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Eitelberg, Mark J.

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MILITARY REPRESENTATION: REFLECTIONS AND RANDOM OBSERVATIONS

by

Mark J. Eitelberg¹

In *Citizenship and National Service*, which is self-described as “a novel blueprint for reviving the American tradition of civic obligation and activism,” the Democratic Leadership Council observes that “only a fraction” of the nation’s citizens “assume the personal risk and sacrifice of military service.”² The Council proceeds to point out:

In a democracy, however, citizenship requires not just sharing burdens, but sharing them equally. That is why Americans should be concerned that our armed forces today are *not representative* of society as a whole.³

At the same time, in a report to Congress on “population representation in the military services,” the Department of Defense claims to see “substantial similarities between the characteristics of the enlisted force and the civilian population.”⁴

What accounts for this apparent difference of opinion? After all, isn’t a military basically “representative” of society when its membership is “substantially similar” to the civilian population? Doesn’t every American know, almost instinctively, the true definition of “representation” or “representativeness”?

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²Democratic Leadership Council, *Citizenship and National Service: A Blueprint for Civic Enterprise* (Washington, D.C.: Democratic Leadership Council, May 1988), pp. i and 24. The description actually appears in a foreword by Senator Sam Nunn, Chairman of the Council.

³*Ibid.*, p. 24. Emphasis added.

⁴Department of Defense, *Population Representation in the Military Services: Fiscal Year 1987* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense [Force Management and Personnel], August 1988), p. ix.

Indeed, the basic concept of representation is a keystone of democracy in this country and a binding thread in the fabric of our pluralist society. We find it in the hiring, placement, and promotion policies of public and private organizations; in “affirmative action,” in “balanced” political party tickets; in appointments to public office; in the minority and women’s rights movements; in our understanding of equity, equal opportunity, parity, and related principles; in books, art, television, and movies depicting the social and ethnic mix of American life; and in symbolic portrayals of the American people covering everything from war memorials to postage stamps.⁵

“Representation” holds a special meaning in the history of the nation and its people. *E Pluribus Unum*—From Many One—is more than just a motto of the Great Seal. It signifies and typifies the American self-image: a nation where unity can be achieved amid social and political diversity; where, in a land of immigrants, people of many backgrounds can live in harmony and come together for a common cause; and where, in democratic fashion, the nation’s great institutions can be called upon to represent, or present again, the varied community interests and characteristics of the multitude. As Herman Melville wrote in 1849, “You can not spill a drop of American blood without spilling the blood of the whole world. . . . No: our blood is as the flood of the Amazon, made up of a thousand noble currents all pouring into one. We are not a nation, so much as a world. . . .”⁶

The U.S. armed forces have always emphasized the diversity of their membership. It is in the nature of the military organization to bring together young men and women from all states and territories, all major demographic groups and social categories, all races, religions, and ethnic backgrounds—the “blood of the whole world”—to serve in defense of the country and its guiding principles. Popular literature and the mass media have helped to foster this image of the American military as a sort of miniature melting pot or mosaic of all distinctive traditions and cultural

⁵A prominent example stands beside the Vietnam war memorial in Washington, D.C.: a statue of three battle-weary soldiers—one white, one black, and one (who is said to be) Hispanic. War movies in this country have often portrayed the military as a melting pot, where GIs representing a wide variety of distinctive social, ethnic, and cultural traditions are mixed together for a common cause. Some movies—such as *Battan* (1943), *PT-109* (1963), and *The Dirty Dozen* (1967)—have taken the representation theme to a fictional extreme by showing racially-integrated combat units during a period of racial segregation. The military of the future, it appears, is also as well-balanced as that of the past—evidenced by the twenty-third century crew of the starship “Enterprise” on *Star Trek*.

⁶Herman Melville, *Redburn: His First Voyage* (Boston: L. C. Page and Company, 1924), p. 169.

patterns. Moreover, the recent spread of interest in military representation has functioned to convert the image into a national policy goal.

Direct references to military representation appear in numerous Defense Department studies and public documents, including annual reports to Congress (for each of the past 15 years) on "the demographic, educational, and socioeconomic characteristics of individuals in the military's active duty enlisted force."⁷ The subject often surfaces as well in the publications of other government offices and agencies, reports by special commissions, "think-tank" studies, academic journals, the popular press, public commentary, and general literature in the Social Sciences.⁸ Measures of "representation" have also been used to evaluate military personnel policies and the various methods for obtaining draftees and volunteers.

With this rich history of devotion to the concept of representation, one would expect to find agreement concerning its presence and value within an organization such as the military. Clearly, something is "representative" when it contains within itself the same elements, in the same proportions, as are found in the larger population. Isn't that simple to see and easy to measure? The discussion could end here if it were so.

In fact, the ideal of a perfectly representative military—a so-termed "micro-cosmic replica" of the general population—is an illusion. Besides the myriad differences between subgroups within gross classifications of groups, and subgroups within subgroups of groups, it is clear that a sample of individuals in any corresponding subdivision of the population would be *at least* biased by those who have certain skills, attributes, interests, and personality traits. Moreover, perfect representation is normally undesirable within any highly specialized institution.⁹

Even the concept of *approximate* representation is difficult to grasp in the abstract. It has been observed that democracy tends to treat its objects numerically,

⁷See, for example, Department of Defense, *Population Representation*, p. I-1.

⁸An extensive bibliography can be found in Mark J. Eitelberg, *Military Representation: The Theoretical and Practical Implications of Population Representation in the American Armed Forces*, Doctoral Dissertation, New York University, October 1979.

⁹Political philosophers have often used "the lunatic" to illustrate this point. However, some people may have an opposite view. For example, in 1970 a nominee for Associate Justice to the Supreme Court was widely criticized as being "mediocre." Senator Roman L. Hruska defended the nominee during confirmation hearings by pointing out that there are many mediocre people in the United States and they deserve to be represented on the Court.

subject to determinations of magnitude—and “our most adequate understanding of things is to be gained by their correlation with, or translation into, terms of commensurable quantities.”¹⁰ So, we therefore strive to achieve a state of mathematical exactness using ratios and statistical computations. Representation questions are looked upon as mathematical problems, equations in which the unknown quantities are the policy decisions necessary to achieve a state of numerical correspondence. But once the ideal of perfect correspondence is abandoned, and the notion of approximate representation is accepted in its place, the presumed certainty of outcomes associated with exact likeness is lost. Approximate representation can mean one inch or a thousand miles, depending on the position and perspective of the surveyor. Ultimately, we establish a boundary of roughly acceptable proportions beyond perfection with subjective standards that are tied to contemporary public attitudes, the politics of the moment, personal values and biases, and particular views of reality.

