CHAPTER VI

DETERMINANTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF SERVICE IN THE ARMED FORCES 
DURING THE VIETNAM ERA*

I. INTRODUCTION

Most of the young men under study were undergoing the transition from adolescence to adulthood during the turbulence produced by the Vietnam War. For many, this war intervened directly in the transition process as they became the manpower that staffed the American armed forces. Most of those who survived the conflict in Southeast Asia reentered the civilian population as Vietnam era veterans. In their roles as soldiers and veterans, these men were an integral part of the American experience of the 1960's. Any study of male youth during this period (1966-1971) would be incomplete if it ignored the Vietnam era veteran.

In the early sixties, when the U.S. military efforts in Southeast Asia were receiving overall public support, the draft was generally accepted and constituted the cornerstone of the military recruitment process. While it was not the principal means of inducting men into military service, the presence of the draft often induced the enlistment decision. However, the equity of the draft became a widely debated

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1 Clearly, the Vietnam War and the concomitant draft entered the decision calculus of many young men who never entered the armed forces. However, the NLS data provide no direct way of determining the extent to which college attendance was a method of draft evasion. Johnston and Bachman (1972) report that "... 20 percent of the college youth mentioned avoiding the draft among their three most important reasons for entering college" (p. 111).

2 As of the last quarter of 1971 there were 4.3 million Vietnam era veterans between the ages of 20 and 29. They comprised 31 percent of the civilian noninstitutional population of this age group. Michelotti and Gove (1972), p. 8.

3 A 1970 Defense Department study estimated that 50 percent of all Army and Air Force volunteers were "reluctant volunteers" (Helmer, 1974, p. 3). Clearly, over the history of the Vietnam conflict the proportion of reluctant volunteers varied.
national issue as draft calls increased in response to the intensification of the war and the increasing number of reported weekly casualties.\(^4\) Deferments for college students were seen as the means of placing the burden of the fighting on young men from the lower and lower-middle social classes. Ultimately, military manpower policy was changed with the enactment of the lottery in 1969 and the cessation of the draft. Although the young men who served during this total period probably were not the "Poor Man's Army"\(^5\) as characterized by many including the popular press, it seems clear that military service during the Vietnam conflict was not randomly distributed among young men in the relevant age range.\(^6\) It is therefore of consequence to inquire who these men were and what socioeconomic characteristics they possessed.

While the debate over the equity of the draft continued, the experiences of the young men returning from the armed services also began to draw national attention. In the early years (1964-1966), a relatively steady flow of veterans reentered a healthy civilian economy (Figure 6.1), making their assimilation into the labor force relatively easy. However, this changed dramatically as the economy slumped, the war intensified, and the number of men discharged annually began to rise (Figure 6.1). Increasingly, veterans and their readjustment problems became the focus of national attention. Newspapers, magazines and television emphasized major themes such as the frustration of unemployment and the psychological readjustment problems of the returning soldiers.\(^7\) Relative to their white counterparts, black veterans ostensibly found assimilation even more difficult. They experienced higher rates of unemployment, on average, and had to cope with returning to a society and economy plagued by racial tensions.\(^8\)

In response to veterans' needs, Congress enacted several pieces of legislation aimed at facilitating the transition from military to

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\(^5\)This characterization is used both by Helmer (1974), pp. 3-10, and by Ladinsky (1975).

\(^6\)Some young men who served during the Vietnam era entered the military prior to 1964. While the war spanned 10 years, those who were discharged in the early war years may have been much different from those who entered during periods of heavy combat. Two hundred sixty-seven young men in the NLS sample were Vietnam veterans at the time of the initial survey.

\(^7\)Lifton (1973); Starr (1973); U.S. Senate (1974).

\(^8\)Fendrich and Axelson (1971); Michelotti and Gover (1972).
civilian life. As a consequence of this action, veterans received preferential hiring with respect to government jobs, increased educational assistance allowances, special counseling with regard to both employment and drug abuse, and access to a multitude of other special benefits. The readjustment problems of veterans also stimulated interest within the social science community and eventuated in research devoted to many aspects of the assimilation process.

In this study we have the dual objectives of exploring the determinants of entering the armed forces during the Vietnam era and investigating the links and spillovers between (short term)\(^9\) military service and subsequent labor market experiences. In the next section we focus on the first of these objectives, beginning with a theoretical framework within which to examine the factors associated with service in the armed forces and concluding with the application of the NLS data to this framework. In Section III we explore several questions related to the postservice experience of the Vietnam era veterans. First, the impact of service in the military on a young man's earnings, occupational status and unemployment experience in 1971 is the focus of attention. Then we turn to more subjective measures of the impact of service in the military by investigating the correlates of the veterans' self-reports of the effects of service on their civilian careers. In the final section of the study the findings of the preceding sections are summarized and their implications are highlighted.

II  THE LIKELIHOOD OF SERVICE IN THE ARMED FORCES DURING THE VIETNAM ERA

As has been indicated above, the draft played a key role in the recruitment process throughout the Vietnam era. By definition, a conscripted individual who wishes to remain a citizen in good standing has no feasible alternative to entering military service. In a period of armed conflict where the risk of injury and death associated with membership in the armed forces increases, the question of who serves takes on new significance.

From the demand side of the picture, it is important to recognize that young men of the Vietnam era were born and reached maturity during a period characterized by frequent international crises (World War II, Korea, Berlin, Cuba). These crises provided the climate in which the draft was viewed as a necessary policy tool, for it permitted able men to be drawn quickly into service in the event of an emergency. In addition, the military pay scale was maintained below the civilian wage, thereby holding down defense expenditures. On the supply side,

\(^9\) Most of the veterans in the NLS sample served in the military for less than four years. Contributing to the incidence of short term service during the 1966-1971 period were the draft and lottery conscription methods.
the post World War II "baby boom" provided a large pool of eligible young men from which to draw. Hence, the Selective Service had the freedom to develop multiple criteria for either exempting or deferring young men from military service. Because the nature of these selection criteria was felt systematically to exclude upper class youth to the detriment of the lower classes,\(^{10}\) the Selective Service and its draft classification scheme came under attack. In developing a model to explain the likelihood of serving in the armed forces during the Vietnam conflict, we draw heavily upon criterion measures established by the Selective Service,\(^{11}\) descriptive material about who served,\(^{12}\) and studies that have focused exclusively on the personal decision to enlist.\(^{13}\)

**Conceptual Framework**

A healthy young man of this period could not make realistic decisions about future plans without taking into account the Selective Service System, for the armed services legally had a prior claim on him. However, if a young man did not meet certain minimum physical and mental health standards,\(^{14}\) he was automatically excluded. Additionally, young men who could meet specific criteria established

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\(^{10}\) Helmer (1974).

\(^{11}\) National Advisory Commission on Selective Service (1967).

\(^{12}\) Helmer (1974); Useem (1973); U.S. Senate (1974).

\(^{13}\) Johnston and Bachman (1972); Studies Prepared for the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force (1970).

