

Vanguard: Black Veterans and Civil Rights After World War I*

Desmond Ang[†]
Sahil Chinoy[‡]

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Abstract

Nearly 400,000 Black men were drafted into the National Army during World War I, where they toiled in segregated units and received little formal training. Leveraging novel variation from the WWI draft lottery and millions of digitized military and NAACP records, we document the pioneering role these men would play in the early civil rights movement. Relative to observably similar individuals from the same draft board, Black men randomly inducted into the Army were significantly more likely to join the nascent NAACP and to become prominent community leaders in the New Negro era. We find little evidence that these effects are explained by migration or improved socioeconomic status. Rather, corroborating historical accounts about the catalyzing influence of institutional racism in the military, we show that increased civic activism was driven by soldiers who experienced the most discriminatory treatment while serving their country.

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[†]Harvard Kennedy School. Email: desmond.ang@hks.harvard.edu

[‡]Harvard University, Department of Economics. Email: schinoy@g.harvard.edu

“The hate and scorn showered on us Negro officers by our fellow Americans convinced me that there was no sense in my dying for a world ruled by them. I made up my mind that if I got through this war I would study law and use my time fighting for men who could not strike back.”

– Lt. Charles Hamilton Houston
First Special Counsel, NAACP
Dean, Howard University Law School

1 Introduction

Throughout American history, civil rights activism has tended to swell following major wars. Membership in the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP), the country’s oldest and largest civil rights organization, spiked dramatically after the return of Black veterans from World War I and World War II (Figure 1). These swells have, in turn, preceded landmark advances in the fight for racial equality – from the New Negro movement of the 1920s and 1930s to military and schooling desegregation in the 1940s and 1950s and the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts during the Vietnam War.

[Figure 1 about here.]

Yet, despite the transformative nature of these social movements and the central role of Black veterans like Charles Hamilton Houston, Jackie Robinson, and Medgar Evers in historical narratives thereof (Morris, 1986; Klinkner and Smith, 1999; Payne, 2007; Delmont, 2023), there exists virtually no empirical evidence about the causal impact of military service on civil rights activism. Disentangling this relationship is complicated by fundamental issues of selection and measurement. More civic-minded individuals may be more likely both to enlist and to participate in social movements. Equally challenging is quantifying an individual’s involvement in the civil rights movement. Common political outcomes such as voter participation and party membership may be weak proxies for one’s desire to advocate for racial equality, particularly in settings with discrimination. For example, low turnout rates could reflect limited civic engagement, significant voter suppression, or both.

This paper aims to document how experiences in the military affected the decisions of Black men to join the early civil rights movement. To overcome concerns about selection, we leverage random variation from the World War I draft lottery, which has never been examined in the literature. The World War I draft included the first class of African American registrants in U.S. history and led to the induction of nearly 400,000 Black men. Due to systemic discrimination, Black draftees received little formal training and were relegated to racially segregated units, where they primarily toiled as menial laborers under white supervisors (Barbeau and Henri, 1996). African Americans comprised roughly 13% of the Army, but 33% of its laborers, and 0.7% of its commissioned officers (Reddick, 1949). These “unknown soldiers” formed the backbone of the American war effort, and their return home coincided with a radical re-imagining of Black identity that would come to define the New Negro era, a period of invigorated political and cultural assertiveness that shaped the foundations of the civil rights movement (Gilmore, 2009).

To document the military service and civic activism of these men, we digitize millions of records from the Great War and the infancy of the NAACP. Specifically, we construct a database of the universe of Black draft registration cards – nearly one million – from the first World War I registration. We link these cards to detailed military records containing information about each soldier’s camp, unit, and deployment area. Then, we link draft registrants through the 1930 full-count census to comprehensive NAACP rosters including the name and exact home address of

more than 200,000 member observations from the end of the war through the 1930s, a period when the organization first gained national prominence.

Using random variation in enlistments induced by the draft lottery, we estimate the causal effect of military service on future membership in the NAACP. Unlike the World War II and Vietnam War drafts examined by others (e.g., Angrist, 1990; Angrist and Krueger, 1994), an individual’s draft liability in World War I was not determined by his birthday. Instead, it was determined by the order in which his specific serial number was drawn in a national lottery. We capture these numbers from the draft cards and reconstruct the draft lottery to back out each individual’s order of liability, which we use as an instrument for military service in World War I. We provide evidence of the instrument’s exogeneity to all observed prewar registrant characteristics as well as its strong relevance with future veteran status.

Our findings reveal the pivotal role of military service in fueling early civil rights activism. The TSLS estimates suggest that African Americans randomly induced to enlist were nearly three times more likely to join the NAACP than observably similar registrants from the same draft board. These results are virtually unchanged across a host of robustness tests using alternative first-stage functional forms, instruments, and linking strategies. The effects are also not driven by changes in residential mobility. However, they are well-reflected in other measures of civil rights activism. Matching registrants to compendia of historically prominent African Americans, we show that draftees were significantly more likely to gain renown as leaders in the Black community during the New Negro era.

In contrast to recent work demonstrating the modern military’s role as an engine of Black economic mobility (Greenberg et al., 2022), we find little evidence that serving in World War I improved the socioeconomic status of Black soldiers. Examining the 1930 census, we recover near-zero estimates for literacy, home ownership, employment, and predicted income. These results are consistent with the historical record, which documents the limited training, low pay, and scant postwar benefits provided to Black soldiers in this period. We also find little effect of military service on census measures of club involvement – such as employment or residence in clubs, lodges, or nonprofit membership organizations – suggesting that increased NAACP membership did not simply reflect greater participation in social organizations more generally.

Examining heterogeneity across prewar registrant and county characteristics, we find suggestive evidence of larger increases in civic activism among individuals who claimed – but did not receive – draft exemptions. We also show that estimates decline monotonically with racism in a registrant’s home county, proxied by former Confederate status and the historical presence of Confederate monuments and lynchings (Bazzi et al., 2023). Both results suggest that increased activism was driven by individuals who experienced the largest *shock* of discrimination upon joining the military. A similar pattern emerges when examining NAACP participation by type of military service, which reveals the highest participation rates among veterans of the 92nd Division, who risked their lives in combat while subject to constant racial abuse under U.S. command, and lower rates among non-combatants and combat veterans of the 93rd, who brigaded with the French military.

These findings align with perhaps the most dominant narrative of postwar activism discussed by historians: “African American soldiers’ experiences in the war and their battles with the pervasive racial discrimination in the U.S. military informed their postwar disillusionment and subsequent racial militancy as veterans” (Williams, 2007). As one Black veteran described, “We have labored in sweat and tears – we have been loyal in every crisis and died in wars without a winking. . . Henceforth our Loyalty is for sale – and the price thereof is Justice.” To investigate this channel more directly, we identify multiple salient dimensions of discrimination from War Department reports tracking discontent among Black soldiers: racial bias in draft inductions, assignment of white officers to Black units, and exclusion of Black soldiers from military training. We then calculate measures

of each individual’s exposure to these factors at draft boards and military camps by examining surveys of camp intelligence officers and constructing a crosswalk linking registrants to camps by board and order of liability.

Estimating differential effects based on experienced discrimination, a stark pattern emerges. Effects on NAACP participation increase monotonically with draft board discrimination, with the largest effects coming from men drafted by boards with the largest racial disparities in induction rates. Similarly, we find large and significant effects of military service for men assigned to the most discriminatory camps and near-zero estimates for men assigned to camps with more racially equitable rates of officer promotions and military training. Constructing matched samples based on registrant and board characteristics, we show that these patterns are unlikely to be explained by differential selection into camps. Together, the results highlight the salience of discrimination and empirically corroborate the catalyzing role of perceptions of injustice and disillusionment in driving postwar activism.

Finally, we examine the first Black officer candidate class in U.S. military history. Unlike draftees, candidates were volunteers and officer selection was not random. Nonetheless, we collect detailed biographical information to document the socioeconomic backgrounds and civic contributions of this historic group of African Americans. The data reveals the highly selected nature of the young Black elites who answered the nation’s call to arms. Included in the 1,300 candidates were nearly 5% of all Black lawyers and doctors in the country. Roughly one in every six candidates would go on to join the NAACP, while one in ten would assume significant roles in the New Negro era, including as leaders of Congress, city government, Black colleges, and civil rights organizations. Comparing candidates who did and did not receive officer commissions, we show that rates of future civic activism are two to three times higher among officers, who, despite their background and training, faced widespread denigration once in the military. While only correlational, these differences are consistent with the large activism effects observed among Black draftees and are entirely unattenuated by a rich set of controls, including measures of prior civic participation.

This paper contributes to several literatures across economics and other disciplines. First, we build on a large body of work discussing the importance of Black veterans in shaping the civil rights movement. While most of this scholarship is qualitative (Parker, 2009a; Parker, 2009b; Barbeau and Henri, 1996; Williams, 2007; Williams, 2010), recent quantitative research has shown that Black enlistments during World War II predict higher voter registration among nearby African Americans and less prejudiced racial views among nearby white civilians in the postwar period (Koch et al., 2021; Schindler and Westcott, 2021). To this, we add empirical corroboration of the prominent role of Black veterans at the onset of the civil rights movement. Digitizing hundreds of thousands of early NAACP records, we show that veterans accounted for nearly 15% of male members – relative to 8% of the adult Black male population – while one in five commissioned officers would become known for their social and civic leadership during the New Negro era.

Beyond a descriptive accounting, this paper provides rare insight into the causal origins of the civil rights movement. While a host of research has documented the far-reaching effects of legislation emerging from the civil rights era (e.g., Cascio and Washington, 2014; Ang, 2019; Aneja and Avenancio-León, 2019; Bailey et al., 2021; Deroncourt and Montialoux, 2021), far less work has sought to understand the underlying forces powering the waves of Black activism that brought about those policies (e.g., Wang, 2021; Dippel and Heblich, 2021; Ramos-Toro, 2021). We provide the first causal evidence that military service – and experiences of institutional discrimination therein – galvanized the fight for racial justice at the height of the Jim Crow era. Our estimates imply that the World War I draft induced more than 10,000 Black men to join the vanguard of America’s preeminent civil rights organization. These same findings may provide important insight into not only the watershed civil rights achievements that followed later 20th-century con-

flicts, but also the dramatic rise of the Black Lives Matter movement after recent state-linked injustices.

Finally, to our knowledge, this study is the first to leverage random variation from the World War I draft lottery. As such, we introduce a new source of exogenous variation in military service during a critical and understudied period in American history, one that saw significant social upheaval ranging from the Tulsa Massacre and the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s to the Great Depression and Bonus March of the early 1930s. By reconstructing the World War I draft lottery, we complement a rich literature examining American conscription during later wars (e.g., Hearst et al., 1986; Angrist, 1990; Angrist and Krueger, 1994; Card and Lemieux, 2001; Bound and Turner, 2002; Bedard and Deschênes, 2006; Angrist et al., 2010; Angrist and Chen, 2011).¹ While those studies primarily focus on economic outcomes, recent work in international settings has investigated the link between exposure to war and the rise of fascism and autocracy throughout Europe (Cagé et al., 2023; Acemoglu et al., 2022; Koenig, 2023). We show that the embers of war may also spark more progressive change, catalyzing civic engagement among marginalized groups – the historical underpinning of many of the world’s most consequential social movements.²

The rest of this paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 provides historical context for the war, the draft lottery, and the rise of the NAACP. Section 3 describes the data and the process used to link records. Section 4 discusses our instrumental variables strategy, Section 5 presents our main results on civil rights activism and socioeconomic status, Section 6 explores mechanisms and the salience of discrimination, Section 7 examines the first Black officer training class, and Section 8 concludes.

2 Background and setting

2.1 World War I draft

When America first entered World War I in April 1917, the combined forces of the standing Army and National Guard totaled roughly 300,000 men. Anticipating the need to send millions of additional soldiers to the Western Front in France, Congress passed the Selective Service Act of 1917, authorizing the federal government to conscript a wartime National Army. The resulting draft was the first to include African Americans and led to the induction of over 2.5 million men, accounting for 72% of the U.S. soldiers who served in the war.

The draft was implemented in three registration waves.³ The first and most consequential, on June 5, 1917, required the approximately 9.6 million men between 21 to 31 years old (i.e., those born between June 1886 and May 1896) to register. The second, conducted exactly one year later, captured the roughly 300,000 men who had recently turned 21. The third, on September 12, 1918, expanded the age eligibility cutoffs to men between the ages of 18 and 45. However, as the war ended shortly thereafter – on November 11, 1918 – more than 90% of inductions were from the first registration, which we focus on in this paper.

¹Far fewer studies have examined American military service during World War I. Those that do (e.g., Mazumder, 2017; Tan, 2020) focus only on white men, raising concerns about their applicability to Black veterans. Rather than leveraging the draft lottery variation, existing studies compare draft-eligible and ineligible birth cohorts. This approach is limited in its ability to explore heterogeneity across types of military service among drafted men and may be confounded by underlying differences between age groups. It is further complicated by the fact that draft eligibility was determined by a man’s age as of June 5, 1917, whereas the 1920 to 1940 censuses only recorded an individual’s year of birth, not his birth month or date.

²Ottinger and Rosenberger (2023) also link war and democratic advancement, showing that French combatants’ exposure to the American Revolutionary War led to their support for the French Revolution a decade later.

³Much of this summary of the draft process relies on the description in Chambers (1987). Information about the layout of draft registration cards can be found in Newman (2001).

Unlike later drafts, in which lottery numbers were assigned by birth date, the World War I draft was implemented as follows. Upon registering at his local board, each registrant was assigned a serial number, which was written or stamped on his card.⁴ Serial numbers were unique within each board and ranged from 1 to N , the total number of registrants at that board. Serial numbers from the first registration were then drawn in a national lottery held in Washington, D.C. on July 20, 1917. Paper slips – one for each serial number 1 through 10,500, the size of the largest draft board in the country – were placed in gelatin capsules, piled in a glass jar, and drawn one by one by a series of political figures in front of national media. The order in which serial numbers were drawn was printed in newspapers throughout the country and used to determine an individual’s draft liability. In particular, the rank order that an individual’s serial number was called relative to those of other registrants in his draft board was his “local order number.” These denoted the order in which eligible men would be inducted.⁵

Following the draft registration, men were categorized by physical exam and exemptions into four classes. Exemptions could be granted for men with dependent family members as well as for occupations essential to “the maintenance of the Military Establishment,” religious beliefs, and moral objections. In practice, most men who received exemptions did so under dependency claims, though local boards wielded significant discretion in the exemption process. Class I registrants primarily included unmarried men and married men without children.

Finally, Class I registrants were inducted in order of their local order number to fulfill quotas established for each draft board. Quotas were determined by the size of the eligible male population in a board minus deductions for prior voluntary military enlistments from the state.⁶

Of the approximately one million Black men who registered during the first and second registration waves, 557,000 were categorized as Class I and 367,710 were inducted. Due to racial disparities in the classification and exemption processes as well as strict limits on Black voluntary enlistments, Black men comprised 13% of inductees, but only 9.6% of registrants.⁷

2.2 Black soldiers in the war

Prior to the passage of the Selective Service Act, there was significant debate about whether to include Black men in the draft. Military leaders and politicians feared that arming and training Black men would result in racial insurrection (Wilson, 2015).⁸ As revealed by War Plans mem-

⁴Individuals who sought to dodge the draft were subject to harsh penalties if caught. Population estimates suggest that more than 98% of eligible men actually registered for the draft. Roughly 4% of registered men were deemed “deserters.” Three-quarters of this group were men who failed to appear for physical examinations at their local board during the classification process. The remaining quarter of deserters were men who failed to report to entrainment camps after being classified and having their order number called (U.S. Provost Marshal General, 1919).

⁵For example, the first four serial numbers drawn in the lottery were 258, 2522, 9613, and 4532. Men with serial numbers 258 and 2522 were thus assigned local order numbers 1 and 2, respectively. In boards with 9613 or more registrants, men with serial number 9613 would have local order number 3 and those with serial number 4532 would have local order number 4, while in boards with fewer than 9613 registrants, men with serial number 4532 would have local order number 3.

⁶States that had supplied larger numbers of volunteers to the National Guard, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps had proportionally lower quotas. As a result, states in New England had relatively low quotas, while Southern states had relatively high quotas.

⁷Army policy only allowed Black volunteers to fill vacancies in the four all-Black units of the Regular Army that existed prior to the war. As a result, only 4,000 new Black volunteers were accepted, with all vacancies filled by the time of the first draft registration (U.S. Provost Marshal General, 1919). In contrast, more than 650,000 white men were able to voluntarily enlist, often to secure more favorable assignments.

⁸These fears were reflected in and inflamed by two high-profile controversies involving Black soldiers: the Brownsville affair of 1906, in which 167 Black soldiers at Fort Brown were falsely accused and dishonorably discharged for attacking a white woman and bartender, and the Houston riots of 1917, in which 13 Black soldiers were executed and 41 were sentenced to life imprisonment for mutinying and killing several civilians and policemen after

oranda, pervasive racial prejudice also fueled concerns that “a large percentage of colored men” lacked the “mental stamina or sturdiness to put in [combat] line against German troops.” Ultimately, political pressure from Black civic leaders and the need to mobilize millions of troops led the War Department to include Black draftees and to open a pathway for Black commissioned officers (which we discuss further in Section 7).

However, these measures came with significant restrictions. To limit contact between Black and white soldiers, military units and camps were segregated. To restrict access to firearms, Black draftees were primarily relegated to non-combat units. To placate fears of racial insurrection, military officials enforced a “safe ratio” ensuring that Black troops comprised no more than one-tenth of soldiers at any camp. Finally, to monitor the activities and discussions of Black soldiers, the Military Intelligence Division established an entire section focused on “Negro Subversion.”

As a result of these measures, the vast majority of the 368,000 Black draftees served essentially as day laborers – domestically and abroad – “perform[ing] some of the harshest backbreaking work of the war” such as loading and unloading cargo ships, building railways, and burying the dead (Wilson, 2015).⁹ Though Army regulations stated that military training and literacy classes were to be provided for all soldiers, in practice, Black men were far less likely than their white counterparts to receive these services. Similarly, while non-commissioned officerships in Black labor units were theoretically open to Black draftees, military investigators found that those posts were often used as a “dumping ground for unfit white men who have been rejected for service in white units” and whose “attitude toward the colored soldier is such as might be expected from men coming from the lower strata of the white population” (Loving, 1918).

