SERVICE MATTERS: THE INFLUENCE OF MILITARY SERVICE ON POLITICAL BEHAVIOR, IDEOLOGY AND ATTITUDES

Catherine L. Johnson, B.S., M.P.A.

Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2010

APPROVED:

Valerie Martinez-Ebers, Major Professor
T. David Mason, Committee Member
Elizabeth Oldmixon, Committee Member
J. Michael Greig, Committee Member
John Todd, Chair of the Department of Political Science
James D. Meernik, Acting Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

The objective of this research is to explore the influence of military service on political behaviors and attitudes. Existing studies of the military have long recognized the existence of a predominantly conservative political ideology with a resulting propensity for strong Republican Party support within the military community, but have failed to explain the likely causal mechanism for this.

Drawing on multiple sources of data from the 2008 Presidential election cycle, I utilized a descriptive analysis of campaign contribution data and bivariate and multivariate analyses of data from the 2008 Military Times Survey and the 2008 American National Election Survey. Much of the data also permitted me to analyze the effect of an individual’s service branch on their attitudes as well. I examined the behavior and attitudes of the military across several dimensions, including candidate support and positions on policies of particular relevance to the military, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This analysis found that people who serve in the military tend to be conservative but in many ways their political attitudes are reflective of those of the general population. An individual's race, ethnicity and gender appear to have more influence than military factors, with the exception of service in the Marine Corps, on ideology, partisan identification and policy preferences.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES ......................................................................................................................... iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES ......................................................................................................................... v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. DOES SERVICE MATTER? QUESTIONING A MILITARY IDEOLOGY ........1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS AS POLITICAL EXPRESSION: THE CASE OF AMERICA’S MILITARY .................................................................25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. IDEOLOGY AND PARTY AFFILIATION: SERVICE BRANCH MATTERS .64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. THE DIFFERING POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF AMERICA’S MILITARY: GROUP MEMBERSHIP MATTERS ............................................................91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. THE IMPLICATIONS OF MILITARY SERVICE ............................................121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES .............................................................................................................................140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................................................................................147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Comparison of Overall Campaign Contributions by Branch and Force Strength</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Contributions to Candidates by Service Branch</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ideological Self-Placement, by percentage</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Party Identification, by percentage</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>(a) Gender Differences in Ideological Self-Placement</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Comparative Gender Distribution, Civilian Population</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Gender Differences in Party Identification</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>(a) Differences in Ideological Self-Placement by Race-Ethnicity, Military</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Times Survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Differences in Ideological Self-Placement by Race-Ethnicity, ANES Survey</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Differences in Party Identification by Race-Ethnicity</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>(a) Percentage Opinion of Obama as Commander in Chief</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Demographic Opinions of Obama as Commander in Chief</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>(a) Percentage Opinion of Bush Presidential Approval</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Demographic Opinions of Bush Presidential Approval</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Comparison of Survey Samples on Bush Presidential Job Approval</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>(a) Percentage Agreeing to U.S. decision to Go to War with Iraq</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Demographic Approval of U.S. Decision to Go to War with Iraq</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Comparison of Survey Samples on Question of War with Iraq</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>(a) Percentage Approval of Bush’s Handling of War in Iraq</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Demographic Approval of Bush’s Handling of War in Iraq</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Comparison of Survey Samples on Bush’s Handling of War in Iraq</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>(a) Percentage Approval of Obama’s 16 Month Plan for Withdrawal from Iraq</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Demographic Approval of Obama’s 16 month Plan for Withdrawal from Iraq</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17. (a) Percentage Approval of Bush’s Handling of War in Afghanistan .........................107
    (b) Demographic Approval of Bush’s Handling of War in Afghanistan ....................108

18. Comparison of Survey Samples on Handling of War in Afghanistan .....................109

19. (a) Percentage Support for Repeal of "Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell" Policy .....................111
    (b) Demographic Support for Repeal of "Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell" ............................112

20. Comparison of Survey Samples on Repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy ..........112

21. (a) Level of Job Satisfaction, by percentage ..........................................................114
    (b) Demographic Levels of Job Satisfaction ..........................................................115

22. A Causal Model Depicting the Propensity of Individuals Serving in the Marine Corps
    Towards Conservatism .........................................................................................118
CHAPTER 1

DOES SERVICE MATTER? QUESTIONING A MILITARY IDEOLOGY

Introduction

From the time of the Revolutionary War, America has relied on its citizens in time of
crisis to lay down their tools and take up arms. Early on in America’s first war, its military
commander George Washington, while acknowledging the critical role that colonial militias
played, realized the imperative of forming a national or continental military force that would
serve as a professional core around which the citizen-soldiers would support (Fischer 2004).
From that time forward, expanded by number and role as needs and technology required,
America’s armed forces have evolved to become the four service branches that exist today. And
while the tools used by today’s military are cutting edge, the model for manning the armed
forces is essentially the same used 230 years ago by Washington: a core of professional
careerists augmented by reservists in supporting specialties, training and commanding legions of
young volunteers of which most serve only one enlistment.

During times of war, the size of the military balloons with the increased numbers needed
being traditionally met by conscription. Following the crisis, all of the forces will then typically
contract back to a lean, peacetime size while still retaining a significant number of reservists,
even those who are still actively drilling as well as many more who are deemed inactive, but still
subject to recall. This ongoing obligation of citizenship – military service – whether by draft, or
from volunteering in wartime, or through peacetime enlistments and commissions, results in
every generation having some percentage of its members experiencing military service. This
number varies from a high of nearly 10% of the population in uniform during World War II, to
today’s percentage of the population in the military (either active or reserve) of less than 1%
Among the several generations, it is estimated by the U.S. Veterans Affairs agency that there are approximately 22 million veterans alive today, or roughly 7% of the population (U.S. Veterans Affairs 2010).

The Military Voter

While a proportion of 7% may seem relatively small, this is a population that has been documented in recent elections as voting in numbers that outpaced their civilian peers, inflating their political presence. Indeed, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), authorized under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986 was created to facilitate absentee voting by, among others, U.S. military service personnel. In a report following the 2004 November elections, it was observed that while the general publics’ voting participation rate (among eligible voters) was estimated at 64%, that of the military services’ was 79% (FVAP 2005).

When one considers that just over 57% of all military personnel at the time were less than 25 years old, and that the mean age for the entire military was just 28 years old, (U.S. DoD 2006), this turnout rate takes on additional significance. The best estimation of the youngest demographic (18-24 year olds) among the general public in the 2004 elections was just 46.7% (Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 2007).

All indications based on age, education, and economic background would suggest that for most of these youngest service members, almost exclusively those in the lowest enlisted grades, one would expect to find equally low levels of voting participation (Campbell et al. 1060; Delli Carpini 1989; Niemi and Jennings 1991). Yet, when it comes to the military voter, all categories appear to exceed their comparable civilian turnout rates in both the 2000 and the 2004 elections (Buyer 2001; Sherman 2000; Teigen 2004 & 2006). If as suggested, the voting behavior of all
active members of the military are proportionally increased, (again, compared to the levels of their civilian cohort) this difference begs investigation as to the cause. What about military service increases the increased likelihood of voting? Is it an artifact of the institutional qualities of the military or the result of shared values by those who serve in uniform?

If this is an individual effect, we might logically expect to see that this increased rate of voting continues even after one’s active service has ended. We might also expect to see a strengthening of the effect as well, one that correlates with the length of time served. Alternatively, increased propensity for voting, and by extension other acts of political participation may only be a transient effect of being in uniform; perhaps the institutional nature of the military itself and how it implements programs such as the FVAP may be the simple explanation behind these results. Either explanation still requires the connecting linkage in the causal chain – the motivation for the action. Does the higher participation of voters with military service stem from a stronger sense of civic duty? Perhaps it is the result of heightened salience to certain political issues. Or, is the military voter simply self-interested and voting, like their civilian counterparts, in increasing numbers when they feel threatened or angry or even hopeful?

While voting is the most direct measure of political participation (Verba et al 1995), there are many other forms of civic engagement and political action that one might expect military service to also influence, particularly if it is indeed an individual influencing effect. Does the military participate in the electoral process beyond the voting booth? While constrained by law from active campaigning, members of the military can still contribute to political candidates (U.S. DoD 2008). If they do so, is there a particular pattern of contributions from those in the military? One might expect greater support for candidates with a military background themselves; also candidates with strong positions on issues relevant to the military – pay and
benefits, defense spending or veteran’s issues, for example, would seem logical associations. Or, rather than being candidate centric, does the military community have a preferred party to which they contribute their support?

Political Ideology within the Military

Beyond simple rates of participation, the more substantive question might be one of direction; besides likely increasing the propensity to engage in political action, might military service also be influencing ideological orientation as well? The majority of the members of the U.S. armed forces today are widely considered to be both social and political conservatives. From its officer corps down, both anecdotal and aggregate evidence suggest that for a substantial portion of its members, at least, a conservative ideology and identification with the Republican Party are the predominant shared political values (Avant 1998; Bachman, Blair and Segal 1977; Betros 2001; Teigen 2007).

This conservative identification has long been recognized to be particularly strong among the Officer classes (Holsti 1998, 2001; Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1972). Younger officers as well, presumably due in part to their typically middle-class backgrounds are also more likely to self-identify conservatively (Dempsey 2010). It deserves mentioning, however, that of the 1.4 million in uniform, less than 16% are officers. The remaining 84% are enlisted, and of these, almost half are again those youngest members in the lowest three ranks (U.S. DoD 2006). The typical enlisted recruit has little or no higher education, is as likely to be a member of a minority group as not, and is much more likely to have come from a disadvantaged background than a newly commissioned young officer (Bachman et al. 2000a).

