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AN “ARMY OF ONE” TO “ARMY STRONG”:
VISUAL MEDIA AND U.S. ARMY RECRUITMENT DURING BUSH’S
“WAR ON TERROR”

By

Shawn Paul Apostel

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(Rhetoric and Technical Communication)

MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

2011

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This dissertation, "An 'Army of One' to 'Army Strong': Visual Media and U.S. Army Recruitment during Bush's 'War on Terror,'" is hereby approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN RHETORIC AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION.

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Every word, every page of this dissertation required a commitment from my family to the research, writing, and revising process, so this completed work is as much theirs as mine. To my wife, Kristi, you are an amazing personal dissertation trainer. You held me accountable and kept me focused. Thank you. To my daughters Hina and Siri, I hope you will write your own dissertations one day. Thank you for donating your Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and countless evenings, to your Papa's dissertation. I love you all very much.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	5
List of Tables	7
Acknowledgements	8
Abstract	9
1. Recruitment During the “War on Terror”	10
1.1 Overview of Army recruitment materials, 1917-2006.....	13
1.2 Research on military recruitment materials, 1954-2006	17
1.3 Research methodologies	23
1.4 Dissertation outline	31
2. The Context of War: Shifting terministic screens.....	35
2.1 Theoretical frameworks and critical concepts	38
2.2 Pre-Iraq: Army as an opportunity	45
2.3 An American military myth.....	50
2.4 Ignoring Combat: A terministic screen	51
2.5 Need a summer job? Look no further	57
2.6 Connecting past wars to the War on Terror.....	61
2.7 A failed terministic screen and lower recruitment numbers.....	62
2.8 Calming the storm of warfare	65
2.9 Army says soldiers make a difference	68
2.10 Interpellating students as soldiers	69
3. The Myth Requires “Army Strong”	74
3.1 Key theorists and critical concepts	78
3.2 Visualizing safety in stressful situations	79
3.3 The story of “Army Strong”	92
3.4 The music of “Army Strong”	94
3.5 Strong? The Army addresses a concerned public.....	95
3.6 Defining/redefining strong	99
4. America’s Army: Sharing an American military myth with the world	102
4.1 Connecting with the visual soldier.....	110
4.2 Simplifying Warfare: American soldiers as heroes	115
5. Interrogating Myths with Students.....	125
5.1 Selber’s three literacy framework	127
5.2 Bringing Selber’s approach into a university classroom	130
5.3 Example 1: GoArmy.com in 2000	136
5.4 Example 2: GoArmy.com in 2001	140
5.5 Example 3: GoArmy.com in 2009	143
5.6 Classroom discussion of Army recruitment messages	150
References.....	155

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	Soldiers are empowered decision makers	19
Figure 2.1	The outside spread of the “Army Linguist brochure	45
Figure 2.2	The inside spread of the “Army Linguist brochure.....	46
Figure 2.3	The back of the mailing.....	53
Figure 2.4	The front of the mailing	53
Figure 2.5	The first page of the mailing	54
Figure 2.6	The second page of the mailing	55
Figure 2.7	The third page of the mailing.....	56
Figure 2.8	The forth page of the mailing.....	56
Figure 2.9	The fifth and final page	57
Figure 2.10	Image of recruitment poster	65
Figure 2.11	Location of recruitment poster	66
Figure 3.1	<i>Time Magazine’s</i> 2003 Person of the Year.....	75
Figure 3.2	23 letters	81
Figure 3.3	23 soldiers.....	81
Figure 3.4	Close up of feet running.....	83
Figure 3.5	Soldiers move quickly	83
Figure 3.6	Soldiers use technology	83
Figure 3.7	Soldiers are informed	84
Figure 3.8	The battlefield from above	84
Figure 3.9	Soldiers jump from airplanes	84
Figure 3.10	A lone parachuter.....	85

Figure 3.11	Soldiers are supported by helicopters	87
Figure 3.12	Helicopters offer excitement.....	87
Figure 3.13	Tanks offer stability	88
Figure 3.14	A soldier looks at an armored vehicle from above.....	89
Figure 3.15	Citizens take the Oath of Enlistment	90
Figure 3.16	Soldiers are ready for combat	91
Figure 3.17	New recruits listen to their drill sergeant	96
Figure 3.18	A soldier controls his nervousness	96
Figure 3.19	After service comes success	97
Figure 3.20	Service makes you a better father	97
Figure 4.1	A digital rendition of the “Fit to Win” boot camp.....	106
Figure 4.2	Bridge map on a clear night.....	109
Figure 4.3	An alley in Ostregal	112
Figure 5.1	The Army’s website on December 2, 2000	136
Figure 5.2	The Army’s website on September 17, 2001	140
Figure 5.3	The Army’s website on February 15, 2009	143

List of Tables

Table 5.1	Selber's framework	130
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Acknowledgements

My interest in visual media began with an award I received for Best News Photograph. I took a picture of Georgia Governor Roy Barnes while he was signing an education bill. While other photographers focused on the moment his pen went to the paper, I took shots of him interacting with the children around him just before he signed the document, and I knew the instant I took the picture that I had a front page photograph. But while my experience and training as a photographer and graphic designer provided me with rules to good framing and depth of field, I remember thinking as I received the award that I couldn't explain *why* the photograph connect with viewers. Why was this photograph better than the others I took at the signing? Why was it more successful than the other photographs of the event taken by the other news photographers? That's when I knew I had to go to graduate school.

This dissertation idea actually began at a sushi restaurant in Clemson, South Carolina. Under the direction of Karen Schiff, I was completing an independent study on the way U.S. citizens relate to the American Flag, and our conversation turned to the American Military. I have always been interested in notions of patriotism, and she recommended researching the visuals used on military recruitment websites. That dinner in 2003 inspired my Masters' Thesis at Clemson University, under the direction of Susan Hilligoss, as well as my research interests during my studies at Michigan Technological University. Throughout my time at MTU, many people have inspired my quest to understand the human connection to visual media: Diana George, Anne Wysocki, Erin Smith, and Diane Shoos provided the feedback and mentoring I needed as I explored visuals in classes, but I must also thank all my professors at MTU, who allowed me to bring in my interests to a wide variety of topics and classes. You were all very supportive.

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Abstract

From Bush's September 20, 2001 "War on Terror" speech to Congress to President-Elect Barack Obama's acceptance speech on November 4, 2008, the U.S. Army produced visual recruitment material that addressed the concerns of falling enlistment numbers—due to the prolonged and difficult war in Iraq—with quickly-evolving and compelling rhetorical appeals: from the introduction of an "Army of One" (2001) to "Army Strong" (2006); from messages focused on education and individual identity to high-energy adventure and simulated combat scenarios, distributed through everything from printed posters and music videos to first-person tactical-shooter video games. These highly polished, professional visual appeals introduced to the American public during a time of an unpopular war fought by volunteers provide rich subject matter for research and analysis. This dissertation takes a multidisciplinary approach to the visual media utilized as part of the Army's recruitment efforts during the War on Terror, focusing on American myths—as defined by Barthes—and how these myths are both revealed and reinforced through design across media platforms. Placing each selection in its historical context, this dissertation analyzes how printed materials changed as the War on Terror continued. It examines the television ad that introduced "Army Strong" to the American public, considering how the combination of moving image, text, and music structure the message and the way we receive it. This dissertation also analyzes the video game *America's Army*, focusing on how the interaction of the human player and the computer-generated player combine to enhance the persuasive qualities of the recruitment message. Each chapter discusses how the design of the particular medium facilitates engagement/interactivity of the viewer. The conclusion considers what recruitment material produced during this time period suggests about the persuasive strategies of different media and how they create distinct relationships with their spectators. It also addresses how theoretical frameworks and critical concepts used by a variety of disciplines can be combined to analyze recruitment media utilizing a Selber inspired three literacy framework (functional, critical, rhetorical) and how this framework can contribute to the multimodal classroom by allowing instructors and students to do a comparative analysis of multiple forms of visual media with similar content.

Recruitment During the “War on Terror”: Military myths, terministic screens, and viewer interpellation

On September 20, 2001, then United States President George W. Bush outlined what he described as a “War on Terror.” Following the public outcry responding to the September 11 terror attacks, recruitment into the armed forces was surging and the President’s approval rating was an unprecedented 90 percent. Yet, a few years later, as the nation became bogged down in a prolonged and difficult war in Iraq, news headlines warned “Army recruiting short again,” “Army’s recruiting lowest in years,” and “Army stretched to breaking point,” due to deaths, low morale, and dismal recruitment numbers (Krepinevich and Lawrence).

However, toward the end of Bush’s presidency, a wide variety of factors contributed to an increased interest in military service. Perhaps the most notable was that as Iraq became more stable, the U.S. economy began to struggle, making jobs increasingly hard to obtain and retain. Although these factors undoubtedly helped to bolster enlistment, the public’s perception of the war and the condition of the economy were not the sole factors in the increased interest in the military as a place of employment or career option. During the period from Bush’s September 20, 2001 speech to Congress to President-Elect Barack Obama’s acceptance speech on November 4, 2008, the U.S. Army produced visual recruitment material with a message that shifted from one that espoused a post-cold war “downsizing” military as envisioned by then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to a post-Iraq invasion strategy involving a “surge” capable Army. The recruitment messages used by the Army addressed the concerns of falling enlistment numbers with quickly-evolving and compelling rhetorical appeals: from an “Army of One” (introduced in January 2001) to “Army Strong” (launched in October 2006); from messages focused on education and individual

identity to high-energy adventure and simulated combat scenarios, distributed through everything from printed posters and music videos to first-person tactical-shooter video games.

News stories throughout the War on Terror document the lowering of standards by the military to fill annual quotas, the role the economy plays in public interest in military life, the increase in signing bonuses and other perks offered to those considering joining the military, and the unprecedented access to middle and high-school students that recruiters receive under the No Child Left Behind Act¹ (Burns, 2005; Badkhen, 2006). Yet the visual recruitment materials distributed during this time have been largely overlooked. The military's recruitment budget was increased to \$7.7 billion in 2008, up from \$3.4 billion in 2004 (Vogel, 2009). (To put this into perspective, Coca-Cola spends an estimated \$2 billion per year to advertise their product *worldwide*, and the fast food industry spends \$4.2 billion per year to market their food in the United States.²) With this kind of spending capital, the military can constantly review and adjust their recruitment message. In fact, the U.S. Military awards the largest advertising contracts in the U.S. government. The same companies (N.W. Ayer, Young and Rubicam, Publicis' Leo Burnett, and McCann-Erickson) that design cologne, fast food, soft drink, blue jeans, and car commercials are creating messages to encourage people to enlist in the military.

¹ Section 9528 (a) (1) of the No Child Left Behind Act requires that "each local educational agency receiving assistance under this Act shall provide, on a request made by military recruiters or an institution of higher education, access to secondary school students names, addresses, and telephone listing." It also requires that schools "provide military recruiters the same access to secondary school students as is provided generally to post secondary educational institutions or to prospective employers of those students." For more information, visit the U.S. Department of Education online (www.2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg112.html).

² Yale's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity is a non-profit research and public policy organization based at Yale University. The Center's 2010 report on fast-food marketing can be viewed by visiting: www.fastfoodmarketing.org/medi/FastFoodFACTS_Report.pdf

These highly polished, professional visual appeals introduced to the American public during a time of an unpopular war fought by volunteers provide rich subject matter for research and analysis. This dissertation examines the images and the text used to sell life in the Army and analyzes how they have changed as the War on Terror has continued. Drawing on Roland Barthes' concept of mythology, I argue that visual recruitment materials utilize two myths of the American military to bolster the call to join the Army: first, that the Army can use military force to remove governments and form allies—a myth I call *reciprocal altruism*—and, second, that those who serve in the military are the true American patriots. I draw on Kenneth Burke's notion of terministic screens to examine the “filters” or “lenses” placed on two-dimensional visuals, moving images, and video games that enable designers to capitalize on these American military myths. I examine both the myths and these screens through key concepts and critical frameworks such as interpellation, gestalt theory, semiotics, and flow from multiple disciplines such as technical communication, rhetoric, film studies, visual theory, and video game theory. I thus take a multidisciplinary approach to illuminate the strategies and techniques designers employed to assuage the concerns people may have felt about joining the Army at various stages during the War on Terror and thereby, in Althusser's terms, to “interpellate” the viewer as a potential soldier.

I also consider what recruitment material produced during this time period may suggest about the persuasive strategies of different media and how they create distinct relationships with their spectators. Finally, I argue that recruitment materials provide a compelling and relevant subject for university multimodal composition classrooms because college students are highly valued by the military and are therefore a prime audience for much of the military's recruitment campaign, a campaign that encompasses

a variety of visual media: posters, magazine advertisements, brochures, key chains, t-shirts, pencils, websites, YouTube videos, music videos, and video games. Like advertisements for Coca-Cola and Dominoes' Pizza, these materials are ubiquitous in most university settings. Yet, unlike these other products, the commitment and the stakes of the call to service in the Army (or any branch of the U.S. Military) is unparalleled given the multiple redeployments and stop-loss measures used during the War on Terror, as well as the unprecedented budget for military recruitment.

Overview of Army recruitment materials, 1917-2006

Although America has used a variety of rhetorical techniques to recruit people for the wars it has faced, the most iconic recruitment image used by the U.S. Armed Forces is the poster of Uncle Sam pointing at the viewer with the message "I Want You" in bold letters. Since the introduction of this poster to American audiences in World War I, images have been recognized as a powerful recruitment tool by the U.S. Military. Visual media were utilized with great success to encourage action and support for war efforts; indeed, the combination of this recruitment tool with the draft fulfilled the military's demand for soldiers throughout many of America's wars. Padilla and Laner's study of military recruitment from 1915 to 1953 found that images and text in recruitment material "rest(ed) on the military division of labor and manpower needs as these change over time, and (...) that recruitment also utilize(d) the insignia and social status of elite units as these develop, to encourage enlistment" (2001, p. 432). In other words, the recruitment messages presented military workers as empowered people, and the audience is to look up to them or strive to become one of them. Padilla and Laner (2002) found that this message continued to 1990 (when their study ended), with an interesting shift taking place during the Vietnam conflict. Throughout the Cold War, recruitment

advertisements focused primarily on how serving in the military provided opportunities for an education or learning a skill or trade, but during the Vietnam conflict the recruitment themes began to showcase other benefits a service member may enjoy. While the majority of the images and text still focused on jobs and education, these new messages discussed the increased social status, patriotism, and adventure one can obtain by serving in the military. This shift to a more wide range of recruitment messages was soon to be put to the test as the draft was abandoned and the military was forced to use an all-volunteer force.

In the 1960's a growing and increasingly vocal public outcry against the Vietnam conflict led to criticism of the draft which proved so strong that the draft lost political support. The RAND³ Corporation, a non-profit think-tank originally formed by the military, lists five reasons the draft was eventually abolished: demographics (the draft was only affecting the underprivileged); cost (recruiting volunteers would be affordable); moral and economic rationale (conservatives, libertarians, and liberals all rejected the draft); opposition to the war in Vietnam (this growing movement showed an American interest in change); and the Army's desire for change (drafted citizens were more likely to display discipline problems that the Army would rather avoid). Advising then President Richard Nixon was the Gates Commission, which concluded that the U.S. Military would be best served by an all-volunteer force. Nixon signed the law ending the draft in 1971, and the Army, under the direction of the advertising agency N.W. Ayer, who worked with the Army from 1969 to 1987, began a campaign to encourage people to enlist by using the message "Today's Army Wants to Join You." When the decision to end

³ The RAND Corporation (short for Research and Development) was originally formed by the Army Air Force in World War II. Today their mission is to help "improve policy and decision making through research and analysis." For more information visit www.rand.org/about/history.html

the draft was made public in January 1973, the Army changed its message to “Join the People who have Joined the Army.”

As the draft ended and conscripts were no longer being sent into military service, RAND studied accession rates and job performance to see what type of person should be the focus of military recruitment messages. Based on these studies, recruitment efforts were redirected towards people who scored higher on standardized tests, or, in military parlance, “high quality youths.” These individuals were found to perform their duties better and be more likely to fulfill their enlistment contracts than those who scored lower on such tests, and their fulfilled contracts saved the military millions in training and equipment (RAND). The military had to devise ways to continue to attract such individuals, who were more inclined to go to college than spend four or more years in active service:

To attract high-quality youths, the services had to develop appropriate marketing strategies and advertising programs that explained the benefits and opportunities of military service. The military learned that it had to offer money for education, bonuses to enlist in certain occupations, and enlistment tours of different lengths. It needed to develop career opportunities that had civilian relevance and were a good preparation for adulthood. The services also had to develop a professional, highly trained, and motivated recruiting staff. Finally, reenlisting the most capable members was the key to creating a truly outstanding force. Besides good pay, careerists demanded quality-of-life benefits such as good housing, child care, health benefits, family advocacy programs, and military stores. It was crucial that the services become “family friendly.” (RAND p. 3)

Putting these programs in place was the important first step, but to get this message out, the military had to do more than print posters and magazine ads. Motivated by an older, post-WWII survey that found 16 to 20-year-olds were more likely to be reached through movies (Seaton, 1955), recruiters began focusing their attention on the relatively new advertising medium of television as popular and political support for the draft was diminishing, and by 1971, 78 percent of potential recruits were being reached through television advertisements. Thus, by the time the draft ended, the Army had a recruitment process in place to access their prime audience. The message “Join the People who have Joined the Army” was replaced by “This is the Army” in 1978, but the message failed to resonate with Americans. Enlistment numbers plummeted in 1979, and the Army missed its goal by 17,000 recruits (Chambers and Vergun, 2006). In 1981 a new message was developed and became one of the most memorable brands of the century; “Be All You Can Be” was used by the Army for 20 years. When the Young and Rubicam advertisement agency picked up the Army contract in 1987, they kept the popular message until 2001, when Leo Burnett was contracted to come up with “Army of One.” This campaign was the first to direct potential recruits to www.goarmy.com. It was also the first to target the Spanish speaking market with “*Yo Soy el Army*,” which literally translated means “I am the Army.” This message was still in its infancy when the War on Terror began; however, the television images designed to appeal to independent youths who were technologically savvy soon lost its effectiveness in the face of an ongoing and unpopular war. The launch of the video game *America’s Army* enabled the Army to reach and instruct a predominately young male market, but by 2006 the “Army of One” slogan was no longer speaking to America’s youth. The Army hired a new agency, McCann Erickson, who replaced “Army of One” with a message that seemed to imply that war was a rite of passage and an ongoing challenge to America’s youth: “Army

Strong.” As evidenced by higher enlistment numbers, it was well received by potential recruits as well as military leaders.

This short history of Army sales pitches serves to illustrate that, since the end of the draft, new recruitment tools and messages that target “high quality youths” and seek to construct particular relationships with these viewers are continually being developed and tested; however, many of these visual recruitment messages have yet to be closely analyzed in terms of their media-specific qualities and rhetorical strategies.

Research on military recruitment materials, 1954 - 2006

Advertising researchers, often in conjunction with RAND and other military-sponsored reports, have conducted numerous studies to determine the effectiveness of media expenditures in increasing enlistment. Detouzos and Garber’s (2006) qualitative study of advertising and the enlistment of high quality youths found that radio and magazine ads worked well to introduce people to military service, but that television ads had more of an immediate effect on encouraging enlistment. Dertouzos conducted an earlier study in 1989 that used a cost-per-high-quality-youth-enlistee ratio to argue for the economic efficacy of print advertising (\$5,000 to \$6,000 per recruit) versus cash bonuses (\$16,000), recruiters (\$5,700), and radio advertisements (>\$8,000). Through quantitative analysis, he also found that there was a significant relationship between print ads and recruitment figures for up to six months after the ads stopped running. Examining the recruitment decline in the 1990s, Warner, Simon and Payne’s research (2003) indicated a connection between relatively low military pay, low unemployment in the civilian sector, an increased college entrance among America’s youth, and the decline in recruitment numbers. A study released in 2000 found that 90 percent of 16 to 24 year

old males recognized the Army slogan “Be All You Can Be”; however, the Army missed its recruitment goal by eight percent that same year (74,500 short in fiscal year 1999) (Wilson et al.). The study also found that those who did not consider enlisting cited “Military Lifestyle” as their reason, ultimately, for not joining. Incidentally, the Army responded to this objection with the creation of the *America’s Army* video game, allowing youth to experience, as I will argue, a low commitment form of military lifestyle in the comfort of their own homes, thereby increasing chances that individuals might enlist.

Scholars in rhetoric and communication, most notably Moskos (1977) have shown interest in the verbal arguments used by U.S. Army recruitment since the end of the draft in 1973, yet few study Army visual recruitment material. One notable exception is Padilla and Laner who published a number of articles on this topic that utilize both content analysis and sociohistorical analysis to refute Moskos’ claim that the implementation of a volunteer draft will create a mercenary-type force, a group more focused on income than its mission. Padilla and Laner (2002) argue that from the Korean War to the end of the Cold War, money was never a predominant theme in military posters. Moreover, they highlight a variety of recruitment pitches during this time: Job/Career/Education, Patriotism, Adventure/Challenge, Social Status, and (least of all) Money. These messages, Padilla and Laner argue, changed based on the needs of the military and not the conditions civilians were facing. However, Padilla and Laner fail to address the growing use of television ads, movies, and even websites as recruitment material during this time, claiming that the messages found on television or the Internet used the same themes. Most importantly, they do not address the way in which these messages used media-specific strategies to attempt to connect with the potential recruit.

As I argue in this dissertation, the theme may be the same among media, but the engagement/interactivity of the viewer with the message are substantially different.

Research I conducted on military recruitment messages concurred with Padilla and Laner's findings that money was not a predominant theme of recruitment material. During the first few months of the war in Iraq, I analyzed 859 images used by the U.S. Military on their various recruitment websites, 331 of which were from the Army's recruitment website, which I collected on October 10, 2003. I found that images used on the Army recruitment website overwhelmingly focused on the training a potential enlistee would receive as a part of service. Only five percent of the images showed soldiers in a tense situation, and, of these, only one appeared to feature a soldier as shots are being fired. The picture below represents the message portrayed in a majority of the images I harvested from the Army website:



Figure 1.1 Soldiers are empowered decision makers

Here we see soldiers at work, helping to build and improve the situation in an (apparently) dangerous place. Both soldiers focus intently at something off the screen. They seem to be making a decision about how something needs to be done. There is a well-used bulldozer behind them, awaiting orders. Although they are both dressed in camouflage, only one is wearing a helmet. This image tells us that soldiers are

empowered decision makers who work in dangerous locations. They have the training and tools to get their work done, to improve the lives of the people in the country they occupy. On March 20, 2003, Americas watched news coverage of the overwhelming power of the United States military in a short span of time, known as the “Shock and Awe” campaign, which was also the beginning of “Operation Iraqi Freedom.” At that point, the “Army of One” image (from above) was put to the test, as American soldiers began a prolonged and difficult occupation.

I concluded my research by saying that the visual recruitment message depicting a decision-making, trained, high-tech soldier may have worked before a prolonged war, but this message would eventually conflict with news images of warfare that the audience would be seeing. I speculated that if the war in Iraq became a prolonged conflict, then the pitch that the military was using (i.e., service is a chance to learn marketable skills, get on-the-job-training, and become physically fit) would need to address (or at least acknowledge) the risks and difficulties faced in combat.

As it turned out, the message that the military was a good place to gain an education proved to be unsuccessful. Recruitment numbers fell dramatically during the prolonged war, and as they fell the military was forced to revamp its visual recruitment message. After six years of use, the slogan “Army of One” was replaced with “Army Strong” on November 2, 2006. Well aware of the challenges of changing a slogan during an already difficult period, Army and advertising representatives worked together in the composition process: “The new slogan, developed in numerous tests with focus groups and interviews with soldiers, is meant to convey the idea that if you join the Army you will gain physical and emotional strength, as well as strength of character and purpose” (Associated Press, “New Army Recruiting Slogan Unveiled,” 2006, par. 11). Development

of the slogan by McCann-Erickson not only involved Army soldiers and leadership, but it also included input from what the military calls “influencers” (teachers and parents). McCann-Erickson personnel even participated in a “three-day mini basic combat training at Fort Jackson, S.C. This allowed the team, if only for 80 hours, to stand in the boots of American Soldiers” (“Making of ‘Army Strong’ Fact Sheet,” p. 1). The resulting slogan “garnered some of the most positive feedback that the Army has seen in years” (p. 1). McCann-Erickson spared no expense to recruit artists to present this new slogan to the American public, hiring Samuel Bayer to create videos. Bayer produced videos for a number of music groups (including Green Day and Metallica) and products (including Nike and Mountain Dew). Music for the “Army Strong” videos was composed by Emmy award winner Mark Isham, who has composed more than 70 television and film scores (including *Men of Honor* and *Point Break*).

