the approximately 925 men who the Navy accepted before it began offering RLT, the figure is 7.7 percent, slightly more than the 7.5 percent Starr uses.<sup>178</sup>

The Air Force did not begin offering a remedial reading program until October 1967, a full year after Project 100,000 began. Like both the Army and Navy, the Air Force focused its efforts on ensuring men who volunteered for the course received adequate remedial education that would help them succeed in basic training. Called the

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<sup>177</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, Table I-2.

<sup>178</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, Table I-2 and Starr et al., *The Discarded Army*, 194.

Air Force Reading Proficiency Program (RPP), it was eight weeks long and the goal was to raise the reading level of a New Standards Man in the Air Force to the sixth grade. There was a provision, as in the other services, for a trainee who reached the minimum grade level for reading to return to basic training sooner than the eight weeks of the course. The Air Force reported an average reading grade level improvement from a 4.7 grade level at entry into the program to a 6.1 grade level upon completion. During the twelve months of Project 100,000 that the Air Force did not have a remedial reading program, it accepted 3,949 New Standards Men. Whether or not any of these would have volunteered for RPP is unknown.<sup>179</sup>

Like the other military services, Starr reports the lower figure of 2,554 airmen who completed RPP from the 1969 Manpower Report, rather than the higher number of 3,288 airmen who volunteered and entered RPP. This higher figure includes the 389 airmen who were still enrolled in RPP at the time of the data call and the 345 airmen who failed to complete the program satisfactorily, the majority of whom were subsequently administratively discharged for a variety of causes to include unsuitability, medical problems, and other reasons. When this number is calculated as a percentage of the total number of Air Force New Standards Men for the reporting period (25,175), less the 3,949 New Standards Men the Air Force accepted before it began offering RPP, the figure is 15.5 percent, more than twice the 7.5 percent Starr uses.<sup>180</sup>

Starr's calculated percentage of New Standards Men for all the military services who completed a remedial reading course during the reporting period of the 1969

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<sup>179</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, Table I-3.

<sup>180</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, Table I-3 and Starr et al., *The Discarded Army*, 194.

Defense Department *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of “New Standards” Men* is mostly accurate. Nevertheless, a more nuanced analysis of the data accounting for how many New Standards Men volunteered for remedial reading courses, how many achieved the minimum grade reading level before they began the course, how many were still in the course at the time of the data call, how many were administratively discharged from service during the course, and accounting for the numbers of New Standards Men who entered service before the different military services began offering remedial reading courses yields a significantly different number. Interpreting the data in this way reveals 16.3 percent of New Standards Men volunteered and participated in remedial reading courses when they were available.<sup>181</sup> Thus, Starr, like Christian Appy, Myra MacPherson, Marilyn Young, Lawrence Baskir and William Strauss, and others who quote him, relies exclusively on the 1969 Defense Department Project 100,000 report and a narrow interpretation of the data in the report to consider the efficacy of any special training and education programs for New Standards Men and to offer criticisms of the programs. This criticism without context is an incomplete account in part because this report only provides data for the first three years of the program from October 1966 to September 1969. Project 100,000 lasted for another two years through September 1971.

Other documents that were available to Starr and scholars critical of Project 100,000 corroborate the conclusion that a significant number of New Standards Men received remedial training and education courses and benefited from these not only while in service, but also when they returned to civilian life. The most significant of these

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<sup>181</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of “New Standards” Men.*

documents was the June 1971 final report *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Standards of New Standards Men*, which included data for an additional 100,000 New Standards Men bringing the total number of men who served under the program to approximately 346,000. The Defense Department finished this final report in June 1971 and reported on the same kinds of information as the 1969 report, but it did not release it publicly at the time. Sticht, et al. in *Cast-off Youth: Policy Training Methods From The Military Experience* found that approximately 50,000 New Standards Men participated in various remedial literacy programs over the entire period of Project 100,000. This means over 14 percent of New Standards Men attended some form of remedial education during their time in the military—double the figure Starr and other scholars have used for over four decades to condemn the program.<sup>182</sup>

Comparing reading comprehension levels of New Standards Men and the general population is difficult since there is little data available other than literacy rates for the U.S. population during this time. According to the Department of Education, the nation's literacy rate in 1959 was 97.8 percent; by 1969 it had increased to 99 percent.<sup>183</sup> But all of the New Standards Men were literate; it was their reading comprehension or functional literacy that proved problematic. The lowest literacy standard or level at which a person is functionally literate is about the fourth to sixth grade,<sup>184</sup> which is where the majority of New Standards men in 1968 tested. The 31 percent who tested at or below the fourth grade level were most likely functionally illiterate. Carl F. Kaestle, a literacy historian,

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<sup>182</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 54.

<sup>183</sup> Institute of Education Sciences, National center for Education Statistics, "National Assessment of Adult Literacy," [http://nces.ed.gov/NAAL/lit\\_history.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/NAAL/lit_history.asp).

<sup>184</sup> Edward E. Gordon and Elaine H. Gordon, *Literacy in America: Historic Journey and Contemporary Solutions* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 286.

reported “on data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census showing that by 1980 20 to 30 percent of the U.S. population was considered to be functionally illiterate.”<sup>185</sup> While these figures are not from the same time period as those for the New Standards Men, they are close enough for a useful comparison. The reading comprehension level for 31 percent of New Standards Men in 1968 was about the same as the functional illiteracy rate of the U.S. population in 1980 and demonstrates that New Standards Men were fairly representative of the broader civilian population in this category.

Beyond details of the remedial reading programs the Army, Navy, and Air Force developed and implemented, both the 1969 interim report and the 1971 final report on Project 100,000 also provide information on other special programs the Defense Department offered New Standards Men to assist them in transitioning to military life or back to civilian life. One of the most significant was the General Education Development (GED) Program. The GED allowed men to enroll in classroom or correspondence courses to improve their education level. Unlike the remedial reading programs that were conducted during the duty day, GED classes were conducted off duty and open to all. These high school completion programs allowed men (New Standards Men and regular recruits alike) to receive eighth grade and high school equivalency certificates. GED classes also allowed men to raise their General Technical (GT) test scores.<sup>186</sup> The GT test was one component of the AFQT and the military branches used it as a way to measure suitability for advanced training once in the service. If a service member improved his

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<sup>185</sup> Gordon and Gordon, *Literacy in America*, 296.

<sup>186</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 54.



GT score, he had a higher probability of qualifying for new skills training, which could mean faster promotion and other incentives.<sup>187</sup>

It was the high school equivalency part of GED that had the most significant impact on New Standards Men. Only the Army reported data for the 1971 Project 100,000 report about numbers of non-high school graduate New Standards Men who advantaged themselves of the high school equivalency program. The data the Army reported was incomplete and only covered through December 1969. Of these 36,811 New Standards Men who were non-high school graduates, 35.1 percent participated in off-duty evening classes to gain their high school equivalency diploma; 12.2 percent or approximately 4,500 of them graduated. Sticht et al. postulate that if these numbers hold true for the entire New Standards Men population from all the military branches over the entire course of the program, then approximately 40,000 men, or nearly 12 percent, earned their high school diploma at night while serving their country during the day.<sup>188</sup> None of the scholars and authors overly critical of Project 100,000 and the efficacy of the program and its impact on the lives of the men who served under it mention the 12 percent increase in high school equivalency for New Standards Men, which was a significant increase in high school equivalency for the military. *The Report Of The President's Commission On An All-Volunteer Armed Force*, also known as the Gates Commission Report, found that 76 percent of voluntary enlistments had high school diplomas in 1969. Adding the approximately 40,000 New Standards Men who completed their high school equivalency represented a substantial increase of high school educated

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<sup>187</sup> Letter, Davenport to McPherson, 7/12/65, LBJ Library.

<sup>188</sup> *Project 100,000: Characteristics and Performance of New Standards Men* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 1971), Table I-4 as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 21, 54-55.

service members. The Defense Department and Selective Service had long established the importance of high school education as a predictor of success in military service.<sup>189</sup>

Beyond the remedial reading courses and GED program the Defense Department needed other adjustments in training methods for the large influx of low-aptitude men in basic and skills training courses. Indeed, the services required additional support systems at the various installations to provide educational and training courses for the New Standards Men. Project 100,000 planners initially thought that the only changes needed were for special training companies to expand capacity and then later add additional capability in remedial reading instruction.<sup>190</sup> The military had for many years been a leader in technical school style training and education, emphasizing hands on instruction and oral testing rather than written testing, and planners assumed that adjusting to New Standards Men would be relatively simple. Many of the military occupational training courses were vocational in nature and emphasized job oriented, practical exercise, and training device strategies for training and education. No doubt the services were finding creative ways to assist New Standards Men succeed in their military training and assignments. Despite opposition to Project 100,000 at the top of the military services from high-ranking officials, military personnel scattered across the country and around the globe at installations, bases, and camps were focused on turning New Standards Men into successful service members.

During September 1966, just as Project 100,000 was set to begin, the Defense Department held a Seminar on Special Training and Screening-Out Procedures at the

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<sup>189</sup> Gates Commission Report, 46 and Table 4-IX.

<sup>190</sup> Department of Defense Manpower Report 1963-1969, Vol IV.

U.S. Naval Academy. This seminar brought together the key basic training officers from all military services that were involved in planning the training for New Standards Men. The focus of the seminar was to consider the use of special training units for addressing potential problems the men might encounter in physical conditioning, motivation, and learning difficulties. Likewise, during October 1966, an Inter-Service Working Group on Technical Training met at Fort Belvoir, Virginia to study and discuss methods of adapting technical training courses to meet the training needs of New Standards Men. Project 100,000 planners believed these special training units would prove beneficial for New Standards Men, but the planners also needed some modifications to existing training courses in order to enhance the overall success rate for the New Standards Men.<sup>191</sup>

Irv Greenberg, the Director of Project 100,000, in a 1969 article published in *Phi Delta Kappan*, the periodical for the Organization of Professional Educators, titled “Project 100,000: The Training of Former Rejects,” details changes in training methods and curriculum that took place at the various military training centers. The services made adjustments to over fifty courses to accommodate New Standards Men and the challenges it was assumed they would face given their low-test scores. Military training commands along with Project 100,000 planners focused on several aspects of training and education. Course developers eliminated unrelated theory and subject matter in courses to keep them as simple as possible. Additionally, training officers modified course material to simplify the reading level. This involved adjusting course material with simpler words, shorter sentences, addition of pictures, diagrams, and cartoons all in an effort to enhance

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<sup>191</sup> Department of Defense Manpower Report 1963-1969, Vol IV, 231.

reading comprehension. Course officers also increased the amount of hands-on training to allow more learning to occur through doing rather than through lecturing on the material. Course directors added audio-visual aids and made an overall improvement in training aids. The services also assigned additional instructors to reduce student to instructor ratios. Finally, course directors revised examinations to make them more relevant and more performance oriented rather than written.<sup>192</sup>

Greenberg made several field visits to the basic training centers during the course of Project 100,000 and reported on his findings to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. One such visit to Fort Benning, Georgia in May 1968 highlights his typical findings during these visits. Fort Benning is a large initial entry and advanced skills training installation located in southwestern Georgia. Both enlisted and officer training are still conducted here as in 1968. Greenberg's visit in May 1968 was to attend a seminar at the U.S. Armed Forces Institute,<sup>193</sup> examine how Fort Benning was implementing the Army's remedial reading program, and to discuss the experiences of Fort Benning personnel with Project 100,000 and New Standards Men.<sup>194</sup>

Like other Army training centers, Fort Benning began its basic reading program in April 1968. When Greenberg visited in May, the first six-week class was nearing its end and he found that the students were highly motivated and making good progress. The

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<sup>192</sup> Irv Greenberg, "Project 100,000: The Training of Former Rejects," *Phi Delta Kappan* 50, no. 10, (June 1969): 570-74, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20372476>.

<sup>193</sup> "The U.S. Armed Forces Institute was established in April, 1942 and was intended [to provide] enlisted men in the Army suitable opportunities to continue school careers interrupted by war, to undertake special studies to increase their efficiency as soldiers, to maintain those personal interests which would help them later to assume their responsibilities as citizens." Herbert G. Espy, *Chemical Education Journal* 22, no. 1, (1945): 26, DOI: 10.1021/ed022p26.

<sup>194</sup> Report, Irv Greenberg Fort Benning Trip, 5/15/68, "Project 100,000 Reference File, Folder 2H," Vietnam Country File, NSF, Box 76, LBJ Library.

soldiers in the first class on average had gained 2.5 grade levels in their reading ability. This positive showing could have been the result of Fort Benning officials selecting soldiers for Greenberg to meet and interact with to make the program look as successful as possible, since Greenberg was the civilian equivalent of a two star general. Nevertheless, there is no indication in the report or subsequent reports that training center officials were trying to portray the program in the best possible light.<sup>195</sup> Indeed, given the lower socioeconomic backgrounds of these men this may have been the first time they had ever received such concentrated educational assistance. No wonder they made such significant gains.

Greenberg also met with officers from the Reception Station, Basic Training, the Track Vehicle Maintenance Course, and from operational units on post. The Reception Station<sup>196</sup> officers reported New Standards Men as cooperative and not presenting any problems during reception station processing. Since October 1967, Fort Benning had received approximately 45 percent of its incoming personnel from mental category IV, with about one half of these being New Standards Men. The primary difference between the Project 100,000 personnel and non-program personnel in mental category IV was that the military services and the Army in particular already accepted mental category IV

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<sup>195</sup> Report, Greenberg Fort Benning Trip, 5/15/68, LBJ Library.

<sup>196</sup> The Reception Station was where newly arrived enlistees and inductees were processed into the Army and received complete physicals, any required immunizations, underwent additional testing for suitability, and were issued uniforms and equipment. Most of the men who were sent to Fort Benning for basic training in 1968 were from Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. See Report, Greenberg Fort Benning Trip, 5/15/68, LBJ Library.

personnel for enlistment or induction provided they had a high school diploma and could pass at least two additional sections of tests within the AFQT.<sup>197</sup>

When Greenberg met with the officers from the basic training units to discuss how the New Standards Men performed, the findings were consistent with other reports that on the whole, men who entered the service under Project 100,000 performed satisfactorily. New Standards Men required more training in personal hygiene and tended to have more personal problems, but generally had excellent attitudes and did very well in the physical aspects of basic training. When the best drill instructors were assigned to train platoons consisting of New Standards Men, they generally did as well or slightly better than platoons comprised of a mix of mental categories with average drill instructors.<sup>198</sup> Basic training companies were employing several of the strategies identified earlier to assist New Standards Men in overcoming their deficiencies. Just as Deputy Undersecretary of the Army Roy Davenport had argued, test scores were less important than training and education. Furthermore, when New Standards Men received support structures to assist them with problems associated with low-aptitude, they were often successful.<sup>199</sup>

Fort Benning also operated special training companies as part of basic training. This was a program to give individuals who failed to meet standards in basic training another opportunity to repeat training and testing by being recycled. Fort Benning operated its special training companies differently than other military training installations—recruits were recycled only after failing to pass the final testing process

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<sup>197</sup> Report, Greenberg Fort Benning Trip, 5/15/68, LBJ Library.

<sup>198</sup> Report, Greenberg Fort Benning Trip, 5/15/68, LBJ Library.

<sup>199</sup> Letter, Davenport to McPherson, 7/12/65, LBJ Library.

rather than during intermediate testing in the course of training. Fort Benning found that over a two-year span, 38 percent of the individuals who had entered the special training companies were from mental category IV. And of those who entered a special training company, 87 percent graduated from basic training.<sup>200</sup> Even though the Army created special training companies, like the other strategies military trainers used to accommodate New Standards Men, to assist low-aptitude individuals, the Army often used the special training companies to assist men from the higher mental categories as well. Thus, while not one of the intended goals of the special training and education strategies the military services designed and implemented to facilitate the success of New Standards Men, service members from the other mental categories benefitted and the force as a whole became better trained and educated.

One of the technical training courses the Army taught at Fort Benning was the Track Vehicle Mechanics Course. This course taught and certified soldiers as mechanics for the Army's family of tracked vehicles like the M113 Armored Personnel Carrier and other configurations of this vehicle on the same chassis. The Tank Mechanics Course would have been taught at Fort Knox, Kentucky. The Army considered it an advanced course and required soldiers to be graduates of the Wheeled Vehicle Mechanics Course before attendance. Officers from the course reported that New Standards Men performed well with one recent graduate being the honor graduate of his class. New Standards Men at Fort Benning commonly had difficulties in reading course materials, but were highly

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<sup>200</sup> Report, Greenberg Fort Benning Trip, 5/15/68, LBJ Library.

motivated and excelled in portions of the curriculum where hands on instruction and oral testing were utilized.<sup>201</sup>

Greenberg's findings during his trip to Fort Benning and other visits to training centers reinforces McNamara's statement to the Congress on the Fiscal Year 1969-1973 Defense Program and the 1969 Defense Budget in the section Special Military Manpower Matters, and in particular, Project 100,000. "We were convinced that they could qualify as fully satisfactory servicemen if exposed to modern instructional techniques and that they could be returned to civilian life as productive members of society with vastly improved lifetime earnings."<sup>202</sup> Some seventeen years later, McNamara still held true to this statement with comments he made in an interview with educational psychologist, Thomas Sticht, in 1985. "I feel that motivation is so important, and a properly motivated individual, properly assigned in relation to his training and mental competence, can perform extremely well in military service."<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, what Greenberg observed at Fort Benning coincides with Davenport's assertion that the mental category IV label had the unintended consequence of branding these men as incapable of successful training, which clearly they were not.<sup>204</sup>

Special training and education strategies were not limited to just basic and skills training. The military services also provided for additional training and education for service members when they arrived at their unit. These varied from additional skills

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<sup>201</sup> Report, Greenberg Fort Benning Trip, 5/15/68, LBJ Library.

<sup>202</sup> Statement, Robert S. McNamara, 1968, The Fiscal Year 1969-73 Defense Program and the 1969 Defense Budget, 189, folder: Baroody Subject File, Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, 1962-1964 (1)-(3), Box A7, Melvin R. Laird Papers, Gerald R. Ford Library.

<sup>203</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 191.

<sup>204</sup> Letter, Davenport to McPherson, 7/12/65, LBJ Library.



training at the unit to more formal educational experiences at the installation for high school diploma equivalency or college courses. At Fort Benning, Greenberg found that officers from operational units reinforced the success stories of New Standards Men from the basic and skills training units. Company commanders from a truck company and a tank company reported that about 8 percent of their respective companies were comprised of New Standards Men and were serving as drivers, mechanics, cooks, and tank crewmen. While they tended to have more personal problems than other soldiers, all of them had received a rating of excellent in their last performance reports. Both commanders reported that they encouraged all of their men—whether Project 100,000 personnel or not—to attend GED courses at Fort Benning. Those that signed up were released for half of each duty day to attend these courses for a period of six weeks.<sup>205</sup>

Not all of the changes to training methods proved to be useful. There were limits to what military trainers could accomplish with the simplification process. Some courses required theory, complicated manuals, or high school level math (algebra or geometry) in order to meet minimum standards. Most importantly, trainers had to maintain quality training even when courses were simplified.<sup>206</sup> Nevertheless, the measures the services took to adjust training courses for the benefit of New Standards Men indicates the level of dedication to helping these men succeed and make them productive members of the military. The single largest contributing factor to whether or not New Standards Men advantaged themselves of the remedial reading courses and off duty education opportunities was the man himself. Every service provided programs for any service

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<sup>205</sup> Report, Greenberg Fort Benning Trip, 5/15/68, LBJ Library.

<sup>206</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 87-89.

member to better himself through education and training, but it was on a volunteer basis. Many New Standards Men and other service members took advantage of these programs. Despite criticism from scholars and authors like Paul Starr, Myra MacPherson, Christian Appy, Marilyn Young, and Lawrence Baskir and William Strauss that Project 100,000 was the Defense Department's deliberate and calculated attempt to funnel large numbers of lower class, illiterate men, many of them racial minorities, into military service for exploitive purposes, there was a concerted effort to provide remedial training and education to the New Standards Men.

Project 100,000 was unique among the War on Poverty programs because it focused on the process of using military education and training strategies as a means to assist young men from impoverished backgrounds. Other War on Poverty programs like the Job Corps, VISTA, and Head Start, were focused on developing training courses and then developing ways to deliver those courses to the target audience. Consequently, the focus on the process of learning led to different strategies for the revision of training courses. These strategies included accommodation, extra help and time, more learnable courses, knowledge based training, and special training units. Each of these strategies produced varying results and adds further weight to the argument that the altruistic goals of Project 100,000 were genuine.<sup>207</sup>

Accommodation strategies were the processes military assignment personnel used to limit the types of occupational specialties and units where they assigned New Standards Men. It made little sense to place New Standards Men into occupational

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<sup>207</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast off Youth*, 85-86.

specialties that were overly technical or required advanced levels of reading comprehension or mathematical skills. Conversely, planners did not want New Standards Men lumped into lower skilled jobs found in the ground combat arms. Indeed, scholars and others critical of Project 100,000 have argued that New Standards Men were assigned to these types of units, especially the infantry, where they were most vulnerable to injury and death from combat with limited opportunities to acquire skills or training that they could use when they returned to civilian life. Defense Department officials were keenly aware of this criticism. As mentioned previously, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Alfred Fitt, wrote Irv Greenberg in a staff memo on March 18, 1968 that the department had “to protect Project 100,000 against the cannon fodder charge.”<sup>208</sup> In fact, one of the many reports the military departments had to provide to Greenberg’s office was a monthly tally of the occupational specialties to which the services were assigning New Standards Men.

When considering the entirety of Project 100,000, the criticism that these men were assigned to combat jobs in numbers far greater than regular recruits is not accurate. Thirty-seven point two percent of New Standards Men were assigned to combat arms specialties, while 23.1 percent of non-program personnel were assigned to combat arms specialties over the same time period.<sup>209</sup> It is true that New Standards Men were assigned to combat jobs more frequently than regular recruits, but the difference is less than 15

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<sup>208</sup> Memo, Fitt to Greenberg, 3/18/68, LBJ Library.

<sup>209</sup> Defense Manpower Data Center Archival Computer Files for Project 100,000 as cited in Sticht, et al., *Cast off Youth*, Table 24, 61 and *1971 Project 100,000 Final Report*, Table E-1 as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 17, 50.

percent. Furthermore, this type of criticism did not account for the nearly two-thirds of New Standards Men who were assigned to non-combat jobs.

Another strategy the military used for New Standards Men was for the military trainers and teachers to provide extra time and help to those recruits who struggled to complete the training. The training commands also afforded extra time to New Standards Men to complete courses, or even allowed them to repeat a portion or all of the training, a process called recycling. During Project 100,000 the services recycled about 8 percent of New Standards Men for basic training and 8 percent recycled for technical training. It is unknown if those recycled for basic training were the same or different recruits recycled for technical training. Therefore, the total percentage of New Standards Men recycled for initial training (given additional time and help) varied from 8 to 16 percent. The figures for failing basic training are even more illustrative. For the entire period of Project 100,000, New Standards Men failed to complete basic training at a rate that varied from 5.4 percent (October 1966-June 1969) to 12.4 percent (July 1969-June 1970). It is true, as some critics claim, that this failure rate was two to three times that of non-program personnel, nevertheless, the discrepancy is minimal when compared to failure rates of non-program personnel and negates the success rate of New Standards Men that varied from 87.6 to 94.6 percent.<sup>210</sup>

The increase of basic training attrition to 12.4 percent in the later years of the program for New Standards Men was the result of a dramatic increase in Marine Corps recruits failing basic training during the second time period. Marine Corps basic training

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<sup>210</sup> 1971 *Project 100,000 Final Report*, Table C-1 as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 15, 47.

attrition jumped from 11.1 percent to 37.8 percent during this time. This sharp increase resulted from the Marine Corps having to rely on draftees to meet its manpower requirements in ever increasing numbers during the time period. Given the nature of the Marine Corps mission in Vietnam and its higher casualty rates than the other services, the dramatically higher attrition rates are not surprising. Those who served in the Marine Corps on a voluntary basis were far more successful than those who were drafted. For example, in 1969 Marine Corps volunteers reenlisted for an additional tour of duty at a rate of 12 percent where as Marine Corps draftees reenlisted at a rate of less than 1 percent.<sup>211</sup>

The military services also revised training courses to make them more learnable, a procedure officially mandated in Project 100,000 policies and guidelines. “We were further committed to imaginative innovation in the restructuring of training courses (both as to content and teaching techniques) in order to make them more learnable, and are committed to conducting research to achieve these objectives.”<sup>212</sup> Here the goal was to utilize educational practices to optimize the learning process for the New Standards Men. McNamara was especially interested in how to make training courses more efficient; not only in terms of the recruits’ ability to learn and retain information, but also in how the services could maximize the use of available resources. In October 1967, he solicited Howard Howe, the Commissioner of Education, for recommendations of individuals in the field of education who could provide expert advice on which educational system

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<sup>211</sup> 1971 *Project 100,000 Final Report*, Table C-1 as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 15, 47.