If the theories of family and community socialization regarding ideological propensity are consistent, the typical enlisted recruit, if he identifies any ideology at all, should be more
liberal and Democratic in his voting preferences (Jennings and Niemi 1968 & 1974; Niemi and Jennings 1991; Sears and Levy 2003). And yet, it has long been a generally accepted point in the literature to assume that enlisted personnel’s attitudes tend to reflect those of their officers, although this aspect has not been as well researched and examined (Huntington 1957; Holsti and Rosenau 1986; Lovell and Stiehm 1989). If so, this suggests another apparent paradox: why would these individuals, who should most likely ascribe to more progressive, Democratic Party values in response to their own early socialization, appear to be expressing more conservative attitudes and Republican political support?

The Military Population

Each year over 150,000 young men and women enlist in the armed forces and undergo what is arguably the most significant change in their as yet young lives (U.S. DoD 2007). Motivations for enlistment are numerous: from a patriotic desire to serve their country, as well as an opportunity to learn valuable job skills and obtain work experience, to obtaining higher education benefits. For many, enlistment is an escape from a bleak future in a problematic community to an opportunity for steady employment that includes health care and housing benefits for dependents. For many, serving a term of enlistment is an interlude: an adventure, a challenge, a personal odyssey (Kerber 1998; Moskos 1993; Ricks 1989).

Besides the substantial physical challenges, recruits are also faced with adjusting to, and coming to terms with, a social system that is for most entirely different from the one to which they were accustomed. Along with a reorientation to group as opposed to individual activity, expression and concern, the recruit is now a member of a segment of society that for many is substantially different ideologically from that in which they were raised. Service in the all-
volunteer forces of today’s military appeals to a wide range of individuals, presumably for these and many other reasons (Ibid).

The typical recruit in the U.S. Marine Corps, for example, is a 19-year-old male, has a high school education, and is most likely to have come from the bottom half of the socio-economic scale (Ricks 1997). This profile is generally collectively true for all the enlisted personnel in the armed forces (Segal and Segal 2004).

Additionally, a disproportionate number of these recruits come from southern states. While the South, as a region of the country, accounts for 35.5% of 18-24 year olds in 2004, it has consistently contributed over 41% of annual enlistments for over 10 years. The Midwest provide 21% and the West 23% of new recruits, with these proportions being nearly equivalent to their respective populations, while the Northeast is the region that under-performs, recruiting less than 14% from a population with over 18% of the nation’s youth in this age range (U.S. DoD 2006).

Since 1948 and President Truman’s desegregation of the U.S. armed forces, the military has served as a model for integration, and indeed, in recent decades African-Americans have been overrepresented in their membership. In fiscal year 2004, the Department of Defense reported the proportion of African-Americans among the enlisted active-duty armed forces to be 21%, with Hispanics comprising 10% and an additional broad category of “others” (non-white) representing 8% of the armed forces. This results in nearly 40% of enlisted personnel being a member of a racial-ethnic minority group. When combined with the 20% of officers who also are minorities, the result is over 36% minority representation for the entire U.S. military (Ibid).

These figures, like age, would seem to suggest a potentially more liberal-leaning ideology among at least these groups (Dawson 2001; Key 1960; Segura and Bowler 2005). Do non-white military members (as a group) retain the ideological position and party support predicted by their ethnic
group membership or do the conservative values of the white majority influence them differently?

Women compose a much smaller proportion of the military: 15% of all forces in fiscal year 2004. This number is an average however because their actual percentages vary significantly between the service branches. From a low of 6% serving in the Marines to over 20% of the Air Force, women have made significant headway from the era, ending in 1967, when their percentages in each branch was limited by federal statute to no more than 2% (Willens 1996). The substantial variation in gender distribution between military and civilian populations very likely contributes significantly in any analysis of political ideology and attitudes. Since 1980, clear gender differences have been seen in every Presidential election. In the 2008 cycle the gender gap was seven percentage points, with women favoring the Democratic candidate (Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 2010). Obviously, within such a disproportionate group as the military, this difference in effect is largely obscured. Still, like racial-ethnic members, women form a critical sub-group to evaluate for the influences of the larger group effect.

The Research Question

The broad question being asked in this dissertation is what is the influence, if any, of military service on the development of political ideology and attitudes and by extension political behavior. In effect, is military service a significant independent variable in determining one’s propensity to participate in both direct and indirect political acts, and if so, how might this also be influencing their political beliefs?

More specifically, this research will attempt to answer three aspects of the potential influence of military service on political behavior. First, is there a conservative effect? Do the
members of the military through their political actions support conservative candidates, parties or issues? If so, do they do it uniformly and consistently or is it more situational? Second, is there any variation among the four service branches in direction or strength of ideology and if so, why? What other reasons might explain any variations among the branches that could potentially influence this effect? And third, how do the demographic differences within the branches and among the military population collectively influence or predict these effects?

Two further aspects of military service potentially play contributing roles in any military effect. These factors include duration, or length of association as well as the type of experience one has in their military service. An individual’s decision to reenlist and remain in service speaks to both an acceptance of the job to be done, as well as the social environment that the military provides. Desiring a continued association suggests just such an acceptance – that one feels an amenity both to the group and its mission, and suggests that the socialization process may have political consequences. If so, are these effects accentuated with service length? Alternately, how long after that service has ended, are any political effects retained?

The military experience ranges widely, and consequently the context of one’s service, either through branch or by experience may also play a role in influencing the socialization process. Do the branches themselves, due to varying missions, histories and cultures produce different effects or does the demographic composition of the branches alone explain any variation found between them? Or, is the more critical distinction the type of service one sees, rather than in which branch they see it? The emotional and physical toll of intense combat, frequent and lengthy deployments and family separations have been well documented, and in the extreme, shown to be long lasting (Grossman 2004). Surely such experiences could additionally have the potential to affect one’s political outlook and opinion as well. How these individuals
perceive their service, as either a just and noble sacrifice or a waste, may likely be reflected in their value of citizenship and their ownership of its obligations and opportunities.

Socialization Effects and Group Influence on the Individual

There exists today a relatively thin body of study on the attitudes and behaviors of young adults in uniform, with most of it derived from more generalized social science research, particularly from a few select panel studies (Bachman et al. 1998; Jennings and Niemi 1981). Especially interesting is the first of these panel studies, despite its relative age. The interest is due to the timing of the study with its cohort group, high school seniors from the class of 1965, providing a view of socialization impacts from military service unique to the present. This significant time of political and social upheaval within American society combined with the study’s emphasis on political attitudes and the development of ideology have provided a wealth of knowledge to the field of sociology as well as political science. The panel’s first wave was performed in 1965, as the students completed their senior year in high school, with the second wave following in 1973. The intervening period of time was singularly distinctive, particularly for the young men being studied, for its years include the Vietnam War. Although designed principally as a comparison study between generations (the parent’s attitudes and orientations are gathered also), it was able to incorporate the effects of military service on political development as well. Between the draft and preemptive volunteering more than half, 55%, of the subjects re-interviewed for the second wave had served on active duty in the armed forces (Jennings and Markus 1977). An additional third wave of this influential study occurred in 1982, which allowed for the maturation of this generation.

Jennings and Markus’ findings on the results, particularly the second wave, are prefaced by the recognition that “life fortunes” and an individual’s reaction to them are important
components of the young person’s development. Particularly with compulsory military service, the time spent in uniform represents a temporary, at best, deviation from one’s desired goals (Jennings and Markus 1984). Additional factors were found to contribute to the perception and opinion of subjects who experienced military service. Two interrelated aspects of service include the duration and immediacy of the service experience. For those in combat, the intensity of the experience is an influencing factor as well. The subject’s overall satisfaction with his military experience is another important determining effect (Jennings and Markus 1977). Results from the second wave in 1973, indicate an important relationship between both the length of time in combat service and overall satisfaction with their military service to increased levels of cynicism and mistrust of government. However, as the third wave in 1982 is examined, the authors find that despite the effects of military service this cohort group matures with attitudes consistent with those of their parents (Jennings and Markus 1984).

Several concerns over the continuing influence of the Jennings and Markus include the time frame of the study. While its importance in measuring the Vietnam War experience on a generation cannot be understated, it is worth mentioning that the initial selection of subjects, high school seniors, precludes a substantial portion of military enlistees who did not finish high school, which at the time was not a necessary requirement for induction. This sampling criteria would also tend to reduce the percentage of racial-ethnic participation, as dropout rates are disproportionately higher for minority students. Additionally, the time frame completely excludes the military experiences of female study participants. Significantly, while the effectively non-voluntary nature of the draft would tend to guard against self-selection, this aspect, that of the draft, is no longer a topical consideration. The advent of an all-volunteer military in 1974 and the distance of a generation from the controversies of Vietnam and the
social inequities raised by the draft have changed the face of military service. Finally, society itself, the changing role of the family and the lower percentage of Americans with military service in their immediate families as compared to Jennings and Marcus’ study, all point to a fundamental change in the way today’s generation view military service (Herring 2002).

The attitudes and ideologies of those in uniform were next examined in depth by Holsti and Rosenau (1986) in a quadrennial survey given to samples of opinion leaders, including a number of senior military officers. The results of these extensive surveys paint a fairly complete picture of the ideological leanings of the military careerist. Not only has the officer corps increased its propensity to identify itself with a political party, they also have overwhelmingly self-identified as being Republican in the most recent (1996) survey results (Holsti 1998). The proportion exceeds their civilian peers, and points at not only the direction, but also the increasing political awareness of the officer component of the military services today.