The task of evaluating representation is further complicated by the absence of a precise or generally acknowledged definition of the term and all that it entails. There is no set of criteria, no clear consensus through history concerning important population subgroups. There is an endless variety of characteristics that may be said to affect the goals of proportional participation. The variables, scales of measurement, and interpretations of military representation consequently vary from study to study, depending largely on individual principles, perceptions, values, and expectations. As a result, identical statistical data are often found to inspire contradictory conclusions in the literature and commentary on the subject.

This confusion over the meaning and practical value of “representation” has apparently not stopped many people from using it to judge the condition of the military. The term has become a permanent part of the military manpower vernacular, and no discussion of the armed forces is complete today without some demographic comparison of the American people and their uniformed warriors. Basically, proponents of population representation in the military have focused on three general areas of national policy: *social equity*, *political legitimacy*, and *military effectiveness*.

¹⁰Marie Collins Swabey, “A Quantitative View” (from *The Theory of the Democratic State*, 1936) in *Representation*, ed. Hanna L. Pitkin (New York: Atherton Press, 1969), p. 83. F. A. Hermens, in *The Representative Republic* (Notre Dame: University Press, 1958), p. 205, also observes that virtually all of the inventors of various systems of proportional representation in government have been *mathematicians*.

The Core of Concern Over Representation

The importance attributed to various themes or elements of military service shifts with changes in the political and social setting. Since 1945, for example, manpower issues have focused on national security, budgetary considerations, and practical expediency (that is, compulsory service).¹¹ "Equality of service" grew out of the citizen-soldier concept around the period just prior to World War I; yet, before the 1960s, equity was seldom ever a major factor in manpower policy decisions. A combination of civil rights and antiwar protests, "quota consciousness," and public response to inequities in the Selective Service System led to extensive draft reform, the draft lottery, and the eventual demise of conscription. At the same time, as a result of these social forces, a new public awareness of the military establishment developed—an awareness and interest in the *means* as well as the outcomes of defense manpower policy. Furthermore, it was a concern for the social consequences of manpower policy decisions that helped to reshape methods of recruitment and to popularize the concept of "military representation."

"Representation," some thus contend, can provide a definitive answer to the longstanding question: "Who shall serve when not all serve?" Fairness can be assured to the extent that the few who *do* serve in the military compose a cross section of all who are equally obligated to defend the nation; and one can assume that military responsibilities are distributed impartially across all sectors of society when identified groups are present in proportion to their presence in the total population—that is, when membership of the military is mathematically similar in some way to the nation's citizenry.

Equity issues are by far the most commonly discussed feature of participation in the present all-volunteer military. This is largely the result of the disproportionate percentage of blacks in the Army and, to a lesser extent, the perceived differences between the social class distribution of the enlisted force and that of the general population. Ironically, while the exclusion of blacks from the military initiated modern discussions of "equality of service," it is their overrepresentation that dominates most commentary today. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the burdens of military service were seen to outweigh the benefits, and equal opportunity gave way to "equal representation"—protecting the disadvantaged and certain depressed

¹¹See James L. Gerhardt, *The Draft and Public Policy* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971).

minority groups, such as blacks, from bearing a disproportionate responsibility for the nation's defense.

Fielding combat forces with a heavy imbalance of minorities and less-privileged youths is especially unjust, it is observed, since these groups do not enjoy a fair share of the benefits conferred by the state. The prospect that a disproportionately large number of minorities would die or be wounded in the early phases of a military engagement, so the argument goes, is immoral, unethical, and contrary to the precepts of a democracy. On the other hand, there are those who contend that an overrepresentation of minorities and certain disadvantaged youths in the military has a positive side—since these individuals are able to obtain employment, training, and social opportunities not otherwise available in the civilian world.

At the heart of the issue of military representation in this country is the concept of the "citizen soldier" and the democratic imperative, asserted by George Washington, that "every Citizen who enjoys the protection of a free Government, owes not only a proportion of his property but even of his personal services to the defence of it. . . ." ¹² Proponents of this view claim that the armed forces can only be considered a *legitimate* extension of the citizenry if the military is a citizen's institution, rather than a home for "regulars" who may have little stake in the society they are pledged to defend. An army that employs mercenaries and "hired guns" to do its bidding abandons the constitutional responsibility of the people. An army that pulls from the nation's populace the poor and socioeconomically disadvantaged, while excusing the well-born and privileged, the rich and the educated, defies the fundamental principles of democratic government and obligatory service by each and every member of the body politic.

The argument continues that those who are no longer responsible for serving their country by taking arms never gain a full appreciation of civic duty—resulting in widespread public apathy and acquiescence concerning the military affairs of the nation. At the same time, the military turns its sights inward, absorbed with its own professional concerns, ideology, powerful pressure groups, and brand of politics. According to a classic theory of accountability in government, this potentially dangerous situation can be avoided by ensuring that the military is well-integrated with

¹²George Washington, "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment," in Walter Millis, ed., *American Military Thought* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1966), p. 23.

its host society: population diversity, or a balanced mix of civilian-community values, can provide a naturally effective means of legitimate direction and control.

Military representation, especially when it pertains to elements of individual “quality,” is also linked with military *effectiveness*. When the modern draft ended, there was no yardstick for assessing the aggregate degree of quality possessed by new enlistees. The aptitude test scores and educational level of the draft-era force were at first accepted as the criteria of recruiting success under the new, all-volunteer system—mainly because the draft offered a visible reference point and, so many believed, all-volunteer recruitment had to prove it could *at least* match the draft in this respect. Eventually, the national population of military-age youths became the sacred touchstone for appraising recruit attributes; and quality representation—that is, having no less than the national proportion of high school graduates and no lower than the national average score on the military’s aptitude test—was equated with the minimum needs of the armed forces.

Some proponents of representation have argued that the social or economic composition of the military can likewise affect its capacity to defend the country. Questions are raised, for example, whether a generally unrepresentative force can maintain a high level of unity, cohesion, and morale; whether a socially unrepresentative force may feel alienated or separated from society and unwilling to pay the price of patriotism in battle; and whether members of a racially or ethnically imbalanced force may experience divided loyalties if summoned into action against persons of the same race or ethnic origin. Other questions are raised concerning the influence of a socially unrepresentative force on public confidence in the military, social harmony, civil-military relations, foreign perceptions of American defense capabilities, and the symbolic portrayal of U.S. domestic and foreign policy.¹³

Some Observations on Current Issues (By a Self-Proclaimed “Old-Hand”)

In 1976, I completed a study for the Army Research Institute, entitled *Evaluation of Army Representation*. In this 200-page manuscript, I developed a conceptual framework and functional definition of Army representation—introducing social equity, political legitimacy, and military effectiveness as the three major policy areas and criteria. The framework and an accompanying “Convergence/Divergence Model” were based on information gathered in an extensive review of literature and