Only 40,000 of the 200,000 Black draftees sent overseas were placed in combat units. Due to low rates of combat service, fewer than 800 Black soldiers were killed in combat during the war, compared to more than 50,000 white soldiers (Keene, 2002). Black combatants were assigned to one of two all-Black divisions: the 92nd or 93rd. While both divisions were led by Black junior officers and white senior officers, they differed significantly in their composition and wartime experience.¹⁰

The 92nd Division consisted of four regiments of Black draftees. Unlike white combat divisions, the 92nd Division was prohibited from training together before deployment so as not to arouse concern among local white communities.¹¹ Throughout their deployment in France, the men of the 92nd were “routinely debased, denigrated, and degraded” by their own senior command, which “was composed of racist southern officers,” and by War Department officials and the American public (Farrar, 2005). Despite limited training, the division was widely disparaged after its 368th Regiment failed to suppress German forces during the Argonne Offensive. Major General Bullard, commander of the Second Army in France, deemed the men of the 92nd “hopelessly inferior,” prompting Congress to discuss the potential dissolution of *all* Black units in the standing army.

In contrast, the 93rd Division consisted of three regiments of Black National Guardsmen and only

being arrested and assaulted by local police.

⁹Historians have equated the experience of Black laborers to “*de facto* slavery with white officers serving as overseers.” One Black veteran wrote, “We were treated like dogs. I mean worse than German prisoners. I would die before I would undertake to go through what I have gone through” (Wilson, 2015).

¹⁰Senior officers in all divisions were white.

¹¹This decision was in keeping with the War Department’s stance of not challenging the status quo of Jim Crow. After a Black sergeant was thrown out of a local theater due to his race, Major General Ballou, the white commander of the 92nd, issued a bulletin stating that “the theater manager is legally wrong. Nevertheless, the sergeant is guilty of the GREATER wrong in doing ANYTHING, NO MATTER HOW LEGALLY CORRECT, that will provoke race animosity.” The bulletin went on to threaten that “White men made the Division, and they can break it just as easily if it becomes a trouble maker.”

one regiment of Black draftees. On the whole, National Guard volunteers were more experienced and better trained than conscripted draftees. However, General Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, believed the 93rd was unfit to be deployed with American combat troops and sent the division to serve under French command. Brigading with the French Army, the men of the 93rd Division experienced far less discriminatory treatment than those of the 92nd. Relations became so friendly that General Pershing delivered a classified missive to his French counterparts stressing that “we must prevent the rise of any pronounced degree of intimacy between French and black officers. . . we cannot deal with them on the same plane as with the white American officers without deeply wounding the latter.” Despite these efforts, the combat exploits of the 93rd Division were widely praised by the French government, with 527 soldiers receiving *Croix de Guerre* medals.

2.3 The New Negro and the rise of the NAACP

At the conclusion of the war, Black soldiers returned home to renewed racial hatred and violence, including a spate of white supremacist attacks during the Red Summer of 1919, the growing presence of “sundown towns” throughout the country (Bazzi et al., 2022), and a resurgent Ku Klux Klan that included more than four million members by 1925 (Ang, 2023). The decade after Armistice Day also saw the striking emergence of the New Negro movement, which “promoted a renewed sense of racial pride, cultural self-expression, economic independence and progressive politics” in defiance of Jim Crow discrimination (Library of Congress, 2009).

Characterized by its rejection of “the conservatism, parochialism, and political accommodationism deemed outdated in the postwar period” (Williams, 2007), the movement was a transformative racial awakening spanning the spread of jazz during the Harlem Renaissance to the manifestation of Black political power in organizations such as the United Negro Improvement Association (Marcus Garvey’s Pan-Africanist group), the American Negro Press (deemed “the single greatest power in the Negro race” by Gunnar Myrdal), and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (the first Black labor union chartered by the AFL). Binding these diverse phenomena together was a belief in the “efficacy of collective effort” that would ultimately lay the groundwork for the landmark civil rights advances of the mid-20th century (Mitchell, 1994).

Perhaps the most enduring and influential institution to emerge from the New Negro movement was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Founded in 1909, NAACP membership was largely stagnant until the return of veterans at the end of World War I. Between 1914 and 1920, membership rolls exploded from 6,000 to 90,000 while the number of local branches grew from 50 to 310. Over this period, the organization’s composition also changed dramatically. While its founders included a number of white progressives, by 1920, more than 90% of NAACP members and officers were Black (Kellogg, 1967).

During the war, the NAACP was influential in winning the right of African Americans to serve as commissioned officers and objected to the War Department’s restrictions on Black volunteers (Kellogg, 1967). These efforts aligned with the organization’s wartime motto of “First your country, then your rights!”, which urged Black men to “forget our special grievances and close our ranks . . . with our own white fellow citizens” (Du Bois, 1918). After the war, the NAACP adopted a more confrontational stance, turning its attention to defeating the “the huns of America: lynchings, Jim Crow, and discrimination.”¹² This work was largely done by local branches, which carried out a

¹²In explaining the NAACP’s shift away from political accommodationism, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote, “I heard from the mouths of soldiers the kind of treatment that Black men got in the American army. I was convinced and said that American white officers fought more valiantly against Negroes within our ranks than they did against the Germans” (Williams, 2023).

range of protest, lobbying, and legal campaigns (Sullivan, 2009).¹³

Throughout this period, participation in the NAACP was a costly endeavor. Membership fees were \$1 per year, at a time when the median annual income for Black families was less than \$500. Participation also entailed significant personal risk as members often became “targets of violence and harassment,” particularly in the South (Sullivan, 2009).¹⁴

3 Data and linking strategy

In this section, we describe our main data sources and outline how we link draft cards, military records, NAACP rosters, and the 1930 full-count census. Further details on linking are in Appendix B.

3.1 Draft registrants

Registration cards and order numbers

We obtained draft cards for the 935,984 Black men who registered during the first draft registration. Card images are held at the National Archives and Record Administration, and an example is provided in Appendix Figure A1. We sent all cards to a data entry firm and captured information on the registrant’s name, address, birth date, birth state, occupation, marital status, serial number, and order number.¹⁵ The cards contain information only about whether a registrant claimed an exemption, not whether he actually received one.

Most draft registration cards have two numbers written on them: the serial or “red ink” number and the local order number. For each board, we identify the typical positions of these two numbers.¹⁶ Then, we calculate the order number predicted by the serial number. To do this, we need to know the order of serial numbers called in the national lottery as well as the total number of first-round registrants in each board, which we obtain from the *Second Report of the Provost Marshal General to the Secretary of War on the Operations of the Selective Service System* (1919). In our main analysis, we use the predicted order number to address any concern that a card’s actual order number, which was written by local officials *after* the national lottery, may have been manipulated.¹⁷

¹³In Charleston, South Carolina, NAACP members organized protests challenging efforts to exclude Black women from clothing factory jobs. In Atlanta, the local branch conducted a large-scale, door-to-door voter registration drive to halt city plans to abolish seventh grade in Black public schools. Across the nation, the NAACP provided legal aid to African Americans involved in racial discrimination cases. Membership fees raised by local branches funded almost the entirety of the national organization’s budget and were directed towards Congressional lobbying for (failed) anti-lynching legislation and legal appeals that ultimately led to the groundbreaking Supreme Court decision in *Moore v. Dempsey* (1923), which expanded federal oversight of state criminal justice systems.

¹⁴In Anderson, South Carolina, branch members were driven out of town after the local newspaper blamed the organization for “the increasing insolence of many Negroes in the city.” In Austin, Texas, the NAACP’s executive secretary was beaten by a mob – which included the county judge and local constable – for asserting that the local branch operated legally. Even at the highest levels of government, the Bureau of Investigation regularly monitored NAACP publications, activities, and members for “Bolshevik tendencies.”

¹⁵To minimize transcription costs, we recorded indicators for occupations listed as “farmer,” “laborer,” and “farm laborer,” the three most common entries for Black registrants, and for whether any exemption claim was listed, not the specific text of the claim.

¹⁶For almost all boards, the serial number is written in the top left of the card. The position of the order number varies much more across boards, but is generally recorded in the same position for all cards in a given board.

¹⁷Nonetheless, predicted local order numbers and actual local order numbers are highly correlated (Appendix Figure A5) and, as we demonstrate in Section 5, the results are robust to using either number.

Military records

As we describe in the next section, our primary data source for determining World War I veteran status among draft registrants is the 1930 census. However, we supplement this information with two databases containing more detailed military service records: passenger lists from the U.S. Army Transport Service (ATS) and the Veterans Administration Master Index (VAMI).

ATS lists contain the name, home address, and military unit of all soldiers who departed to or returned from Europe during World War I. As military units were racially segregated, we identify Black soldiers by matching to the list of Black units in the Center of Military History’s *Directory of Troops* (1988).¹⁸ We then link Black soldiers from ATS lists to draft registration cards using name and residence county, tie-breaking with street address in the case of multiple potential links. We successfully link 100,881 draft cards to the lists. For these registrants, we know not only that the individual served in the military overseas but also the exact unit he served in.

VAMI contains the names of roughly four million veterans who served between 1917 and 1920, which provides another measure of military service to correct for significant under-reporting of veteran status in the 1930 census. To appear in the database, a veteran (or their family) must have claimed benefits from the Veterans Administration between 1917 and 1940. The data does not contain information on race, so we are unable to restrict to Black veterans.¹⁹ However, it does contain residence county and exact date of birth, which we use to link to draft registration cards. We successfully link 120,412 draft cards to VAMI.

3.2 Civil rights activism

NAACP members

To identify early members of America’s oldest and best-known civil rights organization, we collected novel data from ProQuest History Vault’s NAACP Papers collection. The collection includes historical membership rosters from the 46 largest NAACP branches as well as other digitized documents identifying members from smaller branches, such as attendance lists for regional and national NAACP conferences. The branch rosters are standardized, (generally) typewritten forms containing the name and exact home address of each dues-paying member enrolled in a given year. An example roster is shown in Appendix Figure A2. These forms were completed by local branches and mailed to NAACP headquarters along with the national share of membership fees. We sent all documents in the collection containing member lists to a data entry firm to capture names, addresses, branch, and year. In total, we identify 233,517 member observations across 227 branches from 1912 to 1940, with the vast majority of observations coming after 1925. Appendix Figures A3 and A4 show the distributions of NAACP records by location and year, respectively. Comparing to national membership estimates suggests that our data includes roughly 75% of all NAACP members from the mid-1920s to the late 1930s, a period when the organization established its national profile as a legislative, legal, and economic advocate.²⁰

¹⁸In total, the ATS lists contain over six million incoming and outgoing passengers during World War I, about 400,000 belonging to Black units.

¹⁹We first use exact name and date of birth to merge VAMI with the Berkeley Unified Numident Mortality Database, which has race information (albeit with very poor coverage for these birth cohorts). We match 127,099 individuals, which we use to drop 25,640 non-Black individuals, leaving 3,202,013 VAMI candidates for the cards-VAMI linkage.

²⁰For example, we observe 16,012 unique name-branch observations from 1927 to 1929 when nationwide membership averaged 22,000 and 41,490 unique name-branch observations from 1938 to 1939 when national membership averaged 54,000.

Black community leaders

To identify Black community leaders in the postwar period, we examine two electronic databases: the African American National Biography (AANB) and the ProQuest African American Biographical Database (AABD). AANB aims to “illuminate the abiding influence of persons of African descent on the life of this nation” through biographies of “historically significant black individuals.” Biographies are written by modern scholars and curated by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. In contrast, AABD compiles “biographical sketches of individuals from all walks of life – national activists, state and local figures, prominent women, lawyers, artists, musicians, church and missionary leaders, society leaders” from contemporaneous Black publications such as *Who’s Who in Colored America* and *The Negro Yearbook*. In total, the databases include 7,554 Black men born between 1860 and 1900. For each individual, we collect identifying information on name, date and place of birth, and occupation. This data provides an expansive view of civic and social leadership during the New Negro era, when Black identity coalesced across multiple segments of society in resistance of Jim Crow.

3.3 Linking to the census

To examine the effects of military service on our primary outcome of interest – future NAACP membership – we link both the draft registration cards and the NAACP rosters to the 1930 census.²¹ We do this for two reasons. First, the NAACP rosters contain only name and contemporaneous home address, not other stable identifying information with which to directly link to the 1917 cards. Second, the 1930 census is the most reliable source of WWI veteran status in the full population.²² Figure 2 summarizes our linking strategy, which we describe in more detail below and in Appendix B.

[Figure 2 about here.]

To link draft cards to the census, we employ the procedure developed by Abramitzky, Boustan, and Eriksson (2012; 2014; 2019, henceforth ABE), which requires an exact match on the state of birth and first and last initials, individuals’ names to be sufficiently close in Jaro-Winkler distance, and individuals’ birth years to be no more than two years apart. Successful links are registration cards that we uniquely link to a single census record using those criteria. For the 825,571 usable draft cards, we achieve a 25% linking rate.²³ This is similar to Abramitzky et al. (2021), who link 29% of white boys between the 1910 and 1940 censuses using automated methods, and Doetsch (2012), who hand-links 32% of draft cards to the 1930 census for a sub-sample of Black registrants. We demonstrate the robustness of our main results to various linking choices (e.g., requiring that links are unique within a birth year window of two years and tie-breaking multiple potential links using middle initial, county of residence, and veteran status) that yield linking rates ranging from 13 to 32%.

To link the NAACP rosters to the 1930 census, we search for census records of Black men living in the same city or metropolitan area as a given NAACP member.²⁴ In cases of multiple census candidates with similar names in the same city, we tie-break links using exact residence address. Given that individuals may move over time, we also use addresses from the 1940 census to link

²¹We link AABD and AANB records directly to the draft registration cards, given that both datasets contain date and place of birth.

²²The 1920 census did not ask about veteran status, while veteran status was even more likely to be under-reported in the 1940 census than in the 1930 census (Tan, 2020).

²³Usable cards are those for individuals born between 1880 and 1900; belonging to boards for which we are able to obtain the total number of registrants and can identify the typical position of the order and serial number; and that have non-missing serial number, birth year, and birth state.

²⁴We restrict census candidates to Black men because in this era more than 90% of NAACP members were Black (Kellogg, 1967).

NAACP records for which no 1930 census record meets the linking criteria.²⁵ We are able to link 57% of NAACP records to an individual in the 1930 census.²⁶

3.4 Linked samples

Panel (a) of Table 1 describes the cards and the linked sample. Overall, the linked sample is comparable to the sample of draft cards on observable characteristics such as age, occupation, marital status, and exemption claims.

[Table 1 about here.]

Veteran status is significantly under-reported in the 1930 census, which contains only 247,015 Black men who report being WWI veterans relative to 367,710 actual Black inductees. As there were very few Black combat deaths, mortality or attrition alone cannot explain this gap. More likely, some individuals who did serve in the war are not recorded as such in the 1930 census. Thus, in the main analysis, the veteran indicator is equal to one if an individual reported being a veteran in the 1930 census or we linked his draft card to either VAMI or the ATS lists. Using this definition, 35% of linked registrants are veterans, nearly identical to official estimates of Black service rates from historical sources.²⁷

Panel (b) of Table 1 compares Black men whom we identify as NAACP members to all other Black adult men in the 1930 census. NAACP members are positively selected across a variety of socioeconomic measures. Members are more likely to be employed, literate, and homeowners, and they work in higher-income occupations than non-members. Notably, they are also much more likely to be WWI veterans. Using our combined measure, 15% of NAACP members are veterans, relative to just 8% of non-members.^{28,29}

Importantly, we find little evidence that the linking process itself introduces bias to our primary relationship of interest. As shown in Appendix Figure A6, a bivariate regression of NAACP membership on veteran status returns nearly identical estimates in the linked sample (i.e., Black men in the 1930 census with linked draft registration cards) and in the full sample (i.e., all Black men in the 1930 census of draft-eligible age in 1917). OLS estimates are also highly similar across samples when examining other socioeconomic predictors of NAACP membership from the 1930 census.

²⁵Specifically, we attempt to link NAACP members to individuals with similar names who lived in the member's city in 1940 using the same linking procedure, keeping links only if we identify a unique individual in the 1940 census corresponding to a given NAACP record. We then use inter-census links from Abramitzky et al. (2020) to link the 1940 census individuals back to the 1930 census. If an NAACP record is linked to two different people in the 1930 census, one directly and one through the 1940 census, we prioritize the direct link. Further details are in Appendix B.

²⁶As many NAACP records correspond to the same person who appears in multiple years, our linked sample includes 34,906 unique census individuals, relative to an estimated 73,000 unique male NAACP members. This is the number of rows in the NAACP rosters that correspond to men and are unique by first name, last name, and branch, but due to errors in the recording of names and addresses as well as changes therein, there is no way to know the true number of unique members in the rosters.

²⁷In addition to the 367,710 inductions, approximately 20,000 Black men were already part of the Regular Army or National Guard when the Selective Service Act was passed (Keene, 2002). In comparison, 1,078,331 Black men registered during the first and second registrations (U.S. Provost Marshal General, 1919).

²⁸Our patterns diverge notably from the county-level correlates of NAACP branch formation documented by Aaronson et al. (2023), who find little relationship with average Black income and a significant, negative relationship with Black World War II enlistment rates. These differences highlight the difficulties that may emerge when assessing the individual-level drivers of civic activism with area-level measures.

²⁹In Appendix Table A1, we show that these patterns persist when we focus just on individuals who were eligible for the first draft registration and who, as of the 1930 census, lived in an area from which we obtained NAACP rosters.

4 Empirical strategy

4.1 Estimating equation

To identify the causal effect of military service on NAACP participation, we estimate two-stage least squares regressions, instrumenting for service in World War I using random variation from the draft lottery. Our primary relationship of interest is:

$$NAACP_i = \lambda_b + \beta Veteran_i + X_i' \Gamma + u_i \quad (1)$$

where $NAACP_i$ is an indicator for whether the individual was an NAACP member, $Veteran_i$ is an indicator for whether an individual served in World War I (indicated by the 1930 census, VAMI, or ATS), λ_b are draft board fixed effects, and X_i is a vector of controls including an individual's birth year and state as well as occupation, marital status, and exemption claim at the time of registration. However, OLS estimates of β could be biased by the endogeneity of military service. The direction of this bias is *ex ante* ambiguous. Drafted men who refused to report for military service may have been less civically-minded than others or they may have been more willing to challenge the status quo and fight for equal rights. The exemption and physical examination processes could also have generated unobservable differences between veterans and non-veterans correlated with their future NAACP participation.