Holsti’s study, the Foreign Policy Leadership Project (FPLP) exclusively addresses the thinking of a distinct class of uniformed service members: well-educated and dedicated commissioned officers who are pursuing a professional vocation. The military experience of these career officers is substantially different from the one-hitch enlistee. While a small percentage of these young enlistees will find their niche in the military and pursue a career as well, often including commissioning and joining the officer ranks, the vast majority will not. Nor can their experiences or motivations be likened to those of senior officers. Besides the relative differences in education and age, there exists an entirely different social dynamic within the two groups (Lovell and Stiehm 1989).

The officer is trained to lead, to distinguish his actions from those of his subordinates. The officer, even the most junior, is generally privy to the big picture and is aware of his
relationship to it. The junior enlisted member generally has one task, normally part of a larger
group task, which is closely managed and directed by either a senior non-commissioned officer,
or lower ranking commissioned officer. Typically, a junior enlisted member never speaks to his
unit’s commanding officer, and certainly isn’t involved in operational decision making (Sheffield
2002).

However the FPLP survey is important in highlighting both the presence of a strong
ideological influence at work in the military as well as its leanings. It stands to reason, as a
result of human nature, that senior officer’s attitudes are adopted by impressionable junior
officers, who in turn influence the young enlisted personnel under their command. Attitudes
regarding national leadership and policy cannot help but be signaled by those in a position to
influence to those with less experience, education and political sophistication (Huntington 1957).

Following those like Huntington and Holsti, who focus on the civil-military relationship
aspect of research on the military, Jason Dempsey (2010), himself an Army officer, has
completed an extensive revisit to this question. He first compares the attitudes of a random 2004
sample of Army soldiers on the issue of military service, race and rank. In a later 2004 survey, he
compares the responses of West Point cadets with a matched sample from the 2004 American
National Election Study (ANES), specifically looking for the kind of differences between the
military and the general public that earlier research observed. From these surveys (limited to
Army personnel only), he found that in both cases the military respondents political beliefs were
more consistent with their civilian cohorts than they were different, suggesting a change in the
traditional view. In a series of comparative analyses, his work questions the strength of
conservative ideology held by both the young officer cadets and among already serving officers.
He attributes much of this result on the efforts that the Army has taken to have a richly diverse
student body in its national service academy, together with the age of the cadets, and the younger cohorts represented in the first survey as well (Dempsey 2010).

Prior to Dempsey’s work, much of the recent interest in military attitudes and the focus on the military’s adoption of conservative ideology came as the result of Thomas Ricks’s (1997) journalistic studies of the U.S. Marine Corps. Based on his anecdotal experiences when serving as a war correspondent in Somalia, Ricks was drawn to the differences he observed in the attitudes and group unity of Marines from those of the other service branches he had dealt with in the course of his career. In 1995, he pursued his curiosity over the root of those differences and followed a group of recruits from their first moments in basic training through their transformation into Marines. He reached the conclusion that there is a growing gap between the military and the society it serves. This division, he claims, is due in part to the changing values of a society that is generally ignorant of how the military functions, the increasing politicization of the military, and the changing role of the military at the end of the cold war. He also attributes some of this distance to the culture of the military and its emphasis on group membership (Ricks 1997). While Ricks’s book resonates with Marines and poignantly captures what is for most a unique life-experience, it is still essentially anecdotal.

Recognizing the differences between officers and junior enlisted in age, education, and often background, Bachman, Segal, Freedman-Doan and O’Malley (2000b) have utilized the ongoing national youth and young adult study, Monitoring the Future (MTF), to examine the effects of military service on attitudinal indicators of young enlisted personnel and compare them to their civilian peers. Also a panel study, the MTF samples high school seniors and distinguishes those who plan or are considering joining the military in the future. Subsequent surveys indicate that self-selection bias does influence opinion and attitudes, but not to the extent
first imagined. That there exists a moderately pro-military attitude among enlistees is not unreasonable, particularly surprising, or a new response (Bachman et al. 2000b). Like the older panel study of high school seniors, this one also fails to include women (panel mortality prevented statistical reliability) or to tap the significant proportion of enlistees who did not graduate with their class or who obtained equivalency degrees, again a substantial part of these being under-privileged and/or racial-ethnic minorities.

Bachman et al., continue their research on this data set and correlate the likelihood of enlistment to one’s stated interest in doing so (from the high school survey), along with family and other social demographics that impact enlistment decisions. Their research finds that those who enlist have generally decided this while still finishing high school; that they don’t plan to immediately attend college and view work in the military as attractive (Bachman et al. 2000a). This research stream also shows that the percentage of minority male recruits and those from below-average socio-economic backgrounds, the urban and rural poor, are disproportionately high compared to their numbers in society, (Bachman et al. 1998) confirming what Ricks offered anecdotally. The authors identify the increased propensity of enlistment for those with factors such as being raised in a single parent home, low levels of parental education and poor grades in high school (Bachman et al. 1999).

In more recent years, service in the armed forces has been marketed towards youth in a variety of ways: as a personal challenge, the ultimate Nintendo game, or alternately as an opportunity for educational benefits and the acquisition of job skills. With the advent of war, the call to service has become a call to duty. It is perhaps time to examine a new generation of young adults and determine not only their motivations for joining the military, but also how that transition into uniform stimulates, forms or changes their political characters. The initial
indoctrination process is both abrupt and disorienting, as it is intentionally designed to be. The famous Marine Corps explanation is to first break them down in order to rebuild them into Marines, a credo that is replicated in varying degrees by the other service branches. However, while intense, it is a relatively short-lived thirteen weeks for the Marine Corps, which is still the longest of the U.S. armed services basic training schools (USMC 2003).

How much of what Ricks reported is a result of the feeling of isolation and distance from civilian life experienced during the confines of basic training – an artifact of the experience, and how much is a genuine change in attitude and perception has not been determined. There is no dispute, however, that the experience of becoming a Marine is one that leaves an indelible mark on an individual. And for a time at least, he is bound to a group with a strong sense of mission, purpose and spirit (Ricks 1996; USMC 2003).

We know from the literature on voting behavior that there are certain well-established indicators for the increased likelihood of voting with higher education and greater age being two of the strongest (Campbell et al. 1960). Hence the demographic into which most junior enlisted members fall is one that is among those least likely to vote. While a logical inference can be derived from the statistics on the military vote to suggest that there must be an increase in voting activity among this age of uniformed service members, there is a question mark here. If it is an actuality, what is the principle explanation? Is it due to an increase in patriotic values synonymous with self-selection into the services? Perhaps a conscious recognition that as service members they are on the front line of American foreign policy? Alternatively, could the increase in voting be a result of the FVAP and the efforts of unit commanders and service policy, to ensure that their personnel have the opportunity to vote?
It would seem likely that the volunteer, and all of today’s era of recruits, are also looking for the kind of direction that military service gives him (Goldman and Segal 1976). Thus it is not too illogical to extend the argument and suggest that the new recruit is likely to adopt the ideological thinking of his new “family” as well. Not only is he trained to look up to and respect his officers, it again is human nature for him to emulate them to some degree as well. This phenomenon, young adults at an impressionable age being influenced by more mature, senior figures, combined with a natural tendency to adopt the group “think” would suggest that even those newly enlisted recruits from liberal families would become more conservative thinking. Or, will new recruits resist what is for many a way of thinking that is significantly different from their family, neighborhood and community experience? In short, along with changing a young recruit’s manner of dress, his work ethic and his self-centered behavior does military indoctrination also change his mind? Does the intensity of the military experience, occurring during the impressionable years of early adulthood (Alwin and Krosnick 1991; Sears 1999), alter the influence that the years spent with family, teachers and friends had on his development of political ideology?

If the military member at home exercises his voting right to the extent that the FVAP claims he does when abroad, does he vote a conservative ticket having identified with the majority of his group (Huddy 2003) or does he do otherwise? The behavior literature suggests that individuals will predominantly identify with the political party of their families as an extension of group identity (Campbell et al. 1960; Jennings and Niemi 1968; Sears and Levy 2003). Do service members’ voting decisions reflect the inculcated ideology of their military group membership to the extent that they vote differently than they would otherwise had they not
joined the military? Teigen (2007) finds that among veterans conservative ideology is strongly held, and that in the 2004 election the conservative, Republican ticket was widely preferred.

Previous literature on the influence of military service (Jennings and Markus 1976; Miller and Shanks 1996) suggests that service is at best a mild indicator of increased political participation in activities beyond simply voting. Military training is at the core of military life and is surprisingly comprehensive. From basic recruit training that includes such rudimentary instruction as tooth brushing to complex tasks such as piloting jet aircraft, the absorption of knowledge and new skills is an ongoing component of military service. While the ability to grasp sophisticated strategic and operational theory is not required by all; all are required to learn basic organizational principles. This includes understanding hierarchy, the appreciation of standardized routines and the awareness of how tasks get accomplished. The must-do imperative of the military mission necessitates pursuing concerns to their logical conclusion while individual motivation (at all levels) is directed towards initiative, and as is often necessary, providing leadership to accomplish objectives. As a consequence, military service trains its members with many skills applicable to direct political participation and civic activism. Indeed, Teigen (2006) also finds a significant relationship between military service and political participation of all types. The explanation for this is varied.

Military service, often at great personal cost, may also produce a feeling of having a larger stake in the country’s future compared to those who have not jeopardized their lives for it. Those veterans who have experienced combat seem to be particularly aware of the obligations of citizenship, and it has also been found that as the population with military service matures, there is an increase in their membership in various veteran’s groups and organizations, many of which are politically active (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Perhaps this learned knowledge of
how to get things done combined with the increased confidence that their military experience has
given them that they can get things done, has led them to sense that their actions in the civic
arena have intrinsic value and meaning.