¹³These subjects are explored in Eitelberg, *Military Representation*.

an analysis of demographic data.¹⁴ Three years later, I expanded my study of the subject in a doctoral dissertation, *Military Representation: The Theoretical and Practical Implications of Population Representation in the American Armed Forces*. Here, I examined the theoretical and historical antecedents of “representation”; the concept of military representation in America; the various conflicting values, issues, and perceptions (including the “benefits versus burdens” dilemma of military service); and the implications of applying representation policy. After exhaustive research, described in 450 pages of text and tables, I concluded that my conceptual model could “provide order and . . . put issues and statistics in perspective”; but that the “multiplicity of competing principles and the absence of any exclusive denotation for ‘representation’ . . . limit severely the practical significance or value of military representation as a realistic policy objective.”¹⁵

For the past ten years I have continued to dabble in related areas and to write about various aspects of representation within the military. My published works on the subject have included several books, book chapters, articles, papers, and commission reports, as well as anonymous contributions to Department of Defense documents such as the annual “representation report” to Congress.

I am providing this personal information to establish my credibility as an “old hand”—and one who has earned the temporary right to sit back in an ivory tower, put up his feet, puff on a professorial pipe, and offer unorganized, rambling observations about social representation in the American military. Presented below are questions and comments related to issues of current interest.

1. Shouldn't there be more women in a “representative” military? When most people speak of a “representative” military, they usually eliminate women from consideration. This occurs primarily because of historical tradition, the fact that women have been excluded from the draft and draft registration, and because of limitations on the assignment of women in the military. Nevertheless, women today comprise just 11 percent of the active-duty armed forces. This is considerably higher than the proportion of women during the Vietnam-era draft (fewer than 2 percent)—but far below their representative level and the level of

¹⁴Mark J. Eitelberg, *Evaluation of Army Representation*, FR-ED-76-45 (Alexandria, VA: HumRRO, November 1976). Also published as U.S. Army Research Institute Technical Report TR-77-A9 (Alexandria, VA: ARI, August 1977).

¹⁵*Dissertation Abstracts International*, Volume 40, Number 11, May 1980, p. 6000-A.

participation that could be achieved without making drastic changes in current exclusionary policies.

2. If “representation” is an unobtainable ideal, why do people still seek to achieve it? The arguments in favor of a representative military are thought-provoking and they appeal to the fundamental principles of democracy, patriotism, equity, and the like—as well as to our desire for a strong national defense and a virtuous society. However, it is important to recall that the American military has never been truly representative of the general population. The military has age and gender restrictions, physical and medical standards, and requirements relating to educational achievement, aptitude test scores, and moral fitness. The military’s entrance standards have operated to create a force that now has proportionately more high school graduates than in the general population; and one in which aptitude test scores are unrepresentatively high. Some people have claimed that the military is “buying” more quality (in personnel) than it needs; but this argument is rarely made by proponents of population representation.

In fact, the case for having a representative military is very enticing on the surface. However, most people who attempt to make the case for it typically speak in broad generalities—failing to specify what they believe should be achieved or choosing to focus on a hand-picked set of principles, criteria, and population groups.

3. The case for “representation” is much weaker when applied to a peacetime military. One of the major arguments for achieving social representation is based on the view that the nation’s defense burdens should be shared equally by its young citizens. (Of course, the military’s manpower needs are limited—so it is assumed that sharing is somehow fair when distinctive groups are proportionately represented. Thus, each group is equally *liable*, even though a small segment actually serves.) The volunteer military has been described by critics as a place in which “the very poor, the ill-educated, the hapless, the hopeless, and by some accounts, the incompetent are paid to do the defending the rest of us are loath to do.”¹⁶ The basic premise here is that military service is a sacrifice and a hardship that involves high personal risk. Indeed, the word “burden” appears with remarkable frequency in discussions concerning the equity and legitimacy of all-volunteer recruiting.¹⁷

¹⁶Richard Cohen, “Draft,” *Washington Post*, 28 July 1981, p. B-1.

¹⁷See, for example, Democratic Leadership Council, *Citizenship and National Service*, pp. 1, 6, 24, 26, 50, 53.

In addition, all-volunteer methods are generally criticized for their reliance on economic factors—and the way in which they “economically conscript” less-skilled and less-employable youths. Many of those who join the military, it follows, are being forced to do so by the invisible hand of their own poverty. In a May 1988 publication, for example, the Democratic Leadership Council states that

The military has become for many low-income Americans, and particularly minorities, an employer of last resort. That is not, in itself, objectionable: throughout our history military service has always been an honorable path to self-advancement. Yet no matter how well we pay them, we cannot ask the poor and underprivileged alone to defend us while our more fortunate sons and daughters take a free ride, forging ahead with their education and careers.¹⁸

Perhaps the key word in the above quote (and similar observations made over the past 15 years) is “defend.” After all, how much actual “defending” does the military do in peacetime; and can a person contribute to the defensive capabilities of a nation without serving in the military? It is interesting to note that, according to insurance records, an individual currently stands less risk of losing his or her life in the military than in civilian society.¹⁹

Many proponents of representation neglect to draw any distinction between our current, peacetime military and one that would be mobilized for war; but the need for spreading the “burdens of defense” during *war* is much more convincing. In fact, there is a strong likelihood that the nation would return to conscription to fight a war; and, based on the lessons of the previous draft, there is reason to expect that the system would be as fair as possible. On the other hand, a reinstatement of the draft would take time—and the first several rounds of wartime casualties would reflect the demographic composition of existing combat units.

4. If the military is an “employer of last resort” for some young people—what happens to them when they’re turned away from the military? The answer to this question should be obvious: if the military is an “employer of last resort,” then it’s a *last* resort. Many observers accept the role of the military in providing advantages to the disadvantaged and opportunities to those from less-privileged backgrounds—as long as there is no conflict with the “defense mission.”

¹⁸Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁹Tom Philpott, “Male Death Rate Lower in Military,” *Army Times*, 15 August 1983, p. 35. More recent statistics compiled by the Metropolitan Life Foundation show similar results.

Indeed, they ask: "Why should qualified applicants be denied the benefits of military service based on their demographic characteristics?"

