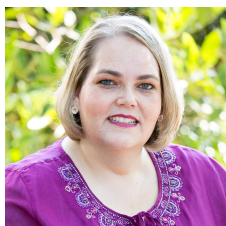


# Soldiers to Citizens: The Link Between Military Service and Volunteering



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## Research Question

*Is military service positively related to volunteering?*

### Brief Abstract

The military is an institution with implications for civil society. Prior research has suggested that military service has been linked to increased political engagement for veterans by influencing their values and beliefs. This paper explores the relationship between military service and volunteering. The hypotheses presented argue that military service highlights the importance of civic participation, provides social resources, and makes veterans aware of opportunities to volunteer. The results demonstrate that military service is positively related to volunteering for certain groups of veterans depending on the individual's race, marital status, and the nature of their service.

### Key Findings

- ▶ Black and Hispanic veterans are more likely to volunteer than other veterans.
- ▶ The military can serve as a social mobility mechanism as the practical and social skills learned during service can be translated into higher-status jobs with higher wages.
- ▶ Married veterans are more likely to volunteer than unmarried veterans, likely due to the supportive social network that can help veterans in the transition to civilian life.
- ▶ Veterans over the age of 65 are more likely to volunteer than younger veterans.

### Opportunities for Action

- ▶ Overall, institutions, such as the military, provide the resources and skills that lead to greater volunteering. As such, social impact organizations should consider how they can work with institutions to expand their volunteer force.
- ▶ Veterans' associations provide opportunities for members to give time to group endeavors. Since most volunteers are found through networks of religious and associational memberships, nonprofits should consider connecting with these groups.

### Find This Paper

This paper was first published on January 18, 2011 in *Public Administration Review*. View the official abstract and paper at <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2010.02307.x>



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# Soldiers to Citizens: The Link between Military Service and Volunteering

Focus on Seminal Nonprofit Management Issues

*Research shows that military service is linked with political engagement, such as voting. This connection is strongest for minorities. The authors explore the relationship between military service and volunteering. They conclude that military service helps overcome barriers to volunteering by socializing people with civic responsibility norms, by providing social resources and skills that compensate for the lack of personal resources, and by making veterans aware of opportunities to volunteer as well as asking them to do so. Military service is positively related to volunteering among blacks and Hispanics. Married veterans are more likely to volunteer than nonveterans. Veterans who served during wartime are more likely to volunteer than those who served in peacetime.*

In this article, we view the military as a government institution with implications for civil society. The military, just like any other institution, has its own set of norms and rules, and new recruits are socialized to support those norms (Lovell and Stiehm 1989). Research has found a link between military service and some political behaviors, such as voting or working on a political campaign (Ellison 1992; Leal 1999; Teigen 2006), which seems to indicate that military socialization creates more active citizens. It is possible, then, that military service is related to other measures of good citizenship behavior beyond political participation. Equally important, the military is a bureaucracy. As a bureaucratic organization, members of the military are shaped by their experience in this type of organizational setting. While bureaucracy is sometimes put in opposition to democracy and democratic processes (Goodsell 2004, 14), this perception resides alongside the notion that exposure to military service and bureaucratic life provides a gateway into civic service and volunteerism. This article seeks to investigate the effect of military service on volunteering, another important measure of civic engagement.

## The Military as an Institution of Civic Engagement

Institutions are the “humanly designed constraints,” or rules, that “structure incentives in human

exchange” and shape human interaction, thereby regulating and increasing the predictability of human behavior (North 1990, 3). In an institution, the collection of formal rules and informal constraints and the process by which they are enforced determine a person’s potential actions (North 1990), including those that individuals feel that they should or should not do. Therefore, institutions structure the incentives involved in making certain decisions by rewarding and punishing various actions.

Military organizations possess their own unique set of governing rules and norms. The military immediately immerses new recruits in an extensive training program that not only teaches recruits new skills, but also continually exposes them to and surrounds them with military values and norms. New cadets in military training institutes immediately undergo a process in which their civilian status is broken down and deconstructed and a new identity is “rebuilt” by constant exposure to military norms, discipline, values, and authority (Soeters, Winslow, and Weibull 2003). Successful military socialization includes embracing military values, such as a sense of pride at being a military member and a sense of loyalty to the military and its traditions (Lovell and Stiehm 1989).

Not only is the military an institution according to the definition just given, but the military is an especially demanding institution. The military fits Goffman’s (1959) definition of a “total institution,” meaning that it is a place where a large number of individuals in a similar situation are separated from the larger society and subject to formally administered rules that govern all aspects of daily life. Others call the military a “greedy institution” because of the many heavy demands it makes on members, such as being on a permanent on-call basis while on duty, being required to relocate on short notice, and having many aspects of daily life dictated by the institution (Soeters, Winslow, and Weibull 2003). After educational institutions, the military is the government

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institution that more American men commonly experience (Teigen 2006), so not only is the military a demanding institution, but also it is an institution that affects great numbers of people.