<sup>212</sup> Paper, Project One Hundred Thousand, 3/20/68, “Project 100,000 Reference File, Folder 2H,” Vietnam Country File, NSF, Box 76, LBJ Library.

would be the most efficient in use of time and money to improve the skills of low-aptitude recruits.<sup>213</sup>

Even though the Air Force had the fewest numbers of New Standards Men, it was keenly interested in developing ways to accommodate and ensure the success of low-aptitude recruits. Specific suggestions for training revisions were detailed in an Air Force memorandum dated 1966. Training course developers included several suggestions: developing a learning system that used what the individual trainee already knew as a basis for further learning; identifying precise learning requirements of courses and jobs, paying special attention to areas that might be especially difficult for CAT IV personnel; delineating requirements for literacy training; relating learning situations and materials directly to the military; and developing specific course terminal objectives that were job relevant.<sup>214</sup> All of these strategies, specifically designed for low-aptitude men, emphatically suggest that the military in general and the Air Force in particular were focused on ensuring that the New Standards Men were successful.

Ultimately, much of the success that New Standards Men achieved is related to the special training and education strategies the services employed. But these changes in instructional methodologies are only part of the story. Just as McNamara had suspected, the military, with its vast resources and extensive experience and knowledge in training and education coupled with its ability to motivate young men, proved successful. Not only did New Standards Men benefit from these special training and education strategies,

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<sup>213</sup> Letter, Howard Howe to Robert S. McNamara, 10/26/67, Papers of Alfred B. Fitt, Box 4, "Correspondence: Memos to Staff 9/28/67 – 8/30/68," LBJ Library.

<sup>214</sup> Memo, Department of the Air Force. Training CAT IV Personnel, 1966, "Project 100,000 Reference File, Folder 2H," Vietnam Country File, NSF, Box 76, LBJ Library.

they also proved useful across all mental categories and levels of aptitude. Just how useful they were to the military services and whether or not New Standards Men caused more discipline problems are issues examined in the next chapter. The military used its experience with training and educating New Standards Men to adapt and change many of the training and education courses across all branches of the military. Even today, aspects of the special training and education strategies still exist. Whether providing English as a second language education to non-English speakers in special training companies prior to basic training or utilizing new and emerging information technologies for distance education and virtual training scenarios, the military continues to adapt in order to provide opportunities for service members and better train the force.

The criticism that some scholars, journalists, and others levied against the Defense Department that the promised training and education was never provided to New Standards Men is simply untrue. To be sure, there were isolated examples of New Standards Men not receiving any additional training and education and these men probably suffered for it. But this dissertation provides a more complete analysis, relying on planning documents, field reports, and firsthand observations, to argue that the military services and the Defense Department made concerted efforts to plan and implement innovative special training and education strategies to assist New Standards Men and lead them to success.

#### IV. New Standards Men—Performance, Standards, and Discipline

Gus Peters was exactly the sort of young man that critics of Project 100,000 argued would end up in the military in mass numbers and contribute to the destruction of the armed forces from within. Hailing from a broken home, having dropped out of school after the eighth grade, and unemployed with an IQ of 62, Peters was hardly the sort of recruit the military branches were looking for. He never would have qualified for military service had it not been for the revised minimum standards under Project 100,000.<sup>215</sup> He initially failed basic training, but after repeated remedial training was able to pass. Sent for advanced training as an armored vehicle crewmember, he continued to have problems and failed that training as well. He was teased and ridiculed by the other soldiers in his unit, eventually went AWOL, and received an administrative discharge for failing to adjust to the military. After only six months, Peters was back home and worse off than before—he still had no skills or useful job experience and now the Army had labeled him a misfit.<sup>216</sup>

There were numerous arguments that New Standards Men like Gus Peters would lead to a significant decrease in military readiness, troop morale, and place an unnecessary burden on the military for the additional training these marginal men

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<sup>215</sup> Baskir and Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance*, 122.

<sup>216</sup> Baskir and Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance*, 127.



required while it was fighting the war in Vietnam. Despite opposition from senior military leaders and other critics of Project 100,000 about accepting large numbers of marginal men for military service, cases like Gus Peters were the exception rather than the rule for the New Standards Men. This chapter explores how New Standards Men performed in the military, whether or not they adhered to acceptable behavior and job performance, and whether or not they posed significant discipline problems for the services. It also addresses the critics' assessments that New Standards Men caused discipline problems, were court martialed in large numbers, and were poor performers in their military jobs.

The vast majority of New Standards Men performed satisfactorily in the military and a small percentage (approximately 8,200) were still serving in 1983, twelve years after Project 100,000 ended, having made their military service into a career. One of the major aspects of the program that is indicative of the systems analysis approach that Robert McNamara used as Secretary of Defense was the requirement for the military services to collect and maintain various data sets about the New Standards Men in order for the department to maintain visibility on how these men performed. McNamara also wanted to make sure the Defense Department was supporting President Johnson's War on Poverty and he needed data from the New Standards Men to illustrate how the department was contributing to this effort.

Robert McNamara stated from the outset that one of the goals of Project 100,000 was to determine, as he believed, whether or not the military could use its expertise and vast resources in training and education to assist men like Gus Peters not only become

productive members of the military, but productive members of society.<sup>217</sup> The Defense Department tasked each of the services with establishing tracking mechanisms to gather data on several aspects of New Standards Men and their performance. Thomas D. Morris, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) issued a memorandum on September 23, 1966 to the military departments specifying the data the services were to collect on the New Standards Men. Assistant Secretary Morris was concerned about uniformity in the type of data collected, but also wanted to ensure that in collecting the data, New Standards Men were not singled out or identified to their fellow service members or supervisors.<sup>218</sup>

The Defense Department tasked the military departments with providing monthly reports covering information on basic training. This included how many men began basic training, completed it, failed it, required additional training to pass or were recycled to repeat portions or all of basic training. The department gathered the same information for how New Standards Men fared in their advanced individual training. The department also required the services to provide details on the New Standards Men who were discharged and for what reasons (disciplinary, medical, untrainable) as well as the number and types of disciplinary actions (non-judicial and judicial). The Defense Department required all this information so that it could track how well New Standards Men were performing and how the services were attaining accession goals for Project 100,000 personnel. Such detailed reports requirements suggest that McNamara and the

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<sup>217</sup> McNamara, Address Before the Veterans of Foreign Wars, August 23, 1966, NARA II.

<sup>218</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low Aptitude Men in the Military*, 32-33.

Defense Department were fully invested not only from a resource standpoint, but interested as well in how New Standards Men performed.<sup>219</sup>

Despite Secretary McNamara's emphasis on measuring Project 100,000 successes and failures and requirements for data collection, monthly reports and maintaining the various databases, it appears that interest from the services diminished over time. The last official report utilizing the statistical information was in 1969—two years before the program ended. The final report for when the program ended in September 1971 was never released to the general public at the time the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs completed it. Indeed, much of the criticism on Project 100,000 and claims that its goals were never met stem from an incomplete data set as scholars, journalists, and others relied solely on the 1969 report. Additionally, it appears that the services themselves became more and more complacent about meeting data requirements for the Defense Department. The amount of data declined each year thereby contributing to the incomplete data set on New Standards Men and consequently the negative views of the program. The services became more and more consumed with the day-to-day requirements of fighting the war in Vietnam and since they were not enthusiastic about the idea to begin with, once Secretary McNamara left the Defense Department in February 1968, the services' commitment rapidly declined.<sup>220</sup>

Another less obvious reason may have been that as time went on, New Standards Men ceased to be a novelty and the culture of the military simply accepted that some men were from lower aptitudes and would require extra help in their training and supervision

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<sup>219</sup> Memo, Reporting Requirements for Project 100,000, 3/20/68, "Project 100,000 Reference File, Folder 2H," Vietnam Country File, NSF, Box 76, LBJ Library.

<sup>220</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 32-33.

in the performance of their duties. Stanley Resor, Secretary of the Army in 1971, delivered the annual Statement on the Posture of the U.S. Army to the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 15, 1971. Reporting on several key issues involving the Army's ability to train, man, and equip Army forces, Secretary Resor provided his assessment of New Standards Men in the Army. Since the beginning of Project 100,000 in October 1966:

The Army has accepted over 200,000 men into this program. 42 percent were non-white, 15 percent earned less than \$60 per week, 43 percent were unemployed, and more than half had not completed high school. The results continue to be encouraging. The failure rate in basic training has been 3.7 percent, somewhat higher than the Army-wide average of 2.0 percent. Efficiency ratings are about the same as the Army average; however, the court[s] martial rate is more than double that of other accessions. A majority of the men in the program have been promoted at normal levels and 15 percent of those with 22-24 months of service have received promotions to Grade E-5. About 6 percent are reenlisting or converting from inductee status to a three-year enlistment shortly after entry in active service.<sup>221</sup>

From Secretary Resor's statement, there is a general sense that the Army in particular with the largest number of New Standards Men in its ranks, had accepted that CAT IV personnel would continue to make up some portion of its end strength and that this was business as usual. Indeed, the Defense Department regularly provides guidance on just how many CAT IV personnel it will accept each fiscal year. For example, the most recent Department of Defense Instruction on the Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower

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<sup>221</sup> Statement, Stanley R. Resor, Secretary of the Army, Posture of the U.S. Army before the Senate Armed Services Committee, March 15, 1971, Melvin R. Laird Papers, Box A91, DOD Papers: Baroody Subject File Selected Statements of Defense Matters by DOD and Other Administrative Officials, Selected Statements Jan-Jun 1971, Gerald R. Ford Library.

dated December 12, 2013 stipulated that no more than 4 percent of personnel with AFQT scores between 10 and 30 percent are eligible for enlistment.<sup>222</sup>

The Defense Department collected, analyzed and reported on the data the services provided and the results provide a different view of New Standards Men than what many scholars and critics of the program have given. While not superlative performers, the vast majority of New Standards Men executed their duties as required, took advantage of education and other life skills programs while in the military, and returned to civilian life after an honorable discharge.

Indeed, data collected through 1969 demonstrates that New Standards Men were successful and that men deemed marginal for military service either mentally or medically could with the proper training, supervision, and care, succeed. *The Department of Defense Manpower Report, 1963-1970* indicates that combined for all the services, 94.6 percent of New Standards Men successfully completed basic training compared to 97.5 percent for all other men through 1969.<sup>223</sup> Some authors have used this deviation to indicate that New Standards Men failed basic training at twice the normal rate. While technically true, it belies the fact that the overwhelming majority successfully completed their training and graduated. This does not mean that New Standards Men did not have difficulties during their initial training. Basic training was and still is a significant physical, emotional, and intellectual event that even the most prepared individual would have some difficulty completing. For many young men, this was their first time away

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<sup>222</sup> Department of Defense Instruction Number 1145.01, SUBJECT: Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower, dated December 12, 2013, <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/114501p.pdf>.

<sup>223</sup> Department of Defense, *Manpower Report, 1963-1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), 231.

from home, separated from family and friends; all the familiar trappings and comforts of their lives were gone. That these men would have difficulty in basic training and adjusting to life in the military is not surprising. There is a well-established link between poverty and the overall physical health, language and cognitive development, academic achievement, and education attainment of children and youth.<sup>224</sup> Young men who lived in poverty and experienced these problems were also likely to experience problems in basic training. Nevertheless, just as Irv Greenberg, director of Project 100,000, found in his field visits, New Standards Men were successful if equipped with the proper tools and afforded trainers and training designed to assist them.

In the Manpower Report of 1970, the Defense Department reported 13 percent of New Standards Men required additional time or training in order to complete basic training. This consisted of being either recycled (repeating the current phase of basic training) or transferred to a special training company.<sup>225</sup> While this figure was significantly higher than the 5 percent of non Project 100,000 men who required additional time or training to complete basic training, it is still fairly low given the hurdles these men had to overcome in order to succeed. The military services invested significant resources to assist these men in graduating basic training, which provides further evidence to the military's commitment to helping these men succeed. The special training companies the services assigned many New Standards Men to in order to complete basic training consisted of concentrated attention in physical conditioning,

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<sup>224</sup> Hirokazu Yoshikawa, J. Lawrence Aber, and William R. Beardslee, "The Effects of Poverty on the Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Health of Children and Youth: Implications for Prevention." *American Psychologist* 67, no. 4 (May 2012): 272-284.

<sup>225</sup> *Manpower Report, 1963-1970*, 231.

adjustment to military life, motivation, and the academic portion of the basic training program.<sup>226</sup>

Attrition figures increased during the period July 1969 to June 1970 with 87.6 percent of New Standards Men completing basic training during this time period as compared to 94.6 percent of all other men when service numbers are viewed as a whole. There was not a significant increase in Army attrition numbers during this latter period (3.7 percent versus 5.5 percent). The other services, however, had more substantial increases in attrition rates. The Navy attrition rate doubled from 8.6 percent to 17 percent and the Air Force attrition rate increased from 9.2 percent to 14.4 percent. It was the Marine Corps, however, that experienced the greatest increase with its attrition rates more than tripling from 11 percent to nearly 38 percent.<sup>227</sup> There are several reasons accounting for this increase in attrition rates. The increase was not merely a result of men who failed basic training because of low performance standards or were released from service during their initial training due to disciplinary problems. Attrition also included men who were injured and could not complete basic training, experienced personal issues that contributed to early release (death or serious illness of an immediate family member), or in some cases even died during their initial training.

Factors contributing to the increase in attrition rates for the Navy and Air Force can be attributed to different policies and cultural tendencies in how the services dealt with training failures. While the Army was more likely to attempt rehabilitation and retraining for a soldier who failed basic training, the Navy and Air Force were more

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<sup>226</sup> *Manpower Report, 1963-1970*, 231-232.

<sup>227</sup> *1971 Project 100,000 Final Report*, Table C-1 as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 15, 47.

likely to separate the service member than focus limited resources on men who had failed training. This was true for both New Standards Men and those not part of Project 100,000. Furthermore, quotas in the Navy and Air Force for New Standards Men were substantially lower than Army quotas. The Army quota for Project 100,000 personnel was set at about one-fourth of all its annual accessions during the time the program was in existence. Quotas for the Navy and Air Force fluctuated between 15 and 18 percent during the course of the program—never rising above 18 percent for either service. Since neither the Navy nor the Air Force were required to fill its ranks with New Standards Men at the higher quotas of the Army, both services could exact higher standards on their recruits.<sup>228</sup>

In the case of the Marine Corps' substantial increase in attrition rates, there are two primary reasons to account for this. First, the Marine Corps has always prided itself on being the most demanding of the military branches. Second, while the other services were required to begin accepting Project 100,000 personnel in October 1966, the Defense Department gave the Marine Corps permission to wait until January 1967. This three-month delay accounts for some of the dramatic increase since the Marine Corps did not have any New Standards Men at the time the Defense Department began collecting data on basic training attrition. Additionally, the Marine Corps' initial quota through June 1967 (18 percent) was substantially lower than the Army's quota (25.9 percent) for the same time period. This allowed the Marine Corps to exercise more discretion in choosing its recruits and implement the same type of remedial training program that had proven so

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<sup>228</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 50.



successful in 1965 and 1966—the same training program that had convinced McNamara that he could pursue low-aptitude men for service and gave birth to Project 100,000.

When the Defense Department increased Marine Corps quotas in successive years to 21 percent and then 24 percent, the Marine Corps reverted to its tougher standards and no longer used the remedial training program for those men who failed basic training. These latter years, 1968 through 1970 represented an increase in Marine Corps units deploying to Vietnam and subsequent reluctance on the Corps' part to spend precious resources on substandard men.<sup>229</sup> Additionally, beginning in 1968, the Marine Corps also had to rely more and more on draftees to meet manpower requirements. Draftees, whether New Standards Men or not, typically did not perform as well as volunteers. This was especially true in the Marine Corps. While the Marine Corps could not refuse to meet its quota of New Standards Men it accepted for initial training, there was no requirement to expend additional resources to offer assistance to recruits who failed to meet minimum standards.

Successfully completing basic training was just the first step in becoming a member of the armed forces. One of the primary goals of Project 100,000 was to afford these young men the opportunity to learn a job skill they could take with them when they returned to civilian life thereby helping them to break the cycle of poverty from which most of them had grown up.<sup>230</sup> One of the main criticisms surrounding Project 100,000 was that the services never provided the promised training and the military required most New Standards Men to serve in combat specialties and then sent them to fight and die in

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<sup>229</sup> *1971 Project 100,000 Final Report*, Tables J-1 and J-2 as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 18, 51-53.

<sup>230</sup> McNamara, Address Before the Veterans of Foreign Wars August 23, 1966, NARA II.

Vietnam.<sup>231</sup> An examination of the Defense Department documents reveals a much different story—that the services trained nearly two-thirds of Project 100,000 men in non-combat jobs. Through 1969, only 37.7 percent were assigned to combat specialties like infantry, artillery, armor, and combat engineers. The rest received training in a variety of job skills that had direct correlations to civilian jobs. These included service and supply, electrical and mechanical repair, administrative specialists and clerks, electronic equipment repair, and medical and dental specialists.<sup>232</sup> By 1971, the percentage of New Standards Men assigned to combat specialties had fallen to 34.4 percent. This rate ultimately resulted in about 118,000 of the New Standards Men serving in combat oriented jobs over the entirety of the program.<sup>233</sup> When Project 100,000 ended in September 1971, the majority of the 65.6 percent of New Standards Men not assigned to combat specialties received their initial training as administrative specialists and clerks, electromechanical equipment repairmen, or service/supply handlers.<sup>234</sup> These specialties were all skills with direct relevance to civilian jobs.

New Standards Men successes were also evident in ways other than their graduation rates from basic and advanced skills training. One of the many criticisms of Project 100,000 before, during, and after the program was that accepting large numbers of men with marginal intelligence and education would lead to numerous behavior and discipline problems. Serving in the military is subject to its own set of social peer

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<sup>231</sup> Baskir and Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance*, 123. See also Appy, *Working Class War*, 32-33 and MacPherson, *Long Time Passing*, 559.

<sup>232</sup> Department of Defense, *Manpower Report, 1963-1970*, 234.

<sup>233</sup> *1971 Project 100,000 Final Report*, Table E-1 as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 17, 50. 23.1 percent of non-program 100,000 men were assigned to combat specialties.

<sup>234</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 49.

pressures, struggles, and anxieties that were exacerbated by service during the Vietnam War. Many of the New Standards Men lacked the social skills necessary to deal with these situations. Some of them when faced with peer pressure, difficult training situations, or bullying would become frustrated, defiant, belligerent, or even violent.<sup>235</sup>

Nevertheless, most New Standards Men performed their duties in a satisfactory manner. The *1971 Project 100,000 Final Report* categorized performance of New Standards Men in relation to other service members by service and reported that they performed only slightly below personnel not in the program. For example, for a period of twenty-two to twenty-four months of service for New Standards Men who entered service from January to March 1969 and reported on by their supervisors as of December 1970, the Army found that only 1.5 percent of New Standards Men performed unsatisfactorily as compared to 0.7 percent of other personnel. While supervisory ratings are often inflated, this does provide one benchmark for how New Standards Men performed in comparison to regular recruits. When examining the other categories of ratings (fair, good, or highly effective) nearly 95 percent of New Standards Men received a rating of highly effective, which was only 2 percent lower than other personnel.<sup>236</sup> Thus, the vast majority of New Standards Men during this time period of the data collection performed their duties in a satisfactory manner. To categorize this as anything other than a success is a flawed assessment.

There were other indicators beyond performance measures demonstrating that New Standards Men performed satisfactorily. The U.S. Army War College at Carlisle

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<sup>235</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 52-53 and Baskir and Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance*, 130-131.

<sup>236</sup> *1971 Project 100,000 Final Report*, Table G-1 as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 20, 54.

Barracks, Pennsylvania is the Army's senior service college where senior officers (lieutenant colonels and colonels) are sent for top-level schooling to prepare them for command at the brigade and higher level and for staff positions at the strategic level of war. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, as officers who had been company commanders during the Vietnam War began to attend, the Army conducted a series of oral history interviews with them to gather their wartime experiences at the company-grade level. As company commanders, these officers were typically in charge of 100 to 200 men and in the decentralized leadership environment of Vietnam were in a unique position to evaluate firsthand how New Standards Men performed under a variety of situations and missions.

These officers, all Army War College students at the time of their interviews, detailed their experiences as a company commander in Vietnam through a series of questions from interviewers. The Project 100,000 responses came not from a direct question about the program, but rather in response to the question, "What was your most significant personnel problem?" Performance, discipline, interacting with other soldiers and superiors, training, and basic life skills of New Standards Men are all addressed in these oral histories. LTC Lloyd K. Brown, U.S. Army, served as a combat engineer company commander as a captain with the 523rd Engineer Company, Port Construction Group in Vung Tau from June 1969 to December 1969.<sup>237</sup> LTC Brown had already been in Vietnam for six months working as a staff officer in the group headquarters when he took command. In addition, he had commanded two other companies prior to his tour in

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<sup>237</sup> Transcript, LTC Lloyd K. Brown, April 13, 1983, by LTC Donald L. Meek, Vietnam Company Command Oral History Interviews, 1981-1985, Box 5, USAHEC.

Vietnam—one in Korea and one at Fort Carson, Colorado—so he was a more experienced company commander than was typical at the time in Vietnam.<sup>238</sup>

The company LTC Brown commanded had severe discipline problems and was combat ineffective, i.e. no longer capable of performing the mission essential tasks of a combat engineer company. The group commander gave LTC Brown free reign to take over the company and deal with the problems as he saw fit. One aspect of the personnel problems LTC Brown encountered when he took over the company was soldiers who were part of Project 100,000. He considered the program to be a tremendous failure, an opinion shared by many of his contemporaries. LTC Brown thought of the New Standards Men in his company as more of a liability than anything else, and he believed that he received the New Standards Men because many of the military occupational specialties in the company (rigger, boat operator, harbor master) had no formal advanced training requirement in the Army. Soldiers with these specialties were supposed to report to their unit after basic training and receive on-the-job training. He believed that the Army used his type of unit as a dumping ground for Project 100,000 personnel to avoid having to train these marginal men beyond basic training although he admitted in his interview that he never had any evidence beyond his personal experience to corroborate his suspicions. Furthermore, LTC Brown provided no details about how the on-the-job training was conducted and whether or not provisions were made for New Standards Men

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<sup>238</sup> Transcript, LTC Brown Oral History Interview, April 13, 1983, USAHEC.

to help them overcome their deficiencies.<sup>239</sup> Project 100,000 planners expected these men would need additional help and supervision to perform adequately.