There is no question that inequity still exists in the nation's social, economic, and educational fabric—the same fabric from which the military must shape its force. If the military is filling a need left by the failures of society, does it make better sense to remove the military from that role or to eliminate the need? There are limits on the number of people who can be in the military at any given time. When advocates of representation call for more "upwardly mobile and middle-class youth" or more "college-bound youth" or more "fortunate sons and daughters" or more "children of the rich and the upper-middle class" or more "social and economic elites," they essentially mean *less* of everyone else. A good part of everyone *else* includes underprivileged minorities—especially young black men and women who have an unemployment rate twice the level of their white counterparts. (When people talk about the overrepresentation of "minorities" in the military, they actually mean blacks. Hispanics and persons from most of 20 other racial/ethnic groups are *underrepresented* in the military.²⁰) For close to 200 years of American history blacks had struggled for the "right to fight"—getting a major boost in 1948 with Executive Order 9981 and culminating with integration in two Asian wars. "Equality of service" once meant getting blacks *into* the armed forces; now it has come to mean, benignly, keeping blacks out.

This might be okay if the displaced volunteers could be promised similar or better opportunities on the civilian side—and if their freedom of choice were left intact. But that's not the case. The question then becomes: Is it fair to cut the less-privileged off from what may be their only source of social and economic relief—people who are found qualified for military service—in the name of *fairness* to the groups they supposedly represent?

In the early 1960s, it was discovered that one-third of all young people could not qualify for the military—and they were the ones who would stand to gain the most from the training, experience, and benefits of service life.²¹ "Project 100,000" was created to bring more of these people into the military so they could

²⁰Martin Binkin and Mark J. Eitelberg, "Women and Minorities in the All-Volunteer Force," p. 81, in *The All-Volunteer Force After a Decade*, ed. William Bowman, Roger Little, and G. Thomas Sicilia (McLean, VA: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1986).

²¹The President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation, *One-Third of a Nation* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1964).

enjoy a fair share of the *benefits* of defense and be helped by the country's "war on poverty." It seems strange now, during a period of extended peace, that anyone would want to use the military as a tool for the civic education of those who are privileged at the expense of those who aren't.

5. Much has been said and written about the socioeconomic composition of the all-volunteer military, but very little is actually known. The all-volunteer concept has been criticized from the start for its reliance on economic incentives. The system, it is believed, encourages the enlistment of those who are economically disadvantaged. When the proportion of blacks in the Army began to rise, many critics assumed they had the evidence to back their claim: blacks are disproportionately represented among the poor; and, if blacks are disproportionately represented in the Army, we must have an "Army of the poor."

Actually, the poor of this country have probably been *underrepresented* in the modern military for as long as there have been medical, physical, educational, moral, or aptitude standards. No one knows this for certain; but true poverty usually leads to disqualification from military service.²² At the same time, wealth probably correlates with the desire to be practically anywhere other than in the military's enlisted ranks. And so, it is fairly safe to conclude that the All-Volunteer Force does not mirror the socioeconomic composition of the general population—and it probably never will.

Nevertheless, attempts have been made to estimate the socioeconomic character of the volunteer force for more than 10 years. One particularly interesting approach involves the use of zip codes; but this method relies on the questionable assumption that a military member's zip code is a reasonably sound indicator of the individual's family income while growing up (based on data showing the average income of all families located within that zip code).²³

Until recently, no attempt had been made to survey new recruits on their socioeconomic origins. The Department of Defense has been accused of avoiding such a survey for fear of what it might reveal. The results of a new survey by the

²²See *ibid.*, for example.

²³This approach is used by R.V.L. Cooper in *Military Manpower and the All-Volunteer Force*, R-1450-ARPA (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1977). It is also used in a 1989 study by the Congressional Budget Office, scheduled for publication later this year.

Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) are, therefore, eagerly awaited.²⁴ But most military analysts can anticipate the findings. Remove the rich and the poor. That leaves the lower-middle class, the middle class, and the upper-middle class. Previous research suggests that minority recruits are overrepresentative of the higher-income levels within their respective race or ethnic group. Statistics on the educational achievement, aptitude test scores, and various background and demographic characteristics of white recruits suggest that these people are heavily concentrated in the middle class. (During difficult recruiting periods, members may tend to cluster in the lower-middle class.) All of this taken together equals an enlisted force that may not be socioeconomically representative; but it's not an army of the poor or the underclass. If anything, it's most likely a "military of the middle class," leaning toward the low side in the Army, which takes a larger proportion of minorities.

6. Principles, perceptions, and values play an important role in determining how a person defines "representation." This should be obvious to most people who have studied "representation" or other abstract concepts of democratic government. However, one particular example is especially interesting.

Research relating to the occupational structure of the military has often used the "collar-color" method of defining jobs. That is, enlisted jobs are equated to their "blue collar," or "white collar" counterparts in the civilian sector. At the same time, the jobs held by officers are categorized as management, administration, and professional positions. Most jobs in the enlisted force are blue collar, using this method, along with a good number of hands-on technical positions. One may assume, therefore, that the people serving in these military jobs are not unlike the people working at similar civilian jobs; and a standard for measuring military representation would logically be the distribution of the general population in civilian-equivalent jobs. Following this line, there would be little reason to expect to find college graduates serving in a blue-collar enlisted position under all-volunteer, peacetime conditions.²⁵

²⁴Cathy A. Stawarski and David Boesel, *Representation in the Military: Socioeconomic Status*, FR-PRD-88-07 (Alexandria, VA: HumRRO, April 1988).

²⁵Added to this is the fact that most new recruits are recent high school graduates—with a median age of just over 19 years.

Why then do some writers criticize the all-volunteer military for, say, not having very many college graduates pounding ground in the Army infantry?²⁶ The answer can frequently be found in the values of the observer. For example, Moskos has criticized the All-Volunteer Force for resembling an "occupation" as opposed to an "institution." The institutional model that he would like to see describes military service as a universal obligation of citizenship (or a "calling"); and it sets the armed forces apart from civilian working life by not separating the organization along occupational or class lines.²⁷

A proponent of the institutional model would thus expect to find persons of all description, including college graduates, in the enlisted infantry or combat arms. A proponent of the occupational model would probably be surprised to discover many college graduates in the rank and file, especially in a generic military skill such as the infantry. And so, those who look at the military and see an "institution" are concerned that fewer than 3 percent of the enlisted force are college graduates; those who see the military as an "occupation" say this is as it should be. (Actually, about 16 percent of *all* active-duty military personnel—combining enlistees with officers—are college graduates, compared with 22 percent of the general population. One out of three military personnel has some college credit, compared with approximately 45 percent of persons across the country.)

This example illustrates how entirely *opposite* conclusions can result in evaluations of the *same* military data. So much depends on how one sees the military (or defines its purpose) and selects the various population standards for comparison.

7. How we define the relevant population and establish standards for comparison will obviously affect the way we perceive levels of "representation." This is a corollary to the point above, that the conditions we set to delineate and measure proportional representation determine our conclusions. Consequently, statistical comparisons of military and civilian populations in studies of representation may not always be consistent. Conventional studies of population representation in the armed forces use the general population (segmented by race, age, and gender) as the standard or reference population. However, various groups

²⁶James Fallows, *National Defense* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), pp. 126–127.