Census data estimate that 12.7 percent of the U.S. adult population were veterans in 2000, representing approximately 26.4 million people (Richardson and Waldrop 2003). Because so many individuals spend some amount of time serving in the military, researchers of civic engagement need to understand the effect of military service on the postmilitary civic behaviors of participants. Participation in other institutions, such as families, schools, and voluntary associations, often leads to greater civic engagement, so it is feasible that a “total” government institution such as the military will shape civic behavior as well.

### How Military Service Shapes Political Attitudes and Behaviors

Military service influences people’s attitudes and abilities, and these increased capacities and improved attitudes are supposed to carry over into civilian life after a person leaves military service, creating the perception that veterans are more patriotic and more prepared and willing to serve the country (President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force 1970). Most Americans view military members as men and women who are willing to set aside their own self-interest to follow the path of duty and honor in serving their country (Moskos 2000).

Overall, empirical evidence indicates that military service has, at best, only a small positive effect on political and civic attitudes compared to political and civic behaviors. Jennings and Markus (1977) investigated the effect of Vietnam War military service on veterans’ political attitudes and values and found that military service modestly reduced political cynicism and trust. Another study of Vietnam veterans’ attitudes found that most noncombat veterans registered ambivalence about politics, political parties, and voting (Pollack, White, and Gold 1975). Schrieber (1979) looked at the effect of military service in World War II and the Vietnam War on attitudes toward the military, the government, international affairs, authoritarianism, and violence and found no significant opinion differences between veterans and nonveterans except in their feelings toward the military. Others have also demonstrated that most veterans experience few lasting changes in their values and beliefs, especially those serving only a short time (Lovell and Stiehm 1989). Much of this empirical evidence is dated and does not conclusively demonstrate a robust relationship between military service and political attitudes upon return to civilian life, but most of the evidence indicates a weak association between military service and political and civic attitudes. It remains unclear whether these patterns observed 20 or 30 years ago are still operative.

Although military service does not seem to change veterans’ attitudes, prior research indicates that military service does shape civic and political behaviors. Ellison (1992) found that black veterans were not more likely than nonveterans to participate in low-initiative political activities, such as voting in national or local elections, but they were more likely to engage in high-initiative political activities, such as contacting political officials or working on a political campaign. For Latinos, however, participation in the military does seem to increase voter turnout and participation in low-intensity political activities, such as wearing a political button, donating to a political campaign, or signing a petition (Leal 1999). Indeed, military service is associated with higher voter turnout rates in general, except among veterans of the Vietnam War era (Teigen 2006). However, not all studies on military service and political participation find positive effects. For instance, Franzich (1982) found that graduates of military academies were less likely to vote than civilians. In general, however, the preponderance of the evidence indicates that military service is associated with greater political participation.

### How Military Service May Influence Volunteering

Institutions determine the incentives for doing or not doing various actions, and the military, just like other institutions, can influence the incentives for individuals to volunteer. People do not volunteer because they cannot, because they do not want to, or because no one has asked them to volunteer (Brady, Verba, and Scholzman 1995). Military socialization can provide individuals with the means to overcome each of these three barriers to volunteering.

*Providing skills and resources for volunteering.* Volunteering takes resources, such as time, money, and participatory skills; individuals without these resources are unable to volunteer. People in higher socioeconomic groups have higher incomes and education levels and thus possess more resources, so these individuals are more likely to volunteer. Social status variables such as age, race, and gender indirectly affect volunteering because they determine how much human, social, and cultural capital people accumulate and can use for volunteer work (Wilson and Musick 1997). Institutions can moderate the

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relationship between social status variables and participation. For instance, researchers have demonstrated that religious participation moderates the relationship between race and volunteering. Musick, Wilson, and Bynum (2000) found that although blacks possess less human capital than whites because of socioeconomic factors, they have more social and cultural capital than whites because of their more frequent religious participation. Participation in religious organizations offers the disadvantaged an opportunity to develop skills that are relevant to civic participation and volunteering, which helps people overcome the barriers to volunteering (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). Institutions can provide compensatory social resources that lead to greater volunteering.

Just like religious organizations, the military also provides a venue for developing the skills and acquiring the resources necessary for volunteering, especially for people from lower socioeconomic classes. The military offers opportunities for education and training so that people can develop their communication and organizational skills. Because the military is a large bureaucracy, it also allows people to learn the skills necessary to function successfully in an organization. In addition, individuals serving in the military interact daily with people from different racial, geographic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds, and yet they all must strive toward a common goal. By integrating diverse individuals into a common social experience and network, military service teaches the necessity of working with others and the skills to do so (Jennings and Markus 1977). In fact, many attribute the success of military units to the cohesion and teamwork that develops within the unit, especially in situations of stress (Ambrose 1997). Finally, military service affords people the opportunity to lead groups, thereby fostering leadership skills. Military service can provide individuals with the resources and skills that open up the pathways to voluntarism.

