Law, Morality, and the Public Servant

Gregory D. Foster, *Science Applications, Inc., McLean, Virginia*

The proper relationship between law and morality has been, for many years, a source of continuing concern, both theoretical and practical. British legal scholar H. L. A. Hart has identified four significant questions that traditionally have been raised concerning the nature of this relationship.[1] The first of these is historical and causal in nature: Has the development of the law been influenced by morals, and vice-versa? The second question may be called an analytical or definitional one: Must some reference to morality enter into an adequate definition of law or legal system? The third is Hart's concern: Is the fact that certain conduct is by common standards immoral sufficient to justify making that conduct punishable by law? Is it morally permissible to enforce morality as such? A fourth question concerns the possibility and the forms of the moral criticism of law: Is law open to moral criticism? Does the admission that a rule is a valid legal rule preclude moral criticism or condemnation of it by reference to moral standards or principles?

It is this last question that concerns us here, but not in a traditional sense. Rather than focusing on the theoretical moral justifiability of a particular law or set of laws, our attention focuses on the practical effects that adherence to a legalistic perspective has on the ability of individuals to make moral decisions and to act morally. Specifically, it will be argued that there is a negative, not a positive, correlation between laws and moral behavior; that as the former proliferate, the latter declines. The law in fact fosters a particular way of looking at and responding to situations that is essentially amoral in nature; in other words, there is created a general inability to judge right versus wrong. Instead, all things are viewed as either legal or illegal.

This becomes an especially critical problem when applied to the public service. As Frederick Mosher has noted in his classic, *Democracy and the Public Service:* (1) Governmental decisions and behavior have tremendous influence upon the nature and development of our society, our economy, and our policy. (2) The great bulk of decisions and actions taken by governments are determined or heavily influenced by administrative officials, most of whom are appointed, not elected. (3) The kinds of decisions and actions these officials take depend upon their capabilities, their orientations, and their values. (4) These attributes in turn depend heavily upon their backgrounds, their training and education, and their current associations [to say nothing of the subcultures in which they have "grown up"].[2]

In a democratic society, government is supposed to serve the people. As we look to the future, we may suppose that government will be called upon to assume ever more responsibility for the provision of services and, in general, for helping society cope with an increasingly demanding environment. Almost inevitably, this will engender governmental growth and an attendant increase in the numbers of public servants "thrice-removed from direct democracy," to use Mosher's characterization. The resultant effect will be a greater dependency on, and a heightened level of expectation toward, government. For the public servant, this will dictate decisions that are both more responsible and more responsive. But, considering the significance of individual capabilities, orientations, and values in official decision making, the question that must be answered is whether the conditions necessary to facilitate such decisions can reasonably be expected to exist.

In a democratic society, government is supposed to serve the people. As we look to the future, we may suppose that government will be called upon to assume ever more responsibility for the provision of services and, in general, for helping society cope with an increasingly demanding environment. . . . For the public servant, this will dictate decisions that are both more responsible and more responsive.

Futurists generally agree that the environment of tomorrow will be characterized by greatly increased complexity—an "explosion" of information; the presentation of entirely new, previously unexperienced situations; and an exponential increase in the numbers and types of interactions and interdependencies. This environment also will be characterized by its fluidity—rapidly changing situations and transitory relationships. The rate of change and near-constant newness will generate high levels of uncertainty. Ambiguity will be a normal state of affairs. All societies, developed and developing alike, can expect to confront this same environmental setting.

Merely to cope with such an environment, government officials must evince three primary traits: adaptability, creativity, and initiative. In the first instance, they will need to be able to adjust constantly to unanticipated demands, to discard preconceptions, and to devise entirely new ways of doing things. Second, they will require excellent conceptual and diagnostic skills in order to extrapolate from the known to the unknown and to generate appropriate responses. Finally, there will have to be a willingness to reach out, to seek new alternatives, to take chances.

