

**Marching Upward:**  
**The Role of the Military in Social Stratification and Mobility in American Society**

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(Abstract)

This study addresses the extent to which participation in the military affects subsequent status attainment and mobility in America. The purpose of this research was to conduct a comprehensive examination of existing empirical research resulting in a synthesis of findings and establishing a concise summary of the state of the literature on this topic.

The study is limited to the examination of existing research on male veterans in the years between 1950 and the present. Findings from sixty-four articles and seven books are presented. The background characteristics of servicemen, the promotion and retention of servicemen, and the post-service earnings and education of servicemen, in the era of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the All-Volunteer Force are discussed. When possible, comparisons are made between servicemen and their civilian counterparts, as well as between Anglos and African Americans.

Findings indicate that men serving in the military prior to Vietnam were from somewhat higher socio-economic and educational backgrounds. The background characteristics of Anglo veterans of Vietnam and the AVF were homogenous to their civilian counterparts. Black veterans of the period from the war in Vietnam through the present have slightly higher levels of education and income prior to service as compared to their civilian counterparts.

Research on promotion, retention, and military occupational assignments demonstrate that blacks are more likely to enlist and re-enlist than are Anglos. Promotions are currently achieved at approximately the same rate regardless of race. However, throughout the period examined, blacks are more likely to be trained in military occupational specialties considered to be less transferable to the civilian workforce.

Findings on post-service attainment are limited to the examination of income, earnings, and education. Military service resulted in higher levels of income, earnings, and education for all veterans serving since 1950, with the notable exception of Anglo Vietnam veterans. In other words, as compared to their civilian counterparts, veterans had significantly higher incomes, earnings, and educational levels post-service. Explanations for the association between military service and social mobility, including fluctuations in enlistment standards and educational benefits during the period under investigation, are presented.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research is to examine the influence of military participation on social stratification and mobility in the United States. The question motivating this research is: What effect does military service have on social class attainment and mobility of Anglos and African Americans in the United States? Examination of existing research on class-based issues including income, earnings, and educational attainment will be conducted. This research will focus exclusively on whites and blacks who are, or previously have been, full-time members of the U.S. military including the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. While issues of gender stratification as well as concerns over treatment of gays and lesbians in the military are important, the current research will be limited to the examination of racial/ethnic stratification among men in the United States.

Most individuals are aware that social inequality exists in the United States. However, many, lacking the “sociological imagination” as defined by sociologist C.Wright Mills, attribute responsibility for inequality to individuals, thus ignoring the social forces that structure one’s life experiences. Social scientists strive to explain these social forces through the study of social stratification and mobility.

Social inequality “is the condition whereby people have unequal access to valued

resources, services, and positions in society” (Kerbo, 1996:10). Social stratification refers to institutionalized inequality which forms a system of social relationships that determine who gets what, and why. Some sociologists also use the term “structured inequality” to refer to the condition in which “inequality is not random but follows a pattern, displays relative constancy and stability, and is backed by ideas that legitimize and justify it” (Heller, 1969:4).

Groupings of individuals with similar social and economic positions within a society’s stratification system make up a social class. Sociologists have long studied individual and group movement within the American class system. This body of research, called status attainment research, attempts to measure the mixture of achievement and ascriptive factors (including race, sex, or class at birth) that determine where people end up in the American class system. The current research seeks an understanding of the relationship between participation in the military (an achieved characteristic) and the social mobility of white and black men (ascribed characteristics) in the United States.

While substantial gains have been made in the later half of the twentieth century, blacks still lag behind whites in the United States on socio-economic status (SES) indicators. The most accepted SES indicators include educational attainment, income, and occupational status. In terms of educational attainment, blacks have approximately the same high school graduation rate as whites; however, the black college graduation rate is significantly lower than for whites (12% as compared to 25%)(Parillo, 1994).

This relatively low educational attainment has serious consequences for blacks in terms



of subsequent income and occupational attainment. Education has consistently been positively correlated with income and occupational prestige in the social stratification literature.

Historically, black family income has been significantly lower than white family income. In 1990, the median black family income was \$21,423 as compared to a median income of \$36,915 for white families. The black poverty rate has consistently remained about three times that of the white rate (Parillo, 1997).

The occupational distribution of a racial/ethnic group serves as a measure of the group's relative status. On an individual level, one's occupation often serves as a basis for status and prestige. Measures of black representation in managerial, professional, technical, and white collar occupations have shown significant gains in the last 40 years, but differences between blacks and whites remain. According to the 1990 Census Data, blacks are more likely to be employed as operators, fabricators, and laborers, while whites are most likely to be employed in more prestigious and more highly compensated managerial and professional occupations.

The social mobility of a group refers to the group's movement, either up or down, in the occupational structure. The ranking of occupations are based on studies of occupational prestige. Intergenerational mobility studies compare the occupational ranking of parents to their offspring to determine whether upward or downward mobility has occurred. Large studies (including data on men only) have shown that upward intergenerational mobility existed in the 1960s and 1970s for the general population in the United States (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Featherman and Hauser, 1978). In other

words, for the general population, sons' occupations tended to be higher ranked than their fathers' occupations. This was especially true when excluding the uppermost and lowest social classes in which occupational inheritance is highest. In the upper and lower classes, sons' occupations tended to be of the same rank as their fathers' occupations.

While the general population enjoyed more upward than downward intergenerational mobility throughout the 1960s and 1970s, black mobility patterns were somewhat divergent. Research by Featherman and Hauser (1978) finds that the American class system is much more rigid for blacks. Black sons are less likely to exceed the occupational ranking of their fathers than sons in the general population. Occupational inheritance in the black upper class was significantly lower for blacks than for the general population, while occupational inheritance in the lowest occupations was higher for blacks. In other words, upper class black fathers' were not able to transfer their advantage to their sons. As Kerbo (1996) states, "no matter what the father's occupation, a majority of blacks sons ended up in lower manual or unskilled blue-collar work" (pg. 339). Blacks, as compared to whites, were less likely to enjoy an accumulated advantage intergenerationally. This situation is thought to have improved somewhat in the late 1970s and 1980s giving rise to a small, but relatively stable black middle class. However, while blacks have benefitted from increased intergenerational mobility in recent decades, upward social class movement remains lower than for the general population, further perpetuating racial inequality (Kerbo, 1996).

Given existing racial inequalities, the current research seeks to uncover the

differential effects of participation in the military on black and white men in the latter half of the twentieth century. Existing research will be used to examine the relationship between race, attainment and mobility, and military participation. The choice of the military as an occupation related to issues of stratification and race is discussed in the following section.

### The Military as a Career Contingency

Traditionally, efforts to predict an individual's status attainment in the social stratification system have focused on a "life-cycle model." This model uses background characteristics of males, including both the socioeconomic position of the family of origin as well as men's educational attainment, to predict socioeconomic status. Common indicators of socioeconomic status (SES) include income, earnings, wealth, education, and occupation.

A career contingency is thought to significantly affect the processes through which individuals attain a specific socio-economic status. In essence, a career contingency is social mobility (either upward or downward) not predictable based on background characteristics of the individual. Therefore, a career contingency is one which facilitates mobility based on participation in that career (Browning, Lopreato, and Poston, 1973).

The extent to which participation in a specific career is based on background

characteristics is necessarily important. If individuals with specific background or personal characteristics are more likely to participate in the military, either because of screening standards or self-selection, the military serves as a contingency differentially affecting specific segments of the population. One consequence of differential participation is the resulting effect on the subsequent attainment and mobility of individuals either lacking or possessing certain qualities. If military participation facilitates mobility, those individuals with specific characteristics predisposing them to enlist and be admitted into the military (for example, physical fitness, average intelligence, etc.) benefit from military participation, while those individuals lacking the necessary characteristics are excluded from the military and denied premiums to upward mobility. Uncovering the degree to which the military as a career contingency affects the social mobility and attainment of blacks and whites in our society, as well as possible reasons for the differential mobility, is the subject of this investigation.

### The Military in Modern American Society

The military is one of the largest and most influential organizations in the U.S. The military is a “total institution” and for the most part distinct from the larger society. Recruits are physically and psychologically detached from their own backgrounds and from society overall. Their needs are met, identities formed, and values instilled, all within the confines of a military post. Few outside influences are allowed, with the exception of a weekly phone call and daily mail. In modern recruit training units,

televisions are not seen, radios are not heard, and all daily activities are military in nature. Even church services require a marching formation and strict adherence to rules of silence. Class affiliations are supposedly irrelevant in a training cycle where personal possessions are completely identical. One's socially constructed "race" is often evident, although it supposedly holds no apparent value in an arena where achievement rather than ascription is stressed. In effect, individuals are "resocialized" with new norms and values seen as appropriate for their role as a member of the military.

The military has a racial history somewhat unique from other American institutions. Racial segregation in the military was abolished in 1948 by President Truman, several years before segregated schooling was outlawed. The military became the nation's first large-scale social experiment in integration (Moskos and Butler, 1996). Many individuals first experienced interactions with other races in this organization. Many, too, left the military and returned to a civilian world that was much less integrated. In general, research finds that the military has been more successful in achieving the goals of integration and equal opportunity than has civilian society. Many theories of why this is true have been posited, including theories of assimilation (Newman, 1973), "contact" theories (Allport, 1954), in-group/out-group effects (Coser, 1956), and theories about compensatory action versus affirmative action (Lipset, 1991). However, what is lacking is a clear description of the evidence pointing to the success of the military in facilitating the social mobility of its members once their service has ended.

The military is a somewhat unique American organization due to the increased opportunities for the acquisition of skills and education offered to military personnel and veterans. The G.I. Bill is one example of a program for military and ex-military personnel that provides educational incentives. This program alone has been credited with providing increased social mobility for many individuals in the United States (Moskos and Butler, 1996). Any investigation of social stratification and the military would necessarily need to address the usefulness, as well as the possible selectivity, of programs such as these in order to more clearly assess the impact of military benefits on social mobility.

### Description of Chapters

Chapter one will provide a brief description of the methods employed for conducting a critical review of the literature. In chapter two, a brief historical discussion of the soldier in society will give important background to the issues at hand. The third chapter will describe the social backgrounds of servicemen from WWII through the present. Existing research on the social origins of military personnel from 1945 through 1997 will be included. By examining the social class origins of military personnel as compared to the larger society, insight can be gained into the characteristics of those who are either benefitted or disadvantaged by service in the military. Furthermore, an awareness of soldiers' "origins" may facilitate comparisons between the achievement of whites and blacks while in the military as well as once their tour of duty has ended. The

rationale for beginning the review with post-WWII is that no systematic social or behavioral research existed on the relationship between the military and socio-economic status prior to this period.

Following the discussion of social origins in chapter three, chapter four will include a description of the patterns of promotion and retention by race as found in research on American soldiers within the relevant time periods. While social class mobility as indicated by authority and income based on military rank is ultimately important, military occupational specialties (MOS) are also uniquely important when discussing status or prestige. For example, a company officer in charge of a support unit receives the same monetary compensation as an officer in charge of a combat unit-but the status of the positions is very different. Additionally, training for certain military occupational specialties are transferrable to the civilian labor market, while others are not transferable. For instance, training in communications technology would certainly be more transferable than training in certain infantry specialties (tank driving for instance).

Chapter five will include a thorough examination of the social class characteristics of ex-military whites and blacks as compared to non-military whites and blacks in the U.S. A comparison between veterans and non-veterans will be made in terms of income, earnings, and education. The discussion will be focused on three time periods including World War II, the Korea and Vietnam eras, and the years since the advent of the all-volunteer force. This chapter will include a discussion of all existing empirical research in this area.

The sixth chapter will serve to synthesize and summarize the existing research on the effect of military service on social class attainment and mobility in the United States. Discussion will include the G.I. Bill and its influence on post-military achievement as well as research on other issues (ie. social certification, skills gained in the military . . . etc.) thought to affect post-service social class attainment and mobility. A description of the influence of military service on the social class attainment and mobility of whites and blacks in the United States in the final half of the twentieth century will be presented. By providing this synthesis, new areas for research into the interface between the civilian and the military stratification system in our society will be illuminated.

In the concluding section of chapter six, a brief discussion of the strengths and weaknesses in prior research on servicemen's post-service attainment will be included. Substantive gaps in existing research will be identified. Additionally, topics and methodologies for future research will be suggested.



## CHAPTER ONE

### DESCRIPTION OF METHODS

The current investigation requires a comprehensive literature review of existing empirical studies on the post-service attainment of those who have served in the military in the years since 1945. Synthesis of the existing research will necessarily involve interpretation and critical analysis on the part of the researcher. An inductive theoretical approach will be employed to create empirical generalizations from the diverse array of existing empirical findings.

This review includes research only on the years following World War II and is limited to research on the military in America. Additionally, only original empirical research was included. For instance, if an article or book chapter merely reiterated prior findings, only the original work was included. Publications that are not considered “scholarly” were omitted. Additionally, existing sources of quantitative data (the Census tapes for instance) were not included in this study.

Research utilized clearly defined measures of social class were included in the study. These measures include, but are not limited to: income, earnings, wealth, education, occupational prestige, and authority. Research involving statistical comparisons of these measures for veterans and non-veterans while taking into account ascribed characteristics such as age and race are most informative for the current study.

The first step in locating relevant research was to perform an exhaustive search

of all relevant library databases. Published research from 1972 forward are included in these databases. The search included:

*Article First*: an index of articles from 12,500 journals.

*Books in Print*: includes records of over 2.8 million books.

*Dissertation Abstracts Online*

*ISI Citation Databases*: includes Social Sciences Citation Index

*Social Sciences Abstracts*: an index of over 350 periodicals

*Sociological Abstracts*: includes articles published in sociology

*VTLS*: a database providing records on holdings of the Virginia

Tech library system

The initial database searches for relevant books, articles, and dissertations were conducted using keywords by “subject.” The following keywords and combinations were used: *veteran, non-veteran, race, races, racial, blacks, African Americans, black veterans, AND military service, military, income, wages, earning ability, draft, enlistment, status, attainment, “bridging” hypothesis, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, All-Volunteer Force, socioeconomic status, social differentiation, social stratification, social mobility, earnings, employment, education, training, G.I. Bill, educational incentives.*

The initial database search resulted in one hundred and forty-two article and six book titles. Upon examination, many of the titles were found to be duplications leaving

only fifty-nine publications (fifty-four articles and five books). Following the database search, the hard copies of existing research were reviewed. Books and articles available at the Virginia Tech library were accumulated, as were articles and books obtainable only through inter-library loan. The published literature was reviewed and the bibliographies of both journal articles and books were used to identify further references, including those items published prior to 1972. These “new” referenced works were then obtained and the above mentioned process was repeated, providing additional references. This process was repeated until no new references were discovered. At this point the literature included seven books and sixty-four journal articles concerning the effects of military participation on social class attainment and mobility.

All significant and relevant findings resulting from the examination of existing literature are discussed in the current work. These findings are synthesized and outlined in chapter six. Contradictory findings are included in the discussion of research. However, if inconsistent findings were found to be questionable when critically analyzed, the minority contradictions were not included in proposition form in chapter six.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SOLDIER IN SOCIETY

Structural provisions for the soldier in society have been historically apparent. These provisions have never been arbitrary, but rather purposeful arrangements based on the degree of power the military possessed at any given time or in any particular society. One glaring example exists within the Indian caste system where the warrior caste (Kshatriyas) and the priests (Brahmans) are at the top of this highly rigid hierarchy. In this system, membership in the warrior caste is ascribed and the caste divisions are clear and well defined (Kerbo, 1996).

Military participation in the United States is currently voluntary and status within the organization is largely achieved, providing an opportunity for individual attainment and mobility both within the military and as a member of the military in the larger social stratification system. A brief history of the origins and development of the military profession in the United States from the American Revolution through the 1990s will give important background to the later discussion of soldiers' attainment and mobility in the contemporary United States.

As the American military emerged as a major social institution, the military has become increasingly a "profession." Occupations termed "professions" are highly prestigious and the individuals who practice these professions are accorded deference. As the scope of military expertise has broadened and technological skill has become increasingly necessary, military officers have become professionals fitting the definition

put forth by Huntington (1957). On the other hand, Huntington and others do not consider enlisted personnel to be professionals.

The existence of military professionalism is a fairly recent event. "Prior to 1800 there was no such thing as a professional officer corps. In 1900 such bodies existed in virtually all major countries" (Huntington, 1957 as cited in Coates and Pelegrin, 1965). Prior to the Industrial Revolution, Western European armies were organized on the basis of feudalism. The officer-enlisted differentiation rested on the aristocrat-peasant distinction. Officers were the noblemen of the era who simultaneously filled the positions of warrior, officer, and aristocrat.

With the advent of firearms and increasing technical specialization came the career staff officers and the career soldiers and sailors. "War was no longer an affair for amateurs." (Coates and Pelegrin, 1965). With the realization that military leadership was not a natural ability based on birth right or genius, the military began to train military officers.

The first steps toward a professional American military began in the Revolutionary War. General Washington's Continental Army received training from the Prussian trained Baron Von Steuben as well as Lafayette, Kosciusko, and Pulaski, all products of European military training. While Washington's efforts to establish a permanent military for the new nation were thwarted, an authorization for the establishment of a small "Corps of Engineers" at West Point, New York, was given in 1802. Later these West Point cadets were to lead a group of federally-controlled volunteers in the Mexican War of the late 1840s, marking the emergence of military

professionalism in America (Coates and Pelegrin, 1965).

West Pointers and Military Academy graduates commanded each of the 60 major battles of the American Civil War. Following the Civil War, the officer corps became increasingly separate from the larger society. According to Huntington (1957, p.157):

The isolation of the military was a prerequisite to professionalization, and peace was a prerequisite to isolation. Paradoxically, the United States could only create a professional military force when it was lacking any immediate use for such force. The dark ages of military political influence were the golden ages of military professionalism.

The military, once professionalized, grew rapidly to include both highly skilled commissioned officers and enlisted men. Both the integration of the military following WWII and the end of conscription in 1972, led to important consequences for both whites and blacks.

### Blacks in the U.S. Military

The history of the American military is a lesson in the parallel history of classism and racism in the United States. As Foner (1974) so appropriately stated: "The armed forces, which have always been a microcosm of American society, have provided a

faithful reflection of the larger society.” Although blacks have participated in all the nation’s wars, they suffered discrimination and racism throughout. Ironically, blacks have experienced exclusion from the military in times of peace and acceptance during times of conflict (Binkin, Eitelberg, Schexnider, and Smith, 1984).

According to Greene (1951), blacks were first used in defense of this country in 1619 when they helped defend against Indian attacks in Virginia. Soon after, colonial leaders, fearing insurrections by armed black freedmen and slaves, developed policies aimed at the exclusion of blacks from military service (Foner, 1974). Freedmen were relegated to positions requiring no arms, such as laborers and drummers.

