Racial Discrimination and the Social Contract: Black WWII Volunteer Enlistment*

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Abstract

Modern states rest on the notion of the *social contract*, namely the idea that citizens obtain political and civil rights in exchange for obligations towards the state. When the state fails to deliver, citizens can withdraw their cooperation in order to enforce the social contract. Does this happen in practice? To answer this question, we focus on the historical U.S. context, where African Americans were disenfranchised by highly discriminatory policies. We ask if, in response to such policies, African Americans were less willing to enlist than the enfranchised white Americans during World War II. Using weekly enlistment data, and implementing a difference-in-differences estimation, we document that white volunteer enlistment rates dramatically increased immediately after the surprise Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, while black volunteer enlistment rates experienced a more moderate increase. At the same time, no such gap exists for draft enlistment, suggesting that our findings are not due to barriers preventing blacks from serving in the military. We corroborate our interpretation by documenting that differences in the opportunity cost of volunteering between blacks and whites are unlikely to explain our results, and by showing that the gap in black-white volunteer enlistment is driven by counties with more discrimination against blacks.

Keywords: Disenfranchisement, War, Race, Social contract
JEL: D72, J15, N92, P16

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1 Introduction

> *"Should I sacrifice my life to live half American? ... Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow?... Is the kind of America I know worth defending?" James G. Thompson, 26-years-old African American man, wrote in a letter published in the Pittsburgh Courier in January 31, 1942.*

To explain the origin of government and the obligations of citizens, Western scholars and philosophers have long posited the notion of a *social contract*, where individuals consent to surrender some of their freedoms and submit to the authority of the state in exchange for protection of their remaining rights. In principle, citizens obtain civil and political rights in exchange for obligations to the state, such as paying taxes or military conscription, and can withdraw their cooperation if the government fails to deliver (Locke, 1690 and Rousseau, 1762). In practice, for the social contract to bind, two things need to be true. First, citizens need to exercise their option to not cooperate if they are disenfranchised. Second, the government needs to respond to such non-cooperation. Somewhat surprisingly, there is relatively little empirical evidence on either phenomenon beyond case studies.[1]

Our paper aims to address the first question by providing novel and rigorous empirical evidence in the historical U.S. context, where black Americans were disenfranchised by highly discriminatory Jim Crow policies. We ask a straightforward question: were the disenfranchised black Americans less willing to enlist than the enfranchised white Americans?

We focus on volunteer enlistment right before and after the surprise attack by Japan

[1] A well-known example of citizens exercising their option to not cooperate is the American Revolution, where one of the maxims was "no taxation without representation". Tax evasion represents a less drastic form of non-cooperation.

on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. For Americans, this episode transformed WWII from a war about foreign lands to one about the defense of their own nation. Thus, the event provides a natural experiment to examine the differential response between black and white Americans to a call to defend the United States. Anecdotal accounts portray great ambivalence on the part of the black community. On the one hand, those such as Langston Hughes – an influential African American poet and social activist – wrote "..You tell me that Hitler / Is a mighty bad man / I guess he took lessons from the Ku Klux Klan [...] I ask you this question / Cause I want to know / How long I got to fight / BOTH HITLER — AND JIM CROW."[2] A sense that the U.S. government had violated the social contract was apparent in the discourse. For example, George Schuyler, columnist for the Pittsburgh Courier, asked "Why should Negroes fight for democracy abroad when they are refused democracy in every American activity except tax paying?"

On the other hand, many in the black community felt that black involvement in WWII complemented the fight against racism at home. This view was famously espoused in the Double V campaign: victories over enemies from without and from within. On February 7, 1942 – two months after the Pearl Harbor attack – the Pittsburgh Courier published on its front page "Democracy at Home and Abroad" and in the accompanying article, emphasized "WE HAVE A STAKE IN THIS FIGHT ... WE ARE AMERICANS TOO!" Black soldiers who fought during WWII were often highly decorated. For example, the Tuskegee Airmen, an all black unit, were awarded over 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses and flew more than 150,000 sorties over two years. The 761st Tank Battalion, known as the "Black Panthers", saved the city of Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge, and earned four campaign ribbons, 11 Silver Stars, 69 Bronze Stars, and around 300 Purple Hearts, as well as the Presidential Unit Citation

[2]Hughes (1943).

for exceptional heroism in action.

Our empirical analysis captures the net of the various forces at play during this period. We use weekly data within a sixteen-week window to compare volunteer enlistment rates right before and after Pearl Harbor between blacks and whites. The granularity of the data and the short event window allow us to provide reasonably sharp identification, avoiding the confounding influences of many other events that occurred earlier and later. We find that volunteer rates increase dramatically immediately after the surprise Pearl Harbor attack for whites, but only moderately for blacks. These results are robust to a large set of controls, such as county, week, and state by year fixed effects. In our most stringent specification, we also verify that results are unchanged when including interactions between week and county fixed effects. The magnitude of our estimates is large. According to our most preferred specification, black men were 16.8 percentage points less likely to volunteer, relative to whites, in the 8 weeks prior to Pearl Harbor, and this gap rose by almost 70% – up to almost 30 percentage points – during the 8 weeks after the attack.

These findings are consistent with the notion that blacks were less willing to defend a nation that had violated the "social contract", and where African Americans had few (if any) civil and political rights. Another, complementary interpretation of our results is that the history of political, social, and economic discrimination reduced blacks' sense of self-efficacy, and discouraged their political and civil engagement. This mechanism is consistent with a branch of the political psychology literature (see, for instance, Komisarchik et al. 2019, and Oskooii 2016, 2018).

The main alternative explanation to our supply-side interpretation is a demand-side mechanism. Specifically, the U.S. military was highly discriminatory at the time, and many accounts emphasize its reluctance to enlist black soldiers. Similarly, because the military required segregated units and living quarters, the low black enlistment rate

may be driven by the relatively lower supply of housing and training facilities for black soldiers. To investigate this alternative, we examine draft enlistment rates. Contrary to our results for volunteers, we find no difference in enlistment rates between blacks and whites either before or after Pearl Harbor. Draftees were subject to the same housing and training constraints, and faced the same discrimination from the U.S. military. Moreover, the military had more control over whom to draft. Thus, these results weigh against the demand-side alternative. We also conduct a number of sensitivity checks, discussed in detail below, to ensure the robustness of our results to omitted variables.

In the second part of the paper, we enrich the analysis by examining heterogeneous treatment effects. First, we divide enlisted men according to the degree of anti-black discrimination prevailing in their county of origin between the end of the nineteenth century and 1940 – the year before the attack on Pearl Harbor. We find that low black volunteer rates were driven by counties with high levels of discrimination. Also in this case, there is no difference for black-white draft enlistment rates across counties with different levels of discrimination. These patterns are consistent with our interpretation that willingness to volunteer was partly determined by the degree of disenfranchisement. Once enlisted, treatment and opportunities faced by black soldiers did not vary depending on their county of origin. Hence, it seems unlikely that our findings were due to the possibility that black men were less willing to enlist because they were placed in different occupations relative to white soldiers.

Second, we find that black volunteers enlisting right after Pearl Harbor were less likely (relative to whites) to have at least a high school degree. This is consistent with the evidence that educated individuals tend to be more politically active and to have a less noisy mapping between politicians' efforts and policy outcomes (Larreguy and Marshall, 2017). In this context, more educated individuals may have been more likely to withdraw their cooperation in response of disenfranchisement. We also document

that, while black volunteers were less likely than whites to be employed in manufacturing upon enlistment before Pearl Harbor, this pattern was reversed during the 8 weeks following the Japanese attack. This is in line with the idea that the Double V campaign was more effective in urban areas and, in particular, in sectors like manufacturing, where unionization was stronger and political engagement was higher (Schickler, 2016). Finally, we show that the negative effect of disenfranchisement after Pearl Harbor was partly reduced by the local presence of NAACP chapters – a proxy for black civil and political engagement (Calderon et al., 2019) – that likely increased black mobilization during WWII.

For the purposes of causal identification, we focus on a narrow window around the attack on Pearl Harbor. Over the longer duration of U.S. WWII involvement, black enlistment rates were not lower than white enlistment rates. In fact, already in the summer of 1942 (well before the U.S. military banned volunteering), black volunteer rates exceeded white volunteer rates. Part of this was likely due to changes in the expression of racial attitudes from the Federal government and military establishment. We provide a speculative discussion in the Conclusions, noting the inefficiency of the highly discriminatory policies, which discouraged patriotic and courageous black Americans from volunteering in the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack.

