This paper examines the changing individual characteristics that select black and white men into military service under three major staffing approaches throughout the late 20th century. The military historically has been an institutional route to upward mobility in the United States. Increases in status attainment for veterans have been explicitly facilitated through public policy commitments, including the early implementation of governmental hiring and pensions for Civil War Union Army veterans (Skocpol 1992) and a series of mid-20th Century "GI Bills" that helped millions of service members purchase homes or pursue educational goals (Chevan 1989; Skocpol 1997). These benefits provided opportunities for socioeconomic mobility to men who had proved their worth on the battlefield, and the influence of veteran status on individual educational and occupational attainment is well-documented in the literature (Angrist 1998; Cooney, et. al., 2003; Nam 1964; Sampson and Laub 1996; Schwartz 1986). Despite this body of evidence, the positive effects of veteran status on social mobility are not fixed. The roles of policy and the relative composition of the armed forces are critical in determining veterans' status attainment. The specific benefits available to veterans vary over time, as do the average human capital profiles of veterans and nonveterans and the degree to which skills gained while on active duty are applicable in the civilian labor market (Cohen, Segal and Temme 1992).

Throughout U.S. history, the armed forces have been staffed primarily by a "skeleton crew" of career officers during times of peace, with larger wartime armies raised by a combination of volunteers and conscription. Prior to World War II, African Americans were under-represented in the military due to a limited number of segregated units in which they were allowed to serve. However, the U.S. armed forces underwent three major staffing changes in the latter half of the 20th century that dramatically affected both the relative risk of military service as well as the demographic profile of the standing army. First, in the aftermath of WWII, the universal draft was retained in response to the Cold War perception of military threat. Second, President Truman ordered the desegregation of the armed forces. The combination of these policy changes meant that all able-bodied young males shared a near-universal risk of service. Although blacks continued to be under-represented in the military, due to a larger proportion of African Americans deemed to be physically or mentally unfit for military service, veteran status became much more equally distributed throughout the adult male population. Cultural forces also affected the demographic composition of active-duty personnel. For example, the expansion of secondary education in the South led to an increasing proportion of black and Southern applicants admitted to the military (Moskos 1966). Despite widely-publicized race- and class-based disparities in service *assignments* (and resulting casualty rates) in Vietnam, selection *into the military* became primarily an issue of gender and age (Binkin 1993).

Selection into the military – and ultimately the veteran population – changed dramatically in 1973 when, in response to intensifying public opposition to the U.S. war with Vietnam and the draft, Congress authorized yet another major change in military staffing policy: the transition to the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). Recruitment since 1973 has disproportionately attracted Southerners, blacks, and young adults from rural communities (Fredland et. al., 1996; Segal and Segal 2004). This led to dramatic demographic changes in military personnel, including a growing proportion of women in uniform, increasing levels of educational attainment and performance on standardized tests for enlistees, and an over-representation of blacks for the first time in our nation's history. The changing characteristics of the armed services personnel resulting from the transition to the AVF may mean that life-course effects of military service and veteran status have now become concentrated on specific segments of the population.