As in later times, when military manpower was needed in the Revolutionary War, blacks were allowed to participate even while the fear of arming black slaves and freedmen continued unabated. Slaveholders strongly objected to recruitment policies which offered slaves an opportunity for freedom through service in the Colonial militia (Binkin, et al., 1982). Blacks participated in almost every conflict and by the end of the war approximately 5,000 had served the American forces. While fears in the South prevented enlistments of blacks, Northern state restrictions were relaxed and many blacks served as substitute draftees for white colonists (Foner, 1974). An estimated 1,000 blacks enlisted with the British Forces, most coming from the South (Quarles, 1959), Although some blacks achieved freedom through service in the Revolutionary War, overall their contributions were quickly forgotten after the war. The policies of the new nation prevented blacks from enlisting in the regular armed forces and militias and while some blacks served in the War of 1812, it was not until the early 1860s that

blacks were again allowed to bear arms.

Soon after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, the Conscription Act allowed a draftee to hire a substitute or purchase release from military service for \$300. Partly as a result, working class men who were unable to “buy” their way out of military service began to feel resentment and hostility. They feared that as a result of their being drafted, the freed black slaves would be able to migrate to the North and fill their vacated jobs. This coupled with the view that slavery, and therefore blacks, were the causes of the war and their subsequent hardships, precipitated the New York City riots and others throughout the East and Midwest (Lee, 1966).

Blacks were also drafted through the Conscription Act of 1863. It is estimated that approximately 186,000 black combat troopers and another 200,000 blacks in service units participated in the Union Army. Blacks made up approximately 25% of the Union Navy (Young, 1982).

Following the Civil War, Congress authorized the retention of only four segregated black regiments, two cavalry and two infantry. These “Buffalo soldiers” participated in a number of skirmishes with the Indians while being led by white officers. The post-Civil War Army held a degree of status for blacks as well as the basic necessities of life in a country who’s civilian climate held few opportunities for blacks. Therefore, there were seldom any vacancies in the four all-black regiments which comprised about ten percent of the total Army strength (Foner, 1974).

With the outbreak of World War I, the Selective Service draft sought to ensure that the racial makeup of the general population was reflected in the racial makeup of



the draftees. At this time, blacks were approximately 11% of the population and were, therefore, also about 11% of the draftees. While many black leaders saw black military service as a stepping stone to greater equality, most black soldiers were draftees and enlistments were limited. Most were assigned to peripheral units in supply crews and labor crews. While about 200,000 black soldiers were stationed in France, 80% were laborers in supply units. Overall, approximately 350,000 blacks served in the war with only very few serving in combat forces. Importantly, a training program for black officers was first established during this First World War. However, by the end of the war, black officers still comprised less than 1% of the total officer corps (Lee, 1966).

The Marines accepted no blacks during WWI, however the Navy allowed black enlistment, though the numbers never surpassed 1% of the total naval forces. The Navy, like the Army, maintained segregation of blacks from whites. Most blacks in the Navy worked in the mess hall and in other menial occupations (Stillman, 1968).

Following WWI and just prior to WWII, black leaders became increasingly vocal concerning the racial conditions in the armed forces. The 1940 Selective Training and Service Act was, in large part, a response to the issue of racial inequality in the military. This act stated that discrimination on the basis of race or color would not be allowed in the selection of draftees and volunteers. While the goal of a 10% black representation in the military was sought by the War Department, integration was seen as out of the question. American life was segregated, and so must be the military (Lee, 1966).

In WWII, blacks again served disproportionately in labor and service duties. The AGCT or Army intelligence test was used to justify the channeling of blacks into these

less prestigious military units. The AGCT was designed to illustrate a potential soldier's ability to be trained. A long history of inferior education resulted in blacks performing considerable lower on the AGCT than white soldiers. Therefore, the concentration of lower scoring blacks into all-black segregated units, set these units up for failure. The white officers in charge on these all-black units were often Southerners and evidence shows that racism among these officers was rampant (MacGregor, 1981).

The Army never reached its quota of 10% black during WWII. Rather, the peak was 8.7% in 1944. Approximately 80% of all black soldiers were placed in service branches, while only 40% of white males worked in these areas. Additionally, it is estimated that blacks made up 4% of the Navy and 2.5% of all Marines. While it is true that blacks were segregated and channeled into service occupations, it is also true that WWII saw an overall increase in black participation in other service areas. For the first time, blacks served as commissioned officers in the Navy. For the first time, blacks were admitted into the Air Force and flew as pilots. While black achievement was largely limited by job exclusion, it is apparent that WWII brought with it for the first time some limited recognition of the black servicemen's contribution to their country (Foner, 1974).

Despite allegations of racial discrimination, many blacks in the Army wanted to remain in the military following WWII, while whites were anxious to be discharged. It is thought that the injustices, though many, were less severe than in the civilian world. The idea that "serving one's country" through military service substantiated a claim of full citizenship pervaded the black population. Having fought a war against fascism, it

was assumed that in a democratic government the racist policies of the military would be eventually found unacceptable. The options for a black civilian were so limited that a military career seemed favorable in comparison. As Samuel Stouffer noted in *The American Soldier* (pg. 248):

...perhaps the most compelling indication that Negroes believed that life in the Army was not so bad for colored men in comparison with civilian life lies in the statistics of volunteer enlistments at the end of the war. In the first six months after the war's close, over 17% of the men who signed up voluntarily were Negroes, although Negroes constituted under 11% of the male population 18 to 37.

In 1948, Harry S. Truman issued an executive order promising "equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin." He established the Fahy Committee to work with the secretary of defense and the service secretaries to implement this policy (Binkin et al., 1982). While this directive did not specifically promise integration, in essence it resulted in the integration of all branches of the armed forces. The Army was the last branch of the service to fully comply, doing so in 1950.

Importantly, the military is thought by some to have achieved full integration of racial and ethnic minorities. It is perhaps the only organization in our country today in which whites are routinely subordinate to blacks (Moskos and Butler, 1996). Research also points to voluntary integration of soldiers in their off-duty hours (Leone in Moskos

and Butler, 1996). Additionally, residential segregation indexes are consistently lower in areas with a military base (Farley and Frey, 1994).

The "contact hypothesis" (Allport, 1954) predicts that as people from various racial and ethnic groups are exposed to and interact with each other as status equals, stereotypes will diminish, and this will lead to lessened prejudice. The reduction of biased attitudes may lessen discriminatory behavior facilitating equality of opportunity. Several empirical tests of the contact hypothesis have supported Allport's explanation of the effect of intergroup contact on racial attitudes (see especially, Powers and Ellison, 1995; Sigelman and Welch, 1993; and Ray, 1983). As will be described, blacks have been most successful in the military. In no other modern-day organization are blacks as likely to experience as high a degree of social mobility, prestige, income, authority, education, or skills as in the US military (Moskos and Butler, 1996).

According to Moskos and Butler (1996), desegregation in the military first took the form of "organizational integration" which was meant to end formal racial discrimination. It was not until the 1960s that "leadership integration" was achieved and blacks were given equal access to positions of authority in the military.

Although the military underwent desegregation, civilian institutions were slower to change. Servicemen experienced an array of conflicts as they experienced integration within the military and total segregation beyond the post. It has been said that the Korean conflict was perhaps the first encounter many white servicemen had with racial integration. While civilian society was slow to change, within a few years of military desegregation civilian institutions also underwent desegregation. The Brown vs. Board

of Education decision of the Supreme Court which ended “separate but equal” in education in 1954 was linked to military integration in a surprising way. Kenneth Clark used the military experience to support his writings advocating school desegregation. His arguments were used to reach the decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education* (Binkin et al., 1984).

In the late 1960s, racial tensions ran high in the United States, and in the military during the years of the Vietnam war. Accusations of racial discrimination in the military were widespread. It was widely, but wrongly, believed that blacks were dying in combat at a higher rate than whites. While accusations such as these were largely false, it was true that only “three in a hundred Army officers were black” (Moskos and Butler, 1996). The obvious dearth of black leaders almost 25 years after integration was a legitimate source of contention.

The draft ended in 1973 and the U.S. military became an all-volunteer force (AVF). With the advent of the AVF came concerns over the “representativeness” of the military. It was and is an assumption of many different factions that to function effectively the military must proportionately reflect the population. The matter of “representativeness” will be revisited later in this work, but some cursory notes are in order.

Within a few years after the draft was ended, it was found that not only had black enlistment grown dramatically, but also that enlistees in general were everything but educated, middle-class whites. Seeing this as a problem, the military turned into a competitor in the labor market seeking to attract “Economic Man” rather than relying on

the traditional citizen-soldier model (Moskos and Butler, 1996).

In the 1980s, enlistment bonuses were replaced with post-service educational benefits such as the Montgomery GI Bill. It is the view of Moskos and Butler (1996) that the “greatest avenue of equal opportunity in American society may be the GI Bill benefits...” (pg. 34). Both black and white soldiers took advantage of the benefits at a rate close to 80% (Moskos and Butler, 1996).

By the early 1990s, racial integration of both the military organization and the military leadership was complete. Colin L. Powell, a black serviceman, was named chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a leading researcher on race relations, Edwin Dorn, became the undersecretary of defense. It has been asserted that only in the present day military are whites routinely subordinate to blacks (Moskos and Butler, 1996).

This brief history of blacks in the military is meant to set the stage for the coming chapters. As I have discussed, blacks have participated in the military throughout the history of this nation. As is often the case with other servicemen, their contributions have gone unrecognized or have been forgotten in times of peace. The integration of the armed forces in the late 1940s resulted in increased opportunity for achievement for blacks in the military. Another historical milestone occurred with the ending of conscription in the early 1970s. The consequences of an all-volunteer force have been the subject of much debate as was the end of segregation in the late 1940s. The following chapters will describe the existing research into the military as an arena for social mobility and achievement. In the next chapter, the social class origins of both

black and white servicemen during conscription following WWII and in the era of the all-volunteer force will be examined.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SOCIAL ORIGINS OF SOLDIERS

#### CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The social composition of the military has long been a source of research and debate. Most politicians and policymakers have expressed the opinion that the military should reflect the social composition of the overall society especially in terms of race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, and education. The socially representative military has its roots in the idea of national democracy. Many believe that those who enjoy the benefits of citizenship should sacrifice for these rights and that no social group should be expected to bear a disproportionate amount of the burden to uphold democracy and freedom. Alternatively, no social group should be allowed to enjoy the benefits of a democratic society without due sacrifice on the part of their group. These assumptions lie at the heart of the argument for maintaining a representative military force.

The aim of this chapter is to characterize the existing data on the social origins of those who participated in the military both before and after the commencement of the all-volunteer force. As mentioned earlier, an investigation of the military and its association with social stratification would be lacking without the necessary information on the social origins of military personnel. In order to assess the impact of military



service on social status and mobility, we must first consider the social backgrounds of those who serve in the military as compared to those who do not. To the extent that this is possible, we can gain insight into the social mobility of both black and white veterans following discharge while taking self-selectivity into account.

While little research exists in the area of social origins of veterans, what does exist is largely quantitative and drawn from existing surveys. The Department of Defense does not consistently collect this type of demographic information from its personnel leading us to depend on existing empirical research by social scientists for insight into this area. Examination of existing research will involve discussion based on two time periods including WWII through 1972 and 1973 through the present. The discussion will include further subdivision of this literature into the indicators used to investigate social origins including educational attainment, socio-economic background, and race.

## **SOCIAL ORIGINS OF VETERANS FROM WWII THROUGH THE VIETNAM ERA**

### *Educational Attainment*

Only two studies address the issue of educational attainment of veterans during the period extending from WWII through the Vietnam era. Berryman's (1988) work

addresses both education and socio-economic background throughout the period under investigation. Fligstein (1976) also empirically investigated veteran's education and socio-economic attainment prior to enlistment using essentially the same data source as Berryman. The following discussion illustrates the findings of these studies.

Berryman's (1988) "Images and Realities: The Social Composition of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Enlisted Forces" is an important contribution towards describing the pre-service educational attainment of servicemen in the years from WWII through the Vietnam Era. Berryman includes information on World War II, the Korean War, the Korean-Vietnam interim, and the Vietnam War. Using the Current Population Survey in addition to the 1973 Occupational Changes in a Generation Survey to obtain a sample of 24,984, she compiled the data on veterans' and non-veterans' pre-service educational attainment presented in table one below (Berryman, 1988, pg.23).

TABLE ONE								
YEARS OF EDUCATION PRIOR TO SERVICE FOR VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS BY MILITARY PERIOD								
	WW II		Korean War		Korean-Vietnam Interim		Vietnam	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Veterans</b>	11.5	3.4	12.5	3.1	12.7	2.9	12.6	2.4
<b>Non- Veterans</b>	9.5	4.2	10.4	4.1	11.6	3.8	12.6	3.5
<b>SOURCE: Berryman, 1988 n=24,984</b>								

As illustrated above, veterans from approximately 1945 to 1972 had education identical to, or greater than, that of non-veterans (Berryman, 1988). The mean years of education completed for veterans of WWII was 11.5, compared to 9.5 for non-veterans. Veterans of the Korean War had completed an average of 12.5 years of schooling with non-veterans completing only 10.4 on the average. In the years between Korea and Vietnam, veterans averaged 12.7 years of schooling, while non-veterans somewhat closed the gap with 11.6 average years. Respondents' education during the years of the Vietnam War was more homogenous than in previous eras. Both veterans and non-veterans reported a mean of 12.6 years of schooling.

In another study from the 1973 "Occupational Changes in a Generation" survey, Fligstein reached somewhat similar conclusions with a subsample of 25,064. He found that WWII veterans tended to have approximately 11 years of schooling, but no high school diploma. However, additional schooling beyond the high school level somewhat decreased one's probability of serving. In essence, he found that "men with more than seven years of schooling but less than a college degree served most frequently" (Fligstein, pg. 304). The period of the Korean War was largely the same as the previous period. Those possessing no education beyond high school were most likely to serve. It was during this period that college deferments came into existence, and those with a college degree were least likely to serve in the military (Fligstein, 1976). In the period between Korea and Vietnam it was found that "high school graduates were most likely to serve, followed by those with nine to eleven years of education and those who attended some college but did not complete a degree" (Fligstein, 1976). In the

Vietnam War, high school graduates were the most likely to serve, while college graduates and those with some college were less likely to serve.

An important event was the advent of college deferments during the Korean War period. While high school diplomas became increasingly common in the military, college degrees were no more common immediately prior to the Vietnam era than in the WWII era largely due to college deferments. Moskos (in Fligstein, 1976) has asserted that service in the military was related to education in that those at the top received deferments and those at the bottom were unable to pass the qualifying exams for military service. Therefore, it would be expected that those who served in the military during this period were from the middle ranks educationally having obtained high school diplomas, but no college degree.

### *Socio-economic Background*

Family income has been associated with military service in several studies. Researchers consistently find that veteran's came from families with higher incomes than non-veterans throughout the period from WWII through the Vietnam War (Berryman, 1988; Gilroy, Phillips, and Blair, 1990; Fligstein, 1976; Binkin, Eitelberg, Schexnider, and Smith, 1982; Bachman, Blair, and Segal, 1977).

TABLE TWO									
SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS PRIOR TO SERVICE BY MILITARY PERIOD									
Characteristics	Military Status	WW II		Korean War		Korean-Vietnam Interim		Vietnam	
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Annual Family Income	Veterans	3359	3283	4996	3746	6569	4504	8432	4857
	Non-Veterans	2796	3274	4119	3871	5624	4503	8215	5400
Father's Occupation	Veterans	29	21	30	21	33	22	35	23
	Non-Veterans	23	19	26	21	29	22	36	24
Father's Education	Veterans	7.6	3.9	8.3	3.7	9.3	3.7	10.2	3.5
	Non-Veterans	6.5	4.0	7.3	4.3	8.3	4.2	10.0	4.1
Mother's Education	Veterans	8.2	3.7	9.1	3.5	10.0	3.1	10.8	2.9
	Non-Veterans	6.9	4.0	8.1	4.0	9.0	3.8	10.4	3.5

SOURCE: Binkin, et al., 1982 n=12,437

Binkin, et al., (1982) used Manpower Defense Data from 1979 to compile the most complete existing representation of the socio-economic status of veterans and non-veterans in the periods represented in table two. Referring to table two, veterans had higher socio-economic status than non-veterans in each period of service as indicated by measures of family income, father's education, and mother's education. Mean annual family income for WWII veterans was over \$500 higher than for non-vets. During the Korean War period this rose to a differential of over \$800 and remained over \$800 for the Korea-Vietnam interim. This gap began closing during the period of the Vietnam War when only a \$200 differential existed between veterans and non-veterans. It bears noting than Berryman and other researchers who consistently reported these

figures chose to use “mean” income rather than “median” income in their analysis.

While it is possible that the results may be skewed by outlying incomes, the non-veteran means reported by Berryman (1988) are consistent with median incomes reported for the overall population in the same time periods (U.S. Census, 1995).

In the Berryman (1988) study mothers’ and fathers’ educational levels were found to be positively associated with military service. In each of the periods illustrated in table two, both the mothers’ and the fathers’ educational levels were somewhat higher for veterans. However, while in the years prior to the Vietnam War the differential was one year of education, the differential between Vietnam veterans and non-veterans on measures of parents’ education was only slightly higher for veterans.

Fathers’ occupation, as indicated by the Duncan SEI, was not found to be a significant predictor of military service in the existing research. However, it is interesting to note that fathers’ SEI as illustrated in table two, was consistently higher for veterans until the Vietnam War period. However, based on the consistently high measures of standard deviation, we cannot be sure how important this shift may be.

It can be concluded that in each period from WWII through the Vietnam War, veterans were likely to be of a somewhat higher socio-economic status than were non-veterans as indicated by fathers’ education, mothers’ education. and individuals’ education. However, it is apparent that in the final years of the draft, veterans and non-veterans were almost indistinguishable in terms of socio-economic background. Interestingly, the average incomes of veterans, while slightly higher than non-veterans, were not incomes associated with a “higher” class status. Rather, the family status of

veterans was at best middle class.

While Davis and Dolbeare (1968) have asserted that the poor were over represented during the draft era, this is unlikely given the small but consistent body of existing empirical research. They asserted that those with low incomes *who were qualified for service* were more likely to be drafted than those of higher incomes and similar qualifications. However, it should be remembered that due to the mental and physical requirements for service, not all who were drafted were admitted to the military. It is true, however, that with the advent of college deferments, fewer college educated individuals were drafted. To the extent that the measures of socio-economic status are associated with college attendance it could be possible that those unable to afford college, but for whom college was an option physically and intellectually, found themselves in the military due to their ability to pass entrance requirements and their lack of ability to be deferred.