²⁷See, for example, Charles C. Moskos, "From Institution to Occupation: Trends in Military Organization," *Armed Forces and Society* 4 (Fall 1977): 41–50.

can be used as the national civilian standard for comparison (for instance, the civilian labor force or divisions of it, the population that served during the draft, the general population of military-age youth, the general population, high school graduates); and various aggregations and combinations of groups from the armed forces can be used for proportional measurement, from the entire Department of Defense down to the smallest identifiable unit (for instance, the total armed forces, separate services, recent recruits, the total enlisted force, officers, males only, occupational specialties, broad skill groups, the geographical distribution of personnel according to branch units and echelons, or the general distribution of group members by rank within units and subdivisions of units to the smallest group, an infantry platoon, or squad).

The proportion of blacks in the military's officer corps—currently close to 7 percent—can be used to illustrate this point. Should this figure be compared with the proportion of blacks in the general population or in some comparable division of the civilian labor force? Is the proportion a little “high,” considering that blacks represent fewer than 6 percent of civilian workers in executive, managerial, and professional occupations? Is it “low,” based on the percentage of the general population that is black (around 13 percent)? Or is it about “right,” considering that blacks comprise between 6 and 7 percent of all college graduates below the age of 30 (and a college degree is a prerequisite for virtually all officer commissioning programs)? Should one also take note of the fact that blacks account for a much higher level of the enlisted force (over 19 percent); or that blacks account for 13 percent of women officers; or that the proportion of blacks in the Army's officer corps is 11 percent, compared with less than 4 percent in the Navy?²⁸

8. Views of “representation” and important population characteristics are also tied to the times. If this were the 1860s, we might be looking at the casualty rates of Irish immigrants in the Civil War and wondering about the policies that allow draftees to use substitutes or buy their way out with 300 dollars. If this were the time of the First World War, we might be concerned about the disproportionate share of eastern European immigrants dying in place of groups insulated by

²⁸The differences by gender are often interesting and overlooked in many comparisons of military and civilian populations. For example, some people may know that blacks account for approximately 19 percent of the *total* enlisted force; and some may know that black representation in the Army is considerably higher, at around 30 percent. On the other hand, few people are probably aware that close to half of all enlisted *women* in the Army are black, including an increasing majority of women soldiers who are noncommissioned officers.

our unfair draft. If this paper were being written at the height of America's involvement in Europe during World War II, a major section might be devoted to the equity, legitimacy, and effectiveness of policies limiting the service of blacks—perhaps asking why people of this race represent just over one percent of the Army's combat troops (in segregated units, no less).

We might ask these questions, because we have a different perspective of ourselves and the world around us. We have different values, different standards, and a broader view of modern history. The fact is, these issues were not of great concern to the majority of American people within their own time.

Racial issues of representation are important today. But persons of some races, such as blacks, are more "important" than are others, such as Native Americans, Asians, and Asian-Pacific Islanders. Hispanics are now important, but Filipinos aren't; yet, even for Hispanics, there is more talk than thought. (How many people know that Hispanic-Americans have historically been *underrepresented* in the all-volunteer military—even today, when social and economic conditions would lead one to expect high levels of participation?) Women apparently are not all that important; but the "rich" and "fortunate" and "America's future leaders" are. Socioeconomic status is at the top of the list of important demographic characteristics. Religion is not, though it *was* many years ago (well before the Bureau of the Census stopped asking about religion on its population survey).

"Representation" is a time-bound idea. It is not based on an indisputable, universal truth. Moreover, the variables used to measure it are really substitutes or indicators of something else. We want to know if the all-volunteer system is fair, so we measure the proportion of minorities. We want to know if it is democratic, so we count rich kids. We want to know if it is effective, so we look at educational level and aptitude test scores—as we strive to achieve demographic diversity and balance.

9. Why is it that the requirements for social "representation" are emphasized more for the military than for many other government institutions? Representation theory was first applied to the bureaucracy in the 1940s. "Military representation" surfaced somewhat later and gained popularity during the Vietnam war. The representativeness of the bureaucracy is still studied; but not with the intensity of interest that is devoted to the military. This can be explained by the differing reasons for focusing on representation—including, for the military, the obligations of citizenship and the burdens of defense.

Our representatives in Congress are elected by majority vote. Nonetheless, very little is said about the social demography of this group, which tends to be considerably homogeneous from one term to the next. In addition, no major study has been made of Congressional staff members—who are among the most powerful people in Washington. Presidential Cabinet members, certain high-level government appointees, and Supreme Court justices are subject to Senatorial approval. Yet, there has never been a Cabinet that could be called remotely “representative” of the nation; and the nation’s highest court (as well as its lower courts) can hardly be called a demographic microcosm of the nation.²⁹

10. There are still many unresolved conflicts in arguments for having “representation.” The three themes used to argue for representation—equity, legitimacy, and effectiveness—are heavily value-freighted, containing a full-range of equally justified, yet essentially opposed positions. The benefits versus burdens issue is one such conflict, perhaps the knottiest of our time, leading to value conflicts both between and within the themes of equity and legitimacy. An even more fundamental conflict is found between the objectives of equal opportunity and proportional representation. “Equal opportunity” (treating *everyone* alike) and representation are often associated with particular minority groups, women, and the struggle for civil rights. But equal opportunity is a concept that relates to the *individual*: rights attach to the individual, and individual opportunity, as opposed to group opportunity, means that all persons are judged solely on the basis of their personal qualifications. Representation conversely classifies individuals according to groups; it draws attention to stereotypical qualities as people are placed in statistical categories based on distinctive group traits or identifiable characteristics; and it encourages, rather than obviates, consciousness of innate group differences.

²⁹Of course, the issue is much more complicated than implied here. Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe that presidents and individual members of Congress often use different standards for social representation when considering the composition of certain divisions of government. The same can be said for the American people: although many were pleased to see a woman appointed recently to the Supreme Court, few have expressed concern about the three or four *more* women it would take to make the Court “representative.” It should also be noted that Congress *exempts itself* from affirmative action, organized labor, occupational safety, and equal opportunity laws. And, as pointed out in *Newsweek*, “only in the last two years has a black staff chief been named to a major [Congressional] committee.” (See “The World of Congress,” *Newsweek*, 24 April 1989, pp. 28–34.)