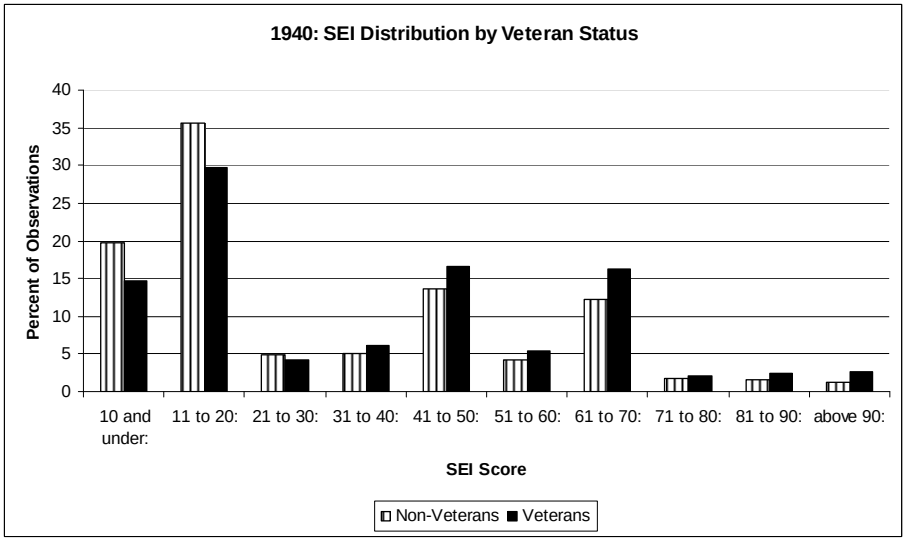
While a portion of veterans' historic upward mobility was undoubtedly related to individual selection into the military among volunteers, a Cold War staffing policy that included a universal conscription lottery equalized risk of service among young men, and as such, the benefits of veteran status were widely distributed. Since 1973, the relationship between the military and the stratification system has been radically altered. The change to an "All Volunteer Force" has meant that the ranks of the U.S. armed forces are now filled completely by those who self-select into military service. While preferential hiring in government jobs remains a benefit for all veterans, the universal provision of veterans' educational benefits is an historic relic, and the privatization of many military functions restricts the proportion of enlisted service members whose military training provides substantial benefit in the civilian labor market. The promise of upward socioeconomic mobility now centers on individual-level negotiations and the exchange of specific financial and educational incentives for enlistment and terms of service. Whether military service in this new context still facilitates upward socioeconomic mobility remains in question (Xie 1992). Some researchers find evidence suggesting that military service, under the All Volunteer staffing policy, has become only one of a variety of low-wage employment options for unskilled young people. They argue that in the absence of strong policy commitment to veterans, there are likely to be few durable socioeconomic benefits to AVF veterans. A competing hypothesis holds that those who serve under the current staffing regime *select in* based on individual characteristics that make them more likely to succeed, regardless of the institutional options available to them (Winship and Mare 1984). The long-term effects of this changed policy environment remain to be seen.

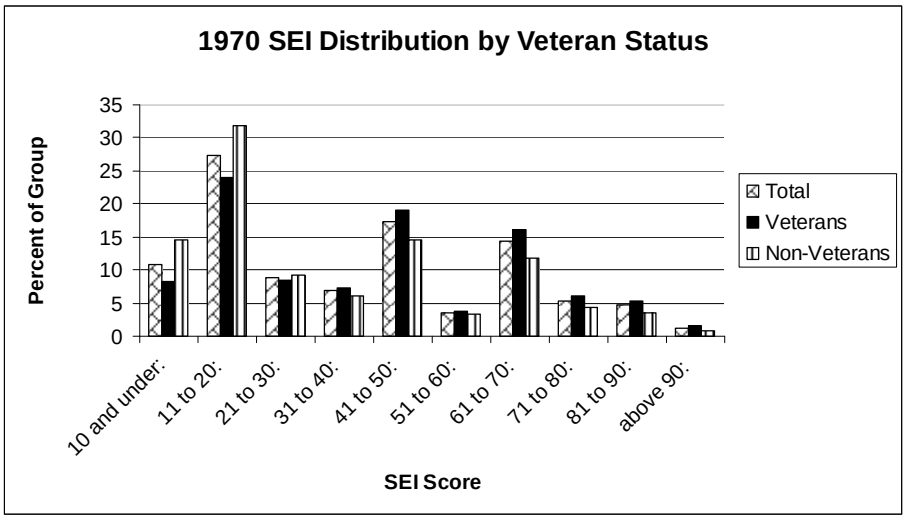
As the on pages 3 and 4, depicting preliminary data analyses, indicate, differences in occupational attainment varies by veteran status over time. However, these differences may be linked to factors such as differences in the age distribution of veteran and non-veteran populations, as well as social factors that may select individuals with different ascribed and achieved characteristics into military service under different staffing policy regimes. This paper will use PUMS data to identify demographic and social characteristics that impact the likelihood of selection into the veteran population in three critical decades in US history, and the way that these characteristics may vary for black and white men. Specifically, I will use samples constructed of native-born black and white men between the ages of 26 and 35 for census decades 1950, 1970, and 1990, as well as the 2004 American Community Survey. I have selected these ages and decades because they provide information on men whose terms of service are easily identifiable given their ages: those from the 1950 sample will be overwhelmingly composed of those eligible for service during World War II; those from the 1970 census will have been subjected to the Cold War universal draft lottery; those from the 1990 census will have bridged the transition from the Vietnam War to the AVF, and those from 2004 will have come of age after the AVF – and its recruiting tactics, including the Army College Fund – became entrenched in American life. I will disaggregate each sample by veteran status. In 1950 and 1970, active-duty military personnel will be excluded. However, given the emergence of longer terms of service, and particularly the prevalence of military careers among African American men[1], I will include active duty personnel in the 1990 and 2004 samples. Additionally, because of the relatively young age of the sample, many of their status-linked characteristics will be relatively similar to those they had upon entry to the service.