\(^{14}\) Until the inception of Project 100,000 (1966), young men were not eligible to serve in the armed forces if (1) they scored below the tenth percentile on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) or (2) they scored between the tenth and thirtieth percentiles and failed the minimum requirements on the Army Classification Battery (ACB) or the Army Qualification Battery (AQB) (Karpinos, 1966). Project 100,000 was begun as a part of the Defense Department's War on Poverty. The minimum mental test score requirements were lowered in order to give low-scoring men the chance to learn skills in the military. The new minimum standard was a score as low as the tenth percentile on the AFQT if (1) the youth was a high school graduate or (2) he received a minimum score on one of seven aptitude tests (Wool and Flyer, 1969). Note that while the minimum mental requirements were lowered, they were not abolished. These "New Standards" men comprised 9 percent of the entrants to the Armed Forces between 1966 and 1968.
Figure 6.1

Number of Entrants, Draftees, and Separates, by Year

100's of thousands

Separates

Entrants

Draftees

NLS years

63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72

by Selective Service regulations were deferred (i.e., were not liable to the draft while so classified). Although the criteria for deferment were revised a number of times during the Vietnam era,¹⁵ hardship and student deferments remained relatively stable. The hardship deferment, based mainly on the presence of a child, constituted a permanent deferment contingent primarily upon the existence of alternative manpower for the maintenance of a minimum level of national security. The student deferment, on the other hand, was designed to be temporary; upon graduation or withdrawal from school a II-S classification almost automatically was converted to a I-A, which meant that the former student entered the draft-eligible set.¹⁶ However, student deferments could be converted into de facto exemptions, through subsequent occupational or hardship deferments.¹⁷

Aside from Selective Service criteria, there are various personal characteristics that may reasonably be expected to be associated with the likelihood of serving in the military. Since the question we address has never been dealt with directly, we must rely heavily upon literature that focuses on factors associated with a young man's personal decision to enlist.¹⁸ However, while the enlistment decision


¹⁶The precise criteria for a student deferment changed throughout the Vietnam era. Until 1966, enrollment in a graduate or undergraduate program insured deferment. For a short time (1966) the II-S was based on class standing. Graduate student deferments (except for students in medical or related fields) were abolished in 1967, while undergraduates making "normal progress" toward a degree continued to be protected. In 1969 the lottery was established and student deferments were no longer extended to incoming students. However, existing deferments were continued until graduation or withdrawal from school.

¹⁷National Advisory Commission on Selective Service (1967).

¹⁸The draft and problems associated with it led the Defense Department to sponsor several research studies that looked exclusively at the enlistment decision. See Studies Prepared for the President's Commission on an All Volunteer Armed Force (1970) and Johnston and Bachman (1972). Hence, unlike the broad question of the likelihood of entering, there is a substantial body of literature from which to draw for enlistment explanations.

In addition to the obvious distinction between enlistment and induction, these studies tend to address even more narrow criterion measures than ours. For example, Johnston and Bachman explore the enlistment decision only in the year following high school graduation.
is relevant to our study, it is merely one important component of the participation by a young man in the armed forces. As such, it is important to consider possible countervailing effects of some factors that would decrease the likelihood of serving, even though the factors may be positively associated with the enlistment decision.

The existing literature reveals that a young man's enlistment decision stemmed from a variety of sources, including draft pressures, opportunities associated with service (e.g., training and the G.I. Bill), the chance to escape an unpleasant civilian environment, and several personal background characteristics. It is clear that the draft did induce many enlistments during this period.\textsuperscript{19} Enlistment often reduced the likelihood of combat duty as well as offering a young man a relatively greater degree of choice of branch of service, participation in training, military occupational specialty, and number of years of obligation. Indeed, for some individuals, enlistment may have offered relatively more attractive options than the civilian labor market.

In addition, it has been hypothesized that the military is a potential vehicle by which a young man may (temporarily) escape an unpleasant environment. For example, individuals who have experienced or anticipate experiencing racial or social class discrimination would be more likely to enter the armed forces, ceteris paribus.\textsuperscript{20} Yet, although the military traditionally has been viewed as an avenue which blacks have used to escape racial or social class discrimination, there are countervailing forces that make it unclear whether the overall rate of participation in the military will be greater for blacks than for whites. That is, while opportunities for training and status advancements may be such as to induce a higher rate of enlistment for blacks, the greater likelihood of black inductees scoring very low on the mental examination serves to reduce the rate of conscription for blacks.\textsuperscript{21}

Hence, our study departs even further from theirs because (1) they include as enlistees young men who attempted to enlist but were rejected and (2) they exclude young men who enlisted after the year following high school graduation. Enlistment studies prepared for the President's Commission are also narrower in that they limit the question to specific branches of service (Cook, 1970; White, 1970; Fechter, 1970) or to specific ranks (Altman and Barro, 1970).

\textsuperscript{19} Johnston and Bachman (1972), pp. 60-70; Studies Prepared for the President's Commission on an All Volunteer Armed Force (1970), II-1, II-3, II-4, II-5, and II-10.

\textsuperscript{20} Johnston and Bachman (1972).

\textsuperscript{21} Between 1964 and 1965, 59 percent of the black inductees failed the mental examination as compared to 25 percent of the white. Karpinos (1966).
On the other hand, by lowering the mental ability requirements through Project 100,000\textsuperscript{22} the armed forces attempted to increase participation among blacks. This hope seems to have been realized; as of 1968, 33 percent of the New Standards men were blacks.\textsuperscript{23} This in turn contributed to the popular belief that blacks were more likely to serve during the latter part of the Vietnam conflict.\textsuperscript{24}

Some observers have suggested that there is reason to expect a relationship between geographic region of residence and the decision to enlist. First, some studies of enlistment behavior have hypothesized but have not confirmed a higher likelihood of enlistment by young men from the South.\textsuperscript{25} An examination of AFQT disqualification rates by state reveals a pattern that may explain why earlier studies have not confirmed the hypothesis. That is, the more rural Southern states show higher than average rejection rates,\textsuperscript{26} perhaps deriving from lower quality educational systems in the rural South. Thus, a higher-than-average propensity to enlist in the South may be offset by a higher-than-average rate of failure on the AFQT among rural Southern youth. Another reason to expect that region will be related to the likelihood of serving in the armed forces is that, during the Vietnam War, college students in the Northeast were influenced by the high level of protest against the war, and were less likely to enlist.\textsuperscript{27} In order to investigate these hypotheses, our model includes a variable representing the interaction between urbanicity and region of residence.

Since the student deferment was central to controversy over the draft, it is necessary to examine variables associated with its impact. Johnston and Bachman found that some variables predict enlistment

\textsuperscript{22}See footnote 14.

\textsuperscript{23}Wool and Flyer (1969).

\textsuperscript{24}Helmer (1974); U.S. Senate (1974).

\textsuperscript{25}The hypothesis was grounded in the popular notion that the traditions of the South are congenial to the pageantry of the military. For elaboration and empirical results see Johnston and Bachman (1972), p. 105 or Gray, II-2 (1970).