This new slogan and its accompanying highly-polished television campaign and website debuted as the Army computer-based video game *America’s Army*, which can be downloaded for free from the Army recruitment website (www.goarmy.com), was gaining in popularity. After years of development and roughly \$7 million spent, the game was launched in July of 2002 to great fanfare from the gaming industry. Subsequent releases of *America’s Army* have garnered continued support from the gaming community:

From a propaganda perspective . . . the Army has seemingly hit the jackpot. (And the Army readily admits the games are a propaganda device.) ‘America’s Army’ was one of the most talked about titles at E3 [Electric Entertainment Expo—an annual video game conference] and is starting to appear in the many ‘best of show’ lists that are popping up on

gaming web sites these days. Even game developers were singing the praises of ‘Operations.’ (Morris, 2002, par. 5)

America’s Army is, in game parlance, a “first-person tactical shooter” game. The images on-screen of the most recent version of the game are designed to depict the look and feel of moving through various locations in the Eastern-European-inspired nation of Ostregals, which we are told by game designers is suffering political turmoil and has requested the U.S. Army’s assistance; players are expected to make quick decisions about who to shoot in order to protect themselves and accomplish missions. *America’s Army*⁴ proved to be so successful that other video games have been developed by the Air Force, Marines, Navy, and U.S. National Guard as recruitment tools.⁵ Since entering the recruitment field, video games have been developed and utilized to train today’s soldiers (“Training without sweating,” 2008). In addition, virtual recruiters are working in Second Life⁶ and on the Army’s website (Stallock, 2008; Brodtkin, 2007). Virtual warfare and military training is even being brought to America’s malls as the Army rents vacant storefronts. Gaming stations that incorporate props like Humvees, Black Hawk helicopters, and Apache gunships are being used with video games to simulate combat experiences (Reiss, 2009). The fact that more people in the Army’s target age demographic show interest in enlisting after playing these games appears to support the games’ effectiveness as recruitment tools, but the question of what specific rhetorical

⁴ *America’s Army 3* was released in June 17, 2009. Chapter 4 will discuss this edition of the game.

⁵ The U.S. Air Force released “USAF: Air Dominance” in 2005; the Marines released a “Tactical Decision-making Simulation” (TDS) in 2005 at the Pentagon’s Visitor Center; the Navy released “Strike and Retrieve” in 2005; and the National Guard released “Prism: Guard Shield” in 2005.

⁶ Second Life is an Internet-based, 3D, virtual world in which users create avatars to explore, socialize, and engage in a wide variety of activities including conferences and commerce. The U.S. Army opened two islands in 2009. One features a welcome/information center; the other allows avatars to participate in a variety of high-energy activities like jumping out of airplanes, rappelling, and using weapons.

strategies video games like *America's Army* utilize to encourage enlistment has yet to be closely examined (Orlando, 2011).

Research methodologies

An analysis of the various recruitment materials produced by the Army during the War on Terror in the following chapters requires that we first uncover the underlying, fundamental strategies that enabled the Army to make appeals to the American public in the first place; for example, why does the slogan “Army Strong” encourage enlistment and not protests as it would, say, in Germany? French critic and theorist Roland Barthes’s notion of myth is particularly useful because it encourages us to consider how text, images, graphic design, sound, editing, and movement can be combined to make statements that have the power of facts for a certain audience, when, in fact, they are particular to a certain historical, social, and cultural context. I propose that recruitment materials make use of myths that put the situation of the wars in the best light possible. I further propose that Burke’s notion of the terministic screen helps us to consider the ways the Army presents itself to illustrate, for example, safety in times of danger, focusing the viewer’s attention on one aspect of service while ignoring valid counter arguments to joining the Army. Finally, in this section I distinguish myth from ideology by arguing that myth transcends and serves to unify various ideologies; utilizing Althusser’s distinction between separation of (Repressive) State Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, I argue that while ideology is more openly expressed and debatable, myths are unspoken and unspeakable and thus are constructed without fear of repercussions and the possibility of contestation.

Myth

To establish how an image functions as a myth, according to Barthes, we must first determine the sign, or a unit of meaning, which is comprised of two parts: a signifier (an image, sound, or word) and the signified (the meaning that comes from the signifier). This signified or meaning depends on our individual experiences and our cultural context. Once we have established the sign (the combination of signifier and signified), Barthes proposes that the totality of this sign has the potential to become a new signifier, a *form*, with a new signified, a *concept*. This new level of signification constitutes the myth, which “has in fact a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us” (p. 55). In the case offered below, the young soldier becomes a *form* of the *concept* of French imperialism, and the myth is the confirmation of the *concept*. Notice this argument appears natural because the image is being used as an alibi. A myth, as Barthes argues, seems to those in the culture as an inherent universal.

Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simplify, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact. (p. 58)

In other words, the myth makes an argument that is depoliticized because of its naturalness to the targeted viewers; the myth seems obvious, timeless, outside of history and serves to unify its audience.

This social function of myth as a binding agent is clearly seen in Barthes’s discussion of the young black soldier on the cover of *Paris Match* in 1955:

On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naïvely or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. (p. 39)

Barthes' example demonstrates that a myth serves to gather different races under the flag of France, while ideologies—I argue below—serve to distinguish and separate various groups within a society; the myth's function is to unify various groups under an umbrella of cultural esteem and self-actualization. This call to unity works well with Althusser's notion of interpellation, which encourages us to consider how images relate to people who view them:

“(I)deology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace every day police (or other) hailing: ‘Hey, you there!’” (p. 174).

By acknowledging and analyzing how military recruitment messages “call out” to the people who see them, we discover how the military presents itself as well as how the military expects potential recruits to respond. The images utilized in the interpellation

process can serve both as a sign and as a form to be exploited by myth; the complexity of viewing, relating to, and interpreting the image is a matter that needs consideration.

Arguing that images are polysemic, Barthes discusses the way that images and text nonetheless work together to shape or “anchor” meaning. For example, there are many ways to interpret an image of an older soldier with a serious face, but text such as “the strength to lead” anchors the image by indicating what Barthes calls “the correct level of perception” (1977, p. 39). Judging by the serious expression, the text, and the context of the war, the image could then be interpreted as that of a strong leader who is prepared to take charge in difficult situations. Similarly, in their examination of photographs of people, Kress and van Leeuwen discuss how, in addition to text, eyes, posture, and background encourage a certain interpretation of the image. They thus demonstrate how designers can use lines, shapes, and the human body itself as a form of visual grammar based in the audience’s culture. The grammar of the visuals can anchor the way we read the messages images present, just as the way we “read” the body, eye contact, and distance of a person with whom we are in conversation.

Using Barthes’ and Kress and Van Leeuwen’s approaches, in this dissertation I analyze various multimodal materials produced during the War on Terror in terms of how they reveal and exploit the following American military myths: *reciprocal altruism* (a term and concept borrowed from evolutionary biology), the belief that soldiers’ self-sacrifice through war can solve complex problems and that the affected nations will, in turn, become democracies and allies of the U.S, thus making America stronger; and *the true patriot*, the belief that military service is a direct and indisputable result of one’s devotion and love for one’s country that cannot be questioned, despite the fact that

people join the military for a number of reasons (e.g. scholarships, adventure, travel, to name a few).

Terministic Screen

In my discussion of Army recruitment material I argue that the military uses a terministic screen in Burke's sense of the term, to safeguard military myths when the War on Terror was causing great stress on American forces. As Burke says, the framework of the terministic screen allows us to "track down the kinds of observations implicit in the terminology [the Army has] chosen, whether [their] choice of terms was deliberate or spontaneous" (p. 1341). In other words, the terminologies used by a group of people actually direct attention to certain concepts and, sometimes intentionally and sometimes inadvertently, away from other concepts, leading to a correspondingly different quality of observations than another group utilizing another set of terminologies. The use of a set of terminologies is the foundation of a terministic screen which becomes evident, for example, as news agencies report that the Army is "near the breaking point," while the Army-funded advertisement announces that the Army is "strong." Even as these words work as an anchor, the visuals used in this advertisement work as a filter preventing us from seeing the Army as anything but vital and uncompromised. Thus Burke's notion of the terministic screen complements Barthes's notion of anchor; just as the anchor narrows the possible meanings of the image, the filter-like qualities of the terministic screen focus our attention on the most desirable aspect of military service.

Burke's notion of terministic screen is equally productive as an approach to visual images; indeed his inspiration for the concept came from visuals themselves: "When I

speak of terministic screens, I have particularly in mind some photographs I once saw. They were different photographs of the same objects, the difference being that they were made with different color filters” (p. 1341). The use of graphic design techniques to minimize stressful situations when, say, a soldier is running to battle with a gun, can also serve as a filter in that it shapes the way the viewer relates to the image; instead of seeing the image as someone about to kill or be killed, the curved, calming, horizontal lines; muted colors; and *mise-en-scène* provide a screen of camaraderie, strength, and safety, thus preventing viewers from considering the image in ways that would be detrimental to the Army’s message to enlist. If, in addition to linguistic signs, we consider the grammar of visuals, we indeed find that the Army recruitment designers took deliberate steps to minimize the stress in images depicting combat-like scenarios and to maximize excitement when showing fast-moving helicopters and tanks. Even as language—the words we use for things physical and metaphysical—limits the way we see, or what we see in the world around us, the use of visual grammar shapes our perceptions of reality. As Burke proposes, “(e)ven if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality” (p. 1341). While the selection of reality can be easily pointed out as a photographer captures a person in action, the deflection becomes equally apparent as we see how the Army adjusted the visuals used during the War on Terror to downplay the news reports of the war and, when that failed to work, the act of war itself.

Ideology and Interpellation

While Burke’s notion of the terministic screen encourages us to consider ideas and concepts that are deflected by the screen, Althusser’s notion of ideology allows us to

consider the power struggle within the selecting and deflecting process. Drawing primarily from Marx and Gramsci as well as Freud and Lacan, Althusser defines ideology as

a ‘representation’ of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence (...which) (w)e commonly call religious ideology, ethical ideology, legal ideology, political ideology, etc., so many ‘world outlooks’. Of course, assuming that we do not live one of those ideologies as the truth (e.g. ‘believe’ in God, Duty, Justice, etc...), we admit that the ideology we are discussing from a critical point of view, examining it as the ethnologist examines the myths of a ‘primitive society’, that these ‘world outlooks’ are largely imaginary, i.e. do not ‘correspond to reality.’”
(p. 162)

For Althusser, ideologies are debatable, definable, and interchangeable, much like Burke’s terministic screen. Althusser defines two systems responsible for the fortitude and resilience of an ideological construct: the Ideological State Apparatuses (which presents itself in the institutions listed above) and the (Repressive) State Apparatus. These are different in that while “there is *one* (Repressive) State Apparatus (RSA), there is a *plurality* of Ideological State Apparatuses” (p. 144). Furthermore, the RSA “belongs entirely in the *public* domain, much the larger part of the Ideological State Apparatuses (in their apparent dispersion) are part, on the contrary, of the *private* domain. Churches, Parties, Trade Unions, families, some schools, most newspapers, cultural ventures, etc., etc., are private” (144). This difference between public and private domains helps illuminate Barthes’s notion of myth because while myths function as a world outlook (ideology), they also transcend ideologies, unifying and containing them within a single

framework; in other words, multiple competing ideologies can exist within a myth because it is a public ideology. For example, the myth of *reciprocal altruism* can function within liberal, conservative, and independent political ideologies as well as Muslim, Jewish, and Christian religious ideologies because political and religious ideologies are private, while *reciprocal altruism* is a public ideology. Since myths function in the public domain, the “calling out” or interpellation reaches a wider audience than, say, a political advertisement, which functions in the private domain. And while the political advertisement may utilize American myths by focusing on the “American dream,” debates and disagreements regarding political parties abound; however, by drawing on these myths, political advertisements attempt to interpellate a politically diverse audience. In the context of the War on Terror, myths allow the Army to make statements without public dispute and the following chapters examine what can be implicitly communicated to youths who view recruitment material without provoking politically-charged debates.

In addition to the larger concepts of myth, terministic screen, and interpellation, this dissertation takes up concepts from a variety of other fields: from rhetoric, Burke’s notion of identification; from film theory, the notion of the gaze as well as Block’s categories of shape, line, motion, etc; from technical communication, Kostelnick and Robert’s discussion of gestalt principles like proximity and similarity; and from video game theory, Bogost’s procedural rhetoric. These key concepts can help illuminate and reveal the myths as well as the techniques designers use to address the concerns the public may feel about joining the Army at various stages during the War on Terror. This multidisciplinary framework thus allows us to define and flesh out how myth functions in visuals, video, video games, and sound.

Dissertation outline

The chapters in this dissertation progress from printed images, to moving images, and finally to video games, revealing how these visual arguments utilize American myths to make their appeals. Chapter 2 analyzes a brochure, a mailing, and a poster. The brochure was produced in 2002, when the war in Afghanistan was just beginning. The narrative taking place in the brochure shows us that the climax of service as an Army linguist is a public-relations-type campaign—talking with a child on a street, winning the hearts-and-minds so to speak. After a feel-good tour of duty, one is free to relax at the beach with good friends, as the denouement shows us. While this brochure may have been effective when it was produced, it quickly became unrealistic a few years later as news coverage of the war in Iraq provided a conflicting visual message. The next sample, the mailing, was produced in 2004 as the war in Iraq was beginning to prove more difficult than President Bush and Donald Rumsfeld initially expected. Here we see a soldier earning “more than spare change” as he is being filmed by a videographer. Although the dark background and strong lighting might build some sense of danger, the soldier turns out to be working on a laptop. The videographer’s presence also releases some of this tension. The black-and-white imagery combined with grainy reproduction makes the images look similar to the ones captured by news photographer Robert Capa during World War II, but the text gives a modern edge and kinetic energy to this image. While the energy denoted in the text fails to continue during the War on Terror, the grainy, photographic representation becomes increasingly common, providing a subtle visual connection to American audiences between soldiers serving today and those who served the Allies during the war. The final sample in chapter 2 is a poster that shows well-equipped soldiers who are making a difference in the world. The poster

communicates to us that soldiers work together; they are prepared for their missions and are ready to instigate needed changes in this world. Produced during the introduction of the surge in Iraq, this image was designed to argue that soldiers have purpose and stability as they enter a conflict zone. These recruitment messages illustrate and can still be made because of the myth of reciprocal altruism. Rhetorically, we see how the poster interpellates students who are walking on campus, as well as provides a terministic screen that represses what many Americans were seeing on the news: that a relatively small force of under-equipped fighters could frustrate the plans of the most powerful military in world history.

Chapter 3 analyzes the television commercial designed to introduce “Army Strong” to the American public and finds how designers address the real-world situation of American soldiers being actively involved in a war by showing soldiers in what could be considered tense situations; however, these soldiers, equipped and ready for battle, are surrounded by visual elements that convey safety and security. The story is told using hand-held shots and quick pans, mimicking a *cinema vérité* style. The commercial also uses depth, similar hues, and horizontal lines to minimize any danger that soldiers shown in the footage could be experiencing. Indeed, the seemingly dangerous activities involve a fast helicopter and parachuting and not the footage of soldiers marching into battle, images more akin to aggressive sports footage than the reality of America’s involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The slogan “Army Strong” also conjures the idea of a strong Army—apparently not something to be debated in American culture as it would be in Japan or Germany—and we also find in the commercial the myth of the true American patriot. Here we see diverse people doing a wide variety of activities in the Army, each of these contributing to its strength. Rhetorically speaking,

the concept of “Army Strong” and the images of a powerful and well-equipped Army are actually being used as a terministic screen to counter the implicit arguments of news footage of devastating road-side bombs and frequent suicide attacks inflicted upon the Army during this period of the war in Iraq. Furthermore, the news reports of an Army reaching its breaking point and talks of cutting America’s losses in Iraq by leaving the country without achieving some semblance of success are also countered in this advertisement. In other words, the Army is strong enough to handle whatever missions it is sent to accomplish.

In Chapter 4 I analyze the video game *America’s Army* and argue that the game’s design not only helps players become accustomed to the sights and sounds of boot camp, but also interpellates the player into Army culture and values. Furthermore, the game facilitates the potential for a strong connection between a player in flow with a virtual character to create a unique experience that, as Bogost suggests, can be an effective rhetorical argument. We also find that the premise of the game illustrates the myth of reciprocal altruism in the sense that the U.S. Army is presented as a force for good in the world. My analysis also finds that the game’s structure promotes the concept that U.S. Army soldiers are not to consider the political, social, or religious reasons why people take up weapons for battle. In other words, once a group is declared an enemy of the United States of America, the Army’s mission is to destroy that group without considering their ideological positions or any other reasons the conflict might have been instigated in the first place. The game tells us that soldiers follow orders; the ethical ramifications of the conflict do not concern them.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the shifts in the multimodal rhetorical arguments found in U.S. Army visual recruitment material during the War on Terror.

Specifically, I argue that in order to recruit during the War on Terror designers had to shift visual rhetoric from images that focus on training and skills to ones that deflect concerns about personal safety, finally turning those concerns into an implicit challenge. This shift includes designing posters and print advertisements with black and white, grainy images similar to those found in documentary images and footage from World War II. Likewise, the video analyzed in this dissertation illustrates a shift to a visual grammar that stabilizes and calms intense images of impending danger while energizing images of flight and speed, suggesting a similarity between military service and extreme sports. Another shift was the launching of a video game that oversimplifies the ethical dilemmas of combat while training players in the use of firearms and urban combat techniques. In this chapter I discuss why an analysis of such military recruitment materials is relevant to the classroom and explain how this broad range of visuals might be brought into the semester-long university multimodal composition using Stuart Selber's framework of multiliteracy to facilitate a multidisciplinary approach that progresses from functional, to critical, to rhetorical analysis. Finally, in this chapter, I briefly consider possible directions for new scholarship on military recruitment as well as its implications for multimodal analysis and classroom pedagogy.

The Context of War: Shifting terministic screens in printed recruitment material

From 2001 to 2008 the U.S. Army suffered a perfect storm in regards to its enlistment efforts. Bugged down in two fronts and suffering high casualties, the Army faced American pessimism and skepticism about its ability to win the war in Iraq; combined with the Army's inability to draft new soldiers and a thriving economy, potential recruits found work in the private sector much more appealing. These unique circumstances exacerbated the challenge of encouraging enlistment. While horrifically memorable, the Army's intense struggle to maintain Iraq's new government was only a part of the War on Terror. The war began with high enlistment numbers that quickly reduced to unsustainably low enlistment before finally ending in a return to steady enlistment numbers. In the midst of this war, the Army had reached a reported breaking point, yet a few years later new recruits began to once again sign up for duty.

One major shift taken by the Army during this time was the visualization of service in the Army. Utilizing the American military myth of reciprocal altruism (that the sacrifices soldiers face in war by removing governments can help the United States by creating new allies), Army recruitment messages could ignore the reasoning behind the wars and focus on constructing terministic screens to interpellate potential recruits. This shift can be clearly seen in the darkest days of the war in Iraq through an advertisement campaign with a tough sell: getting people to join the Army when the public felt the war was lost. Images used at the beginning of the war used a terministic screen that focused attention on training and office-type jobs; however, a few years into the war, the visualization of service began to incorporate more war-like images: first by suggesting the news could not be trusted and then by suggesting soldiers are safe in battle.

This chapter examines the myth of reciprocal altruism and the subsequent terministic screens employed by the design in three recruitment pieces designed and distributed during the beginning, middle, and turning point of these recruitment efforts during the War on Terror. I argue that the circumstances surrounding the war during this time created an environment that made it difficult for viewers, who were accustomed to seeing reports of heavy fighting and otherwise dangerous conditions that soldiers were facing, to engage with the visual messages that were successful before the war. In short, the idea that American soldiers were welcomed liberators was subverted by the battles faced in the War on Terror. This challenge took time for the Army to address with the eventual release of the slogan, and subsequent advertising campaign, for “Army Strong,” the subject of the next chapter.

This chapter discusses the transition to “Army Strong” beginning with a brochure produced in 2002, when the war still commanded strong public support. The “Army Linguist” brochure offers a visual argument on the cover—a close-up of a female soldier, intently listening with headphones—but it also reveals a narrative of sorts as the audience opens the brochure, as well as offering a revealing look into the American military myth of reciprocal altruism. I then analyze a mailing produced in 2004, the same year reports warned that the Army was at a breaking point. “An Army of One Gift Offer” requires audience participation to view the complete text. Several visual and textual arguments are thus articulated with this format; every page is designed to persuade the viewer to continue the process of opening flaps and, finally, to fill out the application form at the end to receive a free Army t-shirt. In this piece we find a terministic screen that seeks to subvert the news reports of the Army’s struggle: the war might look scary on TV, but a closer look will show that the Army is a superior fighting

force. I will conclude the chapter with a discussion of a poster produced in 2006 (when the “breaking point” report was made public) and still in use in 2007. This poster, displayed outside in the middle of campus, interpellates students as they walk to class by showing soldiers walking to war. Using soldiers with weapons is a new terministic screen and it marks the beginning of the visual shift Army recruitment materials took during this time as it embraced the reality and hostility of war by showing armed soldiers marching to combat, while insisting that the job of being a soldier is necessary to make a difference in the world—as supported by the myth of reciprocal altruism. Consequently, this poster is among the last used during the “Army of One” campaign before the introduction of “Army Strong.”

Throughout this discussion, I examine the texts within their historical and cultural context to explain the myth and screens being used by the Army; looking at the context for the visual argument allows us to deduce how design facilitates engagement/interactivity with the viewer and how visual elements are being used to refute any concurrent negative publicity or piggyback on positive visual correlations from popular culture. It also allows us to speculate as to why the particular text would be deemed effective or ineffective as the War on Terror unfolded. Note that all my examples in this chapter were collected while I taught at Michigan Technology University (2004-2008). While this particular university (which is known primarily as an engineering school) may have a certain targeted demographic for the Army, the graphic elements used by the Army are highly standardized and can, therefore, be safely assumed to represent the overall visual arguments used to recruit people into the Army during the particular context of the War on Terror.

Theoretical frameworks and critical concepts

In the recruitment material released by the U.S. Army we expect to read about the benefits and rewarding challenges of serving in the armed forces; however, based on the image and text of the selections discussed below, we are also, with careful observation, able to uncover several common American ideologies: that the Army helps those in need; that highly trained and well-equipped soldiers can solve problems caused by chronic poverty, corrupt political situations, and lack of education; and that a strong U.S. Army is not only good, it is a point of pride. While my analysis will draw from a variety of scholars, the key theories and critical concepts I will be using in this discussion are discussed in detail in Chapter 1. The most fundamental concept in this chapter is Barthes's (1944) notion of myth and how it is used to depoliticize and naturalize the dominant hegemonic view in a culture. I argue in chapter 1 that myth is used by the state to unify diverse ideologies. Revealing the myth is key to coaxing out the meaning of military recruitment material as American culture continues its embrace an acceptance of military action throughout the world because myths allow the Army to make bold claims without explanation.

As we will see in this chapter, the U.S. Army gives us images that show powerful symbols of strength and confidence in the midst of danger, but *how* we read or understand these images are based on factors other than pure sight. As Barthes explains, when we see a photograph or advertisement we first notice the denotative (the literal or “obvious”) meaning and when we evaluate a visual argument we should look at the linguistic message the creator gives us because the text is what “anchors” the denotative message in the image.

Shown a plateful of something [...], I may hesitate in identifying the forms and masses; the caption [...] helps me to choose *the correct level of perception*, permits me to focus not simply my gaze but also my understanding. [...] The text has thus a *repressive* value and we can see that it is at this level that the morality and ideology of a society are above all invested (1998, p. 37-38)

We may look at the image and feel an association with the people shown in these recruitment pieces. However, the text tells us that these people make a difference in the world, as seen in Figure 2.6, in effect marginalizing non-military service. This places the soldiers in a position of action and power. According to other texts in the materials below, we are encouraged to imagine ourselves with the people shown in the images since we are invited to become like them by joining the service; indeed, since the purpose of these recruitment materials is to encourage enlistment, we are to feel a desire to be like the people in the image.

While young American viewers are interpellated as soldiers represented in the images, the people soldiers “help” are coded as “other” in the images we will examine below. Discussing a 1935 photograph of a man from Papua New Guinea in ceremonial dress, Sturken and Cartwright comment:

The photograph ... sets up binary oppositions of white/dark, European/native, civilized/primitive through its very conventions The image ... would mean something very different in the context of this boy's family or village than in the photographic album of a western traveler. The subjects of these photographs are not named as individuals, rather they

are identified as a particular category of people, established as other. They cannot speak in this context, nor do they have any control over the way in which they are presented. (2001, p. 103)

A prime example of this binary can be found in Figure 2.2, where a young soldier is talking with an apparently poor child—which we will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. Beyond the stereotypes found in the image, we see what appears to be a “found” image. In other words, it appears as if the photographer was walking along the road and happened upon this soldier and child in conversation and then, very subtly, took the pictures as this conversation was taking place. The illusion that the photograph was taken without the people in the picture posing is based on our assumptions of photography being “truthful,” a concept that the U.S. Army themselves are careful to perpetuate. However, critics such as John Tagg remind us that photographs themselves offer an interpretation of an event and are far from neutral; “[p]hotographs are never ‘evidence’ of history; they are themselves the historical” (1987, p. 247). Tagg says institutions place standards on photography to establish their “truthfulness.” Using examples from instructions written to police officers who are taking photographs for use in court cases, he demonstrates that, in order for photographs to be perceived as true to a jury, photographs must use conventions such as being

properly exposed, processed and printed. It must be correctly focused and sharp throughout, and all vertical lines of the picture must be upright and should not converge in the print ... (Pictures) should not be retouched, treated or marked in way. Exaggerated lighting effects must not be used, (nor should) deep shadows or burnt-out highlights ... (They should be) taken from eye level. (p. 265)

Tagg gives some of his clearest examples in the writings of S.G. Ehrlich, a court exhibition specialist, who suggests that photographs should be taken in a “neutral, straightforward way” and who cautions against photos that have “dramatic effects” or use “unusual camera angles, printing variations, cropping and the like” (p. 269). We can see some of these same techniques in images that are presented as “truthful” in recruitment photography.

The image may thus seem innocent, as if the photographer just happened upon the event as it occurred, but it does not simply reflect reality; the image presents an ideology, and in some cases a myth, that Americans have accepted and feel is normal (either consciously or unconsciously). Althusser builds on Marx by saying that ideology is how we, as humans, view reality. Thus the photographer and graphic designer, as part of American culture, can unconsciously perpetuate the way his/her culture sees the world. (I think it is also worth pointing out that these images were approved by the U.S. Army to be printed in the material below – so, we can safely say, more than one person is perpetuating this ideology.) As Burgin (1999) says “(t)he photographer who has chosen to live in a society and enjoys its benefits, even though he also chooses to put on blinders when he squints into a viewfinder, is willy-nilly an actor in a political situation.” (p. 41) In other words, the selection involved in photographic technique and editing is always tied up with the ideas of “realism” and “naturalness” that have implications for ideology.