### *Racial Composition*

Research on the racial composition of the military in the period from WWII through the Korea-Vietnam interim has focused almost exclusively on black representation in the military (Berryman, 1988 ; Moskos, 1989; Fligstein, 1976; Armor, 1996; Gorman and Thomas, 1993). Existing research on the percentage black in the military is consistent due to the standardized nature of demographic data. As a frame of

reference, the percentage black in the population during the same periods is included in table three.

TABLE THREE					
PERCENTAGE BLACK OF VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS BY MILITARY PERIOD					
	Military Status	WW II	Korean War	Korean-Vietnam Interim	Vietnam
Percent Black	Veterans	6.9	7.2	5.0	8.5
	Non-Veterans	13.5	14.6	12.6	11.3

SOURCE: Department of Defense Manpower Data

As table three illustrates, the percentage black in the military was nearly stable during WWII and the Korean War, but decreased somewhat during the peacetime interim between Korea and Vietnam.

In examining the racial composition of Vietnam War veterans, blacks were more nearly proportionately represented than in any earlier period. The percent black in the military was approximately 8.5%, while the percentage black in the general population stood at 11.3%. Thus, contrary to popular belief, blacks were not over represented in the military in the Vietnam War period. (A discussion of combat-related military assignments and death rates of blacks in Vietnam will be included in Chapter Four.)



## **Concluding Remarks**

Research on the social origins of draftees since WWII has illustrated several points. Those who served in the military were very much like their civilian counterparts with regard to education, family income, and fathers' educational levels. In terms of education, neither WWII veterans nor their civilian counterparts had a mean number of years of education of twelve or over. During the Korean war and the peacetime period preceding the war in Vietnam, veterans averaged over twelve years of education while non-veterans averaged less than twelve. This is significant because over twelve years of education suggests that the individual completed high school prior to enlistment. In the Vietnam war, veterans and civilians had identical mean years of education (12.6).

The socio-economic status of veterans was slightly higher as compared to non-veterans in all periods beginning with WWII and ending with Vietnam as indicated by income in the family of origin, fathers' occupation and education, and mothers' education. However, this gap decreased in the Vietnam era when these measures became almost identical for veterans and non-veterans.

Further conclusions concerning the socio-economic status of military personnel as compared to the civilian population are difficult to reach due to gaps in the existing research literature. For instance, the percentage of college deferments given by social class or race is unknown. Therefore, the extent to which class status was associated with college enrollment and the effect this had on social class representation in the

military is not surmisable. Additionally, we do not have information comparing those who voluntarily enlisted to those who were drafted. It can, however, be asserted that blacks were somewhat under-represented during the draft years. The next section will investigate the same socio-economic issues in the period of the all-volunteer force.

## **SOCIAL ORIGINS OF VETERANS FROM THE ADVENT OF THE AVF TO THE PRESENT**

### *Educational Attainment*

In the years since the advent of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), the educational attainment of servicemen has fluctuated. Moskos (1989) points out that “during the 1970s entrants with a high school diploma accounted for slightly over half of all recruits” (pg.35). However, by the mid-1980s, approximately 75% of enlistees were high school graduates. Moskos (1989) also points out that enlistees were decreasingly likely to have obtained a college degree in the years after the advent of the AVF. According to his research, only one in twenty enlistees in the early eighties had “some college”; in comparison, in the ten years before the end of the draft more than one in five servicemen had attended some college.

Table four presents a compilation of data from Binkin et al. (1982), Moskos (1989), and Gilroy, Phillips, and Blair (1990) to clarify the trends in educational

attainment among enlistee.

TABLE FOUR							
PERCENTAGE OF NEW RECRUITS WITH A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA BY RACE							
Fiscal Year							
	1972	1974	1976	1978	1980	1985	1990
White	65	57	69	74	66	88	89
Black	68	61	67	80	75	96	96

**SOURCE: Binkin et al, 1982; Moskos, 1989; Gilroy et al, 1990**

Notably, the percentage of high school graduates is higher among black enlistees than among white enlistees. One explanation for this phenomenon has been put forth by Binkin et al.(1982). According to their findings, black high school dropouts who apply are less likely than white dropouts to pass the entrance exams for admission to the military. Therefore, black recruits are disproportionately high school graduates. Moskos (1989) has stated that while the black recruits are representative of the black American population, white recruits are not. He states “In the volunteer army you are recruiting the best of the blacks and the worst of the whites”. (Moskos, 1989, pg. 79).

Gilroy, Phillips, and Blair (1990) also point out that the percent of accessions holding high school diplomas has remained consistently at 91% in the years 1984 through 1987. However, differences exist among branches of the service in terms of education. For instance, in 1979, while 74% of the overall labor market were high school grads, 96% of the Air Force held diplomas. On the other end, only 61% of Army enlistees were high school graduates. Overall, 75% of the Armed Forces were

graduates, one percentage point above the labor market in the U.S.

Binkin et al. (1982) quote Moskos (1980) as saying “today’s Army enlisted ranks is the only major arena in American society where black educational levels surpass those of whites and by a significant degree.” Binkin and colleagues posit that the explanation for this phenomenon lies in the Armed Forces’ entry exams. Black dropouts are less likely as compared to white dropouts to perform adequately on these tests and subsequently fewer are allowed to enlist.

The issue of entrance requirements deserves mention as it pertains to the representiveness of the volunteer force. The AFQT or Armed Forces Qualification Test is used to screen potential enlistees. This test supposedly produces a measure of “trainability” and is meant to be positively associated with the potential enlistees’ retention and success in the military. This test and a high school diploma are highly regarded measures of recruit quality.

As reported by Gorman and Thomas (1993) there are racial differences in achievement on the AFQT. In 1989, only 17% of blacks scored at or above the 65<sup>th</sup> percentile, while 46% of whites received such a score. As Armor (1996) asserts, blacks tend to score lower on the enlistment tests and are more often denied enlistment. He states that in 1994, only 9% of white applicants, compared to 30% of black applicants, scored below the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile on the AFQT. In that same year, about 64% of white applicants were enlisted compared to only 52% of black applicants. It is significant that these same entrance exams are used to determine an individual’s suitability for various Military Occupational Specialties (MOS). Therefore, they serve not only as a screening

device, but also as a “tracking” mechanism used to determine which jobs an enlistee might be suited for, an issue discussed further in the next chapter.

<b>TABLE FIVE</b>		
<b>MEAN AFQT SCORES OF AMERICAN YOUTHS BY RACE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, 1980</b>		
<b>Race</b>	<b>Non-High School Graduate</b>	<b>High School Graduate</b>
<b>White</b>	467	550
<b>Black</b>	365	417
<b>Hispanic</b>	388	505

**SOURCE: Department of Defense Manpower Data**

As table five illustrates, there exist differences in performance on the AFQT both by racial category and by educational level. The effect of these differences by race play an important role in the representativeness of the military. By and large, the proportion of blacks who “intend” to enlist is significantly higher than the percentage who are accepted into military service. The following table describes the number of males aged 18-23 eligible for enlistment in 1981 based on the “Profile of American Youth” in 1981.

<b>TABLE SIX</b>					
<b>PERCENT ELIGIBLE FOR ENLISTMENT BY RACE AND EDUCATION</b>					
<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Army</b>	<b>Navy</b>	<b>Marine Corps</b>	<b>Air Force</b>
High School Graduates	White	96.1	95.5	92.1	88.1
	Black	66.2	63.7	52.1	34.9
Non-High School Graduates	White	47.0	40.8	43.8	18.4
	Black	11.6	9.3	8.4	1.7

**SOURCE: Profile of American Youth 1981**

It is apparent that entrance standards differ depending on which branch of the military one desires to join. Qualification is, for the most part, based on possession of a high school diploma and performance on the AFQT. The highest percentage of males are qualified to serve in the Army. Air Force requirements are the hardest to meet, according to table six. The significance of this data lies in the percentage of blacks qualified for military service both as compared to whites and by educational group. Only two of three black males are eligible to enlist in the Army; this figure drops to almost one in three for Air Force enlistment. Blacks without a high school diploma have a relatively low chance of qualifying for enlistment. This finding explains to some extent the high rate of black recruits (as compared to whites) who are high school graduates.

### *Socio-economic Background*

As Binkin et al. (1982) and others point out, following the Vietnam War, there exists very little research on the social class characteristics of enlistees in the AVF. The armed services do not collect information on indicators of socio-economic status, making any investigation of this kind exceedingly difficult.

Great discrepancies in the median incomes of black households as compared to white households exist in this country. For instance, in 1993, the median family income for white households was \$39,300 compared with \$21,542 for black households. Only

9.9% of whites were officially poor, compared with 33.1 percent of blacks (Parillo, 1997). Therefore, it would not be surprising if the median incomes of black enlistees were somewhat lower than that of white enlistees in the years of the AVF.

As table seven illustrates, Binkin et al.(1982), using data from the 1979 Defense Department Survey of Personnel Entering Military Service, found that the modal category for black enlistees was \$5,200-10,339. For white enlistees it was higher, \$10,400-15,599. Even more importantly, 43% of black recruits in 1979 reported family incomes of \$10,399 or less. Only 20% of white recruits reported family incomes below \$10, 399. This finding is thought to reflect income inequality between blacks and whites in the overall population. While income discrepancies are evident among recruits, this was also the case in civilian society where white families had higher average incomes than black families in this same period.

<b>TABLE SEVEN</b>		
<b>ESTIMATED FAMILY INCOME OF RECRUITS BY RACE, 1979</b>		
<b>Family Income (Dollars)</b>	<b>Whites (n=4,592)</b>	<b>Blacks (n=1,710)</b>
Under 2,599	1.8	9.0
2,600 - 5,199	3.7	10.8
5,200 - 10,399	14.7	23.3
10,400 - 15,599	18.0	12.8
15,600 - 20,799	16.7	7.4
20,800 - 25,999	11.3	3.3
26,000 - 31,199	7.5	2.8
31,200 or more	10.4	3.2
No Response	15.9	27.4
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
SOURCE: Binkin et al, 1982		

Binkin et al. (1982) made further comparisons of males in the armed forces and employed male civilians in 1979. Most interesting to note is the relative advantage black recruits hold over their civilian counterparts in terms of parental education. Sons of parents with 13 years or more of education are more likely to be in the armed services than in the civilian labor force between the ages of 18 and 20. It is important to note that this table excludes the status of "student." Therefore, it does not adequately represent the number of males who are enrolled in college by race.

In a similar study, Gilroy et al. (1990) using parents' occupation and education as an indicator of socio-economic status found little difference between the occupation of

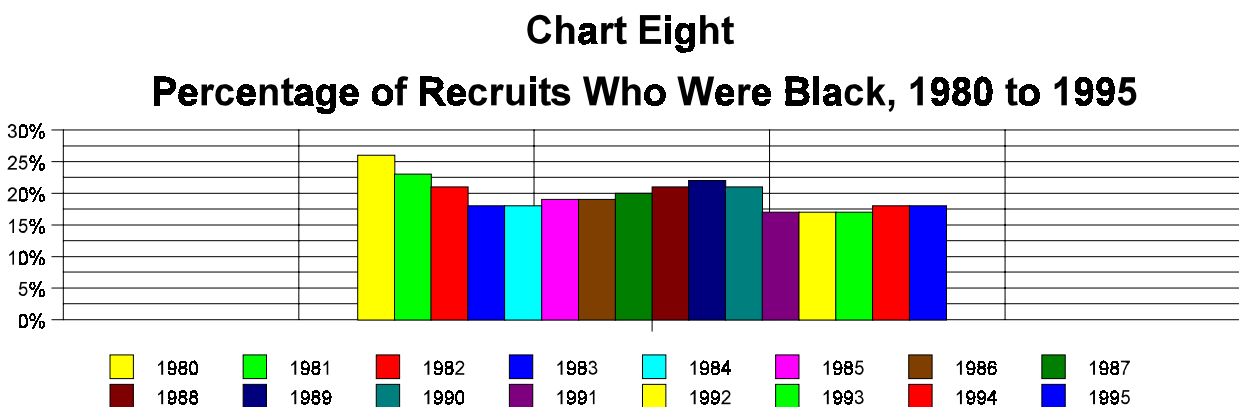


parents of military personnel and parents of those in the labor market in general. However, in terms of education, more parents of members of the armed forces had completed some college than the parents of those participating in the general labor market.

Gorman and Thomas (1993) using a sample from the 1979-1987 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth found that those living in poverty are more likely to have a positive propensity to enlist. They suggest that for blacks, the propensity to enlist doubles if the individual comes from a background of poverty. Again, we should keep in mind that propensity to enlist does not by any means equal actual enlistment. Once again, certain qualifications must be met before one is admitted into the military.

According to one recent article in the *Economist*, recruits in the late 1980s were representative of the enlistment age population as indicated by family income levels and level of education. About 45% of active-duty recruits came from families with above average incomes. Greater than 90% of these recruits had a high school diploma, compared with only 75% of civilians in the same age group (Barone and Gergen, 1990). While the poor are not necessarily over-represented, the rich are somewhat under-represented. In the early 1990s, children of those in the top 15% of U.S. earners are 80% less likely to join the military than the national average and only 20% of servicemen have a parent with a college degree.

A recent article by Teachman, Call, and Wechsler (1993) concluded that the military attracts blacks who would most likely be successful in the civilian labor market based on certain social class variables. However, whites with similar backgrounds are more likely to remain in the civilian labor force. While about 96% of blacks in the army possess a high school diploma, some 89% of whites do (Farrell, 1991). In essence, it seems that the military is attractive to the “cream” of the African American “crop”, while being used as a “safety-valve for less-motivated or less-successful white men” (Teachman et al., 1993). This brings us to the issue of the racial representativeness of the military on which consistent research findings exist.



Source: Department of Defense Manpower Data

### *Racial Composition*

The rising proportion of the AVF who are black has created and generated more discussion than perhaps any other topic. Racial/ethnic representation is probably the most researched and discussed topic in terms of military “representativeness” in the

United States. This research includes empirical data as well as discussion on issues such as policy alternatives, aptitude testing, attrition rates, and re-enlistment rates (Janowitz and Moskos, 1974; Schexnider and Butler, 1976; Eitelberg, 1977 and 1978; Nalty, 1986; Schexnider, 1978; and others). Of interest to the current research is the actual composition of the U.S. Armed Forces or the degree to which racial/ethnic military participation rates differ from the demographics of the population.

By 1974, 27% of new Army recruits were black. In the Navy, blacks made up 11% of the first-term volunteers, in the Marines 20%, and in the Air Force 16% (Nalty, 1986). These high rates of black enlistment continued through 1980. However, by 1981 black enlistment began to decline and never again reached the levels seen in the first years of the AVF.

As table eight illustrates, by 1980, recruits in all branches of the military were 26% black, while the civilian population was 13% black (Armor, 1996). By 1990, recruits were approximately 21% black, and in 1995 18% of recruits were black (Armor, 1996). These patterns differ considerably for different branches of the service. The Army has always attracted considerably more black enlistees with the percentage reaching a high of 27% in the early 1980s (Armor, 1996).

Schexnider and Dorn (1986) illustrate the percentage black in each branch of the Department of Defense as well as the overall DOD percentage. In the last year of conscription the percentage of blacks was just over 11. This percentage had almost doubled by 1987. This percentage reflects both high black enlistment as well as high

black re-enlistment rates. By 1991, it is estimated that 35% of qualified black men had served in the military as compared to only 16% of white men (Magnusson and Payne, 1991).

Armor (1996) discusses the differences in the proportion of Black males accepted for service as compared to White males. For instance, “in 1994 about 64% of White male applicants were enlisted, compared to 52% of black males” (pg. 19). The main reason for this differential in acceptance rates lies in the use of ASVAB “trainability” tests given to applicants for military service. In 1994, less than 10% of White applicants performed below the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile on the ASVAB, while 30% of black applicants fell into this category (Armor, 1996). This results in a reduced representation of blacks in the military as compared to surveys illustrating higher “intention to enlist” opinions by black youth.

Binkin (1984) predicted that the nineties would be difficult for the DOD in trying to maintain a force of 2 million active duty personnel. What he could not foresee was the end of the Cold War and its implications for military readiness. Defense cutbacks have seriously affected job prospects for blacks at a time when the jobless rate for black teenagers is nearly 30%.

Today, the military is not an employer of last resort for the nation’s youngsters. Binkin et al., (1982) points out that because military technology and tactics are becoming increasingly sophisticated, fewer than 50% of young black men are qualified to join the armed forces based on educational requirements and pre-induction exam scores.

Those who are qualified have the characteristics seen as facilitating success in college,

including higher average educational achievement, a high school diploma, and higher education and income in the family of origin.

According to Schexnider (1987) many individuals choose the military in lieu of college for reasons of limited finances. As will be discussed in chapter six, GI Bill benefits for college education were “important” or “very important” to 51% of black respondents and 32% of white respondents in making their decision to enlist.

Additionally, both black and white soldiers take advantage of these benefits at a rate of about 80% (Moskos and Butler, 1996).

### **Concluding remarks**

In discussing the social origins of the AFV it is necessary to include a brief discussion of structural changes in the previous 25 years which have affected the representativeness of enlistment. In the early 1970s, when industrialization served to provide jobs for the children of middle and lower class families, enlistment incentives were not sufficient to attract many of these youth. At this time, it is believed that the “citizen-soldier” ethic provided enlistees in greater numbers than the concept of “economic man.” In other words, military service was valued for its intrinsic benefits rather than monetary remunerations.

Later in the seventies and throughout the eighties, deindustrialization created a change in terms of enlistees. Faced with the choice of furthering education to pursue a

“high-tech” job opportunity or the choice of working in the growing service-oriented economy, many lower-middle and lower class youth chose military service. Upper class youth had the option of furthering their education to maintain the class standing of their parents. Lower and lower-middle class youth were increasingly unable to afford college and many pursued military service as an alternative to a low paying service job. As was mentioned earlier, in the mid-eighties the Montgomery GI Bill provided substantial incentives for enlistment. A short two-year enlistment could essentially provide the financial support to attend college following service. As Moskos and Butler (1996) have stated, “Armed with bonuses and the prospect of good pay, the military turned into another competitor in the labor market, replacing the citizen-soldier with Economic Man” (Pg. 33). The choice to enlist may have been based on financial incentives or on the premise that an attractive civilian job may be easier to obtain post-service.

In terms of education, it has become increasingly uncommon for non-high school graduates to be accepted in the military. Non-grads must score higher on the qualifying exams in order to be accepted and this is uncommon. The military has determined that high school graduates are more likely to fulfill their initial obligation than are non-grads and have made it less likely that anyone without a high school diploma will be accepted.