Our study contributes to different strands of the literature within economics. The first are studies on theoretical models of contractarian governments (Acemoglu and Robinson (2000), Besley (2019), Besley and Persson (2009), Buchanan (1975), Kotlikoff et al. (1988), Wicksell (1986), Weingast (1997, 2005)). In our analysis, we interpret conscription in a way similar to how the model presented in Besley (2019) conceptualizes tax payments.[3] We contribute to this literature by providing, to the best of our knowledge, the first systematic analysis of theories about the social contract.

[3]In the legal literature, there are studies about the Social Contract and public consent to War (e.g., Scarry 1991) and taxes (e.g.,Mangoting et al. 2015).

The second branch of the literature comprises studies investigating individual incentives to fight. Closest to our paper, Caprettini et al. (2018) find that support for WWII – measured as volunteering behavior, medals won during the war, and purchases of liberty bonds – was stronger in counties that received more generous welfare spending during the New Deal. Fouka et al. (2020) finds that WWII German-American enlistment rates were lower in U.S. states with higher anti-German sentiment during WWI. Campante and Yanagizawa-Drott (2018)provide evidence that the tendency to fight partly transmitted from father to son. Hall et al. (2019) document that white slave owners were more likely to fight for Confederacy during the Civil War. Lyall (2016) argues that inclusive and equal regimes have lower desertion rates. Our paper complements these works by exploring the effects of disenfranchisement – one of the most extreme instances in which a government breaks the social contract – on citizens' willingness to cooperate precisely when their contribution is most needed, i.e. during war-times.

Finally, our paper complements recent works on the effects of wars on race relations and social cohesion. Mazumder (2019) finds that European immigrants who fought in WWI were more likely to assimilate into the American society after the War. Similarly, Schindler and Westcott (2017) and Indacochea (2019) document that racial integration of the Army during, respectively, WWII and the Korean War had a positive, long-lasting impact on race relations in the U.S., and induced white veterans to interact more with African Americans once the War was over. We complement these studies by focusing on the opposite causal chain, namely how race relations – racial discrimination and disenfranchisement in particular – influence individuals' willingness to fight for their own country.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses the historical background. Section 3 presents the empirical strategy. Section 4 describes the data. Section 5

presents the results and explores the mechanisms. Section 6 concludes.

2 Background

2.1 Pearl Harbor

The Japanese conducted a surprise military strike against the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii, at 7:48am on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941. The attack happened without a declaration of war and without explicit warning, amidst ongoing peace negotiations. Japan declared war on the United States later that day. The U.S. Congress declared war and formally entered World War II the next day.

2,403 Americans were killed and 1,178 others were wounded. 188 U.S. aircraft were destroyed. The naval fleet sustained significant damage, although some of it was temporary. For example, of the eight U.S. Navy battleships that were damaged or sunk, all but one were later raised and six were returned to service in the war. Important base infrastructure such as the power station, dry dock, shipyard, fuel storage facilities and submarine piers were untouched.

The attack was immediately reported by American news outlets. Pearl Harbor transformed America's involvement in WWII from one that was relatively detached, about abstract values such as democracy versus Fascism in distant foreign lands, into an immediate and urgent defense of the United States. Pearl Harbor became a rallying point for the war effort, and was used in American propaganda throughout the war. For instance, a well-known battle cries included "... we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain..." and "Remember December 7th!". The Japanese conducted additional and highly damaging strikes against the U.S. pacific fleet in the following days, adding to a sense of a nation under attack in the United States.

2.2 Racial Discrimination in the 1930s and 1940s

When the U.S. entered WWII, African Americans had very limited civil and political liberties, due to both formal and informal discrimination that severely restricted their political, economic, and social opportunities relative to the white population. Starting from the late 1890s, many southern states passed laws intended to disenfranchise the black population (Woodward, 2002, p. 83). As discussed in Naidu (2012) and Cascio and Washington (2014) among others, these changes significantly reduced the number of black voters. For example, in Louisiana, the number of black registered voters decreased from approximately 130,000 in 1896 to 1,342 by 1904. In Mississippi, less than 9,000 out of 147,000 voting age blacks were registered to vote. In Georgia, only four percent of all black males were registered to vote (Keyssar, 2000, loc. 2695).

The black population faced restrictions such as the complete segregation of whites and non-whites in all facilities (e.g., restaurants, schools, water fountains, buses), with facilities provided to non-whites being of lower quality relative to those provided to whites. Many states practiced strict neighborhood segregation, where public services such as sewers and electricity ended at the boundaries of the white neighborhoods. In other places, particularly urban areas, there was segregation even within buildings (e.g., across floors) (Packard, 2003, p. 102-103). Miscegenation – i.e., interracial marriages – and sometimes even non-marital sexual relationships were made illegal (Packard, 2003, p. 99). Discrimination was often "enforced" informally by organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan. Non-whites seen as violating white supremacy were regularly harassed, and sometimes murdered. Between 1882 and 1968, approximately 3,446 African Americans were lynched (TuskegeeInstitute, 2010).

Moreover, blacks had to attend – *de jure* or *de facto* – separate (and unequal) schools, which were severely under-funded and were responsible for the large racial gap in educational attainment (Margo, 1990; Collins and Margo, 2006). Partly because of

worse educational opportunities and partly because of rampant labor market discrimination, blacks earned much less than whites.[4] Black men and women were shut out of most non-menial jobs (Sharfstein, 2011, p. 255). Sundstrom (1994) shows that the large differences in black and white occupational choices were driven in part by social norms that rejected black workers as supervisors over white workers.[5]

There was substantial geographical variation in the degree of discrimination. But racism was everywhere, and not confined to the South. For example, the Ku Klux Klan was based in Indiana during the early 20th Century and had large memberships in Maine and Oregon (Packard, 2003, p. 127). California, which had introduced laws to restrict property ownership of Asians during the 19th Century, extended them to include other non-white races such as black (Packard, 2003, p. 100). When Woodrow Wilson became president, he segregated the District of Columbia's federal agencies, which had been integrated for the previous fifty years (Packard, 2003, p. 123). Many schools in Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey were completely segregated, even though it was *de jure* illegal. Similarly, *de facto* residential segregation was commonly enforced in most northern and western cities by white residents (Shertzer and Walsh, 2019). Between 1913 and 1948, 30 out of the then 48 states enforced anti-miscegenation (mixed-race marriage) laws (Vile, 2003).

[4]Margo (1990) discusses the striking stability of the black-to-white earnings ratio from 1900 to 1940 and the potential causes of these gaps, with African American men earning between 45%-48% the income of white American men over this entire period. Also see, for example, Carruthers and Wanamaker (2017b), Collins and Margo (2011) and Card and Krueger (1992). Wright (2013) discusses how the Civil Rights movement undid many of the barriers to black economic success that existed during our time period and led to large economic gains for black men and women. Returns to skin color are analyzed and discussed in more depth in Bodenhorn (2015).

[5]There was also significant variation in the formal laws which affected the rights and opportunities facing blacks within states, as well as in the informal enforcement of state or federal laws. For example, Carruthers and Wanamaker (2013) document substantial variation in the relative quality of schooling for black students across counties. Keyssar (2000, loc. 3052) notes that the economic qualifications for voting varied across municipalities in New York.

2.3 U.S. Military

2.3.1 African American Soldiers

Race relations within the U.S. military mirrored those of the nation. Black and white soldiers were segregated until 1948. During WWII, they had separate canteens, barracks, nurses and even blood banks. Black soldiers served under black or white officers, whereas white soldiers served under white officers only. Enlisted black men mostly served in non-combat units. The marines had no black enlisted men in combat infantry. The Navy Seabees and the United States Air Force had very few, such as the Tuskegee Airmen. The army had only five African-American officers.[6]

2.3.2 Draft and Volunteer Enlistment

Our main analysis focuses on the weeks right before and right after Pearl Harbor, when both volunteer enlistment and draft enlistment took place, and when there was no change in the policies regarding military recruitment or the manner that it was implemented. For brevity, this discussion focuses on the recruiting policies for draftees and volunteers within this narrow time frame.