To account for potential endogeneity, we thus instrument for veteran status using the WWI draft lottery. Specifically, we estimate:

$$Veteran_i = \delta_b + \gamma Order_i + X_i' \Lambda + v_i. \quad (2)$$

Here, $Order_i$ is individual i 's predicted local order number (determined by his serial number) divided by the total number of registrants in his draft board. The instrument is bounded between zero and one with higher values denoting individuals later in the draft order. In accordance with the lottery randomization process, we cluster standard errors by serial number.

4.2 Instrument validity

To examine the instrument's relevance, Figure 3 displays a binned scatter plot of the relationship between the scaled local order number and WWI veteran status. We see a strong and significant negative relationship: the later an individual's position in the draft lottery, the lower his likelihood of being inducted. The difference in likelihood of military service between individuals with the lowest and highest order numbers is approximately 10 percentage points, on average. There are two main reasons that this difference is not 100 percentage points. First, married men and those with exemptions were unlikely to be drafted even if they had a low order number, which in turn raises the likelihood that single men with high order numbers were drafted.³⁰ Second, because *whether* someone was drafted is not recorded on the draft cards themselves, imperfect linking introduces noise to our veteran status measure, further attenuating differences between individuals with low and high order numbers.

[Figure 3 about here.]

³⁰Appendix Figure A7 displays the relationship between order number and veteran status separately based on marital status and exemption claim. Among registrants with very low order numbers, the proportion of veterans among single men who did not file an exemption claim is more than twice the rate among married men who did.

Nonetheless, as shown in Appendix Table A2, the first-stage relationship between $Order_i$ and future military service is highly significant and robust to the inclusion of a rich set of controls. Across all columns, we obtain negative coefficients with t -statistics above 20, indicating that individuals with higher order numbers were less likely to serve in the war, even relative to observably similar men from the same draft board. As we demonstrate later, this relationship is also robust to the use of alternative functional forms allowing for non-linearity in the mapping of order numbers to military service.

[Figure 4 about here.]

To validate exogeneity of the instrument, we regress all prewar registrant characteristics from the draft cards on our local order number measure. These results are shown in Figure 4. In all cases, coefficients are below 0.01 standard deviations in magnitude and statistically insignificant. That $Order_i$ is uncorrelated with all observed characteristics at the time of registration corroborates the random assignment of order numbers through the draft lottery.

5 Main results

5.1 Effects on civil rights activism

NAACP participation

We now turn to our main results examining the effects of Black military service on participation in the nascent NAACP. Table 2 shows TSLS coefficients from estimating Equation 1. We find a significant positive effect of military service on future NAACP membership of about three percentage points. This result is remarkably stable as we include controls for birth state and year (column 2), the interaction of marital status and exemption claim (column 3), and prewar occupation (column 4).

[Table 2 about here.]

In column (5), we show that the effect also persists when we control for postwar residence by adding county fixed effects from the 1930 census. Thus, comparing individuals living in the same county a decade *after* the war, military service still has a positive effect on NAACP membership. While future residence could be endogenous to military service, the fact that the estimates are largely unattenuated when including these controls suggests that the NAACP effects are not driven by residential mobility during the first Great Migration (Collins and Wanamaker, 2015; Bazzi et al., 2021). As further evidence, Appendix Figure A8 directly examines migration and finds little impact of military service on whether registrants moved across regions, states, or counties between 1917 and 1930; lived in a city with an NAACP chapter in 1930 or in an urban area more generally; or moved in or out of a former Confederate state between 1917 and 1930. In Appendix Figure A9, we also show that effects are not driven by the induction of existing NAACP members, as we find no effect of military service on prewar NAACP membership.

Across models, IV estimates are appreciably larger than corresponding OLS estimates. This could be explained in part by differences in responses to military service between men who were conscripted and those who voluntarily enlisted. For example, if men who opposed the draft were the most inclined to join the NAACP, conditional on being drafted, we would expect the local average treatment effect to exceed the average treatment effect. This would be consistent with a story of perceived injustice driving civic activism among Black soldiers, which we explore in Section 6. Similarly, OLS estimates would be biased downwards if volunteers were more trusting of the government and less inclined to join organizations that it viewed as radical. Measurement error in veteran status, transcription errors in the serial numbers, and underestimation of the first-stage

slope could also increase the wedge between IV and OLS estimates.³¹ However, as we discuss in the following subsection, OLS and IV estimates remain positive and significant across a number of robustness checks addressing these concerns.

Together, our findings reveal the large extent to which experiences in the military drove Black soldiers to fight for equal rights upon returning home. The magnitude of the coefficient in our preferred specification (column 4) implies that service in World War I almost tripled an individual’s likelihood of joining the NAACP, on average – to 4.4%, from a baseline mean of 1.6% for non-veterans – for men induced to serve because of the draft. These men accounted for a significant coalition in the nascent civil rights movement. A back-of-the-envelope calculation implies that the draft led approximately 10,000 Black men to join the NAACP, representing about 20% of the organization’s membership in 1940.³²

Robustness

Alternative linking strategies: Appendix Table A3 shows robustness to alternative linking strategies. Column (1) shows our main specification using the standard ABE linking procedure. Column (2) uses marital status and middle initial to tie-break multiple potential census links, while columns (3) and (4) further use veteran status from VAMI and ATS lists and residence county in 1930 as tie-breakers. Panel (b) repeats this exercise using a more conservative ABE threshold.³³ The use of potentially endogenous variables like veteran status and postwar county as tie-breakers increases linking rates and decreases the wedge between OLS and IV coefficients, consistent with measurement error explaining some of this gap. In all cases, results remain positive and significant.

Alternative measures of veteran status: Appendix Table A4 shows robustness to alternative definitions of veteran status. Given significant under-reporting of veteran status in the 1930 census, our preferred measure takes the union of the census measure and more contemporaneous military records (i.e., VAMI and ATS lists). However, we continue to find significant positive effects on NAACP membership using the census measure alone, the contemporaneous measures alone, or the intersection of both. Note, though, that the wedge between the IV and OLS estimates grows as we adopt more restrictive measures of veteran status, as increased under-reporting artificially flattens the first-stage relationship.³⁴

Alternative instruments: Appendix Table A5 shows robustness to alternative instruments for veteran status. First, we redefine $Order_i$ based on the actual local order number (as written on the draft card) instead of the order number predicted from the serial number. Second, we use the *un-scaled*, predicted order number (i.e., without dividing by the total number of registrants in a board). Third, we use the rank of the individual’s predicted order number scaled relative only to other Black registrants (rather than all registrants). In each case, we continue to find positive and

³¹In a simple example with a binary endogenous regressor and a binary instrument, Pischke (2007) shows that $\text{plim } \hat{\beta}_{IV} = \frac{\beta}{(q_1 - q_0)}$, where q_1 is the probability that a veteran is recorded as a veteran and q_0 is the probability that a non-veteran is recorded as a veteran. Due to linking errors, we expect q_1 to be less than one and q_0 to be greater than zero.

³²This comes from multiplying 0.028 by 367,710, the total number of Black men drafted. Note that this estimate refers to the total number of individuals who *ever* joined the NAACP during our sample period, while national membership estimates reflect total membership at a particular point in time (e.g., 51,000 members in 1940).

³³The more conservative ABE procedure, referred to as the $x = 2$ threshold (compared to the $x = 0$ baseline), requires that each draft card have only one potential link within a two-year birth year window. For example, if a draft card with birth year 1893 were linked to two census records, one with birth year 1894 and one with birth year 1895, the $x = 0$ threshold would keep the 1894 link, but the $x = 2$ threshold would discard both links.

³⁴For intuition, consider a binned scatterplot of $Order_i$ and veteran status similar to Figure 3. As veteran status becomes more under-reported, the slope flattens because individuals with low order numbers were more likely to actually be veterans (and therefore proportionally more likely to be miscoded as non-veterans) than individuals with high order numbers. Given that $\beta_{IV} = \frac{\beta_{RF}}{\beta_{FS}}$, this mechanically inflates the IV estimate.

significant effects of military service with point estimates highly similar to those from our preferred specification.

Alternative first-stage estimation: Appendix Table A6 shows robustness to alternative first-stage estimation strategies to address nonlinearity in the relationship between order number and veteran status and the fact that this relationship also depended on marital status and exemption claim.³⁵ To address these concerns, we first estimate a single cubic polynomial in local order number. Second, we split the (scaled) order number into ten groups (i.e., 0 to 0.1, 0.1 to 0.2, etc.) and regress veteran status on these ten indicators. Third, we estimate this nonparametric first stage separately for each of the four mutually exclusive groups based on marital status and exemption claim. In each case, we use the predicted values from the first stage *as an instrument* in the two-stage least squares regression. The more flexible models produce larger first-stage F -statistics and smaller OLS-IV wedges. However, results remain positive and significant in all cases.

Alternative outcomes

Membership duration: To explore intensive margin changes in NAACP participation, we estimate effects on membership duration. We calculate this by taking the number of years between the earliest and latest NAACP rosters that we link to the same census individual.³⁶ We then estimate our preferred specification on a series of indicator variables that equal one if an individual participated for $\geq N$ years and zero otherwise.

[Figure 5 about here.]

TSLS estimates are displayed in Figure 5. We find that being drafted not only significantly increased whether Black men joined the NAACP but also how long they participated for. The estimates suggest that one out of every 100 Black draftees was induced to participate in the NAACP for more than seven years, pointing to a lasting commitment to civil rights advocacy.

Community leadership: We next examine effects on community leadership during the New Negro era by leveraging the AABD and AANB data. As both databases contain birth date and birth place information, we link entries directly to draft registration cards (i.e., without linking through the census). We then estimate Equation 1 on an indicator for whether a registrant appears in either database.

[Table 3 about here.]

Results are shown in Table 3. We find that men induced to serve by the draft were significantly more likely to become known as a community leader by Black contemporaries and modern scholars. As with the NAACP effects, the point estimates indicate that military service nearly tripled an individual’s likelihood of becoming a community leader. Though the fight against Jim Crow took a variety of forms during the New Negro movement, in Appendix Table A7 we show that effects are also robust to defining community leadership more restrictively by excluding athletes, artists, and military personnel. Together, these results corroborate our main findings and suggest that increased civic activism among Black veterans manifested not only in greater NAACP participation but throughout their life’s work.

³⁵Within a given draft board, the probability of being drafted could have dropped off significantly above a certain order number. However, noise and draft board discretion mean that this function is difficult to discern empirically, especially when aggregating across boards. An additional complication is that many requisition orders called for men with specific occupational backgrounds. For example, if a draft call sought engineers, local boards would need to draw on registrants with higher order numbers than if the draft call simply requested the “next man up.”

³⁶Appendix Figure A10 shows similar patterns if we instead define duration by the number of unique years an individual participated. However, results are noisier under this definition due to imperfect recording and transcription of names in the NAACP rosters.

5.2 Effects on socioeconomic status

Income and education

In more modern settings, researchers have found positive effects of military service on educational attainment (Angrist and Chen, 2011) and earnings (Greenberg et al., 2022), particularly among African Americans. In other contexts, Jha and Wilkinson (2012) show that combat experience among South Asian soldiers in World War II fostered valuable organizational skills. Thus, we next examine socioeconomic effects using proxies for income and education from the 1930 census. Results are shown in Panel (a) of Figure 6. We find little evidence that being drafted improved the economic standing of Black men, with near-zero estimates for literacy, home ownership, employment, and occupation and income scores.³⁷

[Figure 6 about here.]

The null effects are consistent with Tan (2020), who finds no economic benefit of WWI service among *white* veterans in 1930 and 1960. They are also consistent with the limited government benefits provided to WWI soldiers and veterans. Army privates were paid \$30 a month, less than average Black income at the time, and Black soldiers, in particular, were frequently excluded from literacy classes and military training.³⁸ Furthermore, the G.I. Bill providing tuition and low-cost mortgages to veterans would not be passed until after World War II. Given rampant labor market discrimination during this period, it remains possible that Black soldiers gained important skills that are simply not captured by the crude economic measures in the 1930 census. Nonetheless, the results suggest that any socioeconomic benefit is unlikely to explain the large increases in NAACP membership.³⁹

Club involvement

As Williams (2007) writes, “many former soldiers, although disillusioned with the U.S. Army and its pervasive racism, valued the discipline and homo-social camaraderie of military life.” Thus, a desire to replicate these bonds in civilian life may have driven Black veterans to join a host of social organizations, not just the NAACP. Expanded social networks or elevated social status from military service (Cagé et al., 2023) could also have facilitated participation in clubs and other fraternal organizations. To test this, we examine indicators of club involvement from the 1930 census. Specifically, we estimate Equation 1 on indicators for occupations coded as “officials of lodge, society, union, etc.”, group quarters residence coded as “club” or “YMCA”, and industry coded as “nonprofit membership organizations.” As shown in Panel (b) of Figure 6, we find little evidence that military service increased other measures of club participation. Together, these results suggest that changes in NAACP membership reflect increased civil rights activism specifically and not a broader desire or proclivity to participate in clubs more generally.

³⁷Given large within-occupation differences in income across race and geography, income scores are generated using the approach established by Abramitzky et al. (2021), which predicts income for Black men using covariates in the 1940 census and uses the resulting estimates to predict income for individuals in the 1930 census.

³⁸To compensate soldiers for lost wages, Congress enacted the World War Adjusted Compensation Act in 1924, which issued certificates worth up to \$625 to be paid 20 years later. In 1932, a “Bonus Army” of 40,000 veterans and family members descended on Washington, D.C. demanding cash payment of their certificates, but a bill approving those payments was not passed until 1936. Comparing veterans to their neighbors, Quincy (2022) finds that the payments increased 1940 home ownership rates.

³⁹Multiplying the upper bound of the confidence interval for the TSLS coefficient on occupational income score shown in Figure 6 by the OLS estimate from a regression of NAACP membership on occupation score among Black draft-eligible men in the 1930 census (i.e., $0.170 \times 0.0122 = 0.00207$) suggests that income gains could explain at most 7% of the overall effect of military service on NAACP membership (i.e., 0.0282 from column (4) of Table 2).

5.3 Heterogeneity

Prewar characteristics

To explore heterogeneous effects of military service, we estimate Equation 1 on NAACP membership separately for registrants grouped by prewar characteristics: occupation type, marital status, exemption claim, and age. Panel (a) of Figure 7 shows these estimates. Although we lack the statistical power to distinguish between groups, we find larger point estimates for Black registrants who claimed – but were denied – draft exemptions. In contrast, we find little evidence of larger effects for registrants from lower-skilled occupations (i.e., farmers and laborers), as one might expect if increased civic activism were driven by increased income, education, or organizational skills obtained through military service.

[Figure 7 about here.]

Given the salience of discrimination in the military and large geographic differences in historical racism across the United States, Panel (b) examines heterogeneous effects based on local racism in a registrant’s home county. Specifically, we follow the approach of Bazzi et al. (2023) and construct a measure of county racism ranging from zero to three that increments by one if a county is located in the former Confederacy or had a Confederate monument or lynching prior to the war. Notably, point estimates decline monotonically as local racism increases. Put differently, we observe large increases in NAACP membership for Black registrants drafted from the least observably racist areas and small, insignificant effects for registrants drafted from the most racist counties. These results suggest that individuals who experienced the largest *shock* of discrimination upon joining the military may have been most likely to join the NAACP after the war, which we examine more directly in Section 6.⁴⁰

Wartime service

We next examine differences in NAACP participation by type of military service. Although the vast majority of Black draftees held menial positions such as camp laborers or stevedores, the circumstances of their service varied greatly. Half of the Black noncombatants remained in America, where they served at domestic camps and ports of embarkation. The other half were deployed to France, where the relative hospitality of the French led one Black lieutenant to remark: “I have never before experienced what it meant to be really free – to taste real liberty – in a phrase to be a man.” Significant differences also existed among the 10% of Black soldiers selected for combat service in France. While the 92nd Division remained under U.S. command for the duration of the war, the 93rd Division lived and fought side-by-side with French troops, equipped with French supplies and arms.

[Figure 8 about here.]

Figure 8 compares NAACP membership across these four groups. Among men assigned to labor and service units, membership rates are virtually identical regardless of whether they served in the U.S. or were deployed to France. Membership rates are higher among men assigned to combat units and, among this group, those who served in the 92nd relative to the 93rd division. Appendix Figure A12 shows that these differences persist when controlling for prewar characteristics that may differ across groups.

Given potential selection on unobservables, differences in NAACP rates are not causal and should

⁴⁰The effects could also be consistent with suppression of civil rights activism in historically racist areas. However, as shown in Figure A11, we find similar patterns when standardizing NAACP membership *within* county racism groups, suggesting that the relative magnitude of treatment effects are also smaller in more racist areas, even when accounting for differences in non-veteran NAACP participation rates across areas.

be interpreted with caution. Nonetheless, the patterns are inconsistent with increased exposure to or interaction with the French driving the large treatment effects of military service on NAACP membership.⁴¹ However, the high membership rates among men of the 92nd, who faced pervasive racism from their compatriots despite risking their lives in battle, could point to the potential salience of discrimination and injustice, which we explore more directly in the next section.

6 Mechanisms

A dominant theme in narrative histories of Black postwar activism is the catalyzing role of perceived injustice (Astor, 2001; Delmont, 2023; Williams, 2023). Summarizing the literature on the origins of the New Negro movement, Williams (2007) identifies the “most significantly” discussed factor as Black soldiers’ deep disillusionment “with Americans’ professed democratic principles as a result of the soldiers’ encounters with racial discrimination in the U.S. Army,” which the soldiers channeled “into creating an American society reflective of their military sacrifice.” The sense of injustice and hypocrisy that many Black soldiers felt when serving a country that actively worked to oppress them is evident in sentiments like those of Private Willis Goodwin: “What did we fight for? Democracy. Are we living it?” While the heterogeneous effects by county racism and wartime service are consistent with such a mechanism, this section provides more direct tests of the mediating effect of discrimination. To do so, we leverage detailed War Department records to identify the most salient forms of systemic discrimination against Black soldiers and to construct measures of each individual’s exposure to discrimination in the draft and military.