If the experience of military service re-shapes a person’s ideological perspective and
identification, and provides the motivation and skills to engage in political action, then logically,
this effect should become stronger as the individual is exposed to it longer. This might also be
another way to separate individual from institutional effect – if the effect is individual, it will
likely increase with time and exposure; an artifact of institutional effect should have less
influence over a shorter exposure period, and should cease altogether when one is no longer in
uniform, (or subject to the FVAP, for example). Alternately, the permanence of this effect may
be conditional upon the length of time one served. In essence, one must not only be exposed, but
for a requisite, perhaps extended, period of time for the effect to be significant.

The Potential Influence of Branch Differences

While there is a popular view that the military is one organization, and indeed at many
levels it is, the U.S. Armed Forces are a collective of four distinct and separate entities. These
four service branches have their own unique histories, missions, and cultures. Each branch
performs its own recruitment and training, budgeting and administration. While many resources
are shared under the larger umbrella of the Department of Defense, each branch effectively has a
self-contained, autonomous organization structure. As a consequence of this arrangement, the
branches are somewhat in competition with one another for both “turf,” essentially the mission
and role for each branch, and the resources justified by them to accomplish those responsibilities.

This arrangement has resulted in a long history of inter-service rivalry for not only
professional prestige but for these critical resources. Competition is intense for the funds to
obtain cutting edge equipment and in the recruitment of the highest quality personnel. In recent years (particularly those leading up to the 2008 elections) the reality for military recruiters was a competitive job-market exacerbated by the force-tempo of war. The increasing use of complex technology on the battlefield and in the military environment creates a demand for high aptitude candidates, further intensifying recruitment rivalries. All these factors, to be blunt, point to a buyer’s market. Today’s youth, in an all-volunteer military can choose.

The two branches bearing much of the burden in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as a consequence of the emphasis towards “boots on the ground,” are the Army and the Marine Corps. And while these two branches have felt the consequences of an extended war in their recruiting efforts, they are still for the most part meeting their needs (New York Times 2007). While substantial financial incentives have been and still continue to be used for particular needs, both the Army and the Marines nonetheless focus their initial recruiting pitch on intrinsic values: one becomes a part of something important, the member of a uniquely qualified group. The challenges to potential recruits are both blunt, “…only a few will be good enough to be Marines…” and implied “…do you want to be ‘Army’ strong?” and project an image of almost mythical status. The Marine Corps particularly emphasizes the cult of membership; you don’t just join the Marines, you become a Marine, and as a recurrent advertising campaign suggests, you have the chance to join a historic pantheon of heroes.

As an alternate to making the recruiting appeal a personal challenge, the services often use a more intellectual approach aimed at selling service as an investment in one’s future. The potential to learn valuable job skills, obtain tangible benefits, or have the opportunity to travel provide enticing lures to recruits. Finally, there has long been a pragmatic aspect of recruitment that is not generally advertised. For better or worse, enlisting for many is seen as rather a last
resort, with rates of enlistment highly correlated with those for unemployment. The net result is that because each branch is responsible for its own recruiting, they all approach the challenge differently (Asch, Hoseck and Warner 2001).

At first glance, it would seem that serving in the military, in whichever branch, is fundamentally a similar experience for all. Upon further examination, however, we see that while many aspects of service are uniformly shared by all, the choice of service branch can offer distinctly different experiences. The primary mission of the branch, the type of skill-sets required for its recruits, and its own unique culture are aspects that potential recruits may, or may not know before they join. But particularly in light of research that shows the influence of family and friends in selecting a service branch, and the high rate of 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} generations of families in uniform (U.S. DoD 2007), we might reasonably conclude that new recruits are to some degree self-selecting into not only military service as a whole, but additionally into a specific branch. Conversely, those new members, without any preconceived ideas of what to expect, are also likely to be readily absorbed into the unique institutional culture of their service branch. The combination of each branch’s distinct emphasis and culture, with an identified self-selection effect, would suggest that each of the four major branches provides a unique service experience, and as a consequence their members likely vary in response as well. Therefore, it is critical to distinguish military service as it differs between the branches, and not just generalize all military service to be alike.

Differences in levels of political ideology between the branches may be rooted in the culture of the branch, or (perhaps more likely) differences between the branches may more accurately reflect the composition of a branch’s membership and the effect of self-selection. Substantial differences in mean education levels between the branches as well as disparate
representation by region, race, gender and age, have been identified by the Department of Defense. There is also a marked propensity for certain demographic groups to enlist at higher rates than others, further skewing demographic distributions (U.S. DoD 2007). Particularly when evaluating the potential causality of ideological direction and intensity, a clear understanding of these variations is necessary.

Methodology

Limitations of Previous Survey Data

Previous work on this subject without exception has been constrained by the limitations of available data. In the past there have been instances where national level surveys, such as the General Social Survey (GSS) and the ANES, have asked the most basic questions regarding military service. These questions typically have not gone beyond actual participation, while sometimes asking in which branch a person served and for how long. The older surveys of military personnel from the civil-military relations literature looking at attitudes and ideology are limited by sample bias. Surveys of senior field grade officers at the national war colleges, or officer candidates in the service academies are not representative of the larger military population. Those previous surveys given to officers alone fail to include the views of the largest sub-population of the military: enlisted, particularly junior enlisted personnel.

In addition to the concentrated focus on the opinions of officers alone, most of these surveys are now over 25 years old. The age of the data effectively limits the results to most accurately recording the views of a previous generation of officers – those who are white, college educated men, who for the most part come from reasonably advantaged backgrounds. Another limitation is that the survey respondents are generally career military, who have self-selected into a socially conservative lifestyle. Additionally, surveys directed to the classes at the various
professional military schools focus entirely on “professional” soldiers. They fail to capture the impact of a single enlistment, or brief stint in uniform. Whether from service in wartime, or enlistments motivated for economic reasons, a consequence of omitting this group also results in a failure to capture the large racial-ethnic presence found within them. And finally, previous national level survey research has failed to adequately measure the views of the growing number of women in the military services.

The Requirements of Military Survey Data

The inability to obtain a rich source of survey data on the military results from a two-fold dilemma. In a large, randomly sampled academic survey like the ANES or the GSS, there are practical limitations on the number of questions that can be justified for the limited amount of data returned. With the percentage responding affirmatively in both the 2004 and 2008 ANES samples to the question of military service experience being below 10% (which is as it should be, recalling the estimation of veterans in the population at 7%), it is not worth the cost to further probe military attitudes. The alternate choice, a targeted survey directed exclusively to military members and not randomly selected, such as the one solicited by the Military Times from its readership, risk issues of selection bias. However, since much of the aforementioned research is asking about how those in the military vary from one another, the selection bias introduced through voluntary participation is perhaps not as critical. Additionally, because the survey is directed exclusively towards military members it also includes many of the potential explanatory variables related to military service. Another significant benefit of using the Military Times survey is the large size of the sample (N≈4400), of which all cases have the desired attribute, in contrast to the 2008 ANES’s small percentage.
The Military Times Survey includes both current and former service members. This is a necessary requirement for achieving as representative a sample as possible from the universe of citizens with military experience. It also has a reasonably balanced number of all ranks of officers and enlisted, individuals currently on active duty as well as in the reserve forces, as well as women and minority members. Finally, all these attributes are also distributed across all four of the service branches.

The Plan of this Dissertation

In Chapter 2, I examine the 2008 Presidential Race to analyze the financial contribution behavior of military members. The source data comes from the Federal Election Commission’s public records of individual contributions to candidates during the 2008 presidential campaign cycle. In addition to revealing the behavior of those in the military collectively, the data also allows for differences by branch affiliation to be determined. In both instances, the inclination to contribute measures both an individual’s ideological direction and perhaps its strength, and is a tangible indicator of political participation. Besides identifying patterns of candidate support, the results also support the hypothesis of branch differences. As a result, branch variation becomes one of the principle areas of focus for the rest of the analysis.

Chapter 3 utilizes the Military Times Survey to further examine the potential differences between the branches and probes the likely explanations for these through an examination of political ideology and party affiliation. Again, the findings indicate significant variations between the branches, and discount some of the other potential explanations including rank and duty status for explaining mean attitudes. The Military Times survey results are then contrasted with comparable measures from the 2008 ANES. Among the more interesting findings are the
importance of race and gender and the difference between the sub-groups within the military and to a lesser extent between the military and the general population.

In Chapter 4, I examine policy preferences and political attitudes to further explore the findings of the previous chapter. Comparing the *Military Times* and the ANES data reveals the consistency of generally conservative values among the military sample, while at the same time reiterating the important role that race and gender contributes. A causal model is then presented to illustrate how the causal effects of self-selection, socialization and institutional differences (by branch) affect the concentration of individuals with similar political beliefs and attitudes.

Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the findings collectively, reaching conclusions that point to future research areas. In discussing the ramifications of these results I consider the implications to the military, civil society and official policy regarding the military.
CHAPTER 2

CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS AS POLITICAL EXPRESSION:

THE CASE OF AMERICA’S MILITARY

Introduction

During the last presidential election former and active members of the United States military once again participated alongside their fellow citizens not only by voting, but also in their active support of candidates by contributing to political campaigns. Did the actions of those military members who made contributions to candidates suggest a challenge to the long-held notion that members of the armed forces are generally more conservative and consequently Republican leaning? In recent presidential elections much interest has been shown to the military vote for several reasons. As a sub-group of voters, military voters are valued for their high rates of voting, while the large number utilizing absentee ballots can become a critical determination in closely contested races.

In the weeks and months before the actual voting, members of the military, like their fellow citizens have an additional opportunity to indicate their political beliefs by actively supporting a candidate. This contribution behavior of military members, like their votes, potentially informs not only their political ideology and attitudes, but their opinion of national policy as well. Considered by their fellow citizens the frontline of national defense, those in uniform have the opportunity to indicate through their support the effectiveness of American security policy. Particularly in the highly salient area of Iraq and Afghanistan war policy, the choices made by America’s military are likely to be highly informative.