Gregory D. Foster is director of the Center for Security and Policy Studies, Science Applications, Inc., McLean, Virginia. He is a member of ASPA's Policy Issues Committee, and his article, "The 1978 Civil Service Reform Act: Post-Mortem or Rebirth?" appeared in the January-February 1979 issue of *PAR*.

Juxtaposed against this environmental setting will be two other competing sets of demands. Generally speaking, as the world becomes smaller, the populace at large will become more aware and thus more demanding, less understanding, and less willing to accept "average" performance from government. At the same time, single interest groups will achieve increasing legitimacy as a primary vehicle for interest aggregation and articulation. They will become more pervasive, more vocal, and more powerful. The inevitable result of this confluence of demands will be a proliferation of value conflicts between competing interests. Yet, the uncertainty inherent in the environment, when coupled with heightened popular expectations, will engender a natural tendency on the part of decision makers at all levels to avoid risks and minimize the potential for mistakes.

The dilemma posed by these circumstances actually will be one of *need* versus *desire,* or, stated otherwise, of *moral* versus *legal* behavior. Moral behavior, as the term is used here, refers to the *willingness* to make difficult decisions concerning right and wrong in situations involving fundamental value conflicts.[3] Moral decisions are value-based decisions. They are content- and context-specific, based on the treatment of a particular situation on its own merits rather than on the merits of similar occurrences. This particularistic feature is one of three distinguishing characteristics that separate the legal from the moral. A second concerns the existence of reflective action. As one author has sugested: "Moral responsibility implies reflective action, 'knowing what you're doing.' . . . [It] is a function of conscious reflective behavior, not of blind conformity."[4] Law, in contrast, tends to foster blind conformity—the interpretation of what *is,* in light of precedent, rather than a judgment of what *should be.*

A third distinguishing characteristic, and perhaps the most significant, concerns the concept of justice. Few today, having seen various legal systems at work, would question the real-world asymmetry between law and justice, theoretical arguments to the contrary. But, only truly moral decisions can result in justice. In the words of Harvard University's Lawrence Kohlberg:

> Justice is not a rule or a set of rules, it is a moral principle. By a moral principle we mean a mode of choosing which is universal, a rule of choosing which we want all people to adapt always in all situations. We know it is all right to be dishonest and steal to save a life because it is just, because a man's right to life comes before another man's right to property. We know it is sometimes right to kill, because it is sometimes just. The Germans who tried to kill Hitler were doing right because respect for the equal values of lives demands that we kill someone murdering others in order to save their lives. There are exceptions to rules, then, but no exception to principles. A moral obligation is an obligation to respect the right or claim of another person. A moral principle is a principle for resolving competing claims, you versus me, you versus a third person. There is only one principled basis for resolving claims: justice or equality. Treat every man's claim impartially regardless of the man. A moral principle is not only a rule of action but a reason for action. As a reason for action, justice is called respect for persons.[5]

There are, of course, those who would subscribe to the homogeneity of law and morality. In his seminal work *The Morality of Law,* Lon Fuller has tried to articulate "the natural laws of a particular kind of human undertaking, which I have described as 'the enterprise of subjecting human conduct to the governance of rules.' " He goes on to suggest that, in seeking the "internal morality" of law, we are concerned not with the substantive aims of legal rules, but with the ways in which a system of rules for governing human conduct must be constructed and administered if it is to be efficacious and at the same time remain what it purports to be."[6] In the final analysis, for this internal morality of law to exist, the following requirements must be met:

- There must be general rules.
- These rules must be made known.
- They must not be retroactive.
- They must be reasonably clear.
- They should not be contradictory.
- They should not require the impossible (or the extremely unreasonable).
- Insofar as possible, they should be constant through time.
- Legal rules and administration of the law should not conflict.[7]

