Background

The Vietnam Generation refers to those men ages 18 to 26 years who lived within the time span of the Vietnam Era, 1964-1973. These men belong to the last generation of Americans to experience the effects of federally-mandated conscription. Almost thirty million American men came of draft age during the time span of the Vietnam War, though far fewer were actually needed for combat service. Although only about 6 percent of all young men in the U.S. actually encountered combat in Vietnam, the draft used to procure this service had a tremendous effect on the men of the Vietnam generation.

The pressure of the draft on young men's motivations to enlist is taken into account in this study, using methodology that has never been employed in enlistment analyses. Using the National Longitudinal Study of Young Men (NLSYM), we examine military enlistment during the Vietnam War over the early adult life course of young American men. Existing research has used the NLSYM to analyze enlistment, but never before to analyze it over the life course of many years. Past literature has often perceived the experiences of men in the Vietnam generation as consistent across all ages and years, as if it were one large cohort. On both theoretical and empirical grounds this perception is incorrect. We cannot assume, for instance, that a 24 year old in 1965 and a 19 year old in 1968 experienced analogous life course pressures, such as similar educational levels, family statuses, career prospects, or draft pressures. Theory pertaining to the early adult life course, and supportive findings, argue that differences between the two young men should be both substantial and significant. Furthermore, the Vietnam War was not a homogeneous event. The number of troops needed for service, and therefore the number of young men taken through conscription, varied across years of the war. Assuming that

men of all ages living at all times within the Vietnam generation experienced similar pressures and options neglects both period and cohort effects, as well as the interactions between them.

We model these period and cohort effects by using longitudinal data to uncover the effects of age and year on the enlistment processes. Furthermore, using the longitudinal data allows us to conduct an event-history analysis, taking into consideration how the effects of important demographic, social, educational, and economic predictor variables change over the early adult life course. Lastly, the event-history allows us to observe the interactions these variables have with the changing pressures of the draft. While our data is limited to only the last seven years of the Vietnam Generation (1966 – 1973), it reveals that patterns of enlistment do significantly differ by the age and year of the respondents.

Theory

Studies examining the processes of enlisting in the US Armed Services often analyze the decision in terms of an economic model. Rational choice theory and occupational choice theory are commonly used to view enlistment as a carefully calculated process of comparison (Shields, 1980; Seeborg, 1994). It is assumes that a young man compares his anticipated employment and wage earnings in the civilian labor market to the benefits offered by the Armed Services. Therefore, when determining the likelihood of a young man enlisting in the US military, it is logical to place the emphasis on predictor variables that measure economic conditions and opportunities, as well as a young man's human and social capital.

The Vietnam era, however, was characterized by heavy federal conscription that

introduced an additional factor for a young man to consider. While comparing the benefits of serving in the US Armed Forces to those of employment in the civilian labor market, a young man faced the ongoing risk of being drafted.

Therefore this paper attempts to uncover whether the merits of rational choice theory stand during times of such uncertainty. Mainly, how do some avoid it and others don't, and subsequently, how does it create unequal conscription patterns? By including the effect of year and age, we disaggregate the draft's effect and show how the process occurs, and is affected by, the events taking place at different levels of the early adult life-course. The second part of the analysis aims to determine: 1) Whether the issuing of 1-A draft classifications differed in terms of wage levels, 2) Whether the interaction between draft classification 1-A and wages affects the likelihood of enlistment in the US Armed Services during the Vietnam era, and 3) Whether there were cohort and period effects of enlistment in the US Armed Services during the Vietnam era.

Data and Methods

The data used in these analyses are from a nationally representative database called the National Longitudinal Study of Young Men (NLSYM). Some 5,225 men ages 14-24 were initially interviewed in 1966 and were representative of non-institutionalized men of this age group. These men were interviewed annually or biannually until 1981.

The final sample used in our analyses is an adequate representation of the young men at risk of military service during a large segment of the Vietnam war. Those excluded from this final sample included women, men with racial classification other than Black and White, men who enlisted prior to 1968, men not healthy enough for military service, men with permanent deferment from service, and men who had already

in any division of the US Armed Services. With these conditions placed on the original sample of 5,225 men, 3,269 men remained.