So, who did the military initially support for President and is there an explanation why? As the primary races advanced, the weight of military support shifted. Was this shift merely a
pragmatic, perhaps strategic decision, or, did it signal a more significant change in political values? Was this pattern consistent among the four service branches, or did it vary? And what does this support suggest about the ideology and attitudes of today’s military? Finally, can these actions be explained by the prevailing assumptions regarding the political orientation of America’s armed forces, and if not what other likely explanations are there?

The Military Influence

Generally considered by both academics and the media to be more conservative and Republican leaning, the modern American military has been viewed as a reliably consistent supporter of the political right (Huntington 1957; Bachman et al. 1977; Holsti 1998 & 2001). The explanation for this support has generally been attributed to career-centric, institutional interests. Recent Republican presidents, most notably Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush both expanded and reinvigorated programs, benefits, and arguably the prestige of the armed forces; while recent Democratic presidents have been criticized for drastically reducing the defense budget (Jimmy Carter) and challenging the traditional values of the military, as in the case of Bill Clinton’s policies on the status of Homosexuals within the military. In addition to these institutionally driven expectations for the behavior of military members, the election of 2008 initially appeared to also be a referendum on the Bush administration’s policy decisions regarding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Center for Responsive Politics (CRP) 2007).

As principal players in these policies, and without question the group of Americans with most at stake in these issues, the choices made by the military both through campaign support and voting could potentially be seen as a bellwether of national feelings. Before the results can be considered however, one must first ask: Is the American military broadly representative of the population, or is it distinct? Would a sample of military member’s attitudes and beliefs match
those of a random sample of civilian Americans, or would their opinions be different? A similar finding would suggest no significant effect of military service on attitudes or opinions, negating as well much of the long-held acceptance of a collectively right-leaning military. While conversely, a finding distinct from national consensus might signal an opinion on these issues that reflects a uniquely military point of view; one influenced perhaps by the inherent attitudes of its unique membership, traditions and institutions, or the result of enculturation into a shared, similar ideology.

Individual Influences

Alternatively, essentially assigning a group explanation based on a shared experience, i.e. service in uniform, to individuals may be overstating the effect of that experience. Perhaps a more prosaic explanation is found in the individual’s own immediate concerns: their life stage and current circumstances may better predict their likely behavior, rather than any short or long-term socialization effect. Down’s *Economic Theory of Democracy* is rooted in the supposition that economic self-interest lies at the heart of individual political behavior. This suggestion, that individual decisions are determined by internalized cost-benefit calculations, forms the basis of the rational-choice theory of political behavior. Economic self-interest for most voters quite simply reduces to a personal checklist – how will a candidate’s policy proposals (if enacted) affect *their* job, *their* prospects, *their* hopes and dreams? How will a change of party in the White House or Congress impact *their* business or industry? What about longer-term considerations: interest rates or pension benefits? It is equally rational to suggest that this perception of self-interest also varies as people’s circumstances, situations and lives change. Self-interest in this context is not exclusively economic; rather, for certain voter groups, self-interest has additional dimensions to consider.
Voter self-interest is often further decided by the specialized concerns of their multiple group memberships. When one considers that these groups range from very broadly ascribed, based on gender, race or age, to more discreet memberships that are self-selected, occupational or ideological, there are multiple potential cleavages from which voters frame their political decisions. Because of the economic and social diversity of its members, America’s armed forces are an excellent case study of these often competing group effects. In addition to the similar economic concerns that they share with their civilian counterparts, the military likely has additional considerations and concerns about their personal self-interest when making their voting calculation. How might a potential administration’s likely foreign policy choices impact members of the military? How might decisions on homeland security matters affect a military reservist or guard member? Because of the unique nature of their occupation, voters in the U.S. armed forces sometimes face a decision that places the often competing motivations of economic and personal (bodily) self-interest at odds. Thus, their decision calculus is of particular interest when voting motivations are examined.

When one initially looks at the motivations of military voters an additional aspect must be considered, this being the tendency to describe the group collectively as such – referring to the (one) “military” vote. Rather, my contention is that there are easily two or more, “military” votes that vary by rank, and possibly branch, active-duty or retired, short-termer or careerist. Only by parsing these groups, and their sometimes differing motivations, or “self-interest”, into more narrowly defined categories will one fully appreciate the dynamics of the role that military service has on individual political decision-making and by extension, allow better understanding of the group effect of the military vote. Voting, however, is merely the final expression of
candidate approval. For many engaged citizens, voting is preceded by other aspects of political decision making and participation as well.

Participation

Political participation naturally divides itself into two aspects, the most common being voting, while the other but less frequently performed act is that of non-electoral participation, which can be further divided into high and low level activities (Leal 1999; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Considered to be low level are those actions during a campaign such as signing a petition or wearing a button, posting a yard sign or donating funds to a campaign. All demonstrate an individual’s willingness to overtly express their electoral support, but with minimal effort and energy expended, as opposed to the high level activities of attending rallies or canvassing, for example.

The act of donating campaign funds however, somewhat increases the stake involved. While the nature of the act is still identified as low-intensity, indeed writing and mailing a check or increasingly more frequent, making a donation through the internet, actually takes little effort. Nevertheless, I would argue that the willingness to give, what for many donors are scarce, hard-earned resources in support of their candidate, is a much more heightened level of participatory activity. Talk is cheap, buttons may be cute and bumper stickers provocative, but monetary contributions are definitive, investing their donor with a personal stake in the campaign outcome. Willingness to contribute, especially early and repeatedly suggests a much higher than average interest in the relevant issues, with the donor having identified the candidate most likely to further, (or safeguard) his own interests and then contributing funds to help affect that outcome.

In examining the effect of campaign contributions, the presidential election cycle is the most obvious and logical process to observe. Historically, the highest voter turnout occurs during
presidential elections, and most citizens if they donate to a campaign, do so at the presidential level. (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995) It is the one race that is national in nature, allowing for a national sample to be observed. This was definitely the case in the recent 2008 presidential election, during which the entire cycle drew unprecedented public interest and media attention and, in the case of the Democratic Party, a primary season that remained a horse-race up to the convention. The 2008 elections also represented a voter referendum on the policies of the Bush administration, specifically the wars on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan, the direction of foreign policy, recent steep rises in energy costs and towards the end of the cycle an economic crisis.

This election year provides an excellent backdrop for examining political participation, with campaign donations reaching record highs, both in dollars and in the number of donors, (CRP 2008b) and with voter turn-out in both the primaries and general election also achieving the highest percentages in recent years (McDonald 2008b & 2008c).

The Campaign Cycle

The stage of the presidential campaign cycle that a donor first contributes might also suggest the primary motivation behind their donations. In the period before the beginning of the formal primary cycle, as many candidates establish exploratory committees and then formally announce their candidacy, support is of a highly personalized nature; this is the moment when contributions represent the greatest leap of faith, and are the purest expression of ideological position. For the candidates, it is at this point that they must illicit a groundswell of early financial support in order to build critical momentum and have the resources in hand to start the primary season in a strong position.

The second stage of the campaign is the primary phase, which requires donors to balance their ideological preferences with a forward-looking strategic calculation as well. As primaries
are partisan, at this stage of the campaign candidates must direct their appeal to their party’s base, those party faithful who consistently vote in primaries, rather than tailoring their rhetoric to the general electorate. Potential supporters must consider which candidate most closely reflects their own position on issues that are salient to them. Which candidate best reflects the donor’s own vision for their party? The realistic supporter must then integrate a strategic dimension into their decision to contribute to a candidate. Will their chosen candidate, however ideal a fit to their own beliefs, be a successful national candidate? Will they be able to generate critical support from independents and moderates, in addition to voters of the opposite party? Will they even succeed in capturing all of their own party’s support? In short, is it rational to expect donations to increase as donors themselves express more confidence in their candidate’s chances of not just being able to win their party nomination, but the general election as well; reciprocally, we would expect to see donations decline if the candidate is perceived to be failing in this regard.

Finally, the primary process is ultimately an endurance race, albeit one in which a strong early start is critical. Successful candidates must be highly visible and well organized in as many races as possible, if not all. The effect of winning or performing unexpectedly well in early contests generates critical momentum, generating a feedback loop of high-visibility media coverage, supporter confidence, increasing campaign contributions and primary wins. The failure to capture all four of these variables appears to derail most candidates fairly early. As candidates drop out of the race, choices narrow, with the final selection of party candidate but for the convention formalities often made early, making latter primaries mere technicalities. Consequently, constant fund-raising is critical in sustaining a successful campaign, with the inability to generate enough initial support, however well qualified the candidate, effectively ending a race before it has begun.
Following the primaries and party nominating conventions, the final, general election phase of the campaign becomes more a party-centered competition and typically generates increasing amounts of donations as more of the electorate becomes engaged.

With the general election fundamentally representing an ideological choice, it is worth noting that today’s electorate is fairly evenly split between the two major parties, with neither having a simple majority of voters. Increasingly, America’s voters identify themselves as independents, or only moderately leaning party supporters, again both sides remaining in relative equilibrium. (Abramson et al. 2010) As a consequence, and in order to appeal to this growing centrist voting bloc, newly-nominated presidential candidates must now moderate their messages to appeal to and capture support from the voters in the center in order to gain the necessary electoral majority needed to win. This requires them to soften their partisan appeals of the primaries, shifting somewhat from a stance near that of their party’s base to a more moderate, centrist position.