It is interesting to compare the average incomes of black and white males to the “recruit” or E-1 salary. In 1992, black male high school graduates averaged \$15,260 per year, while white male high school grads averaged \$22,976 per year. Recruit pay for this same year was approximately \$850.00 per month or \$10,200 per year. Initially, this salary seems quite small considering the average annual civilian wages, but we must

look further to get an accurate picture. Recruits (E-1, unless they have had sufficient college to enlist at the E-2 or E-3 rank) receive fully paid medical care. They receive free clothing, free food, and free housing. Therefore, most recruits earn this salary in addition to having their living expenses paid. Additionally, the enlistees' salary increases approximately \$100.00 per month as he or she obtains the rank of E-2 or E-3.

While the average pay for white male high school graduates is considerably more than basic military pay, civilian pay for black male high school graduates is not substantially greater. The relative lack of income opportunities in the civilian work force for black males may function to raise enlistment rates among blacks in the AVF.

As was mentioned briefly earlier, many enlistees cite educational benefits as attractions to military enlistment. As will be discussed later in this research, the military offers attractive benefits to be used for furthering education. Benefits include a student loan repayment of up to \$25,000, as well as a GI Bill program in which the individual pays into an "educational savings program" and the government matches this payment. These programs are widely publicized by the armed forces with ads saying things such as "Earn \$40,000 for college while serving your country!" as well as the familiar "Be all that you can be." For those who wish to further their education, while earning a living wage, a short enlistment in the military could definitely be attractive.

It is also true that college graduates are less likely to enlist than are non-grads. It is thought that sufficient opportunities exist in the civilian labor market and that the military does not hold sufficient attraction for these individuals. It should not be overlooked that children of higher income parents are more likely to attend college.

While the children of the lower incomes may find the military an attractive option either as a career or as a stepping stone to further education or civilian employment. Chapter three will investigate re-enlistment rates by educational level and may uncover patterns in attrition related to education.

For those who have already obtained a college degree, military service is decreasing alluring. The average annual wage for a white male college graduate was approximately \$40,000 in 1992. Black male college graduates earned an average of \$27,500 per year. In comparison, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants in the military (the rank at which most college grads enlist) earn a much smaller salary of approximately \$20,000. Furthermore, while 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenants benefit from military medical coverage, many do not take advantage of on-post housing or meals. It is somewhat understandable that white male college graduates would be less likely than those with less education to view the military as an attractive option.

Black men desire to join the military at a rate that their actual representation does not reflect. Armor (1996) points out that the percentage of blacks who apply is twice that of white males. However, as was discussed earlier, blacks are less likely to score sufficiently on the ASVAB than are white males. One reason for the high rate of application by Black men is posited by Moskos (1983). He states that the military was the first major American institution to racially integrate and provides better job opportunities than most sectors of society. The next chapter will investigate the promotion and retention of soldiers in the armed forces by race to determine whether the idea that the military provides a “leveling field” for the races is fact or fiction.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### PROMOTION, RETENTION, AND MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY

#### **CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

Chapter four will use existing empirical research to investigate the promotion rates of military servicemen by race in the draft era between 1945 and 1964, in the Vietnam era extending from 1964-1973, as well as in the period following the advent of the AVF, approximately 1973 through the present. While the discussion of promotion rates is important, a discussion of the distribution of individuals into specific military occupational specialties (MOSs) is also of interest. The degree to which men from differing social classes or racial backgrounds are “tracked” and trained in specific occupations holds implications for subsequent social mobility.

Research on the association between social characteristics and retention rates will also be analyzed in this chapter. Necessarily, the racial composition of military personnel will be described as it relates to retention rates.

Empirical research in these areas is somewhat scarce, especially for the period prior to the AVF. However, it is thought that sufficient information exists to present some definitive statements concerning how military experiences differ for individuals depending upon their social characteristics prior to enlistment.

## **Promotion and Retention Rates from WWII**

### **To the Vietnam War**

While virtually no research exists on the differential promotion of servicemen in years prior to the end of the draft, several observations can be mentioned. It is assumed that social class had little or no bearing on the promotion of individuals during this period. No mention of selective promotion based on socio-economic background exists. Therefore, either one of two things can be said to have occurred. Either social class was not associated with promotion time, or this phenomenon was overlooked by researchers. In either case it is logical that those who enlisted did so at a rank which reflected their education and were promoted without regard to social class origins.

The examination of promotion and its association with race is an issue described in existing literature, but no empirical analysis of actual promotion times exists prior to the end of the draft. The effects of the integration of the armed forces on the black experience has been discussed to some extent in chapter one and therefore only a cursory examination of this issue is necessary.

Prior to 1948, black servicemen were segregated into all-black units and were commanded by white officers. There is evidence that white officers assigned to all-black units viewed their assignment as a disgrace. This situation was intensified through the Army practice of "showing a preference for officers of southern birth and training" who were by and large disliked by black troops (MacGregor, 1981). The performance of

black soldiers in WWII was assessed by many as inferior (Ginzberg, 1959; Lee, 1966; and others). However, this assessment has been widely questioned in recent years.

In general, promotion to either non-commissioned officer (NCO) or commissioned officer was not attainable for blacks prior to desegregation in 1948. Following “structural” integration, there was a significant lag in the accomplishment of “leadership” integration as pointed out by Moskos and Butler (1996). It was not until the Vietnam war that blacks assumed leadership positions in the U.S. military, and these positions were mostly in the ranks of non-commissioned officers.

Attrition rates for blacks during this period were somewhat lower than for whites according to research by the Brookings Institute. Following WWII, many whites desired a quick discharge, while a larger proportion of blacks chose to remain in the military. The military environment throughout the period between WWII and the Vietnam War was seen by many blacks as favorable compared to civilian life. Moskos (1957, while an Army private) wrote that military posts were “islands of integration in a sea of Jim Crow.” The retention of blacks in the military in the years prior to Vietnam resulted in a proportionately greater number of blacks in higher ranks when the military was again committed to war in 1965. However, blacks remained under represented in the ranks of both non-commissioned and commissioned officers.

## **Promotion, Retention, and Occupational Specialities**

### **During the Vietnam War**

Existing empirical research into the issue of promotion, retention, and MOS is lacking prior to the period characterized by the Vietnam War. It was in the Vietnam era that race and racial discrimination was recognized as a social ill in the larger society. Therefore, it is not surprising that investigation into racial discrepancies within the military structure largely begins its focus during this epoch.

The following discussion will focus on the existing literature concerning military promotion and retention by race, as well as the relevant discussion of assignments to military occupational specialties as influenced by both social class and race. Most literature on this time period focuses on the question of disproportionate casualties suffered by sections of the population resulting from classism and racism in the assignment of individuals to combat v. non-combat occupations. It should be noted that draftees rather than volunteers constituted roughly 25% of the servicemen serving in Vietnam and 27% of all combat deaths (Kolb, 1991).

Not long after the U.S. entered the Vietnam conflict, the theme among proponents of racial equality ceased to be one of “the right to fight” and became one of accusations of racial injustice through the use of blacks as “cannon fodder” in Vietnam. Allegations that blacks were over represented among combat troops and suffered a disproportionate number of casualties were and remain quite common (See, for

example, *U.S. News and World Report*, August, 1966; *Newsweek*, April, 1966; *National Review*, April, 1967; *Time*, May, 1967; *America*, June, 1967).

TABLE NINE										
BLACKS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE ARMED FORCES, BY SERVICE, 1964-1973										
Fiscal Year	Army		Navy		Marine Corps		Air Force		All Services	
	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer	Enlisted	Officer
1964	11.8	3.3	5.9	0.3	8.7	0.3	10.0	1.5	9.7	1.8
1968	12.6	3.3	5.0	0.4	11.5	0.9	10.2	1.8	10.2	2.1
1970	13.5	3.4	5.4	0.7	11.2	1.3	11.7	1.7	11.0	2.2
1971	14.3	3.6	5.4	0.7	11.4	1.3	12.3	1.7	11.4	2.3
1972	17.0	3.9	6.4	0.9	13.7	1.5	12.6	1.7	12.6	2.3
1973	18.4	4.0	7.7	1.1	16.9	1.9	13.4	2.0	14.0	2.5

SOURCE: Department of Defense Manpower Data

As table nine illustrates, blacks were not over represented among military officers or enlisted personnel during the years of the war in Vietnam. However, blacks were concentrated in the enlisted forces of both the Army and the Marines in the final war years. Noticeably, blacks are under represented in the officer ranks of all branches of the service reinforcing the idea that “leadership integration” had not yet fully occurred.

Blacks suffered 13 percent of the casualties during the Vietnam War period (Binkin et al., 1982; and others). This percentage was only slightly greater than the percentage of blacks in the U.S. general population in that same time period (11.8). Therefore, according to Binkin et al., it cannot be said that blacks were either over represented in the armed forces or that blacks suffered casualties not in proportion to

their numbers in the general population during the Vietnam War. The following table, based on Department of Defense statistics, reports the percentage of blacks who perished due to hostilities in Southeast Asia.

TABLE TEN						
BLACKS AS A PERCENTAGE OF HOSTILE DEATHS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA						
	Officer		Enlisted		Total	
Army	2.7	(3,393)	14.2	(27,470)	12.6	(30,863)
Marine Corps	.6	(785)	13.0	(12,274)	12.3	(13,059)
Air Force	1.1	(1,284)	8.1	(394)	2.9	(1,678)
Navy	.5	(385)	.3	(1,208 )	.3	(1,593)
All Services	1.9	(5,847)	13.5	(41,346)	12.1	(47,193)
Total hostile deaths given in parentheses.						
SOURCE: Department of Defense statistics.						

Westheider (1997) has argued that while the black casualty rate was 12.6 percent of the total deaths, only 9.3 percent of the total active duty force assigned to Vietnam were black. This would lead us to believe that the death rate for blacks was higher than the death rate for whites stationed in Southeast Asia. Westheider and others point out that while blacks were not over represented in Vietnam, they were more likely to be assigned to combat units. There are several reasons to believe this was true. First, many blacks volunteered for combat duty. Combat duty brought with it higher pay, higher status, and a better chance of promotion. These reasons along with many others were sufficient for many blacks to volunteer for combat related assignments.

Another explanation for the high rate of black combat service is related to the

AFQT test taken by recruits. As noted earlier, this test is used to determine the assignment to a military occupational specialty. Often criticized for its cultural bias, the AFQT is somewhat comparable and no more valuable than a standard IQ test. For reasons discussed earlier, blacks often failed to achieve the relatively high scores needed to enter technical and intelligence fields and were, therefore, more likely to be assigned to hazardous occupations during the war.

Having established that black servicemen were somewhat more likely to perish in Vietnam than their white military counterparts, it is necessary to examine the issue of the role of “classism” in the assignment of servicemen to combat units during the war. These two issues are necessarily interrelated. Blacks have traditionally been concentrated in the less privileged economic classes and may have experienced “double jeopardy” in their assignments to MOSs.

The Vietnam war was thought by many to be a “class war” or one in which the lower classes disproportionately served in combat. Research on this issue have been hampered by a lack of data on social class origin of soldiers. As mentioned earlier, the DOD has never kept this information on either draftees or enlistees. Therefore, research findings have been largely inconsistent and the popular notion of Vietnam as a “poor man’s war” has prevailed.

Several studies including those by Willis (1975), Badillo and Curry (1976), Foust and Botts (1991), and Barnett, Stanley, and Shore (1992) came to the overall conclusion that those who came from lower socio-economic geographical areas suffered a disproportionate number of casualties in the Vietnam War. Several problems exist with



these studies. To differing degrees, each is guilty of what can be termed an “ecological fallacy” (Hyman, 1970). Because of the lack of data on individual servicemen, these studies used various measures of socio-economic status in the geographical area from which these men originated. No inferences should be made concerning the socio-economic origins of individuals based on the data on a geographical area. Therefore, these studies are fatally flawed.

A “class bias” in terms of the Vietnam war has also been asserted by various researchers using longitudinal data or cross-sectional data (Useem, 1980; Egendorf, Kadushin, Laufer, Rothbart, and Sloan, 1981; Zeitlin, Lutterman, and Russell, 1973). While social class was found to be associated with service in Vietnam, it was only the uppermost classes of young men who were positively affected by class origins. In the highest levels of socio-economic class, men were half as likely to have served in the Vietnam war.

Several studies have denied the role of class origins in determining military service in Vietnam. Both Berryman (1988) and Fligstein (1980) found no significant differences in the social class origins of veterans as compared to non-vets. Shields (1981) found no association between social class and the likelihood of being drafted.

In an effort to overcome the inconsistent existing research, Wilson (1995) used data from the GSS to test the class-bias thesis. He included all males born between 1944 and 1954 who would have been eligible for service between 1962 and 1972. Measures of fathers’ education and occupation are available through the GSS as is information on respondents’ military service. Regrettably, whether military duty occurred

in Vietnam or in another arena is not surmisable from the data.

Wilson's (1995) findings were consistent with the idea of a "class-bias" in the war in Vietnam. Those from relatively lower class backgrounds were more likely to have served in the military. Wilson asserts that we can expect that the lower classes were disproportionately more likely to have served and died in Vietnam. While these conclusions are logical based on existing research, it is somewhat dangerous to make generalizations of this type.

In a 1976 study, Badillo and Curry come to the conclusion that social class background was related to risk of death in the Vietnam war as a function of assignment to various military occupational specialties. They argue that the military assignment process was highly reliant on social class background variables. Persons from lower class origins were channeled into combat positions during the Vietnam war. Research by Mazur (1995) supports these conclusions by finding a negative relationship between education and exposure to hazard in Vietnam. Contrary to earlier conclusions by Barnett, Stanley, and Shore (1992), Allen, Herrman, and Giles (1994) also assert that the Vietnam War was indeed a "class war." Those from the lower class suffered disproportionate casualties based not on higher rates of recruitment, but rather on assignments to hazardous duty stations.

The influence of social class on promotion time during this period has been largely ignored. What can be gleaned comes largely from research on black promotion rates as discussed by Westheider (1997) and reinforces the importance of performance on standardized military exams. Westheider points out that those individuals who were

assigned to less technical fields such as the infantry, service and supply units, and administrative duty were less likely to be promoted due to the decreased need for NCOs in those fields. Promotion slots rarely opened in these fields and when they did the competition was fierce. Often promotion exam scores are a basis for consideration and as discussed earlier, neither blacks nor lower class whites tend to perform as well on these standardized exams.

Many blacks believe promotion times for blacks to be somewhat slower than for whites. In one survey, 64% of blacks assigned to Vietnam believed that blacks were promoted slower than whites (Westheider, 1997). The following table summarizes information provided by the Department of Army statistics on the status in rank of blacks in the Army before, during, and after the Vietnam war.

<b>TABLE ELEVEN</b>			
<b>BLACK PARTICIPATION IN THE ARMY BY GRADE</b>			
	1964	1972	1980
<b>Officers:</b>			
0-7 and above (general)	--	1.8	5.2
0-6 (colonel)	.2	1.5	4.3
0-5 (lieutenant colonel)	1.1	5.3	5.3
0-4 (major)	3.5	5.0	4.5
0-3 (captain)	5.1	3.9	6.9
0-2 (1 <sup>st</sup> lieutenant)	3.6	3.4	9.7
0-1 2 <sup>nd</sup> lieutenant)	2.6	2.2	9.4
Warrant	2.8	4.5	5.9
<b>Total Officers</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>6.8</b>
<b>Enlisted:</b>			
E-9 (sergeant major)	3.3	8.6	19.0
E-8 (master sergeant)	5.8	14.4	22.9
E-7 (sergeant first class)	7.9	19.9	25.2
E-6 (staff sergeant)	12.2	23.9	22.8
E-5 (sergeant)	14.8	16.9	28.6
E-4 (specialist 4)	12.5	14.1	33.7
E-3 (private first class)	11.9	16.7	37.8
E-2 (private)	11.6	18.5	37.9
E-1 (private)	6.4	18.4	37.3
<b>Total enlisted</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>32.2</b>
<b>SOURCE: Department of Army statistics.</b>			

Westheider (1997) notes that blacks are conspicuously absent in the upper most ranks, but a strong black presence is felt in the mid-level or lower NCO ranks of the military. This is in agreement with Moskos and Butler (1996) who assert that blacks

have a history of strong representation in the NCO ranks. Another possible reason for the lack of black officers at the upper levels lies in the history of black re-enlistment prior to the Vietnam war. In addition to the recommendation of superiors, promotion to the uppermost ranks is a function of time. At the time of the war in Vietnam, racial quotas and segregation were a phenomenon of the relatively recent past. Only twenty years prior, in 1948, segregation had been abolished. Therefore, proportionately fewer blacks had served for the necessary length of time needed to achieve promotion into the upper NCO ranks. In the years following Vietnam, this representation will grow as a function of high black re-enlistment rates, a subject to be taken up in the next section.

## **Promotion, Retention, and Military Occupational Specialties**

### **From the Vietnam War to the Present**

#### Promotion

Differences in promotion times for blacks and whites have been a source of heated debate in the years following the Vietnam war. In 1976, a widely read article by respected sociologist John Sibley Butler declared that promotion times for black enlisted men was longer as compared to white enlisted men even after controlling for civilian educational attainment, AFQT scores, and military occupational specialty (MOS). Butler's research was challenged by several researchers including criticism by Hauser in a 1977 article stating that Butler had not taken into account the lack of closure in the military populations' use of mean months to promotion. Butler successfully defended his

assertations in a reply to Hauser in 1979.

In another failed attempt to reanalyze the results brought forth by Butler, Miller and Ransford (1978) assert that upon reexamination of Butler's data it seems that he had failed to examine the actual time (in months) that it took blacks and whites to be promoted. Miller and Ransford assert that the greatest discrepancy in promotion time is apparent in the promotion from E-4 to E-5. They posit that because the rank of E-5 is the first rank at which servicemen are responsible for supervision of subordinates, blacks are promoted at a slower rate due to racial discrimination. It is their position that discrimination thus exhibits itself when the threat of whites becoming subordinate to blacks occurs at the rank of E-5. Butler (1978), points out that the data does not lend itself to such an analysis. Analysis of the existing data can only calculate promotion time in months from time of enlistment. Therefore, no inferences should be made in terms of how long an individual stayed at any given rank. As Butler states, "the data does not allow us to examine movement between different grades, but only movement to grades from the time of entry" (pg. 75).

Segal and Nordlie (1979) agree with Butler's conclusions that, even when controlling for mental aptitudes, blacks are promoted more slowly than whites. After having first addressed what they felt were methodological problems in Butler's original analysis, Segal and Nordlie could not refute the relative lag in black promotion time.

In 1990, Daula, Smith, and Nord, attempted to dispute Butler's findings by asserting that he had failed to adjust for censoring bias in the data used. According to the researchers, "A sample consisting only of observations on promoted soldiers is

censored in that it represents only the experiences of those individuals who survived to promotion” (pg. 716). Because nonminorities are less likely to remain in the military when faced with a slow promotion time, this attrition must be accounted for when performing statistical analysis of the data. According to the authors, when reanalysis was performed in an appropriate manner, there existed no evidence of racial discrimination in promotion times.