**Motivating people to volunteer.** According to Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995), the second reason people do not volunteer is that they do not want to. This means that a person with the requisite resources for volunteering might still lack the motivation to volunteer. Volunteers are often motivated by the need to satisfy their personal and social goals (Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen 1991), although the motivating values and goals can be different from person to person (Clary and Snyder 1999). Meaning is a social construct, and an individual's perceptions about the self, social action, and personal responsibility are conditioned by institutional forces. Institutions can influence and determine what actions an individual considers necessary or important, and they can shape the goals and values that contribute to volunteering behaviors.

For most participants, military service occurs between the ages of 18 and 26, although during World War II, the age range went up to the mid-thirties (Schreiber 1979). Thus, most military recruits are transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. Adolescence is a crucial time in people's lives when they are forming their own social, political, and civic identities in the world (Damon 2001). These identities are critical because they lead to adult attitudes and behaviors. For instance, a person's political socialization during youth is directly linked to his or her subsequent adult behaviors and attitudes (Beck and Jennings 1982). As people move into young adulthood, their identities are still malleable. Young adulthood is a transition from adolescence to the adult world, and for young adults entering the military, their military experience can have a large influence on their identity development and value systems.

Part of the transition to adulthood is receiving all of the requisite rights and responsibilities of citizenship. The term "citizen-soldier" was born from this idea: that the military both teaches and bestows citizenship (Cohen 1985). Militaries instill the feeling of the necessity of serving one's country, which is generally believed to be supportive of democracy. Value transmission begins during the initial stages

of military membership when recruits undergo their basic training, which yields a new identity as a member of the military (Soeters, Winslow, and Weibull 2003). Successful military socialization leaves military recruits with the values of duty, honor, and loyalty to the country (Lovell and Stiehm 1989)—all values that are supportive of general democratic values. After returning to civilian life, veterans can continue to act on these values by volunteering.

**Providing opportunities to be asked to volunteer.** The final reason that people may not volunteer is because they are not asked to volunteer. This implies that people might be unaware of volunteer opportunities and need a friend or family member to point these opportunities out to them. Empirical research has shown that people are four times more likely to volunteer when they are asked to do so (Wymer 1997). People are more likely to volunteer when others whom they know volunteer or when they are volunteering to help a friend or relative.

One of the primary ways in which military service can provide more volunteering opportunities (or opportunities for people to be asked to volunteer) is through veterans' associations. Veterans' associations provide many opportunities for members to both socialize and to give their time to group endeavors. At the end of World War II, a survey of veterans about to be discharged indicated that they intended to be active in veterans' and other civic organizations after the war (Stouffer et al. 1949). Many veterans' associations also make great efforts to include as many survivors as possible in their organizations (Mettler 2002). Historically, military veterans have been heavily involved not only in veterans' associations, but also in other types of associations, such as fraternal organizations (Skocpol 1999). In fact, in the aftermath of every war (except the Vietnam War), there was an increase in fraternal organization membership (Skocpol 1999). Although participation in many types of organizations has decreased over the past couple decades, participation in veterans' organizations increased from 1974 to 1994 (Rotolo 1999). The number of independent veterans' associations almost tripled from 1980 to 1997, although membership in individual organizations declined somewhat (Putnam 2000). Therefore, it is likely that large numbers of veterans participate in veterans' associations or fraternal organizations, and membership in voluntary associations is strongly linked with volunteering (Hodgkinson, Nelson, and Sivak 2002). Most volunteers are found through networks of religious and associational memberships (Putnam 2000). Thus, if veterans are more likely to join veterans' and civic associations, they also will be more likely to volunteer.

## Hypotheses

We have discussed several reasons why military service might lead to increased volunteering. However, we expect that the effect of military service on volunteering will be different for different groups of people. Therefore, we will create more specific hypotheses about the specific groups in the military for whom we expect a positive relationship between military service and volunteering.