\textsuperscript{26}Even controlling for race, Karpinos found that draftees from the South were half again as likely as all youth to be rejected for mental reasons. His data also indicate that AFQT failure rates in the predominantly rural Southern states were twice the national rate. Karpinos (1966), p. 102.

\textsuperscript{27}Altman and Barro (1970), II-10.
solely because they are inversely associated with college entrance. For example, men with high-measured mental ability and successful high school careers were less likely to enlist. In addition, their study indicated that young men of higher socioeconomic levels were more likely to attend college and, thus, more likely to avoid entering military service. These findings are consistent with the popular notion that members of the middle and lower classes actually served in disproportionate numbers. Thus, an explanatory variable representing socioeconomic status of parental family is included in the model.

Finally, the intensity of the war effort played an important role in the likelihood of a youth entering the armed forces. If a young man became eligible for the draft between 1966 and 1968, he entered a draft pool from which the proportion drawn had grown significantly, which increased the probability of his serving. Hence, a variable indicating the intensity of the war is included in the model.

**Empirical Model and Results**

In order to examine the issues raised in the preceding discussion, we use data for all young men in our sample who could have become veterans during the Vietnam era, defined as the period from 1964 to 1971. Operationally, the dependent or criterion variable is a dichotomy that distinguishes between those who served in the armed forces during the Vietnam era and those who did not, irrespective of whether they were discharged by late 1971.  

In review, the explanatory variables used in the analysis can be divided into two broad categories: (1) Selective Service criteria and other "demand" factors and (2) personal characteristics associated with the student deferment and the enlistment decision. Selective Service criteria include (a) health condition at age 18; (b) a below-

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28 The sample excludes veterans who were discharged prior to 1964 and thus is consistent with published statistical accounts of Vietnam era veterans. Since the Vietnam War ended in 1973, this study understates the total proportion of young men in the age cohort who served by excluding those who entered in 1972 and 1973. However, the declining entrance rates after 1971 and the age of the NLS cohort (the youngest respondent was 19 in 1971) make it unlikely that the results would change substantially if 1972 and 1973 entrants were included. It is possible to identify military/civilian status for respondents not interviewed in a given survey year, with the minor exceptions of those who were not eligible for interview by virtue of (1) an earlier refusal to participate in the NLS or (2) having been dropped from the panel for two consecutive (nonmilitary) noninterviews.

29 In preparing the data for the study, it was necessary to construct variables which utilize individual characteristics at a
average level of measured mental ability; (c) the presence of dependents at age 18; and (d) the student deferment (i.e., educational attainment at age 18). The other "demand" factor is operationalized in a dichotomous variable indicating the intensity of the war at the time that the respondent became 18 years of age.

Personal characteristics associated with the student deferment include (a) above-average socioeconomic level of parental family and (b) above-average level of measured mental ability. In addition to the preceding personal traits, the following characteristics are included in the analysis because of their hypothesized relationship with enlistment behavior: average level of measured mental ability; average and lower socioeconomic level of parental family; residence in the rural South, the urban South, or the Northeast at age 18; and race. For reasons discussed above, parabolic relationships are hypothesized between the likelihood of serving in the military and levels of measured mental ability and education completed at age 18. That is, high and low values on both variables are expected to be negatively associated with participation in the armed forces.

A common "age" reference point, i.e., at a time prior to entrance into the service. This is essential because predicting the likelihood of serving demands preservice traits as the relevant criteria. We chose to look at the characteristics as of a young man's 18th year, because eligibility to serve without parental consent and draft registration both occur at the 18th birthday. In addition, reliance on data as of age 18 minimizes the risk of picking up personal characteristics that were caused by military service, e.g., a service-related health limitation.

These explanatory variables are not so precise as their titles imply. For men who were 19 to 24 in 1966 it was necessary to use retrospective background variables. For young men who were 18 between 1966 and 1971, variables from the survey date corresponding to their 18th birthday were utilized. In cases of panel members not interviewed at that survey, the survey corresponding to their 17th birthday was used. The logic behind "region of residence at age 18" is illustrative. Respondents who were 19 and over in 1966 were asked to compare their residence at age 18 with their 1966 residence. If the two residences were identified as being in the same Census region, the variable was assigned their 1966 region. If the regions of residence were different, region of residence while in high school was used as the proxy. For respondents who were 18 or younger in 1966 the variable was assigned the region of residence corresponding to the year the respondent turned 18. However, there are 467 young men who were not interviewed the year they turned 18. Rather than eliminate these respondents from the analysis, the decision was made to search backward in the longitudinal record for the region of residence at the most recent interview prior to age 18.
Methodology

The hypotheses described in the preceding section are tested by means of Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA), a version of multiple regression analysis with all the explanatory variables expressed in categorical form. The MCA technique permits one to calculate the mean value of the dependent variable for each category of a particular explanatory variable, "adjusted" for the effects of all other variables in the model. Differences in these values among the several categories of a given variable may be interpreted as indicating the "pure" effect of that variable upon the dependent measure. To provide a specific example, the MCA technique allows one to calculate for each SES category of youth what the proportion of the category who served would have been had the members of that category been "average" in terms of all the other variables entering into the analysis.

Results

Most of the hypotheses presented in the preceding section are supported by the analysis (Table 6.1). Having health problems and/or dependents at age 18 reduced the likelihood of serving in the armed forces, although the former achieves statistical significance only among whites. A nonmonotonic (parabolic) relationship was hypothesized for mental ability (IQ) and for education at age 18. Both variables exhibit this relationship, although IQ obtains most of its explanatory power from the strong positive relationship between military service and an average level of mental ability. By contrast, education demonstrates the hypothesized relationship more forcefully in that the respondents with only elementary education and those with at least some college training were significantly less likely than average to enter the military.

Of special interest is the finding that socioeconomic status per se was not related to military service during the Vietnam era, once the effects of education and mental ability are taken into account. Of course, it is true that social class background had indirect impacts on the probability of serving because of its influence on both measured mental ability and educational attainment at age 18. It is also

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30 In order to maximize the data cases available for analysis, codes of NA on IQ, socioeconomic level, and type of residence at age 18 were included in the MCA, but the coefficients are not analyzed. While being coded NA on the variables ordinarily would not be thought to be related to the probability of entering the armed forces, the NA's on the first variable are not randomly distributed throughout the sample. Because of data collection methods, NA's on IQ are concentrated among the most disadvantaged, least well educated youth, especially blacks who grew up in the rural South. Clearly, therefore, those coded NA for IQ should be expected to be least likely to have participated in military service.
Table 6.1  The Likelihood of Serving in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam Era: MCA Results
(F-ratios in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>WHITES</th>
<th>BLACKS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>Adjusted^\text{a} likelihood of serving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total or average</td>
<td>3,627</td>
<td>(6.56)^#</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental ability</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>1,534</td>
<td>32.7**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>27.9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>24.9**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic status</td>
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<td>629</td>
<td>28.7</td>
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<td>Education at age 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-8 years</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>21.7**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-11 years</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
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<td>13-15 years</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>22.0**</td>
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<td>Residence at age 18</td>
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<td>876</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health condition at age 18</td>
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<td>198</td>
<td>10.5**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependents at age 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>17.8**</td>
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<tr>
<td>War intensity at age 18</td>
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<td>Intense period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand mean</td>
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<td>$R^2$</td>
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<td>F-ratio</td>
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(Table continued on next page)
Table 6.1  Continued

UNIVERSE: Respondents 19 to 29 years old in 1971 who were not discharged from the armed forces prior to 1964.

a Adjusted by multiple regression technique of holding constant all other variables shown in the table.