President Roosevelt's signing of the Selective Training and Service Act (STSA) on September 16, 1940, began the first peacetime draft in the United States. It required the registration of all men between 21 and 35, with selection for one year's service by a national lottery. This act became the basis for WWII conscription programs, but was relatively limited in scale before Pearl Harbor. The act set a cap of 900,000 men to be in training at any given time, and limited military service to 12 months unless Congress deemed it necessary to extend such service in the interest of national defense. The STSA also assigned state governors the task of dividing states into local board

[6]For a detailed description of race relations and black enlistment in WWII see Lee (2000), available at this link.

areas. While the exact date in which local boards were introduced is not available for all states, by the summer of 1941 the Selective Service System moved away from a national lottery to administrative selection by its more than 6,000 local boards. The WWII draft operated from 1940 until 1946 when further inductions were suspended.

After Pearl Harbor, the STSA extended the term of service to the duration of the war plus six months, and expanded the ages required to register to all men 18 to 64 years of age.[7] An important feature of military enlistment is that volunteers were allowed until December 5, 1942, when an executive ordered banned volunteers in order to have full control of the labor force. The criteria for accepting volunteers (e.g., health test) were similar for draftees. Once inducted, an enlisted man's occupation in the military depended on factors such as education and occupation prior to enlistment (and race). It did not instead depend on either volunteer status or the county where the soldier was coming from. This is an important feature to keep in mind for our analysis later, when we compare enlistment of volunteers to that of draftees.

During WWII, 49 million men were registered and almost 10 million of them, including volunteers and draftees, were inducted.

2.4 Contemporary Discussion about Black Involvement in WWII

At the time of WWII, a heated debate was taking place within the black community concerning blacks' involvement in the war. On the one hand, there was much disappointment due to the lack of social progress following WWI, when 350,000 African American men enlisted, and there was hope that white Americans would observe the value and patriotism of their compatriots and reduce racial discrimination afterwards. An example of such disillusionment can be seen in Langston Hughes's "The Colored

[7]These changes became effective on December 20, 1941, when U.S. Congress passed Public Law No.360.

Soldier" (1919).[8]

> ..We were just two colored boys, brown and black,
> Who joined up to fight for the U.S.A...
> And that our dark blood would wipe away the stain
> Of prejudice, and hate, and the false color line—
> And give us the rights that are yours and mine.
> They told us America would know no black or white:
> So we marched to the front, happy to fight.

The lack of abatement in discrimination led to public outcries from the black community, which motivated African Americans' reluctance to volunteer during WWII. Prior to Pearl Harbor, The New York Amsterdam (1937) wrote "[Nazis' plan to segregate Jews on German railways was] taking a leaf from United States Jim Crow practices ." Earlier, in 1935, it wrote "If the Swastika is an emblem of racial oppression, the Stars and Stripes are equally so....". "Why should Negroes fight for democracy abroad when they are refused democracy in every American activity except tax paying?" wrote George Schuyler, columnist for the Pittsburgh Courier. "Why should I shed my blood. . . for the whole Jim Crow, Negro-hating South, for the low- paid, dirty jobs for which Negroes have to fight, for the few dollars of relief and insults, discrimination, police brutality, and perpetual poverty to which Negroes are condemned even in the more liberal North?" wrote African American writer , C. L. R. James in 1939.

On the other hand, after Pearl Harbor, African American leaders started emphasizing the complementarity of fighting for the U.S. in WWII and the fight against discrimination at home. This was best captured in the Double V campaign. On January 31, 1942, the Pittsburgh Courier, one of the most read black newspapers at the

[8]Langston Hughes, The Colored Soldier (1919) in: The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes pp. 147-48 (A. Rampersad ed. 1995).

time, published a letter to the editor from James G. Thompson: "Being an American of dark complexion and some 26 years, these questions flash through my mind: 'Should I sacrifice my life to live half American?' 'Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow?' 'Would it be demanding too much to demand full citizenship rights in exchange for the sacrificing of my life?' 'Is the kind of America I know worth defending?' 'Will America be a true and pure democracy after this war?' 'Will colored Americans suffer still the indignities that have been heaped upon them in the past?' These and other questions need answering." Then he proposed what he called "the double V V for a double victory ... The V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery, and tyranny. If this V sign means that to those now engaged in this great conflict, then let we colored Americans adopt the double V V for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory for our enemies from within. For surely those who perpetuate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the Axis forces."

On February 7, 1942, two months after the Pearl Harbor attack, the Courier published on its front page an insignia announcing "Democracy – Double Victory, at Home – Abroad". The following week, the paper announced that it had published the insignia "to test the response and popularity of such a slogan with our readers. The response has been overwhelming." Henceforth, "this slogan represents the true battle cry of colored America." As the editors concluded, "we have adopted the Double 'V' war cry — victory over our enemies on the battlefields abroad. Thus in our fight for freedom we wage a two-pronged attack against our enslavers at home and those abroad who would enslave us. WE HAVE A STAKE IN THIS FIGHT ... WE ARE AMERICANS TOO!" The Double V Campaign ran weekly at least until the summer of 1942. Since then, most black newspapers' involvement with the campaign declined, but their initial

excitement was key to spread the message among black communities throughout the country (Washburn, 1986). For instance, to promote patriotism, the Courier included an American flag with every subscription and encouraged its readers to buy war bonds. Historian Clarence Taylor surmises that "Although the Courier could not claim any concrete accomplishments, the Double V campaign helped provide a voice to Americans who wanted to protest racial discrimination and contribute to the war effort."

3 Empirical Strategy

We implement a difference-in-differences strategy to examine whether disenfranchisement affected black volunteer rates in the military. We compare volunteer rates of black men, who were (more) disenfranchised, to those of white men, who were not; before and after Pearl Harbor.[9] Intuitively, our strategy exploits the fact that the unanticipated surprise military strike transformed WWII into a war of national defense, allowing us to examine the differential response of black – versus white – volunteer rates to this event. The baseline specification is the following:

$$enlist_{ijt} = \alpha + \beta PearlHarbor_t \times Black_{ij} + \Gamma X_{ijt} + \gamma_i + \gamma_j + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{ijt}. \quad (1)$$

The dependent variable, $enlist_{ijt}$, is the share of eligible men of race i in county j who enlisted as volunteers in the U.S. military during week t. Since U.S. Congress increased the registration age range on December 20th of 1941, we adjust the denominator (i.e. the population eligible for inductment) accordingly.[10] Throughout our analysis, we

[9] We restrict attention to blacks and whites, who, taken together, account for more than 93% of all individuals in the enlistment dataset (see Section 4).

[10] In particular, until that date, corresponding to weeks -8 to +1 in our analysis, individuals of age 21 to 35 were eligible for inductment. Then, following the passage of Public Law No.360, this age range was expanded to 18-64.

multiply the enlistment share, $enlist_{ijt}$, by 100,000 to ease the interpretation of results.[11] Equation (1) models the enlistment share as a function of: a dummy equal to 1 for weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, $PearlHarbor_t$, a dummy equal to 1 if group i is black, $Black_{ij}$, and the interaction between the two; race fixed effects, γ_i; county fixed effects, γ_j; and, week fixed effect, δ_t. X_{ijt} is a vector of additional controls, which we discuss later when they become relevant and, in our most stringent specification, includes week by county fixed effects. Regressions are weighted by the race-specific population of eligible men in each county to be representative, and standard errors are clustered at the county level.

The effects of disenfranchisement on volunteering behavior are identified exclusively from the interaction term. All time invariant differences across races or across counties are absorbed by race and county fixed effects. Moreover, any time-varying trend that affects both races and all counties in the same way is controlled for by the inclusion of week fixed effects. The first set of fixed effects rules out the possibility that blacks had different opportunities outside or within the military due to discriminatory practices/culture, as long as such different opportunities do not vary over time. Similarly, week fixed effects deal with the possibility that Pearl Harbor affected the salience of the war for all Americans. The main caveat to our strategy is that an omitted factor that influenced volunteer enlistment also coincided with the attack on Pearl Harbor and differentially affected black and white men. To minimize this concern, we exploit the granularity of our data, focusing on enlistment at the weekly level, and narrow the time window to be only eight weeks before and after Pearl Harbor, when the government had not yet had time to adapt its recruiting policies or announce other important changes. We discuss potential alternative mechanisms and identification concerns – as well as the strategies implemented to deal with them – after presenting the main results.

[11] Clearly, this does not affect either the interpretation or the statistical significance of our results.