Rules, obviously, are the essence of law. Fuller has characterized the law as "the enterprise of subjecting human conduct to the governance of rules."[8] But, though the existence of rules is a necessary condition for the law to operate, it is by no means a sufficient condition. Max Weber has suggested that what actually makes a rule or an order of law is "if it is externally guaranteed by the probability that coercion (physical or psychological), to bring about conformity or avenge violation, will be applied by a *staff* of people holding themselves specially ready for that purpose."[9]

. . . as the world becomes smaller, the populace at-large will become more aware and, thus, more demanding, less understanding, and less willing to accept "average" performance from government. At the same time, single interest groups will achieve increasing legitimacy as a primary vehicle for interest aggregation and articulation. . . . The inevitable result of this confluence of demands will be a proliferation of value conflicts between competing interests.

The picture that emerges is that, whatever purpose(s) the law theoretically serves, it in reality is a body of negative sanctions that prescribes and proscribes social behavior. The law can never reward directly. It can only reward indirectly by punishing offenders and thus "protecting" the general public. As such, it serves a number of basic functions that have been described by Hoebel as follows:

- defining relationships among the society's members, indicating which types of behavior are permitted and which proscribed;

- allocating authority and specifying who may legitimately exercise coercion over whom, together with the selection of appropriate and effective sanctions;
- the disposition of trouble cases; and
- maintaining adaptability by redefining relationships when life conditions change.[10]

Assuming that this is a reasonably accurate representation of what the law actually does, there remains to be answered the fundamental strategic question of *how* the law, and the legal system that supports it, performs these functions. Only by answering this "how" question is it possible to judge the aforementioned "internal morality" of law. At issue is the exercise of discretionary authority—the making of decisions necessary to compensate for the absence of those factors that otherwise would contribute to internally moral law: semantic clarity, lack of contradictions, consistency, etc.

Whereas, moral decisions are value-based decisions that are content- and context-specific, legal decisions are just the opposite: procedure-based decisions that are dependent upon historical precedent. Generally, a law is born as a response to a peculiar (atypical) behavior that exceeds the bounds of social acceptability, even where those bounds might not be representative of the society as a whole. Thus, the specific exception gives rise to the general rule, which thereafter provides the basis for countering comparable exceptions. This process of codification and standardization serves to define situations that the moralist would view as unique according to some generic structure. The ultimate effect is to reduce environmental uncertainty, to narrow the gauge of interpretation, by delimiting the number of unique situations possible.

To the decision maker confronted by a future environment of virtually unbounded uncertainty, the circumscribing nature of the legal process can only have positive connotations; by routinizing the possible states of nature, it is bound to produce greater accountability to the electorate, thereby protecting the people and even the decision maker himself: "Rules could encourage administrative integrity by inhibiting the use of arbitrary or improper criteria and by promoting a critical attitude to a law's content and to the manner of its enforcement."[11]

Unfortunately, however, too little reasoned thought has been given to the debilitating effects that adherence to a legalistic perspective can have on the decision maker's ability to make other than routine decisions. There is an ingrained bias in nearly all modern and modernizing societies that *less discretion,* and therefore by association *more law,* is the ideal normative state. But, discretion lies at the very heart of moral behavior. Difficult moral decisions can only be made by the individual who has the discretionary authority to treat each situation in its own merits. In most fundamental terms, the law considers neither the content of its rules, the relation of the existence of a rule to the nature of the task to be performed, nor the effect of rules on the substantive outcome of decisions.[12]

For the decision maker who either has declined or never has been allowed the discretion necessary to make difficult judgments, both the ability and the willingness to assume such responsibility when necessary will diminish precipitously over time. The result will be what organizational theorists have termed "goal displacement," a means-ends inversion in which the means—the law—becomes an end in itself, thus replacing the original moral end—justice—in importance. While this may produce more rigorous accountability, it also provides an effective political shield behind which officials may hide, safe in the knowledge that in response to the pressures of the moment they have a valid reply: "I'd like to help you, but I'm bound by this rule."[13] In the extreme, this may take the regrettable form of a statement attributed to the late United States Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.: "I have said to my brethren many times that I hate justice, which means that I know if a man begins to talk about that, for one reason or another he is shirking thinking in legal terms."