Our analyses use two dependent variables to measure the enlistment patterns of young men at risk of service during the Vietnam War. The first, general enlistment, is measured over the years using a person-year dummy variable titled "enlisted". A young man is designated as enlisted if he entered the US Armed Services between the years of 1968 and 1974 in any way available. All other men are the reference category. The second dependent variable, voluntary enlistment, is a subset of the first dependent variable in that it is made up only of those young men who voluntarily enlisted to serve in any branch of the US Armed Service between 1968 and 1974. The reference category is composed of all other men, including those men who involuntarily enlisted in the US Armed Services.

Results

General results are consistent with our two main hypotheses. Findings show both a significant and substantial effect of draft pressure on young men's motivations to enlist (Table, as well as tremendous variance in this effect over the age and wage levels of young men. Furthermore, the interaction between draft classification and year is both significant and substantial. These findings support our initial hypothesis that considerable period effects exist within the Vietnam Generation.

Table I: Draft Classification 1-A, by Top-15% Wage Earner.

| Top-Wage Earner | Draft Classification 1-A | | Total |
	No	Yes	
No	11000	**1541**	12541
	(87.81%)	**(12.29%)**	(79.58%)
Yes	2978	**240**	3218
	(92.54%)	**(7.46%)**	(20.42%)
Total	13978	1781	15759
	(88.70%)	(11.30%)	(100%)

Odds Ratio = 1.738
t Ratio = 24.139
df = 1
p<.001

Table II: Enlistment in US Armed Services, 1968 – 1974, by Top-15% Wage Earner & Draft Classification 1-A.

| Top-Wages & 1-A | Enlisted in the US Armed Services? | | Total |
	No	Yes	
No	14979	**540**	15519
	(96.52%)	**(3.48%)**	(98.48%)
Yes	224	**16**	240
	(93.33%)	**(6.67%)**	(1.52%)
Total	15203	556	15759
	(96.47%)	(3.53%)	(100%)

Odds Ratio = .5047
t Ratio = 1.923
df = 1

Table III: Logistic Regression Analysis of Enlistment in US Armed Services, 1968 – 1974.

Variables	Coefficients			
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
Year	-.408***	-.390***	-.389***	**-.244*****
	(.035)	(.036)	(.036)	**(.058)**
Age	1.499***	1.176***	1.085***	-.333
	(.322)	(.335)	(.376)	(.549)
Age^2	-.041***	-.033	-.030***	-.0034
	(.008)	(.008)	(.009)	(.013)
Wages	-.7***	.69	.63	**-5.6***
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	**(.000)**
Wages^2	---	-.000124	-.000118	**-.000304***
		(.000)	(.000)	**(.000)**
Black	-.027	-.00015	-.103	-.119
	(.111)	(.113)	(.120)	(.121)
Southern Resident	.239**	.284***	.310***	.307***
	(.097)	(.102)	(.105)	(.105)
Highest Grade Completed	.309***	.311***	.540***	.502***
	(.038)	(.039)	(.069)	(.067)
Draft Classification One-A	.512***	.410***	.402***	**.915***
	(.116)	(.124)	(.126)	**(.246)**
Would Like to Attend College	-.574***	-.418***	-.335***	-.259**
	(.113)	(.121)	(.122)	(.126)
Enrolled in School Fulltime	---	-.058	-.092	-30.470***
		(.127)	(.138)	(7.044)
Not Encouraged to Attend College	---	1.330***	1.290***	1.254***
		(.116)	(.117)	(.118)
Unemployed	---	.064	.064	.072
		(.158)	(.158)	(.159)
High Unemployment Rate	---	-.224	-.148	-.154
		(.165)	(.174)	(.174)
Low Unemployment Rate	---	.041	.034	.031
		(.123)	(.123)	(.124)
Married	---	-.733***	-.481**	-.444**
		(.177)	(.192)	(.194)
Father	---	---	-.775***	-.614**
			(.274)	(.277)
Did Not Finish High School	---	---	.489***	.555***
			(.171)	(.171)
Attended College	---	---	-.582***	-.802***
			(.181)	(.186)
Graduated From College	---	---	-.830***	-.632**
			(.282)	(.282)
Urban Resident	---	---	.063	.036
			(.112)	(.113)
Does Not Reside in a MSA	---	---	-.091	-.092
			(.124)	(.124)
Parent Did Not Finish High School	---	---	.288**	.266**
			(.113)	(.114)
Raised By Single Mother	---	---	.125	.105
			(.130)	(.131)