Individual contribution decisions during the final period may reflect the continued support for the donor’s original choice, if he/she is the successful nominee, or it may be a more generalized expression of party support. Alternately, new support for a candidate may be motivated simply to prevent the opposing candidate from winning. The differing intensity of emotions involved would suggest that fear of the opposing party’s candidate likely trumps the less-intensive, more altruistically driven motivation of party unity achieved by shifting support to their party’s nominee after their own, preferred choice lost in the primary. A final explanation for shifting support may also be strategic, but in a more complicated way. Federal campaign law requires disclosure of not only the amount of contributions but their source as well. Individual donors are identified by not only their name and town, but they are encouraged to identify both their occupation and employer as well. This public record has no doubt likely been used (at least
in the eyes of the donors) as a way of currying favor with an incoming administration. Might some contributors be supporting, particularly in the final stages, the likely winner in an effort to claim credit later? Or conversely, might some, particularly those within government be showing support to avoid recriminations later, legal protections notwithstanding?

For analysis purposes, it is useful to look at the pattern of campaign contributions both within and across all three of these distinct phases of the campaign, as well as to consider the likely motivations of contributors as the election cycle progresses. Contributions made during all stages of the campaign fundamentally represent ideological direction, through party support. However, candidate support likely also speaks to specific issue positions as well, and may constitute the primary locus of candidate support, rather than principally that of party identification (Grant and Rudolph 2002).

Data

The data utilized are derived from Federal Election Commission (FEC) campaign filings as compiled and presented by The Washington Post and its online website. Their coverage of the 2008 elections included a searchable campaign contributions database. I found the site to be the most comprehensive, as it accounted for all donations, irrespective of the amount, unlike the FEC’s or other large news organizations such as the New York Times. For consistency, and all sites tabulated results slightly differently, I stayed with the Post’s figures for all comparisons. The contributions attributed to military donors are made by individuals only, with the comparison group of “All” contributions including not only those by individuals to each candidate’s campaign, but from all sources as well. For the most part, individual contributions constitute the vast majority of a candidate’s donations, and making such a comparison is somewhat informative. While there was no particular finding of interest from them, I still use
them as another metric through which a general comparison between the candidates can be illustrated.

Additional information on the source of donations, either from individuals, PACs or corporations, comes from the Center for Responsive Politics at its website, OpenSecrets.Org. Due to amended filings and other details, values are not exact, which is one reason no two independent sites match their figures exactly. However, when one can round to the nearest million, slight differences in accounting are not as much of a concern. One problem with the data is the lack of any reports dated August, 2008. This error seems to originate at the FEC, and has not been corrected to date. Thus, the September 2008 report appears to includes both months; the August contributions were put in with the month numbered incorrectly.

The Post’s website allows searches by both employer and occupation. In order to capture all of the permutations used I utilized multiple searches that included the four service branches, Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, as well as their acronyms, including reserve components, for example, USMC and USMCR. Additionally, I searched employment under the terms Department of Defense and DoD. While the vast majority of contributors defined their employer through one of these methods, and specified their military branch, others identified their employer more generally such as U.S. Government or simply Military. To ensure I captured the largest possible number of military contributors I searched within the occupation field under terms such as Military, Officer, Reservist, and Veteran. I was able to eliminate redundancies as well as obvious mistakes, for example, employees of the clothing store Old Navy, and other such errors. This allowed me to generate five data files, each with all of one service branch’s components. The small number of Coast Guard contributors were added to that of the Navy and one additional file was created for those who did not identify a specific branch affiliation.
The Challenges of Interpreting Data

Because not all employees are actually uniformed service members, there necessitated a further culling of the data which identified some potential sources of data bias. These included the possible dilution of the military effect by the presence of civilian employees. Some cases were straightforward with individuals specifically indentifying themselves by occupation as a civilian employee, while others imply by their stated occupation their likely civilian status. For examples, job titles such as Analyst indicate non-military status, and identifying one’s employer as a military installation, rather than a specific branch, also suggests civilian employment. Because of the use of occupation titles or specialties in the military, one cannot arbitrarily drop all cases with seemingly non-military jobs.

There are also certain areas where both uniformed military and civilians do similarly described work. This was a particular problem with the Army Corps of Engineers, which has a large number of civilian personnel, but whose uniformed component also identify not just as “Army” but as belonging to the Army Corps of Engineers. This group is just as likely to define their occupation as an “engineer,” as they are to identify primarily as an Army officer. The other two largest examples of this “professional degree” effect were lawyers and those in the medical fields. While some did clearly define their occupations as Judge Advocate General (JAG) lawyers, for example, or as both physician and officer, most did not. To simply drop all such cases not specifically identifying military membership would risk under-counting what is for several branches, a significant population. Additionally, most of these occupations are filled primarily by commissioned officers, and are not utilized by all of the branches in any equivalent way. In all these cases of potential civilian employment I used my best judgment based on tertiary information like address, and tried to stay consistent throughout. I considered dropping
all of these potentially biasing cases out, but in light of the large proportion of the Army and particularly the Navy’s officer corps in these fields, the loss of data outweighed the potential bias. Thus, there remains a potential bias in the data from unidentified civilians and the over-represented “professional-degree” class of officers. The data compiled in the finalized files, represent 9,618 separate acts of campaign contribution, of which many were made by individuals contributing multiple times. Yet, when one looks at the branches relative to one another, their proportions of contributions generally reflect their respective sizes.

The Campaign

Campaign Phase 1: The Pre-Primary Stage

The initial field of candidates in the pre-primary stage is typically large – and the 2008 Presidential nominating races were no exception. Indeed with the incumbent exiting after a second term, and without there being a sitting vice-president waiting in the wings, the race’s early stages saw a full field of candidates from both parties running for their respective nominations. In both parties, these starting fields of would-be nominees varied in ideological position from dogmatic anchors of their party’s most extreme positions to moderates, located much closer to the center. As mentioned earlier, the realities of primary voting behavior dictate that a candidate first sufficiently appeal to their party base, that core of party identifiers who typically vote in primary elections. But this need must be reconciled with the later necessity of moderating those positions in the general election. The successful candidate performs a balancing act; on the one hand he or she must appeal sufficiently to the party base to win the nomination, but on the other, must not commit to policy positions that will alienate those moderate voters of either party or the independents so necessary for general election success (O’Connor et al. 2006).
The 2008 nominating campaign began early, with both parties having open races and thus two full slates of contenders. Numerous candidates from both parties were poised to make their runs, with several early frontrunners identified. As the candidates formed their campaign committees, filed for office and began building their campaign funds, media pundits selected Senators Hillary Clinton and John McCain as the early favorites for likely Democratic and Republican nomination. During this year-long pre-campaign, these two and 13 others formed the two major party’s candidate lists. Several third party candidates declared as well, but for the purposes of this work, only the two major party primaries are examined. Had the focus of my research, the military, substantially supported a third party candidate, I would have included the candidate in the analysis, but they did not.

During this first phase, with contributions to candidates recounted in Table 1, the military clearly singled out one candidate for the majority of their support. Republican candidate Ron Paul, a U.S. Representative from Texas’s 14th district, accrued just under $211,000, more than twice as much in donations during this period than the next most-supported candidate, John McCain. Paul ran a grassroots campaign that generated an eclectic assortment of supporters and the second largest war-chest of his party going into the primaries. While a Republican, his stance on issues such as the legalization of marijuana use, which presumably accounted for much of the youth support he garnered, did not however dovetail well with more traditional Republican conservative values (Mosk 2008). As for the disproportionately high support of Paul by the military community, it is likely due to his stated position on the Iraq war – he promised to immediately withdraw all American forces following his election to president (Paul 2008). After 4 ½ years of combat, occupation, and multiple deployments and during a year in which it
appeared that success was slipping from reach with American casualties escalating, many in the military were ready for substantive change.

Table 1. Campaign Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributions to Candidates Jan-Dec 2007</th>
<th>Military</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Military %</th>
<th>All %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>$61,765</td>
<td>$82,849,411</td>
<td>11.78%</td>
<td>20.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain</td>
<td>$99,986</td>
<td>$40,134,886</td>
<td>19.08%</td>
<td>10.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>$210,870</td>
<td>$13,942,099</td>
<td>40.23%</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>$29,946</td>
<td>$94,794,935</td>
<td>5.71%</td>
<td>23.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giuliani</td>
<td>$18,830</td>
<td>$59,050,308</td>
<td>3.59%</td>
<td>14.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huckabee</td>
<td>$32,740</td>
<td>$6,122,161</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>1.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson</td>
<td>$22,175</td>
<td>$8,767,147</td>
<td>4.23%</td>
<td>2.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney</td>
<td>$10,114</td>
<td>$38,186,889</td>
<td>1.93%</td>
<td>9.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards</td>
<td>$12,274</td>
<td>$26,133,800</td>
<td>2.34%</td>
<td>6.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson</td>
<td>$9,175</td>
<td>$17,925,817</td>
<td>1.75%</td>
<td>4.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>$3,450</td>
<td>$1,101,948</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
<td>0.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biden</td>
<td>$6,300</td>
<td>$7,128,527</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
<td>1.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kucinich</td>
<td>$2,372</td>
<td>$1,352,647</td>
<td>0.45%</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tancredo</td>
<td>$3,385</td>
<td>$1,337,186</td>
<td>0.65%</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyes</td>
<td>$750</td>
<td>$87,113</td>
<td>0.14%</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Contribution Totals                     | $525,206   | $398,914,874 |           |        |

Table 1 also presents these amounts by the percentage given to each candidate. It would appear obvious from the early support of Paul, who during this phase received over 40% of all military donations compared to only 3½% from the entire donating public, that a committed portion of those in uniform supported the idea of an immediate withdrawal from Iraq. While Paul would never be seriously considered by Republican primary voters, he would continue to accrue support, 99% of which came from individual donors alone (FEC 2009). This “pure” expression of support, untainted by PACs and special interests, is likely very informative, particularly when one considers the personal stake of its military component. This would seem to somewhat demonstrate the substantive role of individual self-interest in candidate selection,
while also illustrating its effect on supporters. Somehow, the impact of hearing or reading a candidate’s issue position, however implausible, will generate significant support from those who share the same desire. A substantial number of military families wanted out of the Iraq War by January 2008, and this issue alone appears to have motivated considerable support (CRP 2007). I should note as well, that the figures presented are from donors who themselves are or were in uniform. Those donations from “military spouse”, and there were many, were dropped from the analysis. For candidate Paul especially, there was considerable additional support from the families of those in uniform and at physical risk.