6.1 Draft discrimination

Given the significant discretion that local boards wielded in granting exemptions and deferments, racial bias in the draft process was a persistent concern throughout the war. As noted in a report from the Provost Marshal General, “it is an actual fact that in a number of instances flagrant violations have occurred in the application of the draft law to negro men in certain sections of the country.” Black registrants were 57% more likely than white registrants to be placed in Class I and 40% more likely to be inducted.

To examine the salience of draft board discrimination, we calculate the difference between Black and white induction rates at each draft board. Black induction rates are determined from the share of veterans in our linked sample of Black draft cards. We infer white induction rates by subtracting the number of Black draftees and registrants in each board from the total number of inductions and registrants in the *Second Report of the Provost Marshal General* (1919). We then estimate Equation 1 separately by quartiles of the induction rate disparity.

[Figure 9 about here.]

As shown in Figure 9, effects on NAACP membership increase monotonically with the racial disparity in induction rates. For registrants from boards that were far more likely to draft Black men than white men, we find large and significant increases in NAACP participation. Conversely, estimates are near zero for registrants from boards with more equal induction rates. Given that Black and white conscription rates could differ for reasons other than racial bias, Appendix Figure A13 further adjusts induction rates to account for local racial differences in marital status and agricultural employment, the two primary exemption considerations. Doing so reveals even starker

⁴¹The results also cut against the possibility that effects were driven by active targeting of Black veterans by the NAACP. If the NAACP hoped to attract well-known and celebrated Black veterans to champion its cause, one would expect higher membership rates for the 93rd Division, which included the renowned Harlem Hellfighters and “enjoyed considerable status in the black community” (Barbeau and Henri, 1996). Recruitment effects alone are also unlikely to explain the stark heterogeneity by military discrimination that we discuss in Section 6.

differences in NAACP participation between boards with above and below median draft disparities. These patterns are consistent with the large effects we observe for men whose exemption claims were denied and suggest that the veterans who joined the NAACP may have felt unfairly targeted in the draft.

6.2 Military discrimination

To examine discrimination once in the military, we turn to reports on “Negro Subversion” produced by the Military Intelligence Division, which monitored sources of dissatisfaction among Black soldiers through surveys of camp intelligence officers. A summary of those reports reveals two systemic issues driving perceptions of discrimination among Black soldiers.⁴² The first relates to the lack of Black officers: “Much of the unrest among colored troops at the various camps is due to the fact that white non-commissioned officers are assigned to colored units, viz: labor and service battalions.” The second concerns the lack of training provided to Black soldiers: “The negro in noncombatant units that is not given drill feels he is not a soldier but merely a laborer . . . [drill] makes him feel he is in reality a part of the army.”

From the military intelligence surveys, we identify the share of Black non-commissioned officers (NCOs) in Black units and the share of Black soldiers that received military training at each camp.⁴³ We then construct a crosswalk linking each registrant’s board and order number to camps. This is generated from a map of camp recruitment areas published in *National Geographic* and draft call lists from Southern boards.⁴⁴ Importantly, this crosswalk allows us to predict camp assignment for all registered men, not just those who were drafted. Using this information, we estimate Equation 1 separately for registrants assigned to more and less discriminatory camps.

[Figure 10 about here.]

Results are displayed in Figure 10. Panel (a) examines Black NCO share and reveals large and significant effects on NAACP membership for soldiers assigned to camps with few or no Black non-commissioned officers. Effects then decline as the Black NCO shares increase, with near-zero estimates for soldiers assigned to camps where the majority of NCOs in Black units were Black. Panel (b) suggests similar dynamics when considering military training. We find large treatment effects for those who attended a camp where Black soldiers were uniformly excluded from military training and insignificant effects for those at camps where some or all Black soldiers received training.

Given earlier evidence of heterogeneous effects by registrant characteristics and board discrimination, it is possible that the differential effects by camp type are driven by differential selection into camps along other dimensions. To account for this possibility, Appendix Figure A14 replicates our analysis using constructed samples of registrants matching the distribution of registrants assigned

⁴²Specifically, we examine the report by Major W.H. Loving to the Chief of the Military Morale Section titled “Recapitulation of Investigation of Military Camps” summarizing his visits to each camp and the report by Captain L.C. West titled “Summary of Replies to Questionnaire from Intelligence Officers at the Large Training Camps” summarizing the camp intelligence officer surveys.

⁴³The intelligence surveys vary widely in their precision of reporting. Some camps provided the exact share of Black NCOs and trained Black regiments. Others provided only broad descriptions such as “only a few,” “most,” or “nearly all”. Thus, we code each discrimination measure into three categories: camps with Black NCO shares greater than 50%, between 25 and 50%, and between 0 and 25%; and camps where military training was provided to all Black regiments, to some Black regiments, and to no Black regiments.

⁴⁴Draftees were generally sent to a camp near their home. However, due to concerns about racial insurrection, the military maintained strict limits on the share of Black draftees in each camp. As a result, many Black draftees from the South were sent to camps in other areas where fewer Black people resided. We use “Men Ordered to Report” lists from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee to identify, for each Southern draft board, the range of order numbers of registrants sent to each camp.

to the most discriminatory camps.⁴⁵ We continue to find null effects on NAACP participation among registrants assigned to less discriminatory camps, indicating that differences in registrant backgrounds explain very little of the differential effects by camp conditions. As samples are also matched on induction rate disparities, the patterns do not simply mirror upstream exposure to draft discrimination.⁴⁶

Together with our previous results, these findings help to illuminate the specific aspects of military service that led Black veterans to fight for equality at home. Consistent with the null effects on literacy and economic status, the null effects on NAACP participation among soldiers who received military training suggests that underlying skill gains are unlikely to explain increased activism. In contrast, the large effects we observe among Black soldiers who were drafted by biased boards and systematically denied promotion and training opportunities are consistent with claims that “African American soldiers’ experiences in the war and their battles with the pervasive racial discrimination in the U.S. military informed their postwar disillusionment and subsequent racial militancy” (Williams, 2007). Feelings of injustice stemming from experiences of discrimination while sacrificing for one’s country would also explain the higher participation rates among soldiers who risked their lives in combat, and among this group, those of the 92nd Division, who experienced regular racial abuse from American supervisors.

7 Black commissioned officers

The historical record highlights the contributions of not only conscripted soldiers but also Black officers in spearheading the civil rights movement. In this section, we examine the first Black officer candidate class in U.S. military history. While officer selection was not random, we leverage rich biographical data to document the socioeconomic backgrounds and civic contributions of this historic group of African Americans.

7.1 Fort Des Moines Training Camp for Colored Officers

At the start of the war, West Point had effectively been closed to Black men for decades.⁴⁷ Policy-makers believed that Black men were inherently incapable of leading soldiers and that commissioning Black officers would lead to a racial revolution. As one Mississippi newspaper put it, “Every white man in Mississippi realizes the seriousness of permitting Negroes to roam about in the South in the uniform of United States Army officers.” However, the War Department ultimately relented to political pressure from the Black community and created a segregated officer training camp at Fort Des Moines.⁴⁸

Black leaders heralded the first Black officer training camp in U.S. history as an opportunity for

⁴⁵For each registrant assigned to the most discriminatory camps (i.e. camps with 0 to 25% Black officer share and camps where no Black troops received training), we select registrants assigned to less discriminatory camps of the same age quintile, marital status, occupation, and exemption claim and from boards of the same quartile of the racial disparity in induction rates. Observations are weighted by one over the number of matches to maintain sample balance on match characteristics.

⁴⁶Notably, correlations between induction disparities at a registrant’s draft board and discrimination at his camp are near zero (i.e., ρ equals 0.10 and 0.15 between the unadjusted board disparities and the military training and NCO measures, respectively; ρ equals 0.03 and -0.05 when using the adjusted board disparities).

⁴⁷From West Point’s founding in 1802 until 1930, the institution graduated over 10,000 white cadets relative to three Black cadets, the last of whom graduated in 1889.

⁴⁸The camp’s creation came with the strict caveat that Black officers would never be promoted above major nor would they ever command white subordinates (Wilson, 2015). Government officials were particularly concerned that Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young, the third-ever Black West Point graduate and the highest-ranking Black officer in the Army, would have to be promoted to brigadier general and oversee white troops if he took part in the war. Instead, Army doctors diagnosed him with high blood pressure and he was forced to retire.

African Americans to shatter racial stereotypes. Howard University Professor T. Montgomery Gregory stated: “It is a test of the new generation of the Negro race in America... It is from the men who are at this camp that the future leaders of the Negro race must come.” As such, Black newspapers and public figures heavily encouraged young Black elites – university graduates, white-collar professionals, and experienced soldiers – to volunteer.

On June 17, 1917, roughly 1,300 Black candidates between the ages of 25 and 40 were sworn into camp. For four months, the men were trained on how to lead combat infantry.⁴⁹ In October 1917, 639 candidates were selected for officer commissions and sent to Army cantonments to lead members of the 92nd and 93rd divisions. Candidates who did not receive commissions were dismissed from the Army until or unless they were conscripted through the draft.

Throughout the war, “black officers from Fort Des Moines became targets of discrimination and persecution” by American officials, who often refused to acknowledge the officers’ ranks and actively sought to undermine their leadership (Wilson, 2015).⁵⁰ After the war, Black officers were summarily dismissed from the military and excluded from commissions in the standing Army, which deemed them “unqualified by reason of qualities inherent in the Negro race ... rendering them unfit for officers and leaders of men” (Hastie, 1943).

7.2 Candidate information

We obtained the names of all candidates and commissioned officers at the camp from John Thompson’s *The History and Views of Fort Des Moines Officer Training Camp* (1917). The book also contains detailed biographical information for a subset of candidates, collected through a survey the author distributed at the camp’s inauguration. For the 574 candidates who completed the survey, we observe their birth date and place, home address, marital status, occupation, and military experience, as well as their membership in churches and fraternal organizations.⁵¹ We then linked officer candidates to NAACP rosters by name and location and to community leaders from the AABD and AANB databases using name and birth information.⁵²

[Table 4 about here.]

The combined data provides rich insight into the backgrounds and life accomplishments of officer candidates. As shown in Table 4, the men who entered the camp were an elite group. Nearly half of candidates had a college education at a time when the college attainment rate in the Black population was less than 2%. Similarly, white-collar professionals such as lawyers, judges, doctors, and engineers comprised more than 20% of the candidate pool but less than 1% of the general population. Put differently, the candidate class of Des Moines included roughly 2% of all college-educated Black men and nearly 5% of all Black lawyers and doctors in the country. Candidates

⁴⁹Unlike white officer candidates, men at Fort Des Moines received only infantry training in accordance with the War Department’s initial plan to incorporate a single Black regiment of infantrymen into each of its 16 divisions. After several senators argued that regiment-level segregation was insufficient, the department decided instead to create the all-Black 92nd and 93rd divisions, each containing infantry, engineers, artillery, and machine gun units. However, the decision was made too late for the officer candidates at Des Moines to be trained in those aspects of military leadership.

⁵⁰For example, at one camp, Black officers received enlisted men’s uniforms and were forced to salute white men they outranked.

⁵¹We observe residence but no other biographical information for an additional 103 candidates. We are also able to obtain birth information for another 171 candidates without biographies by hand-linking to online databases. In particular, Thompson (1917) includes military unit and rank for all veteran candidates, allowing us to collect birth date and state for experienced soldiers from historical Army enlistment records.

⁵²Although census linking rates are similar to those for draft registrants, loss of power is more of a concern due to the small number of candidates. Thus, we define location based on the candidate’s residence at the time of entering the camp and attempt to link directly to the NAACP rosters. Further details on linking are in Appendix B.

were also highly active in their home communities, with far higher rates of membership in churches and fraternal organizations than the general population.

These men would go on to play a significant role in the civil rights movement. One in every five officers would join the NAACP, while one in six would become known for their community leadership. Even among candidates who did not receive officer commissions, more than 10% participated in the NAACP. Appendix Table A8 describes the accomplishments of 15 of the most renowned officer candidates, which include a U.S. congressman, two city aldermen, three deans of historically Black colleges, multiple renowned Black journalists, and several executive officers of the NAACP and other civil rights organizations.

7.3 Officer analysis

While selection of officers was not random, we leverage the detailed biographical data to examine the relationship between military service and future civil rights engagement. Columns (1) to (3) of Table 5 examine NAACP membership, while columns (4) to (6) examine community leadership. First, we simply regress each outcome on an indicator for whether a candidate received an officer commission. We then add birth year and state fixed effects for the subsample for whom we have this information, followed by controls for marital status, prior occupation, military experience, and civic engagement upon entering the camp, which further limits the sample to those with biographical information.

[Table 5 about here.]

Across outcomes, we find positive and significant associations between receiving an officer commission and later-life civic activism. Officers were nearly 50% more likely to join the NAACP or become known as community leaders than observably similar candidates who did not receive commissions. Notably, this relationship is entirely unattenuated when controlling for the rich set of biographical controls. While we make no causal claims about these estimates, the results align with the large activism effects observed among Black draftees. Here, we find a strikingly similar pattern among a far more selected group of individuals – the young Black elites who left prestigious jobs and social positions in largely unrecognized service of their country.

8 Conclusion

In urging Congress to enter the Great War, Woodrow Wilson declared “the world must be safe for democracy.” For many Black soldiers, this entailed a battle not just against German aggression in Europe but also against racial oppression at home. In this paper, we leverage novel variation from the World War I draft lottery and millions of digitized records to document the pioneering role that these men played in the early civil rights movement. Our estimates reveal that military service causally induced thousands of Black men to join the NAACP and to fight for racial equality at the height of the Jim Crow era, corroborating historical narratives of how “systematic discrimination during military service politicized black soldiers” (Williams, 2007). We show that many of these men went on to assume key leadership positions in the New Negro movement, their “military spirit” heralding a revolution in Black identity and collectivism during the postwar period.

Still, these findings likely understate the multifaceted impact of World War I on American soldiers and their communities. Indeed, historians have argued that “modern America’s very identity was forged” by World War I (Hindley, 2017), and early Gallup surveys reveal markedly higher opposition to American imperialism and government intervention among Black veterans (Appendix Figure A15). In this light, significant work remains to unpack the war’s role in other ground-breaking transformations of the era: from the rise of the KKK during the 1920s and the New Deal

coalition in the 1930s to the great wage compression of the 1940s (Goldin and Margo, 1992).

Through a broader lens, our findings shed light on the far-reaching consequences of lived discrimination. While existing research has documented significant impacts on individual decision-making at work (Glover et al., 2017), in school (Carlana, 2019; Ang, 2021), and at the ballot box (Ang and Tebes, 2023), our findings suggest that Black soldiers' experiences of discrimination during World War I catalyzed one of the most sweeping social movements in U.S. history. Though much has changed over the past hundred years, recent surveys indicate that institutional racism remains a pressing concern among communities of color (Alesina et al., 2021). Better understanding the causes and consequences of these concerns may be as critical to the safety of democracy today as it was in 1917.

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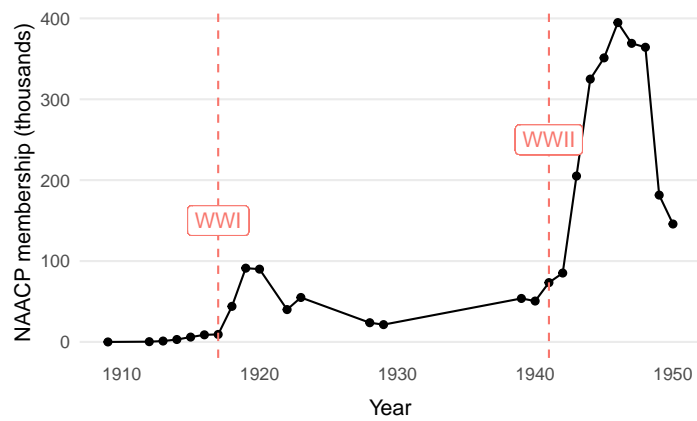


Figure 1: NAACP Membership, 1909 to 1950

Notes: This figure shows the estimated number of NAACP members nationwide at various points between 1909 and 1950. Membership estimates are from Estrada and Gregory (n.d.).

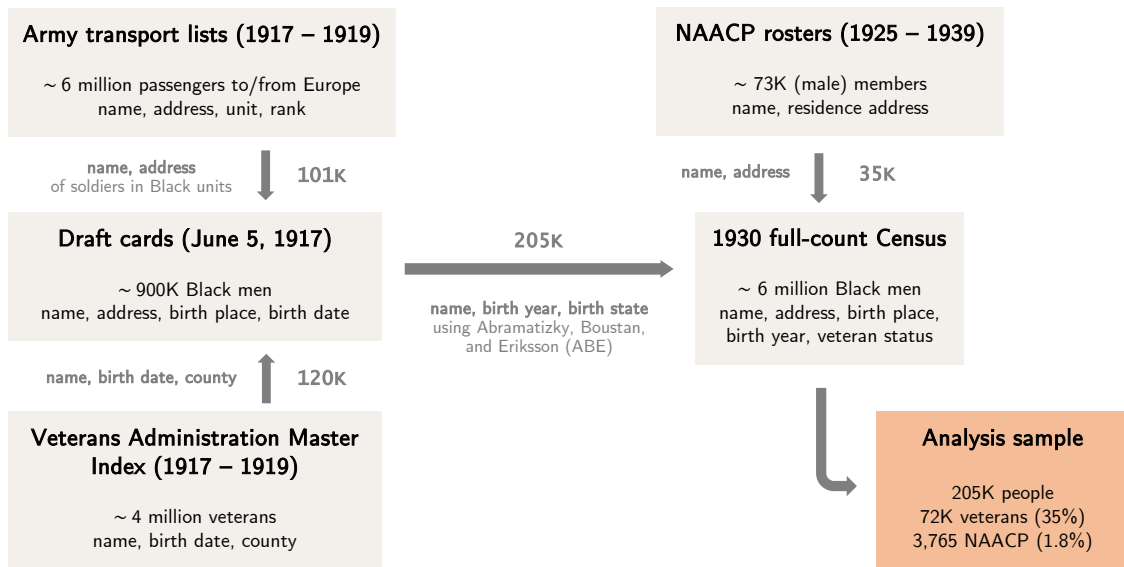


Figure 2: Overview of Linking Strategy

Notes: This figure shows the procedure we use to link draft cards, other military records, NAACP rosters, and the 1930 full-count census. Further details are in Section 3 and Appendix B.