When the interviewer pressed LTC Brown for specific details on the types of personnel problems with New Standards Men he experienced, he related that the problem was not as much the performance of the New Standards Men, but rather how the other soldiers in the company treated these men.<sup>240</sup> For example, one of the Project 100,000 soldiers assigned to the supply section had become so agitated over constantly being teased about his intelligence (primarily his reading and math abilities) that he threatened the rest of the soldiers in his section with a loaded rifle. LTC Brown was able to convince the soldier into surrendering the weapon and then referred him for psychiatric evaluation. Incredibly, the medical unit that evaluated the soldier returned him to the unit and declared him fit for duty. LTC Brown ultimately placed the soldier under his own supervision and made him his personal driver. This Project 100,000 soldier turned out to be outstanding—as long as he had near constant one-on-one supervision and training.<sup>241</sup>

While LTC Brown did not provide any other details about the New Standards Men in his company, his recollections are similar to others who dealt with New Standards Men on a regular basis, especially those that scored in the 10th to 15th percentile of the revised standards.<sup>242</sup> Most New Standards Men could be trained to be productive members of their units, but often required a significant amount of personalized training and attention. This was not without cost, both actual and hidden, and the additional

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<sup>239</sup> Transcript, LTC Brown Oral History Interview, April 13, 1983, USAHEC.

<sup>240</sup> Transcript, LTC Brown Oral History Interview, April 13, 1983, page 21, USAHEC.

<sup>241</sup> Transcript, LTC Brown Oral History Interview, April 13, 1983, page 23, USAHEC.

<sup>242</sup> Transcript, LTC Brown Oral History Interview, April 13, 1983, USAHEC.

burden for personalized training and attention often fell on the non-commissioned officers and other members of the unit. Many of the non-commissioned officers responsible for this may have felt the additional burden was unreasonable.

Another unsparing and familiar account of how New Standards Men performed in the military comes from LTC Richard W. Tragemann, U.S. Army, who served as a field artillery battery commander when he was a captain during two separate tours in Vietnam.<sup>243</sup> His first tour was with the 3rd Battalion, 319th Artillery as part of the 173rd Airborne Brigade from October 1967 to May 1968, and his second was with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment from February 1970 to November 1970. LTC Tragemann shared that the New Standards Men his battery received, as replacements while in Vietnam, were not competent enough to serve as members of a gun crew or even in the ammunition section. He had to put them in the rear area working for his supply sergeant as assistants. In addition to not being able to use these men in the forward firebase in their assigned specialty, LTC Tragemann also spent a significant amount of time responding to parents and family members of these men who were concerned about their well-being and about them not being able to perform their duties.<sup>244</sup> LTC Tragemann did not provide sufficient detail in his interview to determine whether or not his experience was related to how these men performed on a daily basis or more related to his unwillingness or inability to provide New Standards Men in his company with additional training and supervision.<sup>245</sup> As with LTC Brown's experience, New Standards Men who did not

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<sup>243</sup> Transcript, LTC Richard W. Tragemann, July 1984, by COL Robert G. Sausser, Vietnam Company Command Oral History Interviews, 1981-1985, Box 32, USAHEC.

<sup>244</sup> Transcript, LTC Tragemann Oral History Interview, July 1984, pages 3-4, USAHEC.

<sup>245</sup> Transcript, LTC Tragemann Oral History Interview, July 1984, USAHEC.

receive additional training and supervision were often unable to perform their duties to standard.

Beyond requiring additional training and supervision as well as being unable to perform duties in their assigned specialty, New Standards Men also experienced difficulties in the military related to their social interaction with other service members. LTC Edward C. Fisher, U.S. Army, who served as an infantry company commander when he was a captain with B Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry in Quang Tri Province from June 1968 to October 1968, relates such an incident.<sup>246</sup> He recalled that approximately 2 percent of the enlisted soldiers in his company were New Standards Men. The problem he had with the Project 100,000 soldiers was not their inability to perform their assigned duties, but rather their inability to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable behavior. For example, a soldier took a C-ration from one of the Project 100,000 soldiers and the Project 100,000 soldier's response was to chase after the offender and throw hand grenades at him.<sup>247</sup> Like LTC Brown's experience, this is another illustration of how some New Standards Men had difficulty functioning in the Army—not from a performance standard, but rather from a social and behavioral standard in terms of interacting with other soldiers and their supervisors.

Beyond the discipline problems some officers experienced with New Standards Men, there was also a racial component given the increased number of minorities, especially African Americans, among New Standards Men. That American society and the military experienced racial tensions during the Vietnam War is well documented.

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<sup>246</sup> Transcript, LTC Edward C. Fisher, January 25, 1983, by COL Richard M. Biondi, Vietnam Company Command Oral History Interviews, 1981-1985, Box 12, USAHEC.

<sup>247</sup> Transcript, LTC Fisher Oral History Interview, January 25, 1983, page 4, USAHEC.



While black men served in the military in ratios about the same as their population in America, the number of African Americans who served under Project 100,000 was over three times the figure—one in three New Standards Men was African American.<sup>248</sup> This is hardly surprising, as New Standards Men typically came from the South and inner city urban areas where depressed socioeconomic and education conditions were the most significant contributing factors to low test scores on the AFQT, especially among minorities. According to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, nearly two-thirds of New Standards Men were reading below the sixth grade level compared to only 6 percent of personnel not in Project 100,000. Comparable results occurred for mathematic ability as well.<sup>249</sup>

Racial tensions manifested themselves in units with New Standards Men in familiar ways. One common issue was that African Americans believed they were denied the same opportunities for promotion and advancement as whites. LTC Robert B. Franklin, Jr., U.S. Army served as an aviation company commander when he was a captain in Delta Troop, 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry from October 1970 to July 1971.<sup>250</sup> He recalled that one of his most significant personnel problems was that he “somehow picked up some Project 100,000 soldiers as crew chiefs and [he] did not understand how that could happen.”<sup>251</sup> A helicopter crew chief is one of the most technically demanding

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<sup>248</sup> 36.7 percent of New Standards Men were black where only 10.1 percent of all non-program personnel in the military were black during the same time period. *1971 Project 100,000 Final Report*, Table B-2 as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 12, 44.

<sup>249</sup> *1971 Project 100,000 Final Report*, Tables B-3, B-4, B-5, and B-7 as cited in Sticht et al., Table 13, 45. See also McFann, “HumRRO Research and Project 100,000.”

<sup>250</sup> Transcript, LTC Robert B. Franklin, Jr., 1983, by LTC Thomas M. Montgomery, Vietnam Company Command Oral History Interviews, 1981-1985, Box 13, USAHEC.

<sup>251</sup> Transcript, LTC Franklin, 1983, pages 5-6, USAHEC.

specialties for enlisted personnel.<sup>252</sup> LTC Franklin had to move most of the New Standards Men who were assigned as crew chiefs into other positions like supply or ammunition handlers because they were not able to handle the myriad responsibilities involved with the duty position, nor could they maintain the technical qualifications necessary to retain their flight status; it was simply too difficult. (This was not a problem unique to New Standards Men. Many soldiers had difficulty in maintaining flight qualifications.) Besides having to deal with the issues of finding other jobs for the New Standards Men who could not perform as crew chiefs, LTC Franklin also had to deal with racial complaints brought by black soldiers in his unit when he denied black New Standards Men from being crew chiefs. Many of these men believed they were being denied opportunities because of their race as opposed to their abilities. Unfortunately, racism may very well have been a factor in the black New Standards Men not being assigned as crew chiefs, as LTC Franklin does not provide any details in his interview about whether or not he advanced black soldiers.<sup>253</sup>

Other accounts of New Standards Men from the Vietnam Company Command Oral History Interviews reveal that many New Standards Men performed their duties satisfactorily and as McNamara anticipated, were more than adequate as members of the military. COL Ralph L. Hagler, Jr., U.S. Army, served as an infantry platoon leader in the 1st Cavalry Division from November 1966 to November 1967 and then as a company commander when he was a captain in C Troop, 1st Squadron, 12th Air Cavalry from

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<sup>252</sup> Helicopter crew chief is an enlisted military occupational specialty in all branches of the military that involves supervising and maintaining all aspects of the aircraft maintenance, stowage, and other activities on the ground. Depending on the type and model of aircraft it can also include significant duties during flight operations.

<sup>253</sup> Transcript, LTC Franklin Oral History Interview, 1983, page 6, USAHEC.

October 1969 to April 1970.<sup>254</sup> Earlier in his career as a lieutenant, COL Hagler had served as a basic training company commander at Fort Polk, Louisiana and he ended up serving with many of the soldiers he trained in basic training during his Vietnam tours as both a platoon leader and troop commander.<sup>255</sup> Many of these soldiers were New Standards Men. COL Hagler recalled that they were a little more difficult to train both in basic training and then in the unit, “but that for being infantrymen, they were more than adequately equipped from the duty-honor-country aspect to carry out the mission.”<sup>256</sup> COL Hagler’s experience was far more typical of how New Standards Men performed just as Irv Greenberg discovered in his field visits. Furthermore, COL Hagler provided the additional training and supervision Project 100,000 planners knew these men would need to succeed.<sup>257</sup>

COL Walter E. Olson, U.S. Army, provides another example of how New Standards Men were more than sufficient in performing their duties and serving in the military. COL Olson served as a field artillery battery commander when he was a captain with C Battery, 1st Battalion, 92nd Artillery at a base camp in Pleiku in general support of the 4th Infantry Division from December 1966 to August 1967.<sup>258</sup> He was able to form his unit in the United States and then deploy with it to Vietnam. He personally selected all the soldiers at the specialist/E-4 rank and below from their basic and advanced

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<sup>254</sup> Transcript, COL Ralph L. Hagler, Jr., 1985, by LTC Richard H. Taylor, Vietnam Company Command Oral History Interviews, 1981-1985, Box 16, USAHEC.

<sup>255</sup> Transcript, COL Hagler Oral History Interview, 1985, page 3, USAHEC.

<sup>256</sup> Transcript, COL Ralph L. Hagler Oral History Interview, 1985, page 4, USAHEC.

<sup>257</sup> Report, Greenberg Fort Benning Trip, 5/15/68, LBJ Library and Transcript, COL Hagler Oral History Interview, 1985, USAHEC.

<sup>258</sup> Transcript, COL Walter E. Olson, April 11, 1984, by LTC Richard F. Timmons, Vietnam Company Command Oral History Interviews, 1981-1985, Box 25, USAHEC.

training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina while the Army assigned the noncommissioned officers and officers. Most of the soldiers he selected were from Project 100,000 because at the time they were all that was available. COL Olson related how he went to the basic training companies and looked at these men very carefully. While they had some mental deficiencies as expected and some minor physical defects, he was generally very happy with the individuals he was able to select.<sup>259</sup>

His greatest concern was not that they would be inadequate, but that it was going to take more time than he had available (only a few months) to train these men and get them healthy and physically fit before the unit had to deploy to Vietnam. He shared that his fears were completely unwarranted because the New Standards Men came around brilliantly. COL Olson considered them some of the best soldiers he led and was astounded when he relinquished command in Vietnam on how well they actually performed. “They weren’t the smartest people in the world, but they did their job and did it very well.”<sup>260</sup> Another element contributing to the different experiences of these commanders on the performance of New Standards Men was the spread of AFQT scores in CAT IV. Many of the men COL Olson selected had scored in the 25th to 30th percentile on their AFQT. While still considered CAT IV, these men had significantly higher scores than men who had scored at the bottom of the CAT IV scale in the 10th to 15th percentile.<sup>261</sup>

Despite long-standing beliefs and anecdotal evidence that New Standards Men failed to meet any of the metrics for successful tours in the military, these oral histories

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<sup>259</sup> Transcript, COL Olson Oral History Interview, April 11, 1984, pages 2-3, USAHEC.

<sup>260</sup> Transcript, COL Olson Oral History Interview, April 11, 1984, page 3, USAHEC.

<sup>261</sup> Transcript, COL Olson Oral History Interview, April 11, 1984, USAHEC.

present a more complex view. While New Standards Men often struggled with completing basic and advanced training, adjusting to life in the military, and performing their assigned duties to standard, most were able to perform satisfactorily with additional training and supervision. This additional training and supervision could prove costly in that when officers and non-commissioned officers were spending time with New Standards Men to provide the additional help, they were not completing other duties. The officers who related in their oral histories that New Standards Men performed satisfactorily or better were generally surprised at how well they did. This view is in contrast with the many critics of the program who predicted that New Standards Men would simply become “cannon fodder” on the battlefields of Vietnam and those critics writing about the program after it ended considered it a failure in all the areas it was supposed to provide assistance to the New Standards Men. This assumption that the services would assign New Standards Men in disproportionate numbers to combat assignments with combat-oriented skills did not hold true. Slightly more than one-third of New Standards Men for the entire period of Project 100,000 were assigned to combat-oriented specialties, approximately 11 percent more than non-program personnel.<sup>262</sup>

The Marine Corps experienced similar results with the performance of Project 100,000 Marines in combat during Vietnam. Captain David Dawson, USMC, in his occasional paper, *The Impact of Project 100,000 on the Marine Corps* for the History and Museums Division of the Marine Corps conducted oral interviews with and surveys of Marines who had been company grade officers or senior enlisted men in Vietnam with

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<sup>262</sup> 1971 *Project 100,000 Final Report*, Table E-1 as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 17, 50.

Project 100,000 Marines. His findings are remarkably similar to those of the Army War College Oral History Interviews. Generally, he found that New Standards Men were “not noticeably likely to be ineffective in combat and that their presence did not hinder combat operations.” Like the oral history interviews conducted at the Army War College, Dawson found some Marines who related that New Standards Men performed poorly in combat. Nevertheless, of the twenty Marines he interviewed who served with Project 100,000 Marines while engaged in combat operations in Vietnam, only two believed that their presence was a significant detriment to the unit’s ability to accomplish its mission. Even so, none of the Marines Captain Dawson interviewed believed that the presence of low-aptitude men in their unit prevented it from accomplishing assigned missions.<sup>263</sup>

Another area that critics pointed to as a failure for the New Standards Men was in discipline. Many senior leaders in the military and members of Congress assumed that New Standards Men with lower mental capacity would become frustrated in their inability to perform to standards and would cause serious discipline problems, acting out in ways that would lead to non-judicial and judicial punishment at greater rates than personnel not in the program. General William Westmoreland, the senior Army field commander in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968 blamed Project 100,000 for the Army’s poor performance in Vietnam, stating in an interview for *Military History Quarterly* that “when these people came to Vietnam, that’s when the disciplinary problems began on the battlefield.”<sup>264</sup> Nevertheless, when examining the available data, the anticipated increase in disciplinary problems never materialized. The vast majority of New Standards Men did

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<sup>263</sup> Dawson, *Occasional Paper, The Impact of Project 100,000 on the Marine Corps*, 122, 124.

<sup>264</sup> Laura Palmer, “The General at Ease: An Interview with Westmoreland,” *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* 1, No. 1, (Autumn 1988): 34.

not have any significant discipline problems during their service. While the rate of court-martial convictions for Army New Standards Men was 3.2 percent, compared with 1.6 percent for other personnel, the percentage was still very small and over 96 percent of New Standards Men were not court-martialed. Neither did they receive non-judicial punishment in any significant numbers for minor offenses like traffic violations, late to formations or meetings, or missing curfew.

Overall, the official record does not substantiate the claims that New Standards Men would detract from unit morale and cohesion because of increased disciplinary problems.<sup>265</sup> The numbers of New Standards Men who experienced discipline problems were not substantial enough to explain the discipline problems Westmoreland discusses in the interview, and they present another example of a senior officer using Project 100,000 as a scapegoat for larger problems of morale and discipline in the military during the Vietnam War—problems he would have ultimately been responsible for as the overall commander. Indeed, there are several other possible causes that could account for the morale and discipline problems in the military during the war. Widespread drug use within American society and the culture of the 1960s where young people challenged traditional models of authority were likely contributors. A U.S. strategy in Vietnam that was unlikely to succeed, and the unpopularity of a war that often resulted in indiscriminate or collateral violence against a mostly peasant population for a poorly articulated set of reasons were also likely causes. In fact, Westmoreland was rather duplicitous in the interview. On July 22, 1969, only about sixteen months after the My

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<sup>265</sup> Sticht, et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 52.

Lai Massacre, while testifying before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Westmoreland, now the Army Chief of Staff, said: “We are continuing Project 100,000, in which we accept men previously rejected for service. Our experience has been that men in this program perform adequately in practically all jobs and are promoted along with their contemporaries.”<sup>266</sup>

The Defense Department also measured New Standards Men and their performance in the pay grades or ranks these men attained during their service. It is true the services promoted the majority of New Standards Men at slower rates compared to non-program personnel. But after nineteen to twenty-four months of service, 66.7 percent of New Standards Men received promotions to either E-4 or E-5 (specialist/corporal and sergeant respectively) pay grades. In comparison, 81.6 percent of non-program personnel received promotions to the same pay grades over the same time period. Promotion rates for the lower enlisted grades were often automatic so long as the service member did not have any record of poor performance or discipline. Nevertheless, that two-thirds of New Standards Men achieved a mid-level enlisted rank and pay grade after only twenty-four months of service, which was the average timeline, is another indicator of the usefulness of low-aptitude men for military service and their ability to succeed if properly supported.<sup>267</sup>

In an effort to determine the relationship between actual job performance and AFQT score, the Army sponsored a study from the Human Resources Research

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<sup>266</sup> Transcript, General William C. Westmoreland, Congressional Testimony, July 22, 1969, DOD Papers, Baroody Subject File Box A90, folder: DOD – Selected Statements on Defense Matters by DOD and Other Admin Officials, July-Dec 1969 (1-2), Laird Collection, Gerald R. Ford Library.

<sup>267</sup> *1971 Project 100,000 Final Report*, Table F-1 as cited in Sticht et al., Table 19, 53.



organization in 1967. The study recognized that “In the past, when standards of selection were modified to accept more men of lower mental ability, as necessary during times of mobilization, sizable numbers of men have shown that they can perform effectively.”<sup>268</sup> The study selected four different military occupations assigned to men from across all mental categories (armor crewman, general vehicle repairman, supply specialist, and cook). A total of 1,700 men participated in the study with approximately 375 from each military occupation. The study included comparisons of hands-on performance for several sub-groups to include black and white soldiers, inductees and enlistees, and men with formal and on-the-job training.<sup>269</sup>

The study found that job performance was directly related to both AFQT score and job experience. Across all four of the military occupations, CAT I – CAT III men performed better than CAT IV men through five years of on-the-job experience. Testing at each level of job experience revealed CAT IV men who performed well, while there were also CAT I – CAT III men who performed poorly. The study also determined that in general, CAT IV men required at least one year of on-the-job experience before they performed at the same level as men with higher aptitude who were new to the job.<sup>270</sup> The study authors also concluded that poor performance was not necessarily permanent. After the first year of experience when CAT IV men could attain the same level of performance

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<sup>268</sup> Robert Vineberg and Elaine N. Taylor, “Performance in Four Army Jobs by Men at Different Aptitude (AFQT) Levels: 3. The Relationship of AFQT and Job Experience to Job Performance,” HumRRO Division No. 3, Presidio of Monterey, CA, August 1972, v, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/750603.pdf>.

<sup>269</sup> Vineberg and Taylor, “Performance in Four Army Jobs by Men at Different Aptitude (AFQT) Levels,” ii-iii.

<sup>270</sup> Vineberg and Taylor, “Performance in Four Army Jobs by Men at Different Aptitude (AFQT) Levels,” 24-26.

men of higher aptitude who had just started a new job, CAT IV performance continued to improve with experience. Ultimately though, as the Joint-Service Job Performance Measurement/Enlistment Standards Project would determine in 1994, low-aptitude service members as a whole continue to perform more poorly than high-aptitude service members over the course of their service regardless of the amount of job experience.<sup>271</sup> These findings are similar to some of the other studies the Defense Department conducted. Namely, low-aptitude men could succeed with additional time and experience on the job. Nevertheless, this additional time and experience is a hidden cost and presents a risk to military and policy planners in managing manpower requirements and accessions.

Beyond government reports and personal accounts of how New Standards Men performed during their service, newspapers and other periodicals offer insights into the performance of New Standards Men and the attitudes of other service members about how they served. Much of the media accounts during the period of Project 100,000 also reported that most New Standards Men met with success during their military service. Hanson Baldwin, a staff writer for the *New York Times*, reported in his article, “Men Once Rejected for Low Aptitudes Adapt to the Military” that New Standards Men took more time to train and generally fared better learning visually rather than through written instruction. This was still problematic as the average reading comprehension level for CAT IV personnel during Project 100,000 was between the fourth and sixth grade, while most occupational specialties required reading comprehension levels of at least the sixth

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<sup>271</sup> This project is examined in detail in Chapter VI: “The Early All-Volunteer Force, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Miscalculation, and Project 100,000 Revisited.”

grade. Nevertheless, Baldwin reported: “They have fitted pretty well into the Armed Forces.”<sup>272</sup> He correctly argued that the military had always used men who scored in the 10th to 30th percentile on the AFQT during periods of national mobilization, but that Project 100,000 was the first such attempt that occurred outside national mobilization. Furthermore, he reported, based on information from Defense Department spokesmen, it appeared that the majority of the New Standards Men were trainable, although admittedly in the simpler military occupational specialties.<sup>273</sup>

For the New Standards Men to succeed in their basic and advanced training, they required imaginative new training methods that emphasized visual aids and repetitive techniques. Additionally, the program also allowed for up to three additional months of training for the New Standards Men if needed for them to achieve success. Thus, the success of the New Standards Men as Baldwin reports had to be tempered with realistic expectations. One of the greatest difficulties these men had that contributed to their low-test scores was their reading and comprehension level. To assist these men in overcoming these deficiencies, the services provided remedial instruction in reading and writing during initial entry training. This additional training usually consisted of up to six weeks of intensive instruction in an effort to increase the reading and writing skills of New Standards Men to at least the minimum level required for adequate training. Nevertheless, this additional training came with additional costs and burdens. While many of the New Standards Men who attended these remedial reading courses improved their overall

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<sup>272</sup> Hanson W. Baldwin, “Men Once Rejected For Low Aptitudes Adapt to Military,” *The New York Times*, November 19, 1967, 1, 24, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1967/11/19/98608648.html>.

<sup>273</sup> Baldwin, “Men Once Rejected For Low Aptitudes Adapt to Military.”

reading ability and comprehension, the amount these factors improved may not have been significant enough to justify the cost.

When the *New York Times* published Baldwin's article, Project 100,000 had been in existence for just over a year and the services had yet to experience any major difficulties in absorbing the limited numbers of New Standards Men, adding credibility to those in the Defense Department and other government agencies who believed these men could make satisfactory members of the military. Nevertheless, there was concern among defense officials that as the program continued with more and more New Standards Men in the military the potential for problems would rise. Army officials were particularly concerned recalling how personnel standards were lowered during the Korean War in order to meet manpower requirements and how during the war's aftermath, large numbers of these below standards men accounted for a sizeable percentage of the military prison population and were a major proportion of disciplinary problems. Nevertheless, service spokesmen agreed in 1967 that the program could be socially useful without any serious degradation of military effectiveness. Indeed, none of the discipline problems associated with previous periods of the military utilizing low-aptitude men in large numbers materialized.

Nearly a year and a half later, another *New York Times* staff writer reported similar results regarding New Standards Men. In her article, "Mentally 'Unfit' Helping Military: Services Train 100,000 Who Failed Test," Nancy Hicks reported that the directors of the program believed its success lay in the belief of the New Standards Men

themselves that they were able to succeed.<sup>274</sup> The men were not identified to their commanding officers or chain of command and the only method of classification as to their status was via an enlistment code in their personnel files. The Defense Department was concerned that these men would be unduly stigmatized and its concerns were not unfounded. As the Army War College oral history interviews demonstrate, many of the problems these men encountered stemmed from unfair treatment from other service members.<sup>275</sup>

The progress of the New Standards Men was tracked at the highest levels in the Defense Department. Hicks cites the *1969 Defense Department Manpower Report* and thus reported much of the same story as the government, yet she was able to provide new insight on how these men came to have such low educational standards. Interviewing one of the civilian teachers at Fort Dix, New Jersey whom the Army employed to provide New Standards Men with remedial training in reading and writing, Hicks learned that many of these men, once they developed patterns of low performance and achievement when they were younger, were habitually passed along from one grade to another. The civilian teacher Hicks interviewed revealed, “Some of these men told us they were always the trashcan monitor or were always sent on errands out of the classroom. We even had one man from South Carolina who had completed two years of college and couldn’t do basic arithmetic. Another from Connecticut had a high school diploma, but

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<sup>274</sup> Nancy Hicks, “Mentally ‘Unfit’ Helping Military: Services Train 100,000 Who Failed Test.” *The New York Times*, February 17, 1969, 35, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1969/02/17/77441605.html>.