# Statistically significant at .05 level.

* Category is significantly different from the grand mean at .10 level.

** Category is significantly different from the grand mean at .05 level.
noteworthy that the variable indicating the war’s intensity when the young man reached age 18 displays a strong relationship with the likelihood of his serving. Obviously, participation in the military service in the presence of the conscription system is a function of the unpredictable nature of American foreign policy and the fortunes of war. Finally, as hypothesized, geographic area of residence shows a significant relationship to the probability of having served in the military. Young men from the urban South were more likely than average to serve and those from the Northeast were less likely than average to serve.

Overall, a somewhat larger proportion of white than of black youth served in the armed forces between 1964 and 1971 (29 versus 26 percent). Although this intercolor difference shrinks when other factors are controlled and is not statistically significant, it is in rather sharp contrast to the prevailing popular notion that young black men bore a disproportionate burden of the war effort. However, the racial differences in the effects of some of the factors explaining participation in the military are worthy of note. The most pronounced of these is that the health variable does not achieve statistical significance among black youth, whereas it is very powerful among whites. Indeed, blacks with reported health problems were about three-fourths more likely to serve than their white counterparts. While we can only speculate, it may be that the greater relative attractiveness of the military vis-à-vis the civilian labor market for blacks induced those with subtle or minor health problems (e.g., allergies) to waive their right to nonservice more frequently than similarly afflicted whites.

An additional racial difference appears for youth who had completed fewer than 12 years of school. While entering the service was negatively related to an elementary education at age 18 for both races, the absolute difference between blacks and whites in this category is very large: whites were twice as likely as blacks (22 versus 10 percent) to enter the military. For youth who dropped out of high school or had not graduated by age 18, the likelihood of serving is significantly below average for blacks but not significantly different from average for whites. Hence, minority youth who perhaps had most to gain from the service were least likely to enter.31

31 The racial differences discussed in this paragraph may arise from the fact that for both educational categories blacks had completed fewer years of schooling than had whites. Within the elementary school category a black youth was approximately twice as likely as a white (36 versus 19 percent) to have completed fewer than seven years of school by age 18. Within the group who had attended but not finished high school at age 18, while equal proportions (i.e., 17 percent) of the color groups had only nine years of schooling, fewer blacks than whites (49 versus 57 percent) had completed eleven years. Hence, on average, whites had accumulated more human capital and were better equipped to pass the AFQT.
Finally, the geographic background variable exhibits some interesting racial differences. While the likelihood of serving was significantly higher than average for a young man from the urban South, irrespective of color, the reasons probably differ for whites and blacks. For the former group we are inclined to believe the popular notion of the congeniality of military traditions and Southern culture. For the latter, it seems that the military maintained its potential as a feasible avenue of escape from racial discrimination in the labor market even during the Vietnam conflict. Among young whites, but not blacks, from the rural South the rate of participation in the armed forces was significantly lower than average. The strong negative effect among whites probably derives both from the availability of occupational (agricultural) deferments and from lower quality schooling leading to higher failure rates on the APQ test. The weaker effect among black youth may be attributable to an above-average propensity to enlist in order to escape labor market discrimination, which partially offsets the negative effect of lower quality education. Finally, the absolutely and relatively lower likelihood of a young black than a young white serving if he resided in the Northeast or West may be attributable to lower levels of racial discrimination in those regions. That is, these lower levels of discrimination may have either provided labor market opportunities that made the armed forces relatively less attractive or provided an environment more sensitive to the dangers and political issues associated with participation in the wartime armed forces.

III POSTSERVICE LABOR MARKET EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG VETERANS

Introduction

A young man’s military experience is often an interruption in his life plans with unknown consequences. On the one hand, being a veteran may make a young man more attractive to employers relative to nonveterans, effecting an increase in short-run and long-run earnings. Conversely, military experience may serve only as a discontinuity in human capital accumulation with adverse consequences for long run success. The overriding question investigated in this section is whether service in the armed forces during the Vietnam era had any net (independent) effect on the subsequent civilian labor market experiences of young men.

As serious students of this question have realized, to date neither abstract theorizing nor empirical studies have yielded unambiguous conclusions about the direction of such an effect.32

A young man's service in the armed forces has the potential of adding to his human capital in the form of new specific vocational skills, increased general educational credentials (e.g., attainment of GED equivalency status, receipt of honorable discharge papers treated as equivalent to a high school diploma), broadened geographic horizons (an increased propensity to be mobile), "improved" work habits (e.g., punctuality, adherence to instructions, teamwork) and additional resources with which to pursue civilian education and training (i.e., G.I. Bill benefits). Furthermore, while the draft was in effect, the potential cost of turnover to employers was smaller for youth who had fulfilled their military obligation. In addition, national campaigns to hire returning veterans generated some preferential hiring out of a moral sense of indebtedness to young men who fought on behalf of the nation; the same result was generated more formally in the public sector by virtue of veterans' preference under civil service systems.

On the other hand, military service also implies a loss of at least two years of potential civilian labor market exposure and experience, even though legislative and collective bargaining actions have attempted to minimize this loss. For example, the Selective Service Act of 1967 stipulated not only that a young man holding a nontemporary job was guaranteed the right to return to that job after military service, but also that he did not lose any seniority status accumulated up to the time of entrance into the armed forces. Some unions through collective bargaining have extended these rights to include additional accumulation of seniority while a young man is in the military service, and even promotions and pay increases in absentia. Another potentially negative impact of military service on subsequent labor market experience is the heightened likelihood of physical disability which limits the type and/or amount of work a young man can do. Last, but certainly not least, is the psychological damage which afflicted some young veterans of the Vietnam era. To the extent that they were stigmatized as participants in the war and/or felt personal guilt about their associations with the military establishment, veterans may have exhibited attitudes that impaired their productivity in job search and on the job.

33 Strictly speaking, the period could be less than two years if, for example, a young man was severely wounded and discharged early, or if he was in combat for an extended period and "earned" an early discharge. Our operational definition of a veteran requires active duty for a minimum of only six months.


35 Fendrich and Axelson (1971); Lifton (1973); Polner (1971); Starr (1973).
While the military's intervention into a young man's life is felt by all those who enter the armed forces, the effect may be more pronounced among minority and disadvantaged youth. On the one hand, the military traditionally has been viewed as a means to escape discrimination and as a means to achieve status advancement. Thus the military experience would be perceived as an antecedent to later labor market success. For example, Browning et al. postulate that the armed forces may create a "bridging environment" that aids successful minority group assimilation into the civilian labor market. Minority youth often reside in enclaves isolated from mainstream society, and service in the military tends to sever community ties and to reduce dependence upon racial or ethnic enclaves.