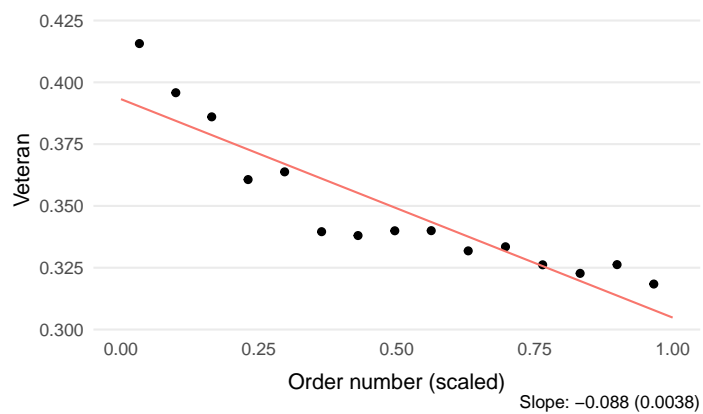


Figure 3: First-Stage Relationship Between Order Number and Veteran Status

Notes: This figure shows the relationship between the order number (scaled by the total registrants in an individual's board) and veteran status, as defined by information from the 1930 census, Army Transport Ship lists, and the Veterans Administration Master Index. The unit of observation is an individual draft registrant. The slope and heteroskedasticity-robust standard error are displayed in the bottom right.

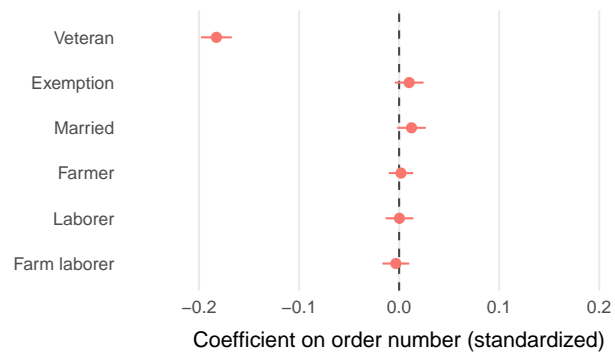


Figure 4: Relationship Between Order Number and Other Card Characteristics

Notes: This figure shows the coefficient on the order number (scaled by the total number of registrants in an individual’s board) from separate OLS regressions where the unit of observation is an individual draft registrant. All outcomes are standardized. Regressions control for birth year, state of birth, and draft board fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by serial number. Horizontal bars are 95% confidence intervals.

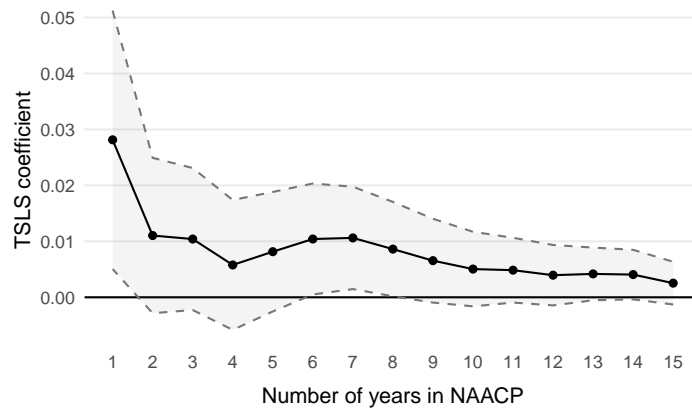


Figure 5: Effect of Military Service on Duration of NAACP Membership – TSLS Results

Notes: This figure shows coefficients from separate TSLS regressions where the outcome is an indicator variable that is one if the individual was in the NAACP for $\geq N$ years, defined by an the maximum year that an individual is observed in the NAACP rosters minus the minimum year. The unit of observation is an individual draft registrant and veteran status is instrumented with the individual's local order number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. Standard errors are clustered by serial number, and the shaded region is a 95% confidence interval. Figure A10 shows a similar pattern when we examine the number of times an individual is observed in the NAACP rosters.

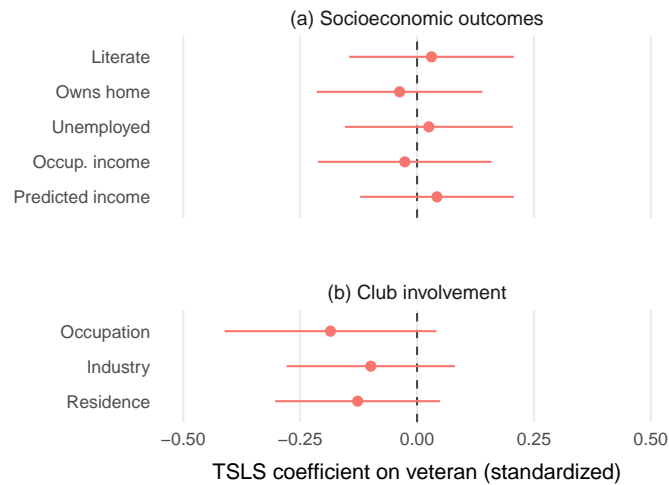


Figure 6: Effects on Socioeconomic Outcomes and Club Involvement

Notes: This figure shows coefficients from separate TSLS regressions where the unit of observation is an individual draft registrant. All outcomes are from the 1930 census. The occupational income score is from IPUMS and is based on median wages by occupation in 1950. We additionally predict income in 1930, as the 1930 census did not record income directly. To do so, we follow Abramitzky et al. (2021): first, we regress wage and salary income in the 1940 census on age and age squared; state, census region, and occupation fixed effects; and interactions of coarse (one-digit) occupation and census region, for Black men ages 30 to 50 in 1940. Then, we use this regression to predict income in the 1930 census. For club involvement, “occupation” is an indicator variable that is one if an individual is an official of a “lodge, society, union, etc.”; “industry” is an indicator variable that is one if an individual’s industry is “nonprofit membership organizations”; and “residence” is an indicator variable that is one if an individual lives in a YMCA or a club. Standard errors are clustered by serial number, and horizontal bars are 95% confidence intervals.

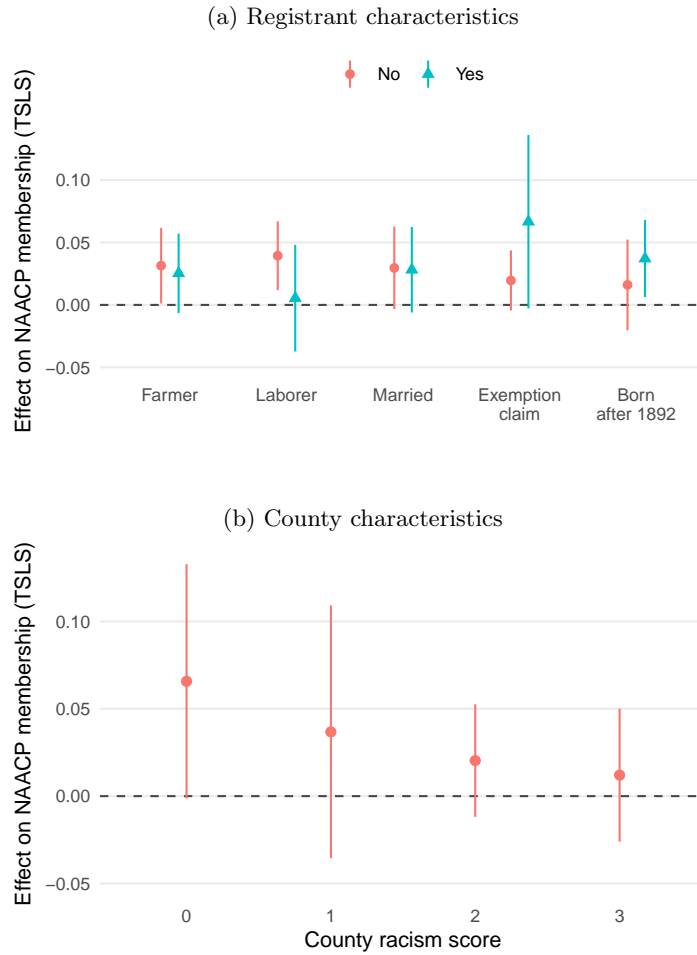


Figure 7: Heterogeneity by Prewar Characteristics

Notes: Panel (a) shows coefficients from separate TSLs regressions, splitting the sample by registrant characteristics. Panel (b) instead splits the sample by county racism score, which increments by one if a county is located in a former Confederate state, had a Confederate monument by 1914, or experienced a lynching between 1880 and 1910. All regressions control for birth year, state of birth, and draft board fixed effects. They further control for, when possible, prewar occupation and the interaction of exemption and marital status. The unit of observation is an individual draft registrant. Standard errors are clustered by serial number, and vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals. The former Confederate states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

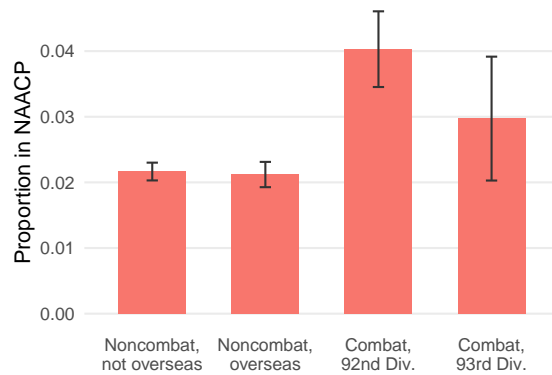


Figure 8: NAACP Membership by Wartime Service

Notes: This figure shows the NAACP membership rate in four mutually exclusive groups of veterans: veterans who were not matched to the ATS lists (i.e., non-combatants in the U.S.), veterans who were matched to the ATS lists and were part of a division other than the 92nd or 93rd (i.e., noncombatants in France), and veterans who were part of the 92nd or 93rd divisions (i.e., combatants in France under U.S. and French command, respectively). Vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals. Figure A12 shows similar patterns when controlling for registrant characteristics.

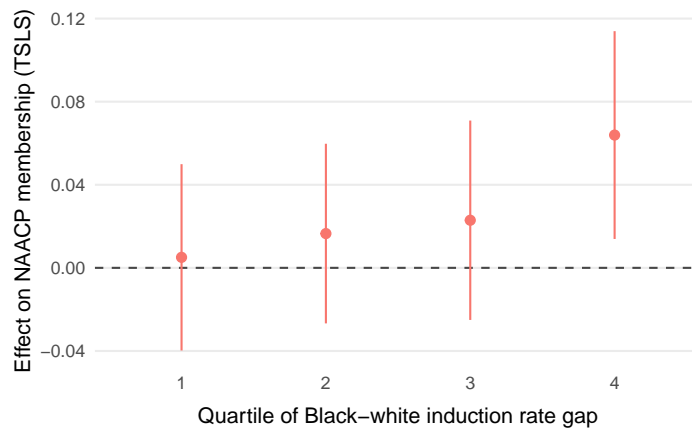


Figure 9: Heterogeneity by Board Discrimination

Notes: This figure shows coefficients from separate TSLS regressions where the unit of observation is an individual draft registrant. Black induction rates are determined from the share of veterans in our matched sample of Black draft cards. We infer white induction rates by subtracting the number of Black draftees and registrants in each board from the total number of inductions and registrants. Quartiles are defined at the card level by the difference in Black and white induction rates at each registrant's board. Standard errors are clustered by serial number, and vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals.

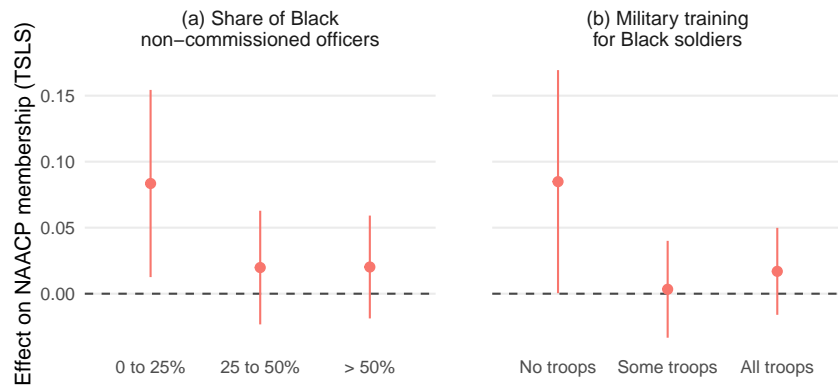


Figure 10: Heterogeneity by Camp Discrimination

Notes: This figure shows coefficients from separate TSLS regressions where the unit of observation is an individual draft registrant. The share of Black non-commissioned officers and the share of Black soldiers that received training in each camp are derived from reports on “Negro Subversion” produced by the Military Intelligence Division; see Section 6 for more details. Standard errors are clustered by serial number, and vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals.

Table 1: Summary Statistics

(a) Draft cards			(b) NAACP members		
	All (1)	Matched (2)		NAACP (1)	Not NAACP (2)
Age in 1917	25.14 (3.06)	25.31 (3.10)	Age in 1930	40.36 (11.91)	39.58 (13.92)
Exemption claim	0.27 (0.44)	0.28 (0.45)	Employed	0.88 (0.32)	0.86 (0.34)
Married in 1917	0.53 (0.50)	0.56 (0.50)	Married in 1930	0.74 (0.44)	0.72 (0.45)
Farmer	0.30 (0.46)	0.31 (0.46)	Literate	0.96 (0.19)	0.79 (0.41)
Laborer	0.26 (0.44)	0.24 (0.43)	Occup. income	24.81 (12.28)	17.64 (6.66)
Farm laborer	0.09 (0.28)	0.08 (0.28)	Owens home	0.41 (0.49)	0.25 (0.43)
Veteran (VAMI/ATS)	0.20 (0.40)	0.22 (0.42)	Veteran (VAMI/ATS)	0.03 (0.18)	0.01 (0.12)
Veteran (Census)	–	0.24 (0.43)	Veteran (Census)	0.14 (0.34)	0.08 (0.26)
Veteran (Any)	–	0.35 (0.48)	Veteran (Any)	0.15 (0.35)	0.08 (0.28)
Observations	825,571	204,923	Observations	32,930	3,199,645

Notes: Panel (a) shows summary statistics for our sample of draft cards from the first WWI draft registration for Black men. Column (1) shows the full sample of cards eligible to be matched – i.e. those with complete identifying information, birth years between 1880 and 1900, and for which we are able to retrieve the individual’s order number and assign them a serial number. Column (2) restricts the sample to our main analysis sample, i.e. cards that we match to the 1930 census. The “veteran (any)” measure is the union of the veteran measures from VAMI/ATS and from the 1930 census; thus, it is defined only for cards that we link to a census record. Panel (b) shows summary statistics for individuals in the 1930 census, restricted to Black men ages 21 and older. Column (1) shows individuals whom we link to NAACP membership records, and column (2) shows individuals whom we do not. Note that some individuals we identify as NAACP members were less than 21 years old as of the 1930 census. “Veteran (VAMI/ATS)” can only be equal to one for individuals in the census whom we link to a draft card (and subsequently to VAMI or ATS lists). Standard deviations are in parentheses. In Appendix Table A1, we restrict the sample from Panel (b) to individuals who were eligible for the first draft registration and who, as of the 1930 census, lived in an area for which we have NAACP rosters.

Table 2: Effect of Military Service on NAACP Membership – TOLS Results

	NAACP member				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Veteran	0.0270** (0.0114)	0.0276** (0.0115)	0.0281** (0.0118)	0.0282** (0.0118)	0.0231** (0.0117)
Draft board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Birth year and state		✓	✓	✓	✓
Exemption claim × married			✓	✓	✓
Prewar occupation				✓	✓
County in 1930					✓
Observations	204,923	204,923	204,923	204,923	204,923
R ²	0.035	0.037	0.037	0.038	0.089
First stage <i>F</i> -statistic	534.0	544.8	564.6	565.1	554.2
Dep. var. mean (nonveterans)	0.0160	0.0160	0.0160	0.0160	0.0160
OLS coefficient	0.0044	0.0043	0.0037	0.0034	0.0017
OLS <i>t</i> -statistic	6.58	6.38	5.31	4.99	2.53

Notes: This table shows TOLS estimates where the unit of observation is an individual draft registrant and veteran status is instrumented with the individual's local order number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. Standard errors are clustered by serial number and reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table 3: Effect of Military Service on Community Leadership – TSLS Results

	Community leader			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Veteran	0.0043** (0.0020)	0.0043** (0.0020)	0.0043** (0.0021)	0.0043** (0.0021)
Draft board	✓	✓	✓	✓
Birth year and state		✓	✓	✓
Exemption × married			✓	✓
Prewar occupation				✓
Observations	825,571	825,571	825,571	825,571
R ²	0.006	0.009	0.009	0.009
First stage <i>F</i> -statistic	1,741.0	1,777.6	1,803.0	1,804.8
Dep. var. mean (nonveterans)	0.0013	0.0013	0.0013	0.0013
OLS coefficient	0.0008	0.0009	0.0007	0.0007
OLS <i>t</i> -statistic	6.83	7.05	5.74	5.48

Notes: This table shows TSLS estimates where the unit of observation is an individual draft registrant and veteran status is instrumented with the individual's local order number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. Standard errors are clustered by serial number and reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table 4: Summary Statistics for Officer Candidates

	Candidates with no commission (1)	Candidates who received commission (2)	All Black men (3)
Married	0.41 (0.49)	0.34 (0.47)	0.67 (0.47)
College graduate	0.41 (0.49)	0.53 (0.50)	0.01 (0.12)
Member of church	0.81 (0.39)	0.74 (0.44)	0.43 (0.50)
Member of Knights of Pythias	0.19 (0.39)	0.11 (0.32)	0.02 (0.13)
Member of Freemasons	0.20 (0.40)	0.17 (0.37)	0.03 (0.16)
Lawyer, judge	0.03 (0.18)	0.05 (0.22)	0.00 (0.02)
Doctor, pharmacist	0.19 (0.39)	0.23 (0.42)	0.00 (0.04)
Engineer, scientist	0.05 (0.22)	0.06 (0.24)	0.00 (0.01)
Teacher	0.15 (0.35)	0.13 (0.34)	0.00 (0.05)
Farmer	0.02 (0.14)	0.02 (0.14)	0.29 (0.45)
Community leader (AANB/BD)	0.05 (0.22)	0.16 (0.37)	0.00 (0.05)
NAACP member	0.11 (0.31)	0.19 (0.39)	0.02 (0.15)
Observations	658	633	3,087,614