To the decision maker confronted by a future environment of virtually unbounded uncertainty, the circumscribing nature of the legal process can only have positive connotations; by routinizing the possible states of nature, it is bound to produce greater accountability to the electorate, thereby protecting the people and even the decision maker. . . .

Obviously, the subject of legitimacy is of paramount importance in such considerations, for it is the measure of the public's acceptance of any institution or organization. Legitimacy bears little direct relationship to the quality of results, *per se*. Rather, it reflects trust in procedures, structures, or authorities. In other words, the legitimacy of a rule derives not from its content—its rightness or wrongness—but instead from its source, its form, or the procedure for adopting it.[14] On the other hand, it is reasonable to suppose that, in the long run, people will withdraw their feelings of legitimacy from any institution that always produces "wrong" results, i.e., those which consistently run counter to public values, interests, and feelings.

There can be little doubt, then, that the consistency of an institution's decisions contributes greatly to its legitimacy. But, that represents only one aspect of the overall concept. Another of major importance is the perceived competence of those making the decisions—their education and training, their experience, their social origins, and so forth. The significance of this factor cannot be underestimated, particularly with regard to the public service, for if legitimacy is indeed the ultimate measure of effectiveness, then discretionary judgment, as the intersection of law and morality, must be perceived as being applied in an able fashion. This requires a general public awareness that, though resort to the law may be a protective response against the potential caprices of discretionary judgment, undue legalism on the one hand and arbitrariness on the other are merely two sides of the same coin. Both lack a rational relation between the action taken and the end(s) to be achieved.

Thus, while it is logical to emphasize the rational and objective nature of law, it is just as logical to argue that the

system which depends on law is likely to manifest those same pejorative traits that have been ascribed to bureaucracy: impersonal, mechanical, disinterested, mindless. Those very factors that charcterize the law also characterize the classical, efficient bureaucracy originally envisioned by Weber. In fact, it is useful to recall two of the major features of the rational bureaucratic structure spelled out by the legal-trained German sociologist:

- "A continuous organization of official functions bound by *rules.*" Rational organization is the antithesis of ad-hoc, temporary, unstable relations. Rules save effort by obviating the need for deriving a new solution for every problem and case; they facilitate standardization and equality in the treatment of many cases. These advantages are impossible if each client is treated as a unique case, as an individual.
- "The rules which regulate the conduct of an office may be *technical* rules or norms. In both cases, if their application is to be fully rational, specialized training is necessary. It is thus normally true that only a person who has demonstrated an adequate technical training is qualified to be a member of the administrative staff. . . ." Weber felt that the root of the bureaucrat's authority, his legitimacy in other words, is his knowledge and training.[15]

On the surface, it would appear that far too little thought has been given to the commonalities between legalistic and bureaucratic behavior. One individual who has is Victor Thompson, who has described the legalistic tendencies within organizations that arise from ritualistic attachment to routines and procedures. Referred to as "bureaupathic," these patterns of behavior reflect the status needs of individuals rather than advancing organizational goals. Rules are used by superiors to control subordinates, who in turn go strictly "by the book," follow precedent and avoid innovations or chances of error by developing an exaggerated dependence upon regulations and quantitative standards: "Everybody, including the supervisor, is simply carrying out instructions imposed from above. If they are unpleasant instructions, it is not the supervisor's fault. . . ."[16]

A similar view has been put forth by sociologist Robert Merton, who notes:

> An effective bureaucracy demands reliability of response and strict devotion to regulations. Such devotion to the rules leads to their transformation into absolutes; they are no longer conceived as relative to a given set of purposes. This interferes with ready adaptation under special conditions not clearly envisaged by those who drew up the general rules. Thus the very elements which conduce toward efficiency in general produce inefficiency in specific instances. These very devices which increase the probability of conformance also lead to an over-concern with strict adherence to regulations which induces timidity, conservatism, and technicism.[15]