In a more recent analysis of promotion times, using data obtained from the Department of the Army, Binkin et al. state that in the years 1971 through 1975 black soldiers were promoted slower than white soldiers in the Army. By 1981, data demonstrates that this differential in promotion times had been almost eradicated.

Moskos and Butler (1996) state that in present times “If the Army has a black center, it is the 75,000 black NCOs.” Currently, about a third of all buck sergeants and staff sergeants and about a quarter of all first sergeants, master sergeants, and sergeants major are black. This is largely due to relatively high rates of black re-enlistment in the army. To understand this better one must realize the rate at which promotions normally occur. A soldier in his first enlistment period will most likely be promoted to the rank of E-4 or possibly E-5 before either re-upping or mustering out. Attaining higher NCO ranks is only possible for the soldier who reenlists following the initial enlistment. Promotion to the uppermost ranks is based on several criteria, but is also a function of time in service. High black re-enlistment rates have contributed to the growing proportion of blacks represented in the NCO ranks.

Currently, approximately eleven percent of the officer corp in the military is black

(Gropman, 1997). Moskos and Butler (1996) state that “If officers are the executives of the armed forces, the armed forces boast more black executives than any other institution in the country” (pg. 47). This is an improvement on earlier percentages which traditionally vary according to which branch of the service is being examined. In 1981, only five percent of all military officers were black. In the Army the percentage was close to eight, while the percentage in the Navy was a low three percent. The Marine Corp and the Air Force had four percent and five percent respectively (Binkin et al., 1982).

The proportion of blacks in the officer corps has been increasing since the advent of the AVF and the percentage of black officers is consistent with the percentage of black college graduates in the same age groups (Binkin et al., 1982). Most of the Army’s 8,000 officers come from campus-based ROTC programs with smaller proportions coming from West Point and Officer Candidate School. There is no evidence that discrepancies in promotion times exist for officers based on race.

### Attrition and Retention

Generally speaking, first-term attrition rates are significantly higher for non-high school graduates (Moskos and Butler, 1996; Binkin et al., 1982). Furthermore, black enlisted servicemen are more likely to complete their first term of enlistment than are white servicemen. According to Moskos and Butler (1996), “Since the mid-1980s about one white soldier in four has been discharged prematurely . . . . The figure for black male



soldiers is one in six. Overall, black soldiers are about one and a half times more likely than whites to complete their enlistments successfully” (pg. 40). While these figures are for the army, it is believed that these rates of attrition are similar in the other branches of the armed forces, though perhaps to differing degrees.

Faris (1984) has posited that one explanation for the relatively high attrition rates in the era of the AVF lies in the enlistees’ reasons for enlisting. Increasingly, enlistment has been based on a market-place model employed by “economic man” rather than a commitment to national service. Attractive economic incentives are often offered, and “economic man” finds these incentives difficult to pass up. Upon enlisting, these individuals motivated economically are incapable of adapting to the rigors of military life (see also Hosek, Antel, and Peterson, 1989). If we accept Faris’ analysis linking motivation to enlist to first-term attrition, we must assume that those motivated by a desire to serve their country (Moskos’ “citizen-soldier”) would be more likely to complete their initial enlistment period. Furthermore, it seems likely that attrition increased following the end of the draft based somewhat on the idea of volunteerism. Perhaps one is more likely to “un-volunteer” than to fail to complete initial enlistment when one is either drafted or likely to be drafted.

The effect of social class on retention has not been examined in existing literature. While social class has not been linked to re-enlistment in the literature, the association between race and retention has been established. Blacks as a group have had consistently higher re-enlistment rates throughout the period following the end of the draft (Butler and Holmes, 1981; Shields, 1988; Stewart, 1992). As table twelve, adapted

from Binkin et al., (1982) illustrates, black Army re-enlistment remained consistently higher than white re-enlistment throughout the years between 1972 and 1981. Notably, the table includes rates for volunteers only. The re-enlistment rates for draftees in the years 1972 and 1973 were lower. In 1972, 11.8 percent of white draftees and 14.8 percent of black draftees reenlisted. In 1973, 10.6 percent of white draftees and 12.4 percent of black draftees remained in the military following their initial enlistment.

<b>TABLE TWELVE</b>				
<b>ARMY RE-ENLISTMENT RATES, BY RACE AND CAREER STATUS, 1972-1981</b>				
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>First Term</b>		<b>Career</b>	
	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>
1972	12.6	20.4	42.6	61.3
1973	37.5	46.1	60.9	69.8
1974	26.6	43.3	70.4	80.5
1975	33.4	54.1	70.3	82.7
1976	29.4	42.2	69.1	82.0
1977	30.5	48.4	66.3	80.3
1978	27.8	47.5	63.4	78.0
1979	33.5	53.7	59.6	74.9
1980	45.1	65.1	66.3	79.6
1981	44.9	66.4	68.0	81.9

SOURCE: Department of Defense Manpower Data

Currently, black re-enlistment rates are one and a half times as high as re-enlistment rates for whites (Gropman, 1997). As discussed earlier, the high rate of re-enlistment not only affects the representation of blacks in the military overall, but also results in a higher percentage of blacks being promoted to the ranks of NCO.

### Assignment to Military Occupational Specialties

As has been mentioned earlier, the assignment to various MOSs is largely based on a combination of education, prior skills and/or training, and most importantly, achieved score on the AFQT (Armed Forces Qualifying Test). Supposedly, the enlistees' skills, education, and "trainability" scores are used to determine the occupational specialty for which the individual would be best suited. While requesting a specific MOS is somewhat common, the individual must be considered qualified before being allowed to train for the specialty. Recruits receive MOS training in Advanced Individual Training (AIT) following completion of Basic Training. The length of AIT depends upon the MOS. Training for some occupations lasts as long as twelve months, while others can be a relatively short eight week period.

As mentioned earlier, following the end of the Vietnam war, proportionately fewer blacks were assigned to combat specialties. This is as much a function of the changing role of the military as anything else. As warfare has become increasingly technological, fewer servicemen are assigned to traditional "combat" specialties, regardless of race. Instead, new specialties requiring technical training have developed. While no evidence exists in terms of a "class bias" in assignments, a racial bias can be asserted. The implications of assignments are far reaching. Even though military pay is indiscriminately based on rank and years of service, training in certain MOSs is potentially useful in post-service occupational attainment. If training and experience are gained in a technical or intelligence field, the individual will experience increased

“marketability” in the civilian sector of the economy. On the other hand, it is theoretically plausible that training in an administrative area may be of decreased value in the civilian marketplace.

As discussed earlier, blacks and the lower educated in general tend to do less well on the standardized AFQT. They are therefore more likely to be assigned to less “marketable” occupations in the military organization, this of course being dependent upon military manpower requirements at the time. For instance, in the mid-1980s, blacks were 50% of those in supply, 46% if those in food service, and 44% of those in general clerical work, according to Moskos. These percentages have been fairly consistent throughout the AVF (Binkin et al., 1982). Although blacks in the military are equally likely to have occupations categorized as “white collar,” they are more likely to be employed as clerical workers than as technical workers. In the blue collar categories, whites are more likely to be trained as “craftsmen,” while blacks are more highly represented in “service and supply” (Binkin et al., 1982). Notably, in 1981, the occupational area with the highest percentage of blacks (64.1) was “laundry and bath specialist.” The occupations with the highest percentage of whites was intelligence and communications. Obviously, training in areas such as intelligence would be more highly valued in the civilian sector than training in fields that specialize in laundry. As will be addressed in the following chapter, the transferability of military occupations to civilian life holds implications concerning the differential social mobility and attainment of blacks and whites.

## **Concluding remarks**

The experience of military participation varies for individuals based on their background characteristics. Individuals' social origins, including social class, education, and race, are associated with their achievement in the military just as civilians' background characteristics are associated with achievement in the civilian workforce. The focus of the preceding chapter was to uncover the extent to which existing research has established an association between these relevant background characteristics and promotion, retention, and assignment to an occupational specialty in the military. No direct association between social class origins and promotion, retention, or MOS have been established in existing research. However, it can be said that education is associated with promotion based on its association with MOS assignment. Promotion rates are faster in MOSs requiring technical training. Those enlistees with higher educational achievement are most often assigned to technical occupational specialties and are more likely to experience faster promotion. In terms of the association between retention and education, the only findings compare high school graduates to non-high school graduates. High school graduates are significantly more likely to finish their initial enlistment than are non-grads.

The association between race and retention has been well documented. Blacks

are more likely than whites to both complete their initial enlistment and to re-enlist.

However, promotion rates are slower for blacks than for whites as a function of assignment to military occupational specialties. Blacks are more likely to be assigned to less technical support or combat specialties in which promotion times are relatively slow.

However, due to high re-enlistment rates, as a function of time “in-service,” blacks are increasingly over-represented in the ranks of non-commissioned officers.

CHAPTER FIVE  
THE EFFECTS OF MILITARY SERVICE ON SOCIAL MOBILITY AND ATTAINMENT  
FINDINGS OF EXISTING RESEARCH

**CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

The discussion of post-service mobility and attainment will include several issues based on existing research. Prior empirical research has focused on income or earnings and educational attainment of veterans in the years since WWII. The bulk of existing research focuses on Vietnam era veterans and, to some extent, those veterans serving since the advent of the all-volunteer-force. Additionally, some historical comparisons have been made based on socioeconomic data from specific age cohorts of veterans. These studies have shown that the effects of military service have varied depending both on the era in which the veteran served, as well as on differences in veterans' ages.

Differences in veterans' premiums for service are apparent depending on the time of service. In general, pre-Vietnam-era data have shown that veterans earn more than their civilian counterparts. Veterans of WWII and Korea have benefitted both educationally and economically from their service according to Villemez and Kasarda (1976), Martindale and Poston (1979), Little and Fredland (1980), and Xie (1992). While several studies resulted in consistent findings for WWII and Korean veterans (Villemez and Kasarda, 1976; Martindale and Poston, 1979; Detray, 1982; and Rosen and Taubman, 1982), these same studies and several others found that veterans of the

Vietnam war did not benefit educationally or financially from service (Berger and Hirsch, 1983; Schwartz, 1986). Therefore, in the discussion of the effects of military service on veterans' subsequent attainment, it is necessary to divide the discussion into relevant time frames. As we know from chapter three, veterans' educational and socioeconomic origins as compared to non-veterans differ based on the historical era in which the service took place. In the WWII era, veterans had higher SES and educational attainment than non-vets prior to service. This changed somewhat in the years prior to the advent of the AVF. Servicemen during the war in Vietnam were homogenous compared to their civilian counterparts. Following the war in Vietnam, the U.S. Armed Forces became an all volunteer force. Beginning with the advent of the AVF, the population of the armed forces became increasingly black due both to high enlistment and high re-enlistment rates. While black servicemen are believed to be of higher educational and SES than their civilian counterparts, this cannot be definitively asserted for white servicemen in the AVF.

Existing studies have found that those who see the greatest "return" to military service are those who are the least educationally and economically successful prior to service (Villemez and Kasarda, 1976; Rosen and Taubman, 1982; Browning et al., 1973; Berger and Hirsch, 1983). Additionally, racial minorities benefit to a greater degree than do whites (Villemez and Kasarda, 1976; Martindale and Poston, 1979; Little and Fredland, 1979; Detray, 1982). Contrary to these findings, Schwartz (1986), Berger and Hirsch (1983), and Angriest (1989) found that military service did not benefit minorities to a greater degree than whites, a subject to be discussed throughout this chapter. To the



extent that it is possible, this review of literature will focus on racial differences in post-service educational, occupational, and income attainment thought to be attributable to service in the military.

Assertions that military service facilitates future educational and occupational attainment are somewhat confounded. While some research focuses on post-service educational attainment, others focus exclusively on income. Still others discuss the connection between education and earnings. As the discussion of relevant research continues in the next section, the examination will be divided into two sections--one for education and one for income and earnings.

The existing literature on post-service educational attainment will be examined first in each of the relevant time periods. Next will be a discussion of income and earnings. For the sake of lucidity, the articles are summarized in the following table. Included in the table are the author and date of publication, the time period examined, the sample size, the data source, and whether findings illustrated significant positive or negative effects on education and earnings for post-service veterans as compared to civilians.

[Table Thirteen follows]

Summary of Existing Research on Veterans' Post-Service Attainment						
EDUCATION	Authors	Date	Time Period	Sample Size	Data Set	Findings
	XIE	1992	WW II	369,471	CPS 1964-1984	+V
			K			+V
			V			+V
			AVF			-V
	Fredland & Little	1980	WW II	5,020	NLS	+V
	Cohen, et al	1992	V	2,485	ADOL SOC. 1973	-V
	Teachman & Call	1996	V	2,935	CDS 1966 - 1979	-WV
			AVF	5,455	WLS 1972	
				2,889	HSB 1980 - 1986	
Martindale & Poston	1979	WW II	B - 24,119    W - 46,177	1/100 PUS CENSUS	+BV +WV	
		K	B - 17,668    W - 25,291		+BV +WV	
		V	B - 1,785    W - 15,026		+BV -WV	
Cohen, et al.	1995	AVF	7,391	NLSY 1979 - 1985	-V	
Villemez & Kasarda	1976	WW II		US Census 1970	+V	
		K			+V	
		V			-V	

Time Period Legend:    WW II - World War II                      K - Korea                      V - Vietnam                      AVF - All Volunteer Force

Findings Legend:            V - Veterans                      BV - Black Veterans                      WV - White Veterans                      LCWV - Lower Class White Veterans  
 "+" - Positive effect of military service                      "-" - Negative effect of military service

Summary of Existing Research on Veterans' Post-Service Attainment						
INCOME & EARNINGS	Authors	Date	Time Period	Sample Size	Data Set	Findings
	XIE	1992	WW II	369,471	CPS 1964 - 1984	+V
			K			+V
			V			+V
			AVF			+V
	Cutright	1974	K	W - 5,221	AFQT 1950	-V
				B - 1,722	S. S. Earnings 1964	
	Teachman & Call	1996	V	2,935	CDS 1966 - 1979	-WV
			AVF	5,455	NLS 1972	WV
				2,889	HSB 1980 - 1986	BV
Martindale & Poston	1979	WW II	B - 24,119    W - 46,177	1/100 PUS Census 1970	+BV +WV	
		K	B - 17,668    W - 25,291		+BV +WV	
		V	B - 1,785    W - 15,026		+BV -WV	
Angrist	1990	V	W - 67,114	S. S. Earnings	-V	
			B - 21,042	Draft Lottery Numbers		
Little & Fredland	1979	WW II	5,020	WLSM 1966 - 1972	+V	
Berger & Hirsch	1983	V	72,632	CPS 1969 - 1978	-V	
Rosen & Taubman	1982	V	220	CPS 1951 - 1976	-V	
				S. S. Earnings		

	Phillips, et al	1992	AVF	W - 7,257 B - 2,384	NLS 1979 - 1984	+WV +BV
	Card	1983	V	998	Talent 1981	-V
	Browning, et al	1973	WW II K	W - 23,286 B - 1,474	1/100 PUS Census 1960	+LCWV +BV
	Villemez & Kasarda	1976	WW II K V		Census 1970	+V +V -V

Time Period Legend: WW II - World War II      K - Korea      V - Vietnam      AVF - All Volunteer Force

Findings Legend: V - Veterans      BV - Black Veterans      WV - White Veterans      LCWV - Lower Class White Veterans

“+” - Positive effect of military service      “-” - Negative effect of military service

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

### *WWII and Korean Veterans*

Only four articles included original research on the post-service educational attainment of WWII veterans: Martindale and Poston (1979), Villemez and Kasarda (1976), Fredland and Little (1980), and Xie (1992). In all of these studies, veteran status was found to be positively associated with educational attainment for servicemen in this period.

Martindale and Poston used three 1/100 Public Use Samples of the 1970 U.S. Census of Population to obtain a sample of 16,127 black WWII veterans and 7,992 non-veterans and 37,870 white WWII veterans and 8,307 non-veterans. For the Korean war period, they obtained data on 9,581 black veterans and 8,087 non-veterans as well as 17,875 white veterans and 7,485 non-veterans. The veterans and non-veterans were matched on the basis of age, but no distinction was available between veterans who were drafted and those who enlisted. Education was measured as the highest year of school completed.

Martindale and Poston found that veterans who served in WWII and Korea had significantly higher mean years of education than non-veterans of the same age. The educational ratios of veterans to non-veterans were 1.04 for blacks and 1.12 for whites

in the WWII cohorts. For the Korean cohorts, the ratios were 1.02 for blacks and 1.19 for whites.

Martindale and Poston (1979) restricted their sample to men reporting earnings in 1970. This excludes all men who were unemployed. The lack of data on the unemployed is unfortunate because it is unknown to what extent unemployment rates of men may be influenced by educational attainment for veterans and non-veterans to differing degrees.

Villemez and Kasarda (1976) using a sample from the same 1970 Census data found similar results. They included men aged eighteen through sixty-four and matched the veterans to non-veterans according to age ranges rather than age by age as did Martindale and Poston (1979). Furthermore, Villemez and Kasarda measured education only as mean number of veterans compared to non-veterans who obtained a college degree rather than in mean years of school completed, as did Martindale and Poston. They find that veterans from WWII and Korean cohorts had significantly higher average rates of college completion than did non-veterans. Given in percentages, the results showed that for WWII veterans there exists a 15.2% rate of college completion as compared to 8.3% for the same cohort of non-veterans; 18.3% of Korean era veterans completed college, while civilians of this cohort averaged 15.2%.

In a 1980 study, Fredland and Little found results similar to Martindale and Poston (1979) and Villemez and Kasarda (1976). Fredland and Little utilized data from

the National Longitudinal Survey, to obtain a sample of 5,020 men aged forty-five to fifty-nine years of age in 1966. Most of the veterans included were WWII veterans who were thought to be ex-military for a significant period of time. The advantage to this relatively long time period between discharge and data analysis is that the “effects of military service may be interpreted to be permanent” (pg. 537). Education was defined as grade of school completed and the range was 0-18.

Fredland and Little (1980) found that both black and white WWII veterans had significantly higher average education than non-veterans. The mean number of years of education for black veterans was 8.69, while the mean number of years for black civilians was 6.12. For whites, veterans averaged 11.11 years of education, while civilians averaged 9.83 years. This is in agreement with earlier studies finding consistently that veterans from the WWII and Korean eras enjoyed higher educational attainment than non-veterans from these same periods. As with the other studies, there were no controls for the background variables of servicemen. These variables were discussed in an earlier chapter and include education, family income, fathers’ and mothers’ education, and fathers’ occupation. Therefore, these findings can be interpreted as valid to the extent that veterans and non-veterans were analogous prior to service.