The images below show U.S. Army soldiers as highly-trained, well-equipped people who are ready and able to take control of dangerous situations. The implication is that we will see the people in these photographs as capable of making a difference in the world. We can take this ideology further by suggesting that people in developing, war-torn, or politically challenged countries need the U.S. Army to help them. By taking

control of their areas, the ideology suggests, the U.S. can assure that crimes like the September 11, 2001 terrorists' attacks will not happen again. This explains, in essence, the American military myth of reciprocal altruism: the belief that the military can be used to solve complex problems with military action and that the sacrifice of American soldiers can help affected nations become democracies and allies of the U.S., thus strengthening the nation they serve. This myth justifies the use of the Army for "liberating" other countries from governments seen as hostile to American interests.

Ignored in this myth is the idea that the U.S. is increasingly expanding its influence on select countries such as those affected by terrorist organizations to the extent that certain citizens feel that their country's autonomy is being compromised. This myth naturalizes the argument that some countries are incapable of selecting qualified leaders, pursuing political and economic development, or achieving a good quality of life on their own. Ironically, this myth is refuted vehemently in many countries and is a partial cause of the upswing in anti-American rhetoric and crimes of terrorism. As we will find in the discussion below, these U.S. Army recruitment materials indicate that not only are American soldiers highly trained and technologically advanced, they are presented as ambassadors of freedom to the world. *Naturally*, these images and texts tell us, the "other" people in the world are struggling and cannot manage their own lives or cannot be trusted; we as Americans must use our military to "help" them.

While the linguistic and denotative messages by themselves reveal the story of America's myths, the recruitment material we analyze below offer a fuller narrative. The brochure tells us of the training and recreation that army linguists enjoy as part of their service. The process of unfolding the paper slowly reveals a story of a soldier posing for a videographer. Basic narratology, as outlined by Aristotle, suggests that stories have a

beginning, middle, and end, but today we are equally comfortable with narratives that do not necessarily follow that order. Indeed, brochures offer multiple narratives, depending on how the audience interacts with the text. But, for the sake of discussion, we will begin by looking at the brochure from the five part structure Exposition (the introduction), Rising Action (the buildup of tension), Climax (the confrontation), Falling Action (the easing of tension), and Denouement (the resolution). These terms pertain to the brochure roughly as follows: exposition is the introduction to our main character—the Army linguist; rising action tells of one linguist’s training and support; climax tells of another linguist’s work in a dangerous place; falling action tells of the rewards our linguists received; and the denouement ends the story with the linguists walking at the beach. We will examine in more detail below how the categories of narratology help illuminate the terministic screen the U.S. Army uses to explain what life in military service is like and how these images illuminate the myth of reciprocal altruism.

As the War on Terror continued, various terministic screens were utilized by the Army as evidenced by the visual shifts taking place. New screens became necessary as recruitment texts like the Army linguist brochure, released before the war, failed to provide a compelling counter-argument to the harsh realities of a prolonged war. To address this concern, the Army began using more war-like imagery in their recruitment pieces. A good example of this initial response in recruitment material can be found in the mailing sent out to potential enlistees, the second sample in this chapter. To reveal the failure of the various terministic screens offered in the material, the analysis of these texts will also draw from Aristotle’s rhetorical forms *ethos* (the perceived character of the speaker), *logos* (the arrangement and reasoning used in the speech), and *pathos* (the emotion used in the speech). In addition, we will utilize a common neo-Aristotelian

rhetorical triangle: audience, purpose, and context. The audience for the samples below is primarily young Americans who are fit for service in the military. The purpose of these recruitment materials is to encourage these young Americans to enlist in the Army. Perhaps the most important point in the triad in terms of the arguments made in this dissertation is context, which in this case involves the historical timing in which the material was released as well as the situation in which the audience interacts with the recruitment material.

By analyzing context we find that as recruitment numbers continued to slide, the Army switched to a new terministic screen, one that visually acknowledged the war and attempted to reframe the images of soldiers marching to conflict into a call for those who dare to make a difference. The final section of this chapter will focus on a poster produced during the final year of the “Army of One” campaign and posted outside on the Michigan Technological University campus. Like the first two sections in this chapter, this section will also consider the myth at work here as revealed in the words and images as well as the terministic screen that uses graphic design techniques to reassure the viewer confronted by the image of soldiers marching to war.

Pre-Iraq: Army as an opportunity

If you are already fluent in a foreign language, you may enlist at an advanced pay grade, and then be promoted again after you complete training. As a Soldier, you will also earn no- or low-cost health care and life insurance, which could be quite attractive, especially if you have a family.


Your experience as a Soldier, and skills as an Army linguist will broaden your future career options. Upon completion of your active duty time, you might choose to pursue a high paying civilian job in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, or in the fields of education or international business. The options are almost limitless.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP.

If you are interested in the Army Language Program, contact your local Army Recruiter, visit our web site at GOARMY.COM or call 1-800-USA-ARMY.

U.S. Army Recruiting
708 Sheldon Ave.
Houghton, MI 49931
Tel # (906) 482-4390

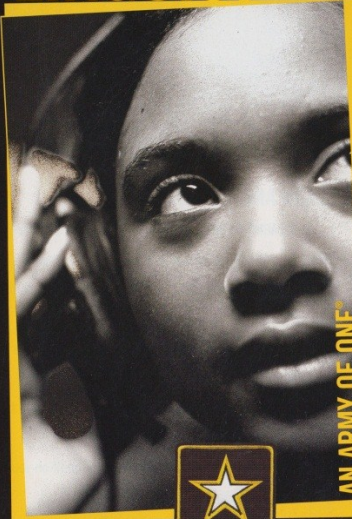
1-800-USA-ARMY ©2002. Paid for by the United States Army. All rights reserved. Chat with a Recruiter at GOARMY.COM


U.S.ARMY®

1-800-USA-ARMY GOARMY.COM

* U.S.G.P.O. 2003 546-103/00095

ARMY LINGUIST



AN ARMY OF ONE™



U.S.ARMY®

Figure 2.1 The outside spread of the “Army Linguist” brochure



Figure 2.2 The inside spread of the “Army Linguist” brochure

I picked up this three panel brochure (Figure 2.1 and 2.2) at the U.S. Army recruitment booth at a Michigan Technological University career fair, and the brochure could also be found at the recruitment center near the campus. The front cover (Figure 2.1) of this brochure shows a young African American⁷ woman wearing a large headset. The shallow depth of field makes the headphones blurry, but it appears that her hand is on the ear piece. She is looking up, as if she is listening in on a conversation that is, from her look of concentration, a matter of importance. The image of the woman is offset, and

⁷ The African-American population is overrepresented in the U.S. Army. According to a 2010 report on data.gov, the Army was 19.65 percent African-American and 61.3 percent European-American. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, European-American's comprised 72.4 percent of the population, while African-American's comprised 12.6 percent. Those of Hispanic or Latino origin comprise 16.3 percent of the general population and 9.85 percent of the U.S. Army. And while women make up 50.7 percent of the population, the U.S. Army has 11 percent female service members.

her right eye is actually the optical center of the picture. Above the picture is the title “Army Linguist” in yellow on a black background. The image is framed in an offset fashion with a yellow box placed behind the photo. The entire visual itself is slightly tilted, creating an oblique, a common way to build tension or energy into the graphics. In this case, the graphics seem to illustrate a photograph quickly placed on top of the brochure’s yellow background box, a popular graphic design technique used to convey an edgy-energy. The lighting in the photograph is high angle and frontal. This hard, high-contrast lighting is associated with serious situations and is commonly used in crime story shows. The darkness behind the soldier’s back suggests she is sitting in a secluded setting, listening intently to an important conversation, waiting for an important clue that will be of use to the Army. Notice how this soldier can function alone; she has the technology and training that enables her to serve as “An Army of One.”⁸

The Army Linguist brochure uses “available design”—the same dimensions and page layout as millions of other brochures that Americans are accustomed to seeing on a daily basis. This familiarity allows the designers of the text to create a story line that can change depending on how the brochure is opened, and since the brochure is a familiar genre with the American public, the way the text is handled can be easily harnessed to tell the Army story. The Exposition of this brochure can be seen on the front cover of the text. Here we are introduced to the main character of our story, the Army linguist. If viewers decide the introduction is compelling enough, they will open the brochure to find the Rising Action in the narrative. Here we read about the training and duties that Army linguists perform throughout the world. At this point, viewers can jump to the

⁸ Throughout this dissertation I will use “Army of One” as well as “An Army of One.” While the latter is the official slogan, the former is commonly used by military officials and the public to refer to the recruitment campaign. I include the word “an” as needed to fit the sentence structure.

Denouement, or open the page to expose the middle of the brochure, revealing the Climax of the narrative. Here we see the photo of a linguist in action, using these skills for the U.S. Army, and inviting the viewer to join in the work as suggested in the words “serve with the best.” This soldier is smiling and seems to be enjoying the conversation taking place while surrounded by comrades or trusted friends—one blurry image of a soldier is in the foreground and another, partial image appears in the background.

Unlike the soldier on the cover, the soldier inside the brochure appears to be participating in a public relations campaign by building a relationship with the little girl with whom he is speaking. Taken in the context of the War on Terror, this soldier is not fighting with weapons; he is fighting for the hearts and minds of civilians. Notice that the child’s arms are by her side; she is not active and so does not appear to be able to defend herself. So, we can see that although the child in this image is not being displayed as an object of desire—as in the case of many advertisements, we (as interpellated by the U.S. Army) are still offered the starring role and the child we see in the image is playing the role of the helpless and powerless victim that needs rescuing. Barthes says images feed into our cultural stereotypes and Figure 2.2—which shows a child who does not look American and in fact fits the stereotype of a poor African girl—is a good example. (Notice that, although many American soldiers serve in Germany, the linguist is not speaking with a stereotypical German child.) For example, we see no sign of what Americans would consider “civilization” around her: the road is not paved, and there is clutter or rubbish (note the tire) in the area. Also, the child’s loose colorful dress and the patterned cloth on her head along with her skin color are visuals Americans would associate with a poor African country. This connection between military service and reaching out and helping those in poor and developing countries offers a counter-argument to those who

consider Army soldiers as gun-wielding warriors who are trained to destroy the enemies of the United States. This connection can be implicitly stated, without public debate, due to the American military myth of reciprocal altruism. Furthermore, this child, who is coded as African and “other,” allows the Army to offer military service as a way to address American media coverage, and public concern, about the economic, medical, and political crises that occur in Africa and deflect concerns about serving in Afghanistan.

The soldier is presented as a compassionate person and the Army as essentially a humanitarian organization. It is also interesting to note that, due to her skin tone and apparel, this child does not appear to be Afghan even though linguists were sorely needed in that front of the war. We could speculate that a poor Afghan, or perhaps Muslim, child would not generate the same sympathy with the American public as the poor African child (given the support Americans have shown to victims of African famines as well as the southern Sudanese Christians and Animists); the motivation behind the choices made here is difficult to determine, but we should notice this discrepancy and note the lack of concern for historical or cultural accuracy. For the Army’s purposes what matters is that this “other” child evokes sympathy and is interchangeable with other “othered” children around the world. The next page of this brochure represents Falling Action, as viewers are told about the benefits of serving as an Army linguist to be enjoyed both during and after service. On the bottom of this section there is a photo showing five people casually walking on the beach, our Denouement. Here we see people who are no longer in uniform. They are smiling and talking, part of a close group of friends. In relation to the picture in the Climax portion of the brochure, these images create a relationship that tell us the work of an Army linguist yields the

reward of time at the beach with good friends. From this image, we can infer that linguists are well compensated for their time on the field and enjoy the free time to explore their personal friendships and interests. As the narrative ends, the brochure gives us contact information, so we can join the narrative for ourselves.

An American military myth

As we have discussed earlier, we can assume from the image that the linguist on the front cover of the brochure is in a safe setting. She does not appear to be in any immediate danger, but she is using her linguistic skills to do crucial work for the Army. An image of a person in an overcoat listening in on a private conversation might make people feel uncomfortable; yet this image is of a soldier, and this woman does not appear sinister. This photograph potentially implies that it is acceptable for the Army to listen in on private conversations, suggesting that the rights Americans cherish do not apply to whoever opposes America's interests. This brochure was printed when the Army was still benefiting from strong public support as the U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan was removing the Taliban from power. At this time it would be easy for a college student to assume that the cover photo was taken at a military base in Afghanistan where the soldier listens for clues to discover the location of Osama bin Laden; however, much like the "Army of One" slogan, the difficulties of the prolonged war created a disconnect between office-type jobs and the news images of soldiers in combat. This disconnect began to affect recruitment messages during the war in Iraq, requiring a change in strategy that we will discuss in the next two sections of this chapter.

The inside picture places our linguist in a more stressful situation. This picture shows the front of a large car or truck with rugged wheel tread and a large grate over the

headlights. The soldier in this scene has a helmet buckled on, along with a camouflage military uniform. Clearly, this soldier is near the battlefield or military hot-spot. However this soldier is smiling, apparently feels safe, and seems to be acting as a friend to the child. This visual communicates one aspect of the American military myth of reciprocal altruism: that the U.S. Army can, and should, be used to reach out to people in their struggle for a peaceful, democratic existence. As we discussed above, the soldier is working in what appears to be a poverty-stricken part of the world. The road is unpaved and the vehicle is well-equipped for off-road expeditions. Behind our subject, we see a tire and barrel, and the general area is crowded or cluttered. The little girl our linguist is talking to appears shy. Her arms hang to her side. She seems to be looking at the car and not at the linguist, but our linguist is attempting to make a conversation. The soldier is crouched down to the little girl's eye level and is facing us and the girl. As discussed above, the soldier is in the position of power and action. The spatial arrangement within the frame gives us a place to stand, allowing us to participate in the conversation and inviting us to help this linguist make a valuable connection for the U.S. Army—to help this village in their struggle for a better (or more American) quality of life as well as their struggle against people who threaten American ideals. This photo further supports this myth by stating, and not arguing, that the U.S. Army can solve complex problems rooted in chronic poverty, corrupt political systems, and inadequate education by marching in highly-trained and well-equipped armed soldiers.

Ignoring combat: a terministic screen

The front cover of this brochure uses a terministic screen that attempts to visually subvert the notion that every soldier may fight in battle; the brochure does this by picturing an intense, well-trained soldier serving her country without a weapon. The

soldiers in these carefully crafted photos are not in harm's way, and they are doing important work for the Army that does not involve active participation in battles. As images of wounded and dead combat troops flood the media during the combat-heavy years of the war in Iraq, brochures like these continued to be used because they help to spread the counterargument that service in the military does not require combat missions, which is a screen used extensively before the War on Terror began. However, this brochure raises more questions than it answers. How many qualified people apply to be one of the 20,000 linguists serving in the Army (which has roughly 560,000 active service members), and how many of these linguist positions open each year? How many linguists serve in an office situation as opposed to providing important translation services to combat troops interviewing and providing instructions to Afghan and Iraqi civilians as well as captive combatants? Although this brochure was published before the war in Iraq began, it is important to note that it was still being used in 2006 during some of the bleakest days of the Iraq war and lowest Army recruitment numbers; the brochure was most likely pulled from distribution later that same year, when the Army shifted its slogan from "Army of One" to "Army Strong."



Figure 2.3 The back of the mailing

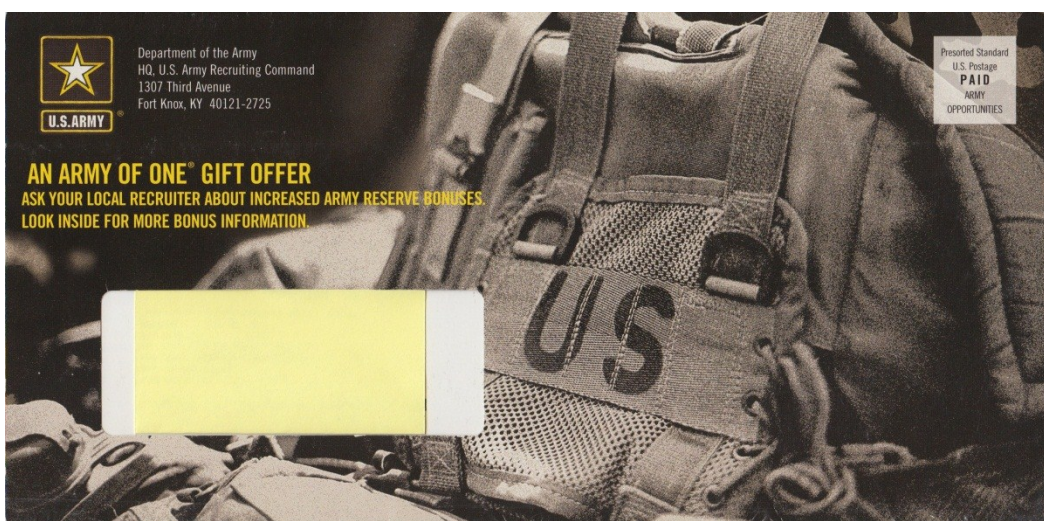
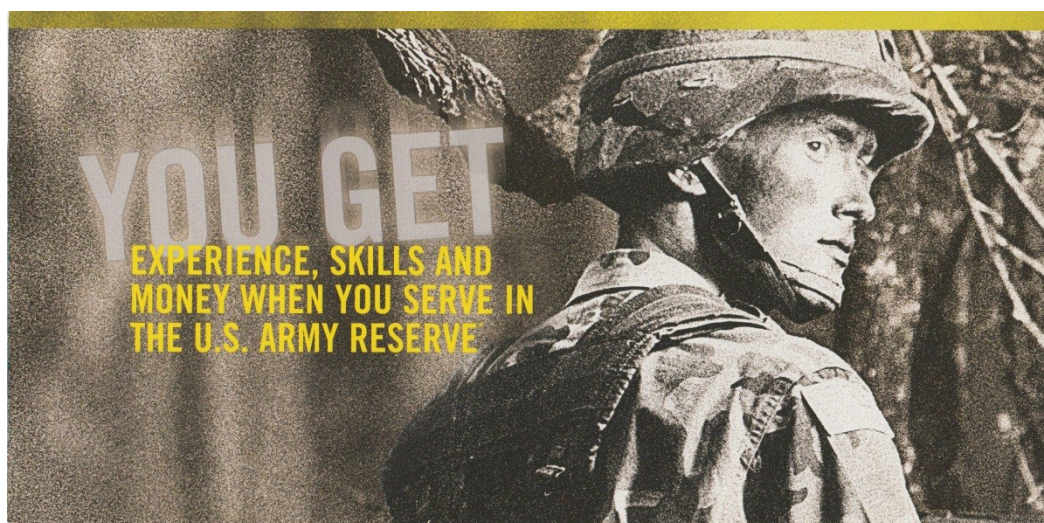



Figure 2.4 The front of the mailing



YOU GET
EXPERIENCE, SKILLS AND
MONEY WHEN YOU SERVE IN
THE U.S. ARMY RESERVE



Private First Class Sandra Mercado, Broadcast Journalist.
AN ARMY OF ONE: In the U.S. Army Reserve.

GET REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCE IN OVER 120 CAREERS.

You can learn a career-building skill—with guaranteed training in the career you qualify for—during your college years. You'll sharpen your skills in as little as **one weekend a month** and add to them during your Two-Week Annual Training.

Figure 2.5 The first page of the mailing opened reveals a news camera operator

YOU GET
EXPERIENCE, SKILLS AND MONEY WHEN YOU SERVE IN THE U.S. ARMY RESERVE

GET REAL

- ★ **Earn** spending money while serving part time, close to school and ready to serve when needed
- ★ **100%** tuition assistance, up to \$4,500 a year, or take advantage of the Army Reserve Student Loan Repayment Program
- ★ **Earn** up to \$20,000 to pay for school with the Montgomery GI Bill and Reserve Education Kicker
- ★ **Serve** as little as one weekend a month and two weeks annual training

Specialist Alma Bennett, University of Illinois, Springfield, Illinois.
 AN ARMY OF ONE. In the United States Army.

Figure 2.6 The second page of the mailing reveals the soldier is working on a laptop

TRAIN TO BECOME AN OFFICER IN ROTC*

- Most popular path to becoming an Officer in the Army or Army Reserve
- Receive training and hands-on experience in strategic thinking, managerial skills and problem solving
- Become eligible for merit-based scholarships worth up to \$17,000 per year
- Up to \$4,000 annual stipend
- Generous textbook allowance

SEND IN ATTACHED REPLY CARD FOR A FREE ARMY T-SHIRT

Get a booklet with details on Army options, with no obligation. You can also call 1-877-273-2351 or log on to goarmy.com/dm/415

U.S. ARMY

IF YOUR SCHOOL PLANS ARE CHANGING, a full-time assignment in the U.S. Army is worth a lot. You'll get job training, money for school and real-life experience.

Up to \$65,000 to pay back qualified student loans

Up to \$70,000 for college, if you qualify

100% tuition assistance, up to \$4,500 a year

©2004. Paid for by the United States Army. All rights reserved. *Benefits are based on qualifications. Information is subject to change. See your local U.S. Army Recruiter for the latest information.

Figure 2.7 The third page of the mailing lists the benefits of being an ROTC Officer

AN ARMY OF ONE

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

ARMY OPPORTUNITIES
PO BOX 171286
SALT LAKE CITY UT 84117-9984

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

Department of the Army
HQ, U.S. Army Recruiting Command
1307 Third Avenue
Fort Knox, KY 40121-2725

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

ARMY OPPORTUNITIES
PO BOX 17553
SALT LAKE CITY UT 84117-9947

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

Department of the Army
HQ, U.S. Army Recruiting Command
1307 Third Avenue
Fort Knox, KY 40121-2725

Figure 2.8 The fourth page of the mailing reveals three serious soldiers

Moisten, fold and seal.

SEND ME MORE INFORMATION AND A FREE ARMY T-SHIRT*

Complete this form and send it in. You can also visit goarmy.com/dm/415 or call 1-877-273-2351.

Phone Birth date (required)

E-mail address

Can we contact you via e-mail? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Social Security Number -

Currently enrolled in school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Last grade completed: High school ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11 ☐ 12
College ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5+

School most recently attended

Please select one: ☐ U.S. citizen ☐ Legal resident ☐ Neither

Have you been diagnosed with or treated for asthma after age 13? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

How likely are you to consider joining the military in the future?
☐ Definitely will join ☐ Probably will join ☐ Probably will not join ☐ Definitely will not join

Ethnic background: ☐ Asian ☐ Black/African American ☐ Hispanic/Latino
(optional) Check the ONE that best describes you. ☐ Native American ☐ White/Caucasian ☐ Other

I would like information about: ☐ Army (full time) ☐ Army Reserve (part time) ☐ Both

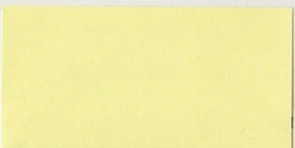
I am interested in College ROTC ☐ Yes ☐ No

(for corrections only to address below)

Name
(please print clearly)

Address

City State ZIP




*Offer expires February 28, 2005. You must be 16-34, a legal U.S. resident and complete all the information requested to receive your free gift. Other conditions may apply. Limit one per person. While supplies last. The information you voluntarily provide, including your Social Security Number, will be used for recruiting purposes only. †Your Social Security Number will be used to analyze individual response to this mailing. (Authority: 10 USC 563)

0105-CF-A

PLEASE GIVE THIS TO A FRIEND

Send this in for a free Army T-Shirt* and more information about becoming a Soldier, AN ARMY OF ONE®. You can also log on to goarmy.com/dm/415 or call 1-877-273-2351.

8641



Name
(please print clearly)

Address

City State ZIP

Phone Birth date (required)

E-mail address

Can we contact you via e-mail? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Social Security Number -

Currently enrolled in school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Last grade completed: High school ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11 ☐ 12
College ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5+

Please select one: ☐ U.S. citizen ☐ Legal resident ☐ Neither

Have you been diagnosed with or treated for asthma after age 13? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

How likely are you to consider joining the military in the future?
☐ Definitely will join ☐ Probably will join ☐ Probably will not join ☐ Definitely will not join

Ethnic background: ☐ Asian ☐ Black/African American ☐ Hispanic/Latino
(optional) Check the ONE that best describes you. ☐ Native American ☐ White/Caucasian ☐ Other

I would like information about: ☐ Army (full time) ☐ Army Reserve (part time) ☐ Both

*Offer expires February 28, 2005. You must be 16-34, a legal U.S. resident and complete all the information requested to receive your free gift. Other conditions may apply. Limit one per person. While supplies last. The information you voluntarily provide, including your Social Security Number, will be used for recruiting purposes only. †Your Social Security Number will be used to analyze individual response to this mailing. (Authority: 10 USC 563)

0105-CF-A

Figure 2.9 The fifth and final page presents a free t-shirt for the viewer and a “buddy”

Need a summer job? Look no further

This mailing was delivered to a student at Northern Michigan University and was rescued from the garbage by a colleague at Michigan Technological University before it was passed on to me. A close analysis of this brochure reveals a shift in the terministic screen that the Army is using to encourage enlistment. In the brochure, the Army totally avoided the look of danger that going into a military hot-spot might present, but this mailing shows a soldier in what appears to be—at first glance—a hostile situation; however, whatever tension might be felt in the image is offset by a camera operator as seen when the mailing is first opened. This section of the chapter will reveal how the terministic screen presented in this mailing is a shift from the screen used in the brochure.