It is somewhat ironical that, as a general rule, bureaucracy is held in rather low esteem by the public while law is held in rather high esteem; this despite the similarities. There is, in fact, a sort of inexorable trend by all societies, as they seek to modernize, toward more law. The general assumptions that facilitate this are (1) that law is a kind of technology; (2) that law is essentially culture-free, and that it improves or evolves; and (3) that "modern" law must be better than "older" law.[18]

There is a certain curiousness to this tendency among the world's emergent societies, for, like the belief in advanced technology as the "proper" road to modernization, it signifies a departure from more fundamental, and perhaps more appropriate, ways of handling problems. This reflects in large measure the influence of the Western legal tradition, which has been either imposed upon or emulated by most developing nations. From the standpoint of the West, this represents a more-or-less natural state of affairs, since the establishment of a codified legal system generally has been viewed as the essential prerequisite for transforming the traditional society into a bona fide nation-state. From the standpoint of the emergent society, in turn, the law in many, if not most, instances, no doubt has been viewed as an instrument of unity, much like a national language, a single political party, or even a secular surrogate for religion.

. . . too little reasoned thought has been given to the debilitating effects that adherence to a legalistic perspective can have on the decision maker's ability to make other than routine decisions. There is an ingrained bias in nearly all modern and modernizing societies that less discretion, and therefore by association more law, is the ideal normative state.

Lucian Pye, for one, has described the genesis of this movement as a *modus vivendi* for carrying on day-to-day relations in what Western colonizers considered to be exotic and bizarre cultures. The need was for some means of achieving order and predictability in relations that seemed dangerously tenuous. The assumption underlying this codified legal approach was that all possible problems could be classified according to categories, that the examination of data would reveal which category applied to a particular case or issue, and that, once category and data were so clarified, a standardized process of reasoning and interpretation would bring anyone versed in the ways of the law to the proper judgment. The illusion here was that all possible categories of problems could be initially defined to prevent the need for any *ex post facto* judgments, and that the data or facts could "speak for themselves" in the sense that, once brought to light, they somehow would automatically inform all under what category of the law they should be classified. Pye suggests that the Western legal approach not only failed in reducing uncertainty, managing disputes, and providing stable social relations during the colonial period, but in the post-colonial period when the main interest has been on rapid changes, it has become a major stabilizing factor inhibiting desired development.[19]

We see in this trend pattern what might be characterized, somewhat facetiously, as an "Iron Oligarchy of Law," a play on words of the Iron Law of Oligarchy enunciated

many years ago by Robert Michels.[20] Michels observed that the leaders of an organization develop vested interests in maintaining their positions, since loss of those positions would force the leaders to return to the performance of more menial tasks, to a life of low prestige, low income, and without the psychological gratification of leadership. Through control over the means of communication of the organization and either the absorption into or purging from the organization of young, ambitious leaders, the established leaders strive to secure their positions. This process is iron because it is presumably without exceptions and oligarchic because the rule of a few is imposed. Similarly, the Iron Oligarchy of Law reflects a compulsive attraction by decision makers toward codification and proceduralization that in effect (1) disencumbers them of responsibility for making certain difficult decisions, (2) solidifies their own power, and ultimately (3) perpetuates the need for specialized legal and administrative expertise to handle the enforcement and adjudication requirements that have been created.

This brings us full-circle back to the crucial issue of legitimacy and what Mosher has called *the* moral question of the public service in American [or, I would suggest, any] democracy: even as the knowledge explosion and the tremendous growth of higher education have greatly enhanced the technical and cognitive capacities of the public service to perform its tasks, these factors also may have weakened the public service's concern for, and competence in, reaching social decisions responsibly with the full polity in view.