4 Data

Our main source of data is the World War II Army Enlistment Records (NARA-AAD), 1938-1946 (NARA, 2002). This dataset, also used in Caprettini et al. (2018) and Fouka et al. (2020) among others, includes 9,039,840 individual service records of American soldiers who served in the Army from 1938 to 1946, and were digitized by the National Archives. The individual level data include information about the date of induction, birth year, education, occupation, marital status, race, citizenship, volunteer status, branch, and rank at the time of induction.[12]

Restricting attention to the time window considered in our analysis, and to black and white soldiers only, Table 1 presents the summary statistics for the enlistment data of 382,092 individuals, reporting them for the full sample in Panel A, and for black and white soldiers in Panels B and C respectively.[13] 7%, or 26,432, of the enlisted individuals were blacks, whereas 93%, or 355,660, were whites.[14] The table reveals that 39% were volunteers, while 61% were drafted. On average, half of the enlisted individuals had at least a high school degree, 10% (resp. 55%) were employed in agriculture (resp. manufacturing) before serving in the Army, and 95% were in private grade (the lowest possible position in the military). Turning to the statistics by race, we note that 41% of whites and 10% of blacks in our dataset were enlisted as volunteers. Not surprisingly, and reflecting unequal access to education, only 20% of black soldiers had at least a high school degree, compared to 53% of whites. Finally, consistent with widespread discrimination in the Army, more than 99% of blacks were enrolled in private grade, as

[12]The records report the effective date of induction. However, there might be a time gap between the day in which individuals show up to volunteer and their effective enrollment.

[13]Restricting attention to the 8 weeks before and after Pearl Harbor, but including soldiers of all races increases the number of observations to 392,875. See Table A1 for the summary statistics reported for the full NARA dataset.

[14]For a handful of individuals, information on high school degree and age is missing – this explains why the number of observations is slightly lower for these variables.

opposed to 94% of whites. Median age was 23 for both races.[15]

Table 1: Summary Statistics

	Mean	St. Dev	Median	Min	Max	Obs
Panel A. Full sample						
Volunteers	0.390	0.490	0	0	1	382,092
Draftees	0.610	0.490	1	0	1	382,092
Blacks	0.0700	0.250	0	0	1	382,092
Whites	0.930	0.250	1	0	1	382,092
At Least High School Degree	0.500	0.500	1	0	1	382,088
In Agriculture	0.100	0.300	0	0	1	382,092
In Manufacturing	0.550	0.500	1	0	1	382,092
In Private Grade	0.950	0.230	1	0	1	382,092
Age	23.78	3.170	23	13	70	381,937
Panel B. Blacks						
Volunteers	0.100	0.300	0	0	1	26,432
Draftees	0.900	0.300	1	0	1	26,432
At Least High School Degree	0.200	0.400	0	0	1	26,431
In Agriculture	0.140	0.350	0	0	1	26,432
In Manufacture	0.580	0.490	1	0	1	26,432
In Private Grade	0.990	0.110	1	0	1	26,432
Age	23.70	3	23	13	53	26,422
Panel C. Whites						
Volunteers	0.410	0.490	0	0	1	355,660
Draftees	0.590	0.490	1	0	1	355,660
At Least High School Degree	0.530	0.500	1	0	1	355,657
In Agriculture	0.100	0.300	0	0	1	355,660
In Manufacture	0.550	0.500	1	0	1	355,660
In Private Grade	0.940	0.230	1	0	1	355,660
Age	23.79	3.180	23	13	70	355,515

We combine data on volunteering with the 1940 full count U.S. Census of population to construct the number of eligible men for each race in each county (Ruggles et al., 2020). This is then used as the denominator for calculating our dependent variable,

[15]The minimum and the maximum ages are unreasonably low and high respectively due to mistakes in the original data. There are 187 individuals whose age is either above 64 or below 15. Reassuringly, all our results are robust to excluding them from the analysis.

the share of enlisted men for each race in each county in each week. We also use the 1940 U.S. Census to construct a number of county controls, which we describe during our analysis as we introduce them.

5 Results

5.1 Volunteers

We begin with a visual examination of volunteer enlistment rates by race, before and after Pearl Harbor. Figure 1 plots the number of white and black volunteers, relative to the number of individuals of either race who could have served according to the regulation prevailing in each corresponding week. As mentioned in Section 3, to ease the visualization of the results, we multiply the shares by 100,000. Figure 1 reveals that white volunteer enlistment rates (white dots) were always higher than black ones (black dots), both in the 8 weeks before and in the 8 weeks after Pearl Harbor. In the fourteen days after Pearl Harbor (week 0 and week 1 on the x-axis), white volunteer enlistment rates spiked up, raising by more than 400% relative to the week before the attack. After a drop during week 2, white volunteer enlistment rates rebounded, growing steadily until week 5. Then, they gradually converged to a level lower than the initial spike, but nonetheless significantly higher than that prevailing before Pearl Harbor. These patterns are consistent with anecdotal and historical accounts that describe the rush to volunteer as soon as news of the Pearl Harbor attack spread, as described in Section 2.1.

Black volunteer enlistment rates were negligible prior to Pearl Harbor and, different from whites' ones, did not move during the seven days immediately after the attack (week 0 on the x-axis). Between day 7 and day 14 (week 1 on the x-axis), volunteer rates for blacks increased significantly – though to a lesser extent than for whites. During the

7 weeks after Pearl Harbor, black volunteer enlistment rates followed the same trend as those for whites. However, their level remained significantly lower. One interpretation of these patterns is that the surge in patriotism after Pearl Harbor induced both black and white men to volunteer more, but the enthusiasm of African American soldiers may have been significantly curbed by the history of discrimination that they had experienced.

Figure 1: Volunteer Enlistment by Race

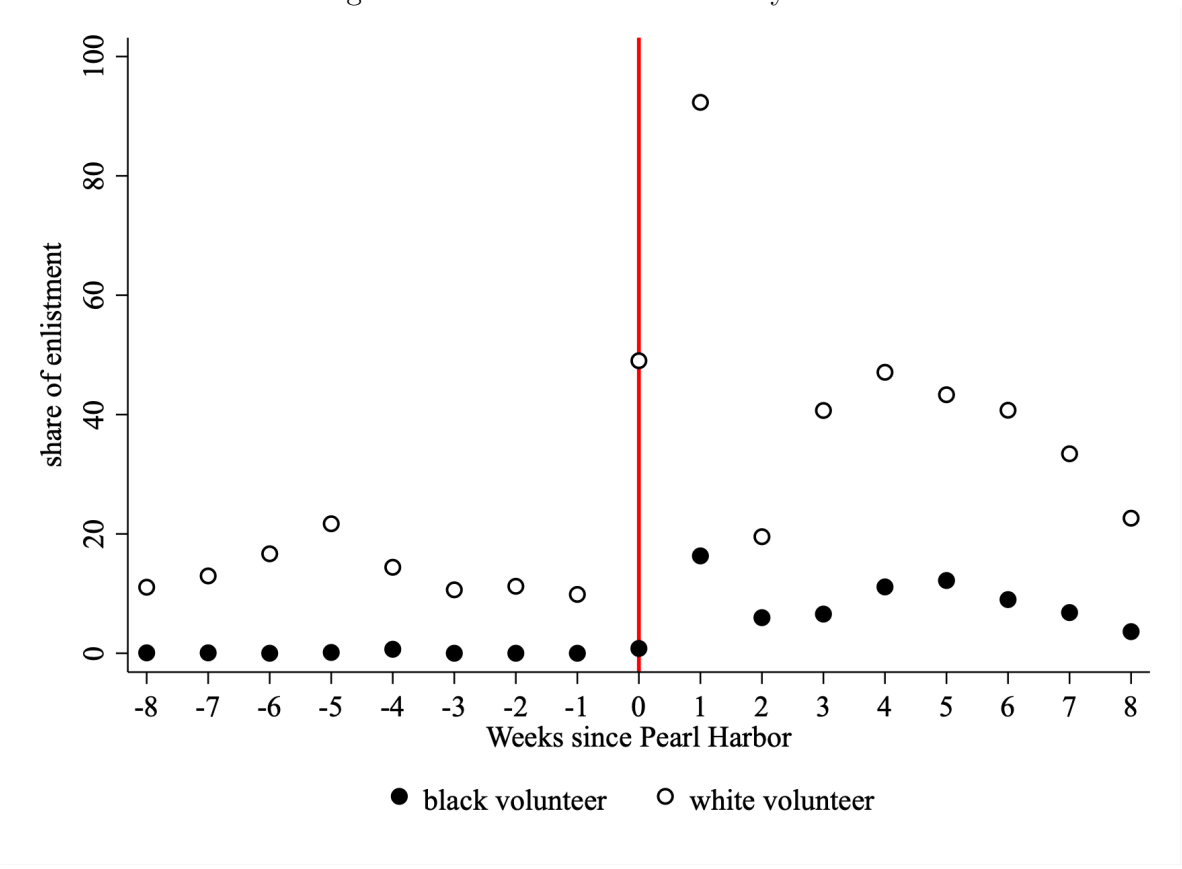


Figure 1 illustrates the variation in our baseline difference-in-differences specification in an intuitive way. We turn to a more formal analysis in Table 2. Here, we estimate the baseline specification presented in equation (1). Column 1 only includes state fixed effects, and reports coefficients on both the black and the post-Pearl Harbor dummies, as well as on their interaction. The dependent variable is the enlistment rate by race and

week, per 100,000 enlistable individuals. Consistent with trends shown in Figure 1, the coefficient on the black dummy indicates that, before the attack on Pearl Harbor, blacks were 13.7 percentage points less likely to volunteer than whites. In line with the rise of patriotism (common to both blacks and whites), the coefficient on the post-Pearl Harbor dummy implies that volunteer enlistment rates rose by almost 25 percentage points, relative to their pre-attack levels. Finally, and most importantly for our purposes, the interaction term reflects that, after Pearl Harbor, blacks became significantly less likely than whites to volunteer, relative to the their respective behaviors before December 7, 1941.

