The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath was the first comprehensive study ever undertaken of the attitudes of combat infantrymen in war. Working from large survey samples taken among infantrymen who fought in World War II, Samuel Stouffer and his associates presented the first data available on individual men’s feelings about their performance and motivation in combat. This volume became the essential source of data on soldiers for scholars working in military, organizational, and social psychology.

Stouffer’s study concluded that in World War II neither ideology nor patriotism was the major motivating factor for soldiers in combat. The main motivations were, rather, unity and the bonds soldiers formed with each other. Stouffer’s work formed the basis for research into topics ranging from the moral dilemma of killing to how to enhance individual performance in military operations, and it is still cited today. At the time this book was published, the New York Times called the study “a monumental contribution to the science of making citizens of a free country win its wars.”

This book was one of a four-volume set. The other volumes bore the subtitles Adjustment during Army Life, Experiments on Mass Communication, and Measurement and Prediction. Combat and Its Aftermath has been the most frequently cited among the volumes.