First, we expect that the relationship between military service and volunteering will be different for different racial groups. The military

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is seen as a more level playing field for those of different races. In particular, the military can function as churches do in fostering civic engagement. The military provides disadvantaged youth with the opportunity to learn occupational and social skills that are helpful, and often necessary, in volunteering. Military service teaches people how to cooperate with people different from them, how to work within a large bureaucracy, and the necessity of responding to authority (Moskos and Butler 1996). By learning these skills, minorities who have served in the military can obtain much better educational and occupational outcomes after their service than their nonveteran counterparts (Butler 1991). And, along with being in higher-status jobs, black military veterans receive higher wages than nonveterans (Angrist 1993). In this way, the military can serve as a vehicle for social mobility for minorities. Given the strong connections between income, class, and volunteering (Wilson and Musick 1997), it is reasonable to expect that as blacks move upward socially and economically, they will be more civically engaged, including volunteering. We believe that this same process will work for Hispanics as well as blacks. This brings us to our first hypotheses:

**H<sub>1a</sub>**—Blacks who served in the military will be more likely than nonblacks who served in the military to volunteer after military service is completed.

**H<sub>1b</sub>**—Hispanics who served in the military will be more likely than non-Hispanics who served in the military to volunteer after military service is completed.

We also expect to see some differences between married and unmarried veterans in terms of their civic engagement after leaving the military. One reason for this is that married veterans have more social support at home to help them through the period of readjustment to civilian life and to help with recovery from service-related trauma. One study of stress-related disorders in veterans and nonveterans of the Vietnam era found that four out of the five stress-related disorders studied—post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and alcohol abuse—were associated with lower levels of social support (Boscarino 1995). One of the risk factors for suicide among veterans is a lack of social support, including not being married (Lambert and Fowler 1997). Other studies confirm these findings—having a stable marriage contributes to a beneficial social network that helps individuals work through the problems confronting them. Marriage can be a particularly important relationship in helping veterans cope successfully with the stress of military service as they return to civilian life (Shehan 1987). It is reasonable to expect, therefore, that married veterans will more easily make the adjustment to civilian life and will have more of the social stability that is necessary to support volunteering. This forms the basis for our second hypothesis:

**H<sub>2</sub>**: Married veterans are more likely to volunteer after military service than nonveterans—both married and unmarried.

In the United States over the past century, veterans who served in the military during different periods of service might have had very different experiences, which could mediate the influence of military service on subsequent participation and volunteering. Serving in different periods might affect veterans differently because

of complicating factors such as the intensity of the conflict or the amount of political support for the military at that particular time or during that particular war.

Veterans who served in the military during different periods of service might experience the military institutions differently from each other. Soeters, Winslow, and Weibull (2003) described military culture as actually being composed of two different subcultures—one “hot” and one “cold.” Most of the time, the military falls under the cold organization rubric—when there is no crisis or immediate needs and business proceeds as usual. In this stage, the military is characterized as a normal bureaucratic organization. Hot military culture occurs during situations of crisis, such as times of war, and this subculture is characterized more by flexibility and self-management.

Empirical research has also found that combat experience can mediate the relationship between military service and participation. For instance, combat and noncombat veterans have very different experiences when readjusting to civilian life (Pollack, White, and Gold 1975), and combat experience accentuated the relationship between military service and political participation among blacks (Ellison 1992). Part of the reason that combat veterans act differently than noncombat veterans is that they often experience different military cultures during their service. For soldiers who serve in combat, military service has greater intensity and salience than it does for those who only served during a period of peace or who did not serve in combat, and intensity and salience of institutional involvement shape how a person experiences an institution and the potential lasting effects of that institution on the person (Jennings and Markus 1977). Because the culture of the military is more intense during a time of war, especially for those who serve in combat, it is reasonable to expect that military service during these periods will have a greater lasting influence on individuals. Therefore, our third hypothesis regarding military service and volunteering is as follows:

**H<sub>3</sub>**: Veterans who served during war will be more likely to volunteer than veterans who served during peacetime.

## Data and Methods

### Data and Sample

The data used to test these hypotheses come from the 2005 September Volunteering Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS).<sup>1</sup> The CPS is a monthly U.S. Census Bureau survey conducted on approximately 50,000 households and including more than 150,000 individuals; it collects information about each household member’s labor force participation, demographic characteristics, and supplementary topics. Since 2002, the CPS September supplement has collected information about the incidence and intensity of an individual’s formal volunteering, as well as information about how, why, and where the person volunteers. In the 2005 September supplement, 89,709 respondents were asked both the volunteering questions and the military service questions. For some of the analyses in this article, the sample size is lower than 89,709 because of missing data on other variables or restrictions in the subgroups to which the analysis is applied. The sample size for each part of the analysis is noted in the tables.

## Variables

**Dependent variable.** The dependent variable is a binary variable representing whether the person volunteered in the previous year. This variable is based on two CPS survey questions. The first question asks, “Since September 1st of last year, have you done any volunteer activities through or for an organization?” The second question is an additional volunteering memory prompt asked of all respondents who answered “no” to the first question. This prompt says, “Sometimes people don’t think of activities they do infrequently or activities they do for children’s schools or youth organizations as volunteer activities. Since September 1st of last year, have you done any of these types of volunteer activities?” If the respondent answered yes to either of these questions, then he or she was coded as a volunteer.