<sup>275</sup> Vietnam Company Command Oral History Interviews, 1981-1985, USAHEC.

couldn't read a word."<sup>276</sup> At the time of her article, the Army had trained over 2,500 New Standards Men at Fort Dix alone and 1,450 of them had completed the basic literacy program raising their reading level to fifth grade competency. Four hundred of these men had gone on to enroll in the more advanced literacy program towards achieving competency at the high school level.<sup>277</sup>

This pattern of acceptable performance from New Standards Men continued as the program progressed. *The New York Times* reported in an article on January 27, 1970, that the Defense Department expressed satisfaction with the performance of New Standards Men who had entered the armed forces since October 1966. Nearly a quarter of a million men who the military would have previously rejected had served in the armed forces. Nevertheless, there was concern over the success of the program to the point that the Defense Department was planning to limit the future acceptance of New Standards Men on a quota system rather than an absolute number. Up to this point, the services accepted New Standards Men at the rate of 100,000 per fiscal year thus the program's name—Project 100,000.<sup>278</sup> The Defense Department divided each year's 100,000 quota among the services in proportions roughly equal to service end strength numbers.

Secretary McNamara also believed that, with the proper motivation, a substantial number of the New Standards Men would become eligible for reenlistment at the end of their initial term thus providing additional opportunities for them to remain employed, gain useful job experience, and take further advantage of educational opportunities while

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<sup>276</sup> Hicks, "Mentally 'Unfit' Helping Military: Services Train 100,000 Who Failed Test."

<sup>277</sup> Hicks, "Mentally 'Unfit' Helping Military: Services Train 100,000 Who Failed Test."

<sup>278</sup> "Lower Standards Satisfy Military: Men Once Unacceptable Found Performing Well," *The New York Times*, January 27, 1970, 9, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1970/01/27/86346969.html>.

in the armed forces. Nevertheless, only about 6 percent of New Standards Men reenlisted at the end of their initial term.<sup>279</sup> It is unknown how many wanted to reenlist, but were unable to because of low-test scores, low performance, or other negative factors. This 6 percent reenlistment rate, however, was not substantially less than the one for non-program personnel. The President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force found that the reenlistment rate in 1970 for the entire force was 7.2 percent.<sup>280</sup>

Reenlistment standards were often different from enlistment standards and varied for each of the military branches. Service members were expected to have developed during their initial enlistment and thus were generally held to higher standards for reenlistment. Low-test scores, medical issues, or personal problems that were overlooked under Project 100,000 could be grounds for denial when a service member was up for reenlistment. Additionally, recommendations from commanding officers and first-line supervisors generally factored heavily into whether or not a service member was allowed to reenlist. Different military service policies also figured into eligibility; for example Army reenlistment standards required soldiers to pass three aptitude tests to qualify for reenlistment, something that two-thirds of New Standards Men in the Army were unable to do.<sup>281</sup>

Despite these challenges, a percentage of New Standards Men qualified for reenlistment and even made the military a career. Examining data in September 1983 as part of a policy study on low-aptitude men in the military, Thomas Sticht, et al. found

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<sup>279</sup> Memo, Roger T. Kelley to Melvin R. Laird, July 12, 1969, DOD Papers, Baroody Subject File Box A67, folder: DOD – Human Goals (Personnel), 1969 (1), Laird Collection, Gerald R. Ford Library.

<sup>280</sup> Gates Commission Report, 108.

<sup>281</sup> Guidance Paper, Project 100,000, 1967, Tab C as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 10, 42.

8,262 men in the Defense Manpower Data Center files who had reenlisted several times and were still on active duty twelve to seventeen years after their initial enlistment as New Standards Men.<sup>282</sup> These Project 100,000 “careerists” were in each of the services with the Army and Air Force having the vast majority (44.9 and 40.4 percent respectively), while the Marine Corps and Navy had much smaller percentages (10.6 and 4.1 respectively). It is not surprising that the Army had the greatest number of Project 100,000 “careerists,” since it had the majority of New Standards Men during the program with 64.8 percent of the total number of Project 100,000 personnel. The Army also offered more job skills that New Standards Men qualified for. The Air Force, however, had the lowest number of New Standards Men during the program at only 9.1 percent, but had the second highest percentage of Project 100,000 “careerists” at 40.4 percent.<sup>283</sup> This is even more remarkable given the considerably more technical nature of Air Force military occupational specialties. Why had so many of the Air Force New Standards Men stayed on to make the military a career? Most likely, Air Force New Standards Men who were the most successful were those who had scored in the higher percentages of CAT IV distribution—the 20th to 30th percentile. Of course, as with most New Standards Men who were successful, the structured environment of the military, education opportunities, and other opportunities in uniform unavailable to them as civilians, enabled them to be successful. McNamara was right; low-aptitude men could, albeit in small numbers, make successful careers in the military.

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<sup>282</sup> Defense Manpower Data Center Archival Computer Files for Project 100,000 and 1983 Strength Files, 1984 as cited in Sticht, et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 56.

<sup>283</sup> Defense Manpower Center Archival Computer Files for Project 100,000 and 1983 Strength Files, 1984 as cited in Sticht, et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 22, 58.



In the end, New Standards Men and their patterns of performance, adherence to standards, and minimal number of discipline problems generally reinforced McNamara's belief that the military could turn men with low-aptitudes into successful service members if it provided the appropriate guidance, training, and education. The vast amount of data and statistics bear this out. While it is true that New Standards Men failed basic and advanced training at twice the rate of non-program personnel, experienced twice the number of disciplinary problems, and were promoted at lower rates than non-program personnel that is only a portion of the story. The fact that they did not perform as well as non-program personnel should not have been a surprise to anyone. These were men who came from the lowest end of the socioeconomic and educational curve in society. They were from near the bottom of the aptitude curve and as a group had not graduated from high school and read at a sixth grade level and lower.

These performance limitations were exactly why most military leaders opposed Project 100,000 and limited the overall percentages of CAT IV in the military. Expending precious resources in funding and manpower to provide the additional support services lower-aptitude men need in order to succeed detracts from other missions. Indeed, it is a delicate balancing act to ensure the military has the adequate manpower levels it needs to execute its assigned missions while at the same time ensuring the quality of the force is high enough for mission success. It matters little if the military is able to meet its end strength requirements, if the quality of the force is too low to be effective.

Despite the tendencies of scholars, journalists, and other critics to focus only on the negative aspects of New Standards Men, and their performance and patterns of

misconduct, the same data reveals success rates for these men nearly as high as their higher-aptitude fellow service members. Critics have ignored the 75 to 95 percent of New Standards Men who were successful in their military training, who did not cause even minor disciplinary problems, and who their supervisors rated as either good or highly effective in their job performance. When critics label the vast majority of New Standards Men as failures because of the limitations of a relatively few numbers of men like Gus Peters they are both misleading and disingenuous. It is both a discredit and insult to the hundreds of thousands of New Standards Men who achieved success and performed their duties under trying circumstances.<sup>284</sup>

The services learned that CAT IV men who scored in the 10th to 30th percentile could, with the proper supervision, training, and care, make successful members of the military. This would prove invaluable as the Defense Department began to seek ways to end the draft and reduce the military's reliance on meeting its manpower requirements through conscription, especially in the Army. As early as 1964, President Johnson was exploring ways to end the draft and transition the military to an all-volunteer force. A draftee military is inherently inefficient since there is little impetus for the military to rehabilitate and retrain recruits who fail to meet standards as there is an ever available pool to draw from. Additionally, the U.S. military's policy in the Vietnam War era was that draftees only served two years, while volunteers served a minimum of three years. Thus, the military required three draftees to meet the same manpower requirements that two volunteers could fulfill over the same time period. As the Vietnam War progressed

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<sup>284</sup> Sticht, et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 56.

and the unrest at home increased over America's commitment, there was a renewed emphasis on finding a solution to meeting the demands for military manpower other than the draft. Project 100,000 demonstrated that the nation could expand its available pool of manpower to include mental category IV personnel. This expansion was critical if the services—especially the Army—were going to be able to meet manpower requirements solely through the use of volunteers.

By the time Project 100,000 came to an end, the United States had been supplying its military manpower needs with a draft for over three decades both in peacetime and wartime. Military personnel planners had long considered the hidden costs of a conscripted military and whether or not the armed forces could offset these costs with an all-volunteer force. Beyond cost, there were also the issues of quality and equity that the Selective Service and the Defense Department had to consider. Transitioning to an all-volunteer force would expand the debates already waging in the public space not only on the draft, but the Vietnam War as well. The next chapter will explore how Project 100,000 contributed to the end of the draft and America's transition to an all-volunteer force.

## V. Project 100,000 and the Transition to the All-Volunteer Force

On January 27, 1973, Dr. Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's National Security Advisor, signed the Paris Peace Accords effectively ending U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. On that same day in Washington, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird issued a press release to the Pentagon Press Corps providing the details of a message he had sent earlier in the day to the Secretaries of the military departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Assistant Secretaries of Defense, the heads of Defense Agencies, and the commanders of the unified and specified commands. "With the signing of the peace agreements in Paris today, and after receiving a report from the Secretary of the Army that he foresees no need for further inductions, I wish to inform you that the Armed Forces henceforth will depend exclusively on volunteer soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. Use of the draft has ended."<sup>285</sup> For over three decades, the United States had relied heavily on the draft to fully meet its military manpower requirements. Hugely unpopular and largely criticized as unfair during the Vietnam War, it was now over. The era of the All-Volunteer Force had begun. Had Project 100,000 contributed to the demise of the draft and transition to the armed forces manned solely with volunteers and if so, in what ways?

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<sup>285</sup> Transcript, Press Release from Melvin R. Laird, January 27, 1973, DOD Papers, Baroody Subject File Box A86 Press Clippings General, 1969-1973 (4), folder: Press Matters, 1969, Melvin R. Laird Collection, Gerald R. Ford Library.

This chapter explores these questions and argues that the performance of New Standards Men contributed in significant ways to ending the draft as it demonstrated that these men could perform nearly as well and in some cases equally as those from higher aptitudes. Indeed, one of the main criticisms of transitioning to an all-volunteer force was the concern shared by many senior military officers and administration officials that without the draft, the military would never be able to access the kind of quality recruit it felt it needed for successful execution of national strategies. Project 100,000 and the performance of the New Standards Men made this argument far less potent.

President Johnson had wanted to end the draft as early as 1964 and directed Secretary McNamara to undertake a comprehensive study of the draft and consider ways the nation could transition to an all-volunteer force. But faced with an increasing build-up of forces for Vietnam, Johnson had to delay further pursuit of ending the draft. Richard Nixon took up the issue during his 1968 Presidential Election Campaign<sup>286</sup> Shortly after his inauguration he directed the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Force on March 27, 1969, to "develop a comprehensive plan for eliminating conscription and moving toward an all-volunteer armed force. It will consider possible changes in selection standards and in utilization policies which may assist in eliminating the need for inductions."<sup>287</sup>

President Nixon appointed Thomas S. Gates, a former Secretary of Defense during the Eisenhower administration, to serve as the chairman of the commission, which became known as the Gates Commission. Nixon also charged the commission with

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<sup>286</sup> See Beth Bailey, *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 2009, Kindle loc 39 and 60 for more on Nixon's campaign promise to end the draft.

<sup>287</sup> Gates Commission Report, vii.

studying “the estimated costs and savings resulting from an all-volunteer force, as well as the broader social and economic implications of this program.”<sup>288</sup> One of the criticisms of an all-volunteer force the Gates Commission addressed was that it would be prohibitively expensive, since presumably volunteer service members would have to receive more pay and benefits in order to induce them to join the military and to retain them once their initial term of service expired. The Gates Commission specifically addressed this criticism and found four reasons why maintaining a draft was actually more expensive: low reenlistment rates of first-term service members, which increased turnover rate and subsequent cost; inefficient use of manpower; loss of the draftee from the civilian economy; and the intangible costs the draft imposed on the draftee, which further impacted a variety of individual and institutional decisions. All of these factors contributed to higher, though perhaps hidden, costs of meeting military manpower needs through conscription.<sup>289</sup>

There is a persistent notion about American society that suggests by their very nature Americans rise to the challenges of defending the nation and volunteer for service in the military as citizen-soldiers to defend hearth and home. This attitude of sacrifice of self for the greater good of the nation fits well with Americans’ notions of liberty, equality, republicanism, and shared sacrifice. Nevertheless, it is a myth. America has never been a nation of military volunteers unless absolutely necessary and then only when cajoled and coerced to do so. During the American Revolution, there was a uniform failure of both soldiers and citizens to live up to the very high standards they set for

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<sup>288</sup> Gates Commission Report, vii.

<sup>289</sup> Gates Commission Report, 28-33.

themselves; most Americans chose to stay away from the war. There was an ongoing struggle between people wanting to dedicate themselves to the patriot cause, yet unwilling to take up arms. The regular army under command of George Washington came very close to making a reality of republican virtue and the notion of citizen-soldiers, yet Washington often had to use coercive measures of recruiting in order to bring regiments up to strength.<sup>290</sup>

In December of 1814, just four months after the British military had laid siege to Washington, D.C., and burned most of the public buildings to the ground, including the White House and Capitol Building, Congress rejected Secretary of War James Monroe's conscription proposal as unconstitutional.<sup>291</sup> The first draft in America occurred when Congress passed the United States Conscription Act or an "Act for Enrolling and Calling out the National Forces, and for other Purposes," on March 3, 1863 two years after the Civil War had begun.<sup>292</sup> Under the provisions of the legislation, men could pay a fee of \$300 to avoid serving in a particular battle or hire surrogates to serve in their stead for the duration of the war. Resistance to the draft soon emerged from lower socioeconomic classes who could not afford to pay the fee or hire surrogates. When conscription officials began calling draft numbers in July 1863, resistance erupted into violence across the urban areas of the Northern states with African Americans quickly becoming the target for angry mobs to vent their frustration upon. Thousands were wounded and over one

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<sup>290</sup> Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press), 1986.

<sup>291</sup> Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy*, 24.

<sup>292</sup> "An Act for Enrolling and Calling Out the National Forces, and for other Purposes," *Congressional Record*, 37th Congress, Third Session, Chapter 74 and 75, March 3, 1863.  
<http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/962.htm>.

hundred killed in the worst of the riots in New York City before President Lincoln was able to send Army units stationed near Gettysburg to restore order.<sup>293</sup>

In 1940, the nation's first peacetime draft<sup>294</sup> took place while Europe burned in world war. A year later, just four months before Japanese naval forces attacked Pearl Harbor, a bill to extend the draft passed by a single vote in the House of Representatives. Except for 1947, when the draft authority expired and Congress did not renew it until 1948 in response to the Soviet Union blockading West Berlin and the escalation of tensions between the East and the West, the draft continued to be a political issue through the 1950s and 1960s, culminating in the Presidential Election of 1968, when Richard Nixon made ending the draft one of his presidential campaign promises. Jack Raymond, writer for *The New York Times*, described America's feelings towards the draft in January 1966. "Thus, the national agony over Vietnam has not in itself produced a wave of opposition to the draft. Rather, it has served to bring out more forcefully the chronic American indisposition to compulsory military service in general, and long standing grievances against the existing draft system in particular."<sup>295</sup>

As early as the spring of 1964, President Johnson wanted to bring an end to the draft and directed Robert McNamara to undertake a comprehensive study to determine the feasibility of the Defense Department being able to meet its military manpower requirements solely through volunteers. Thus, nine years before the draft ended and

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<sup>293</sup> Allan R. Millet and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: Free Press), 2012, 207-211.

<sup>294</sup> Prior to 1940, the last draft had taken place during World War I. The Selective Service Act of 1917 authorized the federal government to raise an army through conscription. The government rescinded the act in 1918 when the war ended.

<sup>295</sup> Jack Raymond, "The Draft is Unfair," *The New York Times*, January 2, 1966, 163, 170-171, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1966/01/02/355987032.html>.



during the first year of Johnson's presidency, his administration was already exploring ways to end the draft and transform the military into an all-volunteer force. McNamara directed a number of surveys in all branches of the military to determine servicemen's attitudes about the draft and volunteer service. A year later in April 1965, the survey results and other analysis were forwarded to the president. McNamara found that only about 60 percent of the enlisted men and junior officers serving on their initial tours of duty would have volunteered if they had not had an impending draft obligation; that is, they were "draft motivated" volunteers. For those men who had volunteered for service, the proportion was smallest among those who qualified for training in technical and professional skills. There were also recent declines in recruitment results over the previous year. Both McNamara and Lieutenant General Lewis B. Hershey, Director of the Selective Service, believed this was a public reaction and speculation about the possibility of ending the draft. Therefore, many young men were postponing enlistment decisions to wait and see what the Selective Service was going to do with respect to revising the draft.<sup>296</sup>

The study authors also found that there was a close relationship between enlistments and unemployment. Survey data from 1964 revealed that only 30 percent of enlistees had fulltime employment when they enlisted. The remaining 70 percent were either unemployed or partially employed. Thus, enlistment appeared to be a matter of necessity rather than a matter of choice. McNamara also recognized that as other War on Poverty programs expanded and provided employment opportunities for youth, obtaining

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<sup>296</sup> Letter, LTG Lewis B. Hershey to the President, 9/24/65 and Memo, Robert S. McNamara to the President, 4/5/65, Papers of LBJ, POTUS, "National Security – Defense (Ex ND 9-4 Conscription – Induction – Draft 11/19/64 – 12/1/65), LBJ Library.

volunteers for military service would be increasingly difficult. McNamara concluded that for the present time, the draft must continue in order for the military to maintain its required manpower levels.<sup>297</sup>

President Johnson commissioned other draft studies to complement the Defense Department study. Carl Kaysen, a Harvard economics professor, conducted an analysis of the draft and Selective Service for the president in June 1966. The purpose of the analysis was to provide propositions on national service, military, selective, and other issues for the president to consider. Kaysen believed that the size of the armed forces would fluctuate around 2.7 million for the next decade, which was its pre-Vietnam War strength. He does not provide any details in his written report on what would happen if this number proved inaccurate. By 1966, the United States had already committed substantial numbers of forces to Vietnam and it is unclear if Kaysen understood what the U.S. commitment to Vietnam would have looked like five or ten years from his study. He argued that if the figure rose much above 3.3 million, then substantial reserve force allocation would be required. Additionally, he noted that in 1966 there were approximately 1.7 million young men turning 19 each year, the age preferred by the services for new recruits, but to maintain pre-Vietnam War troop levels, the military only needed 500,000 new recruits annually. Kaysen also acknowledged that one-third of the young men reporting for pre-induction examinations failed to meet minimum standards. He covered little in the way of new material that McNamara had not already

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<sup>297</sup> Memo, McNamara to the President, 4/5/65, LBJ Library.

considered.<sup>298</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that President Johnson went outside of the government for additional analysis on the draft and whether or not it could be ended is illustrative of the degree to which he struggled with the efficacy of the Vietnam Era draft.

Kaysen identified two deficiencies of the 1966 draft system that had to end. The first was the degree of discrimination in favor of those who enrolled in institutions of higher education. Kaysen considered these individuals as either exceptionally bright or sons of the middle class. He did not indicate what sources he used for this information, and therefore it is difficult to determine with any certainty whether or not his statements are factual or matters of opinion. The second deficiency was the very large number of young men whom the armed forces rejected as unfit for military service. The fact that Kaysen grouped educational deferments and the low-aptitude young men together as both being serious deficiencies of the draft system is revealing, indicating that he may have believed in universal military service. He also argued that education deferments in 1966 had no justification in the national interest and that something had to be done with regards to those young men deemed ineligible for service either through intensive training programs, the redefinition of eligibility standards, or both.<sup>299</sup>

Kaysen offered several conclusions. First, he suggested that the Selective Service create a lottery system for all young men physically able and that if a young man's number was called, his only choice was to report for induction for a period of two years. If a prospective draftee was already admitted to college, he could enroll in the Reserve

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<sup>298</sup> Study, Carl Kaysen, "Propositions on National Service—Military, Selective, and Otherwise," 6/25/66, LBJ Papers, POTUS, "ND 9-4 (12/2/65 – 11/21/66)), LBJ Library.

<sup>299</sup> Study, Kaysen, "Propositions on National Service—Military, Selective, and Otherwise," 6/25/66, LBJ Library.

Officer Training Corps and upon graduation serve in the Reserve Forces for a period of three years. He added that the Army should implement an intensive training program for all those chosen through the lottery, not immediately qualified, but capable of becoming so at a future date.<sup>300</sup> By the time of this report, McNamara had already developed detailed plans for Project 100,000 and would announce the program publicly just two months later. Whether or not Kaysen considered this when formulating his own conclusions is not apparent. Nevertheless, it is almost certain that he would have been aware of McNamara's plans to provide additional training and education to low-aptitude men for military service. Likewise, McNamara revealed in his interview with Thomas Sticht in 1985 that he and the president were intimately involved in the planning and execution of Project 100,000.<sup>301</sup> Thus, it seems evident that Kaysen would have at least known about the program and the fact that he includes a recommendation about additional training for those men who do not immediately qualify for service was perhaps his way of endorsing Project 100,000.

One of the most significant conclusions Kaysen offered is the recommendation that the Selective Service should operate the draft system centrally instead of relying on locally run draft boards at the state level. There was significant criticism about the draft stemming from how the various local draft boards executed Selective Service policies on deferments, medical disqualifications, and other exemptions. Prior to the Selective Service Reform and the use of a National Lottery System in 1970, the Defense Department initiated monthly draft calls. The approximately 4,000 local draft boards of

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<sup>300</sup> Study, Kaysen, "Propositions on National Service—Military, Selective, and Otherwise," 6/25/66, LBJ Library.

<sup>301</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 190.

the Selective Service acted on these draft calls, classified young men in their district, and forwarded those men it selected for induction. These boards were also responsible for classifying men based on mental and physical examination and for approving deferments. While there were substantial policy guidelines directing what the board could or could not do, some policies dealing with deferments were not as rigid and gave local boards and state organizations significant autonomy about who to send forward for induction and who should receive a deferment. Compounding this situation was that federal statutes governing the Selective Service stipulated that local board decisions were regarded as final unless reversed on federal appeal.<sup>302</sup>

This system of local draft boards had been in place for nearly three decades when President Nixon campaigned on ending the draft. It was well entrenched across America and had spurred public and congressional doubts about the efficacy of the draft in general and the Selective Service in particular. During the late 1950s, as the baby-boomer generation was coming of age, there was an ever-growing pool of manpower (young men reaching age eighteen) that the Defense Department had to apply to an ever diminishing demand for manpower in the military. The Vietnam War provided only temporary relief to drain down this manpower pool. Indeed, Project 100,000 and its effect of widening the pool of available manpower only exacerbated this debate. Rather than restoring faith in the Selective Service System, the demand for reforming the decades old system increased.<sup>303</sup> In fact, any relief was short lived. In 1969, a year after the largest commitment of U.S. forces to Vietnam, the armed forces only needed about one half of

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<sup>302</sup> Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy*, xviii-xix.