The front of the text shows what looks like a green duffel bag photographed in a grainy duo tone, with a green/black color palette (Figure 2.4). The bag is placed among other military-style containers, buckles, and camouflage fabric. On the left side of the page, above the address label, the mailing offers “an army of one gift offer.” Inside, we are told we can find more information about bonuses offered by the U.S. Army. The back of the mailing says, in all caps, “make more than just spare change in your spare time” (Figure 2.3). The words “spare change” are the largest on the page and a dominant focal point in the design. Below the caption is the photograph of five soldiers, represented in a negative-style image; we can see their heads and some of their shoulders. Coming up from the bottom of the page and along the left side is camouflage netting, with that side colored in the same yellow as the words on the page.

The soldiers look as if they are in full sunlight, based on the harsh shadows, but the only colors in the photo are black and dark gray. They are looking in different directions, wearing helmets and serious faces. These soldiers look like they are waiting for orders. They are ready, alert, healthy, well-equipped, protected by camouflage, and, apparently, making more than spare change in their spare time. This dark background helps the words “spare change in your spare time” pop out of the text, which appeals to many young Americans including college students during summer breaks. Notice how these soldiers are waiting, ready, and poised for action, just like the offer being given here to join the Army Reserves, to be soldiers on hold, prepared for orders if need arises.

As the mailing is opened, the page reveals a serious-looking male soldier in what appears to be a suspenseful scene (Figure 2.5). The soldier is looking behind him. He is next to a leafless tree with high-texture bark and several branches. He, like the soldiers on the back of the mailing, is wearing camouflage and a helmet. Perhaps as a point of

contrast, we have the image of a female soldier holding a video camera. The proximity of the two images implies a relationship. The inclusion of the female soldier helps offset whatever tension may be perceived in the image of the male soldier, as if this entire scene is an act, and our male soldier is just an actor in a commercial or being recorded for news footage. Our eyes are drawn to the words in all caps: “you get experience, skills, and money when you serve in the U.S. Army Reserve.” The words “you get” are large and slightly blurry, indicating motion (graphic designers call this technique kinetics), and these words are white while, the rest of the statement is in yellow; they are more eye-catching. Under the soldier, next to the videographer, is a paragraph explaining what benefits a person can acquire by joining the Army Reserves: experience in over 120 careers, career-building skills, and guaranteed training. This offer comes with little time commitment: “as little as one weekend a month,” with two weeks of annual training thrown in as well. Notice how the Army offers a terministic screen that showcases the training and monetary rewards that soldiers receive while also deflecting concerns of safety that potential recruits may feel as they consider enlisting. This text was printed in 2004, as the war in Iraq was beginning to become more difficult than President Bush had expected. Within two years, Army Reserve units were being called to serve multiple deployments, so, we can infer, this mailing’s message would be ineffective at least, if not unethically misleading, soon after its publication.

The mailing folds out again to reveal more of the picture. Now we see that the soldier is actually using a laptop computer (Figure 2.6). Although he is outside, we now have the impression that he is engaged in an important activity because he is documenting something he sees at a safe distance. He does not, now, appear to be in any danger. If he was holding a gun, the image would bring a totally different perspective to

this text; in fact, the absence of weaponry in general is indicative of the pre-surge recruitment material we have viewed thus far, a trend that ends abruptly when the surge is announced in 2007. The words behind the soldier proclaim the earning potential for those who serve in the U.S. Army Reserves, including spending money, 100 percent tuition assistance for college, \$20,000 for school, and minimal service and training commitment. There is no mention of the worst-case scenario of multiple, year-long deployments, injury, disability, or death. At the bottom of the layout, (Figure 2.9) a tear-out card is now revealed, and if that page is opened, we see a reply card at the bottom of the mailing offering a free Army t-shirt as a reward for mailing in the card. Also revealed are the faces of three soldiers in parade uniform (Figure 2.8). Two male soldiers are looking to the left, and another male soldier is facing us and looking to the right. This image also works with the idea of serious and well-prepared soldiers waiting for action. These cards on the opposite side of this image are bright white, a contrast to the predominately dark gray mailing drawing attention to the cards themselves while providing a good surface for a ballpoint pen. We should also note that this mailing provides two reply cards, one for the intended recipient and another for a “buddy.” The inclusion of the buddy card is an interesting twist as it infers the offer is too good to keep to oneself while it also allows the Army to provide a point of discussion regarding military service between peers as the friend hands the card to a buddy and discusses filling it out. So, much like the brochure, the mailing physically engages with viewers as they open the pages and tear out a card. The cards, then, become another point of connection as the viewer offers the card to a buddy and instigates a discussion of signing up for a free t-shirt, and possibly “earning more than spare change” in the Army.

Connecting past wars to the War on Terror

We have seen in the above samples that the way soldiers are presented in photos encourages a connection and interaction with the narrative offered, but we should also keep in mind that photography itself is highly constructed and culturally based. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Tagg (1987), and Curtis (1992) discuss how what we think of as “realistic” photographs are culturally produced, and the photographs used in these recruitment pieces seem to capture authentic soldiers in the midst of purposeful actions (i.e., not posed). Going back to Barthes, advertisements engage audience members when they construct a narrative their target audience will accept as realistic or desirable. If we look closely at this mailing (and, for that matter, the recruitment material produced during the War on Terror) we notice the use of black and white images, with a high grain distortion reminiscent of World War II documentary and promotional materials published in the 1940s. Muehling and Sprott (2004) argue that old images can bring up “bitter-sweet” memories that may detract from the message of the advertiser, but in the case of World War II imagery targeting a teenage and early twenty-year old audience, the bitterness of this war is far removed and is now, in many cases, idealized. For the average college student, the images may subconsciously call to mind the old war movies they watched with their parents as a child or perhaps popular war films that mimic old film footage like *Saving Private Ryan*.

In 2007, when the poster below was released, the connection between historic wars and today’s wars becomes even more overt with the release of the National Guard’s recruitment campaign featuring the single “Citizen/Soldiers” by the alternative rock

band 3 Doors Down.”⁹ The music video, which was released to movie theatres, the National Guard’s website, 3 Doors Down’s website, and YouTube, shows reenactments of American military action, from the Revolutionary War to the current wars in what seems to be Iraq. The footage also shows the storming of the beach at Normandy on D-Day but does not show battles in the Civil War, Vietnam, or Korea as these wars still bring up controversy and conflict within the American public while the American Revolutionary War and World War II are considered by the majority of the American public to be noble wars. The scenes from the different wars are all woven together, making a strong connection between service in the military today, to service during other, more supported wars. Judith Williamson (2005) argues that in order to have their full effect, such connections can only be made subconsciously because once a viewer understands how the visual argument is crafted and becomes aware of the ideology embedded in the recruitment material there is the potential that they will be able to refute that argument consciously. So, although these materials may imply a connection to personal memories of watching old war films and the heroism and patriotism those soldiers embodied, these thoughts will be weighed against concerns about the current, ongoing wars and changing military policy that, during times of prolonged conflict, may outweigh this patriotic recruitment message. Only by embracing the struggle in Iraq, turning to the slogan “Army Strong,” was the Army able to once again encourage enlistment.

A failed terministic screen and lower recruitment numbers

By showing people serving today in a way that visually relates them with World War II soldiers, the photograph asks us to connect that service with the “greatest

⁹ The video can be viewed at the following website: <http://www.3doorsdown.com/video/citizensoldier-1> or on YouTube.

generation”—a strong rhetorical message for someone struggling to make some extra money. Yet this mailing maintains the same argument used before the war in Iraq even began: that soldiers gain a great deal of training, money, and job-experience with minimal commitment to actually experiencing combat situations. As the war in Iraq was approaching its second year, the deadliest for American soldiers, it was quite apparent that the military was having a difficult time maintaining peace and winning over the hearts and minds of the Iraqi civilians. Incidentally, 2004-2006 was a tough period for recruitment, and the U.S. Army only managed to sustain its numbers by easing the restrictions they placed on new recruits and by issuing a “stop-loss” policy, which kept current soldiers in commission despite the time-line specified in their contracts. This short-term strategy kept the Army functioning but lowered moral and worked against the recruitment messages being produced and distributed at the time.

Aristotle’s rhetorical forms *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* illuminate the failure of the terministic screen discussed above as a rhetorical tool. This disconnect between the images being used to recruit new forces and the images being seen on the nightly news created a *logos* problem. The message of soldiers waiting for combat and getting good job-experience is not logical in the midst of a prolonged war with intense 24-hour news coverage. Every high-quality youth the Army is targeting knew that signing up for the military during that time would more than likely be a ticket straight to the fighting in Iraq. At the end of this chapter, we will discuss the 2007 poster (Figure 2.6) featuring soldiers walking with guns ready into combat. This new terministic screen provides a shift in recruitment strategy that actually began embracing the concept of warfare and providing a justification for the war—as it framed the war under the myth of reciprocal altruism—and we will see even more of the U.S. Army’s use of warfare imagery as a

recruitment tool as “Army Strong” comes into play. Consequently, we should note that this poster was released a year after the 2006 movie version of the graphic novel *300*, which tells the story of the Spartan warriors who marched against the Persians at Thermopylae who had threatened Spartan freedom and committed acts of terror on Greek soil. These Spartan soldiers were highly trained, and they fought for, as the movie tells us, freedom. Likewise, the poster below shows a small group of highly-trained and well-equipped warriors marching off to stop an invasion of terrorism in America.

The *ethos* of the Army’s recruitment message is also under question if we take a close look at the imagery and words used throughout this mailing. Most college students receiving this mailing would have been well aware that enlistment into the U.S. Army Reserve would most likely take them to the battlefield in Iraq or Afghanistan, yet the images and words refuse to acknowledge this, hoping, it seems, such a refutation would be overlooked or ignored, or, perhaps that the student would be uninformed or so underemployed that military service would be the only viable option to pay for college.

Yet the mailing does not fail in all forms; the strongest rhetorical move by far is the mailing’s *pathos*. Visually, the mailing boasts the same techniques we see in the other samples in this chapter, using grainy black and white photography to make a connection between the soldiers serving today and the soldiers who served in World War II. But the mailing also provides an updated, aggressive energy. The kinetics of the text attempt to create a level of excitement that is needed to channel a potential recruit’s visceral fear of war into the thrill of a challenge. The use of kinetic typography drops as the images used to encourage enlistment provide all the excitement a potential recruit can handle. However, the images also utilize graphic design techniques to create a feeling of safety,

even as the soldiers march, weapons ready, to confront the challenges faced during the War on Terror.

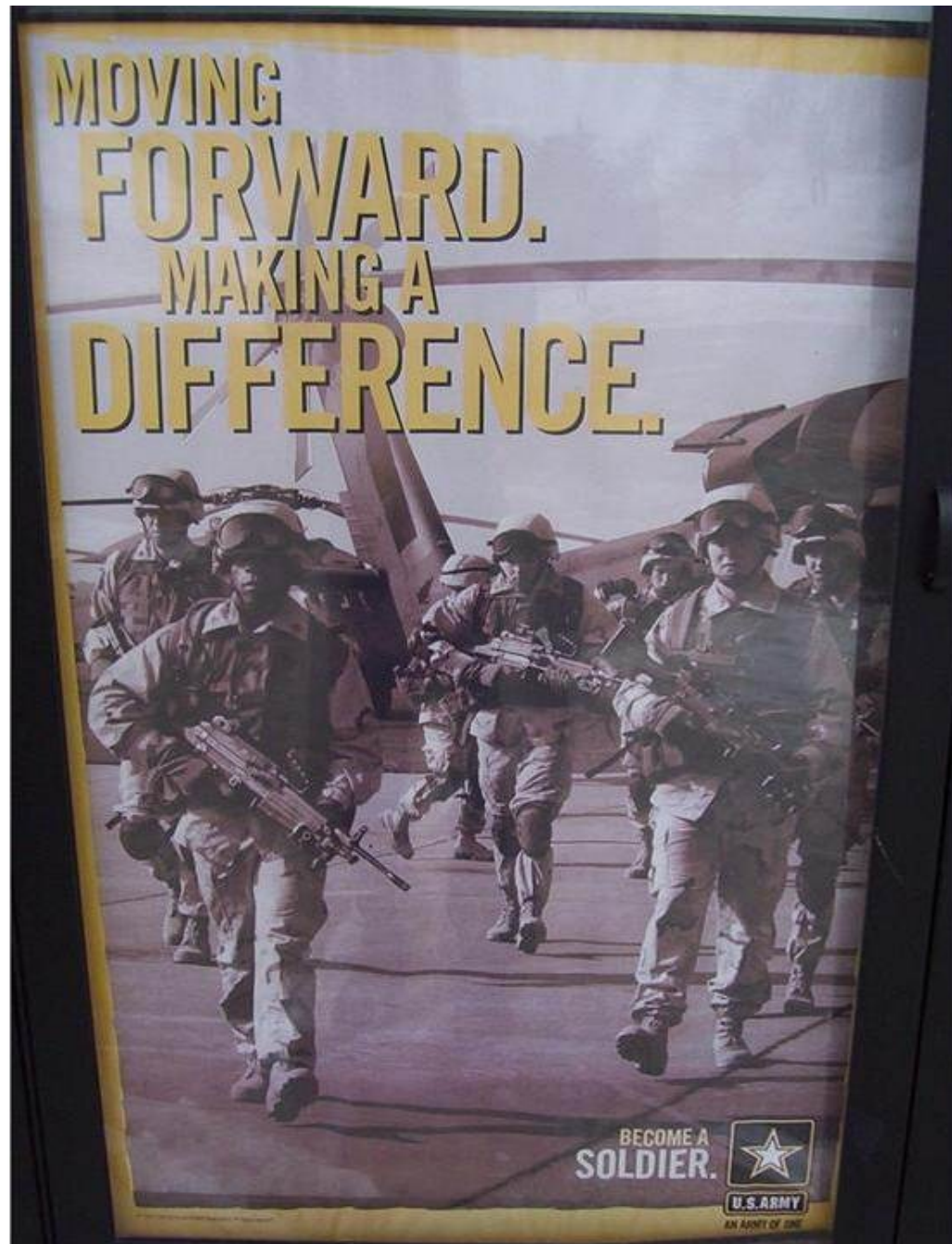


Figure 2.10 Image of a recruitment poster on Michigan Technological University's campus (Image captured by the author on Feb 19, 2007 at MTU.)



Figure 2.11 Location of recruitment poster: in the center of MTU's campus just below the campus thermometer (Image captured by the author on Feb 19, 2007 at MTU.)

Calming the storm of warfare

Walking through the campus of Michigan Technological University one cold winter morning, I noticed a photo of soldiers walking on an airfield (Figure 2.10). Like me, the soldiers had other people walking near them; however, they were “making a difference.” Although I feel I make a difference through my teaching, I wondered how this message resonated with the stressed-out engineering students in the classes I was teaching. This linguistic message encouraged me to consider the basic composition elements of the above recruitment tool to see how the image and text work together to engage its audience and encourage enlistment given the prolonged and unpopular war in

Iraq that was occurring at the time. The poster uses a yellowish color to showcase its textual message on top of a black and white image of camouflaged soldiers walking away from a military helicopter. The soldiers are serious and are carrying weapons and other military equipment. Although their action does not look very exciting or patriotic, they appear to be walking in preparation for combat. Two-dimensional theorists who argue for a universal way of looking based on the physiological structure of the human eye and brain offer additional insight into the way the text is presented on the poster and reveals another shift in the terministic screen the Army is using to encourage enlistment. Looking at the main shapes in the images, as Bang (2000) suggests, we can see how this poster attempts to minimize the stressfulness of joining the Army, despite the primary photograph in which soldiers are marching into a visually suggested battle to “make a difference.” In the center of the image—the point of greatest interest according to Arnheim (1988)—is a soldier who is surrounded by comrades. Above their heads, we see a few strong, stabilizing horizontal lines: the words “Forward” and “Different” in the foreground, as well as the helicopter’s propeller. The soldiers have plenty of room inside the poster to walk, and there is a strong sense of movement and unity being presented. These graphic elements all help to reassure and calm the viewer, providing a powerful counter-argument to the natural, visceral fear of facing an enemy in combat. In addition, Arnheim would have us note that the image of the soldiers is also balanced by those words above their heads, creating harmony. A close analysis of the layout of this poster enables us to distinguish how designers employ visual rhetoric in another terministic screen: the reassuring stability of the graphics, along with the notion of being surrounded by well-equipped and highly-trained comrades, help refute the negative, visceral response of joining the military during a time when being sent into combat is

virtually guaranteed.¹⁰ This is the third terministic screen presented by the Army during the War on Terror under the “Army of One” slogan.

Army says soldiers make a difference

Interestingly, Bang and Arnheim’s approaches lay the foundation for Barthes’ notion of myth which offers further inroads to the workings of this text. The semiotic approach utilized by Barthes suggests that the soldiers pictured are signifiers for “making a difference,” and the poster, by putting the photograph and words together, plays on the American military myth of reciprocal altruism: that these patriotic American soldiers can and do make a difference in the world by spreading/defending peace and freedom, creating a powerful message that students do not question. The quality of the poster also lends to the credibility of the message. Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2001) discussion of the effect of the material, print quality, and general context in which such a text might be viewed is also pertinent here. They note, for example, “Signs in neon light do not mean the same thing as hand-painted signs on a wooden board, nor do documents on heavy embossed paper mean the same thing as documents on gray recycled paper” (p. 69). Likewise, a full page in *Rolling Stone* is viewed differently than a large military recruitment poster displayed in the center of a university’s campus. In other words, how something is crafted, the medium of the message, and the placement of the message all convey meaning to the viewer. How Michigan Technological University students, the prime audience for this poster, interpret the poster’s meaning is known only to them, and perhaps only subconsciously, but we can speculate that they see the poster as a high-quality, well-funded, professional production with a clear message that

¹⁰ “The New Way Forward” or “Surge” in Iraq was announced in January of 2007 to a, primarily, skeptical public.

is backed by the university (because it is posted in their display case in the center of campus—see Figure 2.11). But the design itself is also important. Arnheim says “by making the arrangement of shapes, colors, and movements clear-cut, unambiguous, complete, and concentrated on the essentials, it organizes the form to fit the content” (1988, p. 222). In other words, a good design should clearly articulate the message of the speaker. The words popping out of the page (through shadow, figure/ground separation, typography, and color), the message “moving forward,” and the soldiers walking toward the viewer all work together to create a unified message of progress and purpose through military life.

Interpellating students as soldiers

Barthes’ notion of the myth allows us to see how the Army advertisement works to reinforce the cultural values of Americans. To see how this poster works we need to consider the way it helps college students connect with soldiers going into battle to understand how the design helps students envision themselves in the role of an Army soldier. Kress and van Leeuwen’s discussion of how photographs and the humans represented in them create a point of identification with the viewer based on cultural norms prevalent in the viewer’s life is valuable here.

When images confront us with friendly smiles or arrogant stares, we are not obligated to respond, even though we do recognize how we are addressed. The relation is only represented. We are *imaginarily* rather than really put in the position of the friend, the customer, the lay person who must defer to the expert. And whether or not we identify with that position will depend on other factors—on our real relation to the producer

or the institution he or she represents, and on our real relation to the others who form part of the context of reception. All the same, whether or not we identify with the way we are addressed, we do understand how we are addressed, because we do understand the way images represent social interactions and social relations. (1996, p. 121)

Looking at the denotative level of the photograph in this poster, we can see that the picture was taken at eye level, indicating to students that they are equal with the soldiers in the poster. Their shoulders are more or less facing the student viewers, indicating a level of interaction. But the soldiers' eyes are forward (to the left of the viewer) or down; they are not directed at the viewer. This is a point of disconnection according to Kress and van Leeuwen, but the lack of eye contact is common with recruitment material used today, indicating a cultural change in the American audience from the Uncle Sam "I Want You" years. Perhaps this is because pictures that offer eye contact are considered posed, not realistic; however, there is another point of separation between the soldiers and the students. The soldiers are shown at an impersonal distance according to dominant American social customs. This connection we see with shoulders (as they are square with the viewer) and the disconnect we see with eye contact (as they look down or off to the left and not at the viewer) and distance between the viewers and the soldiers in the poster may be an attempt to create some tension—note especially the soldier in the middle with his head down. On the other hand, this disconnection may actually be functioning as a level of identification, giving the image a strong persuasive function. To discuss this form of identification, we should put the poster back in its context. As typical Michigan Technological University students walk to lab, perhaps frustrated about some aspects of their life, they see people who "make a difference" and are "moving forward."

This poster relies on the American military myth of reciprocal altruism to be successful. The students must accept the statement that the military makes a presumably positive difference, although the statement leaves much to interpretation. Thus, in this particular context, struggling MTU students are interpellated as soldiers who walk with purpose and they reflect on their current choice of obtaining a college degree precisely because they feel no similar conviction with a soldier at this point in their lives.

The historical context in which this poster was printed and displayed also is crucial. When this poster was published, Americans watched in horror as soldiers were killed by roadside bombs and kidnapped by Al-Qaeda in Iraq operatives. These attacks were designed to break the will of America's leaders. Furthermore, the rhetorical messages in those news images served as an argument that, while America's Army could be successful in conventional warfare, the Army was unprepared to handle the insurgent fighting taking place at the time. Despite all the training, funding and high-tech equipment provided to the Army, a significantly smaller force was able to frustrate the most powerful military ever assembled, or so the argument was being made in America via news coverage of the war in Iraq. This poster serves to confront that argument. Here we see determined, highly-trained and well-equipped soldiers marching in calm confidence to the battlefield. These soldiers appear ready and willing to take on whatever challenges face them in order to move America forward, beyond the war in Iraq, and make a difference by ending an unpopular war while securing peace in a land of hostility. This counter-argument is the beginning of the next terministic screen offered by U.S. Army recruitment material, "Army Strong," which not only accepted the fact that America was at war, but also showcased warfare and reframed the wars into a personal challenge.

The three terministic screens of “Army of One” used during the War on Terror failed to connect with its audience on several counts. In the brochure we found two pictures of soldiers serving alone: one in an office and another on the field. We found that this brochure used an American military myth that highly-trained and well-equipped Army soldiers can solve problems caused by chronic poverty, corrupt political systems, and inadequate education. While this brochure may have worked when it was released in 2002, two years later, as America became bogged down in a struggle for control in Iraq, a new terministic screen was required. In 2004 the mailing was released at a time when news agencies reported that the Army had reached a “breaking point.” Again we find a soldier working alone on a laptop while a videographer appears to record his actions. Here we find a visual shift taking place that reduces the clarity of the image and provides a nostalgic tone to the image, providing a connection to old images of war. While this may be an attempt to provide some comfort to a potential recruit—America won past wars and will win this war as well—the image may also be an attempt to visually connect soldiers today to those who served in World War II. Even as this terministic screen attempted to discount news of the war by showing that the soldier was only working on a laptop from a safe distance, the visuals try to connect World War II with the War on Terror. However, combining the graining imagery and news videographer with the textual message (“Make more than just spare change in your spare time), even with all its visual power, did not seem credible given the context. (The mailing was rescued—unopened—from the trash.) A further shift in the Army’s terministic screen can be seen in 2007 with the release of the poser. Here we find a stoic group of well-armed soldiers willing to do their part to “move forward” and “make a difference.” Like the Spartan warriors marching to face the Persian army in the movie *300*, the American soldiers in the poster are highly skilled, serious, and ready to face the enemy in battle.

However, these soldiers are shown with comforting graphic design elements. Although they march to battle, we are encouraged to see them as safe and in control. This poster shows a group of armed soldiers and the beginning of the end for “An Army of One.”

The Myth Requires “Army Strong,” and the screen shows safety and stability in the midst of a deadly war

In 2003, during some of the bleakest days in the battle for Iraq, *Time Magazine* awarded the person of the year to the American Soldier “(f)or uncommon skills and service, for the choices each one of them has made and the ones still ahead, for the challenge of defending not only our freedoms but those barely stirring half a world away” (p. 36). Noting that, unlike the Vietnam Conflict, war protestors show support for the troops, calling for an end to an occupation that was poorly planned and puts the American military in harm’s way unnecessarily. As ideological stands tugged and pulled how to best end the war in Iraq, one concept remained untouchable: the American soldier is a force for freedom throughout the world and the military can be used to improve the lives of those living under oppressive governments. As *Time Magazine* says,

It is a fantastically romantic notion, that thousands of young men and women could descend on a broken place and make it better, not decades from now but right away, hook up the high school Internet lab, send the Army engineers to repair the soccer field, teach the town council about Robert’s Rules and all the while watch your back. (41)

This “fantastically romantic notion” is also a myth, one that we have discussed in previous chapters: the myth of reciprocal altruism. This is the belief that the American military can and should be used to remove oppressive governments, free the citizens of the affected countries, and create stable democracies that will, in turn, prove to be future allies. The power of this myth allows the military to obtain the highest budget of any other military in the world and to have slogans like the Navy’s “A Global Force for Good” and “Army Strong” which we will discuss in this chapter.



Figure 3.1 *Time Magazine's* 2003 Person of the Year was awarded to "The American Solider"

Although American's may feel that their military is a force to good, there are those who disagree and see the American military as occupiers. After the widespread

reports and commentary regarding the stress the U.S. Army was suffering during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2004, the Army decided to take action. The slogan, “An Army of One,” introduced in 2001, was an easy target for anti-war critics, and its appeal in attracting new recruits was questionable, as recruitment numbers dwindled to their lowest levels during the War on Terror. Switching to a new advertisement company in 2006, the Army commissioned a new slogan. After a great deal of research (as discussed in chapter 1), “Army Strong” was released to the public online via a 2 minute 30 second video and to the television viewing public in 30 second versions featuring footage from the longer video. The full, online commercial uses 87 shots—a mixture of yellow words on a black background, photographs, and video showing a wide variety of Army activities. There is no voice over and no diegetic sounds; the soundtrack consists of an inspirational orchestral composition written by Mark Isham that features brass instruments, in particular French horns, joined by trumpets and drums with vocal instrumentation in the background. The release of “Army Strong” was met by enthusiasm by both the Army and the American public. The slogan change also allowed the Army to transition their overall visual message with relative ease. Where videos and promotional material boasting the slogan “Army of One” once focused on office-type jobs and the training one receives when joining the Army (Apostel, 2004), “Army Strong” embraced the stress that combat troops were under and turned it into a challenge. In this chapter I will analyze how the “Army Strong” advertisement uses the myth of reciprocal altruism to engage and persuade an audience to join and support the Army at a time when many felt the it was at a breaking point, overcome by the asymmetric military tactics used by the Iraqi insurgency.

