

Military Service and Entry into Marriage: Comparing Service Members to Civilians

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Background

- During the first decades of the all volunteer era, military service increased young men's odds of entry into marriage (Teachman, 2007).
- Service members were presented with unique benefits, such as employment, training, and housing.
- These benefits helped enlistees achieve the prerequisites to contemporary marriage (Cherlin, 2004).
- Enlistment was especially favorable among young Blacks' odds of entry into marriage (Lundquist, 2004).
- Prior research on the association between military service and marriage largely used samples of men who turned 20 during the 1980s (i.e., late Baby Boomers).
- Less is known about the influence of military service on the risk of entry into marriage among contemporary cohorts of service members.
- Contemporary analysis of this association is important as numerous shifts in marriage trends and military service experiences have occurred since the 1980s.

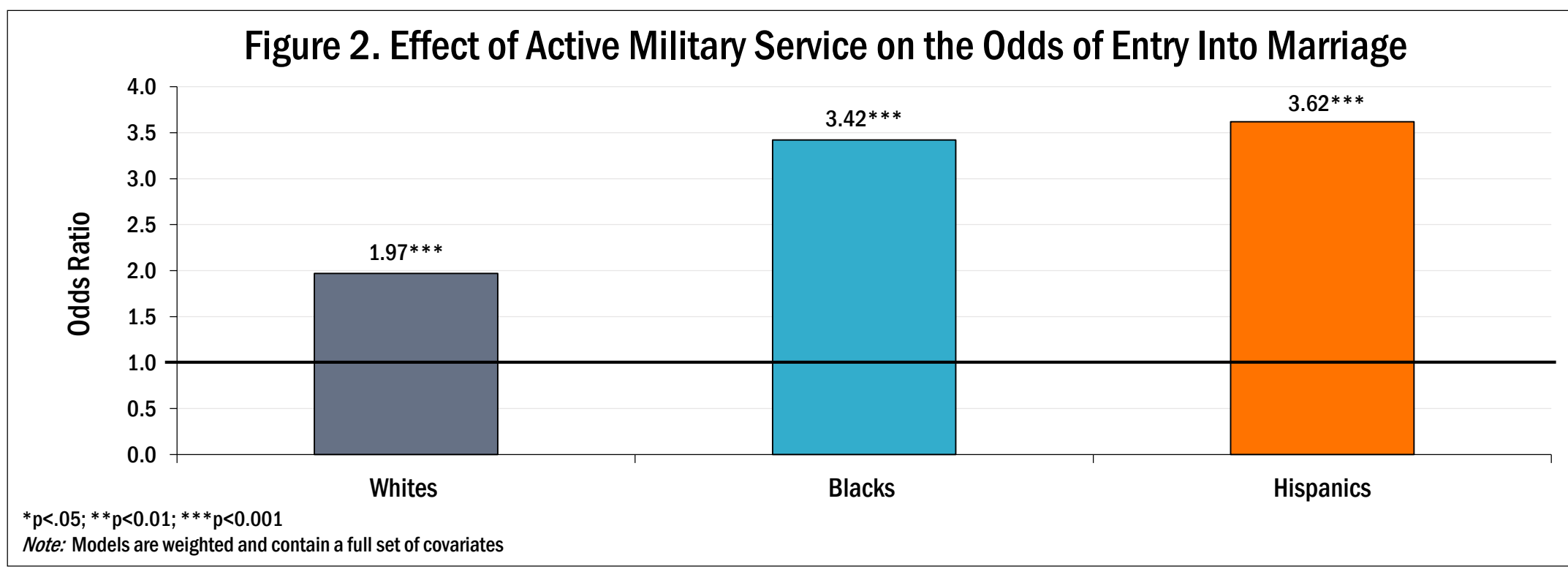
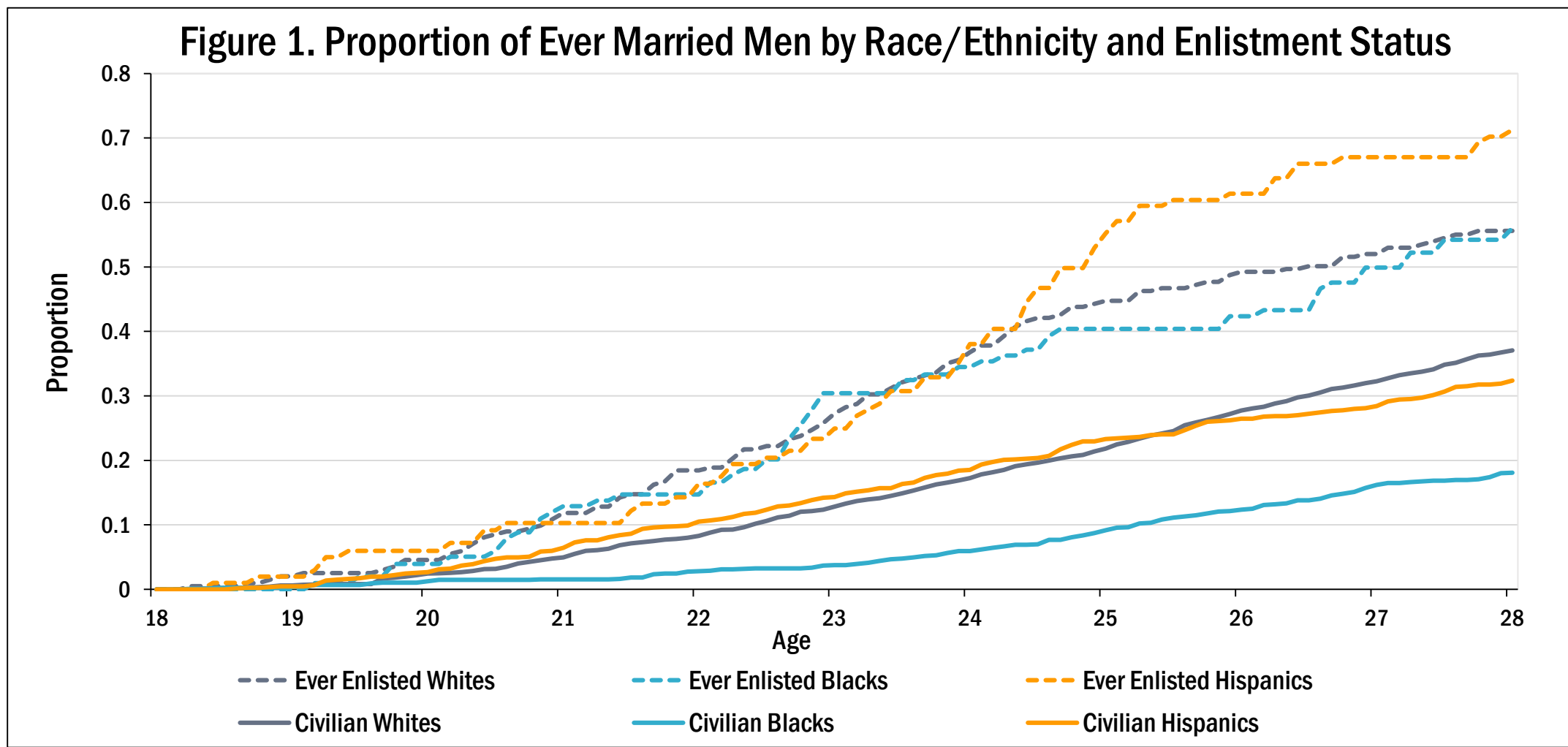
Goals of the Current Investigation