The eventual Republican front-runner, Arizona Senator John McCain, would gather the second highest level of support from military contributors in the pre-primary phase, raising nearly $100,000. This support could be predicted based on several indicators: McCain was himself a military veteran, with a distinguished record of combat service that included capture and torture as a prisoner of war during the Vietnam conflict. His credibility with the military community was further enhanced as he questioned the administration’s strategy on the Iraq war in particular, while still being a staunch supporter of the military and veterans as well. This special qualification, shared membership in the military “group” which distinguished McCain from the other competitors in either primary, should have given him a considerable advantage with these voters. Further, if the military propensity for conservative, Republican party support occurs as others suggest (Betros 2001), By all measures McCain would be the candidate predicted to garner the most military support. Indeed, this scenario appeared to be developing during this opening phase as the percentage of McCain’s military support at 19.08% was nearly double his percentage from all contributions of 10.06%.
On the Democratic side of the race in this early stage the clear front-runner, virtually crowned by pundits as the default nominee of the party, was New York Senator Hillary Clinton. For many reasons, nearly the mirror opposite of those just listed arguing for the support of McCain, the military was not expected to be enthusiastic about Clinton. Besides her gender (about 15% of America’s current military force strength is female, the group from which it seems the majority of her military support came), Clinton struggled with the legacy of both her own and her husband’s Vietnam War protests, as well as her policy positions regarding the armed forces generally. For these and many other reasons, it is fair to assume that the Clinton campaign was not expecting a great deal of support from the military community, and they weren’t disappointed. Among all the candidates in the opening phase Clinton ranked 5th in support with 5.71% of the military contributions, compared to a 23.76% level of support from all contributors.

The preferred Democratic choice of the military was Illinois Senator Barack Obama, who initially garnered 11.78% of their contributions, while capturing 20.77 percent of overall contributions during this period. During this first phase, the level of support for Obama appears to also reflect the effect of group identity as well. In America the modern, post World War II military has been considered by minorities as one career field relatively free of racial discrimination, resulting in today’s military being proportionally higher in African-American members, at 21% rather than the approximate 13% seen in the general public (Department of Defense (DoD) 2006). Understandably, this group much like their civilian counterparts, supported Obama in very high percentages, demonstrably illustrating group identification and support (Abramson et al. 2010; Military Times 2008). As Obama’s candidacy developed momentum, this early campaign success solidified his presence as a serious contender going into
the primary season. This forced most Americans to openly acknowledge the issue of race as they considered the possibility of a person of color winning a major party nomination.

That this question was paired with the alternative of a woman potentially winning likely created a dilemma for older, socially conservative Democrats. Younger supporters clearly preferred Obama however, and with this and other growing support, also primarily from individual contributors, he would finish the pre-primary season rapidly catching up to Clinton’s considerable early advantage, with approximately $83 million raised against her $95 million. In contrast, and in a reverse of the historical pattern of Republican candidates exceeding their Democratic rivals in fund-raising and spending, the most successful Republican, McCain, raised a total of $40 million, while Paul, despite being favored by the military contributors would only be able to accrue $14 million. For these reasons, either due to their popular success or their military support, these four candidates alone will remain the focus of this discussion as we enter the second, primary phase is considered.

Campaign Phase 2: The Primary Races

As the initially large field of candidates entered the primary phase of the 2008 presidential election cycle, the critical role of funding quickly became apparent. Citing insufficient funds, candidates either dropped out early, or restricted their campaigning, limiting their resources to those state primary races that they deemed their best chance of success. This pragmatic strategy must also include the very real effect of momentum and the primary calendar. A candidate must still be “on the radar” when the state primaries that they consider their best chance for success are scheduled. Due to the unique American presidential campaign process and a primary season that begins in January and ends in June, one that evolved so candidates could campaign and be seen, in theory at least, in all 50 states, early success is critical for generating
and keeping press interest. Equally necessary is convincing skeptical donors that their preferred
candidate continues to be a viable competitor in order to both sustain and generate new
donations.

Election to the office of President, with its unique, national constituency demands this
frenetic pace, and indeed, thanks mainly to the design of the Electoral College, no state is
considered too small to be totally ignored during the campaign. Historically, the national
campaign was spaced to allow the physical movement of candidates in a fairly ordered progress
from one state to another, with an established tradition regarding the order of these state contests.
More recently, with primary nominations increasingly being decided by early state primaries,
this status quo was challenged. The first significant change was made by the coordinated acts of
southern states in 1988, to move their primary dates to the first Tuesday in March to not only
speak collectively as a regional block but to record their choices earlier in the season as well
(O’Connor and Sabato, 2006). Concentrating so many primaries on one date resulted in a large
number of delegates being committed relatively early in the process, often preemptively deciding
the “winners” well before the end of the primary season and in advance of the national party
conventions of the summer. In subsequent years and not to be outdone, many other states
followed suit and also moved their primary dates forward on the calendar. 2008 saw a fresh wave
of this front loading effect, and forced both the traditional first primary state, New Hampshire,
which is indeed required by its own state law to hold the first primary (New Hampshire 2007)
and Iowa, a caucus state (so not technically a challenge to New Hampshire’s legal requirement)
to move their dates forward as well. The opening salvo in the 2008 primary elections remained
then, for New Hampshire to fire, on the earliest ever date of January 8th (CRP 2008b). Somewhat
out of frustration, and in an effort to be more relevant in the presidential nomination selection
process, some state parties, notably Florida’s and Michigan’s Democrats, challenged both tradition and national party authority by advancing their state primaries much earlier in the calendar than the national party, in conference, had originally agreed to (Associated Press 2007).

These strategic efforts at front-loading were especially controversial in the 2008 primaries, so much so that with many states jockeying to be first, it looked for a while that some primary elections might actually be scheduled in December. The Democrats in Florida and Michigan initially incurred sanctions from the national party for moving their primary dates in violation of party by-laws, including the loss of accreditation of their delegates to the national nominating convention (Zarella and Oppman 2008). This later created considerable controversy as the candidates themselves reneged on earlier agreements regarding the two rogue states and sought to re-seat (or not) the delegates in question as it became increasingly evident that the nomination might rest on those votes (Greene 2008).

Despite all of the changes made to the traditional calendar, for the Democrats at least, the 2008 primaries in many ways turned back the clock, with their two leading candidates, Clinton and Obama, in a classic horse race going into the final week of primaries. The critical key to the endurance of both candidates in this contest was record levels of campaign donations, underscoring the crucial role that funding in combination with early momentum plays (CRP 2008a).

With the bulk of those record amounts coming from individual donors (Ibid), it is useful to examine their source more closely. Individual candidate support may indicate contributor’s motivations along several dimensions, with large or repeated contributions up to the individual limit of $2300 per candidate, per campaign, likely signifying the intensity of that support. While $2300 or $4600 is not an insignificant amount, the amount contributed alone should not be the
only measure of the intensity of a donor’s ideological beliefs. For many wealthier contributors, this is not any particular sacrifice; rather, a more meaningful testimony of ideological conviction is likely found in the many examples of individual donors, most with moderate incomes, regularly sending small amounts with the quiet constancy of conviction.

This election presented many such testimonies of hope and faith, likely motivated by support beyond ideological dimensions alone. For many citizens, particular candidates also have an appeal beyond their policy positions and party affiliation, and their support likely represents a more fundamental goal of contributors. The 2008 elections demonstrated this effect as well. Within the Democratic Party, two candidates by virtue of their differences from the historic norm of white male presidents likely received contributions that were not simply indicative of party or ideological support, but additionally represented a more personal support based on group or self-identity. While the data could not directly address this potential effect, its likelihood must be considered as one evaluates the results, particularly in consideration of the already disproportionate representation of two groups, African-Americans and Women, found in any sample drawn from the military rather than a national sample.

The total amounts received by the candidates and shown in Table 2 reflect the primary results: McCain securing the Republican nomination early, Paul no longer competitive, and even though the Democrats were in a race to the wire over delegates, the money race became lopsided, with nearly a 2 to 1 advantage for Obama over Clinton. The overall distribution of military contributions had changed significantly also. With Paul out of the race support shifted, but surprisingly in light of the presumed ideology of America’s military, rather than shift to the Republican and former military member McCain, nearly 45% of the military contributors were now supporting Obama. At this stage, the military support for the two leading candidates was not
significantly different from the general population of contributors. The real standouts among the
top four competitors were in the trailing two, Paul and Clinton. Here the difference in military
support is clearly seen, with a much larger percentage of support shown for Paul from that of all
contributors, while support for Clinton by the military was 5% less than the general population.