In a recent study, Xie (1992) compared the educational status of male veterans to non-veterans. Using data obtained from the 1964-84 March CPS, he selected civilian males aged 18 to 35 at the time of the survey. Xie classified the 369,471 cases

into 15,222 cells according to age, race, cohort, education, enrollment in school, veteran status, and hours worked. He utilized multi variate analysis to predict the probability that a person is a veteran. Education was defined as the years of school completed by the respondent and was categorized into 0-8, 9-11, 12, 13-15, and 16 years of more.

Xie found that educational attainment of both black and white veterans surpasses that of non-veterans only after age 28. Because this is an age at which few additional enlistments can be expected, it is thought that this higher educational attainment by veterans is obtained after exiting the military. In other words, it is thought that military service and education are somewhat mutually exclusive or at the least competing activities. Therefore, it is in the period several years after discharge that veterans complete their education. On the other hand, civilians are thought to complete what education will be acquired in their lifetime in the earlier years.

Of particular strength is Xie's use of longitudinal cohort analysis so that education can be compared from the age 18 through 35. In this way, it is possible to show change in the differential between veterans and non-veterans throughout these ages. For instance, he finds that a differential between veterans and non-veterans at the age of eighteen in 1945 was nonexistent. However, when this same age cohort reached the age of thirty-five, veterans possessed an average of almost one year more of schooling than non-veterans. Veterans were behind non-veterans in years of schooling between the ages of twenty and twenty-five. By the age of twenty-six,



veterans had approximately three months more schooling.

Xie's (1992) research illustrates the necessity of measuring veteran's educational attainment *at least* as long after discharge as the current length of enlistment. To clarify, if length of enlistment was thirty months, any cohort comparison of veteran to civilian education would need to take place *no less than* thirty months after discharge to give veterans sufficient time in the civilian world on which to base a comparison to non-veterans. Because enlistment is rare following the age of twenty-eight, it holds that comparisons of veterans to civilians would be most accurate some thirty-four years after the birth of the cohort.

Xie's analysis is the most substantial work in the area of both educational and income comparison of veterans and non-veterans to date. This work will be discussed throughout the chapter as it applies. The value of the analysis lies both in its large sample as well as in its longitudinal nature allowing for comparisons between war cohorts as well as within and between age groups.

Because all four studies of educational attainment reached the same conclusions using different data and measures, it is believed that the higher educational attainment of veterans in this period has been sufficiently established. However, it must be noted that research discussed in chapter three illustrated the higher educational attainment of veterans of this period *prior* to service. Because these four studies did not control for prior education, it is plausible that the veterans would have achieved higher levels of subsequent education regardless of military service. In other words, the

men who served in the military during this time may provide a self-selected sample somewhat biased towards higher educational attainment. As discussed earlier, veterans were screened regarding mental competence and to the extent that those who were accepted for service were of average to above average mental aptitude, it would be expected that they would attain higher levels of education post-service.

Additionally, as will be discussed in the final chapter, the GI Bill has played a role in post-service educational attainment of servicemen. This educational incentive could theoretically have played a major role in the educational attainment of veterans during this period.

### *Vietnam Era Veterans*

Research into the effect of military service on the educational attainment of Vietnam veterans results in conflicting findings. In direct opposition to research on the earlier periods, some research has found a negative effect of military service on Vietnam veterans (Villemez and Kasarda, 1976; Teachman and Call, 1996; Cohen, Segal, and Temme, 1992). Other research has found the effect of service on educational attainment to be marginally positive, especially for black veterans (Martindale and Poston, 1979; Xie, 1992).

Research by Villemez and Kasarda (1976) was discussed in an earlier section, but their investigation as extended to Vietnam veterans has not been mentioned. Although they also used 1970 Census data and found that veterans of earlier cohorts

enjoyed an educational advantage, they did not find a premium for either white or black veterans of the Vietnam cohort. In summary, they found that veterans of the Vietnam era were less likely to be college graduates than were civilians (12.9% as compared to 19.2%). This result is not surprising given the age of Vietnam veterans at the time of the study. Vietnam veterans are those who served between 1964 and 1970. Given that the study used 1970 Census data to compare veteran and civilian college graduation rates (the measure of education), it should be expected that Vietnam veterans would lag behind.

If we accept that military service and furthering education are “competing” activities and do not normally occur concurrently, then this cohort of veterans did not have sufficient time to complete college post-service at the time of Villemez and Kasarda’s study. For instance, a college education normally lasts at least four years. To be included in the study as a Vietnam veteran the serviceman had to be discharged no earlier than 1965, leaving five years before the 1970 Census to complete college. Civilians of this same age cohort had at least two and a half more years in which to obtain a college degree. While those discharged in 1965 could have possibly spent four years in college, those discharged after 1967 could not have completed a college education prior to the Census on which this study is based. Therefore, the Villemez and Kasarda study (1976) is thought to be potentially unreliable due to their measurement of education as a nominal level variable based on college completion and the time frame of the analysis.

Teachman and Call (1996) are in agreement with Villemez and Kasarda (1976) concerning the negative effects of military service on both white and black veterans of the Vietnam era. The Teachman and Call (1996) sample consisted of data on 1412 black men and 9887 white men graduating from high school in 1965, 1972, and 1980. Only the CDS data collected in 1965-66 is relevant for the present discussion. Even after introducing controls for self-selectivity, the CDS data show significant negative results of military service on white veterans' educational attainment. In other words, after controlling for relevant background characteristics and prior educational attainment, white Vietnam veterans were less educated in 1979-80 than their civilian counterparts.

Teachman and Call's research on Vietnam veterans is somewhat lacking. As was mentioned, their sample included only 2,935 white, Washington State seniors. Generalizations from this small geographically homogenous population could theoretically be called into question. Additionally, no comparisons are available for black veterans and civilians.

Cohen, Segal, and Temme (1992) also found lower educational attainment for Vietnam era veterans. The Adolescent Society follow-up study from 1973 provided Cohen et al. (1992) with a sample of 2,485 white males, 947 of whom had served in the armed forces. Educational attainment was measured as a continuous variable by number of years completed. Findings pointed to a significantly negative effect of military service on educational attainment for the veterans in the sample even after

controlling for relevant background variables. While these findings are consistent with other research, it should be remembered that only a relatively small sample of Midwestern *white* males were included in the study. Additionally, sufficient time may not have elapsed for veterans who possibly interrupted schooling for military service to catch-up with their civilian peers.

Martindale and Poston (1979) included an analysis of Vietnam veterans' post-service attainment in the research earlier discussed. Using the 1/100 PUS of the 1970 Census, they obtained a sample of 3,432 black and 7,543 white veterans. The sample also included 7,992 black and 7,485 white non-veterans. Defining education as the highest year of school completed, they found that while comparisons of educational attainment for white veterans and civilians was not significant, black veterans did significantly surpass their civilian counterparts in terms of educational attainment though less so than in earlier periods. Furthermore, the education that was attained was translated into higher wages for black veterans as compared to black civilians. White veterans did not enjoy this premium. In other words, black veterans received higher compensation for the same education than did black civilians. This will be discussed further in another section.

As noted earlier, Xie asserted that the educational return to military service comes only after approximately age twenty-six for veterans of WWII and Korea. Xie found that the Vietnam cohort of veterans gradually reached and in some cases surpassed the educational attainment on non-veterans in their late twenties. For

instance, the 1946-47 birth cohort would have been eighteen years of age when the war started in 1964. The non-veterans of this cohort had almost one year more education than non-veterans by the age of nineteen. This continued to be the case until the cohort reached age twenty-eight at which point veterans had approximately the same years of education as non-veterans (13.2 and 13.3 respectively). By age thirty-five, veterans' education surpassed non-veterans' by a small margin.

To reiterate, both Xie (1992) and Martindale and Poston (1979) found that black veterans had higher educational attainment than non-veterans. Xie also supported these findings for white veterans. Villemez and Kasarda (1976), Teachman and Call (1996), and Cohen et al. (1992) found a negative association between military service and educational attainment. Due to weaknesses in the samples of the latter three studies, the findings of Xie (1992) and Martindale and Poston (1979) will be relied upon. It can thus be said that black Vietnam era veterans have marginally higher educational attainment than non-veterans by the age of thirty years. It should be pointed out that the findings illustrate a definitely smaller educational advantage for Vietnam veterans as compared to earlier cohorts. As will be discussed in the next chapter, it may be significant that Vietnam veterans did not benefit from an armed forces educational incentive (such as the GI Bill) to the degree that earlier cohorts benefitted.

### *Veterans of the AVF*

Research on the educational attainment of veterans serving in the all-volunteer

force is scarce. Only three original works exist, including Xie (1996), Cohen, Warner, and Segal (1995), and Teachman and Call (1996). Cohen et al. and Teachman and Call agree that military service has a negative effect on the subsequent educational attainment of veterans in the all-volunteer force. Xie also finds that veterans born after 1955, and therefore eligible for the AVF, lag behind their civilian counterparts in terms of education.

Xie's findings have been previously discussed as they relate to earlier cohorts of veterans. In sum, these findings illustrate an educational premium for veterans prior to the advent of the AVF. However, this attainment occurs following discharge and is not evident until the cohort reaches its late twenties. Additionally, the veterans' advantage was decreasingly evident in the Vietnam cohort as compared to the WWII and Korean veterans. Xie's sample includes data on age cohorts born from 1928 through 1965. However, for those born in the years making them eligible for service in the AVF, data follows them through a decreasing number of years. For the cohort born in 1955, (the first eligible for the AVF), data are only available through age 29. The results show that at the age of eighteen, veterans trailed behind non-veterans in educational attainment by .5 years. This continued until age 29 when the gap closed to .3 years. As with earlier cohorts for whom information is available through age 35, it is possible that veteran's subsequent educational attainment might have surpassed non-veterans' in later years of life. While this may be the case, no research exists to affirm this notion. Xie concludes that for cohorts born after 1955, veterans trail behind non-veterans in

educational attainment.

Teachman and Call (1996), using data from the NLS, CDS, and HSB, found a negative association between military service in the AVF and educational attainment for white veterans. While the association was negative, it was not significantly so for black veterans in the NLS (1972) sample and actually nonexistent in the HSB data.

Therefore, in the later cohort included in the HSB data, no difference was found between black veterans and civilians graduating from high school in the years 1980-1986. The weaknesses of this data have been discussed in an earlier section and will therefore not be reiterated. However, it should be noted that results from this research relied on an extremely small data set for results on Vietnam era veterans. The sample was somewhat higher for the AVF cohort (1,412 black and 6932 white respondents) and are therefore thought to be more reliable.

Cohen et al. (1995) used data from the National Longitudinal Survey Youth Cohort for the years 1979-1985 to investigate the association between military service and educational attainment. This panel survey provided the researchers with a sample of 7,391. Educational attainment was measured as the number of years of completed education as self-reported by the respondent. In agreement with Xie (1996) and Teachman and Call (1996), Cohen found that AVF veterans lagged behind non-veterans in years of education. Veterans averaged 12.24 years of education, while non-veterans averaged 12.65 years. The difference was found to be significant at the .05 level. While seemingly small, this gap is "larger than the national median difference



in years of education between blacks and whites” (pg. 95).

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The relationship between military service on subsequent educational attainment was positive for veterans throughout the period stretching from WWII through the Korean war era. Beginning in the Vietnam era, research shows that educational attainment remained relatively higher for black veterans, but only marginally so for white veterans. In the period of the AVF, research has consistently found that veterans have overall slightly lower educational attainment than non-veterans.

## **INCOME AND EARNINGS**

### *WWII AND Korean Veterans*

Consistent with expectations based on the level of education prior to service of WWII and Korean veterans, studies have found that veterans of these era have higher post-service income than non-veterans (Browning et al., 1973; Little and Fredland, 1979; Martindale and Poston, 1979; Villemez and Kasarda, 1976; Xie, 1996). Therefore, it can be assumed that military service had a positive impact on WWII and Korean veterans' attainment. Research shows this is especially true for racial minorities and lower class white men. (The exception to this research, Cutright (1974)

dealing with Korean era veterans will be discussed also.)

Browning, Lopreato, and Poston (1973) performed the first empirical test on the hypothesis that the military serves as a “career contingency” influencing the later income attainment of servicemen. Their data were obtained from the 1960 Census and included Mexican Americans, blacks, and whites aged twenty-five to fifty. The sample was restricted to men in five southwestern states who were employed full-time in nonfarm occupations and had completed at least five years of formal education. Income was the dependent variable and income was compared by race and occupational groups. Differences in veterans’ and non-veterans’ years of education were controlled in the analysis. In all six occupational categories, black veterans received a significantly higher income than non-veterans. Among whites, those veterans in lower status occupations received significantly more income than non-veterans in the same occupational categories. These findings lend support for the idea of the military as a “bridging environment” positively effecting both blacks and lower status whites.

Following the Browning et al., (1973) study, the perceived positive impact of military service has been described as a “bridging environment.” The bridging hypothesis asserts that the armed forces serves as “an environment in which the individual may acquire new skills and abilities which, after military service, could help him in his civilian career” (Browning et al., 1973:76). The positive effects of the military as a “bridging environment” contradicted earlier works asserting the negative impacts of

service due to interruptions in formal education, occupational training, or acquisition of seniority (Kassing, 1970).

The military as a “bridging environment” is based on several effects of military service. First, military service is seen as a distinct break from civilian life both geographically and psychologically. This separation provides opportunities for increased independence and self-reliance as well as the opportunity for servicemen to work in an integrated setting. Second, the opportunities for occupational training and educational benefits are seen as positive for the servicemen. Many veterans take advantage of this opportunity to further their education both during their military service and in their post-military civilian life. The applicability of military occupational training to civilian careers has been examined by both Little and Fredland (1979) and Mangum and Bell (1987). The results of these studies as they apply differentially to racial minorities will be discussed in a later section.

Finally, the military is viewed by many as a “bridging environment” based on the servicemen’s increased experience in working within a complex, bureaucratic atmosphere. Browning et al., (1973) assert that “geographic mobility and personal independence, educational, occupational training of various kinds, and experience with bureaucratic structures all make it easier for the veteran to obtain those civilian jobs that provide better pay” (p.77).

Little and Fredland (1979) argue that the “bridging” hypothesis is “overly broad.” Using data on WWII veterans twenty years after the war, they explore the possibility

that two other propositions are responsible for the premium to veterans of this era. The first testable proposition relates to the “effects of good health.” According to Little and Fredland (1979), there is reason to believe that “good health,” both mentally and physically, is a requirement of military service due to enlistment standards. Those who did not possess good mental and physical health were screened out. It is thought that these same individuals would suffer the consequences of poor health in the civilian labor market. Additionally, the military is seen as benefitting health due to active duty medical care as well as healthful “habits” or routines learned while in service.

The second proposition concerns veterans’ post-service employment opportunities within the federal government structure. Little and Fredland assert that preference provisions in various levels of government and civil service jobs provide veterans with an increased opportunity for income than jobs in the private sector. These preferences may lead to increased opportunity for income and occupation not available to non-veterans.

Little and Fredland (1979) test these propositions using older male cohort data obtained from the National Longitudinal Survey (n=5,020). By using data on veterans some twenty years after service the researchers were not hampered in their interpretations based on short-term occupational or income gains as might have been the case for veterans released from active duty a relatively short time before the investigation. By controlling for subjects’ socio-economic background, Fredland and Little produced for findings not subject to misinterpretation based on possible self-

selection of servicemen during WWII.

Research by Little and Fredland demonstrated “that military service contributed to the income of black and white veterans and enhanced the socioeconomic status of white veterans some twenty years after their active duty” (pg. 542). Military service added almost 8 percent to white income and almost 10 percent to black income. Additionally, service added two and a half Duncan index points for whites even after controlling for background prior to service. Surprisingly, the occupational attainment of black veterans was not found to be significantly related to prior service.

In terms of the three elements of the bridging hypothesis set forth by Brown et al., veterans were not found to be more geographically mobile than non-veterans. However, military occupational training was found to be related to higher income and status for whites but not for blacks. This could be a function of the relatively limited training received by black servicemen in the WWII era. Both black and white veterans were found to have higher educational attainment than non-veterans.

Government employment and good health were both found to be related to income and status attainment. Both black and white veterans were found to be in better overall health than their civilian counterparts. It is posited that overall good health is rewarded in the civilian workplace. While government employment was not implicated in whites’ increased income and status, it was significantly related to black veterans’ income and status. 28 percent of black veterans are employed in government, while only 14 percent of black civilians are thus employed. Government

employment held significant positive consequences for black earnings and status.

While Little and Fredland found the military to be positively associated with income and status, they disagreed with earlier findings by Browning et al. that military service “pays off” at a greater rate for black than for white veterans.

Prior research by Villemez and Kasarda (1976) and Martindale and Poston (1979) have been discussed in previous sections. As stated earlier, both relied on 1970 Census data for their samples and both examined the socioeconomic attainment of WWII veterans and non-veterans by race approximately two decades later. These two studies are in agreement finding that both black and white WWII veterans had higher socioeconomic attainment than non-veterans of this cohort. However, they differed somewhat in their measures. Villemez and Kasarda (1976) used Census data on reported income of veterans and non-veterans, while Martindale and Poston relied on reported earnings as a measure of socioeconomic status. Earnings include other sources of funds in addition to income or wages from work. While the measures differed, the results were same. WWII veterans were found to have significantly higher incomes and/or earnings than the same cohort of civilians twenty years following service.

Xie’s (1992) research using a cohort-aging perspective, has been described in the previous section as it pertains to veterans’ educational attainment. This same study found a small but significantly positive effect of veterans’ status on earnings. The difference in earnings between veterans and non-veterans was found to be highly

dependent on race and educational attainment. The earnings ratio between blacks and whites was found to be 74.2 percent among non-veterans and 79.1 percent among veterans. Additionally, it was found that those veterans with fewer than eight years of schooling benefitted most. For these veterans wage's were 15.4 percent higher than for non-veterans with the same education. Xie concludes that veterans status holds the highest premium for socially disadvantaged groups, in agreement with the "bridging" hypothesis set forth by Browning et al. (1973). However, these premiums are not realized until a period of time following discharge.

Not all research has been in agreement concerning post-service earnings and attainment. Cutright (1974) has questioned Browning et al.'s findings based on several methodological issues. First, Cutright asserts that Browning et al. may have obtained misleading results based on controls for occupational status: "If veterans are more likely to be in a higher (or lower) occupational group as a result of military service, this effect is lost." (pg. 319). The second potential problem lies in the small sample included in some minority occupational groups. Fewer than one-hundred veterans and non-veterans are included in some of these occupational groups making direct standardization unreliable. Possibly the greatest potential flaw of the Browning et al. study is related to their failure to control for age. As both Cutright and Xie point out, the percentage of veterans is higher in the older age groups, inferring that veterans earn more without controlling for age may be a misinterpretation. Income increases with age and experience in the labor force. Explanations of higher income based on military

service may be confounded by the age structure if veterans are disproportionately represented in the older age groups where income is often higher. For instance, if we accept that income is often higher after age thirty and veterans make up 70 percent of the sample over age thirty but only 50 percent of the sample in the lower paid ages between twenty-five and thirty, the interpretation that veterans earn higher incomes than non-veterans may be flawed.