**Independent variables.** The independent variables for this analysis are grouped into three categories—military service variables, individual characteristics, and household characteristics. The first military service variable is a dummy variable indicating whether the person is a veteran. The CPS asks respondents, “Did you ever serve on active duty in the U.S. armed forces?” If the respondent answered yes to this question, then he or she was coded as a veteran. Those currently serving the military are not asked the standard CPS questions, so they are not included in this analysis—only those veterans who have left military service.

We also include several military service interaction terms. Two of these interaction terms combine military service with race—the interaction of being black and being a veteran and the interaction of being Hispanic and being a veteran. Previous research has shown that military service has a greater influence on the future political behaviors of blacks and Hispanics than on whites or other races. These two interaction terms are intended to capture a potential effect of race and veteran status on volunteering and to set us up to test hypotheses 1a and 1b. The third interaction term is that between being married and being a veteran; this variable will be used to test hypothesis 2.

The final military service variable is a dummy variable representing whether the veteran served during a period of war or a period of peace. In the CPS data, those who have served in the military are asked to indicate the period(s) of service during which they served according to nine categories: (1) September 2001 or later, (2) August 1990–August 2001, (3) May 1975–July 1990, (4) Vietnam War (August 1964–April 1975), (5) February 1955–July 1964, (6) Korean War (July 1950–January 1955), (7) January 1947–June 1950, (8) World War II (December 1941–December 1946), and (9) November 1941 or earlier. The war dummy variable was coded 1 if the respondent indicated that he or she had served during either World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, the Korean War, or between August 1990 to August 2001 (Gulf War period), and coded 0 otherwise. The war dummy variable will be used to test hypothesis 3.

The first individual characteristic control variable is a male dummy variable (coded 1). The second variable is the respondent’s age. The individual characteristics section also includes three race dummy variables—black (coded 1), Hispanic (coded 1), or other races (coded 1). The excluded race category is whites, so all of the odds ratios should be interpreted with this in mind. The model also includes

an employment dummy variable (coded 1). The person’s highest grade of school completed is also included in the regression. In the CPS questionnaire, respondents are asked, “What is the highest level of school you have completed or degree you have received?” The answers to this question include educational categories, such as ninth grade, tenth grade, associate’s degree, and so on. To create the years of school variable, we recoded each of these categories in terms of the average number of years in school that each level represents.

The first variable under household characteristics is the log of household income. In the CPS data, household income is coded in a series of comparable categories. For each respondent, we recoded household income to represent the midpoint of the income category represented. The highest income category, \$150,000 and above, was coded \$150,000 because the midpoint of this income category is unknown. We then took the log of these family income recodes.

The second household characteristic is a dummy variable for married respondents (coded 1 for married). We also include a variable for the number of the respondent’s own children under the age of 18 living in the home. Children often act as a catalyst for parental volunteering, and therefore the number of children is an important control variable for studies of volunteering. Many parents volunteer for organizations that benefit their children, such as sports teams.

We also control for the volunteering of other members of the household. To this end, we include a variable representing the number of household members, excluding the respondent, who indicated that they had volunteered last year. To control for those who might be in a household by themselves, we also include a dummy variable that is coded 1 if the person lives alone. Finally, we include one variable representing the geographic location of the household. This metropolitan dummy variable is coded 1 if the household is located in a consolidated statistical metropolitan area. Living in a large metropolitan area has been shown to decrease civic involvement, possibly because of different psychological outlooks and orientations in metropolitan areas or differences in the structure and composition of social networks (Oliver 2000). Therefore, we control for metropolitan status.

## Method

Because the use of interaction terms can introduce multicollinearity into the model, we computed a correlation matrix using all of the variables (analysis not shown). A couple of the military service variables are highly correlated with each other. The married veteran interaction term and the war dummy variable are strongly correlated with the veteran dummy variable (.828 and .804, respectively). Although the married interaction term is correlated with one of its component variables, multicollinearity is not an issue with this variable. The coefficients on the interaction terms represent conditional effects and not direct effects for a standard regression model variable coefficient; even if the variables and interaction term are transformed to the point that they are no longer correlated, this does not alter the coefficients, standard error, or results of the significance tests (Jaccard 2001).

However, the war dummy variable is not an interaction term, so we present three hierarchical logistic regression models in the analysis.