This commercial comes at a fascinating time historically. Here we have an Army pushed to the breaking point according to news reports. Soldiers are fighting two main fronts and face multiple deployments. Enlistment numbers are dropping. A concerned public feels like the Army is facing a war that might not be winnable based on the talk-shows, news articles, and political statements made during this time. So the introduction of a new slogan, “Army Strong,” needs to be justified and explained to the public, and the producers of this video understood quite well that the message needed to capitalize on the American myth of reciprocal altruism, in Barthes’ sense of the term “myth” as discussed in chapter 1 to effectively sell this concept to the public while also providing a terministic screen that showed soldiers in war-like situations without the tension and anxiety that one would normally feel in such situations.

This Army military myth allows the commercial to make major statements that go remarkably unchallenged given the circumstances at the time. First, we should note that the commercial and slogan assume that a strong Army is a good thing for America. There is no room for discussion on this topic as there might be in a country like Germany or Japan. The video effectively ties military service to patriotism, as seen in the sequence when the American flag fades into a group of people enlisting in the Army (Figure 3.7), and this illustrates another powerful American myth: that military service is a reflection of love and devotion for one’s country. In other words, signing up for military service shows that you are patriotic, even though there are a wide number of reasons young men and women sign up for service. The myth of the true patriot allows no discussion as to whether American soldiers should wage war in the first place. As Shohat and Stam (1994) found during the news coverage of Desert Storm “the tendentious use of the word ‘patriotism’ (referred) only to pro-war actions and attitudes” (p. 127). Other forms of

service to the country such as serving in politics, as a protestor who challenges an injustice, as a Census worker, or as a volunteer for a non-profit organization are, in most cases, “othered” as a result of this myth; service in the military trumps all. As Barton and Barton (1993) point out, the link between military service and patriotism is so interconnected, the myth is so strong, it is seen as natural to the American public, and to even question the connection becomes a point of contention despite the fact that people enlist in the military for a wide variety of reasons besides patriotic duty: college funds, travel opportunities, family expectations, and the mental and physical challenges military life provides (not to mention the avoidance of jail time for some recruits). In contrast, federal, state, and city employees as well as teachers are cut from budgets by politicians, who themselves find their service to the community to be marginalized by a skeptical public.

Key theories and critical concepts

While this chapter, like earlier chapters, discusses myth and the terministic screens used to interpellate audience members, the introduction of moving images and music to the discussion could benefit from a perspective from film theory. Bruce Block’s (2001) approach to film and video production in *The Visual Story: Seeing the Structure of Film, TV, and New Media* provides us with a framework to break down the elements of this commercial to see how the design and editing functions to create a terministic screen, one that minimize the stress of combat in the midst of war-like imagery. Block identifies the fundamental components of film as script, music, sound, and visuals (which Block subdivides into space, line, shape, tone, color, movement and rhythm). Using these components as a framework allows us to see how edits, color, lines, and depth all work to create a screen of safety and security even as soldiers are shown in war-

like situations. In other words, the tension one would naturally feel marching to battle, weapon ready to fire, is minimized by the components of film. Block's components also enable to see that any excitement and energy in the commercial is focused on images showing quick-moving vehicles and training, not warfare.

Central to the argument of "Army Strong" is the definition of the word "strong," which the Army indicates in the commercial is in need of an adverb of sorts, "Army," to heighten its power. The action of defining a word requires the construction of a new way of understanding the word strong and the power of the Army in the context of a prolonged and difficult war in Iraq. The Army is asking us to see things from a different perspective which seemed counter intuitive at the time. As we discussed in earlier chapters, Burke's terministic screen—that the act of sharing a story also requires selecting a story to be told (in other words, there are multiple ways to tell a story, each has its own screen)—offers us a compelling lens to deconstruct this video. Burke says this lens is not a reflection of reality; the lens is merely a way of selecting some things while deflecting others. As we will see in this chapter, the Army's selection of images, music, and words create a screen that constructs a version of the Army that ran contrary to media reports at the time; however, the message effectively tapped the American military myth of reciprocal altruism and the true patriot, enabling the campaign to say that the Army is (and should be) strong while engaging the viewer with dramatic images and action narratives.

Visualizing safety in stressful situations

The 2 minute 30 second YouTube advertisement that introduced "Army Strong" to the American public uses no voice narrative just music and a series of 87 shots, both

video and photographs anchored with yellow words on black background. This strategy was unique to Army advertisements released before “Army Strong,” and, as discussed in earlier chapters, this move allowed the Army to address the issue that soldiers were actually in battle and that enlistment would most likely end up in some sort of combat. The video begins with quite orchestral music and a black screen. The following lines (printed in all caps) fade in and out to black before the next line appears.

WEBSTER DEFINES STRONG AS HAVING GREAT PHYSICAL POWER,

AS HAVING MORAL OR INTELLECTUAL POWER,

AS STRIKING OR SUPERIOR OF ITS KIND.

BUT WITH ALL DUE RESPECT TO WEBSTER,

THERE’S STRONG,

AND THEN THERE’S ARMY STRONG.¹¹

Beginning the video in this way creates a sense of expectation, especially when combined with the quite orchestral music in the background. Since each screen is the same, with just the words being different, the rhythm is utilizing affinity, as opposed to contrast, which is used to build excitement. Rhythm, says Block, is created by placing an object on the screen and measuring the variations of the divided spaces that object creates. The

¹¹ The complete text, in addition to the lines listed above, are: IT IS A STRENGTH LIKE NONE OTHER. IT IS A PHYSICAL STRENGTH. IT IS AN EMOTIONAL STRENGTH. IT IS A STRENGTH OF CHARACTER, AND STRENGTH OF PURPOSE. THE STRENGTH TO DO GOOD TODAY, AND THE STRENGTH TO DO WELL TOMORROW. THE STRENGTH TO OBEY, AND STRENGTH TO COMMAND. THE STRENGTH TO BUILD, AND STRENGTH TO TEAR DOWN. THE STRENGTH TO GET YOURSELF OVER, AND THE STRENGTH TO GET OVER YOURSELF. THERE IS NOTHING ON THIS GREEN EARTH THAT IS STRONGER THAN THE US ARMY. BECAUSE THERE IS NOTHING ON THIS GREEN EARTH THAT IS STRONGER THAN A US ARMY SOLDIER. ARMY STRONG.

more size variation in the spaces created around the object, the more rhythmic intensity that image creates. Rhythm can also be increased by placing more objects on the screen, which creates a greater number of spaces in the image. Movement on the screen also creates rhythm. The angles in which objects move across the screen, when the subject of the shot moves before or behind an object, and the number of shots (as well as the visual variation of the shots) that it takes to tell the story all can serve to increase or decrease the intensity of the rhythm, depending on the needs of the storyteller.

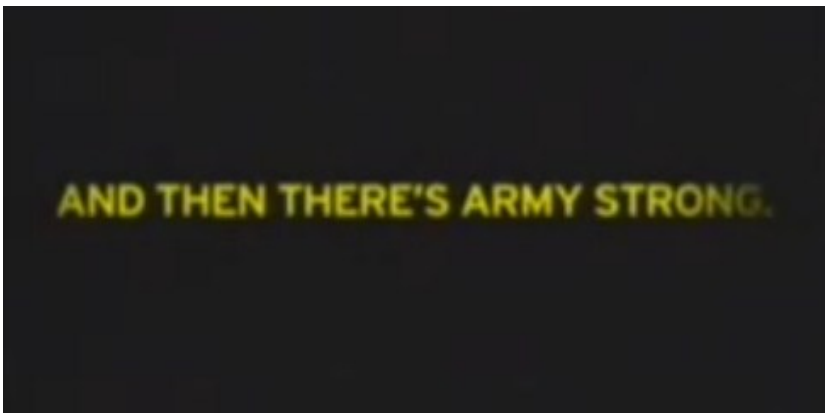


Figure 3.2 23 letters



Figure 3.3 23 soldiers

The text (Figure 3.2) shows an even rhythm on the screen, with unaccented space in the top and bottom of the screen and accented space in the middle of the screen. After six of

these shots, edited with fade-to-black and fade-in transitions, we begin to see a steady, slow rhythm that is gently interrupted with the shot of the soldiers (Figure 3.3) announced with the music by the presence of a horn, which becomes the audio symbol for the soldier throughout the video. Notice the similarity in unaccented space in both the screen of text and the image of soldiers; however, taking the place of the words (23 letters “and then there’s Army Strong”), the center is now filled with 23 soldiers. The sequence that follows this image increases the rhythmic intensity, but before we move on, the use of space in the image of the soldiers is important and needs to be discussed.

Space, according to Block, is the cinematographer’s use of Cartesian Perspectivalism—depth or flatness—on the screen. In Figure 3.3 we have a group of soldiers standing in a line. No soldier is in the forefront; no soldier is in the background. They stand together under a flag. Together they are “Army Strong.” The line of soldiers gives us no sense of depth and this lack of space is further flattened/illustrated by the fact that there are no clear objects in the foreground or background of the image. Space is used differently throughout the video, but the flat space used at the beginning is an important rhetorical choice to communicate strength in numbers as opposed to the strength of an individual soldier. Indeed, this is in striking contrast to the visuals of “An Army of One.” The third shot in the sequence (Figure 3.5) uses deep space. Depth is immediately seen in this image as the aerial diffusion that blurs the details of the hills in the background. The small helicopter in the middle of the image, the soldiers running in the foreground, the hills in the background, and the layering of these three elements create a sense that these soldiers control a large field and will soon secure the area in which they are running. This feeling of control is important because the video needs to

build excitement to gain the attention of the viewer through a “spike” according to Block. This excitement is constructed by increasing the rhythm of the shots.



Figure 3.4 Close up of feet running



Figure 3.5 Soldiers move quickly



Figure 3.6 Soldiers use technology



Figure 3.7 Soldiers are informed

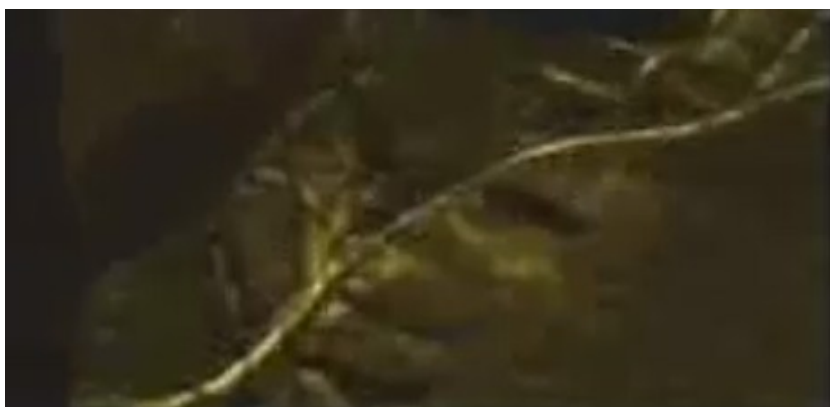


Figure 3.8 The battlefield from above



Figure 3.9 Soldiers jump from airplanes



Figure 3.10 A lone parachuter

This nine-second sequence has a high-rhythmic intensity due to the number of cuts and the way the objects in each shot constantly change, affecting the rhythm of the visual message. For example, while the first image shows the soldiers standing still and a flag waving (Figure 3.3), two images later we see soldiers running across the screen with helicopters flying quickly in the background (Figure 3.5). The rhythm is held back to some extent because the video slows the speed at which the soldiers run. The ending images, with the high-altitude jump (Figure 3.10), do the opposite: although there is only one person in the shot, the speed is increased to intensify the image. This sequence demonstrates that the video is using a type of restraint in building excitement and intensity in an attempt to frame life in the Army as thrilling but not especially dangerous. Interestingly, the tempo of the music increases as the video progresses, increasing the energy and urgency of joining the Army; using a metronome, we find that the music starts at 86 beats per minute and ends at 96 beats, a common way of communicating “an intensifying dynamic” according to Block (p. 169). Another approach the video designers used is to use shapes that denote safety when soldiers march with weapons ready to fire and excitement when vehicles are speeding along.

Block, like many visual theorists, breaks down lines into two main components: straight versus curves. Our emotional connections to these two types of lines are probably best summarized by saying straight lines are hard/sharp and curved lines are soft. As Molly Bang (1991) explains:

Our skin is thin. Pointed objects can easily pierce through to our innards and kill us. What do we know of that has sharp points? Most weapons are pointed: knives, arrows, spears, missiles, rockets; so are rocky mountains, the bows of boats that cut through water, cutting tools like scissors and saw blades, bee stingers, teeth...Curved shapes embrace us and protect us. (...) What do we know of that is formed from curves? Rolling hills and rolling seas, boulders, rivers—but our earliest and strongest associations is with bodies, especially our mother's bodies, and when we were babies, there was no place more secure and full of content. Because of these associations, pictures with curved shapes feel more secure and comforting than ones with sharp points, which feel scarier and more threatening. (p. 70-71)

Our ideological connections may differ from culture to culture, but since this is an ad primarily targeting American culture, which predominately agrees with the above assessment, we can use that summary as a starting point. We can begin with lines from two different shots in the same sequence:



Figure 3.11 Soldiers are supported by helicopters



Figure 3.12 Helicopters offer excitement

Here we see lines being used in two different ways. In the first image (Figure 3.11), we have a group of soldiers standing up in a field from a hiding position. Given that this image could be considered a tense situation, the strong line on the horizon and the horizontal lines of the helicopter blades, combined with the gentle slopes of the hills in the distance offer us assurance that these soldiers are stable and, therefore, safe. (We saw a similar technique used for a recruitment poster in chapter 2.) In the next image (Figure 3.12), the predominate perpendicular lines form obliques, suggesting quick movement and visceral thrill, something many young Americans would find appealing in the context of a fast helicopter ride. The curved lines formed by the shape of the helicopter's cockpits, for instance, create contrast, according to Block, an effective way of

showing visual intensity. The use of intensity with the helicopter and the absence of intensity with the group of soldiers in an open field tell us that, in the Army, soldiers are safe in battle and move quickly in the air. That safety is even more apparent in this image of a tank (Figure 3.13):



Figure 3.13 Tanks offer stability

The tank forms the shape of a long rectangle, indicating, according to Block, that the Army possesses “stability and a solid quality” (p. 87). When compared to the image of the helicopter, a much more oval-like shape, we can see that, while on land, we find the Army is safe, solid, and secure, and, as we discussed above, in the air, the Army is fast, dynamic, and exciting. This energy can be communicated with silhouettes as well.

Consider the screen shot below (Figure 3.14):



Figure 3.14 A soldier looks at an armored vehicle from above

Here we see a soldier looking down from a helicopter. The soldier is shown as a silhouette, and the focus is on the armored vehicle in the lower portion of the screen; the use of a dark image, Block proposes—in this case the soldier—creates a suspenseful situation, but that suspense is focused on an armored vehicle moving at a tremendous speed. Again, this energy is channeled to create exhilaration rather than fright. Furthermore, the entire format of the commercial, moving from video sequence to black screens, creates a tremendous amount of tonal contrast, as the screen moves from images to black and back to images, which is another effective technique to create visual intensity and excitement without showing soldiers in harm's way. In addition to tonal contrast, colors are also used rhetorically in this commercial.

Block encourages us to think about hue, brightness, and saturation, and how they relate to contrast and affinity. The juxtaposition of dark screens to lighter screens is not the only variety we find in this commercial; the color in the video changes from one shot to the next. Like before, the more contrast we see in these color aspects, the more visual intensity can be felt by the viewer, a technique used effectively in this advertisement.



Figure 3.15 Citizens take the Oath of Enlistment

Most of the colors used in this video have only slight variations of hue, which, when showing soldiers in war-like situation helps to create a level of visual stability. Although multiple hues are used in this commercial, contrast throughout the shots remain in relative affinity until we get to one of the final shots in which people are apparently pledging to serve in the U.S. Army (Figure 3.15). Again the use of the silhouette in the foreground creates a level of drama, this time regarding a ceremony. The people in the middle of the screen are blurry, allowing us to put our own faces, or the faces of our friends and family in place of those who stand in the picture. The use of red and blue from the flag, along with the dark shapes of people, create a high level of contrast and hue variation. These colors are saturated and bright, which further works to create visual intensity designed to relate excitement and energy to the act of joining the Army. In comparison, most of the screen shots, like the one below which I captured from this video (Figure 3.16), used an affinity of hue, low saturation, and colors that are not very bright (containing gray or white).



Figure 3.16 Soldiers are ready for combat

In this image we see four soldiers in battle fatigues walking with weapons ready to fire as four helicopters in the background fly along with the soldiers. Although they are in full combat gear and appear ready for battle, the colors in this shot do not create contrast; they are all “cool” colors according to Block, which help the soldiers appear safe and in control, even though the situation would suggest that they may engage the enemy at any moment.

This simulated engagement—“simulated” because we see no shots fired or signs that these soldiers are under enemy attack—can be clearly seen in the movement represented in many of the shots. Block lists some 38 types of movement to consider when analyzing a film, but for the purpose of this chapter storyboarding the movement taking place in the video as he suggests by drawing the direction of movement in the video with simple lines is a useful way to see how much contrast or affinity is being created in the shots. As you trace the movements in the shots in a small rectangle, that represents the screen, the lines make it very clear that the Army is using strong contrast in some segments and affinity in others. For example, contrast occurs in shots involving helicopters and tanks or in training situations. Although most of the shots, like the words on the screen, use affinity, oddly it also occurs even in some situations that seem

stressful, as when the soldiers run out of an armored personnel carrier; here, I argue, affinity is used to ease the anxiety an audience may feel about charging into battle.

Overall, though, we can clearly see a high level of contrast, as the lines in the advertisement move in circles and diagonal, horizontal, and vertical directions creating a great deal of visual intensity. So we find high energy and excitement is a part of life in the Army, but we also find a sense of safety and stability when soldiers appear to be in combat.

The story of “Army Strong”

While we find individual components in the “Army Strong” video presents a screen of safety and security when soldiers are in war-like situations, the story itself reveals the myth of the true patriot. Much like the narrative discussion of the brochure in chapter 2, Block offers a basic story structure we can use to discuss a film’s structure and visual components: exposition, conflict, and resolution, and since Block is focused primarily on moving images, I will utilize his approach here as opposed to Aristotle’s, which I used in chapter 2. Perhaps not coincidentally, considering that one of the primary targets for these ads is high school and college students, this video uses a “Webster’s definition” as an introduction, a prototypical way to begin an essay. However, this video “disagrees” with Webster’s definition because there is “strong” and there is “Army Strong.” So, while introducing the concept of “Army Strong” in a way many college and high school students would be familiar with, the commercial also serves to counter traditional “book learning” in some ways, since Webster is wrong. The video then slowly builds to a conflict; although it does not show guns firing or injuries occurring, or even enemies, we are told the story of the training, deployment, and success of Army soldiers.

The story is constructed in a fragmented way, helping to communicate a sense of energy and visual excitement to the screen.

A quick summary of the story will help illustrate this fragmentation as well as the three main parts of the story in terms of Block's categories. At the beginning we are shown how technology is used to support ground troops by sending in paratroopers where needed. This is a "spike" according to Block, a brief sequence of excitement to capture our attention. We then watch soldiers in training in the next two sections before deployment and interaction with children in an, apparently, foreign land. The next sequence shows a nervous face, an award, and honor from a former soldier in a parade-like setting. Then we are back at the battlefield, awaiting orders until called to action in the next section. Again we find technology and helicopters being used quickly and with apparent precision and clear communication. The next scene shows soldiers off duty, at the office and fishing, before a scene of saluting soldiers. We are taken back to training before seeing a bridge being built quickly and a tank moving in slow motion toward the viewer. Again we are shown a training sequence before watching these soldiers run with guns in the same direction, the climax of the ad. We find the helicopters in support and are visually told that their mission is accomplished when we observe a soldier waving to a passing helicopter. As he waves the edit cuts to the American flag waving before cutting to a shot of people enlisting with the backdrop of the American flag. While the flag offers a sense of closure, like the ending of "The Star Spangled Banner," it also creates a link between patriotism and service in the armed forces—the myth of the true patriot. This resolution of the flag and enlistment also serves as a call to action as we see two different soldiers in combat fatigues looking at us as well as two more action shots. Interestingly,

there is no phone number or website at the end and no verbal appeal to join. There is, however the words: “Army Strong,” followed by the Army logo.

The music of “Army Strong”

Music is an important element in this video, and, having analyzed the basic visual components and story structure of the commercial, we should now turn our attention to the way music helps to build excitement and encourage enlistment. This video contains no diegetic¹² sound, only music, but we could infer that sound, much like visual components, could be analyzed in terms of contrast and affinity. Loud or obtuse sounds create more contrast, while background noises, and the sounds associated with characters on the screen create more affinity. With music, however, the discussion is a little more complex. The music in this advertisement is a simple melody which builds in intensity using a variety of techniques. The music begins with the sound of a gong or timpani before low strings and brass play at a soft volume. This takes place as we see the words on the screen. The music at this point tells us that something is coming; we need to be paying attention (K. Krikorian, personal communication, November 14, 2010). When we see the first shot of soldiers we immediately hear a French horn or trombone playing the melody. Here we are being asked to associate the sound of the horn with the soldiers. The use of the horn is rhetorically significant because of its strong, tough sound and ability to become very loud, overpowering other instruments; brass is likely to be perceived as powerful (Stilwell, 2007). We also culturally associate the sounds of military to brass instruments (i.e., Bugles). A trumpet comes in as we see a soldier being

¹² I use diegetic here to indicate there are no background noises, not to infer that the music doesn't work together with the action taking place on the screen. For a good summary of the debate over the distinction between diegetic and nondiegetic sound, read *Panel Discussion on Film Sound/Film Music: Jim Buhler, Anahid Kassabian, David Neumeyer, and Robynn Stilwell*, an online chat published by Velvet Light Trap, Volume 51 in Spring 2003.

encouraged and praised and this trumpet continues to lead the melody. Tension is built through the layering of music and also through the use of quarter notes in the string section and drums on some of the downbeats. The composer also uses two key changes, the first in the scene of soldiers running through a grassy field to build urgency and the second during the text “there is nothing on this green earth.” At the end, the quarter notes become sixteenth notes, adding even more excitement. So we can hear several techniques being used to communicate energy and urgency: the addition and layering of instruments, a constantly increasing tempo (as discussed above), increasing rhythmic drive, and louder instrumentation (K. Krikorian, personal communication, November 14, 2010). This energy, however, is offered through instrumentation that utilizes affinity, as the orchestra follows a predictable and memorable melody.

Strong? The Army addresses a concerned public

The overwhelming public support garnered by this commercial and new slogan can be explained through its complex and rhetorically powerful visual rhetoric as well as the way it effectively connects the American desire for a successful ending in Iraq with the desire to be strong, noble, and patriotic. While the American public knew that the Army was bogged down in a, seemingly, endless war, the video and slogan offered a visual argument that the Army’s victory was inevitable, an argument that the myth of reciprocal altruism actually requires for global stability. Furthermore, the visuals present a terministic screen that minimize the stress of combat with color choices, tone, horizontal lines, and curves while maximizing contrast and energy in visuals that show traveling and the use of technology. Moving from “Army of One” to “Army Strong” also allowed the designers to move from images that focused on training and individual action, to images that seem more akin, at times, to an aggressive sport.

Much like the images we analyzed in chapter 2, this commercial offers a carefully constructed story that conveys a sense of documentary realism, encouraging the public, as Tagg (1987) notes, to accept the commercial as fact. This commercial uses several codes and conventions to communicate this realism to the viewer.



Figure 3.17 New recruits listen to their drill sergeant

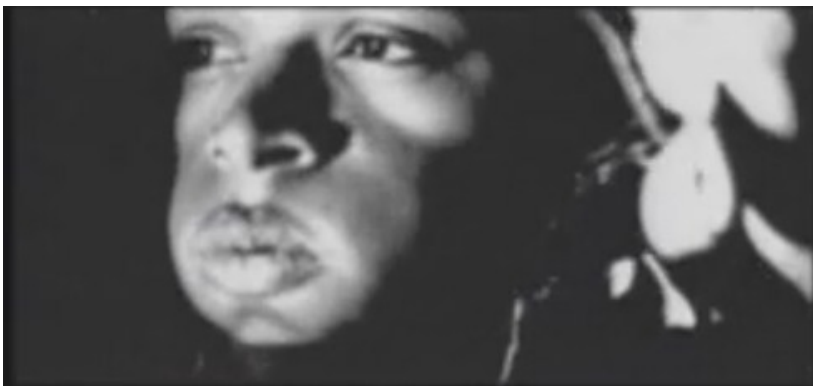


Figure 3.18 A soldier controls his nervousness

The jumpy, hand-held techniques, used in the training sequence at the beginning of the commercial, when the camera zooms to a face of a young woman (Figure 3.17), appear as if the footage was taken quickly by a camera operator struggling to capture the moment. This visual also suggests that no tripod or proper lighting could be considered because of the urgency of the moment; we also see this lighting and hand-held technique used when the soldier is running while training and when the soldier is exhaling with cheeks puffed

out (Figure 3.18), apparently releasing the stress of the moment. Another documentary technique we find is the apparent inability of the camera operator to stay with the subject as can be seen in the helicopter sequence. This creates the appearance of an unplanned recording session, something anyone who recorded video on a cell phone could relate to.

