Missing Voices: Understanding Group Identity and War Attitudes Among Service-Connected Civilians

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A Civil-Military Opinion Gap?

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  - “those who protect us are psychologically divorced from those who are being protected”

- Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
  - “growing disconnect between the American people and the military”
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  - “It’s tough to quantify just how ‘disconnected’ Americans are…”
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The Puzzle:

- Why do we find consistent anecdotal evidence of a civil-military gap, but sporadic or conflicting estimates of the size and issues which comprise the gap?
Why should we care?
- Military effectiveness and civil-military relations
- Approximately 1 in 5 Americans have a direct or family-mediated connection to the military
- Increasing attention placed on laws specific to veterans, their families
Existing Model of Civil-Military Relations

- Civilians
- Veterans
Our Answer:

- Assuming all civilians have the same relationship with the military institution creates a class of ‘missing voices’: service-connected civilians.

- Distinguishing civilians with a family-mediated connection to the military from others improves estimates of war attitudes and clarifies the size and scope of the civil-military gap.
The ‘Missing Voices’ Model

Service-Connected Civilians

Civilians

Veterans
## Service-Connected Civilians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection to Military</th>
<th>Civilian or Military Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongest</td>
<td>Veterans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immediate family member: Active Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immediate family of other veterans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civilian employee of military installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employee of military contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residents near military installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weakest</td>
<td>All other civilians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing the Service-Connected and Disconnected

- Service-connected civilians have a group attachment based on their increased contact with service members
  - Family, work, social networks, government programs, and social obligations

- This attachment brings a different set of considerations to mind when evaluating issues related to military programs and intervention (war attitudes)
  - Information available within service-connected and disconnected networks may also differ
Contextualizing the service-connected experience

- Distinct stressors:
  - Risk of injury or death to service member
  - Periodic separation and reunion
  - Geographic mobility and living in foreign countries
  - Inability to access military services
  - Marital strain
  - Assuming single parent status and additional household duties
    - (Segal 1986; Burrell et al 1995; Wood et al 2006)
Research Question

- Virtually all ‘Gap’ studies treat the civilian population as homogeneous in their relationship to the military
  - Prior group-based analysis was conducted during the Korean and Vietnam Wars (Mueller 1973; Lau et al 1978)
  - Elimination of the draft, ‘Republicanization’ of the military

- Research question: Do the immediate family members of veterans hold views toward conflict and war that are distinct from other civilians?
Hypotheses

- **H1:** Service-connected individuals express greater support for war than civilians who are not service-connected.
  - Dissonance reduction/coping means not wanting to consider loved one’s sacrifice is in vain

- **H2:** The estimated difference between veterans and civilians increases once accounting for service-connected individuals.
Data and Method

- 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES)
  - matched random sample internet survey
  - Sample estimates similar to telephone and mail surveys (Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2010)
  - N=55,400

- Logistic Regression
Independent Variable

We'd like to know whether you or someone in your immediate family is currently serving or has ever served in the U.S. military. Immediate family is defined as your parents, siblings, spouse, and children. Please check all boxes that apply.

1. I am currently serving in the U.S. military
2. I have immediate family members currently serving in the U.S. military
3. I previously served in the U.S. military but I am no longer active
4. Members of my immediate family have served in the U.S. military but are no longer active
5. Neither myself nor any members of my immediate family have ever served in the U.S. military

Exclude other punches
Dependent Variables:

- All things considered do you think it was a mistake to invade Iraq?
  - No: 37%  Yes: 63%

- All things considered do you think it was a mistake to invade
  - No: 51%  Yes: 49%

- Do you think the U.S. should send more troops to Afghanistan to fight the Taliban and al Qaeda?
  - Increase: 33%  Decrease: 67%
Predicted Probabilities: Not a mistake to invade Iraq, three models.
Predicted Probabilities: Not a mistake to invade Afghanistan, three models
Predicted Probabilities: Increasing Troop Levels in Afghanistan, three models
Predicted Probabilities, Hypothesis 2
Summary of Findings

• H1 supported: Service-connected civilians more likely to express support for both conflicts, increasing troop levels.

• H2 supported: Veteran estimates diverge further from civilian ones once the service-connected are distinguished from the general population.

• Accepted for publication in *Armed Forces & Society*
Study limitations

- The above is not a definitive statement on the civil-civil gap.

- It does suggest scholars need to re-imagine the civil-military relationship by including this new category.

- A closer look at service-connected civilian group identity. Particularly what environmental cues increase the salience of the identity, and for which issues.
The Residual Group Identity Model

Civilians in Military Households

Civilians

Veterans

Cues in environment
Hypotheses

• H₁: Veteran identity effects on war attitudes are moderated by veteran salient context.

• H₂: The effect of living with a veteran on war attitudes is moderated by veteran salient context.
Data and Method

- 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES)
  - Random sample of 25% of congressional districts

- IV: Aggregate measure of identity salience
  - Veteran density
  - Presence of veteran candidates
  - Proximity to military base

- DV: Mistake to invade Iraq, Afghanistan.
## Initial Evidence: BIC Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>W/O interaction</th>
<th>Veteran Context</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vets vs. Non-vets</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>31764</td>
<td>31746</td>
<td>-18 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>33356</td>
<td>33354</td>
<td>-2 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>N = 14099</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lives with Vet vs. Non-vets</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
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<td>25735</td>
<td>-11 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>27369</td>
<td>27371</td>
<td>+2 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N = 11031</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early Findings:

- Service-connected civilians who live with veterans appear sensitive to veteran cues at least some of the time.
  - Environmental cues influence individuals without objective group membership.
  - Suggests group identity has degrees.

- Effect appears robust for Iraq, not Afghanistan.

- Including Service-Connected civilians improve model fit.
Future Directions: CCES 2011

- Defining the contours between service connected and disconnected civilians
  - Abstract measures of war support
- A closer look at environmental cues
  - When does the identity become more salient
- A closer look at service-connected civilian relationships
  - Huge number in this sample, but relation to veteran, and veteran’s active status likely play a large role
- Looking at the consequences of multiple group attachments
  - Women, racial/ethnic minorities and service-connected status
Gallup Most Important Problem

- Economic issues
- Veteran Issues

Data points from 1946 to 2010.
Table 3: A comparison of three model specifications, logistic regression estimates of attitudes in 2010 toward the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not mistake: Iraq</th>
<th>Not mistake: Afghanistan</th>
<th>Increase troops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Connected</td>
<td>0.235* (0.02)</td>
<td>0.209* (0.02)</td>
<td>0.263* (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td>0.254* (0.03)</td>
<td>0.382* (0.03)</td>
<td>0.161* (0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in politics</td>
<td>0.247* (0.01)</td>
<td>0.237* (0.01)</td>
<td>0.383* (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>2.585* (0.03)</td>
<td>2.580* (0.03)</td>
<td>1.188* (0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1.259* (0.03)</td>
<td>1.253* (0.03)</td>
<td>0.363* (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.315* (0.02)</td>
<td>-0.337* (0.02)</td>
<td>0.651* (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R²</td>
<td>0.1818</td>
<td>0.1832</td>
<td>0.1013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>54252</td>
<td>54252</td>
<td>54087</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parenthesis; * indicates significance at p < 0.05; Constant estimated but not reported, Data: 2010 CCES