Wages*Age	---	---	---	**.34** **(.000)**
Enrolled in School Fulltime*Age	---	---	---	2.599*** (.675)
Enrolled in School Fulltime*Age^2	---	---	---	-.053*** (.016)
Enrolled in School Fulltime*Year	---	---	---	-.154** (.075)
Draft Classification One-A*Year	---	---	---	**-.296*** (.092)**
Draft Classification One-A*Wages^2	---	---	---	**.0021*** (.000)**
Constant	-18.393*** (3.277)	-15.558*** (3.418)	-17.922*** (3.919)	-.260 (5.624)
Likelihood Ratio	708.075	848.134	887.075	954.868
df	9	16	24	30
N	15759	15759	15759	15759

Note: numbers in parentheses are standard errors.
Coefficients associated with wages are per $10,000
*** p<.01   ** p<.05   *p<.1

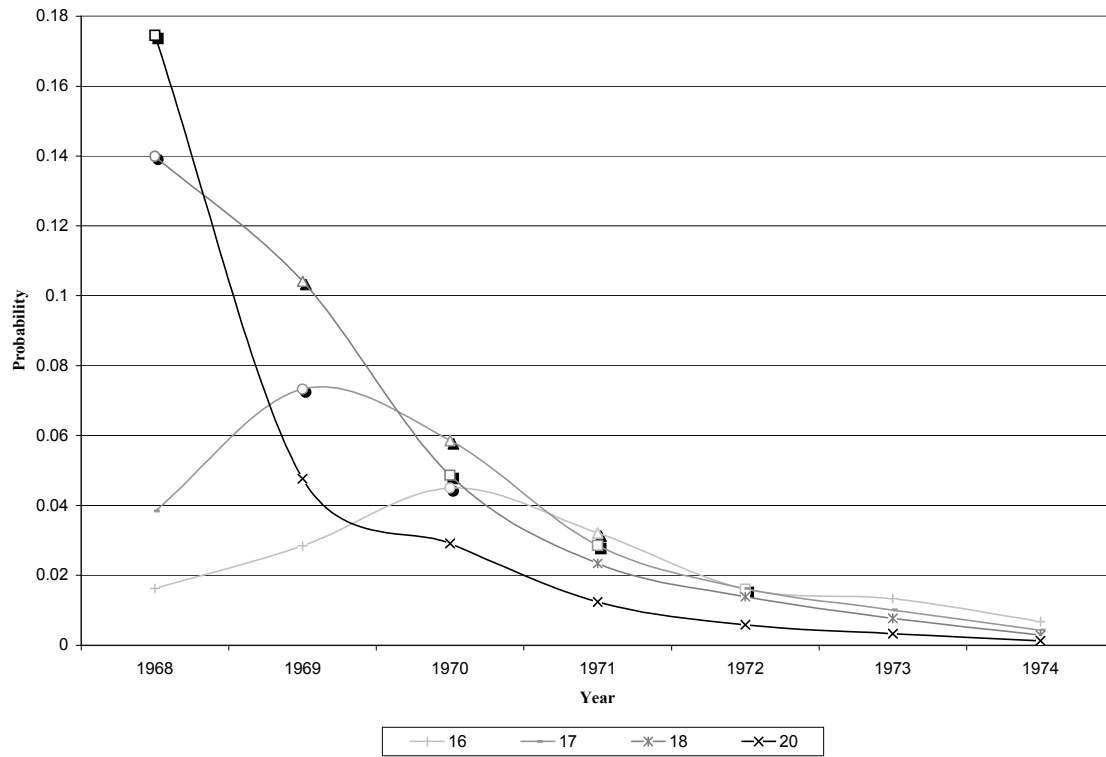**Table IV: Logistic Regression Analysis of Voluntary Enlistment in US Armed Services, 1968 – 1974.**