There are similar conflicts on a very basic level. These conflicts are discussed elsewhere, but the point should be clear.³⁰

11. The barriers to excluded groups are lowered when necessity demands a change; and major barriers to women will probably be removed in the near future. The nation, at various times and under various circumstances, has denied members of certain social categories entrance into military service when it was important to them to serve and has protected members of other groups when it was important to them not to serve. The experience of blacks in the American armed forces is a prime example—marked by policies of exclusion during periods of peace and expedient acceptance during mobilization for war. Indeed, the exigencies of war have pried open the doors of American military service to blacks; and it was necessity, not social enlightenment, that finally led to racial integration of the armed forces.³¹

Practical necessity has opened the doors to military service for many groups over the years. During World War II, for example, the armed forces “turned to whatever resources might prove productive”³²—including close to 300,000 illiterate men and 100,000 convicted felons (2,000 of whom were pulled directly from prison by the Army).³³ Folklore has it that “Project 100,000” was a “war on poverty” initiative. Well it was—in theory. But it was “sold” to the armed forces in 1966 as a way of broadening manpower supply for the Vietnam buildup and forestalling activation of the Reserves.³⁴

It is interesting that many of the arguments made for restricting the participation of women in today’s military are similar to the arguments made for restricting the participation of blacks 40 or more years ago. This applies to issues of

³⁰See Eitelberg, *Military Representation*, pp. 392–401 for a summary of the various issues and conflicts.

³¹See Martin Binkin and Mark J. Eitelberg; with Alvin J. Schexnider and Marvin M. Smith, *Blacks and the Military* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1982); and Mark J. Eitelberg, *Representation and Race in America’s Volunteer Military*, NPS-54-86-010 (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, September 1986).

³²Department of the Army, *Marginal Man and Military Service* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 1965), p. 31.

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 74–75, 211, 213, 236.

³⁴Mark J. Eitelberg, *Manpower for Military Occupations* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense [Force Management and Personnel], April 1988), pp. 179–180.

individual ability as well as to unit cohesion and effectiveness; to questions of organizational management as well as to the physical, medical, and psychological characteristics supposedly shared by persons of the same race or sex. It wasn't very long ago that questions were being raised about "the inherent ability of Negroes" to serve in combat and the fact that white soldiers would be unwilling to fight beside blacks.

Unlike blacks, however, the barriers restricting women from combat jobs will be removed during *peacetime*. (In fact, the greater the threat of war, the *less likely* these particular barriers will be lifted.) At the same time, qualified women will be permitted to serve in combat occupations as a consequence of military necessity: that is, maintaining a high level of personnel quality, under all-volunteer conditions, in the face of severe budgetary constraints and a declining population of male "baby-busters."

Research has shown that the competition for bright people in technological fields is intensifying as the available supply of employees continues to shrink. Moreover, as the military experiences technological growth, its demand for highly-qualified members will continue to expand. The net result is that proportionately fewer people from an already-declining population will be qualified for a growing number of military jobs (assuming constant force size).³⁵ This may occur at a time when added demands are being placed on the federal budget and defense priorities are falling.³⁶ These factors will most likely lead to the discovery of a new manpower resource—women—who can theoretically cut the demand for male volunteers by up to one-half or even more.³⁷

³⁵Mark J. Eitelberg, "Aptitude Test Scores of Military Personnel Assigned to C³I Jobs: Trends and Prospects," paper presented at the 43rd International Convention and Exposition of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, Washington, D.C., June 1989. Of course, there is the possibility of sharp *reductions* in force strength that would coincide with a curtailed commitment of troops in Europe and Asia.

³⁶See Mark J. Eitelberg, *American Demographic Trends and National Security: Issues for the 21st Century*, NPS-54-88-001 (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, February 1988).

³⁷The architects of the All-Volunteer Force never really considered the role that women could play in "manning" a draftless military. In fact, the Gates Commission, which evaluated the feasibility of ending the draft, assumed that the "baseline" for women would remain at around 1.2 percent of the post-Vietnam force. The Commission staff even explored the possibility of *replacing* women with civilians—as a way of reducing budget outlays—since most of the positions held by women were "believed to be included in the group identified as potentially substitutable." See Binkin and Eitelberg, "Women and Minorities," p. 82.

12. Misperceptions and myths concerning the social representativeness of the military are common. In *Who Serves? The Persistent Myth of the Underclass Army*, Berryman observes that “just as our images of the social compaction of the [all-volunteer military] are wrong, . . . our images of the enlisted forces have rarely been accurate.”³⁸ She proceeds to show the many similarities between the composition of the civilian and military labor forces over the years—arguing that the “negative social image” of the enlisted military and criticisms of its social composition are typically grounded in bias and misunderstanding.³⁹

The current interest in social representation can be traced back to the 1960s—especially the period around 1965–66, when blacks accounted for over 20 percent of all soldiers killed in Vietnam. As the war progressed, the proportion of combat fatalities among black troops dropped. By war’s end, blacks had suffered 13 percent of all combat deaths over the 1961–72 period—slightly above the percentage of blacks in the general population and almost exactly the same percentage as that of blacks in the Army’s enlisted ranks.⁴⁰ Yet, memories of the earlier years of the war seem more heavily etched in the minds of many Americans; and to this day there is probably a sizable segment of the otherwise-informed population believing that blacks comprised a disproportionate share of those who died in Vietnam. For example, as late as 1981, a *Washington Post* columnist claimed that blacks and Latinos “sustained 40 percent of all infantry casualties” in Vietnam—and then proceeded to label the all-volunteer military “undemocratic.”⁴¹

Misperceptions about the current military persist, and they can be found in many places—including media commentary, speeches by public officials, government documents, prestigious academic journals, and elsewhere.⁴² The comments of Eugene McCarthy, delivered before the Yale Political Union in September 1987, illustrate this point:

³⁸Sue E. Berryman, *Who Serves? The Persistent Myth of the Underclass Army* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), p. 21.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴⁰Binkin and Eitelberg, *Blacks and the Military*, pp. 76–77.

⁴¹Mark Shields, “Checkbook Patriotism Won’t Do,” *Washington Post*, 6 March 1981, p. A–15.

⁴²See Eitelberg, *Representation and Race*, pp. 31–33 for selected examples.

The volunteer army has not worked well. The Department of Defense has not been able to attract enough capable and qualified persons to the armed services. Our armed forces are far from a cross-section of the U.S. population; our military is unrepresentative of the nation. Standards of admission have been lowered; financial and other benefits have been increased; cash bonuses for enlisting have been offered.⁴³

McCarthy goes on to say that the “volunteer army” is just another designation for “mercenary army,” and that service in the military is an “inalienable duty of citizenship.”⁴⁴ At a later date, he stated his support for a military draft based primarily on his view that “an army should be representative of the population.”⁴⁵

McCarthy never bothered to explain what he meant by “unrepresentative of the nation”—and, in fairness, his own definition of “representation” may support his claim. However, there are few knowledgeable people who would broadly criticize the capabilities and qualifications of the men and women in today’s military. And standards of admission have not been lowered (unless he was thinking of the enlistment test errors of the late 1970s); if anything, standards are generally higher now than in the entire history of the military (though the armed forces have recently experienced a downward swing in the so-termed quality of new recruits).