<sup>303</sup> Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy*, 270 and 284-285

the qualified young men who turned nineteen that year. After the Defense Department accounted for volunteers, it would only need to draft about 25 percent of the remaining qualified men. Alfred Fitt, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs under Robert McNamara and a short time under Melvin Laird, predicted this number would drop to about 14 percent when the Defense Department could revert to pre-Vietnam War manning levels.<sup>304</sup>

The convoluted system of deferments and exemptions produced a growing debate across the country on draft equity. Since its inception, the Selective Service had established deferments and exemptions for any number of reasons. Sole survivor son status, paternity, reserve and National Guard status, farming, industry, political office, medical and dental professionals, and education all served to make selection for induction increasingly unlikely. From 1961 to 1965, the national percentage of young men aged eighteen to twenty-six who were ineligible for the draft as a result of disqualification (mental or medical), reserve programs, dependency, and student and occupational deferments had risen from 53.5 percent to 63.3 percent. That is, by 1965, only 36.7 percent of draft-aged men were qualified, eligible, and available for induction.<sup>305</sup> Furthermore, the most significant reason for the selective nature of the draft as opposed to universal military service was that the military simply did not need all of the men for service who reached draft age each year. The number of eighteen-year-old men had grown steadily during each of the years prior to America's involvement in Vietnam and

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<sup>304</sup> Memo, Fitt to Laird, January 27, 1969, Gerald R. Ford Library.

<sup>305</sup> Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy*, xviii, 270, and 284-285.

was projected to increase through the remainder of the decade. Any draft policy had to account for this increased number.<sup>306</sup>

Charlie Peters, Director of Evaluation for the Peace Corps from 1962 to 1968, discussed his increasing concern about the inequity of the draft regulations in November 1965 with Hayes Redmon, assistant to Bill Moyers, who was Press Secretary for President Johnson.<sup>307</sup> In an undated issue paper (most likely November or December 1965) the Defense Department provided information in a paper titled “The Issue of Draft Equity: Does the Draft Selection System Discriminate in Favor of the ‘Rich Man’s’ Son?” The paper provides information on whether or not the current system, particularly the student deferment policies, was equitable or did it favor young men coming from well-to-do families.<sup>308</sup>

That the Defense Department would concern itself with such a study in 1965, before draft criticism became widespread, is revealing in several ways. Most importantly, it suggests that the Defense Department and the White House were concerned with the draft, its inequities and inefficiencies, and finding ways to minimize reliance on it and transition to a military force comprised of volunteers. What is most striking is that these concerns were not necessarily borne of growing public disapproval of the draft, but rather recognition on the part of the policy planners that the system was not working. Indeed, President Johnson had already directed McNamara to conduct a comprehensive draft study in the spring of 1964 with the hopes of being able to reduce reliance on the draft.

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<sup>306</sup> Paper, “The Issue of Draft Equity,” 11/65, LBJ Library.

<sup>307</sup> Memo, Hayes Redmond to Bill Moyers, 11/20/65, “ND 9-4, FG 115,” LBJ Library.

<sup>308</sup> Paper, “The Issue of Draft Equity,” 11/65, LBJ Library.

The Defense Department conducted its analysis on figures from the 1964 data set. This was before the United States had committed combat forces to the Vietnam War in large numbers and thus increased calls for more military manpower had not yet occurred. The study found that the majority of the men who were qualified, eligible, and available came from the middle classes. Indeed, education was a key-determining variable for who served and who did not on both ends of the educational spectrum. Specifically, the study found that the percentage of twenty-six year old men who had entered military service at some point since turning eighteen was 60 percent for high school graduates and those who had some college, but no degree. Conversely, the percentage of those who had served in the military dropped to 48 percent for men who were not high school graduates and 34 percent for men who had graduated college. The study estimated for this latter group that about 8,000 college graduates would eventually enter service after graduation, since their draft deferments would expire. This would have brought the percentage of college graduates who had served to 40 percent.<sup>309</sup>

The study concluded that the sharp differences in military service by educational level, particularly among college graduates, resulted from a series of deferments. Specifically, student deferments, occupational deferments, and dependency deferments all contributed to the lower percentage of college graduates from serving. Likewise, the study found that the lower percentage of men with military service who were not high school graduates resulted from these men failing to meet minimum standards for qualification in the mental category. It was this last reason, “deferments due to unfitness,”

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<sup>309</sup> Paper, “The Issue of Draft Equity,” 11/65, LBJ Library.



that impacted men who had failed to meet minimum standards on the AFQT or had failed the medical examination. The numbers of men found unfit for service were highest among the least educated, which were also men who overwhelmingly came from the poorest economic groups in the nation.<sup>310</sup>

The popular myth is that those who served in the Vietnam Era military from the lower socioeconomic classes were forced to bear a disproportionate share of the military service obligation. In reality, the Vietnam Era military was mostly made up of men whose educational backgrounds suggest they were from the middle class. Sue Berryman, in her work *Who Serves? The Persistent Myth of the Underclass Army*, contends that for the entire Vietnam Era, the difference between socioeconomic and educational factors between those who served and those who did not was minimal.<sup>311</sup> While the Selective Service had issued instructions to the local draft boards to tighten selection policies, especially in deferments and the Defense Department had begun exploring ways to lower standards, public criticism continued to grow.<sup>312</sup> Kaysen hoped that by doing away with the local draft boards altogether, the criticism about fairness and equity on how the various draft policies would diminish. Indeed, since Kaysen recommended ending educational deferments, and all other deferments would be severely limited, there would be no need for local draft boards.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Paper, "The Issue of Draft Equity," 11/65, LBJ Library.

<sup>311</sup> Sue E. Berryman, *Who Serves? The Persistent Myth of the Underclass Military* (Boulder: Westview Press), 1988, 50.

<sup>312</sup> Paper, "The Issue of Draft Equity," 11/65, LBJ Library.

<sup>313</sup> Study, Kaysen, "Propositions on National Service—Military, Selective, and Otherwise," 6/25/66, LBJ Library.

President Johnson also appointed Burke Marshall, formerly an Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Civil Rights Division, as the Chairman of the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service from 1966 to 1967. Marshall solicited a number of prominent figures at the national level for their views on the Selective Service, universal military service, and military service in general. One of the organizations that responded was the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the annual meeting of the American Catholic Hierarchy in Washington, D.C. The General Secretary of the conference, the Most Reverend Paul Tanner, contended that without evidence that compulsory universal military training was required given the current demands on the force for Vietnam, the National Catholic Welfare Conference supported supplying the military through volunteers. Furthermore, he argued the principle of “subsidiarity” required that the “state should not disrupt the lives of its citizens unless there is a proven need and unless compulsory service is the only way to obtain the necessary manpower.”<sup>314</sup> Project 100,000 demonstrated that the eligible pool of prospective manpower could expand to include lower aptitude men, thus making “compulsory service” less viable as the only way to obtain the necessary manpower for the services.

Burke Marshall considered his work on the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service as ineffective. The president never acted on the commission’s two main recommendations to end educational deferments and reform the Selective. Marshall believed the president wanted to end the draft and reform how the Selective Service

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<sup>314</sup> Letter, Paul Tanner to Burke Marshall, 10/5/66, LBJ Papers, POTUS, “ND 9-4 (12/2/65 – 11/21/66),” LBJ Library.

operated, but political pressures and the Vietnam War prevented him from doing so.<sup>315</sup> Whether President Johnson lacked the political power or the personal will to effect any change to the nation's military manpower requirements is unclear. His announcement on March 31, 1968 that he would not seek reelection to the presidency charted a course for the draft to continue into the next administration and would take President Nixon his entire first term of office to end it. Both McNamara and Johnson recognized the inherent inefficiency of the draft, the societal costs it imposed, and the desire to create opportunities for the nation to transition to an all-volunteer force, but unfortunately, the American commitment to the Vietnam War stymied their efforts.

While the American effort in Vietnam increased, there was also a growing awareness from the general public just how inequitable the draft was with respect to the selective nature of it and the age of the young men who were drafted. The Gallup Poll conducted a survey in September 1965 addressing both these issues and the results are telling. The *Washington Post* reported 83 percent of those who responded favored a program requiring at least one year of military service for all physically fit young men who cannot pass "an educational test." This was a variant of many earlier proposals to institute some form of universal military training and/or service for all physically fit young men.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Transcript, Burke Marshall Oral History Interview I, 10/28/68, by T. H. Baker, Internet Copy, LBJ Library.

<sup>316</sup> George Gallup, "U.S. Public Favors Two Key Changes in the Draft System," *The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)*, September 19, 1965, <http://search.proquest.com.nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/docview/142566960?accountid=12686> and Memo, John M. Steadman to Joseph A. Califano, 9/65, LBJ Papers, POTUS, "ND 9-4 (12/2/65 – 11/21/66)," LBJ Library.

The specific question in the poll is revealing. “Many young men every year are turned down by local military draft boards for one reason or another,” it read. “Would you favor or oppose requiring all physically fit young men who cannot pass an educational test to serve for at least one year in some other form of military service, such as in work battalions behind the lines?” By this time, it was well known that one-third of the young men who reported for their pre-induction examinations (mental and physical) were failing to meet minimum standards. Whether or not those who responded favorably to this idea of universal military service understood the broader implications of allowing low-aptitude men to serve in the military, or whether they just believed that the Selective Service System was unfair is not revealed in the poll results.<sup>317</sup>

The results are indicative of how the general public as opposed to politicians and the military felt about military service in general and the use of low-aptitude men in the military in particular. That is, there appears to be an acceptance on the part of the general public that military service should be universal, regardless of the individual’s mental capabilities. The results also reveal a certain naiveté on the part of the respondents.<sup>318</sup> The military could not use nor could the nation afford such a large influx of personnel, low-aptitude or not. Manpower planners in the Defense Department and Selective Service had already been dealing with the growing disparity between the available manpower pool and the requirements of the services. While the build-up for the Vietnam War had stabilized the expanding pool of manpower for service needs, this was only short-lived.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Gallup, “U.S. Public Favors Two Key Changes In the Draft System.”

<sup>318</sup> Gallup, “U.S. Public Favors Two Key Changes In the Draft System.”

<sup>319</sup> Memo, Fitt to Laird, January 27, 1969, Gerald R. Ford Library.

The poll also revealed that over two-thirds of the respondents believed that the best age for a young man to serve in the military as part of universal military service was between the ages of eighteen and twenty. These findings coincide with other criticisms about the draft and the longtime practice of the Selective Service, with presidential approval, of calling young men for military service at later ages in their mid twenties. The idea of this “oldest first” policy was to not expose the “flower of America’s youth” to the dangers of military service and to gain recruits who were older and thus believed more mature than their younger counterparts. Many military leaders and planners supposed that since these men were draftees, their older age would be of benefit to the services. In reality, however, the practice placed young men in sort of a draft limbo where they were reluctant to make any long term life plans with respect to education, career, or family for fear that they would be interrupted at any time for compulsory military service. Defense Department personnel planners advocated for a draft age of about twenty or twenty-one years of age. Since the Defense Department found that most young men who volunteered for service did so at the relatively young age of seventeen to nineteen years old, it believed any move to reduce the draft age to these younger age groups would infringe upon those who were going to volunteer.<sup>320</sup>

The escalating war in Vietnam and the ever-increasing demand for more forces prevented President Johnson from pursuing an all-volunteer force. The results of the various studies, analyses, and opinion polls were put aside, but the wider debate about the efficacy of the draft and military service grew. There were numerous arguments both for

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<sup>320</sup> Gallup, “U.S. Public Favors Two Key Changes In the Draft System.”

and against the draft and whether or not the nation should adopt an all-volunteer force. Issues of supply, cost, equity, and quality of the force all figured prominently in the ongoing debate, and, to varying degrees, these issues were all linked.<sup>321</sup>

The issue of supply was one of the most common arguments from both the services and some members of Congress. Many in both camps argued that without the draft and threat of compulsory military service, the military would not be able to meet manpower requirements; the demand would exceed the available supply. But this was flawed logic. The pool of available manpower had already outpaced the services' demand early in the 1960s with the Defense Department only needing to draft about 25 percent of its manpower needs. Indeed, the Navy and Air Force did not need to use the draft at all, and the Marine Corps did not use the draft until 1968. The figures for 1965 illustrate this in stark terms. Of the estimated 10.1 million men of draft age, at least 5.7 million would never serve because of deferments, hardship status, or their status as mentally or medically unfit. The remaining 4.3 million were further limited in having to serve because the armed forces simply did not need that many men even with the escalation of the American effort in Vietnam. These figures would continue to rise throughout the rest of the decade and into the 1970s. Manpower planners had already determined that if the services reduced manpower requirements to pre-Vietnam War levels, only 14 percent of the force would have to be drafted. Furthermore, since draftees only served an initial term of two years, more draftees were required to meet manpower requirements since volunteers served an initial term of three years. When turnover rates were included in this

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<sup>321</sup> Transcript, General Woolnough Oral History Interview, March 4, 1971, USAHEC.

analysis, the Gates Commission found that the enlisted ranks of an all-volunteer force would be 5 percent less than that of a mixed draftee and volunteer force.<sup>322</sup> The more pertinent question was whether or not enough men would volunteer for service to make up for what would be lost in ending the draft.

Closely linked to the issue of supply was cost. This argument for continuing the draft stipulated that the United States could not afford the associated costs of an all-volunteer force. The Gates Commission Study found that military compensation for junior enlisted men in their first few years of service was so low that it would not sustain an all-volunteer force of the desired quality and would have to be corrected in order to realize such a force. Compensation for first-term service members (draftees and enlistees) was comprised of both pay and allowances. Service member basic pay was the monetary compensation received each month and for first termers, it was approximately 50 percent less than what an entry-level civilian counterpart would receive in annual compensation. The service members' total compensation was combined with numerous allowances: food, clothing (uniforms), housing, medical care, dental care, and several other services designed to provide basic necessities for service members and to reduce the difference between the basic pay service members received and the wage that their civilian counterparts earned.<sup>323</sup>

The average total compensation differential between first term enlistees and first year civilian employees in 1970 was approximately \$2,000 per year. With the annual total military compensation for the first year of enlistment at \$3,251, this was about a 40

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<sup>322</sup> Memo, Fitt to Laird, January 27, 1969, Gerald R. Ford Library and Gates Commission Report, 40-41.

<sup>323</sup> Gates Commission Report, 49, 55.

percent differential for the Defense Department to overcome in compensation profiles to make service members pay and allowances comparable to their civilian counterparts.<sup>324</sup> The Gates Commission also found that voluntary enlistments were lowest for the Army. This was expected because the Navy and Air Force did not use the draft for manpower needs and the Marine Corps relied on it minimally. The Gates Commission determined that a pay increase of 50 percent for first term service members in basic pay would ensure the recruitment and retention of a 2.5 million man military that Defense Department planners determined was necessary for fiscal year 1971. This end strength figure and associated cost would of course reduce when the Vietnam War was over.<sup>325</sup>

Numerous military leaders, planners, and members of Congress assumed at the time that without draftees and draft-motivated volunteers filling the ranks under the current pay and compensation system, the military would not be able to meet manpower requirements without expanding defense spending to a level the nation would not be able to sustain.<sup>326</sup> Congress directed a number of studies to review how the military compensated service members and the impact of the draft on recruiting and retention. Most of these studies focused on the career military since many in Congress believed that the first term, non-career service member received adequate compensation and allowances through annual pay, food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and other basic necessities. Not surprisingly, the studies bore this out. The 1967 Quadrennial Review of

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<sup>324</sup> Gates Commission Report, Table 5-II, 53.

<sup>325</sup> Gates Commission Report, 53, 57.

<sup>326</sup> Hanson Baldwin, "The Draft is Here to Stay, But It Should be Changed," *The New York Times (1923-Current File)*, November 20, 1966, <http://search.proquest.com.nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/docview/117592521?accountid=12686> and Gates Commission Report, 12-13.



Military Compensation or Hubbell Study as it was commonly known after the Navy admiral who headed the study, Rear Admiral Lester E. Hubbell, concluded, “A basic overhaul of career force compensation is needed. The existing system is not attaining its objective to the extent desired. The hard facts are that we are not now attracting, retaining, and motivating to career military service the kind and numbers of people our uniformed services need.” The report paid little attention to the first term non-career service member, assuming that these individuals were already receiving adequate compensation.<sup>327</sup>

The Hubbell Study’s omission of pay and compensation for first-term service members is further evidence of the opposition of Congress and military leaders to finding ways to end the draft, since doing so would require significantly more pay and allowances than what the military was currently providing. This added further weight to the argument that ending the draft would require relying on young men from the lowest mental categories in disproportionate numbers in order to make up the difference of those willing to serve and the manpower requirements of the military departments.

Nevertheless, nothing came of the Hubbell Study recommendations on career service members and their compensation, because the study failed to address the impact of an all-volunteer force and how the military would compensate first term, non-career service members. Martin Anderson, Special Assistant to President Johnson, did not accept the recommendations of the Hubbell Study because it did not include the same types of

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<sup>327</sup> Department of Defense, “Modernizing Military Pay: Report of the First Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation,” Volume I, Active Duty Compensation, November 1, 1967, 26, <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=AD0787431>.

increases to the pay and allowances of first termers as it did for career service members. President Johnson rejected the proposal and never sent it to Congress.<sup>328</sup>

Just four years earlier, during testimony and debate in congressional hearings about using low-aptitude men for military service, key members of both the House Armed Services Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee expressed their disapproval about using low-aptitude men in the military. Senator Leverett Saltonstall from Massachusetts commented, “The great problem that we face throughout this country today when we see these terrible crimes that are being committed everywhere are being committed by the lower mentality [sic] which ... you have kept out of the army and therefore, you have a lower disciplinary area in the army because they have a higher intellect. Those poorer ones are cluttering up our jails and committing crimes and attacking women today.”<sup>329</sup>

Senator Saltonstall’s correlation of low-aptitude with criminal behavior was common. Senator Richard Russell from Georgia and Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee was also resistant to lowering enlistment standards. “I finally conceded that it created a terrible impression in the foreign countries to which these undisciplined men were sent which made it possible for them to commit crimes in Italy, Spain, and Germany. All of them, of course, were not criminals. Some were of as good character as anybody, and just were less intelligent. There was a small percentage who

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<sup>328</sup> Rostker, *I Want You!*, 110-111.

<sup>329</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1966, Part I: Military Personnel*, Hearing before the subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 89th Congress, First Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 762.

were vicious, and they gave the United States a black eye.”<sup>330</sup> Saltonstall’s and Russell’s testimonies were common among members of Congress when considering military manpower aptitude levels, and these views extended to the military as well.

Congressional debate tended to reflect this type of negative stereotype and perception. There is a great tendency to make these generalizations, which is reflected in the historiography of Project 100,000, about the value of low-aptitude men based on the relatively small percentage of overall cases. Some members of Congress tried to find common ground for low-aptitude men to serve and understood the potentially detrimental effects barring such men from serving might have on recruitment and accession goals. In the end, they either changed their minds or were swayed by other members of Congress who shared the views of Congressman Saltonstall and Congressman Russell. Such attitudes, equating low-aptitude with undisciplined and illicit behavior, often based on anecdotal evidence, translated personal bias into policy. The net effect was the military services demanding ever-increasing budgets for recruiting in order to attract the sort of high profile recruit they were after. Nevertheless, this approach was not based on available research in military manpower. Indeed, a 1994 National Academy Press report on military manpower found there was little in the way of military research or policies since World War II to suggest a quality military required a force with the majority of its manpower from the upper half of vocational and mental aptitudes, or that it should not meet any of its manpower needs from the lowest one-third of the distribution.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1966*, 762.

<sup>331</sup> Bert F. Green and Anne S. Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment: Report of a Workshop* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press), 1994, 26.

In addition to the issue of compensation for first termers there was also a growing understanding that conscription was a tax in kind, forcing labor on those individuals who were drafted or volunteered under threat of the draft. Economists argued that in order to end the draft, in which young men paid taxes with their service, and transition to an all-volunteer force, the nation would have to shift to a monetary tax where young men paid taxes with currency instead of military service. Professor Milton Friedman of the University of Chicago and advisor to Barry Goldwater during the 1968 Presidential Election advocated such a system. He argued that in order to end the draft, America would need to make military service more attractive in terms of compensation, career opportunities, and conditions of service. Indeed, he responded directly to critics on the compensation issue of an all-volunteer force and ending the draft saying, “It would be not only more equitable, but also more efficient. The draft is wasteful because of its hidden costs. The cost of a volunteer force must be compared with the existing cost of the ‘tax in kind’ imposed on the men who serve, the cost of high turnover in service, and other societal costs involved with a draft.”<sup>332</sup>

The vast majority of Americans also viewed the draft as tremendously unfair.<sup>333</sup> The common view among the public sector was that the system of conscription had to be changed. Even after the increased draft calls associated with the escalation of the Vietnam War, the system of delays, deferments, and exemptions was no longer credible in the view of most Americans. Much of the antiwar movement was in direct response to

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<sup>332</sup> Raymond, “The Draft is Unfair.” See also The Gates Commission Report.

<sup>333</sup> Gallup, “U.S. Public Favors Two Key Changes In the Draft System,” Raymond, “The Draft is Unfair,” and Bruce Chapman, *The Wrong Man in Uniform: Our Unfair and Obsolete Draft—and How We Can Replace It* (New York: Trident Press), 1967.

the perception of inequity in the Selective Service System and the draft. Indeed, one of the main reasons for President Nixon's campaign promise during the 1968 Presidential Campaign to end the draft was that he hoped ending it would undermine the antiwar movement. He believed that much of the movement's power was derived from affluent young people and they would stop protesting once the threat of being drafted ended.<sup>334</sup> Lieutenant General Hershey instituted a policy whereby the Selective Service would revoke the draft deferments of individuals who were arrested protesting the draft or interfering with the activities of an Armed Forces Recruiting Station and subject them to immediate induction based on their draft sequence number. Known as the Hershey Directive, the Supreme Court voided this order in January 1970 as unconstitutional.<sup>335</sup> Indeed, General Hershey was one of the most ardent proponents of universal military service and opposed an all-volunteer force.

In a letter to Horace Busby, Special Assistant to President Johnson, dated September 24, 1965, Hershey provides the Selective Service contributions over the previous year in managing America's military manpower pool. He was particularly pleased with how the Selective Service had assisted military recruiters with procuring volunteers when local Selective Service boards forwarded information to recruiting stations about men who qualified mentally and physically for the military during their pre-induction testing. Hershey estimates that over the previous year the Selective Service saved over ten million dollars for the Defense Department. He goes on to suggest that if

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<sup>334</sup> Stephen Ambrose, *Nixon, Volume Two: The Triumph of a Politician 1962-1972* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 264–266.

<sup>335</sup> Gus Lee and Geoffrey Parker, "Ending the Draft—The Story of the All Volunteer Force," Human Resources Research Organization, Final Report 77-1, Washington, DC, April 1977, 25-26.

the Defense Department would cease volunteer enlistments, it could save a further sixty million dollars through abolishing recruiting efforts altogether.<sup>336</sup> He so firmly believed in universal military service that he said in his oral history interview for the Oral History Project of the University of Texas, “I hate to think of the day my grandchildren will be defended by volunteers.”<sup>337</sup>

Hershey advocated using initial service and basic training as a sort of screening process to determine which young men would be suitable or even interested in continued military service. He believed that the issue of fairness in the draft would be overcome through universal military service. He also believed that it would be much more expensive for the nation to have an all-volunteer force when the cost of recruiting was added to the increases in pay and compensation that would be required in order to recruit a force to fill manpower requirements.<sup>338</sup>

By 1969, it was becoming increasingly obvious to Defense Department officials and newly elected President Nixon that Hershey could no longer be an effective director of the Selective Service. During the new president’s first National Security Council meeting on January 25, 1969, President Nixon raised the issue of reforming the Selective Service. There were two issues the new administration had to consider: what reforms to initiate given the long history of failed efforts and what to do about the highly controversial Lieutenant General Lewis B. Hershey.<sup>339</sup> Secretary of Defense Melvin

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<sup>336</sup> Letter, Lewis B. Hershey to Horace Busby, 9/24/65, Papers of LBJ, POTUS, Box 148, 1963-1969, “National Security – Defense ND 9-4 Conscription – Induction – Draft (11/19/64-12/1/65),” LBJ Library.