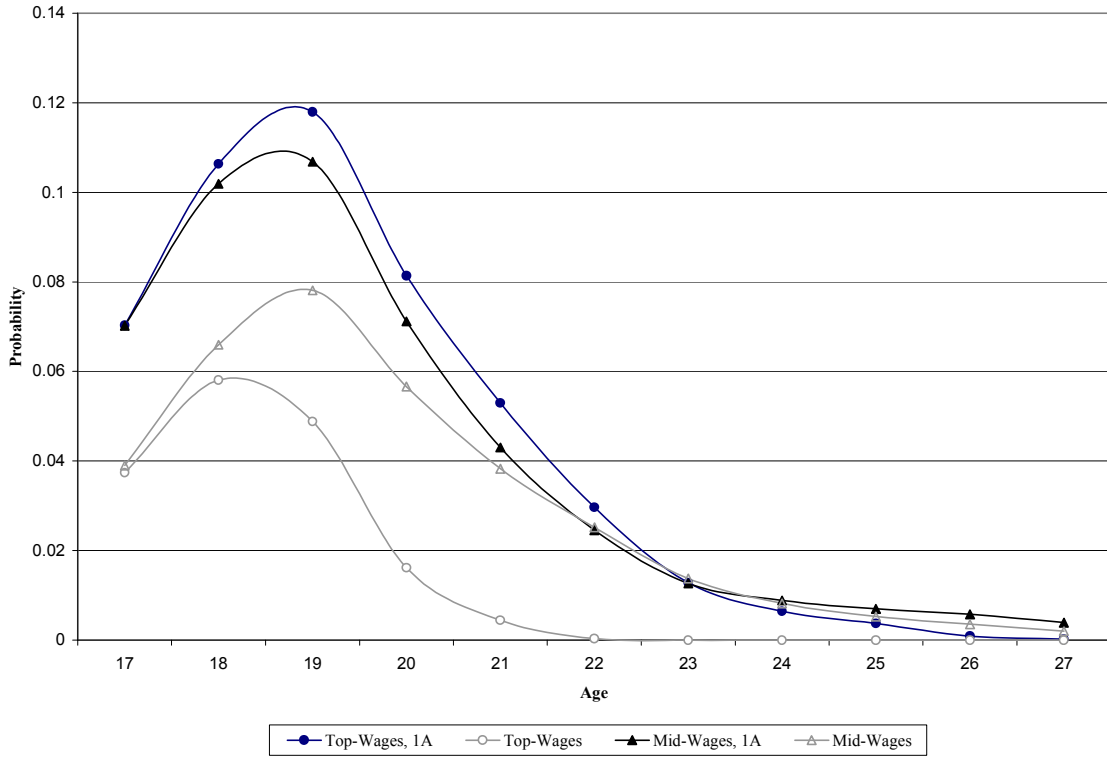| Variables	Coefficients			
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
Year	-.288***	-.278***	-.275***	-.073
	(.041)	(.042)	(.042)	(.073)
Age	.576*	.386	.350	-1.203**
	(.350)	(.366)	(.415)	(.599)
Age^2	-.021***	-.016*	-.014	.014
	(.008)	(.008)	(.010)	(.014)
Wages	-.9***	.35	.33	-6.0*
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
Wages^2	---	-.0000835	-.0000821	-.000251**
		(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
Black	-.249*	-.232	-.343**	-.360**
	(.141)	(.142)	(.150)	(.151)
Southern Resident	.316***	.364***	.375***	.360***
	(.117)	(.121)	(.124)	(.125)
Highest Grade Completed	.372***	.358***	.621***	.571***
	(.049)	(.050)	(.086)	(.084)
Draft Classification 1-A	.081	.056	.067	.594*
	(.159)	(.168)	(.169)	(.335)
Would Like to Attend College	-.515***	-.440***	-.340**	-.251*
	(.140)	(.150)	(.150)	(.155)
Enrolled in School Fulltime	---	.192	.139	-34.339***
		(.157)	(.170)	(7.677)
Not Encouraged to Attend College	---	1.194***	1.150***	1.090***
		(.142)	(.143)	(.145)
Unemployed	---	.314*	.308*	.313*
		(.158)	(.176)	(.177)
High Unemployment Rate	---	-.461**	-.419*	-.429*
		(.219)	(.227)	(.228)
Low Unemployment Rate	---	-.008	-.015	-.016
		(.148)	(.148)	(.149)
Married	---	-.724***	-.610**	-.543**
		(.225)	(.250)	(.250)
Father	---	---	-.361	-.236
			(.328)	(.332)
Did Not Finish High School	---	---	.570***	.659***
			(.208)	(.207)
Attended College	---	---	-.614***	-.808***
			(.225)	(.229)
Graduated From College	---	---	-.825**	-.571*
			(.327)	(.326)
Urban Resident	---	---	.065	.034
			(.135)	(.135)
Does Not Reside in a MSA	---	---	-.032	-.037
			(.146)	(.147)
Parent Did Not Finish High School	---	---	.287**	.267**
			(.132)	(.133)
Raised By Single Mother	---	---	.122	.093
			(.161)	(.162)