Notes: This table shows summary statistics for officer candidates – those who did not receive a commission in column (1) and those who did in column (2). Pre-camp candidate statistics are based on the sub-sample of individuals for whom we observe biographical information. NAACP membership is measured only for the sub-sample for whom we observe either birthplace or current location, which we use to link candidates to the NAACP records. For comparison, column (3) shows corresponding estimates for all Black men. Statistics for marital status and occupations are from the 1920 full-count census, where the sample is limited to Black men age 18 or older. Estimates for church membership are from the 1916 Census of Religious Bodies. Estimates for membership in the Knights of Pythias and the Freemasons are from Stevens (1907). These 1906 estimates are extrapolated to 1916 using the growth in national Freemason membership between 1906 and 1916, where the latter estimate is from Hernandez (2015). The share of college graduates is from the 1940 census, and is based on the number of Black men age 40 or older with at least four years of college education in that year. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table 5: Officer Commissions and Civil Rights Activism

	NAACP member			Community leader		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Officer	0.0771*** (0.0245)	0.0866*** (0.0281)	0.1181*** (0.0354)	0.0895*** (0.0239)	0.1065*** (0.0293)	0.0972*** (0.0356)
Birth year and state		✓	✓		✓	✓
Married, job, military			✓			✓
Civic engagement			✓			✓
Observations	848	745	574	848	745	574
R ²	0.011	0.153	0.295	0.015	0.143	0.257
Dep. var. mean (non-officers)	0.111	0.109	0.105	0.099	0.100	0.109

Notes: This table shows OLS estimates where the unit of observation is an individual officer candidate. In columns (4) to (6), “Community leader” refers to appearing in AANB or AABD. The sample is restricted to officers and candidates for whom either current location or birth state are non-missing. Columns (2) and (5) further restricts to individuals for whom we observe both birth year and birth state, while Columns (3) and (6) additionally limit to the candidates who completed biographical surveys. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

A Additional tables and figures

Form 805 REGISTRATION CARD		153	No. 27
1	Name in full	James Calloway	Age in yrs. 25
2	Home address	Richmond Ark	
3	Date of birth	June - 2 - 1892	
4	Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)?	Natural born citizen	
5	Where were you born?	Richmond Ark	
6	If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject?		
7	What is your present trade, occupation, or office?	Farming	
8	By whom employed?	Johnson & DeLaney, Ark	
9	Where employed?	Little River Co. Ark	
10	Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support (specify which)?	Wife	
11	Married or single (which)?	Married	Race (specify which)? Negro
12	What military service have you had? Rank	None	branch None
	years	None	Nation or State None
	Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)?		
I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.			
153 James Calloway Morr			

Figure A1: Example World War I Draft Registration Card

Notes: This figure shows an example of a card from the first WWI draft registration wave, held in 1917. The stamped number in the top left (805) is the individual's serial number. The handwritten number in the top middle and bottom left (153) is the individual's local order number, which corresponds to his position in the draft.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

2199

MEMBERSHIP REPORT BLANK
 Name of Branch Birmingham Branch Date February 6, 1936
 The following members have been enrolled since our last report on (date)

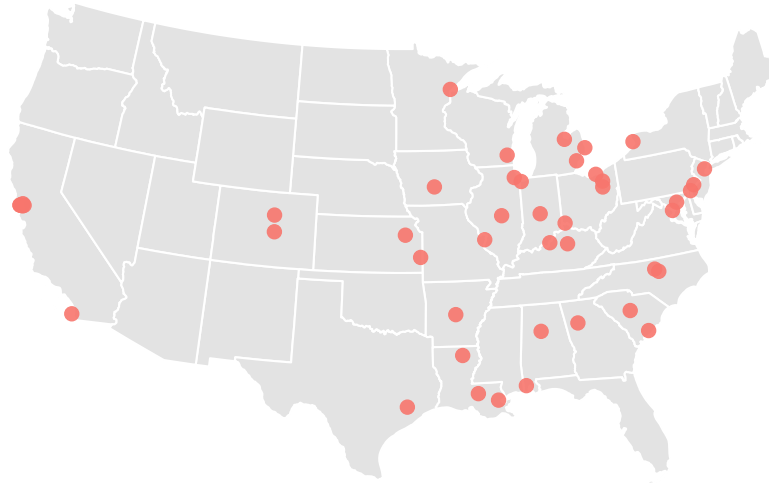
	NAME	ADDRESS	Paid by Member	Enrolled by Branch	To Report (See Branch)
1	Mr. John M. Gear	612 Williams Street	1.00	50	50
2	Mrs. John M. Gear	612 Williams St.	1.00	50	50
3	Mr. B. J. Henry	328 1/2 N. 18th St.	1.00	50	50
4	Mr. E. W. Thompson	Pittsview, Alabama.	1.00	50	50
5	Mrs. C. B. Howe	204 N. 9th Avenue	1.00	50	50
6	Mrs. I. G. Blaylock	204 N. 9th Avenue	1.00	50	50
7	Mr. L. E. Harris	516 N. 4th Court	1.00	50	50
8	Mr. Gessner Clark	2529 N. 16th St.	1.00	50	50
9	Mr. S. M. Martin	1015 N. 16th St.	1.00	50	50
10	Mrs. M. L. M. Hooks	1530 N. 6th Avenue	1.00	50	50
11	Mr. Richard M. Neely, Jr.	316 N. 10th Avenue	1.00	50	50
12	Mr. E. F. McCarroll	800 N. 12th Avenue	1.00	50	50
13	Mr. Wm. Haygood	5504 Ave. I, Vinesville, Ala.	1.00	50	50
14	Rev. S. S. Washington	530 N. 14th St.	1.00	50	50
15	Miss Pansy Holloway	505 So. 18th St.	1.00	50	50
16	Mr. G. Bernard Nichols	1201 N. 9th St.	1.00	50	50
17	Mrs. S. A. Hunt	804 Dillard Avenue	1.00	50	50
18	Rev. M. Thornton	1111 N. 7th Avenue	1.00	50	50
19	Miss Alma Robinson	424 So. 1st St.	1.00	50	50
20	Mr. P. S. Westry	1808 Ave. K., Escaloy, Ala	1.00	50	50
21	W. T. Woods, G. M.	P. O. Box 377	1.00	50	50
22	Mr. Luther B. Hill	716 N. 29th St.	1.00	50	50
23	Rev. L. A. Smith	2726 - 6th Ave., Bessemer, Ala.	1.00	50	50
24	Mr. Benjamin W. Austin	Dunbar High Sch., Bessemer, Ala	1.00	50	50
25	Miss Elaine Verner	Dunbar High Sch., Bessemer, Ala	1.00	50	50
			25 00	12 50	12 50

(Make report out in duplicate, using typewriter and carbon paper if possible, keeping duplicate copy for your files) (See other side)

Figure A2: Example NAACP Roster

Notes: This figure shows a 1936 roster for the Birmingham, Alabama NAACP branch.

(a) Branch locations from NAACP rosters



(b) Branch locations from Estrada and Gregory (n.d.)

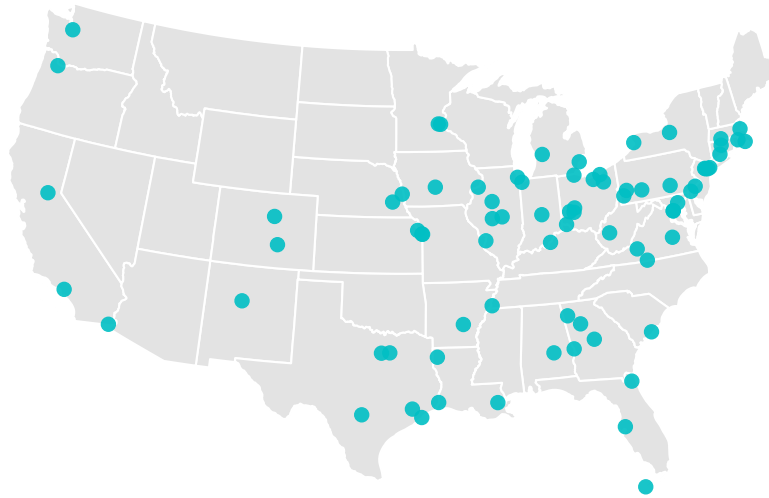


Figure A3: Locations of NAACP Branches

Notes: Panel (a) shows the locations of NAACP branches in our sample of rosters. Only branch locations with at least 100 records are shown. Panel (b) shows the locations of NAACP branches from Estrada and Gregory (n.d.). Only branches with at least 100 members in any year before 1941 are shown.

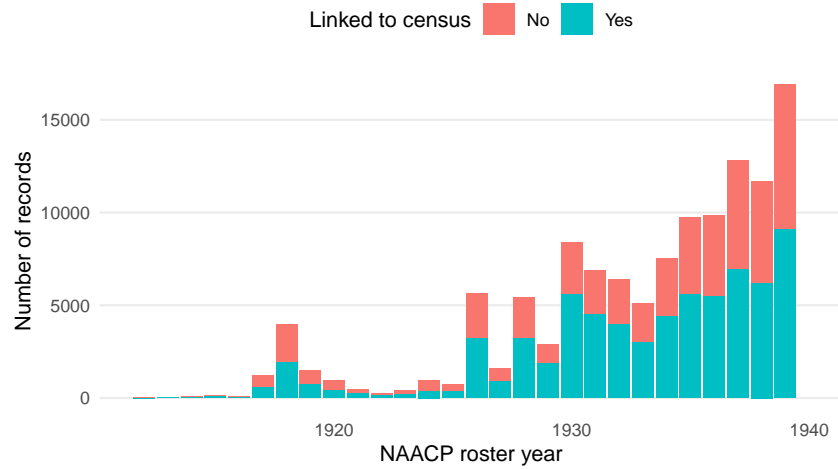


Figure A4: Number of NAACP Records by Year

Notes: This figure shows the number of NAACP records each year in our sample of rosters. The colors indicate the number of records successfully linked to the 1930 census, either directly or through the 1940 census and subsequently back to 1930 using links from Abramitzky et al. (2020).

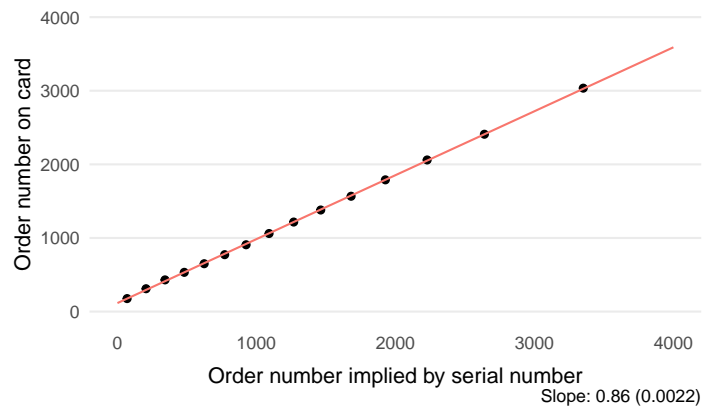


Figure A5: Order Number on Cards and Order Number Predicted from Serial Number

Notes: Figure is a binned scatter plot showing the relationship between the *actual* local order number written or stamped on the draft cards and the local order number that we *predict* using the serial number on the draft cards. The unit of observation is an individual draft registrant. The slope and heteroskedasticity-robust standard error are displayed in the bottom right.

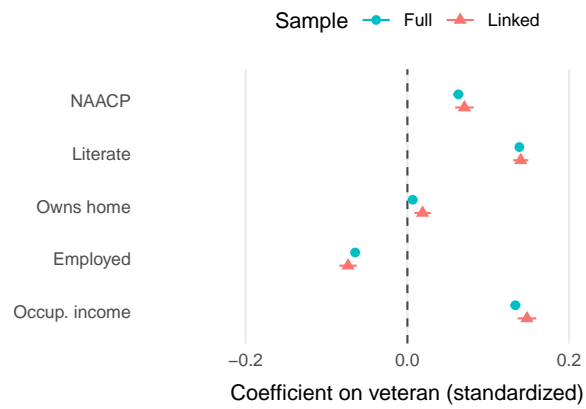


Figure A6: Full vs. Linked Samples: Relationship between Veteran Status and 1930 Outcomes

Notes: This figure shows OLS estimates of the relationship between veteran status and various outcomes in the 1930 census. In blue, we show estimates for all Black men born between 1886 and 1896. In orange, we show estimates for our sample of Black men linked to a draft card. The veteran indicator is from the 1930 census, and does not incorporate additional information from VAMI or ATS. Outcomes are standardized, but the regressions do not include controls. The unit of observation is an individual in the 1930 census. Horizontal bars are 95% confidence intervals using heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors.

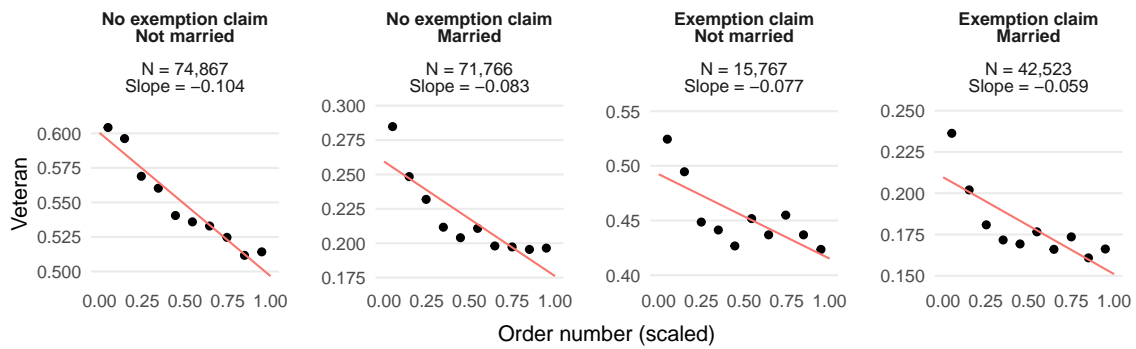


Figure A7: First-Stage Relationship By Registrant Type

Notes: This figure shows binned scatter plots of the first-stage relationship between veteran status and (scaled) order number separately for each of four cells defined by exemption claim and marital status. The unit of observation is an individual draft registrant. The number of observations in each cell and the slope of the first-stage relationship are shown at the top of each panel.

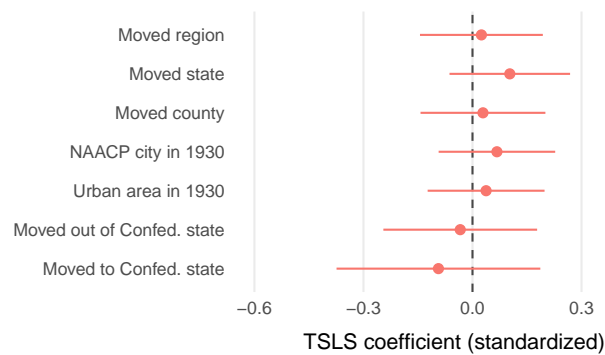


Figure A8: Effects on Residential Migration

Notes: This figure shows TSLS estimates of the effect of military service on migration. The unit of observation is an individual draft registrant and veteran status is instrumented with the individual's local order number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. The outcomes are standardized indicators for whether the registrant: (1) lived in different census regions in 1917 and 1930, (2) lived in different states in 1917 and 1930, (3) lived in different counties in 1917 and 1930, (4) lived in a city with an NAACP chapter in 1930, (5) lived in an urban area in 1930, as defined by the Census Bureau, (6) lived in 1930 in a state that was *not* formerly part of the Confederacy (defined only for individuals living in 1917 in a former Confederate state) and (7) lived in 1930 in a former Confederate state (defined only for individuals living in a non-former-Confederate state in 1917). The former Confederate states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Standard errors are clustered by serial number, and horizontal bars are 95% confidence intervals.

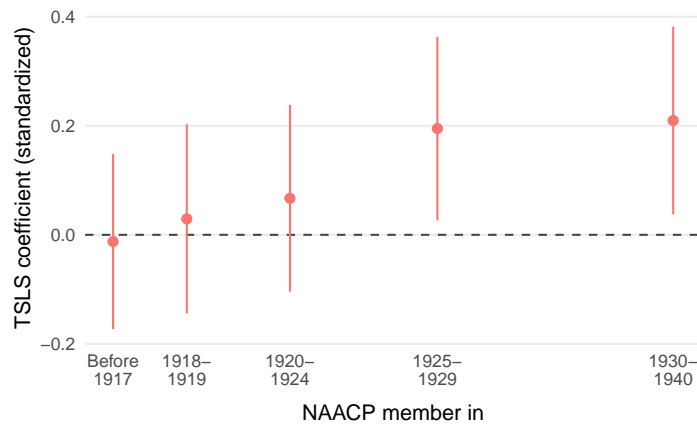


Figure A9: Effect of Military Service by Year of NAACP Membership – TSLS Results

Notes: This figure shows coefficients from separate TSLS regressions where the outcome is an indicator variable that is one if the individual appeared in the NAACP rosters within the indicated years. Each of these outcome variables is standardized. An individual is considered to be in the NAACP in year y if the earliest year they are observed in the rosters is $\leq y$ and the last year they are observed in the rosters is $\geq y$. The unit of observation is an individual draft registrant and veteran status is instrumented with the individual's local order number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. Standard errors are clustered by serial number, and vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals.

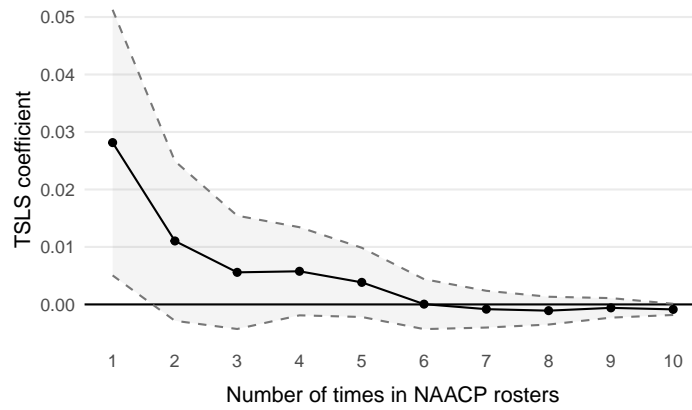


Figure A10: Effect of Military Service on Number of Times in NAACP Rosters – TSLS Results

Notes: This figure shows coefficients from separate TSLS regressions where the outcome is an indicator variable that is one if the individual appeared in the NAACP rosters $\geq N$ times. The unit of observation is an individual draft registrant and veteran status is instrumented with the individual's local order number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. Standard errors are clustered by serial number, and the shaded region is a 95% confidence interval.