Cutright (1974), in an attempt to correct the flaws he felt were evident in previous studies, linked data from the Selective Service files with earnings records from Social Security. Using data on men born between 1927-1934, he obtained a white sample size of 5,221 and a black sample size of 1,722. Variables included geographic area, race, age, Social Security earnings in 1964, AFQT scores, and years of education. Cutright's analysis compares earnings for veterans and non-veterans matched in terms of age, race, AFQT, education, and region of employment. In this way, he assesses the effect of military service on earnings while controlling for these characteristics.

Cutright's findings indicate a small positive effect of service for earnings of draftees. However, this was only in the lowest AFQT interval. For the largest majority of white men, the effect of service was negatively associated with earnings. Cutright asserts that this negative effect is largely due to time lost in the civilian labor market. For blacks, no comparisons were reliable based on the small sample sizes within each AFQT category. In sum, Cutright was unable to support earlier work by Browning et al. in finding that the military served as a "bridging environment" for minorities and lower



SES white men.

### *Vietnam Veterans*

While research largely demonstrates a premium for veterans of WWII and Korea, many researchers say this is not the case for Vietnam veterans. In terms of income, it seems that the trend established by WWII and Korean veterans was reversed for veterans of the war in Vietnam. Overall, Vietnam veterans have lower incomes and earnings than their civilian counterparts (Angrist, 1990; Rosen and Taubman, 1982; Berger and Hirsch, 1983; Teachman and Call, 1996; Martindale and Poston, 1979; Card, 1983). However, blacks are the exception to the rule; black veterans earn greater incomes than non-veterans according to Card (1983), Xie (1992), and Martindale and Poston (1979).

Angrist's (1990) research analyzes the long-term labor market consequences of service during the Vietnam era. Angrist (1990) attempting to control for self selection among servicemen in the Vietnam era, utilizes the five draft lotteries during this period "to set up a natural experiment that randomly influenced who served in the military" (pg. 314). Additionally, he used aggregate level data from the Social Security Administration to compare 1966-1984 earnings for draft-eligible men and those exempted from the draft in the same period. By matching birth dates of those eligible for the draft with SSA information on income, Angrist hoped to minimize the extent that draftees and

enlistees were a self-selected sample with certain characteristics in common.

According to Angrist's (1990) findings, draft eligible men both white and nonwhite, experienced lower income through 1984, than those exempt from the draft. For whites the loss was statistically significant at approximately \$3,500 annually for veterans as compared to non-veterans. Nonwhites who were draft eligible did not experience a statistically significant loss in income.

While Angrist's (1990) research is often cited, it is seriously flawed. First, aggregated level data on income based on the birth dates of those who *might* have been drafted is not a sufficient measure. Regardless of who might have been drafted, those who actually *served* in the military would be the appropriate population from which to sample. Secondly, Angrist (1990) apparently does not recognize that being eligible or ineligible for the draft provides possible clues as to the selectivity of those who served. For instance, those ineligible did not differ merely by birth date but possibly also by other characteristics including health, mental ability, imprisonment, college enrollment ...etc. Finally, and most importantly, Angrist (1990) does not identify to what extent enlistment as opposed to being drafted might have affected the quality of his sample. In short, the findings of this research must be questioned as a possibly inaccurate representation of the impact of military service on veterans' post-service income.

Using a matched sample of Social Security and CPS data, Rosen and Taubman (1982) find that veterans earn approximately 19 percent less than non-veterans. The

sample included only 220 Vietnam era white male veterans for whom earnings were observed between 1951 and 1976. While this paper is seen as a major contribution, it nonetheless has certain flaws. They included a Vietnam-era veteran dummy variable in their earnings regressions and by doing this they do not allow for the veteran/non-veteran differential to vary across time, age, or cohort. Additionally, their “non-veterans” include peacetime veterans as well as those who have never served in the military.

In an attempt to show changes over time in veterans’ and non-veterans’ earning patterns, Berger and Hirsch (1983) examine veteran and non-veteran differences in civilian earnings by cohort, age, and year. Using the 1969 through 1978 Current Population Surveys they trace the earnings of eleven cohorts of men born between 1942 and 1952 (n=72,632). While they find few overall differences between veterans and non-veterans earnings, they do produce some interesting findings.

First, Berger and Hirsch (1983) find that while veterans with at least a high school degree earn a small percentage less than non-veterans; veterans with only 8-11 years of schooling earn approximately three percent more than comparably educated civilians. Additionally, they found that the “longitudinal age-earnings profiles for veterans, while initially lower than for non-veterans, are also initially steeper” (pg. 469). The earnings differences between veterans and non-veterans is nonexistent by the age of 26. Finally, based on this research there is no evidence of an additional premium for veterans later in life or for nonwhite veterans as compared to white veterans.

Teachman and Call include education, occupation, and income attainment in

their

1996 examination of the relationship between military service and post-service attainment. They analyze the relationship for whites only in the Vietnam era (the analysis extends to blacks in the later discussion of the AVF) using CDS data from 1966 through 1979 previously described in the discussion of educational attainment of veterans serving in the Vietnam era.

Teachman and Call (1996) find that white Vietnam veterans suffer negative consequences from military service. After controlling for measured background characteristics, the lower occupational and income attainment of this cohort of veterans is left unexplained. Therefore, it is concluded that military service is negatively associated with income and occupational attainment for white veterans of the Vietnam war period.

As described in an earlier section, Teachman and Call's research on Vietnam veterans is somewhat lacking. As was mentioned, their sample included only 2,935 white, Washington State seniors. Generalizations from this small geographically homogenous population could theoretically be called into question. Additionally, no comparisons are available for black veterans and civilians.

The 1979 analysis by Martindale and Poston also covers Vietnam war veterans. For this era of veterans they obtained a sample of 1,785 blacks and 15,026 whites from the 1970 PUS 1/100. This data provided information on the 1969 annual earnings of veterans as discussed in earlier sections. Their findings showed a positive effect on the

annual earnings of black Vietnam era veterans of \$825. However white veterans received \$492 less per year than civilians of the same age.

These findings should be interpreted with a degree of caution based on the year of the information (1969). Given earlier findings of veterans' education and earnings it is likely that data on Vietnam era veterans should not be relied on for explanatory purposes until *at least* the mid-seventies. While Martindale and Poston's research on earlier cohorts of veterans are considered reliable, the data on Vietnam veterans is considered flawed. The war in Vietnam was not even over when this data was collected and other research must be depended on for information on the relative earnings of this cohort.

A more reliable body of research on the earnings of Vietnam era veterans is provided by Card (1983). Using data on 998 men obtained from the TALENT survey, she provides more reliable findings on the relative earnings of Vietnam era veterans than earlier described works. While the sample is small, Card (1983) manages to control for background variables in the family of origin and in education that earlier works failed to control. Using income as the dependent variable and "veteran status and race" as a dependent variable, she further analyzed educational attainment as a covariant. The subjects included were thirty-six years of age at the time of the survey in 1981, meaning that the subjects were of the 1945 birth cohort. By the age of thirty-six it is thought that a comparison of Vietnam veterans to non-veterans could be considered

appropriate given that almost a decade had passed since the end of the war.

Card (1983) found that military service in the Vietnam war era resulted in career-related deficits for veterans. This includes an income deficit as compared to their non-veteran peers which extends as late as ten years after discharge from the military. She finds that nonwhites are equally disadvantaged by military service in this period even when educational and other differences between veterans and non-veterans are controlled.

Xie's 1992 research (previously discussed in an earlier section), using a much larger sample than Card (1983), shows a slight earnings advantage for veterans of the Vietnam era after controlling for age and prior educational attainment. What advantage exists occurs later in life and is more evident for those of lower socio-economic status and racial minorities.

In summary, Xie's findings illustrate a small but significant positive effect of military service on the civilian earnings of veterans. Overall, veterans earn 1.3 percent more than non-veterans of the same age. This is consistently found after the age of twenty-nine and the advantage is somewhat higher for black veterans and veterans with less than twelve years of schooling. This supports the Browning et al. (1973) "bridging" hypothesis that military service is especially beneficial to blacks and those with low educational attainment prior to service.

*Veterans of the AVF*

The income and earning of AVF veterans have been analyzed by Xie (1996), Teachman and Call (1996), and Phillips, Andrisani, Daymont, and Gilroy. Essentially, Xie's findings for the earnings of AFV veterans are consistent with findings on Vietnam era veterans. Veterans consistently demonstrate higher earnings than non-veterans. This premium is largest for nonwhites and those with less than twelve years of schooling. However, this advantage was small beginning with Vietnam era veterans and extending through the AVF.

It should also be noted that Xie's data extends only through 1984, a mere eleven years after the advent of the AVF. Therefore, veterans experiencing a three year enlistment in the AVF have only returned to the civilian labor force eight years prior. While the earliest cohorts included in Xie's research are twenty-nine years of age, the later cohorts are increasingly younger. It would be expected that following discharge, there would be an immediate, but possibly short-lived, drop in veterans earnings. It is plausible that short-term disadvantages by younger cohorts of the AVF have not been overcome and are therefore reflected in Xie's data. In later years, it is speculated that veterans of the AVF possibly have increased earnings relative to non-veterans based on findings in the earlier cohorts serving in WWII and Korea.

While previously discussed research on income by Teachman and Call (1996) was criticized for its small, all-white sample, their data on the AVF is somewhat larger. To investigate the relationship between military service and income attainment during

the era of the AVF, Teachman and Call use three data sets including the Career Development Study (CDS), National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (NLS), High School and Beyond Study (HSB). The Career Development Study population consisted of juniors and seniors in Washington State public high schools in 1965-66. This same population was interviewed again thirteen years later in 1979-80. Teachman and Call obtained a sample of 2935 white men from this existing data source.

The NLS included respondents in their senior year of high school in the United States. The population was followed and interviewed in 1972, 1973, 1974, 1976, and 1979. Data on 500 black men and 4955 white men were obtained from this study for use by Teachman and Call. The third data base, is for the most part a replication of the NLS. The High School and Beyond Study (1980) as well as its follow-up of 1980 seniors in 1982, 1984, and 1986 were used. Of the population for which data was obtained, 912 black men and 1977 white men were included in Teachman and Call's (1996) research. Both the NLS and the HSB were based on a stratified random sample of U.S. public, private, and church-affiliated schools.

Income is measured as the "annual value of wages or salary associated with current (or latest) job held for at least 6 months in each data base" (pg. 14). For veterans, this includes only jobs held following discharge. Controls were used for relevant background variables including: number of siblings, father's education, mother's education, and grade point average in high school. No control was instituted



for income in the family of origin. The effects of military service were considered separately for blacks and whites in the analysis.

Teachman and Call (1996) found no evidence to support the contention that military service affected subsequent civilian income for either blacks or whites. In essence they assert that there is no relationship between military service and income attainment for veterans of the AVF after controlling for background variables. Given the controls used in the analysis, these findings are thought to be valid. However, as in other studies of the AVF, the time elapsed between discharge and the measure of income attainment is not identifiable among the veteran population. There is no way to know if sufficient time has elapsed for veterans to overcome short-term decreases in earnings following discharge.

Phillips et al. (1992) used data from the National Longitudinal Survey 1979-1984 to assess the impact of military service on income attainment for veterans serving at that time as well as for discharged veterans as compared to non-veterans. In this way Phillips et al. could, for the first time, address the income attainment of active-duty servicemen to civilians. They restricted their sample to men aged 18-21 in 1979 who would have been 23-26 by the last year of the survey in 1984. Their sample of 11,180 was divided into three groups. The first group consisted of 2,874 men who entered the military and completed their enlistment by the age of 23. The second group included 511 men who completed 16 years of schooling by age 23. And the third group consisted of 7,795 men who were included in the civilian labor market. The regression

equations were estimated by race for non-Hispanic whites, blacks, and Hispanics using annual wage and salary earnings as the dependent variable.

The results of this analysis show a significant earnings advantage for both black and white servicemen while in the military. Therefore, as compared to their counterparts in the civilian labor force, white non-Hispanic and black servicemen have greater earnings. White men earned an average of \$1,280 more annually while in the military than their civilian cohort. This positive differential was even greater for black servicemen who averaged \$4,655 more than their civilian peers.

Upon discharge, white servicemen were found to experience a relative decrease in earnings for a short period. However, within two years of discharge the earnings of the white veteran will supercede those of his civilian counterpart. Black earnings also drop following discharge, but unlike white veterans, black veterans' income does not drop below that of their civilian counterpart. On the other hand, while black veterans do not experience the short-term drop, neither do they experience the higher relative income later. Black veterans' long-term earnings following discharge were not found to be significantly different than if they had remained in the civilian labor market.

Phillips et al. construct earnings profiles over an eight year time span for both blacks and whites. They assert that for "non-Hispanic whites who chose the military, earnings would total \$103,850 over this period as compared to \$98,500 for those who went directly into the civilian labor market after high school" (pg.354). For blacks, the military choice is worth \$14,000 over the eight year period. The military choice is

beneficial for both whites and blacks while in-service, but blacks do not continue to enjoy earnings premiums following discharge. The \$14,000 advantage over eight years is approximately the same as the three year in-service advantage of \$13,965.

While Phillips et al. assert an earning premium following discharge for whites, it seems that the data do not support this. Even though whites benefitted by \$5,350 over the eight year period, this is largely attributable to the advantage of \$1,280 per year enjoyed in the average three year enlistment. The remaining advantage of approximately \$1,500 is not sufficiently large to deem a relative advantage in a sample of 7,257.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Veterans from the WWII and Korean war era were economically advantaged compared to non-veterans based on the findings of published research. These veterans earned significantly more post-service than their civilian counterparts. However, the veterans of the Vietnam era have been penalized economically for military service, with blacks and the less educated fairs somewhat better than whites. In the AVF, both blacks and whites earn relatively more while in-service, but benefit only slightly upon re-entering the civilian work force.

Importantly, some of the published research comparing veterans' and non-

veterans' incomes failed to adequately control for income and/or earnings prior to military service. Based on research by Fligstein (1976) and Berryman (1988) discussed earlier, WWII and Korean veterans were somewhat economically advantaged prior to service. This advantage could theoretically have endured regardless of military participation.

Table fourteen is a comparison of veterans' and non-veterans' incomes both prior to, and following, military service. Shown are the ratios of veteran to non-veteran incomes. Berryman's (1988) data provided the only source for mean income for the periods including World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. However, while mean incomes were provided for veterans and non-veterans, no breakdown by race was provided. Data for the post-service comparison were taken from Villemez and Kasarda (1976). Their publication was the most comprehensive to date in providing mean incomes, by race, for veterans and non-veterans, in the periods shown below.

TABLE FOURTEEN								
RATIO OF VETERAN TO NON-VETERAN MEAN INCOMES BY PERIOD								
	WW II		Korean War		Vietnam		AVF	
	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
<b>Prior to Service*</b>		1.20		1.21		1.02	No data	No data
<b>Post-service**</b>	1.34	1.24	1.21	1.22	1.09	1.17	No data	No data
<b>SOURCES: * Berryman, 1988; no data breakdown by race</b>					<b>**Villemez and Kasarda, 1976</b>			

Due to a lack of data, no statistical comparison is possible using the ratios to determine the statistical significance of the differences in ratios, the table does provide a somewhat clearer picture. The ratios of veterans' to non-veterans' earnings were higher post-service. However, without an appropriate statistical test, the significance of this difference cannot be determined. Therefore, we are forced to rely on existing research findings for information on the significance of the association of military service with post-service earnings, often in the absence of necessary controls on pre-service income and/or earnings.

In the next chapter, the discussion will focus on explanations of “benefits” and “drawbacks” of military service. Explanations of these differences will include those supported in prior research in this area. Additionally, the next chapter will include discussion on the relative differences in attainment between black and white servicemen in the differing socio-historical periods. Comparisons will be made and explanations posited concerning the social origins, promotion and retention rates, and the benefits or burdens of service for both whites and nonwhites in each period. In this way the following chapter will serve to synthesize the existing research, suggest new explanations for the existing findings, and indicate areas for future research.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH ON POST-SERVICE ATTAINMENT OF VETERANS

#### CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter six will first reiterate the findings on social origins, promotion and retention, and post-service attainment, in order to draw inferences concerning the status of black and white veterans following service in the WWII, Korean, Vietnam, and AVF eras. These conclusions will be presented in summary form. Next, explanations for the findings will be posited.

In general, assertions that military service lowers one's lifetime earnings, educational attainment, or mobility, focus on the "interruption" of education or occupational training or experience. Briefly, this argument rests on the assumption that time lost in the labor market or in schooling adversely affects subsequent earnings. Therefore, time "lost" while in military service is viewed as a disadvantage for the veteran. While this explanation is widely accepted, it has not been substantiated by existing research. Although veterans experience short-term losses in income and education relative to non-veterans immediately following discharge, they do "catch up" and surpass their civilian counterpart in the ensuing ten years.

Relatively unexplored explanations for fluctuations in veterans' premiums include the self-selection of veterans, vacillations in GI bill benefits, and changes in enlistment

standards during the previous fifty years. These explanations will be delineated and support for each will be discussed.

Generally, findings that military service positively affects one's social mobility are supported by explanations including: 1) time spent in the military serves as a "bridging environment"; 2) service provides both the motivation and financial assistance to further education; 3) employers use military service as a screening device. These explanations will be described and support for each will be scrutinized in the following discussion.

#### Trends from Examined Research

The following table compares the social origins, promotion and retention rates, and post-service attainment of both black and white veterans and non-veterans in each of the periods under investigation.

<b>TABLE FIFTEEN</b>					
<b>COMPARISON OF VETERANS TO NON-VETERANS BY RACE AND MILITARY PERIOD</b>					
		WW II	Korea	Vietnam	AVF
Social Origins	Education	>V	>V	=	<WV >BV
	SES	>V	>V	=	<WV >BV
Promotion		<BV	<BV	<BV	=
Retention		>BV	>BV	>BV	>BV
Post Service	Education	>V	>V	<WV >BV	<WV >BV
	Income	>V	>V	<WV >BV	=WV >BV
Legend:    V=Veterans                    WV=White Veterans                    BV=Black Veterans >Greater for Veterans    =No Significant Difference           <Less for Veterans					

As shown in the table, veterans of WWII and Korea had higher educational and socio-economic status both prior to and following military service. Blacks were under represented during this period and experienced slower promotion rates. However, black retention was somewhat higher than white retention rates.

The situation changes slightly in the Vietnam war period. Veterans were thought to be homogeneous to their civilian counterparts in terms of educational attainment and socio-economic status prior to service. Following military service, research indicates that white veterans experienced downward social mobility as indicated by education and earnings, while black veterans fared somewhat better. During this period, blacks were slightly under-represented in the military and experienced slower rates of promotion. However, retention rates for blacks were considerably higher than for whites.