<sup>337</sup> Transcript, LTG Lewis B. Hershey Oral History Interview, 11/22/68, by Paige E. Wallace, U.T. Oral History Project, AC74-128, LBJ Library.

<sup>338</sup> Letter, Hershey to Busby, 9/24/65, LBJ Library.

<sup>339</sup> Rostker, *I Want You!*, 67.

Laird made the case for removing Hershey as director in a memorandum to President Nixon on February 3, 1969. Laird argued that Hershey was increasingly at odds with the new administration, just as he had been under President Johnson about transitioning to an all-volunteer force, and that because Hershey had been the director for so long, few in Congress were willing to challenge him; it was time for a change.<sup>340</sup> Ironically, Hershey's general dislike of a volunteer force and belief in universal military service coupled with his ideas about using the military as a means for manpower conservation, rehabilitation, and betterment contributed to ending the draft through Project 100,000.

Of all the arguments for or against the draft, the one that Project 100,000 impacted the most was the issue of quality. Here, the argument for continuing the draft was that without it, the quality of recruits measured in AFQT scores and general health would decline, because the Selective Service and the Defense Department would be forced to lower standards in order to increase the available supply and meet demand. During the Vietnam War, the Army and then later the Marine Corps relied heavily on the draft to meet manpower requirements as the demands for units and manpower increased. Both services argued extensively that without the draft, they would not be able to meet their manpower requirements. This was also true to a lesser degree for the Navy and Air Force. While both were able to meet manpower needs through volunteer enlistments and officer accessions, the draft still played a role in the Navy and Air Force meeting

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<sup>340</sup> Memo, Melvin R. Laird to the President, "Selective Service Reform," February 3, 1969, Laird Collection, DOD Papers: Historical Project Papers, Box C1 All-Volunteer Force, 1969-1973 – Calendar of Documents, folder: All Volunteer Force, Gerald R. Ford Library.

manpower requirements as a motivator for those young men who volunteered for service in order to avoid the draft.<sup>341</sup>

Before Project 100,000 and the New Standards Men, military officials could argue the need for recruits who scored in the upper two-thirds of the AFQT. This “quality argument” remained in force throughout the 1960s and was one of the key criticisms the Gates Commission investigated during its study on the feasibility of an all-volunteer force. Senior military leaders contended that it was only through the draft that they could get the higher aptitude and better educated recruits they felt they needed.<sup>342</sup> A voluntary force, the argument went, would be less effective because not enough highly qualified youths would be likely to enlist and pursue military careers. Likewise, as the quality of servicemen declined, the capability of the services would also decline and would further intensify recruiting problems.<sup>343</sup> The services argued that high-quality recruits were required to understand how to employ the machinery of modern warfare, minimize training costs that would be associated with low-aptitude men, minimize disciplinary problems associated with low-aptitude men, and produce future leaders within the noncommissioned officer ranks.<sup>344</sup>

Over the entire Vietnam War period about one-third of service members were drafted and two-thirds were volunteers. This latter portion included a substantial number of men, as much as one half, who were “draft-motivated” volunteers. These were individuals who believed they were going to be drafted in the near future and in an effort

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<sup>341</sup> Gates Commission Report.

<sup>342</sup> Raymond, “The Draft is Unfair.”

<sup>343</sup> Gates Commission Report, 18.

<sup>344</sup> Gates Commission Report, 45-46.



to exercise some agency over their military futures chose to enlist or join officer training voluntarily. This allowed them to choose the branch of service and military occupational specialty they wanted provided they met the standards for those positions. In so doing, many hoped to avoid service in the ground combat forces of the Army or Marine Corps, which for a substantial number of enlisted service members in the combat arms usually meant going to Vietnam. Instead, “draft-motivated” volunteers wanted to serve in combat service support units far away from the combat zone or in the Navy or Air Force. Serving in these latter branches normally meant duty on board a ship either in the Pacific Area of Operations or in the Gulf of Thailand or South China Sea off the coast of Vietnam or at an Air Force base in the United States, Europe, South Vietnam or Thailand (in support of operations in Vietnam). All of these were vastly different experiences than serving in the ground combat forces of the Army or Marine Corps.<sup>345</sup>

The Reserve Component (both the reserves and National Guard) also benefitted from draft-motivated volunteers seeking to avoid active military service. Since President Johnson and later President Nixon chose not to mobilize Reserve Component forces in any substantial numbers, these units became havens for men seeking to avoid active compulsory service. The Offices of the Chief of Army Reserves and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau argued that without the draft and subsequent draft motivated volunteers; they would not be able to meet their manpower requirements. The Gates Commission Study estimated that 75 percent of the 2.6 million men in the Reserve

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<sup>345</sup> Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy*, 291-292.

Components were fulfilling their initial six-year military service obligation only as a way to escape the draft.<sup>346</sup>

Senior military leaders and Congress argued that lowering standards in order to expand the available manpower pool would prove disastrous for the United States and would undermine military effectiveness as well as project a weakened nation to the rest of the world. Despite Secretary McNamara's belief that low-aptitude men could serve successfully in the military, several very senior officers directly opposed him. "From its very inception, the senior military leadership spoke about Project 100,000 in the most derogatory terms, often referring to it as another of President Johnson's Great Society 'social experiments.' If this was to be the cost of an all-volunteer force, it was a cost that they were not willing to pay, and they resisted every effort to force them to lower their recruiting standards."<sup>347</sup> One example of how senior military leaders viewed lowering standards was General William Westmoreland, the U.S. commander in Vietnam and later Army Chief of Staff. He blamed the My Lai incident on the lowering of standards as a result of educational draft deferments, which he believed prevented the Army from getting junior officers who were of the right intellect and moral fiber it needed. In his book, *A Soldier Reports*, Westmoreland contends that Lieutenant William Calley, a platoon leader in the company responsible for the massacre, would have never been an officer if not for the educational draft deferments and the subsequent lowering of standards.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> Gates Commission Report, 97-99 and Table 9-I.

<sup>347</sup> Rostker, *I want You!*, 135.

<sup>348</sup> Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 375 and Transcript, Westmoreland Oral History Interview, 1982, page 240, USAHEC.

By the time President Nixon established the Gates Commission to study the feasibility of ending the draft and transitioning to an all-volunteer force, there was ample evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of New Standards Men. Indeed, the Gates Commission Report released in February 1970 only mentions Project 100,000 and New Standards Men once in the entire report. The commission's conclusion was that men with lower AFQT scores could achieve acceptable performance and did not cause increased disciplinary problems.<sup>349</sup> They required more supervision and generally needed additional training and in many cases, needed remedial education, especially in reading. Nevertheless, the vast majority of New Standards Men performed their jobs in a satisfactory manner and served honorably with little or no disciplinary issues. But these successes were not without additional costs, both real and hidden, that placed additional burdens and requirements on a military already encumbered with the Vietnam War and a host of other contingency missions and requirements around the world.

When it became apparent that lowering standards would not have the disastrous impact that many in the military predicted, a new argument against lowering standards emerged. The cost of an all-volunteer force was already an argument for continuing the draft and now senior leaders in the military and Congress contended that using New Standards Men would add even more of a cost to the overall defense bill. But the actual cost of training a New Standards Man for service proved negligible. John A. Sullivan, a researcher with the Center for Naval Analyses, conducted a research study on the qualitative requirements for the armed forces for the Gates Commission, and determined

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<sup>349</sup> Gates Commission Report, 46.

that the experience of the New Standards Men proved that high quality recruits were not needed. Irv Greenberg, the Director of Project 100,000 and later a key Defense Department manager for the All-Volunteer Force implementation program, demonstrated that the cost of training a single New Standards Man was only \$200 more than a regular recruit. Sullivan argued that it was more economical for the services to obtain more volunteers by lowering standards than it was to increase pay and benefits.<sup>350</sup>

As early as 1964, President Johnson was exploring ways to end the draft and transition to an all-volunteer force. There were several objections from both military leaders and members of Congress about the efficacy of an all-volunteer force. Supply, cost, equity, and quality were all issues in the arguments for why America could not end the draft it had relied on for nearly three decades to meet its military manpower requirements. Project 100,000 made these arguments less potent, and its success contributed in a significant way to ending the draft and the development of the All-Volunteer Force. Ironically, this was completely opposite from what senior members of the military and Congress had predicted earlier in 1966 when McNamara first introduced the program. Project 100,000 proved that low-aptitude men could, with the proper training, supervision, and support, make effective members of the military. And while the armed forces would certainly continue to need highly skilled specialists, the military also

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<sup>350</sup> John Sullivan, Studies for the All-Volunteer Force, "Study 2: Qualitative Requirements of the Armed Forces," 1970, I-2-25 as detailed in Rostker, *I Want You!*, 134. Both Greenberg and Sullivan based their cost analysis not on the additional training New Standards Men received, since it was voluntary and the personnel and facilities required for this additional training were already allocated, but rather the additional cost imposed because of the higher attrition rate of New Standards Men versus non-Project 100,000 personnel.

needed men who could perform general tasks and duties; tasks and duties that New Standards Men demonstrated they could perform.

## VI: The Early All-Volunteer Force, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Miscalculation, and Project 100,000 Revisited

Project 100,000 was not the only time in recent history when aptitude standards were lowered in the military. During World War II and Korea, standards were lowered to levels even below those of Project 100,000. During World War II, minimum standards were set so low that those classified as CAT V (below the 10th percentile) had to be given remedial literacy education simply in order to take the qualification test. These men as a whole performed so poorly that Congress enacted legislation in 1948 prohibiting the use of personnel from this mental category except in times of war or national emergency.<sup>351</sup>

In the decade following the Vietnam War, as the military transitioned to the All-Volunteer Force, there was another instance of low-aptitude personnel serving in the military. This time, however, it was by neither design nor necessity. From 1976 to 1980 grading tables used to convert raw scores from the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) to percentile scores for the AFQT provided incorrect information that resulted in a miscalculation. Thus, when an individual took the ASVAB as part of their enlistment process, and their raw score was converted to a percentile to determine if they

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<sup>351</sup> See Sticht et al, *Cast-off Youth*, Chapter 3, “The Low-Aptitude Soldier in World War II and the Korean Conflict.”

met the minimum 31 percent on the AFQT, the resulting percentile score was erroneously reported as above the minimum standard for hundreds of thousands of individuals.<sup>352</sup>

Accepting such large numbers of CAT IV personnel without any control measures as during Project 100,000 proved problematic, but there were no indications at the national level that this had occurred. Indeed, the narrative emerging from the Defense Department and the separate services was just the opposite. During the first few years of the All-Volunteer Force, the conclusions from the Gates Commission Report seemed valid and the Defense Department appeared to be able to maintain a quality force without resorting to conscription. “By all measures of quantity and quality, including AFQT scores, each of the services was meeting staffing requirements and maintaining a quality mix comparable to that of the draft era. In fact, a comprehensive review by the Rand Corporation in 1977 concluded that the aptitude of recruits had actually increased, although there was some decrease in education levels.”<sup>353</sup> Unfortunately, the true picture of America’s military and its readiness was far more dismal.

By October 1980, the Department of Defense had accepted over 300,000 recruits who had scored below the minimum 31 percent, nearly as many as the number of New Standards Men it accepted through Project 100,000 from 1966 to 1971. For example, in Fiscal Year (FY) 1979, the Defense Department believed that only 5 percent of its total number of recruits who entered service were from CAT IV. In reality, it was closer to 30 percent. Even more troublesome, the Army reported that only 9 percent of its recruits

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<sup>352</sup> Green and Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 8-9. The ASVAB includes 10 separately timed subtests covering factors of verbal ability, mathematical ability, clerical speed, and technical knowledge. For enlistment purposes, the general aptitude of service applicants is assessed by a composite of the ASVAB subtests combined in various ways to form the AFQT.

<sup>353</sup> Green and Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 15. See also Richard V.L. Cooper, *Military Manpower and the All-Volunteer Force* (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 1977).

during this year were from CAT IV, but in actuality, the number was far greater at 46 percent. In other words, for the soldiers who entered the Army in FY 1979, nearly half had tested in the 10th to 30th percentile on the AFQT. During Project 100,000, the largest percentage of CAT IV personnel the Army accessed during the program was 25 percent. During the final year of the miscalculation, the rate was nearly double at 46 percent.<sup>354</sup>

Unlike Project 100,000, though, no one knew for certain there had been such a large influx of low-aptitude men into the ranks of the military. Officers and non-commissioned officers in the line units knew anecdotally that something was profoundly wrong, but did not know there was a specific problem with the ASVAB or the All-Volunteer Force.<sup>355</sup> In fact, Defense Department officials were reporting just the opposite. On March 27, 1979, Robert B. Pirie, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics from 1978-1981, testified before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Department of Defense Appropriations for FY 1980 on the state of military manpower procurement. Pirie reported that under the All-Volunteer Force the percentage of recruits that scored in CAT IV had decreased from a pre-Vietnam level of 15 percent and a high of 25 percent in FY 1968 to about 5 percent in FY 1977 and FY 1978.<sup>356</sup> Nevertheless, there were some troubling signs that went unnoticed.

The entire improvement in the average aptitude score of military recruits was the result of the services taking fewer men who scored in CAT IV and more who scored in

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<sup>354</sup> Jane Gillette Heisey et al., *Military Performance of Low Aptitude Recruits: Project 100,000 and the ASVAB Misnorming* (Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization, 1985), 24. See also Green and Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 16.

<sup>355</sup> U.S. Congress, *Hearing Before A Subcommittee On Manpower and Personnel Of The Committee On Armed Services*, United States Senate, 96th Congress, Second Session, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), 9.

<sup>356</sup> U.S. Congress, *Hearings Before A Subcommittee On The Committee On Appropriations*, United States Senate, 96th Congress, First Session, Part 2 Manpower (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 8.



CAT IIIB.<sup>357</sup> In fact, the reduction in higher-quality recruits had occurred not only in the top two categories (I and II); the number of CAT IIAs was also down.<sup>358</sup> Pirie's claims on the efficacy of the All-Volunteer Force's success and its reduction in percentages of CAT IVs first appeared in a 1978 Defense Department report, "America's Volunteers: A Report on the All-Volunteer Armed Forces." There was an important caveat in the report about the numbers of CAT IIIBs the Army had accepted. The normal military eligible population for CAT IIIB was about 32 percent. The Army, however, had taken in about 45 percent of its recruits from CAT IIIB during FY 1977.<sup>359</sup>

During a congressional hearing before the Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel on January 22, 1980, Senator Sam Nunn (Democrat, Georgia), the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, presented anecdotal evidence of widespread problems with recruit aptitude during testimony from Robert Pirie. Nunn argued that in his visits to military installations and discussions with senior non-commissioned officers, there was a growing sense that petty officers and sergeants (the personnel who were most familiar with the new recruits coming into the military) were becoming discouraged with the All-Volunteer Force because of "the quality of the personnel they were called on to train and work with. The quality, according to everybody who is out there in the field, is

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<sup>357</sup> Defense manpower analysts frequently divide CAT III into IIIA (50– 64 percent) and IIIB (31– 49 percent).

<sup>358</sup> Rostker, *I Want You!*, 385.

<sup>359</sup> Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics), "America's Volunteers: A Report on the All-Volunteer Armed Forces," Washington, DC, December 31, 1978, 25-26, <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA101903>. See also Rostker, *I Want You!*, 392.

deteriorating very, very rapidly.”<sup>360</sup> Nunn was right about the quality of the force, in that it was substantially lower than it appeared on paper.

In subsequent testimony in March 1980, Pirie explained that as early as April 1978, he had learned that the scoring tables for the ASVAB test might have been miscalculated. Citing a report from the Center for Naval Analyses of that same year, Pirie indicated that his office had asked the report’s author, Dr. William Sims, to conduct a follow-up study since the first report’s data set was not originally intended for determining the validity of the ASVAB scoring tables. Sims second study produced results that seemed to validate Pirie’s testimony from 1979 and the increased quality of the All-Volunteer Force. Pirie indicated in his testimony that both studies from the Center for Naval Analyses only involved Marine recruits, which the Marine Corps had already screened out many of lower-aptitude men. Consequently, Sims was working with an incomplete data set.<sup>361</sup>

Pirie subsequently asked the Army Research Institute to conduct a third study focused on all Defense Department potential enlistees, rather than just one military branch. It was this final study examining recruit aptitude from across the entire Department of Defense that revealed just how significant the problem had become. Since 1964 and under the All-Volunteer Force, the Army had experienced an increase of about 50 percent in the numbers of CAT III and IV recruits; the CAT IV percentage alone had risen from a high of 25 percent in 1968 to 46 percent in 1979. Concurrently, the Army had experienced a greater than 50 percent reduction, from 34 percent to 16 percent, in the

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<sup>360</sup> *Hearing Before A Subcommittee On Manpower and Personnel Of The Committee On Armed Services, 96th Congress, Second Session, 9.*

<sup>361</sup> Rostker, *I Want You!*, 394-395.

numbers of CAT I and CAT II recruits.<sup>362</sup> By 1980, over 50 percent of Army recruits were CAT IVs and only about 55 percent were high school graduates, while at the same time the percentage of recruits in the higher-aptitude levels had drastically fallen off.<sup>363</sup>

In the aftermath of the ASVAB scoring miscalculation, Congress requested the Defense Department conduct a comprehensive study to link enlistment standards to actual job performance of the military service members. The purpose was to determine exactly what enlistment standard was required to maintain an appropriate level of quality within the military. The Defense Department took this mandate and initiated the Joint-Service Job Performance Measurement/Enlistment Standards (JPM) Project in the summer of 1980. This decade plus study ended in the mid-1990s and resulted in hands-on performance tests for about thirty military occupations that accounted for between 25 and 30 percent of all the jobs enlisted service members would perform.<sup>364</sup>

After Project 100,000 ended and the Defense Department no longer required the services to access a quota of recruits from CAT IV, the services set minimum standards for enlistment quality through a process of validating scores on the AFQT with how recruits performed in training schools. By 1980, however, the relationship between recruit aptitude and performance had significantly declined, especially in the Army. Indeed, as a result of limited staffing, Army schools were practically forced to graduate trainees regardless of performance in order to meet demand in the field. Furthermore, there was “little relationship between ASVAB scores and such performance measures as time to promotion, supervisor ratings, and attrition rates and no data at all on the

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<sup>362</sup> Rostker, *I Want You!*, 394-395. See also *Hearing Before A Subcommittee On Manpower and Personnel Of The Committee On Armed Services*, 1980, 1,306-1,307, and 1,312.

<sup>363</sup> Green and Anne, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 2.

<sup>364</sup> Green and Anne, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 3.

relationship between ASVAB and on-the-job performance.”<sup>365</sup>

During the ASVAB scoring miscalculation, the Defense Department established required aptitude levels of military recruits as it had for nearly four decades with reference to a normal sample representing all men serving in the military in 1944. When the Defense Department finally learned of the extent of the scoring miscalculation and reported it to Congress, the 1944 norm was woefully outdated. Thus, the Defense Department, in cooperation with the Department of Labor, undertook a study, “Profile of American Youth,” to assess the vocational aptitudes of a nationally representative sample of young people and to develop updated norms for the ASVAB. Based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Labor Force Behavior, the sample of over 9,100 young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three included representative samples of both men and women from across all ethnicities, socio-economic status, region, and other demographics. The results of the survey established norms for AFQT scores that informed required aptitude levels from 1980 onward. This new baseline established the norm of 36 percent of the general population in the top two mental categories and 34 percent in CAT III. The lower mental categories comprised 30 percent<sup>366</sup> of the population with 21 percent in CAT IV.<sup>367</sup>

With this new norm as a baseline for enlistment standards, the JPM Project established technical standards for hands-on performance tests for twenty-five jobs in all four services for first term enlistees only and ASVAB validation requirements. The JPM

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<sup>365</sup> Green and Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 16-17. See also Cooper, *Military Manpower and the All-Volunteer Force*.

<sup>366</sup> This is not significantly different from the 1962 Selective Service Report that found one-third of the young men who reported for induction testing failed to meet minimum qualifications.

<sup>367</sup> Alexandra K. Wigdor and Bert F. Green, Jr., eds, *Performance Assessment for the Workplace, Volume I (Committee on the Performance of Military Personnel, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council)* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1991), 51, 53.

Project found a direct correlation between AFQT score and hands-on performance test scores with the higher a service member's AFQT score, the higher the hands-on performance test score. It also found an increase in overall performance during the first thirty-six months of service. There was a noticeable increase (over five points) in job performance during the first twelve months of service for CAT IV personnel, and then a gradual increase over the next twenty-four months with a leveling off by year five of service. Thus, while there was an expected increase in job performance as the new recruit gained experience, it was not as pronounced as many analysts thought. Indeed, the increase in job performance was strongest for CAT IV personnel with three years experience, but this increase in performance that took CAT IV personnel three years to attain was equal to the scores for CAT IIIA personnel after they had completed only one year of experience. Still, at the end of the first term, the lower-aptitude personnel continued to score lower than the higher-aptitude personnel, but the difference was not as pronounced.<sup>368</sup>

Recognizing that higher-aptitude recruits come with increased costs in recruiting and retention, the JPM Project also determined that there was a cost benefit associated with maintaining an optimum mix of high-aptitude to low-aptitude personnel. In other words, it was not fiscally feasible to build a force solely of high-aptitude personnel, nor was it possible given other societal pressures and influences on the available pool of potential military manpower.<sup>369</sup> Robert McNamara and the Defense Department manpower planners recognized the dilemma of increasing the numbers of CAT IV

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<sup>368</sup> Green and Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 20-21.

<sup>369</sup> See Paul F. Hogan and Dickie A. Harris, "Policy and Management Applications of the Accession Quality Cost/Performance Trade-off Model," in Green and Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 129-157.

personnel in the military with Project 100,000 and the New Standards Men. Namely, any large influx of low-aptitude personnel would also require a variety of support services to assist these men in overcoming learning disabilities, correctable medical deficiencies, and a host of other social and cultural problems in order to become successful members of the military. These additional support services are not without cost, both in monetary terms and the additional time required for non-commissioned officers and officers to manage these programs. For remedial literacy training, it is not clear if the additional cost resulted in significant improvement of reading levels. Indeed, Congress never approved the additional funding required in the 1966 Defense Department budget for the Special and Enlistment Program, the forerunner to Project 100,000 that the department was unable to implement.

For the low-aptitude men who entered military service during the ASVAB scoring miscalculation, no such services existed. This lack of additional remediation and other support services most likely contributed more than any other factor to the overall poor performance of the CAT IV personnel in the JPM Project hands-on performance testing. Indeed, the military in general and the Army in particular of the 1970s was one of the least capable the United States ever fielded in terms of quality, with the overall quality of the All-Volunteer Force reaching its lowest point in 1980.<sup>370</sup> As the military transitioned to peacetime and the All-Volunteer Force, the large influx of low-aptitude soldiers contributed significantly to the “Hollow Army.”

There were other performance evaluations of the men who enlisted during the ASVAB miscalculation that portrayed similar outcomes. While the JPM Project was

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<sup>370</sup> Green and Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 25.

extensive across all branches of the military and occurred over a longer period of time, Irv Greenberg's more narrowly focused study examined the performance of lower-aptitude soldiers across four metrics and for a variety of occupational specialties within the Army. He analyzed performance in the areas of first term attrition, promotion, training attrition, and performance on the Skills Qualification Test (SQT).<sup>371</sup> Greenberg found that for the metric of first-term attrition, the rate for low-aptitude soldiers who enlisted under the ASVAB scoring miscalculation was relatively high for non high school graduates at 54 percent when compared to soldiers in CAT I and II, but roughly the same at 29 percent for high school graduates across all mental categories.<sup>372</sup>

This finding lends credibility to Alfred Fitt's assessment (the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs during McNamara's tenure) that for New Standards Men during Project 100,000, the single most discriminating factor for success was whether or not a young man had completed high school. Roy Davenport, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Personnel, also argued that standardized test scores were less important once a man was in the military and performance became the standard of evaluation.<sup>373</sup> The JPM Project bore this out, but there was still a direct correlation between the AFQT score and job performance over the first term of enlistment.