13. Advocates of “representation” continue to propose alternatives to the all-volunteer system; but anything short of a universal draft (with demographic quotas on reenlistments) is questionable. Previous research has shown that the demographic character of the armed forces could be changed by the introduction of a lottery draft, as long as there are few exemptions or deferments and each age cohort represents a cross section of the eligible population. However, the representativeness of the force would depend largely on the mix of volunteers to conscripts, which in turn would depend on the size of the draft calls and on the eligibility standards for both enlistees and inductees.⁴⁶ In addition, the demographic texture of the force would depend on the attrition of first-termers and on the behavior of those who reenlist. The effects of these several factors are uncertain—but an

⁴³Eugene McCarthy, *Required Reading* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1988), p. 55.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵Franklin and Marshall College *Alumni News*, December 1988, p. 7.

⁴⁶See Binkin and Eitelberg, *Blacks and the Military*, p. 145. If the objective were to markedly alter the military’s membership, volunteering would have to be tightly regulated or controlled.

analysis of the racial composition of the military under two draft alternatives suggests that changes in current patterns of social representation would be marginal.⁴⁷

Since the inception of the All-Volunteer Force, various proposals have been offered to create a military that mirrors society more precisely. One of the most recent proposals is the "Citizenship and National Service Act of 1989," introduced before Congress by Senator Sam Nunn and Representative Dave McCurdy. The proposed Act lists six purposes, the first of which is "to renew the ethic of civic obligation in the United States and spread the responsibilities of citizenship more equitably." The Act is also intended "to strengthen national defense by making the composition of the Armed Forces more representative of the country at large."⁴⁸

The Nunn-McCurdy proposal seeks to accomplish these objectives by linking practically all federal assistance for higher education to service in a national "Citizen Corps." Volunteers choosing to serve in the military would receive two-thirds of the basic compensation of other enlistees and a \$24,000 tax-free voucher at the end of two years of active service. (A commitment to serve in the reserves would follow.) The voucher could be used to pay for educational expenses or as a down payment for a home. An individual could alternatively earn a \$12,000 voucher by agreeing to serve 8 years in the reserves. Persons who prefer civilian service over the military could earn a maximum of \$20,000 in return for two years of full-time work. They would also receive \$100 per week in compensation as well as health insurance benefits.

This is an interesting proposal and it has been taken very seriously by the Defense community because of the influence and stature of Senator Nunn, who is Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services.⁴⁹ (Though the Nunn-McCurdy bill is only one of more than 20 proposals for "national service" introduced before the 101st Congress.) Many people have been attempting to estimate its

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 147.

⁴⁸"Citizenship and National Service Act of 1989," S. 3, 101st Congress, 1st Session, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁹Senator Nunn has been a long-time critic of the representativeness of the all-volunteer military—particularly with respect to "legitimacy" and the obligations of citizenship. (See Eitelberg, *Military Representation*, pp. 17, 33.) Nunn has also been a strong advocate of national service (and compulsory military service) over the years. A 1977 study commissioned by Nunn suggested that national service could help to spread the burdens of defense more equitably among population groups. See William R. King, *Achieving America's Goals: National Service or the All-Volunteer Force*, Report prepared for the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, 95th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977).

possible consequences for the military as a result; however, since it is a grand scheme without precedent in this country, estimates of its effects on the military are highly speculative at best. And these estimates tend to reflect the biases of the individuals and organizations involved.

Nevertheless, there are certain basic features of the proposal that offer some indication of how it might affect the social representativeness of the military. First of all, since the incentive to join the military is *money* in the form of a voucher, it is unlikely that it will drive otherwise-disinclined “children of the rich and upper-middle class” to enlist for two years. (The designers of the bill tend to call the voucher a “GI Bill”—but it is still money for college or for a new home. Potential participants will thus respond to the monetary value of the voucher based on their economic status.) The Democratic Leadership Council, which created the “blueprint” for the Nunn–McCurdy bill, admits that, “from a purely economic standpoint, [youths from well-to-do families] obviously will have less incentive to volunteer.”⁵⁰ But the Council remains optimistic:

In time, as national service grows and becomes for increasing numbers of young people a rite of passage to adulthood and an emblem of citizenship, privileged youths may well come to feel a social obligation to participate.⁵¹

The “social obligation” would certainly have to be quite *strong*, if the intention were to have a fair share of “privileged youths” in the enlisted ranks. The military’s national service contingent would not enjoy a very easy life for two years. First, their pay would be lower than that of other enlistees; and their treatment and status may suffer as well within the organization. (They would not, for example, qualify as military veterans.) More importantly, because they would be “short-timers,” the military could not afford to invest much in their training. Most of the national service participants would therefore be placed in jobs requiring few special skills—such as general detail positions, infantry, service and supply, and the like—comparable to the jobs filled by draftees during the 1960s.

It is difficult to predict what, if any, effect the Citizen Corps program would have on the socioeconomic composition of the military. Indeed, as noted previously, no one really knows very much about the socioeconomic background of

⁵⁰Democratic Leadership Council, *Citizenship and National Service*, p. 18.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

today's military members—*without* the Citizen Corps. Yet, several factors combine to suggest that the proposed program would *not* make the military any more socially representative than it is now:

- (1) Close to 30 percent of all federal aid for higher education is awarded to racial or ethnic minorities, including 15 percent to blacks and 8 percent to Hispanics. By comparison, minorities represent about 22 percent of the general population, 28 percent of the military's new recruits, and 30 percent of the active-duty enlisted force.⁵²
- (2) Minorities and young people from low-income backgrounds are most likely to rely solely on financial aid to support their education. This should come as no surprise, since the primary purpose of federal aid for higher education is to equalize educational opportunity. Most aid is "need-based" and targeted for individuals who can demonstrate that they need financial help. More specifically, "the intent of such aid is to remove financial barriers that could prevent individuals from enrolling in college, unduly restrict their choice of an institution, or bring about their premature departure from college."⁵³ A recent study by Leslie and Brinkman concludes that student financial aid is an "effective tool" in this capacity, helping considerable numbers of low-income people.⁵⁴ At the same time, low-income students have fewer *alternative* sources of financial support for higher education—implying that they may be more inclined than others to join the Citizen Corps for the educational voucher.
- (3) In the fall of 1988, a sample of young people between the ages of 16 and 21 were asked to indicate their preference with respect to four national service options on the Defense Department's Youth Attitude Tracking Study.⁵⁵ Three of the four options were similar to the choices that could be made under Nunn-McCurdy. The results showed that blacks and Hispanics were more likely than whites to choose the military option over civilian service; women were more likely than men to select the civilian option; and low-aptitude youths were more likely than those of high aptitude (regardless of race or ethnicity) to choose military service. The results

⁵²Department of Defense, *Population Representation*; Bureau of the Census, *Population Profile of the United States - 1984/85*, Series P-23, No. 150 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, April 1987); and R. Korb, N. Shantz, P. Stowe, and L. Zimble, *Undergraduate Financing of Postsecondary Education: A Report of the 1987 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study*, CS-88-239 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Education, June 1988).