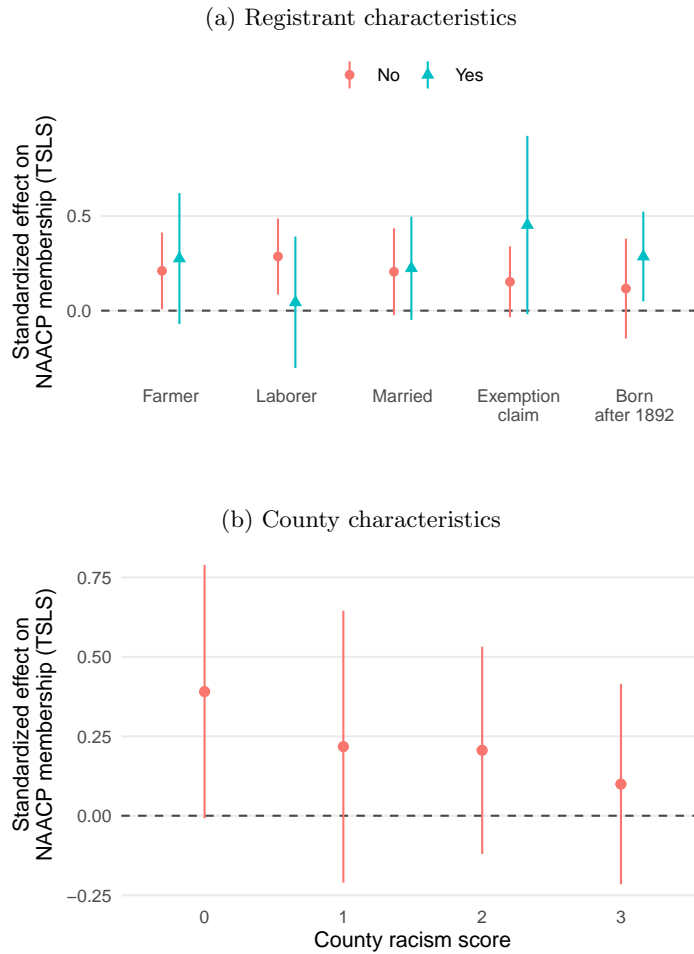


Figure A11: Heterogeneity by Prewar Characteristics – Standardized Effects

Notes: Panel (a) shows coefficients from separate TSLS regressions, splitting the sample by registrant characteristics. Panel (b) instead splits the sample by county racism score, which increments by one if a county is located in a former Confederate state, had a Confederate monument by 1914, or experienced a lynching between 1880 and 1910. These estimates correspond to those in Figure 7, except that in each regression, NAACP membership is standardized within the specified sub-sample to account for baseline differences in NAACP membership across characteristics. All regressions control for birth year, state of birth, and draft board fixed effects. They further control for, when possible, prewar occupation and the interaction of exemption and marital status. The unit of observation is an individual draft registrant. Standard errors are clustered by serial number, and vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals. The former Confederate states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

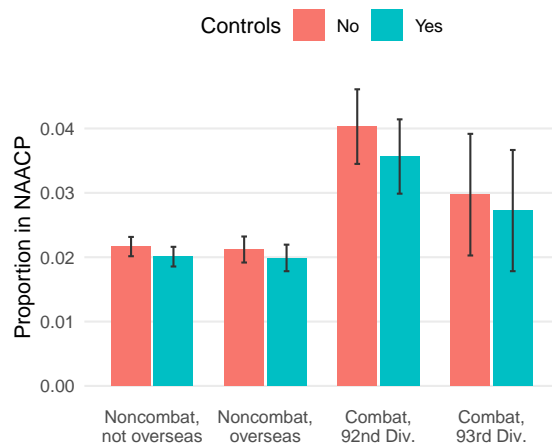


Figure A12: NAACP Membership by Wartime Service – Adjusted for Card Characteristics

Notes: This figure shows the raw and adjusted NAACP membership rates in four mutually exclusive groups of veterans corresponding to Figure 8. Adjusted estimates are coefficients from an OLS regression of an indicator for NAACP membership on an indicator for each type of military experience, controlling for age, the interaction of exemption claim and marital status, and prewar occupation. We show these coefficients added to the control means for each group. Vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals using heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors.

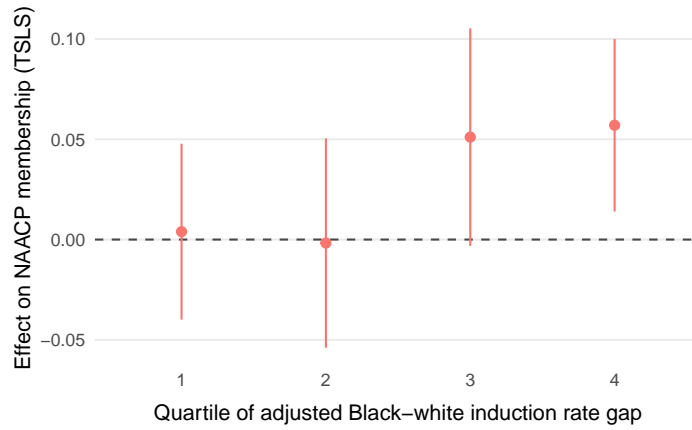


Figure A13: Heterogeneity by Board Discrimination – Adjusted for Marriage and Occupation

Notes: This figure shows coefficients from separate TSLS regressions where the unit of observation is an individual draft registrant and veteran status is instrumented with the individual's local order number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. Black induction rates are determined from the share of veterans in our matched sample of Black draft cards. We infer white induction rates by subtracting the number of Black draftees and registrants in each board from the total number of inductions and registrants. These rates are adjusted to account for the county-level Black-white difference in marriage and agricultural employment (farmers and farm laborers) in the 1920 census. Quartiles are defined at the card level by the difference in Black and white induction rates at each registrant's board. Standard errors are clustered by serial number, and vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals.

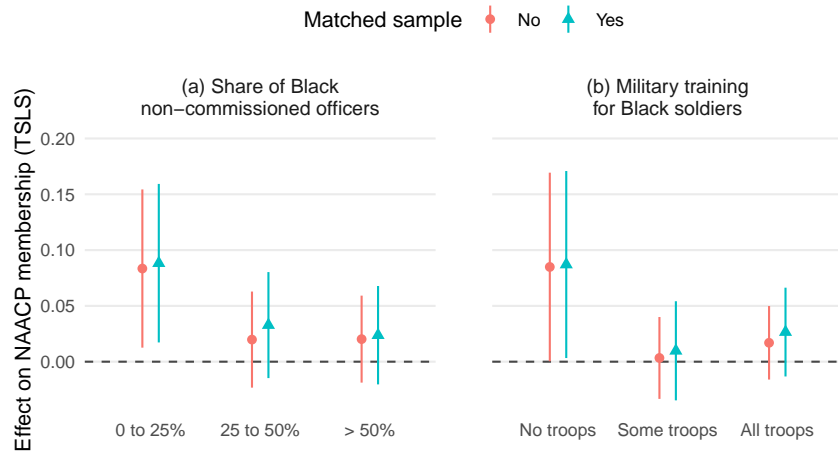


Figure A14: Heterogeneity by Camp Discrimination – Matched Samples

Notes: This figure shows coefficients from separate TSLS regressions for the full sample (in orange) and a matched sample (in blue), constructed as follows. For each registrant assigned to the most discriminatory camps (i.e., camps with 0 to 25% Black officer share and camps where no Black troops received training), we select all registrants assigned to less discriminatory camps of the same age quintile, marital status, occupation, exemption claim, and quartile of the Black-white difference in board induction rates. Observations are weighted by one over the number of matches to maintain sample balance on match characteristics. The share of Black non-commissioned officers and the share of Black soldiers that received training in each camp are derived from reports on “Negro Subversion” produced by the Military Intelligence Division; see Section 6 for more details. The unit of observation is an individual draft registrant and veteran status is instrumented with the individual’s local order number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. Standard errors are clustered by serial number, and vertical bars are 95% confidence intervals.

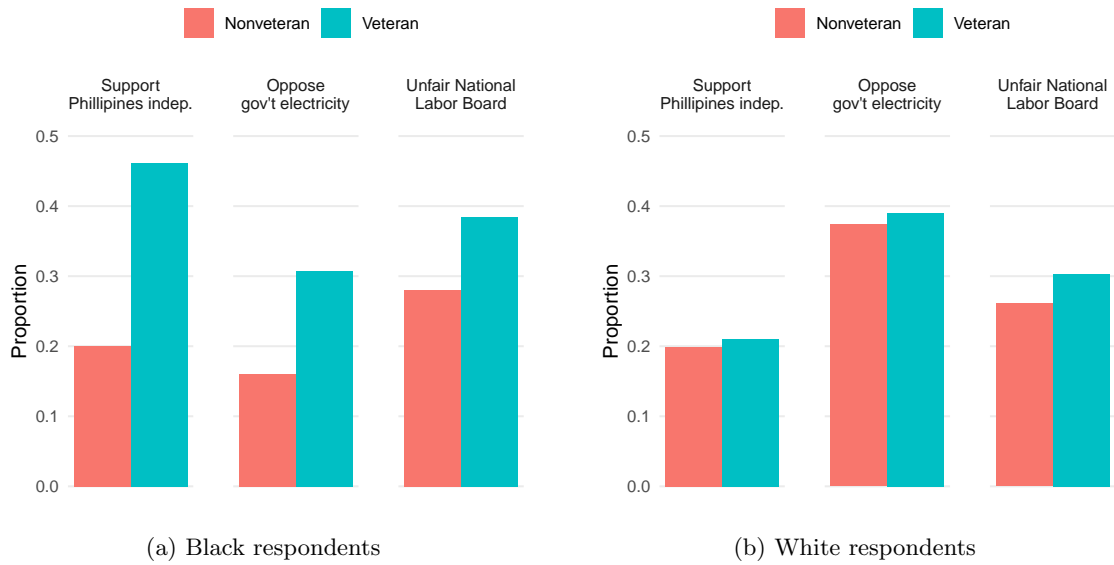


Figure A15: Political Views by Race and Veteran Status – Gallup Survey (1938)

Notes: This figure shows responses from a 1938 Gallup poll disaggregated by race and veteran status. Panel (a) examines Black male respondents and Panel (b) examines white male respondents, and responses for nonveterans are shown in orange and for veterans in blue. This is the only pre-World War II Gallup survey capturing views of and trust in the American government for which microdata is available and veteran status is observed. The figure shows the share of respondents who report “yes” to “Do you think the United States should give the Philippines their independence now?”, “no” to “Would you like to see your local government buy, own and operate the electric power system that serves this community?”, and “no” to “Do you think the National Labor Relations Board has been fair to employers in its decisions?”.

Table A1: Summary Statistics for 1930 Census, Restricted Sample

	NAACP (1)	Not NAACP (2)
Age in 1930	38.63 (3.03)	38.42 (2.97)
Employed	0.90 (0.30)	0.83 (0.37)
Married in 1930	0.80 (0.40)	0.75 (0.43)
Literate	0.98 (0.15)	0.92 (0.27)
Occup. income	25.59 (12.76)	21.12 (6.59)
Owns home	0.39 (0.49)	0.19 (0.39)
Veteran (VAMI/ATS)	0.09 (0.29)	0.05 (0.22)
Veteran (Census)	0.27 (0.44)	0.20 (0.40)
Veteran (Any)	0.30 (0.46)	0.23 (0.42)
Observations	10,847	318,059

Notes: This table shows summary statistics corresponding to Panel (b) of Table 1, except the sample is restricted to individuals born between 1886 and 1896 who were living as of the 1930 census in an area for which we have NAACP rosters. “Veteran (VAMI/ATS)” can only be equal to one for individuals in the census whom we link to a draft card (and subsequently to VAMI or ATS lists). The “veteran (any)” measure is the union of the veteran indicators from VAMI/ATS and from the 1930 census. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table A2: First-Stage Relationship Between Order Number and Veteran Status

	Veteran			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Order number (scaled)	-0.0883*** (0.0038)	-0.0871*** (0.0037)	-0.0850*** (0.0036)	-0.0850*** (0.0036)
Draft board	✓	✓	✓	✓
Birth year and state		✓	✓	✓
Exemption claim × married			✓	✓
Prewar occupation				✓
Observations	204,923	204,923	204,923	204,923
R ²	0.039	0.079	0.165	0.166
Dependent variable mean	0.349	0.349	0.349	0.349

Notes: This table shows OLS estimates where the unit of observation is an individual draft registrant. Standard errors are clustered by serial number and reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A3: Effect of Military Service on NAACP Membership – Alternative Linking Strategies

(a) $x = 0$

Tie-breaking	NAACP member			
	None (1)	Prewar (2)	+Veteran (3)	+County (4)
Veteran	0.0282** (0.0118)	0.0333*** (0.0116)	0.0281*** (0.0108)	0.0266** (0.0104)
Birth year and state	✓	✓	✓	✓
Draft board	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exemption \times married	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prewar occupation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	204,923	242,981	252,266	260,821
R ²	0.038	0.030	0.031	0.033
First stage F -statistic	565.1	586.0	637.4	677.6
Linking rate	0.248	0.294	0.306	0.316
Dep. var. mean (nonveterans)	0.0160	0.0158	0.0156	0.0150
OLS coefficient	0.0034	0.0027	0.0031	0.0032
OLS t -statistic	4.99	4.38	5.04	5.43

(b) $x = 2$

Tie-breaking	NAACP member			
	None (1)	Prewar (2)	+Veteran (3)	+County (4)
Veteran	0.0365** (0.0155)	0.0239* (0.0132)	0.0244** (0.0118)	0.0254** (0.0099)
Birth year and state	✓	✓	✓	✓
Draft board	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exemption \times married	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prewar occupation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	102,819	146,208	159,264	196,881
R ²	0.069	0.059	0.054	0.055
First stage F -statistic	419.6	545.2	630.3	735.2
Linking rate	0.125	0.177	0.193	0.238
Dep. var. mean (nonveterans)	0.0184	0.0192	0.0188	0.0150
OLS coefficient	0.0028	0.0031	0.0030	0.0031
OLS t -statistic	2.60	3.46	3.64	4.35

Notes: These tables show TSLS estimates where the unit of observation is an individual draft registrant and veteran status is instrumented with the individual's local order number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. Panel (a) reports estimates using the ABE $x = 0$ threshold, and Panel (b) uses the more conservative $x = 2$ threshold; see text for details. For each panel, in column (2), the "prewar" tie-breaking method includes middle initial and marital status. Column (3) additionally breaks ties by comparing veteran status of potential matches in the 1930 census to contemporaneous veteran status from VAMI and ATS lists. Column (4) additionally uses county of residence. Standard errors are clustered by serial number and reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A4: Effect of Military Service on NAACP Membership – Alternative Veteran Definitions

	NAACP member			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Veteran (Baseline)	0.0282** (0.0118)			
Veteran (Census)		0.0523** (0.0221)		
Veteran (VAMI/ATS)			0.0273** (0.0114)	
Veteran (Intersection)				0.0495** (0.0207)
Draft board	✓	✓	✓	✓
Birth year and state	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exemption claim × married	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prewar occupation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	204,923	204,923	204,923	204,923
R ²	0.038	0.026	0.039	0.037
First stage <i>F</i> -statistic	565.1	192.5	763.8	392.2
Dep. var. mean (nonveterans)	0.0160	0.0161	0.0167	0.0167
Mean veteran indicator	0.349	0.239	0.225	0.115
OLS coefficient	0.0034	0.0069	0.0024	0.0091
OLS <i>t</i> -statistic	5.02	9.19	2.95	7.49

Notes: This table shows TSLS estimates where the unit of observation is an individual and veteran status is instrumented with the individual’s local order number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. We show results for four different indicator variables measuring veteran status. Column (1) shows our baseline measure, which takes the union of veteran status from the 1930 census and from VAMI/ATS lists. Columns (2) and (3) show the census and VAMI/ATS measures separately, and column (4) shows the intersection of the census and VAMI/ATS measures. Standard errors are clustered by serial number and reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A5: Effect of Military Service on NAACP Membership – Alternative Instruments

	NAACP member			
	Baseline (1)	Order num. (2)	Not scaled (3)	Rank (4)
Veteran	0.0282** (0.0118)	0.0332*** (0.0124)	0.0292** (0.0143)	0.0287** (0.0117)
Draft board	✓	✓	✓	✓
Birth year and state	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exemption claim × married	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prewar occupation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	204,923	186,186	204,923	204,923
R ²	0.038	0.037	0.038	0.038
First stage <i>F</i> -statistic	565.1	478.2	7.43	567.8

Notes: This table shows TSLS estimates where the unit of observation is an individual draft registrant. We show results using four different instruments for veteran status. Column (1) shows the baseline instrument, which is the individual's local order number predicted from his serial number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. In column (2), the instrument is the individual's local order number as written on his draft card, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. In column (3), the instrument is the individual's local order number predicted from his serial number (unscaled). In column (4), the instrument is the rank of the individual's local order number (predicted from his serial number) among draft cards for Black men in his board, scaled by the total number of Black draft cards in his board. Standard errors are clustered by serial number and reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A6: Effect of Military Service on NAACP Membership – Alternative First Stage Functional Forms

	NAACP member			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Veteran	0.0282** (0.0118)	0.0225** (0.0109)	0.0191* (0.0107)	0.0200* (0.0104)
Birth year and state	✓	✓	✓	✓
Draft board	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prewar occupation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exemption claim × married	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cubic polynomial		✓		
Nonparametric fit			✓	
Nonparametric × exemption claim × married				✓
Observations	204,923	204,923	204,923	204,923
R ²	0.038	0.041	0.042	0.042
Dependent variable mean	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018
First stage <i>F</i> -statistic	565.1	729.9	724.9	748.9