Wages*Age	---	---	---	.35*
				(.000)
Enrolled in School Fulltime*Age	---	---	---	2.958***
				(.732)
Enrolled in School Fulltime*Age^2	---	---	---	-.060***
				(.017)
Enrolled in School Fulltime*Year	---	---	---	-.267***
				(.089)
Draft Classification 1-A*Year	---	---	---	-.248**
				(.119)
Draft Classification 1-A*Wages^2	---	---	---	.000136*
				(.000)
Constant	-9.656***	-8.269**	-11.503***	8.187
	(3.553)	(3.725)	(4.332)	(6.155)
Likelihood Ratio	422.099	506.428	530.233	583.193
df	9	16	24	30
N	15759	15759	15759	15759

Note: numbers in parentheses are standard errors.
Coefficients associated with wages are per $10,000
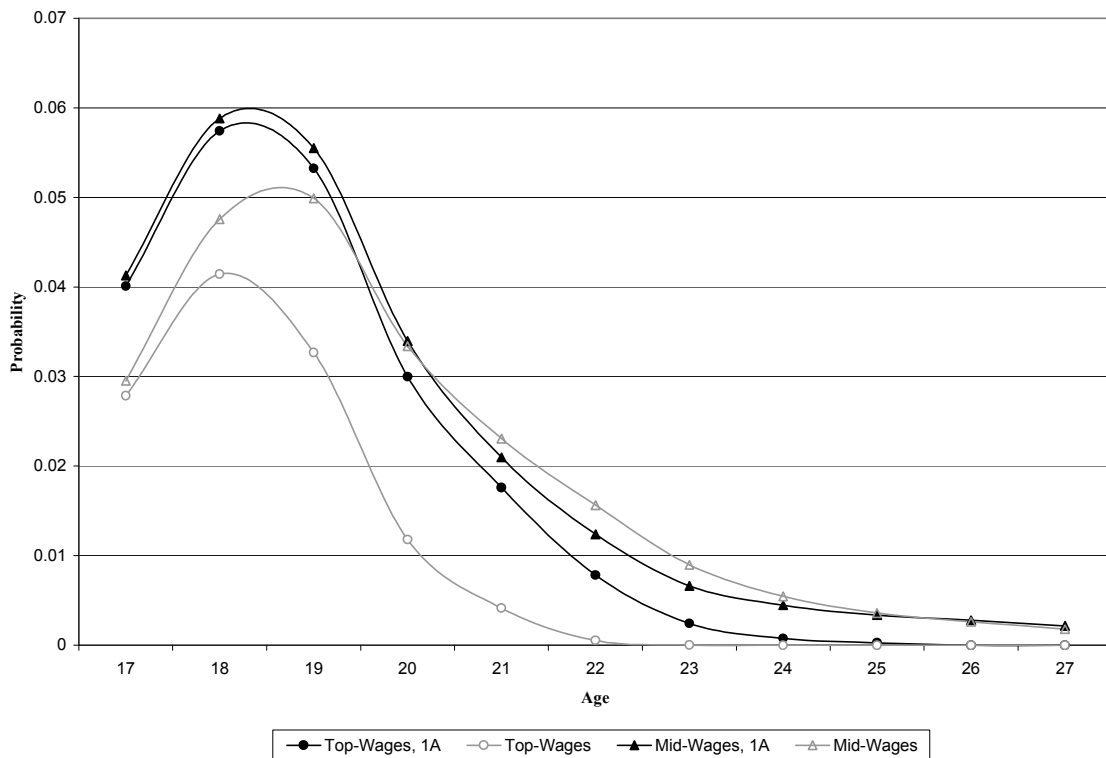*** *p<.01* ** *p<.05* * *p<.1*