The sum of the coefficients on the black dummy and on the interaction term shows that blacks were 30 percentage points less likely to volunteer. All our estimates are highly statistically significant. They are also quantitatively large: given a sample mean of 26.7 (per 100,000 eligible individuals), the coefficient on the interaction term indicates that blacks were almost two thirds less likely to volunteer, relative to whites, after the attack. The magnitude of our findings is larger than – but comparable to – that estimated in other works on volunteering behavior during WWII. Fouka et al. (2020) finds that exposure to anti-German language laws during WWI lowered Germans' propensity to volunteer during WWII by 2.6 percentage points, or by 11% relative to cohorts of Germans who were not directly exposed to these laws. Caprettini et al. (2018) document that doubling New Deal expenditures in a county would raise volunteering behavior by 8%. The fact that our estimates are larger than those in both these works is not surprising, given the extreme form of disenfranchisement and discrimination blacks were exposed to for decades.

Subsequent columns of Table 2 explore the robustness of our baseline results to the inclusion of: week and county fixed effects (column 2); week fixed effects and interactions between county fixed effects and the post-Pearl Harbor dummy (column

Table 2: DD Regression: Volunteer

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VARIABLES	Share Volunteers (per 100,000 enlistable individuals)			
Mean dep. variable	26.999			
Black * POST	-16.551***	-16.516***	-11.300***	-11.300***
	(1.010)	(1.018)	(0.986)	(0.986)
Black	-13.724***	-14.418***	-16.872***	-16.872***
	(0.833)	(0.918)	(0.673)	(0.673)
POST	24.871***			
	(0.744)			
Black + Black * POST	-30.275	-30.934	-28.172	-28.172
p value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Observations	94,367	92,106	92,106	82,348
R-squared	0.181	0.417	0.470	0.825
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Week FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE * POST	No	No	Yes	Yes
County FE * Week FE	No	No	No	Yes

Notes: the dependent variable is the share of volunteers per 100,000 enlistable individuals (for each race, county, and week). POST and Black are dummies equal to one for, respectively, weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack and black. Column 1 only includes state fixed effects. Column 2 adds county fixed effects and week fixed effects. Column 3 adds county fixed effects interacted with the POST dummy. Column 4 adds week by county fixed effects. Regressions are weighed by enlistable individuals in 1940. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

3); and, interactions between county and week fixed effects (column 4). In all cases, coefficients remain precisely estimated and quantitatively in line with those reported in column 1.

5.2 Alternative Demand-Side Mechanism

As noted above, we interpret results in Table 2 through a supply-side mechanism: due to protracted and extensive disenfranchisement, African Americans' incentives to enlist

as volunteers after Pearl Harbor were lower than those of whites, who instead never suffered from discrimination, violence, and limited political and civil rights. The main alternative mechanisms to this interpretation is a demand-side channel. Discrimination in the U.S. military at the time was widespread, and anecdotal accounts reveal the reluctance of the military to accept black soldiers, or to build adequate facilities for them (Lee, 2000). On the other hand, historical evidence shows that, at least in certain instances, the military was more willing to exempt white draftees than black draftees (Murray, 1971). These contradictory anecdotal accounts make it difficult to predict how demand-side racism might have influenced black volunteer enlistment.

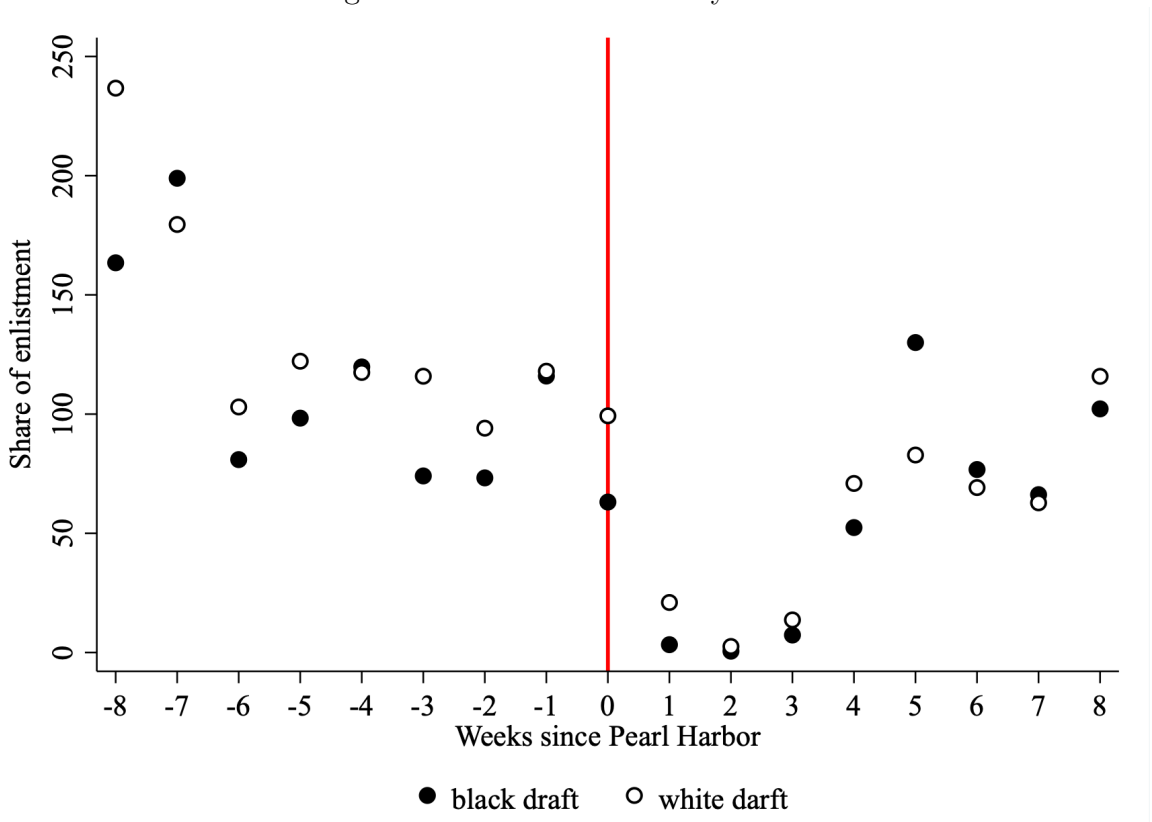
Nevertheless, we can investigate whether these demand-side forces, taken together, are likely to explain the patterns documented in Figure 1 and in Table 2, by focusing on draft enlistment. Since draftees faced a similar degree of discrimination as volunteers, and because the military had even more control over draftees, differential patterns of draft enlistment rates between blacks and whites should capture demand-side racism. Conversely, demand-side explanations would be harder to reconcile with similar patterns in draft enlistment rates for blacks and whites, before and after Pearl Harbor.

Figure 2 plots draft enlistment rates before and after Pearl Harbor, revealing a key difference with the patterns documented in Figure 1 above. Not only draft enlistment rates were similar between black and white men before the Pearl Harbor attack. But also, they did not change differentially afterwards. If anything, blacks were more likely than whites to be drafted in some weeks (e.g. week 5 on the x-axis). This evidence runs counter to the interpretation that our previous findings can be explained by the military rejecting black volunteers or preventing their numbers from growing by limiting the construction of adequate housing facilities. Instead, it is consistent with accounts of the military being more willing to exempt white men from draft service.