⁵³Larry L. Leslie and Paul T. Brinkman, *The Economic Value of Higher Education* (New York: The American Council on Education/Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), p. 135.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

⁵⁵Defense Manpower Data Center, untitled draft manuscript on responses to national service questions appearing on the Youth Attitude Tracking Study, May 1989.

were further analyzed combining information on the “enlistment propensity” of the respondents (determined from other questions) with estimates of future behavior (determined from historical data on previously-administered surveys). The researchers concluded that the hypothetical national service program would probably have “little effect on the gender, minority, or AFQT proportion of individuals in their first term of service.” However, it was also found (using conservative assumptions) that the armed services would experience a “substantial” decline in person-years within the first-term force—creating the need for a much greater number of recruits each year. It should be noted that the study did not examine the possible effects of the hypothetical program on the career force; and the predictive value of responses to survey questions of this type is uncertain.⁵⁶

It is interesting to note that participation in the new Citizen Corps would be restricted to persons possessing a high school diploma or its equivalent.⁵⁷ Since more than 9 out of 10 new recruits now are high school graduates, the bill would not be expected to alter levels of educational achievement in the force as a whole. (It is assumed here that the Nunn–McCurdy bill does not include high school dropouts in its definition of “representative.”) However, since many participants would be “college material,” the armed forces may wind up competing with the Citizen Corps for “regular” recruits who are willing to make the military a career. Furthermore, the military would have to offer an equivalent of the home payment option or it would probably stand to lose a good number of high school graduates not planning to attend college. The Citizen Corps program could conceivably operate to reduce current levels of educational achievement and aptitude test scores in the military’s career force.

There is another aspect of the Nunn–McCurdy proposal that raises serious questions of equity for women. As noted, the plan is intended to make the military “more representative of the country at large” and to better distribute the burdens of defense. This can be accomplished, according to the plan’s architects, by building upon “incentives that have already proved successful in attracting a broader cross-section of society into military service—shorter enlistments and more generous GI Bill-style benefits.”⁵⁸ Evidently, the designers of the new program did not have *women* in mind when they defined the term “representative,” because “GI Bill-style

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷S.3, Section 102, “Eligibility,” p. 8.

⁵⁸Democratic Leadership Council, *Citizenship and National Service*, p. 28.

ceilings on the number of women who can serve in armed forces, women will continue to receive a disproportionately small share of the burdens as well as the *benefits* of military service.

In fact, the original "GI Bill of Rights" was created through the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 to compensate veterans for their lost opportunities and to ease their transition to civilian life. It was also seen as a benefit or reward for draftees who faithfully served their country at low pay. Soon after the close of the Vietnam era and start of the All-Volunteer Force, the GI Bill was ended and replaced with a less costly program of contributory vesting known as "VEAP."⁵⁹ Between 1944 and 1976, when Congress eliminated the GI Bill, women accounted for about 1.5 percent of the military—and about 1.5 percent of everyone eligible for GI Bill benefits. The fairness of this was never really questioned, presumably because women were not subject to the draft. If they joined the military, they did so voluntarily. Furthermore, they were less likely than men to attend college; and they could always share in the home-buying advantages and other benefits as wives of military veterans.

The times have changed. Today, there are more women than men attending college.⁶⁰ There are more women than men receiving federal aid for higher education.⁶¹ If all federal aid for higher education became subject to national service, the impact would be felt more strongly on women than on men. Moreover, since the participation of women in military service is still restricted, their access to the \$24,000 military voucher (as opposed to the \$20,000 civilian voucher) would likewise be limited. Currently, women represent about 11 percent of all active-duty military personnel. This percentage may rise over the next few years—but tradition and combat exclusion will make changes in the male-dominated military quite difficult.

Consequently, women would not have equal opportunity or access to the more lucrative educational or home-buying benefits resulting from national service under the military option. What makes matters worse is the fact that most Citizen Corps jobs in the military would probably be in positions currently closed to women

⁵⁹In July 1985, "VEAP" was replaced with a revamped "New GI Bill" (a three-year trial program of enhanced educational benefits). The basic program was subsequently extended and renamed the "Montgomery GI Bill," after Congressman G. V. Montgomery, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

⁶⁰Korb et al., *Financing of Postsecondary Education*; and National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education, Volume 2: Postsecondary Education* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1988).

⁶¹Korb et al., *Financing of Postsecondary Education*.

because of the combat exclusion policy.⁶² So, the participation of women in the military option could be *even less* than one would expect based on the present composition of the military. (An unknown factor here is the effect the Citizen Corps could have on the representation of women in the career force—since women are currently less likely than men to volunteer and more costly to recruit.)

The Nunn–McCurdy proposal is probably attractive to many American citizens who would agree with its fundamental goals of equity, patriotism, and civic responsibility. Indeed, Danzig and Szanton observe, “national service has relatively broad political appeal as an ideal.” It sounds so good, so democratic, so right for our desired society. However, “when reduced to a particular plan,” the authors find, “[National service] may have considerably less appeal.”⁶³ This point provides a fitting prelude to a final observation.

14. After all is said and done, it should be clear that “representation” is an unrealistic policy objective. In their comprehensive study of *National Service*, Danzig and Szanton conclude that “most forms of national service would not improve the quality or representativeness of either the all-volunteer or a draft-based military.” They also write that “national service is not an idea, and still less a plan, but rather an ideal encompassing a variety of often inconsistent ideas.”⁶⁴

The same may be said for “representation.” It is an ideal encompassing many inconsistent ideas, conflicting concepts, differing definitions and criteria, as well as numerous unresolved policy issues. It tends to hold different meanings for different people, with no clearly exclusive denotation. And, as the example of national service suggests, policies to achieve proportional participation are generally problematic—carrying heavy spillover costs and consequences that can backfire in the face of good intentions. There are certainly some very good reasons for having an approximately representative military (particularly in wartime), just as there are compelling reasons for having voluntary national service. The big hitch is putting principles into practice.

⁶²The Democratic Leadership Council itself observes that professional soldiers “would undergo training in more technical military specialties, while citizen soldiers would be assigned to *combat units* and *labor-intensive* duties.” (See *Citizenship and National Service*, p. 36; emphasis added.)

⁶³Richard Danzig and Peter Szanton, *National Service* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1986), p. 267.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 265.