Figure I: Enlistment in US Armed Services by Draft Classification 1-A, Age, and Year.
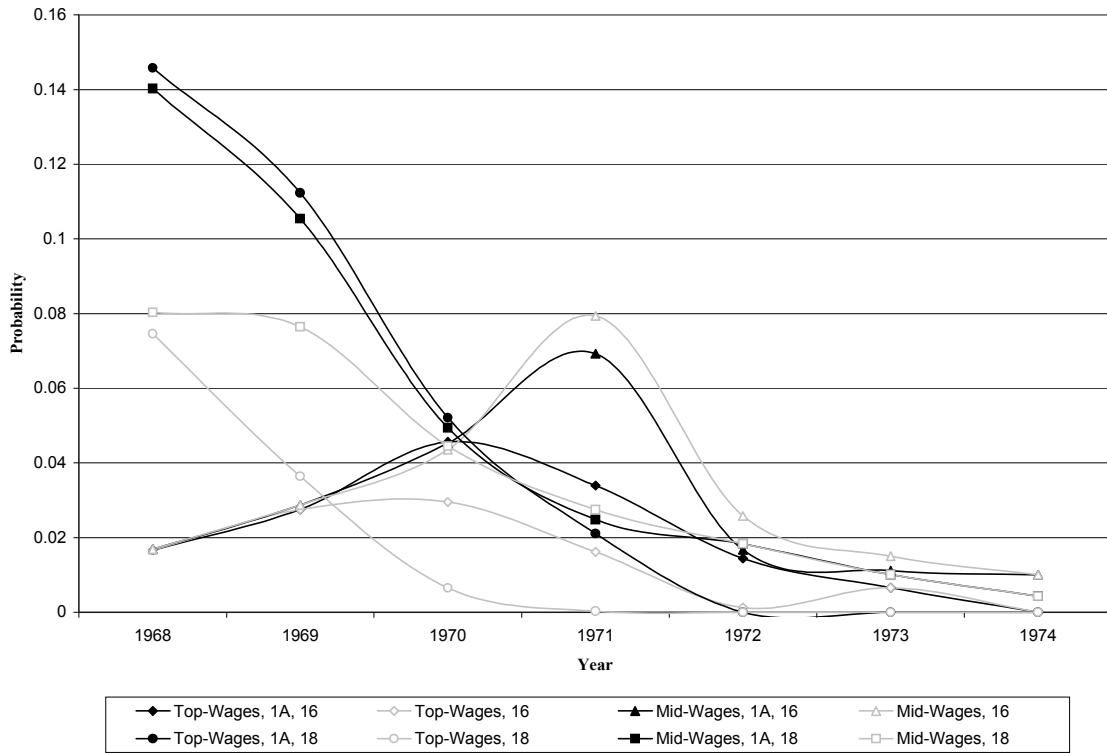
Figure II: Enlistment in US Armed Services, 1968 – 1974, by Wages and Draft Classification 1-A.

Figure III: Voluntary Enlistment in US Armed Services, 1968 – 1974, by Wages and Draft Classification 1-A.

Figure IV: Enlistment in US Armed Services by Wages, Draft Classification 1-A, and Year.

Legend: Top-Wages, 1A, 16 | Top-Wages, 16 | Mid-Wages, 1A, 16 | Mid-Wages, 16 | Top-Wages, 1A, 18 | Top-Wages, 18 | Mid-Wages, 1A, 18 | Mid-Wages, 18

Figure V: Voluntary Enlistment in US Armed Services by Wages, Draft Classification 1-A, and Year.

Legend: Top-Wages, 1A, 16 | Top-Wages, 16 | Mid-Wages, 1A, 16 | Mid-Wages, 16 | Top-Wages, 1A, 18 | Top-Wages, 18 | Mid-Wages, 1A, 18 | Mid-Wages, 18