On the other hand, this type of positive effect of service may have been less likely in the Vietnam era, as the result of the widespread feeling that U.S. involvement in the war was unjust. In addition, black youths were less likely to receive valuable training and more likely to participate in combat than their white counterparts. Fendrich and Axelson suggest that in the black community traditional sentiments about the military changed dramatically as the war intensified (i.e., why should a black youth die in Southeast Asia to save democracy that does not really exist?). This, in turn, led to a heightened degree of political alienation among returning black veterans. Finally, disadvantaged youth were less likely to avail themselves of programs (e.g., the G.I. Bill) that facilitated the assimilation process.

Clearly, "military experience" is not monolithic, nor is its impact on subsequent civilian labor market experiences. Among the potentially salient dimensions of variation are branch of service, type of military occupation, length of active service, and type of formal training. A long standing recruiting technique has been to emphasize the uniqueness of one branch of the armed forces in contrast to the others. Weinstein found that Navy veterans more easily transferred their skills to the civilian sector than did Army veterans. He conjectured that this resulted from philosophical differences underlying training programs in the several branches of the armed forces—namely that Navy training was designed to be more general and to be applied to a wider range of job situations. However, Weinstein's study was based on a sample of pre-Vietnam era veterans. A subsequent study utilizing data on Vietnam era veterans found no

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37 Fendrich and Axelson (1971).
consistent net association between branch of service and subsequent labor market success, although later civilian earnings were found to be relatively lower among Army veterans in some military occupation groups. 39

Another source of differentiation in the military experience is type of training. For example, O'Neill et al. found that the labor market payoff to training in the armed forces differs by type; i.e., the higher the status of the civilian counterpart of the training, the more likely the training is to be positively associated with earnings. Length of active service is another factor contributing to differences in the effects of military experience. O'Neill et al. discovered no positive association between subsequent earnings and length of military service, except for veterans who had been electronic equipment repairmen in the military. 40

Aside from the implications of military service for income and occupational attainment, there is considerable academic and policy concern about the process by which a newly discharged veteran becomes a fully participating member of the civilian sector. For some veterans the process involves long spells of unemployment. In early 1970 unemployment among veterans began to rise, and it continued to do so through 1971, reaching 11.4 percent in the final quarter of that year. 41 For the younger veterans this was one-third again as high a rate of unemployment as that experienced by nonveterans of the same age and race.

Perhaps the most important factor contributing to increased unemployment among veterans was the coincident rising level of general unemployment and the peaking of the discharge rate in the 1969-1971 period. The relative youth of the Vietnam era veterans at the time of discharge probably also contributed to the higher-than-historical incidence of unemployment. The average age at discharge of Vietnam era veterans was 23 in contrast to 25 for Korean War veterans and 27 for veterans of World War II. Thus, the Vietnam era veterans had had relatively less time to accumulate meaningful labor market experience prior to entering the armed forces. 42


40 According to a personal communication from John Werner (one of the authors), the lack of a generally positive association may have resulted from inclusion of a variable representing highest military paygrade, because this variable is highly correlated both with length of service and with postservice earnings.

41 Michelotti and Gover (1972).

42 Showell (1975).
Obviously, during the Vietnam era the Defense Department's focus was on winning the war and, therefore, on producing "soldiers," an occupation with relatively few nonmilitary applications. There was little, if any, concern for the civilian manpower implications of military training, and this placed veterans at a competitive disadvantage upon their re-entrance to the civilian labor market. Even though re-employment rights were guaranteed, few veterans took advantage of this right.\textsuperscript{43}

However, there also were forces that tended to inflate artificially the unemployment rate among veterans. First, virtually all veterans were eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. While it was technically true that a veteran had to be looking for work during the benefit period, as a practical matter, State Veteran Employment Representatives relaxed standards for recently discharged veterans, allowing them several weeks to readjust to civilian society.\textsuperscript{44} Second, it has been suggested that the educational benefits of the G.I. Bill tended to inflate the rates.\textsuperscript{45} Because the educational system is typically demarcated into 10- to 15-week periods, veterans waiting to enroll had to seek temporary employment and were faced with employer reluctance to hire them in the face of their imminent return to school.

Models and Empirical Results

Models In order to examine the first two of several questions about the effects of military service on postdischarge labor market experience, we employ rather conventional models relating to the determination of earnings and occupational status and add a variety of measures to identify various categories of veterans. To illustrate, the regression model to explain hourly rate of pay includes traditional human capital variables (education, formal training, ability, work experience, tenure on current job, health condition); environmental variables (urbanicity, region of residence); and job context variables (public sector employment).

Several alternative sets of variables to distinguish veterans are also included in the equation. First, categories of veterans are separately identified by dummy variables indicating whether training was received in the military and in which branch of service the veteran served (e.g., Army veterans with training are differentiated from Army veterans without training). Second, an alternative equation is

\textsuperscript{43} Werner and Radcliff (1973).

\textsuperscript{44} Manpower Magazine (1971).

\textsuperscript{45} Werner and Radcliff (1973).
estimated by including, as substitutes for the variables representing
training and branch of service, dummy variables indicating whether the
veteran's military and post discharge jobs were in the same major
occupational group. As a third alternative, these dummy variables are
all deleted and a variable measuring the total number of months of
active military duty is included.\footnote{46} In each of the three specifications,
the total amount of civilian work experience is divided into two
portions--i.e., experience prior and subsequent to military service.\footnote{47}
Finally, each equation includes a dummy variable specifying whether a
veteran returned to school after being discharged.

Because of the well-documented racial differences in the determinants
of wages and occupational status, separate regression equations are
estimated for blacks and whites, which in turn enables us to evaluate
whether the effects of military service differ according to race. The
universe for which the equations are estimated consists of 19- to 29-
year-old men who were both out of school and employed at the time of the
1971 survey.

Turning next to the impact of service in the armed forces on the
unemployment experience of veterans, we again employ regression equations
that control for several variables expected to be related both to the
criterion measures and to the status of being a veteran. Because the
"proper" dependent variables cannot be specified unambiguously, two
alternatives are presented, namely the probability of experiencing at
least one week of unemployment during 1971 and the proportion of time
in the labor force during 1971 that was spent unemployed.\footnote{48}

The variables included to explain the incidence and extent of
joblessness are nearly identical to those used in the earnings and
occupational status models described above. The principal exceptions
are (1) the addition of a dichotomous variable designating those
veterans discharged from the armed forces during 1971 and (2) deletion
of the analysis based on a comparison of military and civilian
occupations. The new variable is added to the model because having
been recently discharged may be expected to increase the likelihood of
joblessness by virtue of the minimal exercise of reemployment rights.\footnote{49}

\footnote{46} Obviously, all nonveterans receive a value of zero on the latter
variable.

\footnote{47} See footnote 46.

\footnote{48} The first is a dummy variable coded "1" if the respondent
experienced any full weeks of unemployment and "0" otherwise. The
second is the ratio of weeks unemployed in 1971 to weeks in the civilian
labor force in 1971.