For the metric of promotion, Greenberg determined that 84 percent of low-aptitude soldiers were promoted to pay grade E4 within thirty-six months of their enlistment date, which was considered an acceptable time frame for advancement to E4

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<sup>371</sup> Irv Greenberg, *Mental Standards for Enlistment: Performance of Army Personnel related to AFQT/ASVAB Scores* (Monterey, CA: McFann, Gray & Associates, 1980) as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 68-69.

<sup>372</sup> Greenberg, *Mental Standards for Enlistment*, as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, Table 28, 69.

<sup>373</sup> Memo, Fitt to Laird, January 27, 1969, Gerald R. Ford Library and Letter, Davenport to McPherson, 7/12/65, LBJ Library.

across all the services. Conversely, 72 percent of non high school graduates were promoted to E4 within this same time frame. The training attrition metric measured the percentage of potentially ineligible recruits who failed to meet minimum standards during their specific occupational specialty training following basic training. Overall, attrition was relatively low in particular because most of the individuals who had difficulty with literacy or other issues impacting their ability to successfully complete training had already been administratively discharged during basic training. Any attrition from the advanced skills courses that did occur was most likely due to motivation and behavior problems rather than academic ones.<sup>374</sup>

The metric of performance on the SQT measured the percentages of low-aptitude soldiers who passed or failed to pass the SQT. This test was a combination of supervisor ratings, hands-on job performance tests, and written examinations designed to measure a soldier's performance and potential for future service. Army units administered the SQT at four different levels. SQT 1 was for enlisted grades E1 to E4 (private to specialist); SQT 2 was for enlisted grade E5 (sergeant); SQT 3 was for enlisted grade E6 (staff sergeant); and SQT 4 was for enlisted grades E7 and above (sergeant first class, master sergeant, and sergeants major). As with the other metrics, higher-aptitude soldiers performed better than lower-aptitude soldiers, and high school graduates performed substantially better than non high school graduates. This was expected as the SQT's written portion would still prove difficult for lower-aptitude soldiers. While Greenberg's study and conclusions were useful in helping the Defense Department update its standards for enlistment, it was the JPM Project and its hands-on performance tests that

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<sup>374</sup> Heisey et al., *Military Performance of Low Aptitude Recruits*.



proved lower-aptitude recruits performed lower in job performance than higher-aptitude recruits over the course of their entire enlistment. This remained constant regardless of high school graduation status.<sup>375</sup>

Other studies confirm Greenberg and the JPM's conclusions. The Human Resource Research Organization conducted a study of the performance of lower-aptitude service members from the ASVAB scoring miscalculation and found that across several different military occupational specialties, where aptitude demands varied, individuals who entered military service with lower-aptitudes performed comparably in pay grade achievement and attrition with qualified recruits in aptitude categories just above them.<sup>376</sup> Nevertheless, the performance gap was still large, particularly when considering recruits from the entirety of CAT IV. That is, recruits in the lower portion of CAT IV with scores in the 10th to 19th percentile performed more poorly than CAT IV recruits with scores in the 20th to 30th percentile range. And there was a large performance gap between service members in CAT IV when compared against those in CAT IIIB.<sup>377</sup>

Indeed, Greenberg found that lower-aptitude recruits for the Army that enlisted from 1976 to 1980 were just as successful at completing their tours as higher-aptitude soldiers with the same level of education.<sup>378</sup> This is another data set to support Alfred Fitt's argument that a high school diploma was a more important factor to determining success in military service than standardized tests. Where test scores have a more

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<sup>375</sup> See David J. Armor and Charles R. Roll, Jr., "Military Manpower Quality: Past, Present, and Future," in Green and Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 13-34.

<sup>376</sup> B.M. Means et al., "When Low-aptitude Recruits Succeed," Paper submitted at the meeting of the Military Testing Association, San Diego, October 1985 as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 72.

<sup>377</sup> Armor and Roll, "Military Manpower Quality: Past, Present, and Future."

<sup>378</sup> Greenberg, *Mental Standards for Enlistment* as cited in Sticht et al., 67.

determining factor is when service members or potential enlistees are compared against their own population or against others with more or less education.<sup>379</sup>

The performance measures for lower-aptitude service members from 1976 to 1980 validate what the Defense Department learned from its experience in Project 100,000. When lower-aptitude personnel are given an opportunity to succeed and provided with necessary support services to overcome their deficiencies, most of these individuals are not only useful, but also capable of productive work and contributions.<sup>380</sup> Nevertheless, the overall performance of these lower-aptitude service members was still lower than their higher-aptitude peers. Like the New Standards Men, there were also higher costs involved in utilizing these lower-aptitude service members. In addition to the higher fiscal costs associated with the support services the lower-aptitude service members needed in order to succeed, there were also other hidden costs incurred to address the lower job performance of these service members. Whether additional time to complete a task or additional personnel to redo and complete a task to standards, utilizing lower-aptitude service members came with risk and required mitigation strategies. In the wake of the ASVAB scoring miscalculation and Project 100,000, Congress enacted legislation to limit the total number of CAT IV personnel in the military. The National Defense Authorization Act of 1982 mandated that no more than 20 percent of military accessions for that year could be from CAT IV and that no more than 35 percent could be non high school graduates and this limitation has remained in place.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Shields and Gafton, "A Natural Experiment: Analysis of an Almost Unselected Army Population." U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1985.

<sup>380</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 75.

<sup>381</sup> Congressional Record, Public Law 97-86, December 1, 1981, 97th Congress, National Defense Authorization Act of 1982, Defense Appropriations, HASC and SASC Committee Hearings, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-95/pdf/STATUTE-95-Pg1099.pdf>.

The Defense Department has placed further restrictions on CAT IV enlistments. The most recent Department of Defense Instruction on the “Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower” dated December 12, 2013 stipulated that no more than 4 percent of personnel with AFQT scores between 10 and 30 percent were eligible for enlistment.<sup>382</sup> Most military manpower experts would argue that there is a place for some CAT IV personnel in the military. The 4 percent limit the Defense Department has set does not come out of the existing research.<sup>383</sup> Likewise, “there is very little basis in either military research or military policies since World War II to suggest that a capable military force requires three-fourths of its enlistees to be from the upper half of the national distribution of vocational and mental aptitudes, or that there should be virtually no one from the lowest one-third of the distribution.”<sup>384</sup>

The ASVAB Miscalculation and the resulting testimony from Department of Defense officials and Senator Sam Nunn, as well as the anecdotal evidence of officer and non-commissioned officers from the field about the quality of the All-Volunteer Force provide a useful comparison of the performance of low-aptitude men during different times in the military. While evidence suggests that New Standards Men had success rates nearly the same as regular recruits, the evidence that emerged as a result of the ASVAB miscalculation presents a more measured assessment. Certainly the success of New Standards Men relative to non-program personnel resulted from the support systems the Defense Department and the military services emplaced to assist these low-aptitude men with overcoming their deficiencies. No such support systems existed during the ASVAB

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<sup>382</sup> DODI 1145.01, SUBJECT: Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower, December 12, 2013.

<sup>383</sup> Author’s discussion with Dr. David J. Armor, Professor Emeritus of Public Policy, George Mason University and committee member for military enlistment standards for the Joint Performance Measurement and Enlistment Standards Project, May 1, 2014.

<sup>384</sup> Green and Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 26.

mis calculation and the low-aptitude men who enlisted as a result struggled and the quality of the force, in particular the Army, reached its lowest point of the All-Volunteer Force Era.

## VII. Conclusion—Reconstructing Our View of Project 100,000, New Standards Men, the U.S. Military in Vietnam and Beyond

The final accounting of Project 100,000 is a much more complex and complicated story than what numerous scholars, journalists, and other critics have offered in critiquing the program from its inception to its execution during the Vietnam War and in the years that followed. Robert McNamara wanted to demonstrate that low-aptitude men could achieve success in the military as a result of the discipline, training, and education they would receive and return to society as more productive members, and he wanted to do this in a way that would not compromise national security. He believed men who scored below the 31st percentile would have substantial increases in lifetime earnings after completing military training and service and that they would become more responsible members of society when compared to those individuals with the same levels of aptitude who did not serve. The value of military service would speak for itself.

Numerous critics of Project 100,000 have argued over the years that as the American commitment to the Vietnam War escalated beginning in 1965, the Defense Department implemented Project 100,000 as a means to increase the manpower pool for the draft without having to limit the number of educational deferments or mobilize the Reserve Components of the military. That is, the military could meet manpower requirements, but the upper classes of America would not have to serve. But finding

available manpower was not a problem. If more personnel were needed, McNamara would have simply ordered Lieutenant General Lewis Hershey, Director of the Selective Service, to increase draft calls for that particular month. When pressed on this in an interview nearly fourteen years after the program ended, McNamara responded emphatically, “No, we weren’t short of people—strength goals could have been met through the draft. This was to increase equity and raise the lifetime potential of disadvantaged individuals without cost to the services. It was never about getting more manpower for Vietnam.”<sup>385</sup> While it is possible McNamara reconstructed his memory of what had occurred during the planning and execution of Project 100,000, other Defense Department officials corroborate this view. Indeed, the military simply did not need all of the men for service who reached draft age each year. The number of eighteen-year-old men had grown steadily during each of the years prior to America’s involvement in Vietnam and the U.S. census projected this number to increase through the remainder of the decade.<sup>386</sup>

And yet, despite evidence to the contrary both from McNamara and from internal planning documents, this criticism continues. Why have so many scholars, journalists, and other writers continued to insist, even when faced with contradictory evidence, that the Defense Department instituted Project 100,000 solely for the purpose of drafting America’s racial minorities and socially dispossessed and to send them to fight and die in Vietnam? Part of the answer lies in the very limited historiography of Project 100,000. Many of the standard texts on the Vietnam War do not even mention it or only provide scant details as part of a larger discussion on the draft and the transition to an all-

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<sup>385</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 195.

<sup>386</sup> Memo, Fitt to Laird, January 27, 1969, Gerald R. Ford Library.

volunteer force. There is also a continuing debate on just about every aspect of the war. Katherine Kinney contends, “among scholars, statesmen, and citizens, there is open disagreement about when the war began, why we fought, who we fought, or when and how and why and if we lost.”<sup>387</sup> Perhaps most significantly, the Vietnam War was a tremendous wound on the psyche of the nation. Jeffrey Record describes this as an “open wound in the United States, in part because for Americans it was an exceptional twentieth-century historical and psychological experience: a lost war.”<sup>388</sup> For many, the narratives they believe are a form of catharsis and provide an outlet for their own views of the war. For others, personal bias and agendas continue to influence their perceptions about the Vietnam War in general and the draft in particular and the narratives they write. Authors and scholars like Paul Starr, Christian Appy, Myra MacPherson, Marilyn Young, Lawrence Baskir and William Strauss rely on selected reports, documents, and anecdotal evidence in ways that tend to validate their criticisms of Project 100,000, but often fail to consider their findings in the broader context of the entire program and the time period as a whole.

This dissertation explored the history of Project 100,000, its impact on the military, and the men who served under this program. Numerous policy and staff planning documents state the primary goal of Project 100,000 was the Defense Department’s contribution to President Johnson’s War on Poverty. But there are differing accounts of whether or not the Defense Department would be able to meet its manpower requirements with the build-up required for the Vietnam War. Even the same individuals

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<sup>387</sup> Katherine Kinney, *Friendly Fire: American Images of the Vietnam War* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

<sup>388</sup> Record, *The Wrong War*, vii.

had different views of this over the course of the war and in the years following. Alfred Fitt, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs for McNamara and briefly for Melvin Laird, is one such official whose views are conflicted over the course of the period.

In January 1969, just as the Nixon Administration was coming into office, Fitt wrote Melvin Laird, the new Secretary of Defense, a memorandum on Selective Service matters. He detailed that the short term problem with the Selective Service Policy at that time was the military services only needed about half of the fully qualified young men who turned nineteen each year. After accounting for volunteers, the military only had to draft about 25 percent of the remaining qualified men in the manpower pool.<sup>389</sup> It is evident from this memorandum that there was no shortage of manpower. Conversely, in Fitt's oral history interview, he offers a different view.

I don't know how many people were aware of it within the Army, but the manpower pool in the fall of 1966 was dwindling in the face of the build-up which was then occurring in the Army. They would have had to lower standards anyhow in order to satisfy the build-up of requirements. So to the extent that it had to be done anyhow, it kind of took the steam out of people who objected to the idea of lowering standards.<sup>390</sup>

What accounts for these differing versions of the ability of the Defense Department to meet its manpower requirements with the existing pool of qualified men? In fact, there is only a three month differential between Fitt's oral history interview and the memorandum he sent Laird on Selective Service matters. The obvious and simplest explanation is that Fitt was simply mistaken. The context of this portion of the oral history interview is Project 100,000, so it could be that he was recalling events from two

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<sup>389</sup> Memo, Fitt to Laird, January 27, 1969, Gerald R. Ford Library.

<sup>390</sup> Transcript, Fitt Oral History Interview, Tape 1, page 19, LBJ Library.



years earlier before the program began and was not remembering the context correctly. It could also have been the dwindling manpower pool Fitt mentions was the pool of volunteers. Assuming that the vast majority of men who wanted to volunteer did so, then Fitt was indeed correct, both in the October 1968 oral history interview and the memorandum to Laird in January 1969. The volunteer manpower pool was dwindling in the fall of 1966 and Project 100,000 was one way to try and expand the pool of qualified men who could volunteer for service and thus allow the Defense Department to minimize its reliance on the draft. The 1965 Draft Study that President Johnson directed McNamara conduct and the study's findings that the numbers of volunteers were inadequate to meet manpower requirements support this view.<sup>391</sup>

Primary source documents from the Defense Department and other agencies of the federal government as well as the White House and Selective Service demonstrate Project 100,000 was planned and executed as a social program for disadvantaged young men who had failed to meet minimum standards for military service. McNamara's work as a member of the President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation and President Johnson's War on Poverty set in motion his desire to use the substantial resources of the Defense Department to give disadvantaged young men an opportunity to better their lives through military service and then return to civilian society with life and job skills to breakout of the cycle of poverty. It had a secondary effect of increasing the number of young men who were eligible to volunteer for enlistment. Indeed, McNamara's letter to Johnson on the status of the draft bears this out. "Although continuation of the draft authority is clearly needed, I am convinced that our objective must be to greatly

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<sup>391</sup> Memo, McNamara to the President, 4/5/1965, LBJ Library.

strengthen our voluntary recruitment effort and thereby minimize reliance on the draft.” The Defense Department accomplished this without eliminating educational deferments or mobilizing reserve component forces through widening the pool of available and qualified men. Ultimately, though, the real goal was to increase the number of men who were qualified to enlist as volunteers.<sup>392</sup>

A key component of Project 100,000 was that only entrance requirements for enlistment or induction were lowered. McNamara was adamant that standards for completing basic training and skills training remained unchanged and New Standards Men had to successfully complete these to remain in the military. While standards were to remain the same, there was no prohibition on providing accommodations for the New Standards Men to help them succeed. Project 100,000 planners knew that for the program to be successful, they needed to develop special training and education approaches to provide additional instruction and help to the New Standards Men. Most of these men had struggled in school and their scores on the reading and mathematics sections of the AFQT were indicative of this. In 1968, using a sample of 46,000 New Standards Men, Department of Defense planners found that 68 percent of the men read at or below sixth grade level, with 31 percent reading at or below fourth grade level.<sup>393</sup> This was a serious problem, as most training course developers designed training materials in the military training schools for a reading comprehension level of the sixth grade. The challenge for the Defense Department planners and the services was to develop and implement training

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<sup>392</sup> Memo, McNamara to the President, 4/5/1965, LBJ Library.

<sup>393</sup> Department of Defense Manpower Report 1963-1969, Vol IV, Chapter on Project 100,000, 230 and McFann, “HumRRO Research and Project 100,000,” 5.

methods to accommodate New Standards Men without detracting from the rest of the training missions and expending valuable resources.

The services developed several strategies to revise training courses in order to provide the assistance New Standards Men needed. The Army, Navy, and Air Force implemented remedial education courses to address the New Standards Men's low scores in reading comprehension. Though voluntary, as many as 50,000 New Standards Men participated in literacy programs over the entire period of Project 100,000 and raised their reading comprehension levels as a result.<sup>394</sup> These strategies came at cost, however, and placed additional strain on unit personnel in the form of lost manpower while the New Standards Men attended these courses and units provided instructors and facilities in order to execute the additional instruction. The services also offered General Education Development courses both during and after duty hours where New Standards Men and other service members could enroll in classroom or correspondence courses to complete their high school equivalency. Approximately 40,000 New Standards Men earned their high school diplomas and established for themselves one of the most important predictors of success in military service and civilian society.<sup>395</sup>

The services also made adjustments to over fifty advanced skills courses in order to accommodate the training and educational needs of New Standards Men. The course developers simplified course material and emphasized hands-on training and performance-based testing rather than large amounts of course reading and pencil and paper testing. Furthermore, there was also an emphasis on using audio-visual aids and

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<sup>394</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 54.

<sup>395</sup> *1971 Project 100,000 Final Report*, Table I-4 as cited in Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 54-55 and Table 21 and the Gates Commission Report, 46 and Table 4-IX.

improving the quality and use of training aids. The military training commands took measures to reduce student to instructor ratios.<sup>396</sup> The services also employed other strategies for the revision of training courses. These included accommodation, extra help and time, more learnable courses, knowledge based training, and special training units. New Standards Men were successful in large measure because of the special training and education strategies each of the military services used. McNamara believed and the success of the New Standards Men confirmed that the military, with its experience in training and education, helped these young men overcome their deficiencies and succeed. The measures the services took to adjust training courses for the benefit of New Standards Men is illustrative of the military's dedication to helping these men succeed and make them productive members of the armed forces.<sup>397</sup>

Examining the performance, standards, and disciplinary issues among New Standards Men revealed that the majority of these men performed satisfactorily in the military. While as a group they did not perform as well as men with higher aptitudes, the majority of New Standards Men were successful at their jobs, were able to take advantage of education programs while in the military, and returned to civilian life after honorably serving better off than if they had never served at all. The Army found that only a small percentage of New Standards Men performed unsatisfactorily. When the services assessed New Standards Men who entered service from January to March 1969 after two years of service, nearly 95 percent of New Standards Men received a rating of highly effective.<sup>398</sup> One former field artillery battery commander who had several New

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<sup>396</sup> Greenberg, "Project 100,000: The Training of Former Rejects."

<sup>397</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast off Youth*, 85.

<sup>398</sup> *1971 Project 100,000 Final Report*, Table G-1 as cited in Sticht et al., Table 20, 54.

Standards Men in his unit while deployed to Vietnam in 1966 to 1967 shared his assessment of these men during his oral history interview at the Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. “They weren’t the smartest people in the world, but they did their job and did it very well.”<sup>399</sup>

New Standards Men did have problems, just as the critics of the program predicted. It is not surprising that men who had dropped out of school, came from broken families, were unemployed, and had low literacy rates would also experience problems in basic training, advanced skills training, and military service. Nevertheless, the overly critical narrative that emerged even as the program was underway and has continued since it ended is inaccurate and based on an incomplete understanding of the available evidence. Furthermore, it serves to discredit and negate the service of hundreds of thousands of New Standards Men who served in an honorable fashion.<sup>400</sup> The military learned that CAT IV men could be successful if they were provided support services that included additional supervision, training, and remedial support. The Defense Department would leverage this experience as it explored ways to end the draft and transition to an all-volunteer force. This was especially true for the Army, as it depended heavily on the draft to meet its manpower requirements.

The Gates Commission addressed the numerous arguments from both the military and Congress for why the United States would be unable to meet its military manpower requirements through an all-volunteer force. These arguments included issues of supply, cost, equity, and quality of the force.<sup>401</sup> The supply argument against an all-volunteer

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<sup>399</sup> Transcript, COL Olson Oral History Interview, 3, USAHEC.

<sup>400</sup> Sticht, et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 56.

<sup>401</sup> Transcript, General Woolnough Oral History Interview, 1971, USAHEC.

force maintained that without conscription and the threat of compulsory service, the military departments would not be able to meet manpower requirements. But this was based on a flawed understanding of the pool of available young men qualified for military service. The pool of manpower was already outpacing the Defense Department's needs in the early 1960s. The increased manpower requirements for the Vietnam War only provided temporary relief. In fact, the military only had to fill about 25 percent of its manpower needs through the draft. Neither the Navy nor the Air Force needed the draft to meet manpower requirements, and the Marine Corps did not need to rely on the draft until 1968. The real supply issue was not about draftees; it was about whether or not the Defense Department could get enough volunteers to fully meet its manpower requirements. Expanding the available pool of eligible volunteers through Project 100,000 demonstrated one way that it could.

The cost argument for continuing the draft maintained that the United States could not afford the associated costs of an all-volunteer force. But this too was incorrect. While the Gates Commission Study found that the United States would have to raise military compensation for junior enlisted men by 50 percent (especially first term enlistees) in order to sustain an all-volunteer force of the of the desired quality, this increase in compensation would be offset by reductions in turnover rates, and increased quality of the force. Professor Milton Friedman, a University of Chicago economist, advocated for ending the draft and a transition to an all-volunteer force, which would require significant changes to the 1960s military pay and compensation system for first-term enlisted personnel. An all-volunteer force, he argued, "would be not only more equitable, but also more efficient. The draft is wasteful because of its hidden costs. The cost of a volunteer

force must be compared with the existing cost of the ‘tax in kind’ imposed on the men who serve, the cost of high turnover in service, and other societal costs involved with a draft.”<sup>402</sup>

Most Americans viewed the draft, and its convoluted system of exemptions, deferments, and delays as unfair. The popular myth is that those who served in the Vietnam Era military were from the lower socioeconomic classes and were forced to bear a disproportionate share of the military service obligation. In reality, the Vietnam Era military was mostly made up of men whose educational backgrounds suggest they were from the middle class. Sue Berryman, in her work *Who Serves? The Persistent Myth of the Underclass Army*, contends that for the entire Vietnam Era, the difference between socioeconomic and educational factors between those who served and those who did not was minimal.<sup>403</sup> Nevertheless, there was an equity issue when considering the socioeconomic status of those men who did not serve. There were sharp differences in military service by educational level, particularly among college graduates that resulted from a series of deferments and added to the perception that the draft was unfair.<sup>404</sup> Ending educational deferments and expanding the available pool of volunteers at the lower socioeconomic level through programs like Project 100,000 made military service more equitable across all segments of America.

The most relevant argument for or against the draft that Project 100,000 impacted the most was the issue of quality. The quality argument stated the military needed the draft to make sure that it was able to meet its manpower requirements with quality

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<sup>402</sup> Raymond, “The Draft is Unfair.” See also The Gates Commission Report.

<sup>403</sup> Berryman, *Who Serves? The Persistent Myth of the Underclass Military*, 50.

<sup>404</sup> Paper, “The Issue of Draft Equity,” 11/65, LBJ Library.

recruits as measured in AFQT scores, general health, and moral character. Without the draft, the quality argument stipulated that the Defense Department would have to lower standards until the pool of qualified volunteers grew large enough to meet demand and the quality of recruits would suffer. During the Vietnam War, both the Army and Marine Corps (from 1968) relied on the draft in order to meet end strength requirements and provide forces not only for the war, but also a host of other operational and training requirements around the world. Both services lobbied extensively that transitioning to an all-volunteer force would make it near impossible to access the required quality manpower.<sup>405</sup> The Navy and Air Force indirectly needed the draft to produce draft-motivated volunteers who were in the higher aptitudes and inclined to volunteer for service to avoid the Army and Marine Corps as draftees. The Gates Commission rejected this argument and maintained the services could preserve appropriate readiness and quality without relying on the draft.