Interestingly, draft enlistment rates were very low for both races in the month after

Pearl Harbor. One possible explanation, consistent with historical accounts, is that limited facilities made it difficult for the military to house the dramatic surge in volunteers after Pearl Harbor. This observation might raise the concern that, in light of capacity constraints, the military may have been more willing to induct white volunteers, while turning away black volunteers. However, these capacity constraints were relaxed within a couple of months, precisely when we observe an increase in draftees (from week 4 onwards). Importantly, Figure 1 shows that black volunteer enlistment continued to be lower than white volunteer enlistment even after week 4.

Figure 2: Draft Enlistment by Race



As for volunteers, we present regression results in Table 3, where the dependent variable is the number of drafted individuals (by race), relative to the population that could have been drafted in that specific week. Following the structure of Table 2, column

Table 3: DD Regression: Draft

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VARIABLES	Share Draftees (per 100,000 enlistable individuals)			
Mean dep. variable	94.520			
Black * POST	16.926*	17.249*	13.244	13.244
	(8.768)	(8.850)	(9.144)	(9.145)
Black	-2.429	-4.392	-2.507	-2.507
	(7.833)	(7.841)	(7.999)	(8.000)
POST	-76.919***			
	(5.705)			
Black + Black * POST	14.497	12.857	10.737	10.737
p value	<0.001	<0.001	0.003	0.003
Observations	94,367	92,106	92,106	82,348
R-squared	0.093	0.169	0.217	0.815
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Week FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE * POST	No	No	Yes	Yes
County FE * Week FE	No	No	No	Yes

Notes: the dependent variable is the share of draftees per 100,000 enlistable individuals (for each race, county, and week). POST and Black are dummies equal to one for, respectively, weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack and black. Column 1 only includes state fixed effects. Column 2 adds county fixed effects and week fixed effects. Column 3 adds county fixed effects interacted with the POST dummy. Column 4 adds week by county fixed effects. Regressions are weighed by enlistable individuals in 1940. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

1 includes only state fixed effects, while subsequent columns gradually add further controls. In stark contrast with results for volunteers, after Pearl Harbor, blacks were *more* likely than whites to be drafted, even thought this relationship is not statistically significant at conventional levels in the most stringent specifications (columns 3 and 4).

5.3 Heterogeneous Effects

5.3.1 Discrimination in the County of Origin

In this section, we investigate whether, in line with our preferred interpretation, the black-white volunteer enlistment gap after Pearl Harbor was correlated with the degree of discrimination that black men faced at home. To do so, we construct a principal component measure of political and social discrimination for the county of enlistment, which, for brevity, we denote with PCA.[16] Specifically, to construct the PCA, we focus on the following variables: presence of the KKK from 1915 to 1940 and prevalence of lynchings until 1939; the Democratic vote share in Congressional and Presidential elections between 1900 and 1930; the measures of racial residential segregation and isolation constructed in Logan and Parman (2017).

Appendix Table A2 presents the full list of variables included in the PCA index, with the corresponding source. Here, we briefly discuss the rationale for the inclusion of each of them. First, KKK presence and the number of lynchings represent direct measures of violence perpetuated by whites against blacks. Second, relying on the Democratic vote share over the period 1900-1930 is consistent with historical evidence that, at least until the New Deal, the GOP was the party closer to blacks' interests (Calderon et al., 2019; Moon, 1948; Schickler, 2016). Third, an extensive literature documents that disenfranchisement and discrimination against blacks were often reflected in higher residential segregation (Ananat, 2011; Shertzer and Walsh, 2019), and in inequality of opportunities in education (Carruthers and Wanamaker, 2017a; Margo, 1990) and in the labor markets (Naidu, 2010; Sugrue, 2008).

We then augment our baseline difference-in-differences specification by adding a

[16]This strategy assumes that an individual grew up in the county where he enlisted. While this assumption might not hold, it would introduce bias in our regressions only if these migration patterns changed right after Pearl Harbor – something that, since we consider a horizon of just 8 weeks, seems somewhat unlikely.

triple interaction between the black and the post dummies with the PCA index. We fully saturate our regression, by also including all lower order interaction terms. Results are shown in Table 4, which follows the same structure of Tables 2 and 3, adding more stringent sets of controls from columns 1 to 4. For brevity, we focus on the most stringent specification, reported in column 4, where we control for county and week fixed effects, as well as for the interaction between the two. A high PCA value reflects more discrimination.

In line with our hypothesis, the coefficient on the triple interaction is negative and highly significant. This indicates that, after Pearl Harbor, the black-white enlistment gap increased more in counties where the history of discrimination against blacks was higher. According to our most preferred specification, comparing a county at the 75th percentile of the PCA index with one at the 25th percentile, blacks living in the latter were 4.72 percentage points more likely to volunteer than those living in the former. Considering that the sample mean is 26.9%, this implies that reducing discrimination from that prevailing in a county at the 75th percentile to that in a county at the 25th percentile would have increased blacks' willingness to volunteer by almost 18% – a large effect. In Table 5, we replicate these results focusing on draft enlistment rates. The triple interaction is statistically indistinguishable from zero – a pattern consistent with the randomized nature of the draft lottery during this period.

These result are interesting for several reasons. First, they are consistent with our preferred interpretation that the black-white enlistment gap after Pearl Harbor was, at least partly, driven by the disenfranchisement of blacks. The null effect documented for draftees also suggests that demand-side mechanisms are unlikely to be at play. Second, they rule out several alternative explanations. For example, one may be concerned that lower black enlistment after Pearl Harbor were due to a perception amongst black men that discrimination in the military was more severe than outside the military. This

Table 4: DDD Regression: Volunteer

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VARIABLES	Share Volunteers (per 100,000 enlistable individuals)			
Mean dep. variable	26.699			
PCA * Black * POST	-1.868***	-1.857***	-3.044***	-3.044***
	(0.585)	(0.588)	(0.608)	(0.608)
PCA * Black	-0.026	-1.114*	-0.555	-0.555
	(0.448)	(0.585)	(0.456)	(0.456)
Black * POST	-11.125***	-11.009***	-7.208***	-7.208***
	(1.325)	(1.332)	(1.157)	(1.157)
Black	-15.544***	-14.492***	-16.281***	-16.281***
	(0.743)	(0.854)	(0.652)	(0.652)
Black + Black * POST	-26.669	-25.501	-23.489	-23.489
p value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
PCA * Black * POST + PCA * Black + Black * POST + Black	-28.563	-28.472	-27.088	-27.088
p value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Observations	92,497	90,406	90,406	80,852
R-squared	0.181	0.418	0.470	0.826
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Week FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE * POST	No	No	Yes	Yes
County FE * Week FE	No	No	No	Yes

Notes: the dependent variable is the share of volunteers per 100,000 enlistable individuals (for each race, county, and week). POST and Black are dummies equal to one for, respectively, weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack and black. PCA is the index of discrimination and disenfranchisement described in Section 5.4.1. Column 1 only includes state fixed effects. Column 2 adds county fixed effects and week fixed effects. Column 3 adds county fixed effects interacted with the POST dummy. Column 4 adds week by county fixed effects. Regressions are weighed by enlistable individuals in 1940. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

would imply that black men who faced more discrimination at home were more willing to volunteer. In fact, our findings show that precisely the opposite is true. Similarly,

Table 5: DDD Regression: Draft

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VARIABLES	Share Draftees (per 100,000 enlistable individuals)			
Mean dep. variable	94.520			
PCA * Black * POST	5.700	5.452	0.419	0.419
	(4.990)	(5.017)	(4.105)	(4.106)
PCA * Black	-16.970***	-13.497***	-11.128***	-11.128***
	(4.224)	(4.135)	(3.846)	(3.846)
Black * POST	2.731	2.714	18.531	18.531
	(13.708)	(13.814)	(12.829)	(12.830)
Black	20.569*	15.759	8.316	8.316
	(11.682)	(11.673)	(10.753)	(10.754)
Black + Black * POST	23.3	10.428	26.847	26.847
p value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
PCA * Black * POST + PCA * Black + Black * POST + Black	12.03	18.473	16.138	16.138
p value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Observations	92,497	90,406	90,406	80,852
R-squared	0.096	0.170	0.218	0.824
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Week FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE * POST	No	No	Yes	Yes
County FE * Week FE	No	No	No	Yes

Notes: the dependent variable is the share of draftees per 100,000 enlistable individuals (for each race, county, and week). POST and Black are dummies equal to one for, respectively, weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack and black. PCA is the index of discrimination and disenfranchisement described in Section 5.4.1. Column 1 only includes state fixed effects. Column 2 adds county fixed effects and week fixed effects. Column 3 adds county fixed effects interacted with the POST dummy. Column 4 adds week by county fixed effects. Regressions are weighed by enlistable individuals in 1940. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

one may be concerned that black men were reluctant to volunteer after Pearl Harbor because they had poor job opportunities within the military. This would also imply

that black men from counties with more discrimination were more willing to volunteer. Notably, while a potential concern with results in Table 4 is that the PCA index may be correlated with county-specific factors that affected white and black willingness to volunteer after Pearl Harbor, the inclusion of county by week fixed effects (in column 4) rules out this possibility.