> The harder and infinitely more important issue of administrative morality today attends the reaching of decisions on questions of public policy which involve competitions in loyalty and perspective between broad goals of the polity (the phantom public interest) and the narrower goals of a group, bureau, clientele, or union. . . . The danger is that the developments in the public service of the mid-century decades may be subtly, gradually, but profoundly moving the weight toward the partial, the corporate, the professional perspective and away from that of the general interest.[21]

In this, an age of greatly increased public skepticism, legitimacy is, or should be, of paramount importance to the public service. A not insignificant measure of that legitimacy in the future will be the "distance" of the public service from the public it purportedly serves. To a large extent, this distance will be a function of the level of specialized knowledge and training that Weber contended is essential to efficient bureaucratic performance. If the public perceives that this distance, even though theoretically *efficient,* is creating a barrier to the *effective* delivery of services, the legitimacy of the public service will atrophy further.

It is absolutely essential that the public service shed the negative images that have come to be associated with it. To do so, it must convince the public that it is capable of rendering difficult moral judgments on a sustained basis. Even if, in absolute terms, the magnitude and scope of value conflicting situations are not materially greater than they have been in the past, in relative terms the public's "threshold of sensitivity" has been lowered. Public expectations therefore will be not for routinized technicism but for adaptability, creativity, and initiative in government decision making.

Discretionary authority, and the flexibility that attends such authority, is fundamental to the future legitimacy of the public service. Ironically, laws tend to proliferate in order to guard against arbitrary behavior; and yet, more laws actually may produce more arbitrariness than fewer laws, simply because the number of laws and implementing regulations is too great to enforce. This produces selective enforcement and a disjunction between what Fred Riggs has labeled "formal" and "effective" norms.[22] The results actually may undermine administrative morals and lead to corruption. Moreover, the popular attitude toward government may become more cynical and resistance to public programs more determined.

It has been suggested here that the legal imperative which characterizes most modern and modernizing societies not only feeds on itself, but it also engenders a form of "grooved thinking" among public service decision makers that is precisely the opposite of the individual traits that should be expected in order to cope with the environment of the future. What is suggested is not the complete elimination of laws but a more reasoned appreciation of public needs and appropriate responses.

The subtitle of E. F. Schumacher's popular economic treatise on the uses and abuses of technology—*Small Is Beautiful*—comes to mind: "Economics as if People Mattered." Schumacher maintained that the traditional belief in the ultimate goodness of unlimited economic growth is, for human and ecological reasons, outmoded and dysfunctional. He therefore subscribed to the creation of "intermediate technology," a technology of "production by the masses" (rather than mass production) that capitalizes upon the best of modern knowledge and experience, is conducive to decentralization, compatible with the laws of ecology, gentle in its use of scarce resources, and designed to serve the individual instead of making him the servant of machines.[23]

In analogous fashion, what is needed in the public service of the future is "intermediate legalism"—law as if people mattered—that complements and actually fosters moral behavior—the willingness to make difficult moral decisions. Only in this manner can government provide service rather than impose disservice.

Notes

1. H. L. A. Hart, *Law, Liberty, and Morality,* New York: Vintage Books, 1963.
2. Frederick C. Mosher, *Democracy and the Public Service,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 1.
3. Willingness, rather than ability, is viewed here as the driving attribute of moral behavior. Because what is at issue is a psychological, not a physical, ability, it is felt that the continued presence of willingness can produce ability over time, whereas the reverse cannot be true.
4. Edward Stevens, *Making Moral Decisions,* New York: Paulist Press, 1969, p. 13.
5. Lawrence Kohlberg, "Education for Justice: A Modern Statement of the Platonic View," in James R. Averill, ed., *Patterns of Psychological Thought,* Washington: Hemi-