**Table 1** Logit Regression Results

Dependent variable = Person volunteered last year			
	Odds ratios		
	Veteran Dummy Only	With Race Interaction Terms	Full Model
<b>Military service variables</b>			
Person is a veteran	1.109**	1.083*	.803**
Black x veteran	—	1.166	1.230†
Hispanic x veteran	—	1.482*	1.508**
Married x veteran	—	—	1.248**
War period	—	—	1.230***
<b>Individual characteristics</b>			
Male	.538***	.538***	.537***
Age	1.004***	1.004***	1.004***
Black	.851***	.836***	.832***
Hispanic	.622***	.609***	.608***
Other races	.758**	.758**	.758**
Employed	1.122***	1.121***	1.124***
Highest grade completed	1.164***	1.164***	1.164***
<b>Household characteristics</b>			
Log of household income	1.129***	1.128***	1.129***
Married	1.342***	1.341***	1.318***
Number of children < 18 in household	1.237***	1.237***	1.242***
Number of household members who volunteered last year	3.284***	3.282***	3.279***
Person lives alone	2.075***	2.071***	2.099***
Metropolitan	.779***	.778***	.778***
<i>N</i>	75,883	75,883	75,883
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.17	.17	.17
LR Chi <sup>2</sup>	8,890.29***	8,896.73***	8,919.50***

† *p* < .10; \* *p* < .05; \*\* *p* < .01; \*\*\* *p* < .001.

In the first model, we only use the veteran dummy variable as a military service variable. In the second model, we add the two race and military service interaction terms. Finally, in the full model, we introduce the married interaction term and the war dummy variable. Presenting these models separately helps us investigate the potential impact of multicollinearity from the war variable in the model. We use logit analysis to examine our hypotheses because ordinary least squares would not be appropriate for the binary dependent variable. Because of clustering at the household level, we use the cluster option in Stata to calculate the standard errors.

**Results**

Table 1 presents the odds ratios for a logit regression using the binary person volunteered variable as the dependent variable. The first column presents the odds ratios for the first model, with the veteran dummy variable as the only military service variable. The second column adds the two race and military service interaction terms. The third column adds the married interaction term and the war dummy variable.

Before discussing the results in this table, it is useful to explain how to interpret odds ratios. Odds ratios represent the change in the odds of the dependent variable happening while holding the other variables constant. If an odds ratio is greater than 1, this means that a one-unit increase in the independent variable (holding all other variables constant) makes a higher score on the dependent variable more likely. An odds ratio between 0 and 1 means that a one-unit increase in the independent variable (holding all other variables constant) is associated with a lower score on the dependent variable.

**Table 2.** Probability of Volunteering by Primary Military Service Variables

	Male		Female	
	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried
<b>White</b>				
Nonveteran	.26	.21	.39	.33
Veteran	.26	.17	.39	.28
War veteran	.30	.21	.44	.33
<b>Black</b>				
Nonveteran	.22	.18	.35	.29
Veteran	.26	.18	.40	.29
War veteran	.30	.21	.45	.33
<b>Hispanic</b>				
Nonveteran	.17	.14	.28	.23
Veteran	.24	.16	.37	.27
War veteran	.28	.19	.42	.31

Note: All other variables are held constant at the mean for the analysis in this table.

For instance, in the first model (column 1), the odds ratio for the number of children is 1.237, which means that every additional child in the family increases the person’s odds of volunteering by 1.237. The odds ratio for the male dummy variable is .538, which means that the probability of a male volunteering is .538 less than the probability of a female volunteering.

Table 2 substantiates the relationships between many of the common individual and household characteristics and volunteering that have been found in previous research. Volunteers are more likely to be female, white, have a higher education level, be married, have children, and live with others who volunteer or live alone. Volunteers are less likely to be black, Hispanic, or from another minority race or to live in a metropolitan area.

The findings regarding the relationship between military service and volunteering are quite interesting. The military service dummy variable is positively related to volunteering in the first two models, but when we add the married interaction term and the war dummy variable in the third model, the military service dummy variable is negatively related to volunteering. The black military service interaction term is not statistically significant in the second model, but it is marginally related to volunteering in the third model. This provides limited support for hypothesis 1a. The Hispanic military service interaction term is positively related to volunteering and statistically significant in both models 2 and 3, which provides support for hypothesis 1b. In model 3, we see that both being a married veteran and having served during a period of war are positively related to volunteering, supporting hypotheses 2 and 3.

Table 1 indicates that the relationship between military service and volunteering is complex. It is potentially problematic that introducing the married interaction term and the war dummy variable changed the relationship between the military service dummy variable and volunteering. To more fully explore this relationship, table 2 shows the predicted volunteering probabilities broken down by several variables of interest—military service, race, gender, and marital status—while holding all other variables in the model constant at their means (probabilities were calculated using the *prvalue* Stata command; see Long and Freese 2003).