In Appendix Table A3, we perform three additional exercises. First, in column 2, we replicate our most preferred specification (reported in column 1 to ease comparisons), by adding to the county-specific variables used to compute the PCA index also a number of state-level indicators for the presence of: i) poll taxes; ii) literacy tests; iii) miscegenation laws before 1940.[17] As it appears, adding these more formal measures of disenfranchisement leaves our main estimate unchanged. This is consistent with the idea that informal, but coordinated, actions of whites were at least as important as more formal institutions to limit blacks' political, social, and economic participation (Lawson, 1976; Shertzer and Walsh, 2019; Sugrue, 2008). Second, we split the PCA index into its "political" (column 3) and "social" (column 4) components. The former is composed of the Democratic vote share and dummies for the presence of poll taxes, literacy tests, and prohibition of miscegenation, whereas the latter includes all remaining variables mentioned above. Interestingly, the effects seem to be entirely driven by the political component of the PCA. Finally, in the remaining columns of Table A3, we verify that our results are similar when restricting attention to non-southern states (column 5) and when focusing on the U.S. South only (column 6), or when considering only individuals in the age range 21-35 (column 7), who had registered already before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

[17]While poll taxes and literacy test requirements were almost entirely concentrated in southern states, miscegenation laws were more widespread across the entire country (Vile, 2003).

5.3.2 Volunteers' Characteristics

Much of the historical discussion about WWII participation took place amongst the educated black community. Table 6 investigates the characteristics of the volunteers that enlisted, before and after Pearl Harbor. In particular, we re-estimate our baseline differences-in-difference specification (equation (1)), using as dependent variable the share of volunteers (of each race in each week) with a given characteristic, relative to the number of volunteers enlisted. For brevity, we only present results for our most stringent specification, where we include county, week, and county by week fixed effects.

In column 1, the dependent variable is the share of volunteers with at least a high school degree. Our results show that, prior to Pearl Harbor, black volunteers were 18.43 percentage-points less likely to have a high school degree than white volunteers. This gap increased by an additional 16.34 percentage-points after Pearl Harbor. Although these estimates are only statistically significant at the 15% level, their magnitudes are quite large, given that the sample mean for the share of volunteers with at least a high school degree was 61.92%. One interpretation of these findings is that, consistent with recent empirical evidence, educated citizens have higher political participation rates and less noisy mappings between politicians' efforts and outcomes (Larreguy and Marshall, 2017). They are also consistent with the notion that educated blacks were engaged in the discussion about military enlistment and the lack of political and civil rights.

In column 2, we turn to the share of volunteers that were inducted at the private rank – the lowest rank in the Army. The estimates show that, prior to Pearl Harbor, there was no statistically significant difference in the share of private-rank inductees between white and black soldiers, even though the point estimate is negative. After Pearl Harbor, the share of black men inducted as privates increased by 20.14 percentage-points. The estimate is statistically significant at the 10% level. These results are consistent with the findings for education, since educational attainment was a key determinant of the

induction rank.

Next, in column 3, we explore whether black volunteers were more likely to be older (or younger) than white ones. We first define a dummy equal to 1 if an individual's age is below the sample median (23). Then, we define the dependent variable as the share of volunteers who were "young". As it appears, there is no statistically significant difference between black and white volunteers. Although black volunteers were somewhat more likely than whites to be above the age of 23 before Pearl Harbor, this did not change differentially after the attack. Not only the coefficient on the interaction term is imprecisely estimated. But also, its magnitude is small. We also exploit the detailed nature of the NARA dataset, which reports the sector where volunteers were employed before enlisting. In column 4, the dependent variable is the share of volunteers who were employed in the manufacturing sector at the time of enlistment. Interestingly, while black volunteers were less likely to be employed in manufacturing prior to Pearl Harbor, the pattern switched after December 7, 1941. This patter is interesting for two reasons.

First, it suggests that our findings – namely, lower volunteer enlistment rates for blacks relative to whites after Pearl Harbor – are unlikely to be driven by stronger outside options for blacks in the manufacturing sector. As discussed in Boustan (2016) and Sugrue (2014) among others, increased demand for labor in war-related industries pulled a large number of African Americans outside of the South and of agriculture between 1942 and 1945. One potential concern may be that, for this reason – and not because of past exposure to disenfranchisement – blacks were more reluctant than whites to volunteer. This possibility, however, is inconsistent with the estimates in column 4. Second, these results are in line with the idea that the Double V campaign was more effective in urban areas and, in particular, in sectors like manufacturing, where unionization was stronger and political engagement was higher (Schickler, 2016).

Table 6: DD Regression: Different Characteristics

	Dep. variable: Share of volunteers			
	High school	Private grade	Young	In Manufacture
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Mean dep. variable	61.92	86.93	68.38	51.33
Black * POST	-16.341	20.141*	2.209	33.274***
	(11.659)	(10.842)	(11.382)	(7.199)
Black	-18.432	-9.895	9.332	-19.117***
	(11.731)	(10.785)	(11.260)	(6.512)
Black + Black * POST	-34.773	10.246	11.541	14.157
p value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Observations	1,676	1,676	1,676	1,676
R-squared	0.770	0.888	0.682	0.679
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE * POST	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE * Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: the dependent variable is the share of volunteers with each of the characteristics reported at the top of the corresponding column, relative to all volunteers (in a week, county, race). All regression include county and week fixed effects as well as the interaction between the two. Regressions are weighed by enlistable individuals in 1940. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

5.3.3 Local Presence of NAACP

Finally, we examine whether the local presence of organizations that promoted black political and civil engagement reduced the negative effect of disenfranchisement on volunteering behavior of African Americans. Following the strategy used in Section 5.4.1, we augment the baseline difference-in-differences specification with a triple interaction between the black and the post dummies with an indicator equal to one if a county had at least one NAACP chapter between 1919 and 1940.[18] As above, we fully saturate our regression, by including all lower order interactions. We conjecture that the local presence of NAACP chapters, by favoring blacks' political involvement, was instrumental to the diffusion of the Double V Campaign, and thus promoted the incentives for African Americans to volunteer. Results are reported in Table 7, which follows the same structure as Table 5 above, and includes a gradually more stringent set of fixed effects. The dependent variable is again the enlistment share (per 100,000 individuals) in county j, for race i, during week t.

Focusing on the most stringent specification (column 4), where we include county and week fixed effects, as well as the interaction between the two, we observe that blacks were significantly less likely to volunteer both before and after Pearl Harbor, and that this gap increased during the 8 weeks after December 7th 1941. However, the triple interaction between the black and post dummies and the NAACP indicator is positive and statistically significant. It is also quantitatively large. It indicates that the increase in the white-black volunteer gap after Pearl Harbor was almost 50% lower in counties with at least one NAACP chapter. These patterns are consistent with anecdotal evidence that emphasizes the importance of the NAACP to spread the Double V campaign, and are in line with our previous results on black volunteer

[18]Data on the local presence of NAACP chapters come from Gregory and Estrada (2019). See also Calderon et al. (2019) for a more detailed description of these data.