- Examine the association between military service and entry into marriage among a contemporary sample of active duty service men and civilians.
- Consider how the risk of entry into marriage among enlistees differs by racial/ethnic status.

Data & Methods

- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997
- Men aged 18 and older observed between 1997 and 2011
 - Born between 1980 and 1984 (i.e., early Millennials)
- Data are converted into 417,934 person-month intervals
- Event history analysis
- Controls: age, race/ethnicity, ASVAB score, income, residence with both parents in 1997, education, residence in the South

Effect of Military Service on Entry Into First Marriage



Effect of Active Military Service, Veteran Status, and Service in a Combat Zone on the Odds of Entry Into Marriage Among Those Who Ever Enlisted, by Race/Ethnicity

	Zero Order Models	Active Military Service	Veteran Status	Service in a Combat Zone
Military Service				
AMS	1.59 **	1.38	1.41	1.41
Veteran Status	0.69 *	0.81	0.84	0.81
Service in a Combat Zone	1.01	1.06	1.06	1.06
Race/Ethnicity (ref = White)				
Black	0.98	0.87	0.86	0.78
Hispanic	1.43 **	1.45	1.66 *	1.68 *
Interactions				
AMS*Black		1.01		
AMS*Hispanic		1.10		
Veteran Status*Black			1.03	
Veteran Status*Hispanic			0.81	
Combat Zone*Black				1.36
Combat Zone*Hispanic				0.77

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

AMS = Active Military Service
Note: Models are weighted and contain a full set of covariates (with the exception of zero-order models)

Summary

- Military service continues to be a significant pathway to marriage among contemporary cohorts of young men.
- The proportion of enlistees who married by 28 varies by race/ethnicity.
 - Entry into marriage during young adulthood was most common among Hispanic enlistees.
 - Entry into marriage among Black enlistees resembles the trajectory of White enlistees.
- Active military service has the greatest effect among racial/ethnic minorities.
 - Consistent with prior literature suggesting enlistment can “springboard” disadvantaged groups to improved socioeconomic attainment.
- Among enlistees, there is no significant difference in the influence of active service on the odds of entry into marriage between racial/ethnic categories.
 - Similar conclusions regarding the effect of veteran status and service in a combat zone on entry into marriage.
- Future research should consider entry into marriage among the growing population of female service members.

References

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Teachman, J. (2007). Race, military service, and marital timing: Evidence from the NLSY-79. *Demography*, 44(2), 389-404. doi: 10.1353/dem.2007.0018