Table 2 corroborates and strengthens the findings in table 1 and illustrates the complexities of the relationship between military

service and volunteering. In table 2, we see that veteran status does not change the probability of volunteering for married white veterans—both male and female. However, among married white veterans, military service actually decreases the probability of volunteering for both males and females. White veterans who served during a period of war are more likely to volunteer than nonveteran whites if they are male, and equally likely if they are female. Among blacks, we see that married veterans are more likely to volunteer, but unmarried veterans are not. Again, black veterans who served during a period of war are much more likely to volunteer than nonveterans, regardless of marital status or gender. This same pattern is evident for Hispanic veterans, and it is even stronger. Military service increases the probability of volunteering for Hispanic veterans regardless of marital status or gender. Serving during a period of war further increases the probability of volunteering.

As seen in table 2, the relationship between military service, race, marital status, and gender is complex. This explains why the military service dummy variable is negatively related to volunteering in the third model of table 2 when we add the married interaction term and the war dummy variable. Across the board, married people of both genders and all three races are more likely to volunteer than single people. Unmarried white veterans are less likely to volunteer than married white veterans (unless they served during a period of war). Unmarried black veterans volunteer at the same rate as black unmarried nonveterans, unless the veteran served during a period of war. Unmarried Hispanic veterans are more likely to volunteer than unmarried Hispanic nonveterans. Thus, we see that unless we separate out the effects of race, marital status, and serving during war, the overall influence of veteran status on volunteering is positive (as seen in model 1 of table 1). When adding the race and marital status interaction terms and the war dummy variable, we see that military service is negatively related to volunteering for white, unmarried veterans who did not serve during war. Military service is unrelated to volunteering for unmarried black veterans.

## Discussion

We find that the relationship between military service and civic engagement is nuanced. Military service is positively related to volunteering for certain groups of people who served in the military, but not for all veterans. Military service is most likely to positively influence the volunteering behavior of married veterans, veterans who are black or Hispanic, and those who served in the military during a time of war. These groups of veterans are more likely to have volunteered last year than other veterans and nonveterans. One potentially problematic finding is the overall relationship between veteran status and volunteering. In the first two models of table 1, veteran status is positively related to volunteering, and in the third model, it is negatively related to volunteering. This raises the question of whether the change in this relationship is attributable to multicollinearity or whether veteran status is indeed negatively related to volunteering.

As mentioned previously, multicollinearity is not a problem with interaction terms. Interaction terms add complexity to the model and the coefficients of these terms represent the conditional effects of the interaction term on the dependent variable—conditional on the values of the composite variables. The only potential multicollinearity problems would be with the war dummy variable. However, the

probabilities in table 1 show that when we look at the volunteering of veterans who served in war and the volunteering of veterans who did not serve in war, the negative sign on the veteran dummy variable is not a fluke. It appears that there are different processes going on for these two different groups of veterans that can only be identified when we add the war dummy variable to the model. This gives some credence to the idea that the military culture is different during these periods (Soeters, Winslow, and Weibull 2003), and that serving during these periods might make the institutional experience more salient. This also fits nicely with Ellison's (1992) findings that combat veterans are more likely to vote than noncombat veterans.

The finding that Hispanic veterans and, to a limited extent, black veterans are more likely to volunteer than other veterans fits perfectly with Leal's (1999) and Ellison's (1992) findings that black and Hispanic veterans have higher levels of different types of political activity after leaving military service than white veterans. This lends support to the idea that the military can serve as a social mobility mechanism for people from lower socioeconomic classes (Moskos and Butler 1996). The practical and social skills that people learn in the military can be translated into higher-status jobs with higher wages (Angrist 1993), but also perhaps to more civic and political engagement.

It is intriguing that white unmarried veterans are less likely to volunteer than white married veterans. One possible explanation for this is that motivations for whites to join the military might be changing, especially because of the move from a military force composed of both volunteers and conscripts to an all-volunteer military force in 1973. This move has changed both the demographic composition and culture of the military. While the military had been less representative of the eligible population than it was previously, with the middle class largely unrepresented in the military (Moskos 1982), it is currently highly diverse—although not an exact replica of American society as a whole (U.S. Office of the Undersecretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness, 2007). The shift to an all-volunteer force has changed the culture of the military as well. Motivations to join the military have shifted more toward occupational incentives, such as pay and educational opportunities, rather than feelings of duty and love of country (Laurence 2006; Moskos 1982). It is possible that these changes and other differences in the contemporary military are mediating the relationship between military service and volunteering.

We also found that being a married veteran was positively linked to volunteering. This lends support to the idea that veterans with a strong, supportive social network can more successfully navigate the transition from military service to civilian life. Moreover, younger cohorts of veterans appear to volunteer less. Perhaps this is a reflection of the unusual set of circumstances experienced by many individuals serving during World War II, and not that subsequent cohorts are somehow deficient. This adds support to and is consistent with Mettler's (2005) empirical work on the making of the "greatest generation" and the more general perception that this cohort was exceptional in a variety of ways.