Table 7: DDD Regression: NAACP

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VARIABLES	Share Volunteers (per 100,000 enlistable individuals)			
Mean dep. variable	26.699			
NAACP * Black * POST	9.342***	9.314***	7.608***	7.608***
	(2.327)	(2.349)	(2.112)	(2.112)
NAACP * Black	2.798*	4.139***	4.942***	4.942***
	(1.449)	(1.527)	(1.141)	(1.141)
Black * POST	-18.660***	-18.616***	-13.410***	-13.410***
	(1.072)	(1.082)	(1.074)	(1.074)
Black	-14.443***	-15.793***	-18.243***	-18.243***
	(1.020)	(1.104)	(0.781)	(0.781)
Black + Black * POST	-33.103	-34.409	-31.653	-31.653
p value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
PCA * Black * POST + PCA * Black + Black * POST + Black	-20.963	-20.956	-19.103	-19.103
p value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Observations	94,367	92,106	92,106	82,348
R-squared	0.183	0.418	0.471	0.826
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Week FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE * POST	No	No	Yes	Yes
County FE * Week FE	No	No	No	Yes

Notes: the dependent variable is the share of volunteers per 100,000 enlistable individuals (for each race, county, and week). POST and Black are dummies equal to one for, respectively, weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack and black. NAACP is a dummy. Column 1 only includes state fixed effects. Column 2 adds county fixed effects and week fixed effects. Column 3 adds county fixed effects interacted with the POST dummy. Column 4 adds week by county fixed effects. Regressions are weighed by enlistable individuals in 1940. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

enlistment increasing more among blacks who were employed in manufacturing.

6 Conclusion

The United States entered WWII during one of the worst periods of post-Civil War history in terms of racial discrimination. Jim Crow in the U.S. South and more subtle, but equally effective, forms of discrimination in the U.S. West and North had deprived black Americans of most of their civil and political rights for decades. The entire generation of black Americans needed by the U.S. military had grown up in such an environment. Contemporary discussions show fierce ambivalence towards sacrificing black lives to fight Axis powers in the earlier part of WWII. Many in the black community stressed the similarities between Nazi Germany and American racial policies, questioning the value of fighting for a country that had long disenfranchised its non-white citizens, thereby breaching the social contract.

Our paper documents that this ambivalence was reflected in volunteer enlistment rates right after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941: black volunteer enlistment rates increased less and were lower than white volunteer enlistment rates. Conversely, there was no such difference for draft enlistment rates, weighing against the possibility that barriers from the U.S. military or capacity constraints were responsible for the lower volunteering behavior of African Americans. These findings are consistent with the idea of a social contract within the black community – no taxation without representation. The tax in this case, was military service.

Our study reveals the potential costs of disenfranchising citizens, and highlights how racial discrimination against black Americans permeated into every aspect of the U.S. political economy and society. This context is particularly poignant because, by the end of 1942, black volunteer rates exceeded white volunteer rates. Moreover, although

black soldiers were mostly assigned to non-combat units, those who were allowed to fight typically defended their country with exceptional bravery, and were often awarded with combat medals. It is natural to ask what caused the increase in black enlistment rates. Part of the answer may be the success of propaganda such as the Double V campaign, which emphasized the complementarity between the war at home and the war abroad. Part of it may be the perception of a shift in the attitude of the government. Interestingly, the actual changes within the military with respect to race relationships were small. Segregation continued in the military until 1948, and only 10% of black enlisted men were ever assigned to combat units. The fact that black volunteer rates increased with such small improvements highlights the patriotism and motivation of black soldiers. Viewed in this context, our empirical findings of low black enlistment rates right after Pearl Harbor emphasize the inefficiency of race discrimination in the context of military war effort.

This study suggests several avenues of future research. An obvious follow-up inquiry is to examine whether participating in WWII influenced activism in the Civil Rights movement, as the Double V campaign intended, and whether inter-racial interactions in the military changed whites' racial attitudes. Similarly, it would be interesting to obtain data on performance during WWII, and quantify the welfare losses that decades of discrimination caused by reducing black participation in the military, in the spirit of recent work by Hsieh et al. (2019).

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Appendix

Table A1: Summary Statistics: Full Sample

	Mean	St. Dev	Median	Min	Max	Obs
Panel A. Full sample						
Volunteers	0.200	0.400	0	0	1	9,039,840
Draftees	0.800	0.400	1	0	1	9,039,840
Blacks	0.100	0.300	0	0	1	9,039,840
Whites	0.830	0.370	1	0	1	9,039,840
At Least High School Degree	0.380	0.480	0	0	1	9,038,126
In Agriculture	0.120	0.330	0	0	1	9,039,840
In Manufacturing	0.600	0.490	1	0	1	9,039,840
In Private Grade	0.910	0.290	1	0	1	9,039,840
Age	24.95	6.620	23	10	75	8,749,160
Panel B. Blacks						
Volunteers	0.140	0.340	0	0	1	894,897
Draftees	0.860	0.340	1	0	1	894,897
At Least High School Degree	0.140	0.350	0	0	1	894,622
In Agriculture	0.170	0.380	0	0	1	894,897
In Manufacture	0.610	0.490	1	0	1	894,897
In Private Grade	0.910	0.280	1	0	1	894,897
Age	25.13	6.760	23	11	75	859,621
Panel C. Whites						
Volunteers	0.190	0.390	0	0	1	7,527,105
Draftees	0.810	0.390	1	0	1	7,527,105
At Least High School Degree	0.410	0.490	0	0	1	7,526,859
In Agriculture	0.120	0.320	0	0	1	7,527,105
In Manufacture	0.590	0.490	1	0	1	7,527,105
In Private Grade	0.920	0.260	1	0	1	7,527,105
Age	24.72	6.150	23	11	75	7,477,518

Table A2: PCA Components

Variable Name	**Source**	**Construction**
Poll Tax 1940	Naidu (2012)	Dummy equal to 1 if a state introduced a poll tax between 1890 and 1940.
Literacy Test 1940	Naidu (2012)	Dummy equal to 1 if a state introduced the literacy test requirement between 1890 and 1940.
Miscegenation Prohibited 1940	Dahis, Nix and Qian (2019)	Dummy equal to 1 if a state introduced laws to prohibit inter-racial marriages between 1890 and 1940.
Dissimilarity Index 1940	Logan and Parman (2017)	Dissimilarity index at the county level constructed by LP
Isolation Index 1940	Logan and Parman (2017)	Isolation index at the county level constructed by LP
President Vote Share Democrat 1900-1930	Clubb et al. (1990)	Average vote share in Presidential elections at the county level, for each election between 1900 and 1930.
Congress Vote Share Democrat 1900-1930	Clubb et al. (1990)	Average vote share in Congressional elections at the county level, for each election between 1900 and 1930.
Presence of KKK	Kneebone and Torres (2015)	Dummy for presence of KKK in any year between 1915 and 1940, in each county.
Number of Lynching cases up to 1939	Monroe Work Today (MWT)	Total number of lynching episodes in a county against African Americans between 1803 and 1939

Notes: this table reports the variables used to construct the PCA discrimination index (see Section 5.4.1). Column 2 reports the reference for which the variable is taken.

Table A3: Heterogeneity PCA results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
VARIABLES	Share of Volunteers						
Mean dep. variable	26.999	26.999	26.999	26.999	28.110	23.429	35.3
PCA * Black * POST	-3.044***	-2.307***	-3.299***	-0.221	-3.347**	-2.272**	-3.500***
	(0.608)	(0.424)	(0.615)	(0.517)	(1.639)	(0.893)	(1.092)
PCA * Black	-0.555	-0.485	-0.580	-0.715*	-0.439	0.344	-0.482
	(0.456)	(0.306)	(0.416)	(0.392)	(1.163)	(0.682)	(0.345)
Black * POST	-7.208***	-8.541***	-8.909***	-10.984***	-6.057***	-9.599***	-30.399***
	(1.157)	(1.070)	(1.044)	(0.945)	(1.537)	(2.092)	(2.015)
Observations	80,852	80,852	81,328	80,852	38,760	42,092	80,852
R-squared	0.826	0.826	0.825	0.826	0.832	0.813	0.794
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE * POST	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE * Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: the dependent variable is the share of volunteers per 100,000 enlistable individuals (for each race, county, and week). The table replicates Table 4 using different versions of the PCA index and different samples. Column 1 reports the baseline result (reported in column 4 of Table 4); column 2 presents results obtained when constructing the PCA index using both county and state level variables; columns 3 and 4 present results when decomposing the PCA index in political factors (Average Presidential Vote Share Democrat 1900-30, Average Congressional Vote Share Democrat 1900-30, Dummies for poll, taxes, literacy tests, and prohibition of miscegenation in 1940) and social factors (Dissimilarity Index, Isolation Index (from Logan & Parman 2017), KKK presence, count of black, lynchings up to 1939) respectively. Columns 5 and 6 use the baseline PCA index and present results for non-southern and for southern states respectively. Column 7 restricts attention to people registered before Pearl Harbor Shock. Regressions are weighed by enlistable individuals in 1940. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, in parentheses. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.