Interestingly, Tagg's approach also encourages us to single out images that appear posed because they are presented by the sponsoring agency as different from the "realistic" images. There are two that really stand out in this commercial because they do not follow the codes of realism used in the rest of the advertisement.



Figure 3.19 After service comes success



Figure 3.20 Service makes you a better father

In one image a man in a suit looks out of a window (Figure 3.19). The man seems to be reflecting on his past work in the military, since the footage is in the middle of this commercial. The other image shows a man fishing with his son (Figure 3.20). Both of these shots are taken with a stable camera which moves smoothly to capture the subject. The lighting in both of these shots seems to be planned to illustrate the mood of the subjects. We would be comfortable seeing this footage used to sell life-insurance, so the fact that it is used by the Army is interesting and deserves a bit of reflection: perhaps the Army is telling us that life in the military is more real than life in the civilian sector. Gardner and Palmer (2010) found that viewers found that people preferred the non-standard compositions found in realistic images (what they call “representational fit”) rather than the generic, standardized image. In any case, we can definitely see that the commercial tells us that life in the Army is more exciting and rewarding than life as a civilian. Notice the man in the office (Figure 3.19). He is alone. He is looking out the window and seems bored. He is thinking fondly about his time in the military, perhaps remembering the adventures he had. He wants to go back and do that all over again because when he was in the Army, he was really living; now he can merely remember that time. In other words, life is only meaningful and real when you are serving your country in the Army. The image of the man fishing with his son offers a different perspective (Figure 3.20). Here we see that the military has prepared this soldier to be a good father to his son. Both images together could also suggest that the military provides a grounding that makes people into better citizens and parents. The fact that these images break the codes of realism, however, makes this self-actualization message somewhat doubtful, or perhaps wishful thinking making me think that these images were actually stock shots purchased for the advertisement since they seem to work against the rhetorical message they are intended to offer the viewer.

This reflection we see in the man in the office illustrates theories of the gaze we are constructed to take with the soldiers shown in this commercial. While we might not see them in a Freudian sense, we can see that these soldiers are being shown as an object of desire they personify: a desire for strength, life, adventure, thrill, and honor. Even the man standing alone in the office offers us a compelling narrative (Figure 3.19). Here is a man who served his country, and remembers his service fondly and with longing. We are offered a chance to be like this man, to serve in the Army and enjoy the excitement, respect, and honor bestowed on those who serve, and then use the training and discipline we receive in the Army to become successful. The idea of wearing a suit and casually walking around a large office building with wall-sized windows is a compelling narrative to many who equate climbing the corporate ladder to success; here we see the Army piggy-backing on this notion by showing us a military success story: a man who served and has used that training to become respected and powerful in the corporate world.

Defining/redefining strong

Perhaps the most compelling rhetorical device in this video can be seen in the re-framing of the word “strong.” The new U.S. Army slogan is introduced by challenging the word itself, our basic definition of the term. It is as if our use of the term has somehow minimized the word’s true meaning, like the use of the word “awesome.” The Army is attempting to rescue the term from misuse, to show us what strong really means. Discounting the news and personal opinion to the contrary—two wars, falling recruitment numbers, reports that the Army was at the breaking point—the Army is telling the American public that it is strong; the commercial is acting as an introduction to a terministic screen. The concept of the terministic screen reminds us to look for how

the “reality” of life in the Army is constructed for the audience. For example, notice that high-tension scenes are composed to appear safer than they actually are in combat situations. The commercial shows soldiers in what appear to be combat zones, but mainly through photographs. The only movement in these photographs is through a Ken Burns effect, slowly zooming in to the subject. In one scene a number of tanks can be seen in a desert situation, but they are moving fast and seem to be in control, seemingly setting up to attack. Nowhere do we see soldiers stationed at check points or walking through the streets of a city with guns ready to fire; the “reality” we see in the news, documentaries, and films about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is not the “reality” we are presented with in this commercial. “Army Strong” offers a terministic screen which argues that “there is nothing on this green earth that is stronger than the U.S. Army.” In other words, do not believe the news that says the Army is at a breaking point.

Burke’s notion of identification is also helpful to see how rhetoric functions in this commercial. The decision to cast so many faces in this commercial is significant. We see a variety of nationalities, gender, and age groups, performing different tasks (using computers, running with weapons, jumping out of planes) which helps the video connect with a wide audience and reminds viewers that the Army is an equal opportunity employer. Identification also occurs, as Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) point out, when eye contact is made. The soldiers directly face the viewer at the end of the commercial, and, as we have noted above, the use of the silhouette also helps us put ourselves in the place of those signing up to join in the Army at the end of the commercial.

The connection and empathy encouraged by this commercial can be further examined through Gee’s discussion of video game engagement. Utilizing his experience playing the video game *Grand Theft Auto*, Gee provides a compelling insight that applies

to this commercial when he says that “games allow you to accept a given assumption (I have to earn a living through crime) and then see how you personally would think, feel, and act.” (par. 29). While this commercial is not a game, we can see that the video is constructed to give us multiple narratives, subjects, and outcomes to life as an Army soldier. Here the assumption is “I want to be Army Strong” and the commercial provides us with a wide variety of ways we can “think, feel, and act” as a part of being “Army Strong” and shows us the rewards (adventure, training, and honor) of making this decision. When combined with the American military myth of reciprocal altruism and the myth of the true patriot, the rhetorical argument to be “Army Strong” is strengthened and above criticism and public discussion. However, much like the video game we will discuss in the next chapter of this dissertation, we are also shown a military that oversimplifies the complexity of working for the Army during a time of war; *America’s Army*’s terministic screen, offered by the Army, is the subject of the next chapter.

America's Army: Sharing an American military myth with the world
Download AA3 Today and Become a Member of the elite America's Army Team!

Start playing America's Army 3 today. America's Army fans and new players alike can now experience America's Army 3, the official U.S. Army game, which has more authentic military elements including training, technology, weapons, and audio than any other military game.

Built on Unreal Engine 3, AA3 delivers stunningly realistic characters, environments, lighting effects, animations, and team-based experiences. In the game where Every Detail Counts™, players are bound by Rules of Engagement (ROE) and gain experience as you navigate challenges in team-based, multiplayer, force-on-force operations. With 15 different map/mission combinations and exclusive advanced training that allows you to unlock new abilities and customize your gear, you'll experience Soldiering in the U.S. Army like never before.

Find strength like no other in a game like no other. Start your mission now!

When you play AA3 on Steam, you'll earn Steam Achievements, ranking up among your friends as you earn distinguished status, badges, medals and ribbons. With AA3 on Steam, you can also save your keyboard bindings to the Steam Cloud - just login to your Steam account and fire up AA3 on any PC to utilize your custom settings. (Steam)

This advertisement for *America's Army 3* on the Steam platform reveals how games require a level of physical and mental interaction out of viewers that graphic

designers and advertising producers must envy.¹³ The sheer amount of time spent looking at video games while they are being played accounts for some of that interaction, but this viewing is encouraged by the level of rewards a player can obtain by practicing and mastering a video game.¹⁴ Like posters, video games attempt to attract attention with visual components, and like television advertisements, video games combine visual components with music and sounds; however, video games take visuals, music, and sound to another level for advertisers as observed in the Army's recruitment video game. *America's Army* has published nine releases since July 4, 2002, and each release has attempted to balance game play with (what game designers call) "authenticity," teaching players what life in basic training is like, Army culture and values, and what combat missions are like after training as a soldier. While the first version was released in 2002, a year after the slogan "An Army of One" was introduced to the American Public, the game has constantly been tweaked and updated, becoming more visually complex and socially engaging. The current version, *America's Army 3*, was released on June 17, 2009 and provides stunning visual detail and the ability to communicate verbally with other players. By January 9, 2011, the game was downloaded 908,719 times on the Army's preferred partner program download site, and there were 8.8 million registered players. According to *America's Army* public relations director Lori Mezzoff, "30 percent of young Americans played America's Army game and 30 percent of these players say they're more likely to enlist in the army because they played" (Orlando, 2011). A claim like this shows us the power and impact of video games—which can be updated to confront the challenges faced by the Army.

¹³ Portions of this chapter were previously published in *Computers and Writing Online*, Fall 2008, as "Thinking through Persuasive Play: Encouraging a Reflective Gaming Experience."

¹⁴ An annual survey released on the website gamespot.com found that gamers averaged 13 hours of playtime each week with 4 percent of gamers playing 40 to 48 hours per week. To find out more visit <http://www.gamespot.com/news/6264092.html>

As video games engage players through hand-movements as well as visuals, so their level of engagement is stronger than the connections made when viewers look at two-dimensional texts like posters and brochures. The premise of *America's Army* is that the United Nations, having exhausted its ability, has invited the U. S. Army step in to help the struggling nation of Ostregal, revealing once again the American military myth of reciprocal altruism—that American soldiers can be sent to help countries gain freedom from tyrannical leaders. Any reciprocity gained by such action is limited to obtaining new democratic allies like Germany or Japan. New players follow a narrative similar to an actual recruit. Players qualify for combat through boot camp and can progress up the ranks by completing missions following Army rules of engagement and values. Missions take place in Ostregal—a war with equally equipped enemies, a lack of civilians, and the support of the world. This premise, or terministic screen, overly simplifies the act of going to war, and the structure of the game, with clearly defined enemies and easily obtainable objectives, glosses over the ethical and moral concerns that warfare naturally raises. Furthermore, the game indoctrinates players in the core values of Army soldiers by requiring players engage by those values as they participate in the game, which, according to Bogost (2007) is a form of procedural rhetoric. Bogost argues that video games “open a new domain for persuasion, thanks to their core representational mode, procedurality” a form which he calls “procedural rhetoric, the art of persuasion through rule-based representations and interactions rather than the spoken word, writing, images, or moving pictures” (p. ix). Bogost defines procedurality as “a way of creating, explaining, or understanding processes. And processes define the way things work: the methods, techniques, and logics that drive the operation of systems, from mechanical systems like engines to organizational systems like high schools to conceptual systems like religious faith” (p. 3). As players navigate through the game, the underlying rules of

living by Army values require that they, even for a few hours, think like an Army soldier right from the beginning of the game.

Upon launching *America's Army 3*, we can immediately observe the mood-setting music, the realistic sound effects, the millions of colors (depending on the screen) used by video games, and, as we begin, the initial awkwardness of learning how to become a virtual soldier in the U.S. Army. This awkwardness, with time and practice, eventually may give way to flow, a state in which Csikszentmihalyi (1996) says a person is “completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you’re using your skills to the utmost” (par 3). Experiencing flow is an exhilarating and highly satisfying experience, and gamers are looking for it when they play a game. Developing such a game is what many designers strive to accomplish.

Long before flow can be accomplished, players begin *America's Army* by creating a login name, qualifying on obstacle courses, grenade throwing, weapons shooting, and medical training before being allowed to participate in missions.¹⁵ This training, and the developer’s insistence on underscoring the game’s “realism,”¹⁶ is an important aspect to the game as a rhetorical device because, as RAND has found—and we discussed in Chapter 1, aversion to military lifestyle is a key reason many people do not sign up for the armed forces. Part of this realism includes capturing the landscape of the training facility as seen in this image:

¹⁵ *America's Army 3* is the first version of the game to allow you to skip boot camp, as many players are already familiar with the controls; however, boot camp is where a beginner would learn the basic controls to play the game successfully.

¹⁶ *America's Army 3* executive producer Micheal Bode insists that the game “is the closest thing you are going to get to the Army unless you join.” The interview can be viewed on the game platform or on YouTube. To watch the interview without downloading the game, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjH2BzT2v3I&NR=1>



Figure 4.1 A digital rendition of the “Fit to Win” boot camp in Fort Jackson, S.C.

Game developers went through great lengths to capture particular details of the “Fit to Win” boot camp in Fort Jackson, S.C., (they even spent time there in basic training) as well as the sounds of weapons, and the precise way soldiers are trained to run, walk, roll, and hold weapons. To get the movements of the virtual soldiers to be as realistic as possible, the game developers captured the motions of a Special Forces soldier as he operated the equipment and performed basic maneuvers like running with a rifle, aiming, and crawling. SME (subject matter experts), actual soldiers working in the U.S. Army, were consulted and had their movements digitally recorded while performing actions to make sure things like medical training and combat weapons training look as authentic as possible. The environments, layout, and equipment used at U.S. Army training facilities are duplicated in the game, and even the weapons sounds and drill sergeant voices are from actual recordings. This technical attention to realistic details can allow players to feel like they have participated in military maneuvers, training,

exercises, and culture, which recruiters hope will counter the aversion to military lifestyle and, thus, increase the likelihood of enlistment.

As players progress, they are allowed to use increasingly complex weaponry through practice and eventually qualifying to use the weapon, a method actually used by the U.S. Army. After training, players can earn metals, ribbons, and increase their “Honor” score by successfully completing missions and demonstrating U.S. Army core values (or LDRSHIP: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless-Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage) while on missions. Honor points are viewable by others and the higher the points, the more likely the player will be selected for missions with other players. Gamers who do not play by U.S. Army core values can be suspended from play by having their virtual soldier locked in a brig for a time; or players can actually be barred from playing the game with their current virtual soldier or have such low “integrity points” from Rules of Engagement (ROE—based on the Geneva Convention) violations that they realize they will never move up in the ranks, so they start over, creating a new virtual soldier and go through training from the beginning.

After training, soldiers are allowed to join other players to achieve a wide variety of missions. Current roles a player can take on include rifleman, automatic rifleman, grenadier, squad designated marksman, and combat medics (a.k.a. 68 Whiskeys); combat engineers and Raven (small unmanned aerial vehicle) operators will be added in the video game in the future, according to game designers. Upon completing basic training, players can go through additional training to qualify to be one of these new, specialist characters in the video game. The premise of the game is as follows:

Fourteen months ago, the Czervenian government, controlled by the PKC began expelling civilians from the country (Ostregal) by military force. Over 300,000 people have been displaced and those who refused to leave have been executed. Czervenian President Kasimir Adzic and the PKC threaten to destabilize the region. U.N. Security Council resolutions failed to resolve the conflict and U.N. aid workers are overwhelmed. A humanitarian crisis of epic proportions is imminent if decisive action is not taken. The RDO government and the U.N. have requested the help of the United States. The President has sent the U.S. Army to resolve the situation. (From <http://www.americasarmy.com/intel/recon.php>)

Day-to-day life in Ostregal is not experienced by the player. (There is no shopping or sharing drinks with the locals.) The situation is presented as a list of missions which the player can select. These missions take several factors into account. Gamers have a wide variety of places (maps) they can go (bridge, pipeline, alley, impact, and ranch), which offer a range of lighting and weather conditions (day, dusk, night, fog, sporadic rain, cloudy, high wind, clear) and missions to complete (carryable objective, activated objective, take and hold, VIP escort, classic play, assault/defense, secure and extraction).



Figure 4.2 Bridge map on a clear night (Screen shot from *America's Army 3*)

Therefore, gamers can select from dozens of missions which are composed of a combination of the above factors, looking something like the screen shot captured above: Mission: VIP Escort; Map: Bridge; Night/Clear. This level of variety, combined with the randomness of players participating in these missions, ensures that the narratives that unfold in the game are unique and require novel approaches at times, thus keeping gamers interested in playing the recruitment game.

This brief overview of *America's Army* video game just skims the surface of the detail involved in successfully playing this game. Despite (or, perhaps, because of) this complexity, the game has been an overwhelming success. And while the background may be an engaging stage for play, the rhetorical function of the game can be clearly seen as players sign in and move their avatar through the stage to complete missions and earn

honor points. This next section will examine how players engage with their avatars and why this engagement is an important rhetorical tool for the U.S. Army.

Connecting with the virtual soldier

The virtual soldier is running through the halls of an empty building. In each room I see chairs, empty tables, and random debris. I'm looking for an objective; it looks like a communication device in an open case. I can hear the virtual soldier breathing, footsteps, and the sounds of other people on the team as they spot enemy soldiers. Someone calls for a medic. I hope the enemy isn't around the next corner.

Watching footage of the game on YouTube is very different from actually playing. While both are interesting to watch, actually playing a game can be much more exhilarating. I do not want the soldier to get wounded and can do my best to avoid it. In a movie, I may wish a character would not walk through an open door; in the game, my character will enter an open door if I do not want it to. I feel as if what happens to my avatar happens to me. I feel responsible for its “life,” for whether the avatar is injured or killed. The virtual character is actually a part of me in some way.

This connection a player feels with a virtual character is a hot topic in video game theory because facilitating that connection can make or break the success of a video game. Although scholars like Gee (2003), Zettl (2007), King and Kryzywinska (2002) discuss “camera” angles as part of the apparatus of engagement (do we see the entire body of the character, are we looking through its eyes, or over its head), many game theorists discount the visual composition (in terms of complexity and clarity) of the

game and focus more on play and narrative because these are what keep people playing.¹⁷ The quality of graphics is also largely marginalized by the work of most theorists, yet not by players and game advertisers; most scholars say that a game can have great graphics but poor engagement with the player if the narrative is weak. In other words, players need a compelling storyline to encourage them to successfully complete levels or missions and progress in the video game. The visual aspect of this storyline can be examined through the lens of the film components we discussed in Chapter 3.

Block's (2001) components—space, line, shape, tone, color, movement, and rhythm—can easily apply to the functional elements of *America's Army 3*, and these components help us see how visual elements work with the storyline to build tension and increase the emotional connection a player has with the avatar. This screen shot of the alley map is a good example (Figure 4.3). Coming from a film theory background, we can note how depth is constructed in the game to make players feel like they are walking through an alley, when in fact, they are looking at a flat computer screen. Block's components also help us notice that the movement caused by walking and pointing the weapon, together with the visual rhythm caused by multiple elements and details in the video game helps create the feeling that players are actually moving their characters through the alley. Here the illusion of depth is created through light and dark areas on the screen. The game can have a quick pace too, depending on how aggressive a role you make your virtual soldier take, and also due to the fact that live players are on the other team seeking to achieve their objective; if you are a hindrance to that objective, your character could very well be shot.

¹⁷ For more discussion on the concept that play and narrative trump visual composition, see Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman's discussion of the popularity of the game *Pong* in the preface of their book *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (full citation in the Reference section).



Figure 4.3 An alley in Ostregal (Screen shot from *America's Army 3*)

This visceral thrill can generate an excited state in the players which can complement the desire players feel to avoid virtual death and accomplish the mission—a very unique feeling for military recruitment, especially considering the other recruitment material we discussed in earlier chapters which attempt to create a sense of safety when soldiers are in tense situations. Walking your virtual soldier through this setting is actually unsettling as there are many places your enemy could be hiding and waiting for you to make a mistake. These visuals work with the narrative and facilitate it, make it more compelling and engaging and creating more empathy between the player and the virtual soldier.

Players' movements and actions in the game are an important aspect of their gaming experience; Salen and Zimmerman call this gameplay and define it as “the formalized interaction that occurs when players follow the rules of a game and experience its system through play” (2004, p. 303). This experience must be unhindered

or frustration may occur as the player and avatar fail to fully connect. When players push a button, they expect their character to obey the command immediately. Dreyfuss (2003) notes that this point of contact between the person and the product must not become a point of friction. If this occurs, players would be constantly aware and frustrated by their lack of connection with the virtual character. Eastin and Griffiths (2006) found that engagement is higher among players when they are familiar with the game console, and *America's Army 3*, like many popular video games, is purposefully designed to teach the keyboard controls and to get players comfortable with the process of moving (both physically with the use of the hands and virtually through their character's "body") as the game progresses. These keystrokes can even be customized by the player if needed. This is one reason why boot camp is so important in *America's Army 3*. It allows the player time to get comfortable with the keystroke controls before the virtual soldier's life is in danger. Game platform, computer screen, keyboard, and control pads are all considered vitally important to both designers and gamers.

Being comfortable with the controls helps gamers fully engage with the game, allowing them the possibility to experience a sense of pleasure that is difficult to describe. Back in the 1930s, Huizinga wrote that play can take a person from seriousness, to absorption, and then to "a devotion that passes into rapture" (p. 8). More recently, Csikszentmihalyi came up with his theory of "flow," which we discussed earlier. Both theorists describe the euphoric feeling one gets when one is totally immersed, challenged, and confident in a task. Flow in *America's Army 3* can be attained, we could summarize, when people who frequently play can fully engage with the challenge of playing instead of consciously focusing on interpreting elements on the screen or on moving their fingers to control the virtual character. With or without flow, the controls

are an important way to connect with the virtual character, and the level of connection players have with their digital characters is still palpable and observable by game theorists and designers. For example, the pronouns used by players when discussing their gaming experience illustrate this connection. Will Wright, creator of *The Sims* (a more visually iconic than a photorealistic game), noticed that people switch pronoun uses when discussing his game. When characters do what the gamers want, gamers use the word “I” when discussing the character. When characters disobey suggestions, gamers use the word “he” or “she” in reference to the character (Fullerton, 2004). Clearly this behavioral level of engagement is different than the ideological connections we make when we look at some “neutral” two-dimensional texts like maps or bus charts.

Potential recruits are engaged in several ways as they play *America's Army 3* — and one way is the sense of community it offers them. After the player completes boot camp, *America's Army 3* provides opportunities to team up with other players online to compete against other teams and complete missions. Fullerton says a “good” game provides an experience to gamers, which allows players to connect emotionally to the game, and Bonk and Dennen (2005) add that the teamwork that games like *America's Army 3* offers facilitates a community connection that is different from other games. Eastin and Griffiths (2006) say that playing video games with or against other people heightens a player's engagement in the game, and Loyall (2004) finds that players are more immersed in a game when they respect the virtual character.

Respect is important because in many games, according to Gee (2003), players take on a “projective identity” which combines a virtual self, the character in the game, with their own values and desires. Aarseth (1997) argues that players see their characters not as others, but as “remote-controlled extension(s)” of themselves. Playing these types

of games creates a simulation of experience, says Gee, which prepares the player for action in the world. This simulated experience may give players a basis for reflective thought about an activity in which they have only virtually participated in. Indeed, Gee says that “because (games) fit so well with human minds and offer alleviation from social ills, they also have the capacity—not always realized, of course—to make people more reflective about both thinking and society” (p. 15). Gee also points out that games may help players reflect on their ideological perspective because a video game forces them to perform the actions of, what may be, a completely different type of person, doing, for instance, jobs that the players may or may not feel comfortable doing as career choices.

Simplifying Warfare: American soldiers as heroes

One way games can make players reflect on their perspective of reality, says Gee, is by giving them a feeling of control, order, and meaning. He says games like *Full Spectrum Warrior*—we could add here *America’s Army 3*—allow players to “experience expertise, to feel like an expert” commanding officer (2005, p. 49). (Bonk and Dennen argue that success in games actually improves players’ self-esteem.) Gee says after playing the game, he felt like a professional military commander, and the experience he took away was that he now knows how to act and what it feels like to be a person in that role. Gee calls it “our (military) career”: the virtual commander and Gee’s physical self. The combination of the virtual and physical results in a third type of self, he says; this third self is what gives games the power to influence social change, but this can only come about if the game stimulates the players to consider their ideological perspective. That is a big “if” for *America’s Army 3*. Players may feel like they understand what being a soldier would be like because they play a game that offers them a perspective of that line of work, but they are only being given a terministic screen showing a very small,

overly positive, and highly shielded perspective of military life—much like the printed advertisements we discussed in Chapter 2 and the war-like images in Chapter 3. The game does not provide an opportunity for players to think critically about joining the military; it—on the contrary—provides positive experiences which, by their immersive saturation, may work against the critical thinking function that the players need to use before they make such a decision. For example, the premise of the game itself capitalizes on the American military myth of reciprocal altruism by suggesting the U.S. Army has global support upon entering the conflict in Ostregal and while engaging the enemy the conflict escalates through no fault of America's Army. No other conflicts in the virtual world of the game are calling for more recruits; all resources are devoted toward this effort. Missions are clear and achievable in a few minutes or hours at most and are chosen by players at their convenience. Enemies are uniformed, easily identifiable, and just as equipped as American soldiers. While making the game more playable, these scenarios offer an unrealistic and historically inaccurate portrait of almost every military campaign undertaken. Details like these may elude many young Americans, and the game is ready to provide a terministic screen that presents an oversimplified, heroic version of all the action and adventure they are looking for.

Gee (2005) says that games can reinforce already held beliefs, but they can also open avenues into viewing the world from different perspectives. For example, a viewpoint that war is heroic will be reinforced with *America's Army 3*, but the viewpoint that war is hell, according to Gee, would be reinforced by playing *Operation Flashpoint: Cold War Crisis*. If, after playing *America's Army 3* for a year, people played *Operation Flashpoint*—a game which illustrates the difficulties of war—they may or may not think differently on the issue, but it does mean that, at least for the time they play *Operation*

Flashpoint, the values and actions required of the character will probably be performed by a player's projected self—thus having some effect on his or her level of empathy for a soldier in warfare. In theory, the longer people play the “war is hell” game, the more likely they will be to critically examine their experience in *America's Army 3* because it will not match their memories of (virtual) fighting in a war.