\footnote{49} U.S. Senate (1972), pp. 64-65.
and by virtue of the almost automatic eligibility for unemployment compensation with minimal requirements to search. It is also expected that recency of discharge would artificially increase the proportion of labor force time spent unemployed, because it increases the numerator (weeks unemployed) and decreases the denominator (weeks in civilian labor force) of the ratio. The categorization of veterans according to the occupation comparison is deleted because of its nonapplicability to some veterans—i.e., those who had held no postservice job by the time of the 1971 survey. The universe for the analysis of unemployment consists of 19- to 29-year-old men who were not enrolled in school at the time of the 1971 survey.

Finally, as a supplement to analyzing the objective consequences of military service on subsequent civilian labor market experiences, the data provide the opportunity to examine the veterans' perceptions of these consequences. All veterans were asked in 1971 whether they believed that their service in the armed forces had helped or hurt their (civilian) careers. Overall, slightly more than one-half of them reported that it had helped their careers, one-sixth reported a deleterious effect, and the remaining three-tenths felt that their military experience had no impact on their subsequent experiences in the civilian labor market. As might be expected, these response patterns were far from uniform across all types of veterans. For example, ex-Marines, veterans with very brief periods of service, and those who received no training with civilian applicability seem relatively less likely to report positive effects of their military service (Appendix Table 6A.2). Similarly, college graduates, draftees, and those discharged in 1971 seem relatively more likely to report negative effects.

In order to examine more carefully the sources of variation in the reported effects of the military service, we performed MCA's using two dichotomous dependent variables. The first distinguished those who perceived positive effects from all others, and the second differentiated those who reported negative effects from all others. Using the identical set of explanatory variables permits us to identify the net distribution of responses to the question for each category.

50There is also reason to believe that the diligence of the Census interviewers contributed to an artificially high proportion of a veteran's time spent in unemployment. That is, if it was learned that a respondent was unavailable at the initial attempt to contact him but that he would be discharged from the military service before the close of the survey period, the interview was probably conducted. Thus, the total amount of time in the civilian population for such a veteran will be minimal (less than two months), which artificially inflates the proportion of time unemployed should he seek work and/or apply for unemployment compensation.
of young veterans, where "net" means "adjusted for the variation in the response due to other characteristics." Moreover, it enables us to demonstrate the nonsymmetric nature of the responses in the sense that a given characteristic may induce an above-average positive response rate but not a below-average negative response rate.

Some of the explanatory variables included in these analyses are similar to those used in the analyses of earnings, occupational status, and unemployment. However, because the term "career" is somewhat vague, the hypotheses underlying these variables are somewhat more tentative than in the earlier analyses, and may best be viewed as exploratory. For example, it is of interest to know whether the perceived impact of the military on subsequent civilian careers varies with the level of human capital possessed by the veteran in order to assist in evaluating military service as a source of producing human capital. Especially in light of programs such as Project 100,000 and Project Transition, it seems reasonable to expect that the least well educated young veterans had the most to gain from military service, if only in terms of skill acquisition. Thus, the amount of schooling completed by the respondent prior to entering the military is included in the analysis. Finally, for similar reasons the following are included in the MCA's: whether the respondent's military and post-service jobs were in the same major occupation group, whether the respondent returned to school after being discharged from the service, and a comparison between the respondent's health status prior to and subsequent to military service.

Since the nature of a veteran's experience during his tour of military duty may be expected to influence his perception of its impact on his postservice career, some of the variables are designed to represent this set of factors, viz., method of entry to the armed forces, duration of military service, type of training received while in the military service, branch of the service, and date of discharge. The hypotheses underlying this latter set of variables merit brief explanation. While undoubtedly there was some draft-induced enlistment, it is anticipated that those who served involuntarily would be less likely to exhibit positive reactions and more likely to express negative reactions to their military experience. Similarly, those who served for longer periods of time are, on average, more likely to have done so voluntarily and, therefore, are expected to be more positive about the impact of their service. Likewise, it is anticipated that those who received training with some potential transferability to civilian jobs would be relatively more positive about the effect of their military experience.

The branch of the armed forces in which a young man served is included for exploratory purposes, and no a priori hypotheses are offered. While gross differences in the response patterns of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine veterans are observed, they may merely reflect differences in voluntariness of service and/or differences in training among the several branches of the armed forces. The date of discharge is included for three reasons. First, the question
about the impact of military service was asked of all veterans in 1971 (rather than, say, at the first interview subsequent to discharge), and it may be that the perceived impact of military service is stronger the more recent the tour of duty. Second, veterans who returned to civilian life in 1970 or 1971 entered a much less buoyant economy than was true of those who were discharged in the middle or late 1960's. Finally, growing societal disenchantment with U.S. military involvement in Vietnam over the period under study probably made a difference in the general acceptance of the veteran according to when he reentered the civilian labor force.

Results All in all, the results indicate that the effect of military service on subsequent civilian earnings and occupational status is neither unambiguously positive nor negative (Table 6.2). Since the effect does apparently differ substantially between the races, the findings are discussed separately for whites and blacks.

For young white men, all of the variables associated with having served in the armed forces exhibit positive associations with current hourly earnings, but the only effects that attain statistical significance (at the 5 percent level) are those associated with (1) returning to school after being discharged and (2) doing the same kind of work after leaving the service as was done while in military service. While each month of active military duty seems to increase current wages (presumably because the variable represents general work experience), the impact is miniscule (about 0.2¢/hour/month of service) and not statistically significant (t < 1.00). Indeed, the size of this coefficient, in relation to the coefficient for civilian work experience, may be interpreted to mean that, on average, the time spent in the military is detrimental to later success in the labor market. To be more specific, the regression results imply that the return per year of military service was only about 2.5¢/hour in contrast to the return to a year of civilian work experience of more than 11¢/hour. Hence, for white veterans it seems that only those young men who availed themselves of the subsidy to pursue postservice additional schooling received monetary payoffs from their military experience.

In contrast, the impact of armed forces service is more ambiguous among young black men. First of all, there are too few (i.e., fewer than 10) respondents who returned to school after leaving the armed forces to have confidence in the estimated effect of this behavior on civilian wages. Second, none of the variables identifying veterans attains statistical significance in any version of the equation. Finally, the estimated value of a year of military service (about

51 It should be noted that the latter effect may represent either (1) the impact of specific types of occupational training in the military or (2) the identification of young men who held the same (high-paying) occupations before, during, and after military service.
Table 6.2  Net* Effects of Selected Aspects of Military Service Experience on Civilian Hourly Wage and Occupational Status, 1971, by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version of the equation and aspect of military service experience</th>
<th>Hourly wage (dollars/hour)</th>
<th>Occupational status (Duncan Index)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WHITES</td>
<td>BLACKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Version I</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient of training in the military--Army</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient of training in the military--other branch</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonrecipient of training in the military--Army</td>
<td>0.30*</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonrecipient of training in the military--other branch</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returnee to school after military discharge</td>
<td>0.85**</td>
<td>@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Version II</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military and 1971 occupations--same</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td>@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military and 1971 occupations--different</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returnee to school after military discharge</td>
<td>0.82**</td>
<td>@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Version III</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per month of active military duty</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returnee to school after military discharge</td>
<td>0.89**</td>
<td>@</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** Appendix Tables 6A.3 through 6A.5.