sphere, 1976, pp. 120-121.
6. Lon L. Fuller, *The Morality of Law,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964, p. 97.
7. Edwin M. Schur, *Law and Society: A Sociological View,* New York: Random House, 1968, pp. 55-56.
8. Fuller, *op. cit.,* p. 106.
9. Max Rheinstein, ed., *Max Weber on Law in Economy and Society,* trans. by E. Shils and M. Rheinstein, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954, p. 5.
10. E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Law of Primitive Man,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961, Chapter II.
11. Jeffrey L. Jowell, *Law and Bureaucracy: Administrative Discretion and the Limits of Legal Action,* Port Washington, N.Y.: Dunellen, 1975, p. 195.
12. *Ibid.,* p. 12.
13. *Ibid.,* p. 21.
14. Lawrence M. Friedman, *Law and Society: An Introduction,* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977, p. 139.
15. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization,* Talcott Parsons, ed. (A. M. Henderson and T. Parsons, trans.), New York: Oxford University Press, 1947, pp. 329-330.
16. Victor Thompson, *Modern Organization,* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1961, p. 160.
17. Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure,* Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957, p. 156.
18. Friedman, *op. cit.,* p. 46.
19. Lucian W. Pye, *Aspects of Political Development,* Boston: *Little, Brown, 1966, pp. 114-122.*
20. Robert Michels, *Political Parties,* New York: Dover, 1959.
21. Mosher, *op. cit.,* p. 210.
22. "Formal" refers to the official norm, the theory, to what ought to be done, as expressed in constitutions, laws, rules, and regulations. "Effective" refers to what actually happens, the unofficial conduct, the practice, the informal, the real behavior of people, officials, politicians, administrators, pressure groups. Fred W. Riggs, *Administration in Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964, pp. 57-58.
23. E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful,* New York: Harper & Row, 1973, pp.. 153-154.

Efficiency and Usefulness in Policy Research: The Case of the All-Volunteer Force*

William P. Snyder, *Texas A&M University*
James A. Davis, *Oklahoma State University*

■ This study finds that policy research sponsored by the Department of Defense on the all-volunteer armed force is, with some qualifications, relevant, timely, and nonduplicative. Unlike other researchers, the present authors conclude such policy research is at least potentially useful to the Department of Defense and its branches. Data and analysis involved bibliographies of studies on the all-volunteer force filed in a computer-based information retrieval system operated by the National Technical Information Service.

Policy research—also known as "applied social research"—has become a staple in the Washington policy-making process. In fact, some observers suggest that the federal government is suffering a research epidemic: spending on policy studies has exceeded $7 billion since the mid-60s and is currently in excess of $1 billion annually.[1] As a result of this growth in policy research, most federal departments and agencies now have staffs or offices to coordinate research activities and to purchase the services of private or academic contractors.

This extensive policy research effort is justified, in part, by a strong rationalist tradition which assumes that a fuller understanding of the issues contributes to more effective policies. Notwithstanding its growth in volume, however, the usefulness of such research to decision makers is widely

*An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Southwest Regional Conference, Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, April 27-29, 1978. Professors Dwight F. Davis of Texas A&M University, Ralph S. Hambrick, Jr., of Virginia Commonwealth University, Douglas Shumavon of Miami University (Ohio), and Mark Daniels of Oklahoma State University provided useful suggestions.

William P. Snyder is visiting professor of political science at the U.S. Army War College. A 1952 graduate of the Military Academy, he was a member of the West Point faculty from 1962 to 1966. He retired from the Army in 1975, and now teaches at Texas A&M University. He is the author of *The Politics of the British Defense Policy, 1945-1962* and *Case Studies in Military Systems Analysis,* and a Fellow of the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society.

Jimmy Davis is assistant professor of political science at Oklahoma State University. He received his Ph.D. from Miami University (Ohio) in 1977. A specialist in political socialization and attitudinal research, he is the author of a forthcoming volume, *"Do People Like Me Have Any Control Over Politics?" Mexican-American Adolescents of South Texas* (R & E Research Associates).