Unlike *Operation Flashpoint*, *America's Army 3* actually puts teams of players against each other, so the enemy of the United States in *America's Army 3* provides an interesting ideological conundrum. When players log into missions and form teams, they see themselves as U.S. Army Soldiers. Players on the other side appear in a different style uniform and are translated into Czervanian (a mix of Eastern European words combined with Spanish grammar) by the game. However, even those players on the other side see themselves in U.S. Army uniform as well and, in turn, see their opponents as enemies. In other words, players always see themselves as U.S. Army soldiers, even though members of the opposing team see them in “enemy” uniforms; any chance to actually build empathy or identification with the enemy soldier is completely subverted. Players cannot choose to see themselves as enemies of the U.S. Army. While, at first, this might seem like a brilliant design, it also speaks to the ideology of America's use of military force. Actual U.S. Army soldiers are not encouraged to consider the circumstances in which people take up arms; they are merely enemies of America and must be destroyed. Soldiers are not asked to understand the cause of those who take up arms; soldiers are commanded to accomplish missions set up by higher ranking officers. *America's Army 3* tells us that soldiers are apolitical: they follow orders; they live by Army values as they accomplish these missions. Soldiers, and thus the players by virtue of playing, are

required to have a view of warfare that does not take into account the political, economic, cultural, or religious underpinnings that created the fighting in the first place.

In addition to providing a simplified version of what warfare is like, *America's Army 3* also provides a compelling reason to enter into the act of war, which reveals a foundational belief required for the American military myth of reciprocal altruism. Virtual soldiers are not asked to protect American economic interests or energy needs or even to remove governments that harbor terrorists; they are asked to step in where the United Nations is faltering, to help the world achieve stability and protect the innocent. Instead of an invasion force, the U.S. Army is answering a call for assistance. In a scene more like the Bosnian War (in which U.S. Forces were used to halt the systematic-genocide of Bosnians being committed by the Serbs), the U.S. Army is given the task to step in and provide a peace keeping force:

The Contested Area of Ostregal: 200 miles of dense forests, war-torn villages and dangerous rural plains are all that stand between the Republic of Ostregal and its total domination by the Czervenian Nationalist Party. Answering the call, the United States Army is deployed to provide humanitarian relief and protect the innocent civilians caught in the crossfire. But when battle begins and an ominous threat is uncovered, American Soldiers will fight with strength, honor and courage like no other. (*Americas Army Graphic Novel* p. 1)

In this quote from a graphic novel that explains the context of events within the game, we learn that a large military force is gathering to attack the U.S. Army soldiers stationed in Ostregal, giving these soldiers the moral grounds to go on specific missions, shooting

those who threaten American forces, civilians, and political leaders, and providing more visceral excitement to a game than the role of a peace-keeper at a check station. Here the game reinforces the American military myth of reciprocal altruism: soldiers are sent to war to help a country gain its freedom from tyranny and to help them achieve democratic independence. We are asked, in a way, to hearken back to wars in which America thoughtfully and somewhat reluctantly entered after all diplomacy failed, before the country's economic interest played an important role in American military policy. The game's notion of the military providing aid, therefore, is somewhat troubling considering the way in which American military policy has been utilized throughout various times in history, and most recently during the War on Terror, when much of the world protested the use of the U.S. Military to remove those in power in Iraq. Furthermore, returning to the similarities between Ostregal and the Bosnian conflict, the idea of using the military to prevent genocide and protect innocent lives, as outlined by the Clinton Doctrine (in the 1996 National Security Strategy), is easy to simplify but difficult to realize in warfare when tensions between factions run high and, America's political interest is used to justify the act of ignoring crimes committed by its allies (for example, Croatia's ethnic-cleansing campaign on Serbs in Krajina). War is painfully difficult, and *America's Army's* focus overlooks much of what makes war complex and fraught with ethical concerns; and this terministic screen, combined with the engagement that the video game offers, is troubling because the game is funded by a government organization and use as a successful recruitment and public relations tool.

Instead of an oversimplification of war, games designed to recruit should engage critical thinking, encouraging careful examination of the decision to enlist because the game is, in essence, a rhetorical tool. Steinkuehler (2005) says that video games offer a

way for a person to experiment with an identity in a low risk way, and that the virtual interaction players are involved with within the game often spills over into physical interaction outside the game—in other words, enlistment. The game's use of Army values is a compelling iteration of Steinkuehler's argument. Even though a majority of those who play *America's Army 3* decide not to enlist, they will still have played by Army values and have been subject to military leaders during their game playing experience. These youth have been influenced to think like and take on the values of a U.S. Army soldier, which is, in its own way, valuable to the U.S. Army.

Furthermore, Gunter (2005) provides an interesting list of studies showing that video games influence youth behavior—*America's Army 3* producers would agree, as the game has proven highly successful as a recruitment tool. However, when a game designed to recruit teenagers provides a terministic screen that overly simplifies the complexity and horror of actual combat (i.e., mutilating wounds and confronting child soldiers), there is an ethical problem because the game uses the memories of playful flow as a repository for positive experiences; currently *America's Army 3* does not encourage critical thinking about the rhetorical strategies it is utilizing. It, in fact, requires players to take on Army values, train using weapons, and engage in missions using virtual weapons; the process is very formulaic. Lumby and Probyn's (2004) call for a renewed look at New Media ethics has been ignored by those who develop recruitment games and as these games gain in popularity, there has yet to be a public outcry for such ethical standards. *America's Army* was the first video game created to recruit people, and now there are dozens of similar games. Some players, frustrated with the overt simplification of war utilized by the game, incorporate Huizinga's (1950) notion of "spoil-sport" into their missions.

The player who trespasses against the rules or ignores them is a “spoil-sport.” The spoil-sport is not the same as the false player, the cheat; for the latter pretends to be playing the game and, on the face of it, still acknowledges the magic circle. It is curious to note how much more lenient society is to the cheat than to the spoil-sport. This is because the spoil-sport shatters the play-world itself. By withdrawing from the game he reveals the relativity and fragility of the play-world in which he had temporarily shut himself with others. He robs play of its *illusion*—a pregnant word which means literally “in-play” (from *inlusio*, *illudere* or *includere*). Therefore he must be cast out, for he threatens the existence of the play-community. (p. 11)

(We will discuss examples of this in Chapter 5). In any case, what Huizinga found in the 1930’s is still applicable today: educators (or perhaps just adults in general) largely ignore the important role of play in our learning experience and are, it seems, just now beginning to scratch the surface. The downfall in this notion is that, as play is ignored, ethics remain a separate topic. Yet we are now faced with the necessity of critically examining the ethics of designing games like *America’s Army 3*.

A major stumbling block seems to be that video games are too closely associated with entertainment—even though games are now recruitment tools. For example, Fullerton (2004) says games can be judged by the standards of good entertainment: that which “engages us and moves us both intellectually and emotionally” (p. 31). And, looking at video games through Fullerton’s lens, we see the ideological, and most disturbingly, the rhetorical aspects of video games ignored; her list includes challenge (not too easy or too hard), play (objectives are fun to achieve—see Fullerton for pages on

the definition of play), premise (context), character (the vessel for gamer participation), and story (narrative). But is the primary purpose of *America's Army 3* to be considered good entertainment? Clearly the sponsoring agency sees *America's Army 3*'s purpose as a recruitment device which is engaged with through people's desire to be entertained, to play. This desire can be so strong, that those who engage critically with the game, like "spoilsport" University of Nevada Associate Professor Joseph DeLappe (aka: "dead-in-iraq"), can be kicked out or even shot by teammates for using the game's text messaging system to type in the names of American soldiers killed in Iraq.

Clearly *America's Army 3* is more than entertainment; it is a rhetorical device in many ways. The procedural rhetoric can be seen in *America's Army 3* as players are required to participate in many rituals undertaken by a member of the U.S. Army as well as exposure to Army culture in general. The dreaded 9 week boot camp is simplified, demystified, and homogenized into a few sequences that can be mastered, or at least completed, in one evening. Core Army values are seen each time the game is opened, during boot camp, and after each mission is played. Ranks and insignias are explained and offered as rewards to players who accomplish missions without violating the Rules of Engagement, thereby collecting honor points and being distinguished from other players by moving up in rank. These few examples show how much the U.S. Army is able to pass along its culture to the video game playing public.

Speaking of the video game playing public, after the trouble I encountered just getting *America's Army 3* to launch, as opposed to *America's Army 1*, games seem to be a valuable recruitment tool for any organization. The complexity of playing *America's Army 3*, including the act of downloading the game, requires a level of computer savvy that would eliminate many would-be players. *America's Army 3* requires five gigs of

hard-drive space, 2 gigs of ram, (no Intel processors), broadband Internet connection, not to mention the ability to memorize some 25 keyboard commands. Interestingly, this game seems to target an audience that has some technical prowess, financial resources, and cognitive ability—a tough audience to capture and one that would include many of the “high quality youths” we discussed the military as wanting to recruit in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. Furthermore, with the introduction of Ravens and other unmanned robot units, having tech savvy video game playing soldiers on hand serves the U.S. Army interests in terms of training for those devices as well as the aforementioned traits of those who can download, open, and play such a game.

Interestingly enough, whether or not the game really teaches players core Army Values or encourages America’s youth to enlist, just having a game is a tremendous value for an organization. As Bogost, who in 2003 co-designed *The Howard Dean for Iowa Game*—the first video game used by a presidential candidate—says, “(w)hile the game did deploy procedural rhetorics...the very existence of an official Howard Dean game served its own rhetorical purpose, further aligning the candidate with technology culture” (p. 48). Elizabeth Losh also calls attention to this rhetorical function in reference to a game to teach soldiers Arabic language and culture: “the purpose of the game might be rhetorical and not pedagogical. Despite what the researchers thought they were doing, perhaps it was primarily intended to SHOW the teaching of Arabic to policy makers and the general public not actually TEACH Arabic more effectively” (2005). Indeed, the amount of press *America’s Army* has received over the years, and the presentation of the U.S. Army as a technologically savvy enterprise by the release of this successful game worldwide, is a useful rhetorical tool in terms of recruitment and propaganda. As we found, *America’s Army* offers a terministic screen that over-

simplifies war and reveals, upon close inspection, the American military myth of reciprocal altruism and a terministic screen that oversimplifies the complexity of war. The next, and last chapter of this dissertation, offers an overview of the visual shift that took place during the War on Terror as well a framework that allows instructors of multimodal composition classrooms the ability to discuss multiple forms of visual media.

Interrogating Myths with Students: Applying a three literacy framework to the multimodal composition classroom

The chapters above all point to a massive visual shift in recruitment material during the War on Terror that addressed the concerns of individuals and showcased service in the U.S. Army as a way to fulfill the American military myth of reciprocal altruism and to actualize the myth of the true patriot. While recruitment materials used at the beginning of the War on Terror focused on empowered, highly-trained decision makers who enjoyed free time and satisfying, marketable careers in the Army, as the war in Iraq continued and casualties mounted, the Army recruitment material shifted to images that showed soldiers in combat clothing—but holding computers and cameras, not weapons. As the war continued printed recruitment material began utilizing high-grained distortion, silhouettes, and text that incorporated kinetic energy which suggested that the war was not as dangerous as one might think based on news images. However, as recruitment numbers continued to plummet during toughest days of the war in Iraq, another visual shift took place that began to show soldiers in warfare; yet while these soldiers were shown with guns ready and serious faces, designers used strong and sometimes curved horizontal lines, calming colors, and solid, heavy shapes and typography to create a feeling of safety in the midst of danger. We also found that the *America's Army* video game capitalizes on the American military myth of reciprocal altruism while indoctrinating a video game playing public with Army values and also introducing and propagandizing this myth to the world.

Although the recruitment texts being used in this dissertation are limited in terms of sample size, they do serve as an indication that the Army constantly adapts its recruitment rhetoric to address cultural concerns. As discussed in Chapter 1, the military is the largest advertising contract that the government awards, and military leaders can

hire the best advertising agencies and draw on a huge budget to send a powerful and successful recruitment message to the American public. Service in the military is a high stakes commitment that cannot be broken without jail time or other form of punishment, and a recruit cannot choose what role he or she will take as a soldier (e.g., whether he/she works in an office or stands at a dangerous checkpoint. As I discussed in Chapter 1, college students are sought after because they are more likely to fulfill their requirements and are easier to train. Furthermore, the signing bonuses and tuition waivers are tempting for many students as they struggle with the financial stress of college life. All of these factors suggest that it is warranted, if not imperative, that we teach our students how to analyze these materials.

Not only is the multimodal composition classroom an ideal place to analyze the visuals and video games used by the military to encourage enlistment, but, correspondingly, these multimodal materials are ideal subject matter for this classroom. This chapter will present an approach that enables students to discuss the multiple visual media and genres utilized by the military. I will first introduce a multiliteracy framework taken from Stuart Selber's book *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* (2004). Although many approaches are utilized in the multiliteracy classroom—most commonly a neo-Aristotelian focus on audience, purpose, context and ethos, logos, and pathos—Selber's focus on literacies translates well to the multiple-genres of visual media that students consume in a typical day. Using Selber's framework, I will provide an example of how a class could use screen shots of the Army's recruitment website (www.goarmy.com) together with suggested readings to discuss the way the sites are designed and their ideological and the rhetorical dimensions. I will also provide possible discussion topics that can be used in such a classroom situation. By contextualizing this analysis with the

historical events taking place at the time these sites were being used, I will also be able further illustrate the rhetorical visual shift that took place in U.S. Army recruitment material during the War on Terror. Finally, the chapter will close with a discussion of the challenges and difficulties found in utilizing a multidisciplinary approach in the classroom.

Selber's three literacy framework

As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, recruitment print materials, videos, and video games attempt to catch and hold young people's attention to encourage them to join the Army, but even though they all primarily use visual design as their major strategy of appeal, we get a deeper understanding of how visual recruitment materials work if we analyze them from perspectives associated with a variety of fields, e.g. technical communication theory, two-dimensional visual theory, film theory, and video game theory. In addition, bringing together key concepts associated with different media and what are sometimes considered to be separate disciplines gives university students the theoretical flexibility needed to make connections among two-dimensional visual texts, moving images, and video game images. Key concepts in Barthes' work, for instance, are relevant to analysis of two-dimensional visuals, film, and television. Video game theory began by utilizing key concepts from literature and film: for example Zettl (2007), King and Kryzywinska (2002) look at "camera" angle; King also focuses on cut scenes (sequences in games used to advance the plot) by using concepts found in film theory. Game studies theorists Aarseth (1997) and Gee (2003, 2004, 2005) focus on narrative and virtual participation, while game play (the player's experience with the game) is a much more predominate topic in the work of other game theorists such as Fullerton (2004), Eastin and Griffiths (2006), Loyay (2004), and Huizinga (1950).

The challenge is finding a way to organize and present the key concepts discussed above in a university classroom discussion so that each unique viewpoint can be explored and both the commonalities and the specificity of each medium can be addressed. Stuart Selber's *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* (2004) offers a framework for teachers of writing and communication who wish to use their classrooms to address the question of how we can make balanced judgments regarding our use of computers and computer programs by exploring functional literacy, critical literacy, and rhetorical literacy: in other words, how texts function, how they are ideologically constructed, and how they persuade the viewer. Although Selber primarily discusses these literacies in terms of computer use, I argue that his framework is a productive one for analysis of visual recruitment material, especially in regards to their use in the multimodal composition classroom. Using this framework in a classroom is Selber's purpose, as he envisions courses that "cover all three (literacies) in ways that are less in-depth but that more closely demonstrate the interrelationships between functional, critical, and rhetorical literacies" (p. 221). Since the work of scholars associated with a variety of perspectives and disciplines will be utilized in this discussion, Selber's literacies give us a complex yet malleable structure in which to ground this discussion. Furthermore, such a framework enables this discussion to move beyond the multimodal composition classroom and into other classes.

In the context of this study, attention to questions related to functional literacy encourage us to focus on how a particular medium is constructed in terms of graphic design, editing, and composition, and an understanding of functional literacy enables us to point out how design creates meaning. In my analysis, for example, Kostelnick and Roberts' use of Gestalt theory provides special insight to the use of visual space in two-

dimensional design and how design affects eye movement and general comprehension of the information provided. The work of other scholars is particularly helpful when discussing functional literacy, among them Tufte, who works on cognitive style and information representation; Block (2001) and Dick (2005), who have popular books on shooting and editing films and videos; and King and Fullerton, who discuss the construction of video games.

Critical literacy encourages us to examine the ideological implications of visual texts, especially how images and words can work to reinforce a culture's dominant hegemonic meaning. My discussion of critical literacy utilizes the work of Barton and Barton (1993) and their arguments regarding ideology and graphic design; Kress and van Leeuwen and their discussion of visuals in book *Reading Images*; visual theories of the "gaze;" Tagg and his analysis of power and representation in photographs; and Gee and his examination of video games and learning.

Rhetorical literacy encourages us to explore how the design of the visual text, together with the ideology in the message, are combined to persuade viewers and encourage the spectator to action. My discussion of rhetorical literacy utilizes Barthes' notion of myth, Arnheim's discussion of sign, Burke's (1966) dramatism, and Bogost's procedural rhetoric.

Selber's framework of three literacies provides a valuable structure to combine the key concepts and critical theories associated with various disciplines necessary to address still, moving, and interactive visual recruitment messages. Exactly how that can be accomplished in a university classroom is what I will discuss next. Beginning with the two-dimensional text enables the discussion in this section to proceed much like it would

in a typical multimodal composition classroom: from still images to increasingly more dynamic texts, which themselves can include simple movement (e.g., flash animations) to full interactivity (e.g., video games). This approach also mirrors the changes in technology that have been embraced by the U.S. Army in their recruitment tools.

Bringing Selber’s approach into a university multimodal composition classroom

To facilitate the development of these literacies in a university multimodal classroom through the analysis of recruitment material, I offer below a few helpful texts from selected theorists. By doing so I do not intend to indicate that these are the only theorists capable of addressing the various literacies, or that each theorist’s work falls under only one of Selber’s literacies. I offer this chart below merely to help visualize Selber’s framework and how the work of theorists can be used to flesh out particular aspects of each literacy:

Table 5.1

Selber’s framework

Literacy	Poster/Website	Cinema/Video	Video Game
Functional	Barthes, Kostelnick and Roberts	Block	Morris, Fullerton et.al.
Critical	Kress and van Leeuwen, Tagg		Gee
Rhetorical	Arnheim	Burke	Bogost

For posters and basic website design, I find two theorists to be very helpful when discussing functional literacy. Kostelnick and Roberts’ (1998) book *Designing Visual Language: Strategies for Professional Communicators* provides an excellent look at gestalt theory which helps explain the connections humans make with and the meaning we impart to the information we see. Gestalt theory focuses on the way each piece of

information is placed during the design process and could easily lead into a discussion of the images and text being used in the visual. Barthes (1977) provides a powerful framework to begin class discussion regarding visuals. His article “Rhetoric of the image” from *Image, Music, Text* provides an accessible approach to begin discussion of a poster or magazine advertisement. Barthes begins his analysis by first focusing on the denotative or literal message through a close look at the linguistic and visual texts. After these two messages are described in detail, Barthes has us focus on the connotative message—what the image suggests.

Barthes’s connotative message gives us a productive inroad to critical literacy by encouraging us to think about the way the words and the photographs work together with cultural ideology. Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* offers a discussion of photographs capturing the human image and how we as viewers relate to the person in the image based on our cultural norms, emphasizing how the emotional and social connections we make with these images are useful in discussing the ideological relationships we have with people in our everyday interactions. Using a variety of photos taken from anthropologists, Kress and van Leeuwen look at eye contact, the angle of shoulders of the people in the photograph, and the cropping of the image—how much of the person is actually shown in the photograph. They apply cultural interpretation to these photographs, reading the people represented as if they were actually in the room with the viewer. This technique encourages us to read our own cultural expectations in terms of the photographs we view. The way in which these photographs are captured and reproduced is something that Tagg (1987) discusses in his work *Evidence, Truth and Order: A Means of Surveillance*. Tagg reminds us that the way an image is captured, reproduced, and presented to an audience is important

because notions of whether a photograph is “posed” or “real” are actually culturally constructed. Images can be crafted to appear more real to an audience, and these photographs are more believable, more factual as a result. A common technique used to create the illusion of reality is to use hand-held cameras that create jumpy and sometimes blurry images. Some subjects may appear out of focus, involved in an activity and rarely, if ever, looking into the camera.

Barthes’ notion of myth is a natural transition to a classroom discussion of the rhetoric in a poster by encouraging us to consider how an image can work to reinforce, and therefore argue for, the cultural norms we come to see as natural. Arnheim (1972) in his book *Visual Thinking* (especially Chapter 8) would be a good theorist to bring to the conversation with his notion of “sign” as discussed in “Pictures, Symbols, and Signs.” Signs, says Arnheim, “stands for a particular content without reflecting its characteristics visually” (p. 136). Signs can be letters, numbers, or shapes as they are used, say in street signs. Pictures “portray things located at a lower level of abstractness than they are themselves. They do their work by grasping and rendering some relevant qualities—shape, color, movement—of the object or activities they depict” (p. 137). Pictures can be abstract or photographic representations. Symbols, on the other hand, “portrays things which are at a higher level of abstractness than is the symbol itself” (p. 138). In other words, the composer is using the image to represent a concept or idea, but symbols depend on audience members to consciously make that connection.

Block’s (2001) *The Visual Story: Seeing the Structure of Film, TV and New Media* offers an accessible approach to breaking down complex moving visuals, enabling us to see how moving images are composed to convey meaning. Block’s approach allows us to break down several elements of this commercial to see how it is designed and how

it works to convey its message. He uses the following terms to discuss visuals: space, line, shape, tone, color, movement and rhythm, and for the fundamental components he uses the terms script, music, and sound. Utilizing each of the aspects outlined by Block enables us to see not only how visuals are constructed but how their meanings are created as these shots are edited into a sequence. Thinking about meaning in the capturing and editing of a visual message reminds us to consider the viewers and the position they take as audience members. Mulvey's (1975) article "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema" provides an interesting starting point for class discussion in regards to how viewers are positioned as they gaze upon an image. Mulvey uses Freud's psychoanalytic framework to argue that classic Hollywood films catered to a male gaze that favored the protagonist and tended to view women in films as objects of desire. Class discussion could begin with Mulvey and move into discussion of other gazes and positions viewers are encouraged to, and may subversively, take when watching a video. The discussion of different ways of viewing leads comfortably to Burke's (1966) notion of terministic screen from *Language and Symbolic Action: Terministic Screens* in which he argues that the act of recording also requires the act of selecting, so that every (in our case) visual is actually a deflection of another aspect of the argument. For example, the words "Army Strong" and the visual argument used to make this rhetorical appeal required the creators to select images that reflected their argument: that the Army is powerful. Classroom discussion could be guided to discuss other images used in conjunction with the Army that do not reflect this argument. I think of the popular parody image that plays with the full Army slogan: "There's strong..." superimposed on a strong male sitting at a table "and then there's Army strong" superimposed on an overweight male wearing an Army shirt. This discussion should raise awareness of the

fact that the video is offering one way of viewing the Army, and we should not accept this video as the only way.

King and Krzywinska's (2002) edited collection *Screen Play: Cinema/Videogames/Interfaces* provides some interesting explorations of the connections between film and video games, a connection too good to pass up in a multimodal classroom. Perhaps the most useful chapter in the book for this class would be "First-Person Shooters—A Game Apparatus" by Sue Morris. In this chapter Morris uses the cinematic apparatus lens and applies the categories to video games: technical basis, conditions of game play, the game as text, and the psychological process. The chart on pages 91-92 is very useful to break down the functional aspects of a person playing a video game in comparison to viewing a film in the cinema or on a television set. Another useful book is *Game Design Workshop: Designing, Prototyping, and Playtesting Games* by Fullerton et al. (2004) because the authors discuss ways video game designers can build a potential experience, which they argue is the most important aspect to consider. They offer "dramatic elements" to consider as a game is being developed: challenge, play, premise, character, and story. Designers are also encouraged to think about different types of players: the competitor, the explorer, the collector, the achiever, the joker, the artist, the director, the storyteller, the performer, and the craftsman. These two lists may provide valuable discussion points in a multimodal composition classroom before or after playing a video game as well as offer an inroad to the person playing the game. This topic would lead naturally to what a player can learn by playing a video game. Gee's (2003) work *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* provides points of discussion on the engaging capabilities of video games which may be helpful in a classroom situation. Gee argues that games offer players a chance for

situated cognition, thinking as tied to our bodies because we make a strong connection with virtual characters we guide in video games, a connection that is so compelling that we feel responsible for its actions. These games give us a chance to take on experiences, join groups we may not be familiar with otherwise, and prepare for actions that may take place in our daily lives. Such experience, says Bogost (2007) in his book *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames*, force us to take on the values and ideals embedded in the video game, thus utilizing “procedural rhetoric.”

Applying these theories and key concepts in a classroom situation should be a gradual process, with visual examples integrated into the course as readings are completed. I do not list a day-to-day discussion in this chapter, but I offer three examples that may be useful in a classroom situation. Instead of recapping the two-dimensional texts, video, and video game I selected for this dissertation, I examine the evolution of the Army recruitment website (www.goarmy.com) by using the Internet Archives’ Wayback Machine (<http://www.archive.org/web/web.php>).¹⁸ Rather than engaging in a detailed visual analysis of these sites, I use the work of key theorists and topics from the readings I discussed above to show how classroom discussion could progress over the course. This progression also shows that over time, technology has required an increasing knowledge of visual theory to discuss these texts, for example, while the work of two dimensional theorists might have pointed out much of what was going on in earlier versions of the Army’s website, analysis of websites produced today can benefit from the work of theorists who are versatile enough to discuss or who directly discuss moving images and video games.