**UNIVERSE:** Employed respondents 19-29 years of age in 1971 who were not discharged from the armed forces prior to 1964.

- The effects are net in the sense that other variables that determine wages (occupational status) are held constant by the regression, including those variables associated with being a veteran.
- Each version of the equation was estimated separately and contained only those variables characterizing veterans that are shown. For example, Version I contains interactive dummy variables for veteran status, receipt of military training and branch of service along with a dummy variable indicating the return to school, but it excludes the occupation comparison variables and the duration of service variable.
- Strictly speaking, these veterans received only basic training and/or training only in a military (combat) job.
- Coefficient based on fewer than 25 respondents.
- Indicates nonzero value rounded to zero.
- * Statistically significant at .10 level.
- ** Statistically significant at .05 level.
8¢/hour) lies between the estimated value of a year of civilian work experience prior to the military (about 2¢/hour) and that of a year of civilian work experience after military service (about 14¢/hour). Nevertheless, the coefficient of the active duty variable (MLDURTOT71) does not achieve significance at conventional levels. If we accept the coefficient at face value (i.e., ignore the t-ratio of 1.2h), then the results imply that, whether it represents the acquisition of cognitive skills or productive work habits, the time a young black man spent in the armed forces pays off in increased civilian earnings.

Contrary to our expectations, there is no evidence for either racial group that training received in the armed forces that is potentially applicable to civilian jobs yields a demonstrable, significant return. With one exception, all of the preceding inferences about hourly earnings apply equally well to the analysis of occupational status and, therefore, do not merit repetition. The exception is that there is no evidence that black veterans received any payoff to their military service in terms of occupational status.

Turning to the impact of being a veteran on unemployment experience in 1971, the answer is rather more straightforward. Although it is more systematic among whites, the evidence for both racial groups indicates that young veterans were significantly more likely than their nonveteran counterparts to suffer unemployment during 1971 (Table 6.3). Inexplicably, this conclusion does not apply to black young men who were veterans of the Army infantry. Among white veterans this effect was somewhat attenuated for those who returned to school. Partly in contrast to our expectations, the veterans discharged in 1971 did not have significantly higher likelihoods of being unemployed, but they did spend significantly larger proportions of their labor force time without jobs. Examination of the full regression results also reveals that, ceteris paribus, the differential unemployment experience of veterans eventually disappears (Appendix Tables 6A.6 and 6A.7). The variable measuring the amount of postservice work experience (EXPERPOST) has a strong negative coefficient, meaning that a veteran's susceptibility to unemployment in 1971 was lower if he had been discharged in, say, 1968 than in 1970. Thus, it seems that time in reacclimation to the civilian labor market is the principal source of a "solution" to the unemployment "problem" of veterans.

Turning finally to the analysis of the employed veterans' perceptions of the effect of their military service, the results of the MCA's provide support for some of the hypotheses (Table 6.4). Since the

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52 See footnote 51. Also, it is noteworthy that approximately three-fifths of the veterans in our sample report having received training other than basic or combat training. This is in close accord with published data. See U.S. Senate (1971), p. 140, Table 37.
### Table 6.3  Net Effects of Selected Aspects of Military Service Experience on Unemployment Experience 1971, by Race

(Effects shown in percentage points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version of the equation and aspect of military service experience</th>
<th>Probability of being unemployed 1971</th>
<th>Proportion of time in labor force in 1971 spent unemployed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WHITES</td>
<td>BLACKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Version I</strong>&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient of training in military--Army</td>
<td>11.6**</td>
<td>25.8**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient of training in military--other branch</td>
<td>13.7**</td>
<td>@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonrecipient of training in military--Army&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>11.4**</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonrecipient of training in military--other branch&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>14.9**</td>
<td>28.6**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returnee to school after military discharge</td>
<td>-9.2</td>
<td>@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discharged in 1971</td>
<td>-9.3</td>
<td>-23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Version II</strong>&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per month of active military duty</td>
<td>0.4**</td>
<td>0.6**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returnee to school after military discharge</td>
<td>-7.2</td>
<td>@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discharged in 1971</td>
<td>-8.6</td>
<td>-10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** Appendix Tables 6A.6 and 6A.7.

**UNIVERSE:** Respondents 19-29 years of age and interviewed in 1971 who were not discharged from the armed forces prior to 1964 and who spent at least one week in the labor force in 1971.

The effects are net in the sense that other determinants of the likelihood of being unemployed are held constant by the regression, including those variables associated with being a veteran.

a The effects are net in the sense that other determinants of the likelihood of being unemployed are held constant by the regression, including those variables associated with being a veteran.

b, c See footnotes b and c, Table 6.2.

@ Coefficient based on fewer than 25 respondents.

* Statistically significant at .10 level.

** Statistically significant at .05 level.
Table 6.4  Perceived Effects of Military Service on Civilian Careers: MCA Results

(F-ratios in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>Adjusted percent reporting that military service was</td>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>Adjusted percent reporting that military service was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of entry to service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drafted</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>2.69*</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlisted</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>21.5*</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherb</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch of service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy, Coast Guard</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marines</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-12 months</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>20.8**</td>
<td>24.4*</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-24 months</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>60.9**</td>
<td>10.0**</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-36 months</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 months or more</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>60.1*</td>
<td>23.6*</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of discharge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>7.12*</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>27.6**</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-1969</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967 or earlier</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>7.9**</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of discharge</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>47.4**</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>60.3**</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in military</td>
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<tr>
<td>None or military only</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same training</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military and post service occupation</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>117</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health condition in 1971</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No health limitation</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>54.6**</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>120</td>
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<td>@</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limitation, began during service</td>
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<td>@</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limitation, began after service</td>
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<td>@</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>9-11</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>13-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>16-18</td>
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<td>16.8</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>Returned to school post service</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>53.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>Grand mean</td>
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<td>16.0</td>
<td>55.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>$F^2$</td>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.14</td>
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<td>2.97</td>
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<td>Total number of respondents</td>
<td>521</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>128</td>
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</table>

(Table continued on next page.)
Table 6.4  Continued

UNIVERSE: Respondents who were Vietnam era veterans and who were employed in 1971.
a The percentages are adjusted by the multiple regression technique of holding constant all
other variables shown in the table. For unadjusted percentages see Table 6A.2.
b Includes those who entered the armed forces through ROTC or OCS and those whose method of
entry was not ascertained.
@ Adjusted percentage not shown where category contains fewer than 20 respondents.
# Significant at .05 level.
* Significantly different from the grand mean at .10 level.
** Significantly different from the grand mean at .05 level.
results for whites and blacks differ, they are discussed separately. Voluntariness of participation in the armed forces does exhibit a positive relationship with the self-reported value of that participation. Relative to enlistees, draftees were less likely to report a positive career effect and more likely to report a negative career effect, although only the latter effect achieves statistical significance (at $\alpha \leq .10$). Finding any statistical significance for this variable is especially noteworthy because branch of service and length of tour of duty are controlled for, and because some of the enlistees were of the draft-induced variety, making their service less than entirely voluntary. Also found to exhibit significantly above-average positive reports of their military experience were young white veterans who received training in the armed forces and those whose tours of duty lasted either one to two years or more than three years.53

The long-service group of white veterans also forcefully demonstrates the non-symmetric nature of the perceptions being studied, in that it also had a significantly higher-than-average rate of reporting negative effects of military service on civilian careers. Thus, long-service veterans were the least likely to express ambivalence about the impact of their military experience on their post-discharge work lives, and those who served for one year or less were the most likely (55 percent) to report no effect on their civilian careers.