Experiences for veterans of the AVF are somewhat improved compared to the Vietnam era. While white veterans enter the military with lower educational attainment and socio-economic status, blacks entering the military possess higher overall education and socio-economic status than their civilian counterparts. Additionally, blacks are considerably over-represented in the AVF due to higher enlistment rates as well as significantly higher retention rates. Promotion rates for blacks and whites are similar with blacks being over represented in the NCO ranks and slightly under-represented among the officer ranks. In terms of post-service attainment, blacks experience upward mobility as do lower class whites. The post-service educational



attainment and earnings of white veterans is equal to, or slightly lower than, their non-veteran counterparts.

It should be noted that due to the timing of research on veterans of the AVF, the full benefits of military service may not have been illustrated. The cohort of veterans enlisting in the years since 1973, were not of sufficient age at the time of most existing research to have overcome short-term disadvantages following discharge. It is thought that given sufficient timing for “catching up” educationally and occupationally, veterans of the AVF will benefit both educationally and economically as compared to their civilian counterparts.

It may be the case that relatively disadvantaged white veterans and black veterans benefit to a greater degree than middle class white veterans. One possible reason is that middle class white veterans are more likely to be economically able to obtain higher education without military educational incentives. Those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds would benefit to a greater degree from educational benefits based on service. Furthering of education post-service would necessarily facilitate the acquisition of jobs paying higher wages. The following page reiterates the findings illustrated in table fourteen and discussed above.

## Generalizations Concerning the Effect of Military Participation on Social Class

### Attainment and Mobility by Race

- Veterans prior to the war in Vietnam exhibited higher educational attainment than non-veterans.
- Veterans prior to the war in Vietnam exhibited higher income and/or earnings than non-veterans.
- Black Vietnam era veterans exhibited higher educational attainment than black non-veterans.
- Black Vietnam era veterans exhibited higher income and/or earnings than black non-veterans.
- White Vietnam era veterans exhibited slightly lower educational attainment than white non-veterans.
- White Vietnam era veterans exhibited slightly lower income and/or earnings than white non-veterans.
- Black veterans of the AVF exhibited slightly higher educational attainment than black non-veterans.
- Black veterans of the AVF exhibited higher income and/or earnings both while in the military and following discharge.
- White veterans of the AVF exhibited slightly lower educational attainment than white non-veterans.
- White veterans of the AVF exhibited higher income and/or earnings while in the

military, but no advantage in income and/or earnings following discharge.

### Benefits of Military Service

Because veterans have significantly higher educational and economic attainment than non-veterans (with the exception of white Vietnam veterans), it is necessary to explore explanations for this advantage. Several explanations will be discussed including:

- The military as a “bridging” environment facilitating occupational and educational training.
- Military service as a “screening device,” especially for government employment.
- Self-selection of veterans

### *The Military as a “Bridging Environment”*

The idea of the military as a “bridging environment” was first discussed by Browning et al. (1973). In essence, this research showed that military service enhanced socio-economic mobility in three broad ways. First, military service increases personal independence by providing a break from civilian life, both geographically and in terms of personal relationships. Second, military service provides the opportunity for educational and vocational training. Thirdly, military service provides the individual with necessary experience in dealing with large bureaucratic structures.

The idea of the military as a bridging environment assumes that these three

opportunities do not exist to the same degree for the individual in civilian society. Therefore, those most facilitated by military experience are those with a relative lack of personal independence, educational and vocational training, and experience with large bureaucratic structures. Additionally, it is assumed that these are necessary characteristics for success in the civilian workforce.

### *Military Occupational Training*

Given that military service has been shown to be especially beneficial for minorities and lower class whites in the years following the Browning et al. study, it is concluded that the original findings concerning the “bridging” impact of the military as a provider of occupational training remain especially true for the relatively disadvantaged. For instance, it has been estimated that there are “civilian counterparts” to over 80% of military occupational specialties (Mangum and Bell, 1987). In these MOSs, training gained in the military can be transferred to the civilian marketplace. This is thought to be increasingly true in the more recent AVF due to the higher concentration of servicemen in more technical occupational specialties. Obviously, some MOSs are thought to be less transferable than others. For example, combat specialties are less transferable to the civilian workforce than is training in electrical repair. In future research it would be interesting to investigate the racial composition of occupational specialties in the current AVF. In this way comparisons could be made as to the relative transferability of military training for blacks and whites.

### *G.I. Bill Benefits*

The use of veterans' benefits to further post-service education is also seen as a benefit of military participation. Following WWII, the GI Bill was instituted supplying educational entitlements based on military service. It is widely accepted that this incentive has had a positive impact on the educational attainment of servicemen. The GI Bill provides financial assistance for furthering one's education following service and has been taken advantage of widely by both black and white veterans, though to differing rates based on the period of service.

In a 1978 research article, J. Peter Mattila compared GI educational benefits and enrollment rates for WWII, Korea, and Vietnam era veterans. The relative benefits for the three groups were illustrated by calculating a ratio of monthly GI benefits to average monthly earnings for those employed in manufacturing. It was found that WWII veterans' benefits were equal to about 54% of the average manufacturing wage in the same period. The percentage was lower for subsequent veterans, with benefits for Korean era veterans equaling 39% of the manufacturing wage, and Vietnam era benefits averaging only 34% of the mean manufacturing wage.

Furthermore, Mattila (1978) found that enrollment rates for eligible veterans in college or vocational training schools also fluctuated in the three periods. Enrollment rates were lowest for Vietnam veterans as compared to previous cohorts of veterans. Through statistical analysis, the lower rate of enrollment for Vietnam era veterans was found to be significantly associated with the lesser funds appropriated to the GI Bill

during the Vietnam war era.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s (the Vietnam era), GI Bill benefits were decreased relative to civilian educational benefits. It was during this period that civilian financial aid for college increased tremendously. Non-veterans had increased access to means of financing higher education not tied to military service. This is one possible explanation for the relative lack of attainment by Vietnam era veterans as compared to their civilian counterparts. While civilians were finding it more financially possible to afford college, servicemen were not given the educational benefits that both earlier and later cohorts of veterans enjoyed. Therefore, it is not surprising that Vietnam era veterans did not benefit from service educationally and financially as did WWII and Korean era veterans.

In 1985, the Montgomery GI Bill was instituted increasing educational benefits for veterans to a level not previously manifested. Under this program, which is still in force, veterans can receive up to \$28,000 for college in return for their two year enlistment. Additionally, special programs (in force at various times in the last decade) provide up to \$25,000 in student loan repayment. Furthermore, enlistment bonuses exist at various times, providing a cash "rebate" of up to \$5,000 for enlistment in the Armed Forces. Taken together these benefits are thought to be powerful incentives for the enlistment of upwardly mobile individuals. GI Bill benefits for college education were "important" or "very important" to 51% of black respondents and 32% of White

respondents in making their decision to enlist. Additionally, both black and white soldiers take advantage of these benefits at a rate of about 80% (Moskos and Butler, 1996).

The educational premiums for veterans entering the military since 1985 have not been demonstrated in existing research. It is thought that these premiums exist much as they did prior to the Vietnam war. The overarching reason for the lack of evidence to support this assertion lies in the timing of the existing research. In short, sufficient time has not elapsed for the benefits of service in the last decade to be exhibited in research on more recent veterans. It is thought that veterans' premiums become measurable only after age twenty-eight, as demonstrated by Xie (1990). Therefore, those veterans who enlisted in the years since 1985 currently range in age from eighteen to thirty-one. As will be suggested in the next chapter, future investigation of veterans over the age of twenty-eight would likely illustrate educational premiums as compared to non-veterans in this age group.

### *Veteran Status as a Screening Device*

Veteran status as a screening device for employment is thought to be a benefit of military service also. However, the extent to which employers see veteran status as a positive or negative characteristic for determining employment opportunities has been largely ignored in existing research. For instance, if individuals with comparable

backgrounds apply for the same job, to what extent would veteran status be an advantage? Veteran status holds premiums when applying for government positions through the use of civil service points. A veteran receives civil service points for military service and will therefore be more likely to be hired than a civilian with comparable qualifications. In some instances, such as the postal service exam, veterans points are added to the test score to determine who will be interviewed for the position. Furthermore, in many civil service jobs, years in the military count toward retirement. Clearly in cases such as this, the veteran holds the advantage.

Veteran status could also indicate hirability in the civilian workforce. For instance, because the Armed Forces conduct random drug tests, it is assumed that veterans are not drug dependent (at least prior to discharge). Additionally, finishing one's enlistment could be seen as a measure of personal responsibility and commitment. And finally, due to military acceptance standards, it is assumed that an individual accepted into the military possesses at least an acceptable level of intelligence and physical health.

### *Self-Selection of Veterans*

The last possible explanation for the upward mobility of veterans lies in the self-selection of veterans for service in the AVF. In the draft years these same explanations are plausible as they apply to military screening requirements. The military has



stringent screening requirements for inductees. These include the ASVAB test for mental competence and “trainability” and physical fitness requirements. The ASVAB or AFQT has been earlier discussed as it applies to induction standards. While no comparable test exists in the civilian workforce, it is assumed that by scoring sufficiently on the AFQT to be accepted into service, the individual possesses at least average intelligence and literacy necessary for lucrative civilian employment.

The physical requirements for enlistment also indicate hirability. The potential inductee must not be either overweight or underweight, and must not suffer from chronic disease or illness. Additionally, to complete basic training, the individual must pass a physical training (PT) test. This test includes a timed two mile run, as well as doing what is judged to be a sufficient number of push-ups and sit-ups within a two minute time period. The individual who fails this PT test will either remain in basic training until passing the test or will “muster” out and fail to complete the enlistment. Therefore, only individuals considered to be “healthy” by civilian standards complete an initial enlistment.

Once in the military, health is maintained through free medical care, low-fat menus on base, weight maintenance programs, and mandatory physical fitness training. The military both demands and maintains healthy members. Once the enlistment is completed, many individuals could be considered to be in excellent health by civilian employers. This would work to the advantage of the veteran as compared to the non-veteran when looking for employment.

One issue concerning self-selection or screening for the military includes the background characteristics of enlistees discussed earlier. It should be noted that in all periods since WWII, black veterans had comparably higher education and socio-economic status *prior* to service. Furthermore, until the Vietnam war period, white veterans were similarly advantaged *prior* to service as compared to their civilian counterparts. Therefore, it is not surprising that these same veterans were relatively advantaged following discharge from the military.

#### An Explanation of the Burden of Service for White Vietnam Veterans

When discussing “drawbacks” of service it is always necessary that possible injury or death be included. The ultimate “drawback” to be contemplated when considering a military enlistment is the possibility that one will be injured or killed while in the military. As discussed earlier, this “drawback” differentially affects portions of the population. The upper classes and the very lowest are spared the possibility of combat to a great extent. Upper class youth are less likely to enlist than their middle class peers and those from the very bottom of the socioeconomic ladder are less likely to be accepted in the military due to enlistment standards.

It can be asserted that military service has facilitated the socioeconomic attainment of veterans since WWII -- with the exception of white Vietnam veterans.

While other cohorts of veterans, both black and white, benefitted in terms of educational and income attainment following service, white veterans of the Vietnam era did not significantly benefit. The reasons for this relative “drawback” of service have often been discussed using the unpopularity of the Vietnam conflict as an explanation. Servicemen of the era were not respected or welcomed home relative to other cohorts of veterans. In other words, veteran status was a screening device used to the detriment of veterans in this period. This was seen by some as hindering assimilation into civilian society in general and the civilian workforce in particular. While this explanation is plausible, another explanation exists that has been previously ignored.

While lower class and less educated individuals are less likely to be accepted currently due to enlistment standards, this was not the case in the era of the Vietnam war. Possibly the most logical explanation for the relative “drawback” of service indicated by the post-service achievement of white Vietnam veterans lies in the changing enlistment standards unique to the Vietnam war period. As a result of a social experiment called Project 100,000, approximately 246,000 individuals were accepted into the military between October 1966 and June 1969 who would not have qualified either prior to or following this period. An explanation of this Project and its implications for the attainment of Vietnam era veterans follows.

### *Project 100,000*

In 1965, the unemployment rate for white males aged 18-19 stood at 11.4, while the unemployment rate for 18-19 year old blacks was a high 20.2. Given this high rate of unemployment for draft age males, Secretary McNamara conceived a plan to address the number of unemployed through providing the undereducated with an opportunity for military service. By lowering enlistment standards and admitting them to the armed forces, it was thought that this group of otherwise ineligible individuals would benefit from military occupational training. Of course, this plan would also provide additional manpower for the conflict in Vietnam.

Beginning in October 1966, and extending through June, 1969, McNamara’s plan, Project 100,000, admitted 100,000 men per year to the armed forces who would

not ordinarily have qualified based solely on enlistment standards of educational attainment and AFQT scores. Forty-five percent of those enlisted under the program were high school graduates and the median reading ability was at the sixth grade level. Most of the men did not qualify for the technical occupational specialties and subsequently almost forty percent were assigned to combat specialties.

The assertion that Vietnam veterans were peculiar in their relatively disadvantaged position following service is supported by the discussion of Project 100,000. While veterans of earlier and possibly later eras coming from disadvantaged backgrounds received premiums for service, those admitted to the service during the Vietnam war were uniquely hindered. The most disadvantaged veterans prior to service were those included in Project 100,000. This same group were not trained in occupational specialties that would facilitate their later civilian marketability. As discussed earlier, the more technical specialties bring higher marketability, while combat and “soft” occupational training is much less transferable to the civilian market. This fact, along with the relatively lower educational benefits during this period, and the unpopularity of the war in general, served to hinder white Vietnam veterans in their post-service attainment.

Additionally, it is possible that those participating in Project 100,000 were unable to take advantage of the limited G.I. educational benefits that existed. Although limited, the military did provide some educational assistance for Vietnam veterans. It is highly likely, given the lower educational levels of those enlisted under the Project, that these

men were unable to further their education following enlistment. Because the standards were lowered for this group, it is probable that the potential for educational achievement among this group was somewhat lower than among veterans in general.

Black Vietnam veterans admitted under the Project would necessarily have been disadvantaged both prior to and following service. However, in comparison to their civilian counterparts, black veterans fared somewhat better than their white counterparts. The only plausible explanation for this lies in the nature of racial discrimination in the late 1960s and 1970s. Blacks in the overall population experienced discrimination based on race. For black veterans, it is thought that the status of “soldier” or “ex-soldier” in part overcame some of these elements. It has been said that in the Army no one is black or white, everyone is olive green. While this is simplistic, it is thought that veterans status may have overcome some elements of racial prejudice and discrimination. This would explain the relatively advantaged position of black Vietnam veterans compared to white veterans of this era. While educational benefits were scarce and the war was unpopular, black veterans were nonetheless advantaged compared to black civilians.

### Answer to the Research Question

The original research question was:

### **What effect does military service have on social class attainment and mobility of Anglos and African Americans in the United States?**

Based on the limited existing research, it can be stated that military service has a positive effect on the social class attainment and mobility of whites and blacks throughout the period from World War II to the present. Research suggests that those from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds, both economically and educationally, receive the highest premiums for their service. The only exception are white veterans of the Vietnam era, who have not significantly benefitted from service as compared to their civilian counterparts. However, research on the AVF has not sufficiently demonstrated advantages due to the timing of data collection. Future research on the veterans enlisting since 1973 will undoubtedly reinforce the assertion that military service is beneficial for upward mobility.

In conclusion, it is thought that because military service provides training and educational benefits it has a direct positive effect on educational attainment and an indirect positive effect on social mobility. The military, by providing educational incentives, gives veterans from moderately disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to further their education. This, in turn, produces higher incomes, although possibly differentially for blacks and whites. The implications for further research on this

supposition will be discussed in the following section.

### Implications for Future Research

As discussed throughout, research necessary to establish a comparison of veterans to non-veterans by race is lacking. Furthermore, it is thought that existing research on the AVF has not taken into account the time necessary for veterans to achieve what could be considered a “stable” social class position following service. Therefore, research on veterans enlisting in the period between 1973 and 1988 is necessary. Those enlisting in this fifteen-year period would currently range in age from a low of twenty-eight years to a high of forty-three years. Research on these cohorts of veterans would be valid having given veterans sufficient time post-discharge to reach a permanent level of attainment relative to their civilian peers. This research should necessarily include race as an independent variable in the analysis in order to contribute to an understanding of the differential effects of military service by race.

Ideally, data should be available on the serviceman’s education and socio-economic status both prior to, and each year following, their military service. This could be accomplished in a longitudinal age-cohort study so that changes in cohorts over time would be evident. However, because this type of information is not routinely collected by the Department of Defense, this may be an unreachable goal.

One possible option would be to analyze data currently collected by the DoD on enlistees’ educational level prior to service used in conjunction with existing



demographic surveys to test the hypothesis that military service under AVF conditions facilitates educational attainment. If follow-up data could be obtained including information on the income and/or earnings of veterans and non-veterans in addition to information on level of education, the issue of relative “payoffs” for education could be more readily addressed. For instance, if the comparison between black veterans and non-veterans and white veterans and non-veterans of the same educational level shows us that veterans receive higher incomes and earnings when controlling for education, further research could be directed at uncovering the reasons for this phenomenon. Or, for example, if it were found that the income gap between black veterans and white veterans of the same educational level was smaller than between black non-veterans and white non-veterans of the same educational level, further research into alternative explanations of the veterans’ premium would be appropriate.

In essence, what is called for is an annual survey including comprehensive data on the education and income or earnings of veterans and non-veterans by race and age. Included in this research should be the date of enlistment and discharge to analyze the time frame needed for “catching up” post-service, as well as to compare those who remain in the military to those who serve only one period of enlistment. This type of survey does not currently exist and would need to be designed with these goals in mind. While research of this type would necessarily be expensive and time-consuming, the outcome would be sufficiently worthy of the investment. The military is one of the largest and most influential organizations in American society. The effects of

participation in this organization are felt by a large number of Americans. These effects on individual attainment and mobility are necessarily of interest to those social researchers seeking to uncover answers to the problem of inequality in the overall society.

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### **Vita**

Patricia Danette (Ballard) Light was born in Arkansas on November 29, 1966. She is the daughter of Florine J. Ballard and the late George N. Ballard of Portia, Arkansas. She received her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Arkansas State University in 1990, and her master's degree in Sociology from the University of Mississippi in 1994. She began graduate studies in sociology at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in August, 1994, and is receiving her doctorate in May, 1998. Danette is married to Darrin Light of Narrows, Virginia. They have two young sons, Cody and Hunter. She will be employed as an assistant professor of sociology at Concord College in Athens, West Virginia, beginning August, 1998.

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