¹⁸ “The Internet Archive is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that was founded to build an Internet library. Its purposes include offering permanent access for researchers, historians, scholars, people with disabilities, and the general public to historical collections that exist in digital format.” From <http://www.archive.org/about/about.php>

Example 1: GoArmy.com in 2000



Figure 5.1 The Army's website on December 2, 2000

The above webpage (www.goarmy.com) was in use on Dec 2, 2000, ten months before the “War on Terror” began. Although the website does have some advanced visual technology at the time (virtual tours and chat options) the pages offering these experiences are deep within the site. This index page could be adequately discussed using the work of theorists we chose to analyze two dimensional texts. The Barthes reading encourages us to first examine the linguistic and visual image we see on the page. The first words I notice after the red “Army Reserve” are “Click Here” because those words are the largest. Under this command is “Significant Bonuses, Incentives and Other Options” indicating quite overtly that joining the Army Reserve is not about patriotic duty but about benefits and personal enrichment. We also find six racially and

gender diverse faces, four of whom are smiling. One person appears to be a doctor, one a military police officer, one is in a business suit, one appears to be in the process of taking notes as if in a class, one is a pilot of some kind, and the last soldier is in camouflage with his face painted as if prepared for rural combat. In the background we see the image of a parachuter, the only person on the webpage who is too small to see a face. The person parachuting appears to be the only person in a physically dangerous situation although the person with his face painted could be in danger, but the lack of background makes the image more difficult to read. In fact, every soldier is removed from the background of the image, creating an obviously edited image that resembles a photo-montage more than a photo-realistic representation of military life. Here the designer offers these soldiers as representation of military life. Percentage wise, it appears military service involves roles that would translate well into the civilian sector. The training required to work in the medical, security, and legal field can be costly, so the military is offering a chance to get training while serving. As if to further reinforce this notion, we have a person taking notes, in an apparent educational situation. For those who desire flight training or warfare experience, we have two of the six soldiers modeling this aspect of service. Our parachuter further offers a taste of adventure. It is interesting how the word “options” is listed under the soldiers, creating a subtle (and untrue) indication that those who enlist in the military are able to select the line of work they find most appealing or marketable.

From Barthes’s discussion the class could move to Kostelnick and Roberts whose attention to design allows us to note that “Click Here” is visually predominate because of the figure ground separation caused by having white words on a dark green background. We can also note that the words “Click Here” and “Other Options” are conveniently

placed over a medical worker and a student. When things are placed close to each other, humans tend to see connections, say Kostelnick and Roberts; this is the rule of proximity. We could discuss why the Army would create a connection with doctors and students and not the soldier with his face painted. The soldiers are connected and aligned, creating a notion that each member belongs in the group. We could discuss the use of three female and three male soldiers as well as the racial variety, neither of which accurately reflect the Army's actual diversity. Although we could analyze other principles discussed by the authors, the two above seem to do the best describing why we notice certain words and how the placement of those words can create connections with the viewer, even though that connection may not be entirely true or stated specifically through words on the website.

The way these images are represented on this website, with their lack of background and photomontage-style of arrangement, do not seem to be particularly realistic, and Tagg reminds us to consider the style of the photographs taken and how these images represent or work against what American's consider to be a realistic photo. Our initial observation reveals that most of the people in the image are looking directly at the viewer and smiling. These actions seem to indicate that the soldiers knew their photograph was being taken; they stopped what they were doing, and prepared themselves for the act of being photographed. This preparation could have taken a few minutes so that the uniform could be straightened, stethoscope strategically placed, or a helmet could be adjusted. We simply don't know and can assume whatever we wish. Since it is common for American's to prepare for such a photo, we could assume that these photos are well-planned and staged. Furthermore, the background of each image has been removed, so we know that these images have been edited before being posted

on the website. The eye contact, smiles, and deliberate removal of the background all work against any realism we may impart to the photographs on this website. We may infer that the choice to represent soldiers in this way may have been a deliberate attempt to show as many aspects of military life as possible on the front page of the site, in hopes of keeping the interest of the audience, who have a wide variety of desires and goals when they consider signing up for the military. In other words, Army life involves a number of jobs that do not require you to kill people or risk your own death. Plus, many of these jobs translate into well-paying jobs after you serve in the Army.

Kress and van Leeuwen's work helps us point out the connection being made with the eye contact of the soldiers being photographed. After reading their work, the class could discuss the way we would relate to these soldiers if they were standing in front of us. We see them from the waist up, a more personal connection but not an intimate one. This would translate to a personal space many Americans would feel comfortable with when talking to friends. The eye contact offered by these soldiers indicates respect and interest, and the shoulder angles represent interest as well. Kress and van Leeuwen's work would have us note that these soldiers are positioned as friends who are interested in us and our needs.

After reading Arnheim's work the class could discuss how the soldiers here are being offered as a symbol of Army life. These happy, good-looking, healthy soldiers are serving their country and look at you in an indirect appeal to join them. They have choices, incentives, and other options. They are trained to do work that will be marketable after their service. Here we see that the website is using images that offer a counter argument to the concept of a military life that is rigid, dangerous, and limiting, thus providing an effective rhetorical argument to join the military during a time when

Army deaths and casualties were not constantly in the news, and, according to RAND, the main objection to joining the military at the time was discomfort with “military lifestyle.” However, when the War on Terror begins, we find a shift taking place in the symbols of military life.

Example 2: GoArmy.com in 2001 (post 9.11/pre “War on Terror”)

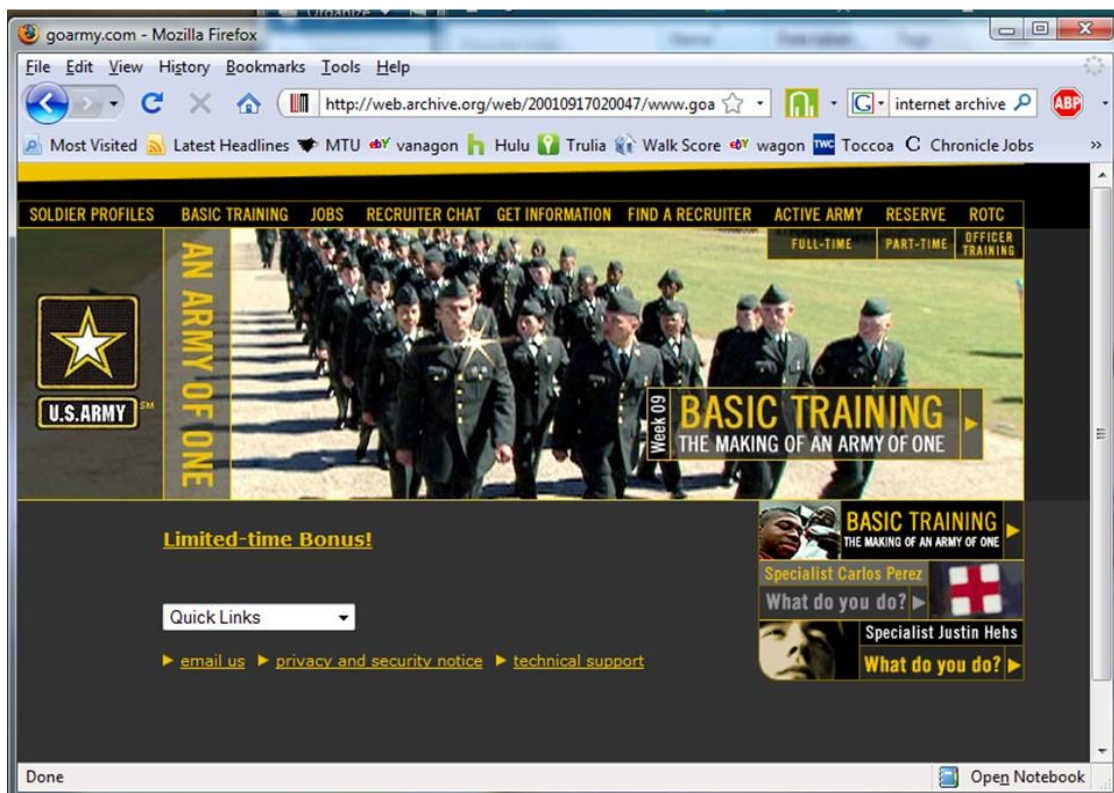


Figure 5.2 The Army's website on September 17, 2001

The above webpage was in use on September 17, 2001, three days before Bush outlined his War on Terror to the nation. In addition to visual elements we discussed in the section above, this website also uses Flash and QuickTime/RealPlayer movie technology to tell the stories of recruits entering the Army and experiencing basic

training. The work of Block and the concepts of gaze and the terministic screen are helpful when discussing these videos. By clicking on “What do you do?” we enter a page with a picture of Specialist (SPC) Justin Hehs. We find out he is 21 years old and from New Braunfels, Texas and two videos are offered to the viewer. When compared to the first sample in this section, this second website offers us a much closer connection with the person in the image. They are not cut-out characters removed from their backgrounds. Here we see SPC Justin Hehs asking us a question: “Apaches are airborne and you have one minute to decide where they go. What do you do?” The video uses no music. SPC Hehs sits in the cab of a military vehicle with the door open. He looks and talks directly at the viewer as he asks us the question directly. As he talks, we see soldiers using high-tech computers in a command center; outside, soldiers are flying helicopters. The camera movies quickly and the footage seems highly stylized—the contrast is very strong and the frames freeze and fade to white between some cuts and the video skips frames often, creating quick jumps in the on screen movement as well as the soldiers’ movement. There is an excited tension in the air as soldiers talk loudly to each other and various sounds of computers in use are heard in the background. After the question is asked, the cuts continue at the same speed, but the film no longer features a strong contrast. As SPC Hehs gives us the correct Army procedure, the video shows soldiers performing this response. Frames are no longer skipped, so soldiers appear to move at a realistic pace even though the edits are quick. The lighting also appears more natural at this time and edits are simple cuts instead of fade to white.

Block’s work discusses contrast and cuts, and this discussion is helpful when analyzing a video clip like the one described above. Here we find that the high-contrast and jumpy frame skips register as “Contrast” with the viewer. This technique, according

to Block, can create a sense of tension which is then resolved when SPC Hahs gives us the correct answer. When he does, the video still uses quick cuts to generate excitement, but we no longer have the strong lighting, so the contrast is normalized. We feel as if the people making decisions are more in control of the situation, even though it appeared stressful when we were confronted with SPC Hehs's question.

Mulvey's work on the gaze encourages us to consider the position we are asked to take and the position SPC Hahs takes in the video. The eye contact and direct address of SPC Hahs instantly positions us as someone who is seen, making it difficult for us to merely gaze at the main character of this video. Each time we see SPC Hahs the camera is closer to his face. In the beginning we see him in a medium shot as he sits in a vehicle. At the end we only see his face. He is no longer in the vehicle. The people we see in the footage are taking action; they are working fast. The camera positions us as a passive observer. The soldiers know the answers and we can merely watch them as they solve this complex communication question. Soldiers, we notice, are in a position of power. They have the computer technology and the training to answer the tough questions that the viewer—positioned as a civilian—cannot answer.

Burke's notion of terministic screen is helpful as we view the video because it encourages us to consider how the video is being framed. SPC Hahs begins the video by asking us a question that we do not know the answer to. We did not ask to be given that question, and we are not expected to know the answer. The purpose of the question is to show that the Army knows how to answer it. The images offer soldiers who collaborate and are comfortable with the technology required to answer such a question. Our screen, as constructed by the video and the words of SPC Hehes, is of a highly-trained and computer-savvy Army. A link below this video asks the viewer to "Discover your

strength: send for more information” and thus to consider becoming part of this knowledgeable and technologically sophisticated Army. However, as the War on Terror begins a few days later, and the war in Iraq becomes increasingly difficult, the Army must yet again shift the visual message as we see below in the next index page screen capture of goarmy.com.

Example 3: GoArmy.com in 2009



Figure 5.3 The Army's website on February 15, 2009

The above webpage was in use Feb 15, 2009, two years after the surge in Iraq was implemented and news of U.S. casualties from that region declined to the point that GOP

House Representatives were declaring victory there.¹⁹ ²⁰ The webpage has dramatically increased in technological sophistication, a move designed to engage the viewer. Today, web designers can use such a wide variety of visual tools that a rich analysis almost necessitates an multidisciplinary approach. In addition to the predominate photograph of soldiers in battle gear as seen on this screen capture we find an embedded video; the main image continues to change, like a slide show, and we also find the image (and link) to a virtual recruiter on the bottom right. Selber's framework is an effective tool for organizing the analysis of this website. Once again we could begin the discussion with the theories and key concepts we utilized in the first screen capture we discussed. We could then view some videos and discuss them using the Block's framework, the gaze, and the terministic screen—as used in the second screen capture of this chapter. And finally we could play the newly released *At the Ready* game before playing *America's Army*, discussed in detail in Chapter 4. In the context of a multimodal classroom, playing the newly released version of *America's Army* requires processing speeds that many standard computers do not contain. This may prove problematic for many classes. However, the *At the Ready* game provides a much more accessible example for classroom discussion because it can be played on a browser and only requires a high-speed Internet connection. After a description of the game, I will provide an overview regarding what situated cognition and procedural rhetoric reveals through the playing of *At the Ready*. As a point of comparison, I will first discuss an interaction with the virtual recruiter, Sergeant Star—the Army's virtual recruiter—found on the front page of this screen capture (Figure 3.5).

¹⁹ In 2007, when the surge was implemented, support for the war had fallen so low that in April 2007, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid proclaimed the war was “lost.”

²⁰ By 2009 the surge was considered such a success by the GOP House that Representative Steve King sponsored the “Victory in Iraq” resolution to “encourage” American troops.

When we click on the virtual soldier, we see a video sequence of Sergeant Star repelling out of a helicopter. He unbuckles himself from the ropes and introduces himself. He then stands in front of us, waiting for us to type in our name. As he waits he adjusts his position. We see his full body and some background in the screen shot which makes him come across visually as somewhat impersonal; however, he is verbally friendly in terms of his word choice and tone. Once we type in our name, as required to begin interacting with this virtual character, his image disappears; we only see a picture of his face. As we type in a question, an answer appears below the question in a chat-like format. Under our chat is a list of one to four links under the heading “Here’s More.” After a brief pause, Sergeant Star’s voice says the answer (as if reading the text). To the right of the page, we see that the website has now visited a link that contains more information about the question we asked. Interestingly, when I asked what line of service was better, the Army or the Marines, Sergeant Star replied:

I can only tell you about the Army, which is the largest and the oldest of all the branches of service. It’s self-contained, well-equipped and can be deployed anywhere in the world. As the largest branch, the Army offers the most competitive enlistment options, incentives and guarantees.

A good sales pitch when comparing Army to the Marines, but, in the end, Sergeant Star is basically a high-tech search engine for the Army website. His reading of the answer provides some level of engagement, but the absence of his body and the mere photograph of his face as we ask questions create a level of disengagement. I am also not addressed by my name which I expected since I typed in my name. The interest I initially had when I first viewed the virtual recruiter repelling down into the screen from an unseen helicopter dissipated once I found that the movement of the virtual person and

the interaction I could have with that person was reduced to something more akin to searching for information on Google. Indeed, if Sergeant Star's face and voice were removed, our engagement would be no different than a Google search on a typical website. That sense of control or at least the possibility of virtual/physical exchange that I anticipated when I began the search would have created a level of interaction that games can successfully accomplish.

The Army browser game *At the Ready* provides a markedly different encounter. The launch site offers three different experiences. Upon visiting the page (goarmy.com/home/at-the-ready.html) we hear upbeat drums and electric guitars and synthesizers. As we watch footage of soldiers gearing up for action, we hear the voice of a male narrator: "Walk in the boots of an Army soldier. Learn what they learn. See what they see. Do what they do. Get the skills of an Army soldier by immersing yourself in real life situations." We are given three choices, illustrated by a screen split into three tall vertical rectangles: 11B Airborne Infantry, 68W Combat Medic, or 31B Military Police. I will discuss the Combat Medic game in greatest detail, but students could easily play all three games in less than a half-hour. Upon selecting the game we are immediately asked if we would like to connect our experience to our Facebook account. We are then given an overview on how 68Wiskeys (Combat Medics) save lives on the battlefield. In a live action video on the upper right hand corner of the screen we see and hear Staff Sergeant Eric Zlatkin as he discusses the steps we need to take to heal a wound to the leg. At the same time we see the procedures taking place in the middle of the screen. We are told to follow these procedures: apply a tourniquet, cut clothing to expose the injury, place the leg in a traction splint, check the pulse by pressing on the top of the foot, and finally initiate the IV.

Through a camera apparently mounted on the medic's head, this game forces the viewer to take the point of view of the medic. We see arms working and we are asked to select from a list of options at appropriate times. If we select the wrong procedure, we hear a voice, as if on a headpiece telling us "remember what you've been trained" or "not yet." The correct selection will yield a "that's nice" or no comment at all. Before discussing what the work of video game theorists might bring to the discussion, I would like to make a few general observations about the game. First, we find the soldier on the ground and crying out in pain. As soon as we arrive, the soldier is silent. As we begin treatment, there are no shots being fired in the background. We are completely protected from the unseen enemy by the soldiers and concrete structures around us. After we apply the tourniquet, we call for an evacuation, which arrives in moments. We transport the person from the vehicle to a larger, covered truck and cut the clothing to reveal the wound, which appears to be a burn about the size of a fist. In other words, the game appears to have been created during a training simulation; however, interestingly and oddly out of place in a simulation, a real IV is applied to the patient.

While the terms offered by Block might be a good place to begin in a classroom setting, for the purposes of this chapter, I will move directly to key ideas and critical concepts offered in video game theory. Morris encourages us to consider the technical basis for the game. Here we notice that the game itself uses real video footage, so the game is a hybrid of sorts. As we consider the conditions of viewing we notice that the attention of the viewer in this game is not as highly involved as a game like *America's Army* because the game does not require us to control every movement of the character. We merely chose what to do at the appropriate time. However, our point of view remains primarily first-person and our sense of responsibility is greater than what we would

experience in a movie or television series. Fullerton *et.al*'s dramatic elements help us flesh out more details regarding the construction of this game. The challenge is to successfully complete the assignment, in our case, to stabilize and extract a wounded soldier from the battlefield to a transport vehicle. We play this game by watching a training video then performing the action by watching video footage and selecting the correct answer from a list of prompts. The premise is that we are trained medics and must perform our duties under supervision. Our character is a well-equipped and well-supported medic who only has to remember an order of steps to save lives. And, finally, our story is that of heroism, rescuing a wounded soldier by extracting him from the battle and stabilizing him thanks to the action and training of our virtual character as well as the training and easy-to-remember steps offered by the Army. The designers of these games seem to be targeting the achiever as Fullerton *et.al* discusses.

Having a basic understanding of how the video game is designed allows us to move on to the ideologies at work in the game. Gee argues that games allow us to take on experiences we may not otherwise be inclined to undergo and, by doing so, offer us a chance to expose ourselves to what he calls situated cognition (2003). As potential recruits play these games, they are offered a chance to perform the actions required by three different soldiers. By playing the game the viewers are positioned as soldiers. The first-person camera angle causes us to see the character's arms and uniform as they were our own, as if we were in the Army. Our close proximity to the computer screen makes the connection even more powerful than if viewed on a television screen. Our character's arms and hands move confidently and our character only needs to be reminded of the sequence of steps, not the correct application of those steps—which makes these games easier to play than *America's Army*. These actions, it appears, are so engrained in the

soldier that the game acts out something akin to muscle memory. The games offer us a chance to see the procedures and to understand the steps the Army takes to care for its wounded. The games also force us to act in a way fitting of an Army Combat Medic, and this is a form of rhetoric.

Applying Bogost's notion of "procedural rhetoric" allows us to first note that the actions our virtual character can take are limited. By playing the game we, through our interaction with the character, are forced to momentarily assume the values and ideals of the U.S. Army because we have a limited number of responses, and a wrong choice is merely corrected. If we insist on the wrong step, the entire game begins again, or we learn that the directions provided an outcome that is better than if we choose not to follow those directions. By offering this game on its website, the Army allows a chance to have civilians take a virtual Army body for a test drive on a closed track, so to speak. Such a low risk experience is designed to offer the viewer a sample of military training, techniques, and a general feeling of accomplishment. Our virtual character's limited number of actions create a sense that serving in the Army is not as overwhelming as we might initially feel. We can follow directions and save lives, jump out of airplanes, or arrest a suspect. The designers' choice of options is telling in that they each offer compelling and public-relations friendly jobs performed by the Army. We can feel the visceral thrill of jumping out of an airplane, treat an injured soldier and remove him from a harmful situation, or arrest a suspect accused of manufacturing improvised explosive devices (which, we should note is "proven" at the end of the game as we inspect the back of his pickup truck).

Classroom discussion of Army recruitment messages

As we have seen in the samples above, Selber's framework allows us to combine key theories and critical concepts from multiple disciplines in a useful way in the context of a university multimodal composition classroom. Instructors can use the Table 5.1 as a rough outline to determine whether readings cover the functional, critical, and rhetorical aspects of the material being discussed, noting that the social-political context is an important aspect that should be included in any analysis, especially as it concerns the critical literacy of ourselves and our students. We should also note that this framework facilitates a very limited discussion of the aesthetics and production of the visuals we analyze. In this dissertation any discussion of the artistic expression designers employed (like the grainy, black and white images of soldiers) was limited to the cultural and rhetorical purposes such design might serve. Future research on this topic would benefit from the inclusion of such a discussion since the emotional connection we feel with beautiful designs is a useful rhetorical device in the hands of a skilled advertiser.

Furthermore, as we consider classroom discussions of visuals, I would like to point to the work of a number of scholars who offer approaches that may help us and our students coax out the ideologies in recruitment messages. Williamson (2005), Drucker (1997), Kinross (1989), Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Barton and Barton (1993), Rothschild (1999), to scratch the surface, all discuss how elements like shape, photographs, and typography reveal the ideology of the designer/client. Game theorists/designers like Salen and Zimmerman (2004) acknowledge the field's overt concern with nuts and bolts theory and make an excellent attempt to bring cultural concerns to the forefront of discussions on video games, and there are increasingly more theorists addressing this issue. Rose (2002) offers us a good place to begin when

discussing games: she suggests to students that they take images seriously, think about the social conditions and effects of the images, and be self-reflective when interpreting images. In any case, finding an effective way to discuss games in the classroom is important and necessary.

Games like *America's Army* have a tremendous potential as rhetorical devices, and it looks like more organizations are willing to use this format as an attempt to indoctrinate the word's game playing youth. Gee says that a game like *Full Spectrum Warrior* helps players realize they have the capacity to make their virtual identity into a physical identity. Some identities may be impossible to take on, like being a half-elf character in a fantasy world, but a military commander is an option many college students could achieve. Playing the game may inadvertently take them a step closer to a more favorable response to such an option, and designers of *America's Army*, as we found in Chapter 4, have the numbers to prove it. Ethically, this is problematic because recruitment then is based not on a weighing of facts and desires/goals through deliberation but on a highly-constructed fantasy experience that is far from a typical soldier's experience. My concern is that the way the U.S. Army approaches visual media is, at the least, unexamined and careless, or, at the most, misleading and unethical.

Confronting the rhetorical devices of a video game in a classroom situation is the subject of a handout created by the Media Education Foundation²¹ entitled: *War Games: Thinking Critically about Video Games that Play at War* and is available for download on their website. The handout asks students to visit *America's Army* website and answer the following questions:

²¹ The mission of the Media Education Foundation is "to produce and distribute documentary films and other educational resources to inspire critical reflection on the social, political, and cultural impact of American mass media" (www.mediaed.org/wp/about-mef). For more information visit: www.mediaed.org

Why would the U.S. Military spend this much money to develop a video game?²²

Why might a video game be an effective recruiting tool?

How does a video game that simulates military training and combat differ from the experience of actually going through it? (p. 1)

These basic questions provide the beginning of a framework that could be useful in generating class discussion regarding the ideological and rhetorical nature of this video game. If the game is actually played by members of the class, then Bogost's discussion of procedural rhetoric could be brought into the conversation. A simple modification of the above questions could be: What does the procedure of going through boot camp tell you about life in the U.S. Army? Why might this rendition of boot camp be an effective recruitment tool? How does *America's Army 3* boot camp differ from the 9 weeks of boot camp that soldiers are required to successfully complete?

As video games increasingly become a part of our education, entertainment, and persuasive experience, having a framework to apply to this form of communication becomes increasingly; because games are only part of many advertising campaigns, being able to address multiple forms of visual communication in a single classroom is increasingly important. Advertising campaigns commonly use printed material, television commercials, websites, and video games to capture, engage, and hold their audience's attention. This trend will most likely only increase as hand-held mobile computing devices become less expensive. To address this marketing strategy, research

²² *America's Army* was developed for \$32.8 million over a seven year period. Most popular video games cost between \$10-20 million to design.

needs to be done to determine best practices and approaches to classroom discussion on this topic, and this chapter is offered as a starting point.

While this chapter is written primarily for the instructor of a multimodal composition classroom, it is my hope that more classes begin to address the way various forms of communication can be critically examined in every learning environment, especially those related to oral and technical communication and video game and graphic design production. Doing so, however, brings in many new challenges to the classroom setting. For example, while an instructor may feel very comfortable discussing the functional aspects of the layout of an advertisement, say, in a graphic design class, incorporating ideological and rhetorical functions of the design will bring new challenges, syllabus changes, and additional prep time. Likewise, instructors who are more comfortable with ideological or the rhetorical concerns of the text will need to read and apply key concepts that the function and production of multimodal texts. And finally, addressing various modes of communication (printed, video, and video games—to name a few) will be challenging to many instructors as well as students who are not as technologically connected as their peers (the technological divide), but as access to technology becomes less expensive, and as new forms of multimodal communication are adapted by the military and other large corporations, the need to confront and analyze these forms of communication will only increase. So while addressing functional, critical, and rhetorical aspects of multiple forms of visual communication products may not be achievable in every classroom situation, my goal with this dissertation is to encourage instructors to make an attempt at addressing these issues, reflect on the experience, and continue trying new strategies will help students confront the images created by those

who utilize visual rhetoric to encourage people to purchase, think, and do what may not be in the viewer's best interest.

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