Consistent with our expectations, the date of discharge bears a strong monotonic association with the probability that a young white veteran would report a detrimental effect of his military service, i.e., the probability is much higher the more recently he was discharged. This may reflect one or more of several forces. First, the recency of negative military experiences may induce strong negative reports about anything related to those experiences. Second, the loss of a few years of civilian labor market exposure may have been more of an impairment in the relatively depressed labor market of 1971 than in the tighter labor markets of the middle 1960's.

Contrary to expectations, the measures comparing pre- and post-service characteristics do not exhibit significant relationships with the likelihood of reporting either positive or negative effects of military service. Although the differences between those who did and those who did not return to school are in the anticipated direction, they do not achieve statistical significance. There is an apparent discrepancy between these findings and the earlier conclusion that white veterans who returned to school enjoyed higher earnings and better jobs as compared to nonveterans and veterans who did not go back to school. The discrepancy may be explainable if those who returned to school would have continued their educations in any event

53 It should perhaps be noted that a regression analysis using occupational status as the dependent variable indicates a significantly lower Duncan Index score for white veterans who reported that the military service was a detriment to their careers (Table 6A.8).
and, thus, perceived the military experience as an interruption in their prior plans to achieve higher earnings and status. While this is purely speculative, it is consistent with the following facts: (1) there is substantial collinearity between level of education prior to military service and the likelihood of returning to school after being discharged and (2) college graduates had significantly below-average reports of positive effects and above-average reports of negative effects of military service.

In general, it is almost impossible to draw any confident conclusions from the MCA analyses of the self reports by young black veterans. In the main this probably is due to the small number of respondents who comprise many of the categories used in the analysis. While the associations between perceived effect of military service and (a) voluntariness of participation and (b) receipt of training in the armed forces are the same for white and black veterans, for the latter group they do not attain statistical significance. Comparable to the findings for whites, there is a strong significant positive relationship between duration of active duty and the likelihood of reporting a positive effect. However, the categories in which this relationship manifests itself are different for blacks than for whites.

Finally, when all is said and done, young black veterans and young white veterans do not diverge systematically in their views of the impact of their military service on their subsequent civilian work experiences. The small intercolor differences of blacks perceiving both more positive and less negative effects is not uniform across all categories of the veterans. For example, among those who served one to two years and among those discharged prior to 1967, white veterans were more likely than black veterans to report a positive effect of military service. Similarly, black high school dropouts were noticeably more likely than their white counterparts to report a negative effect.

IV SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was conducted upon the premise that the experiences of Vietnam era veterans are integral to understanding the transitions by young men from adolescence to adulthood and from school to work during the late 1960's. As a starting point we analyzed the correlates of the likelihood of serving in the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam era (1964-1971). In doing so the study departed substantially from earlier research that focused almost exclusively upon the decision

54 Preliminary runs of the analysis that pooled the data across the races and included a dichotomous variable for race indicated that the latter variable was not statistically significant.
by a young man to enlist in the military service. The analysis confirmed many intuitive answers to the question of who served, including the following: (1) young men with health problems and/or dependents were less likely to serve and (2) veterans were less likely to come from the ranks of both the least and the most capable young men than from the group with average educational achievement and mental ability.

Importantly, the findings also demonstrate that, while socioeconomic background obviously indirectly influenced who served (i.e., through measured mental ability and educational attainment), it exercised no independent direct effect once these factors were taken into account. Equally important is the finding that there was no significant racial difference in the likelihood of serving in the armed forces during the Vietnam era. Finally, the results indicate regional/racial differences in the probability of entering the armed forces that may be interpreted as evidence that the military was used as an avenue of escape from racial discrimination in the civilian labor market even during the Vietnam conflict.

The second objective of the study was to examine the effects of being a veteran on civilian labor market experiences. In order to consider a broad range of such experiences we performed regression analyses of hourly earnings, occupational status and unemployment during 1971. The regressions were designed to isolate those specific characteristics of veterans that were hypothesized to affect labor market achievements, while simultaneously controlling for other determinants of those achievements.

When earnings or status is the criterion, young white veterans were found to have paid a substantial cost for their military service in terms of foregone civilian work experience. That is, the labor market apparently did not evaluate time in the armed forces as equivalent to time in civilian work in terms of producing human capital. The exceptions to this generalization were the minorities of young white veterans whose military and subsequent civilian jobs were in the same occupational group and those who took advantage of the G.I. Bill to return to school. For young blacks the interpretation of the results is less straightforward. None of the variables identifying veterans attain statistical significance at conventional levels. However, the estimated earnings (but not status) payoff to each year on active military duty exceeded the payoff to each year of civilian work experience prior to service. For neither race group do the results provide clear support for the hypothesis of a significant carryover of military training into civilian jobs.

The most succinct summary of the results of analyzing unemployment among young men is that while soon after their discharge veterans evidently experience significantly more joblessness than their nonveteran counterparts, this disadvantage disappears with time. That is, reacclimation to the civilian labor market over time appears to be the "solution" to the unemployment "problem" of veterans.
Analysis of veterans' perceptions of the effect of military service on their civilian careers revealed rather more positive attitudes than would be suggested by the foregoing analysis of veteran/nonveteran differences in labor market achievements. More than half of the employed veterans reported that the armed forces experience had helped their careers. While we found no objective evidence to support it, this positive attitude was relatively more common among those who had received training while in the military service. Some of this dissonance may be attributable to ambiguity in the meaning of "career" and/or to a longer time horizon associated with the subjective evaluation than with our evaluation based on 1971 cross-sectional analyses. Furthermore, some consistency is evident. First, the results indicated that veterans who reported that military service was a detriment to their careers had significantly lower occupational status (Appendix Table 6A.8). Also, reports of negative effects declined with the length of time since leaving the armed forces, and this is consistent with the finding that (some) labor market disadvantages of veterans disappear with time. Finally, combining the analyses of objective and subjective assessments of the impact of military service leads us to conclude that there may have been a slightly greater payoff to the young black veterans of the Vietnam era than to their white counterparts.
REFERENCES


U.S. Senate, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Readjustment Education and Employment of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. 92nd. Congress. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, 1971.