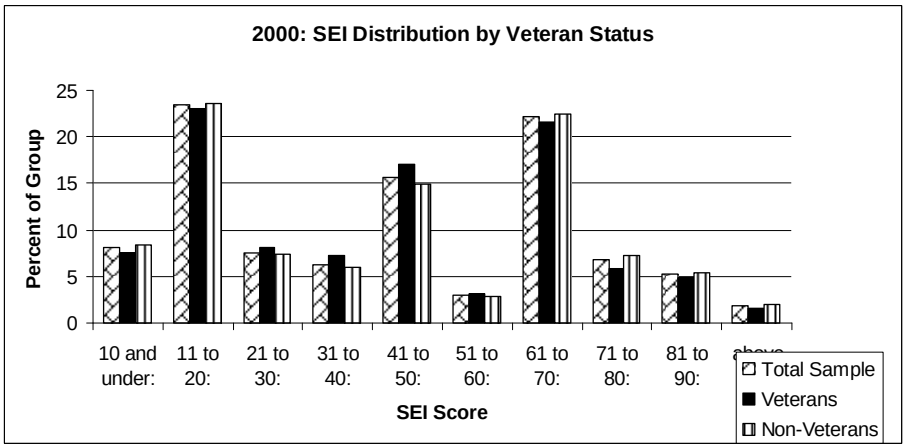
My analyses will be conducted separately for blacks and for whites. I will first present descriptive statistics identifying the characteristics of each racial group, and the way that hose

[1] The Department of Defense is the nation's largest employer of black high school graduates (Segal & Segal 2004).

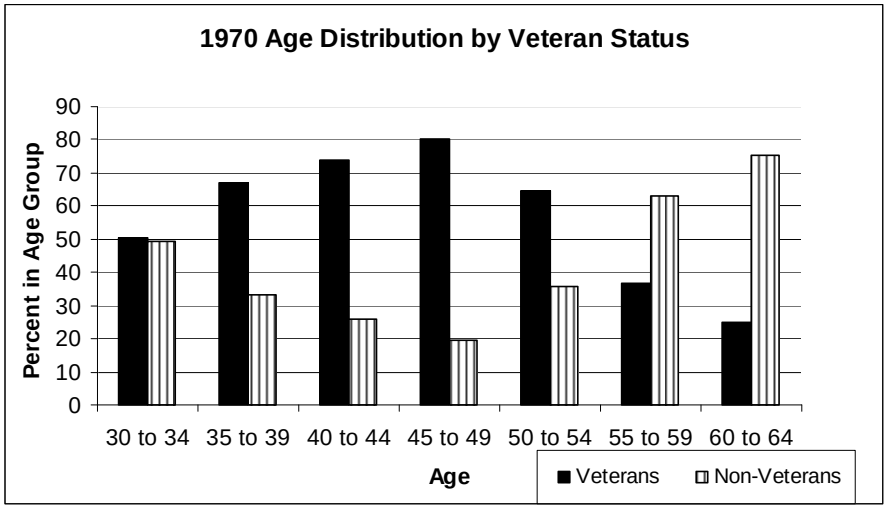
characteristics vary by veteran status. These characteristics include states of birth and residence, level of educational attainment, occupational status (using the Duncan SEI), homeownership, industry of employment, income, marital status, number of coresident children, whether the individual is a labor market participant, and for those actively engaged in the labor market, whether he is unemployed. I will then compare the samples within and across decades to







identify differences between the veteran and non-veteran populations, how those differences vary by race, and whether those within-race differences change over time. I will use a variety of statistical approaches, including logistic regression analysis in which the outcome variable is dichotomous and indicates whether the individual is a veteran or not, to assess the relative risk of becoming a veteran by race and cohort.



This question is an important one, given the durable effects that veteran status has on life-course trajectories. In 2000, 12.7% of the adult civilian population were veterans. Veterans – particularly those who have seen combat – are at a disproportionately high risk for homelessness, substance abuse, and mental illness. Veteran status may also provide benefits in the civilian labor market, through hiring preferences for public-sector jobs. VA benefits often include medical care, homebuying assistance, and for many veterans, the opportunity for advanced education. The distribution of human and social capital by veteran status should be of interest to all who study social stratification, race, and public policy.