During the first few years of the All-Volunteer Force, the conclusions from the Gates Commission Report seemed valid and the Defense Department appeared to be able to maintain a quality force without resorting to conscription. “By all measures of quantity and quality, including AFQT scores, each of the services was meeting staffing requirements and maintaining a quality mix comparable to that of the draft era.”<sup>406</sup> In reality, however, America’s military and its readiness were reaching its lowest point not only of the All-Volunteer Force, but also since the Korean War. The quality argument against an all-volunteer force and the use of low-aptitude men proved more relevant than originally thought. While the vast majority of New Standards Men performed their jobs

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<sup>405</sup> Gates Commission Report.

<sup>406</sup> Green and Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 15.



in a satisfactory manner and served honorably with little or no discipline issues, as a group these men did not perform as well as their higher aptitude peers. When large percentages of low-aptitude men came into the military during the ASVAB miscalculation, the lower performance had significant impact on the readiness of the force, especially the Army. Both the Joint-Service Job Performance Measurement Project hands-on performance tests and the 1972 Human Resources Research Organization Report detail the lower performance of CAT IV personnel compared to the performance of service members from higher mental categories.<sup>407</sup>

Issues of supply, cost, equity, and quality all factored into the debate of whether or not America could end the draft it had relied on for nearly three decades to meet its military manpower requirements. Project 100,000 and the performance of New Standards Men negated much of these arguments. Indeed, the success of the program was a major contributing factor in ending the draft and transitioning to the All-Volunteer Force. Project 100,000 proved that low-aptitude men could, if provided with support services and additional training and supervision, make successful soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. Of course, the military would continue to require highly skilled specialists and service members from the higher aptitude levels, but it also needed service members who could perform general tasks and duties. New Standards Men proved they were capable of filling that role.

Project 100,000 provided opportunities for men to serve in branches of the military that they otherwise never would have qualified for. Nearly 70,000 New Standards Men served in the Navy and the Air Force with over 30,000 men each in these

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<sup>407</sup> See Green and Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, and Vineberg and Taylor, "Performance in Four Army Jobs by Men at Different Aptitude (AFQT) Levels."

two branches of the military at a time when the Navy and Air Force relied solely on volunteers to meet manpower requirements.<sup>408</sup> Project 100,000 gave men service opportunities that would not have existed otherwise and consequently afforded them opportunities for education and training in more technical specialties for possible job skills when returning to civilian life. Additionally, for those New Standards Men in the Navy and Air Force sent to the Vietnam Theater of Operations, they were also able to serve in relative safety onboard a Navy ship or at an Air Force base.

In 1983, over 8,200 New Standards Men were still serving and had made a career of the military. On average, their education levels had gone up, their AFQT scores had gone up, and they were within striking distance of the higher enlisted pay grades (E7 and E8). For all the arguments and criticism against Project 100,000, in the end, it was successful. The military's experience with the program and the performance of the men who served under its conditions demonstrated that eligibility and performance criteria for military service are not absolute and calls into question what exactly minimum levels of education and aptitude are required for success.<sup>409</sup>

Another success criteria for Project 100,000 was whether or not military service for these men was beneficial to their lives when they left the military and returned to civilian life, since McNamara stated this as the primary goal of the program. Only two substantial studies have occurred in the years since Project 100,000 ended in an effort to determine whether or not McNamara was right about the positive effects of military service on the lives of New Standards Men. In 1974, William Beusse in his study for the Air Force Human Resources Laboratory on the impact of military service on low-aptitude

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<sup>408</sup> Paper, Greenberg, "Project 100,000 Information Paper," 1972, Gerald R. Ford Library.

<sup>409</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 56-57, 60, and 83.

men provided the first glimpse of how Project 100,000 veterans were doing as civilians. In a comparison of 477 Project 100,000 veterans with 477 carefully matched low-aptitude non-veterans. Buesse found that Project 100,000 veterans were generally doing better in the areas of employment, education, and salary. The non-veteran group had a 3 percent higher rate of unemployment and a corresponding 3 percent lower rate of full-time student status. Both groups were equally employed at 90 percent. Buesse found that 53 percent of the Project 100,000 group had completed high school compared to 46 percent of non-veterans. Lastly, the Project 100,000 group was earning \$10 to \$15 more per week than the non-veteran group. While there is no indication in Buesse's report that he conducted any significance testing to account for the small differences in his results, the study does suggest that McNamara was right; military service had been a positive experience for Project 100,000 veterans.<sup>410</sup>

Several years after Buesse completed his study others emerged, which seem to dampen the positive effect of military service on low-aptitude men. Janice Laurence and Peter Ramsberger in *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military: Who Profits, Who Pays?* offer a different view than Buesse. Laurence and Ramsberger used data from the VETLIFE Study the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) conducted in 1989 to provide evidence on whether or not the goal of Project 100,000 of improving low-aptitude men's post-military lives through military service was met and to investigate the long-term effects of military service on these men.<sup>411</sup> The VETLIFE Survey used a technique of comparing Project 100,000 veterans with a group of non-veteran low-

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<sup>410</sup> William Buesse, "The Impact of Military Service on Low-aptitude Men" (Brooks AFB, TX: Air Force Human Resource Laboratory), 1974.

<sup>411</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 100-107.

aptitude men similar to Beusse's from 1974. Laurence and Ramsberger found little difference in the employment and education of the two groups, but a significant difference in salary. Their data analysis took place nearly twenty years after Beusse's and involved a smaller data set, 311 Project 100,000 veterans and only 183 non-veteran low-aptitude men. Laurence and Ramsberger attribute the differences in sample size to the number of respondents they received to the survey questions and interviews, but insist the sample size produced statistically significant results.<sup>412</sup>

In the Laurence and Ramsberger Study, the difference between the two groups in employment rates was negligible. The Project 100,000 group had an approximate employment rate (full and part-time) of 89 percent. The non-veteran low-aptitude group had an approximate employment rate (full and part-time) of 91 percent. For education levels attained, the difference between the two groups was more significant. Laurence and Ramsberger found that approximately 55 percent of the Project 100,000 group had a high school education, but only about 50 percent of the non-veteran low-aptitude group was high school educated. There was an even more significant difference for college education, but with the non-veteran group having a higher percentage of some college. Over 26 percent of the non-veteran group had some college education, whereas only about 17 percent of the Project 100,000 group had some college education.<sup>413</sup>

On February 28, 1990, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation held a hearing on the Readjustment of Project 100,000 Veterans. It was one of the few times Congress was involved with low-aptitude men in the military since

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<sup>412</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, Chapter 5, "What Became of the Low-Aptitude Veterans?"

<sup>413</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 118-119.

1971 when Congress specifically prohibited the Defense Department in the FY 1972 Defense Budget from setting mandatory accession percentages of low-aptitude men.<sup>414</sup> The chairman of the subcommittee, Congressman Lane Evans (Democrat, Illinois), gave the opening remarks at the hearing. “The focus of our hearing today is the post-service readjustment of Project 100,000 veterans. Were the social goals of this program achieved? Did Project 100,000 veterans, as civilians, reverse the downward spiral of human decay referred to by Secretary McNamara? Did military service provide a springboard for economic improvement and advancement in civilian life?”<sup>415</sup> The hearing included testimony from both Beusse and Laurence.

Janice Laurence testified on the VETLIFE Study from 1989 that she along with Peter Ramsberger detail in their book, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military: Who Profits, Who Pays?* Laurence stated in her testimony that taken as a whole, the study results suggested that Project 100,000 was less than successful in its stated goal of providing low-aptitude men a means of increasing their socioeconomic status through military service. Nevertheless, despite these negative findings, one half of the Project 100,000 veterans who were interviewed believed the military had a positive effect on their civilian lives after the military by giving them maturity, discipline, and training.<sup>416</sup>

William Beusse based his testimony on the Air Force Human Resources Laboratory Study he conducted in 1972 and published in 1974 in the report “The Impact of Military Service on Low-aptitude Men.” Like those findings in 1974, his testimony directly contradicted Laurence’s testimony about the impact of Project 100,000 on the

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<sup>414</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*.

<sup>415</sup> Hearing before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, House of Representatives, “Readjustment of Project 100,000 Veterans,” One Hundred First Congress, First Session, February 28, 1990 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), 2.

<sup>416</sup> Congressional Hearing, “Readjustment of Project 100,000 Veterans,” 1990, 4, 6.

lives of the men who served under the program. He testified, “Compared to non-veterans, veterans were more than twice as likely to have upgraded their education. They were less likely to be unemployed; they were more likely to be employed in higher-paying occupations; and they were more likely to have migrated to a different geographic region. Veterans earned an average of 10.4 percent more than non-veterans.”<sup>417</sup> Beusse’s results were obviously far different than what Laurence and the HumRRO study concluded.

Beusse’s testimony followed Laurence’s at the hearing and he was keenly aware of how his results were “somewhat at odds with the conclusions of some other studies of the economic effect of military service, particularly the HumRRO study that Dr. Laurence just described.”<sup>418</sup> Beusse argues there were a number of reasons for the difference in the results of his study and Laurence’s study and how these differences may have accounted for Laurence’s conclusion that military service was not beneficial for low-aptitude men. The most significant reason for the differences in the conclusions of the two studies was the matching process he conducted for the veteran and non-veteran groups. While the HumRRO study simply found Project 100,000 veterans who were willing to answer the survey questions and be interviewed and then matched them with a group of non-veterans of similar age and aptitude, Beusse matched his two groups in age, race, geographic locale, and a very narrow variation in aptitude. This method of matching allowed for analysis free of statistical manipulations. The second reason for the differences in the two studies is that Beusse conducted his study on Project 100,000 within about three years of their discharge date. This allowed enough time for post-

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<sup>417</sup> Congressional Hearing, “Readjustment of Project 100,000 Veterans,” 1990, 7.

<sup>418</sup> Congressional Hearing, “Readjustment of Project 100,000 Veterans,” 1990, 8.

service benefits to materialize, but not so much time that that large numbers of sample numbers could not be found.<sup>419</sup>

A further point on aptitude matching between Project 100,000 veterans and low aptitude non-veterans is required. The HumRRO study did not have AFQT test scores on the non-veterans in its study. It relied on information available from the scholastic records of individuals in the National Longitudinal Study (NLS) Survey<sup>420</sup> and equated a corresponding AFQT score to these records. Beusse's study matched veterans and non-veterans for aptitude based on AFQT test scores, as he was able to find non-veterans who had taken the AFQT, since the draft was still in effect.<sup>421</sup> Another point of clarification for the two studies concerns the mental category IV label. While it is true that the Defense Department used the CAT IV label for anyone scoring in the 10th to 30th percentile on the AFQT, the vast majority of New Standards Men scored in the 10th to 20th percentile. In fact, for the entire period of Project 100,000, 61.9 percent of the New Standards Men scored in the 10th to 15th percentile on the AFQT and 31.9 percent scored in the 16th to 20th percentile on the AFQT; less than 3 percent scored above the 20th percentile.<sup>422</sup> Beusse matched each Project 100,000 veteran with a non-veteran with AFQT scores that if were not identical, were only separated by a small margin. The HumRRO study allowed for a wide deviation among scores and matched non-veterans to

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<sup>419</sup> Congressional Hearing, "Readjustment of Project 100,000 Veterans," 1990, 8.

<sup>420</sup> The National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) are a set of surveys designed to gather information at multiple points in time on the labor market activities and other significant life events of several groups of men and women. For more than four decades, NLS data have served as an important tool for economists, sociologists, and other researchers. <http://www.bls.gov/nls/>.

<sup>421</sup> Congressional Hearing, "Readjustment of Project 100,000 Veterans," 1990, 10.

<sup>422</sup> Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth*, 43, Table 11.

the study whose NLS scores fell along the entire spectrum of CAT IV personnel, to include those in the top third with AFQT scores of 21 to 30 percent.<sup>423</sup>

Like most of the narratives about Project 100,000 and the New Standards Men, whether or not their service proved to be beneficial is complex and complicated. There is statistical evidence and congressional testimony asserting that low-aptitude men in the military received little in the way of measurable positive effects. Likewise, there is the same type of evidence that military service was in fact beneficial for New Standards Men. While survey data in 1974 and in 1989 indicate Project 100,000 veterans were about as well off as non-veteran low-aptitude men with respect to employment and education, there was a wide discrepancy in salary between the two surveys. In 1974, survey data suggested that Project 100,000 veterans were making \$520 to \$740 more per year than non-veteran low-aptitude men. In 1989, however, this difference in annual pay had reversed and survey data suggested that non-veterans were making about \$5,000 to \$7,000 more per year than the Project 100,000 veterans.<sup>424</sup> Even accounting for inflation, this represented a 500 percent increase in earnings for the non-veteran group from 1974.

What accounted for this significant shift in earnings? The reasonable expectations that military service would benefit low-aptitude men appear just as convoluted as the arguments about the planning of Project 100,000, whether or not New Standards Men received any remedial training and education, and if these men had positive or negative effects on the units where they served. William Beusse explained some of this in his testimony at the February 1990 congressional hearing. Beusse argued that despite the

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<sup>423</sup> Congressional Hearing, "Readjustment of Project 100,000 Veterans," 1990, 10.

<sup>424</sup> See Beusse, "The Impact of Military Service on Low-aptitude Men" and Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 115.



very careful attempt Laurence made in the 1989 VETLIFE Survey to equate Project 100,000 veterans with non-veterans for the survey, the survey was limited by the resources available at the time and the survey authors had to make adjustments to the data when pairing the two groups for comparison. Unfortunately, just like many of the authors and scholars who have presented overly critical narratives about Project 100,000 and the men who served in the program, the VETLIFE Survey may have relied on incomplete data in its findings of the benefits of military service on the lives of low-aptitude men.

Beyond these tangible metrics of the effect of military service on the New Standards Men, Laurence and Ramsberger also considered what the Project 100,000 veterans said about their service and whether or not it had a positive or negative effect on their lives after the military. Indeed, as Stich et al. pointed out in *Cast-off Youth*, “whether it is helpful or not to an individual is probably best determined ... by asking them.”<sup>425</sup> While this method is less desirable since there is no control group and New Standards Men may have reconstructed their memory in the years following their service, these intangible metrics indicate a more positive effect than the other survey data. Approximately 50 percent said their military experience had a positive effect on their civilian lives. Only 14 percent indicated it had a negative effect and the remaining percentile indicated it had no effect on their lives. Thus, despite the objective data and tangible metrics from the HumRRO study indicating no significant positive effect of military service to the Project 100,000 veterans, a substantial percentage of the respondents believed their lives were better off having served in the military.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> Stich et al., *Cast-off Youth*, as cited in Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 142.

<sup>426</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 122-123.

Responses like, “If it wasn’t for the military, I wouldn’t have a job today,” were common among the respondents. Others said they were lifted from the streets, became more responsible, and gained a new perspective, learned about friendship, obedience, and how to treat others. They also felt they were stronger, better people, and could deal with any situation. Others said the military had “helped them 100 percent” and that “it was the best thing to happen to me” and an “experience I will never forget.”<sup>427</sup>

There is certainly a place for some percentage of low-aptitude individuals to serve in the military. While tangible and intangible evidence indicate CAT IV personnel can be successful in uniform and that generally their service will have a positive effect on their lives after their service ends, it is not without cost. Even though the direct cost of training such individuals and helping them assimilate into military life was negligible during Project 100,000, there were hidden costs with additional training and supervision that were not always apparent. Placing this burden on the military, especially during wartime, was not the most efficient use of precious resources.

The arguments over whether or not Project 100,000 was a success or failure and whether or not it was a positive or negative experience for the New Standards Men will most likely remain, just as the broader debate about the Vietnam War continues to unfold in academia and public opinion. The debate over using low-aptitude service members will surface again the next time America commits its armed forces to sustained combat operations and military manpower levels are strained through repeated deployments. Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of Project 100,000 is that it continues to challenge our perceptions about what low-aptitude is, how it impacts individuals, and what the

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<sup>427</sup> Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*, 142.

economic and social context of these individuals says about their future success not only in the military, but in the broader civilian society as well.

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After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States embarked on the longest commitment of military forces to combat action since the Vietnam War. This time, however, America would prosecute these wars with an all-volunteer force. Initially, both in Iraq and Afghanistan, operations were stunning in their decisiveness and ease of execution. By the summer of 2004, however, the Iraq War had turned increasingly difficult. U.S. and coalition forces were facing a full-blown insurgency and casualty figures began to grow. Christian Appy, in his chapter “Class Wars” of the edited volume, *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam: Or, How NOT to Learn from the Past*, contends “as casualties from the Iraq War mounted, the false pretexts of the war became more widely known, and the U.S. occupation became increasingly beleaguered. The recruitment budget was raised from \$2.7 billion to \$3 billion, an additional thousand recruiters were put in the field, enlistment bonuses were raised, and recruiters intensified their focus on the unemployed and economically disadvantaged.”<sup>428</sup> For Appy, the Iraq War, just like Vietnam, was an example of how the Defense Department looked to Americans who were socially and economically dispossessed to fight its wars.

In the face of the increased pressure for more military manpower, just as the numbers of volunteers were declining, the Defense Department lowered standards for enlistment to increase the available pool of manpower. Fred Kaplan, in a *Slate.com* article published on October 4, 2005 argues, “Further evidence that the war in Iraq is wrecking

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<sup>428</sup> Christian Appy, “Class War,” 141 in Lloyd C. Gardner and Marilyn B. Young, eds. *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam: Or, How NOT to Learn from the Past* (New York: The New Press, 2007).

the U.S. Army: Recruiters, having failed to meet their enlistment targets, are now being authorized to pursue high-school dropouts and (not to mince words) stupid people.” He goes on to cite an *Army Times* article of the same week that the Army would be short 7,000 new recruits for FY 2004 that had just ended. This represented a near 10 percent shortfall of the Army’s goal for the year and the Defense Department had decided to make up the difference by expanding the pool of eligible recruits by letting up to 10 percent of them enlist without a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma.<sup>429</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* published an article the same day as Kaplan’s that stated the Army was planning on increasing its percentage of CAT IV recruits for FY 2005 from 2 percent to 4 percent.<sup>430</sup> Aptitude was not the only standard that was lowered. The Defense Department allowed for new enlistees to be over the age of 35 and to have drug related or felony related offenses on their records. Was America resorting to scrapping the bottom of the barrel for its soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines?

As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continued to escalate and the demands for manpower increased, there was a renewed call for America to return to the draft in order to meet its manpower requirements. Political leaders, scholars, and military service members all voiced their opinions on whether or not the United States should return to a mixed volunteer and draftee military. Those who argued against bringing back the draft, equated draftees with low-aptitude service members. Nathaniel Fick, a Dartmouth graduate and Marine officer with combat tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan, argued in a *New York Times* opinion piece, “Renewing the draft would be a blow against the men and

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<sup>429</sup> Fred Kaplan, “The Dumbing-Down of the U.S. Army,” *Slate.com*, October 4, 2005, [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/war\\_stories/2005/10/the\\_dumbingdown\\_of\\_the\\_us\\_army.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2005/10/the_dumbingdown_of_the_us_army.html).

<sup>430</sup> Mark Mazzetti, “Army to Lower Bar for Recruits,” *Los Angeles Times Online*, October 4, 2005, <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/oct/04/nation/na-recruit4>.

women in uniform, a dumbing down of the institution they serve. The United States military exists to win battles, not to test social policy. Enlarging the volunteer force would show our soldiers that Americans recognize their hardship and are willing to pay the bill to help them better protect the nation.”<sup>431</sup> Fick’s argument that the military should not be used for testing social policy is familiar. The same kind of argument surfaced during the Vietnam War and opposition to Project 100,000.

Senator Chuck Hagel (Republican, Nebraska), a Vietnam veteran, appeared on NBC television’s “Today Show,” and said, “Mandatory military service had to be considered in the face of a generational war against terrorism. The middle class and lower middle class should not be forced to bear the burden of fighting and dying if, in fact, this is a generational—probably—25 year war.”<sup>432</sup> Congressman Charles Rangel (Democrat, New York) is a long-time proponent of bringing the draft back to America. In an Associated Press article that appeared in the *Washington Post* on November 19, 2006, Rangel said, “I don’t see how anyone can support the war and not support the draft. If we’re going to challenge Iran and challenge North Korea and then, as some people have asked, to send more troops to Iraq, we can’t do that without a draft.” Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is quoted in the same article from his testimony to Congress in June 2005. “There wasn’t a chance in the world that the draft will be brought back.”<sup>433</sup>

Lowering aptitude standards to expand the available pool of manpower and debate over the efficacy of the draft in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are the same

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<sup>431</sup> Nathaniel Fick, “Don’t Dumb Down the Military,” *The New York Times Online*, July 20, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/20/opinion/don-t-dumb-down-the-military.html>.

<sup>432</sup> Chuck Hagel, “The Today Show” appearance, April 2004 as cited in Bill Van Auken, “Iraq Crisis Spurs Call for U.S. Military Draft,” April 22, 2004, <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2004/04/draf-a22.html>.

<sup>433</sup> John Heilprin, The Associated Press, “Rep. Rangel will Seek to Reinstate Draft,” *The Washington Post*, November 19, 2006 [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/19/AR2006111900376\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/19/AR2006111900376_pf.html).

kinds of arguments that occurred over forty years ago. Appy makes a direct correlation to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and Vietnam with respect to the lowering of standards in order to meet manpower requirements.<sup>434</sup> Just as in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, anytime the United States calls upon the military to fight large and protracted wars, the Defense Department will have to contend with whether or not it can meet manpower requirements under its current system or make revisions to fulfill its personnel needs.

Despite the Iraq Surge in 2006 and the Afghanistan Surge in 2007 requiring more forces in the respective combat theaters; the Defense Department capped its percentage of CAT IV service members at no more than 4 percent, which has remained the same over the last several years.<sup>435</sup> Even during what has become America's "Longest War," the Defense Department has found it unnecessary to allow more CAT IV personnel to serve. The existing research, however, does not indicate the requirement to keep this low level of CAT IV personnel. "There is very little basis in either military research or military policies since World War II to suggest that a capable military force requires three-fourths of its enlistees to be from the upper half of the national distribution of vocational and mental aptitudes, or that there should be virtually no one from the lowest one-third of the distribution."<sup>436</sup>

Even though federal legislation allows for the Defense Department to meet its manpower requirements with up to 20 percent from CAT IV, the overall percentage of CAT IV personnel in the military during the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan was never

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<sup>434</sup> Appy, "Class War," 142.

<sup>435</sup> DODI 1145.01, SUBJECT: Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower, December 12, 2013.

<sup>436</sup> Green and Mavor, eds, *Modeling Cost and Performance for Military Enlistment*, 26.

more than 4 percent and the adjusted standards for maximum age and drug related or felony convictions were not in place for more than a few years. The Defense Department is currently undertaking a comprehensive history of the Iraq War and as American commitment is scheduled to end in December 2014, it has also planned a similar study for Afghanistan. Despite the reductions in standards that occurred during the height of U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, by all accounts, the military remained overwhelmingly competent and capable of accomplishing its assigned missions. America's military is reverting back to its peacetime methodology of increasing standards, both mental and physical, to maintain a high degree of readiness and capability.

America has asked its service members and their families to endure significant, and in some cases, overwhelming sacrifices and hardships. The rate of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other physical and psychological injuries among veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan will strain the military medical system and Veterans Affairs for years to come, perhaps even an entire generation. Concurrently, there are a number of forgotten victims, the spouses and children of service members and veterans alike who are having to deal with their own issues of PTSD and psychological trauma that will take many years to overcome. The Defense Department and Veterans Affairs Administration must plan for ways to address these hidden injuries and help its members, veterans, and their families on the path to recovery and restoration. Any future plans for increasing the pool of available manpower must account for the costs associated with a larger force, not just costs measured in dollars, but costs measured both in blood and treasure.

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