This study shows a relationship between the military service of certain demographic groups and volunteering, but other than knowing



whether a person is a veteran and when he or she served, we have no data on the length and intensity of military service or other details about the way respondents experienced the military as an institution. Previous research has shown that many of these variables are important when investigating the link between military service and civic attitudes and behaviors. For instance, the branch of the military in which a person serves could make a difference. Franzich (1982) found that members of the navy and air force were more participatory than members of the army, and members of the army were more participatory than members of the marines. We also note the importance of serving in combat (Ellison 1992; Pollack, White, and Gold 1975). Some other factors that might alter the relationship between military service and volunteering are the length of military service, the recency of the experience, the intensity of involvement, the way people view the military, and the salience of the military experience (Jennings and Markus 1977). Future research can do more to illuminate the linkage between military service and volunteering by exploring the impact of some of these additional variables.

## Conclusion

A popular narrative found in studies of military service (particularly of the World War II era) makes an explicit link between this type of service and broader forms of civic engagement. While previous research has shown that military service is connected to some forms of political participation, such as voting, the broader narrative linking military service to civic engagement is built on limited evidence that tends to generalize the experiences of the World War II era to other points in time. For example, Mettler concludes that “fraternal groups flourished during the postwar years, and veterans became devout and long-term members. . . The fact that veterans were parents of the baby boom boomers helped to explain a good share of their civic involvement . . . highly educated veterans belonged to a vast number of professional, trade and business organizations . . . less highly educated veterans frequently joined labor organizations” (2005, 124). The implication of this study, and others like it, is that the motivations responsible for military service spill over into other forms of civic service, such as volunteering, and that the behaviors of World War II veterans are typical of all veterans.

However, there is a countercurrent to this narrative that tends to deemphasize any link between military service and civic engagement. Efforts to play down this link are grounded in a concern that conflating the two diminishes the unique sacrifices that members of the armed services are asked to make and removes the special status granted to military service in American society. This argument is based on a belief that conflating military and civic service may weaken the armed services by removing some of the unique honorific status traditionally associated with military service and reducing the likelihood that young Americans will volunteer for military service and opt for other forms of civic engagement.

We test these assumptions and investigate the influence of military service on veteran volunteering behaviors after returning to civilian

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We find that military service is positively related to measures of civic engagement, such as volunteering. The relationship between military service and volunteering is complex, however. Black and Hispanic veterans are more likely to volunteer than both their nonveteran counterparts and white veterans.

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life. We find that military service is positively related to measures of civic engagement, such as volunteering. The relationship between military service and volunteering is complex, however. Black and Hispanic veterans are more likely to volunteer than both their non-veteran counterparts and white veterans. Married veterans are also more likely to volunteer than single veterans. Finally, veterans over the age of 65 are more likely to volunteer upon leaving the service than veterans from younger age groups. This provides evidence that exposure to institutional military life, at least for some groups of people, leads to greater civic engagement.

Therefore, our findings suggest that the spheres of military service and community service are linked, albeit not as closely as suggested by selected studies of specific military cohorts or as distant as those who tend to deemphasize any connection between military and civilian service. Military service interacts with other aspects of individual and community life, including marriage, ethnic identity, and life course, and it is this interaction that seems to be responsible for determining whether military service spills over into higher rates of community service. Unfortunately, the causal mechanisms responsible for the interaction of military service and these aspects of individual and community life remain unclear.

Our ability to untangle these complex relationships will depend on access to different types of data. Because our analysis is based on a cross-section of experiences of military and nonmilitary personnel, we lack longitudinal observations that follow people over time and capture more precisely the impact of military life on civic engagement. This type of data would let us unravel the ways in which the military experience intersects with other aspects of individual and community life, producing varying rates of civic engagement among veterans compared to similar individuals with no military background.

Building on this analysis, subsequent research should attempt to identify which aspects of military life are responsible for enhanced civic engagement among its members. Identifying these underlying relationships will help us understand how best to make sure that particular institutions, such as the armed services, continue to contribute to the day-to-day practice of democracy.

## Acknowledgments

This research was funded in part by a grant from the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. They authors also wish to thank Peter Frumkin and the participants in the first Summer Fellow Program at the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service for their valuable comments on this manuscript.

## Notes

1. We also attempted to replicate this analysis using the Philanthropy Module of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (COPPS) data. However, we chose not to present these results because (1) the sample size of the COPPS was not sufficiently large to allow for the depth of subgroup analysis that we conducted in

this analysis, and (2) the military service variables in the COPPS data were only current up to 1994 for household heads and 1985 for household wives, so the full span of military periods were not represented in these data. However, when the models are run using the COPPS data to the extent possible, most of the military service variables were not statistically significant. Serving in a period of war was negatively related to volunteering ( $p < .10$ ), and being a veteran with a disability was positively related to volunteering ( $p < .10$ ).

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