Notes: This table shows TSLS estimates where the unit of observation is an individual draft registrant. We show results parameterizing the first-stage relationship between veteran status and local order number in four different ways. Column (1) shows the baseline instrument, which is the individual’s local order number predicted from his serial number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. In column (2), the first stage is a cubic polynomial in this scaled local order number. In column (3), we split the (scaled) order number into ten groups (i.e., 0 to 0.1, 0.1 to 0.2, etc.) and regress veteran status on these ten indicators. In column (4), we estimate the nonparametric first stage in column (3) separately for each of the four mutually exclusive groups based on marital status and exemption claim. In each case, we use the predicted values from the first stage *as an instrument* in the two-stage least squares regression. Standard errors are clustered by serial number and reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A7: Effect of Military Service on Community Leadership – Restricted Occupation Types

	Community leader			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Veteran	0.0043** (0.0021)	0.0045** (0.0020)	0.0044** (0.0020)	0.0043** (0.0020)
Draft board	✓	✓	✓	✓
Birth year and state	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exemption × married	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prewar occupation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	825,571	825,571	825,571	825,571
R ²	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009
First stage <i>F</i> -statistic	1,804.8	1,804.8	1,804.8	1,804.8
Dep. var. mean (nonveterans)	0.0013	0.0013	0.0012	0.0012
OLS coefficient	0.0007	0.0007	0.0007	0.0006
OLS <i>t</i> -statistic	5.48	5.46	5.53	5.34

Notes: This table shows TSLS estimates where the unit of observation is an individual draft registrant and veteran status is instrumented with the individual’s local order number, scaled by the number of registrants in his board. We show results using four different definitions of community leadership. Column (1) shows the baseline estimate, which defines “community leader” as an indicator variable that equals one if an individual appears in AABD or AANB. Column (2) recodes the outcome variable as zero for individuals who achieved prominence in sports. Column (3) additionally recodes the outcome as zero for individuals who achieved prominence in arts. Column (4) additionally recodes the outcome as zero for individuals who achieved prominence due to military experience. Standard errors are clustered by serial number and reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A8: Notable Officers and Candidates

Name	Rank	Abbreviated biography
Cleveland Leigh Abbott	1st Lt.	Athletic director and head football coach, Tuskegee University; inductee, U.S.A. Track and Field Hall of Fame
William Levi Dawson	1st Lt.	U.S. Congressman (only Black Representative); alderman, Chicago City Council
Earl Burrus Dickerson		Chairman, NAACP Legal Redress Committee; Assistant A.G., Illinois; first Black Democratic alderman, Chicago
Eugene F. Gordon		Journalist, social commentator, and editor, Boston Post, National Urban League's Opportunity magazine
Charles Hamilton Houston	1st Lt.	First Special Counsel, NAACP; Dean, Howard University Law School; first Black editor of Harvard Law Review
George W. Lee	2nd Lt.	Official, NAACP and Urban League; Grand Commissioner of Education, Improved Elks fraternal order
Howard Hale Long	1st Lt.	Dean, Paine College; chief examiner for all Black public schools in D.C.
Osceola McKaine	1st Lt.	Co-founder, League for Democracy; Secretary, NAACP Sumter branch; prominent journalist and orator
William Stuart Nelson	1st Lt.	Dean, Howard University; first Black president, Shaw University; president, Dillard University
William Jenifer Powell	1st Lt.	Aviation pioneer and instructor to Tuskegee Airmen; founder, Bessie Coleman Aero Club (Black aviation club)
Francis Ellis Rivers	1st Lt.	Judge, N.Y.C. court; assemblyman, N.Y. State; first Black ADA of New York; President, NAACP Legal Defense Fund
George Samuel Schuyler	1st Lt.	Author of <i>Black No More</i> (first Black science fiction novel); business manager, NAACP; prominent social commentator
Austin Thomas Walden	Cpt.	Lead attorney in Ward v. U. of Georgia (challenging racial bias in admissions); National Vice President, NAACP
Joseph Henry Ward	Lt. Col.	Head medical officer, Tuskegee Veterans Hospital; Supreme Medical Registrar, Supreme Lodge, Knights of Pythias
Carter Walker Wesley	1st Lt.	Prominent lawyer and civil rights advocate; argued 13 cases before Oklahoma Supreme Court and won 11

Notes: This table shows abbreviated biographies, based on information from the African American National Biography, for 15 officer candidates at the Fort Des Moines Training Camp for Colored Officers. The two individuals without a rank listed did not receive an officer commission.

B Further details on linking

B.1 Linking NAACP records to the census

We retrieved and transcribed images of NAACP membership rosters from the ProQuest History Vault. These rosters take the form of standardized, (generally) typewritten lists containing member names, exact home address, NAACP branch, and year. In total, the rosters contain 233,517 observations across 227 branches from 1912 to 1942.

We first exclude rows that correspond to businesses or clubs and remove rows that likely correspond to female members. We say that a row corresponds to a woman if the name includes the title “Mrs.” or “Miss” or if the first name is one of 663 female names. These are names for which, in the 1930 full-count census, there are more than 500 Black people with that first name and more than 90 percent of them are female. This leaves 122,368 rows in the NAACP rosters that are candidates to be linked to the census.

The 1930 census contains the most complete information about whether an individual was a WWI veteran, so we first attempt to link the rosters directly to this census. However, since many of our NAACP rosters are from years close to 1940, we also attempt to link the NAACP rosters to the 1940 census, and then use a 1930 to 1940 crosswalk from the Census Linking Project (Abramitzky et al., 2020) to map these links back to the 1930 census.

In the census, candidates to be linked to the NAACP rosters are Black men living in the city or metropolitan area corresponding to a city for which we have NAACP rosters. This is 1,665,428 people in the 1930 census and 1,903,688 people in the 1940 census.

We follow a modified version of the ABE procedure to link the NAACP rosters to the census. We first standardize first names using a list of nicknames and common misspellings. We then block on city, first initial, and last initial. A pair of records is a candidate link if (1) the Jaro-Winkler distances between the first names and last names are both less than 0.2, or the first name as recorded in the NAACP roster is only an initial and the Jaro-Winkler distance between last names is less than 0.2; and (2) the year of the NAACP roster minus the birth year of the individual in the census implies that the individual would have been over 21 years old, the age restriction for joining the organization.^{B1}

For each record, if there is at least one potential link within the *city* as recorded in the census (as opposed to the *metropolitan area*), then we drop all candidate links outside the city. Then, we have seven different link types:

1. There is only one candidate census link remaining.
2. There are one or more candidate census links remaining, and the sum of the Jaro-Winkler distance in first name and last name for the *second-best* link is at least 0.2 greater than this sum for the best link.
3. There is a unique census link after restricting the middle initials to be the same.
4. There is a unique census link after restricting the first and last names to be *exactly* the same.
5. There is a unique census link after restricting the first and last names and middle initials to be *exactly* the same.
6. There is a unique census link after restricting the names of the streets in the NAACP rosters and in the census to have a Jaro-Winkler distance of less than 0.1.

^{B1}In 1936, the age restriction was increased to 26 years old. However, individuals as young as 14 could join “junior” branches (Bynum, 2009).

Table B1: NAACP to Census Linking Rates by Method

Link type	1930		1940		Combined	
	Num.	Prop.	Num.	Prop.	Num.	Prop.
1	25,992	0.212	26,842	0.219	28,023	0.229
2	28,487	0.233	29,271	0.239	30,740	0.251
3	17,695	0.145	15,077	0.123	19,017	0.155
4	18,970	0.155	18,729	0.153	20,591	0.168
5	14,660	0.120	12,413	0.101	15,731	0.129
6	28,721	0.235	27,335	0.223	30,845	0.252
7	22,399	0.183	20,082	0.164	23,823	0.195
Any	63,938	0.523	62,227	0.509	69,478	0.568
Unique	32,100	0.262	31,036	0.254	34,906	0.285

Notes: This table describes the result of linking NAACP records to the 1930 and 1940 full-count censuses. See the text for a description of link types. “Num.” denotes the total number of NAACP records linked using each method, and “prop.” denotes the proportion of candidate NAACP records that were successfully linked using each method. “Any” denotes the number of NAACP records linked via any method, and “unique” denotes the number of unique individuals in the census linked to an NAACP record.

7. There is a unique census link after restricting the names of the streets in the NAACP rosters and in the census to have a Jaro-Winkler distance of less than 0.1 and restricting the address numbers to be exactly the same.

We link 63,938 NAACP records to the 1930 census and 69,478 to the 1940 census. Using the Census Linking Project to map the 1940 links to the 1930 census, combined, we link 69,478 rows to the 1930 census either directly or through the 1940 census.^{B2} Since the NAACP records contain many duplicate rows for the same individual, this corresponds to 34,906 unique people in the 1930 census whom we identify as NAACP members. Table B1 shows linking rates by method and Table B2 shows linking rates by city.

B.2 Linking ATS lists to draft cards

The Army Transport Service (ATS) lists contain records of all people departing from and arriving at U.S. ports on Army ships during World War I. They include the residence address of the individual, and while they do not include information about race, they do include information about the military unit than an individual belonged to. As the military was racially segregated at this time, we search for links only among individuals who served in Black units. This leaves 253,362 rows in the ships lists that are candidates to be linked to a draft card.

We attempt to link the two datasets using various combinations of name, address, county, and state. When the set of linking variables does not include middle name or initial, we drop any links where the middle initial is non-missing in both datasets and conflicts. We require that each ATS record be linked to no more than one card. However, we do not require that each card have only one unique link to the ATS lists, since individuals could appear on the ATS lists multiple times (i.e., on departure from and return to the U.S.).

^{B2}If an NAACP record is linked to two different individuals in the 1930 and 1940 censuses, we prioritize the direct link to the 1930 census.

Table B2: NAACP to Census Linking Rates by City

City	Num. rows	Row linking rate	Num. unique links	Unique linking rate
Overall	122,368	0.568	34,906	0.285
Detroit	14,269	0.534	4,371	0.306
Washington	13,833	0.608	3,806	0.275
Chicago	9,320	0.618	3,344	0.359
Baltimore	7,997	0.587	2,214	0.277
New York	6,982	0.571	1,731	0.248
St. Louis	6,945	0.582	1,857	0.267
Cleveland	6,543	0.567	1,803	0.276
Philadelphia	5,825	0.636	1,845	0.317
Atlanta	5,222	0.518	1,048	0.201
New Orleans	4,646	0.545	1,418	0.305
Louisville	4,561	0.592	1,281	0.281
Cincinnati	3,783	0.556	872	0.231
Houston	3,737	0.524	1,323	0.354
Birmingham	3,470	0.582	1,141	0.329
Indianapolis	3,156	0.599	1,061	0.336
Denver	2,503	0.515	523	0.209
Des Moines	1,770	0.462	343	0.194
Akron	1,637	0.477	437	0.267
San Francisco	1,433	0.588	380	0.265
Duluth	1,391	0.217	87	0.063
Gary	1,316	0.582	541	0.411
Northern CA	1,263	0.604	409	0.324
Charleston	1,150	0.643	340	0.296
Mobile	1,123	0.601	357	0.318
Baton Rouge	1,107	0.507	215	0.194
San Diego	845	0.541	196	0.232
Buffalo	734	0.595	260	0.354
Monroe	728	0.558	159	0.218
Columbia	657	0.665	233	0.355
Little Rock	596	0.574	212	0.356

Notes: This table describes the results of linking NAACP records to the 1930 full-count census. It displays the overall linking rate and branch-specific information for the 30 branches with the most records. “Num. rows” denotes the total number of NAACP records in each city, “row linking rate” denotes the proportion of those rows that were successfully linked to a census record, “num. unique links” denotes the number of individuals in the census identified among NAACP records from that city, and “unique linking rate” denotes the number of unique individuals in the census divided by the total number of rows.

Overall, we successfully link 109,622, or 43.3% of eligible records from the ATS lists to 100,911 draft cards.

B.3 Linking draft cards to VAMI

The Veterans Administration Master Index (VAMI) contains records for veterans who served in World War I and who made (or whose descendants made) pension or benefits claims from the Veterans Administration between 1917 and 1940. It does not include the race of the veteran; however, it does have their exact date of birth and residence place. We first use exact name and date of birth to merge the VAMI data with the Berkeley Unified Numident Mortality Database, which has race information, but with very poor coverage for these birth cohorts. We match 127,099 individuals, which we use to drop 25,640 non-Black individuals, leaving 3,202,013 VAMI candidates for linking to a draft card.

We attempt to link the two datasets using various combinations of name, birth date, county, and state. When the set of linking variables does not include exact birth date, we enforce that candidate links must have a difference in birth year of no more than 2 years. We do *not* require that a card be uniquely linked to a VAMI record, since we use the existence of *any* link as a source of information about whether an individual was a veteran. However, in practice, 98.6% of linked cards are linked to a unique VAMI record.

Overall, we successfully link 120,412, or 13.0% of cards to VAMI. Note that we would not expect to link anyone who completed a draft card but did not join the military.

B.4 Linking draft cards to the census

To link the draft cards to the 1930 census, we first restrict the sample of cards to those from individuals born between 1880 and 1900; belong to boards for which we are able to obtain the total number of registrants and can identify the typical position of the order and serial number; and have non-missing serial number, birth year, and birth state. This leaves 825,571 cards. Candidates to be linked to a card from the 1930 census are the 1,621,374 Black men born between 1880 and 1900, inclusive.

Following ABE, we block on birth state, first initial, and last initial, and drop pairs with a birth year difference of more than five years. We restrict candidate links to pairs where the Jaro-Winkler distance between last names is less than 0.15 and either (1) the Jaro-Winkler distance between first names is less than 0.15, (2) either of the first names is an initial, or (3) the standardized first names (accounting for nicknames and common misspellings) match exactly.

Our baseline linking method is the standard ABE procedure, i.e., we drop any pairs with a birth year difference more than x years greater than the minimum birth year difference, and keep only links where each card is linked to exactly one census record and each census record is linked to exactly one card. We use the two thresholds suggested by ABE, $x = 0$ and $x = 2$, corresponding to less conservative and more conservative procedures. We drop any links with birth years more than two years apart. This constitutes the “standard” ABE procedure and results in a linking rate of 24.8% for the $x = 0$ threshold and 12.5% for $x = 2$.

In robustness analyses presented in Table A3, we also modify the ABE procedure by constructing tie-breaking rules as follows:

- *Middle initial*: A card is linked to exactly one census row where the card and census row both have non-missing middle initials that agree, and the census row is likewise uniquely linked to that card.

Table B3: Cards to Census Linking Rates by Method

Link type	$x = 0$		$x = 2$	
	Num.	Prop.	Num.	Prop.
Standard	204,923	0.248	102,819	0.125
Middle initial tie-breaker	210,701	0.255	117,392	0.142
Marital status tie-breaker	239,402	0.290	134,565	0.163
Middle initial + marital	242,981	0.294	146,208	0.177
Veteran status tie-breaker	227,962	0.276	126,688	0.153
County tie-breaker	224,623	0.272	159,629	0.193
All tie-breakers	260,821	0.316	196,881	0.238

Notes: This table describes the results of linking draft registration cards to the 1930 full-count census. The number of linked cards for the various tie-breaking methods include links made according to the standard method. See the text for a description of link types. “Num.” denotes the total number of cards linked using each method, and “prop.” denotes the proportion of candidate cards that were successfully linked using each method.

- *Marital status:* A card is linked to exactly one census row where the card and census row both indicate that the person was either married or unmarried before 1917, and the census row is likewise uniquely linked to that card. For the cards, marital status is measured contemporaneously; for the 1930 census, we use birth year combined with age of first marriage to determine whether the individual was married before 1917.
- *Veteran status:* A card is linked to exactly one census row where the card and census row both indicate that the person is either a veteran or non-veteran, and the census row is likewise uniquely linked to that card. Information on veteran status for the cards is derived from whether the card is linked to the ATS lists or to VAMI, and information on veteran status for the census is derived directly from the census data.
- *County:* A card is linked to exactly one census row where the card and census row are both from the same county, and the census row is likewise uniquely linked to that card. The county in the cards refers to the individual’s residence in 1917, and the county in the census refers to the individual’s residence in 1930.

Table B3 shows the linking rates using these methods.

B.5 Linking AANB/AABD to draft cards

We combine two compendia of Black community leaders – the African American National Biography (AANB) and the ProQuest African American Biographical Database (AABD) – and attempt to link individuals in these databases to draft cards. The candidate AANB/AABD records to be linked, if they have non-missing birth year information, must have birth years between 1880 and 1900. They additionally must have either non-missing birth state or birth year. This leaves 5,072 candidate AANB/AABD records for linking; 94.0% have non-missing birth state and 65.1% have non-missing birth year.

We attempt to link the two datasets using various combinations of name, birth date, and birth state. When the set of linking variables does not include birth year, but the variable is non-missing, we enforce that candidate links must have a difference in birth year of no more than three years.

We additionally require that middle initials and birth state, when non-missing, do not conflict. Finally, we require that for each linking method, links are unique: one card can be linked with at most one AANB/AABD record and vice versa. Overall, we successfully link 1,415, or 27.9% of AANB/AABD entries to a draft card.

B.6 Linking officer candidates to NAACP rosters and AANB/AABD

The data on officer candidates contains contemporaneous location (as of 1917) for 820 individuals and birth state for 711 individuals. We attempt to link the 848 people with non-missing information for one or both of these fields to NAACP rosters and the AANB/AABD databases.

To identify NAACP membership, we first try to link the 820 people with non-missing location directly to the NAACP rosters using first name, last name, and location.^{B3} We successfully identify 93 individuals, or 11.3%, in the NAACP records in this way. Then, we try to link the 711 people with non-missing birth state to the 1930 census using first name, last name, and birth state. We successfully link 302, or 42.5% of individuals to the 1930 census. Of these, 65 are linked to NAACP records. Combining these two methods leaves 135 officer candidates, or 15.9% of those eligible to be linked, whom we identify as NAACP members.

Given the much smaller number of AANB/AABD entries, we hand-link these databases to officer candidates using all available name and birth information. In total, we link 132 officer candidates to an AANB or AABD entry, comprising 15.5% of candidates with non-missing location information.

^{B3}Specifically, we require that the NAACP roster city appear either in the individual's address or in their residence location.