A month by month percentage accounting, illustrated in Table 3, shows these trends as
the primary race developed, and specific to our discussion illuminate a few points: the most
obvious is the rapid solidification of support behind Obama as it became apparent he was a
viable candidate. Another highlight is the sustained, but lesser proportionally, core of military
support for Clinton throughout – indeed these percentages closely mirror the proportion of the
military that is female, and perhaps suggests a group identification argument. This snapshot of
the data is the only aspect that shows support for Clinton by the military that is nearly consistent
with the overall contributions distribution. When we compare between the two sources, military

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Military</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Military</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>$240,445</td>
<td>$125,889,295</td>
<td>44.56%</td>
<td>45.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain</td>
<td>$125,811</td>
<td>$65,279,656</td>
<td>23.31%</td>
<td>23.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>$48,085</td>
<td>$2,668,057</td>
<td>8.91%</td>
<td>0.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>$102,290</td>
<td>$67,726,631</td>
<td>18.96%</td>
<td>24.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giuliani</td>
<td>$1,100</td>
<td>$3,265,348</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td>1.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huckabee</td>
<td>$130</td>
<td>$142,092</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson</td>
<td>$6,935</td>
<td>$1,040,516</td>
<td>1.29%</td>
<td>0.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney</td>
<td>$10,534</td>
<td>$9,760,630</td>
<td>1.95%</td>
<td>3.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards</td>
<td>$3,337</td>
<td>$2,105,614</td>
<td>0.62%</td>
<td>0.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson</td>
<td>$225</td>
<td>$265,155</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biden</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kucinich</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$172,856</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tancredo</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyes</td>
<td>$450</td>
<td>$19,039</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contribution Totals | $539,642 | $278,334,889 |
and overall, we see broadly similar proportions, but two distinctions stand out, particularly when one considers the eventual nominees. Rather than garnering a greater amount of support from the presumably more conservative military, and additionally in light of his own military background, McCain, receives consistently slightly less support from the military than he does from the entire contributing public. Only in January does he garner a greater proportion of support from military contributors than the greater general public.

Table 3. Campaign Phase 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent to Candidate – Military</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>34.26%</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
<td>51.34%</td>
<td>44.43%</td>
<td>48.19%</td>
<td>44.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain</td>
<td>31.41%</td>
<td>12.49%</td>
<td>23.55%</td>
<td>25.33%</td>
<td>30.29%</td>
<td>23.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>14.97%</td>
<td>14.49%</td>
<td>2.68%</td>
<td>0.77%</td>
<td>1.15%</td>
<td>8.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>5.95%</td>
<td>22.93%</td>
<td>22.31%</td>
<td>28.96%</td>
<td>20.37%</td>
<td>18.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giuliani</td>
<td>0.72%</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney</td>
<td>4.86%</td>
<td>2.36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards</td>
<td>2.42%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent to Candidate – Overall</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>40.38%</td>
<td>48.87%</td>
<td>48.61%</td>
<td>40.76%</td>
<td>47.15%</td>
<td>45.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain</td>
<td>16.33%</td>
<td>14.58%</td>
<td>25.89%</td>
<td>30.79%</td>
<td>35.67%</td>
<td>23.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>2.25%</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
<td>0.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>16.69%</td>
<td>32.76%</td>
<td>25.19%</td>
<td>28.34%</td>
<td>17.09%</td>
<td>24.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giuliani</td>
<td>5.02%</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney</td>
<td>13.59%</td>
<td>1.88%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards</td>
<td>3.37%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson</td>
<td>0.42%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results question not only the reliability of the military as being consistently conservative, and supporting of Republican candidates, but also to some degree challenges group affects. McCain was and is still seen by many as a military man. It is reasonable to assume that this should have counted more for him, particularly from this group. Obama, on the other hand, while initially starting slow in convincing the military to support him, finished strongly – with a
monthly total for May that exceeds even the overall percentage of support. While post-election surveys may show more exact percentages, particularly by demographic group, the overall picture for the military is one that reflects the larger, national result. In essence, at this stage, there is no substantive difference in the contribution decisions of America’s military from those of the greater national population.

Campaign Phase 3: The General Election

Following the national party conventions, the third and final phase of the campaign begins with the general election campaign. During this phase, ideological conviction should be expected to override any personal within-party disappointments over nominee selection. Party faithful are now expected to rally around their party’s nominee, including switching if necessary their financial support as well.

As Table 4 shows, candidate Obama clearly garners the bulk of support, but there is an interesting twist: in the final phase of the elections, while the level of military support for Obama goes up, the proportion that supported McCain within the military is greater than in the overall population, but only mildly so at nearly 21% compared to roughly 17%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Campaign Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions to Candidates June-Sept 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution Totals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage to Candidates June-Sept 2008</th>
<th>Military</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>79.15%</td>
<td>83.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain</td>
<td>20.85%</td>
<td>16.91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When compared to the previous results ending in May, we actually see a shift in support, Obama goes from 45% of the military contributing to him, to now nearly 80% while McCain’s military support drops from 23.3% to 20.8%, and the support to all other candidates essentially ends. This suggests that not only did Obama pick-up support held by the other Democratic candidates, but he likely gained some support from Republican backers as well. While the military donations continued strongly throughout the three periods, their focus shifted. Whether this reflects a genuine change in conviction or a more pragmatic assessment of self-interest can only be construed from these results.

The trends for the general election months of June to September are clear however regarding both the reluctance to support a losing cause, as well as a conviction to be part of the winning side. Both are clearly illustrated when one looks at month-by-month comparison of the military contributions with all contributions, as shown in Table 5. Very similar to their civilian counterparts, those within the military who are still contributing are heavily favoring Obama, while support for the conservative candidate, McCain all but evaporates as the period ends.

Table 5. Campaign Phase 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributions to Candidates Jun-Sept. 2008</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug/Sept*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>$63,718</td>
<td>$50,360,579</td>
<td>$45,036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage to Candidates Jun-Sept. 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug/Sept*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>67.63%</td>
<td>75.56%</td>
<td>63.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain</td>
<td>32.37%</td>
<td>24.44%</td>
<td>36.27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point it may be useful to reflect on the total level of individual campaign contributions across all three phases, both by dollars (Table 6), and Percentages (Table 7).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Military Contributions</th>
<th>All Contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>$532,980</td>
<td>$186,911,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain</td>
<td>$286,604</td>
<td>$88,903,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>$258,955</td>
<td>$16,565,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>$132,236</td>
<td>$154,611,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giuliani</td>
<td>$19,930</td>
<td>$62,315,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huckabee</td>
<td>$32,870</td>
<td>$6,264,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson</td>
<td>$29,110</td>
<td>$9,807,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney</td>
<td>$25,709</td>
<td>$47,947,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards</td>
<td>$15,611</td>
<td>$28,239,414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson</td>
<td>$9,400</td>
<td>$18,190,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>$3,450</td>
<td>$1,101,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biden</td>
<td>$6,300</td>
<td>$7,128,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kucinich</td>
<td>$2,672</td>
<td>$1,525,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tancredo</td>
<td>$3,385</td>
<td>$1,337,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyes</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>$106,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Contributions</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,360,412</strong></td>
<td><strong>$630,956,323</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Military</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>39.18%</td>
<td>29.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain</td>
<td>21.07%</td>
<td>14.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>19.04%</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>9.72%</td>
<td>24.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giuliani</td>
<td>1.46%</td>
<td>9.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huckabee</td>
<td>2.42%</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson</td>
<td>2.14%</td>
<td>1.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>7.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards</td>
<td>1.15%</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson</td>
<td>0.69%</td>
<td>2.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biden</td>
<td>0.46%</td>
<td>1.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kucinich</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td>0.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tancredo</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>0.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyes</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theoretical Explanations

The Self-Selection Effect of Volunteerism into the Military

The membership of the United States military is not a representative sample of American society, rather it is biased as a result of individual choice. This choice is driven by multiple motivations, all of which need to be considered and controlled for when one looks to causal explanations of behavior. As previously mentioned, the greatest differences are in the demographic make-up of those in uniform.

The military has traditionally, and still continues to be, predominantly male. Today’s military is approximately 15% female, a percentage that while still disproportionately low, when compared to the general population, is greatly increased from the statutory limits of 2% established by the 1948 Women’s Armed Services Integration Act. Since this limitation was repealed in 1967 (GAO 1987), and in combination with the end of the draft, opportunities for women in the military forces have gradually been increasing, particularly within the areas of support, technology and other non-combat specialties. While women are still restricted from direct combat roles, increasingly the modern military mission and what constitutes “battle-space” are obscuring the traditional boundaries between combat and supporting roles. Indeed, one lasting legacy of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts will likely be the end of gender segregation in all but the direct, ground-fighting forces. The historical legacy of generations of limitations and restricted service has consequently resulted in the number of women veterans also being correspondingly low, at slightly over 1.74 million women (7 1/2 %) compared to 21.24 million men (U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA) 2008).

The relative proportion of race-ethnicities within the armed forces is another likely source of attitudinal differences, particularly when one examines the entire population of individuals
with military experience. Like restrictions on women’s service, prior to the 1948 desegregation of the military by Truman’s Executive Order 9981, minorities were either prohibited outright from serving in some branches or had their opportunities drastically restricted to supportive, non-command roles. In either case, the number of minority recruits accepted prior to World War II was negligible. This policy was rooted in racial prejudices, and linked to the institutionalized segregation of the South. Today the armed forces are fully integrated, diverse, and aggressively recruiting from those groups that remain under-represented, to the extent that the military has achieved a level of diversity rarely achieved in other occupations or industry. The percentage of minorities in today’s active-duty military is 28.5%, while minorities represent approximately 20% of the veterans population (U.S.DoD 2007; U.S. VA 2008).

While those in active service are predominantly young, with an average age of 27, the U.S.’s veterans population of nearly 23 million is disproportionately distributed across all age ranges, based mainly on the nation’s historical experience with war. As a consequence, the relative differences between these generations need to be identified and understood, especially when newer survey data is compared to older. The Second World War resulted in over 15 million men and women in uniform, historically the highest percentage of the American population serving at any one time. The influence of this one generation on attitudes and actions related to military opinion has been considerable but is rapidly shrinking as members of the WWII generation ages. Indeed, the overall number of U.S. veterans has been steadily decreasing as this population expires; as director Ken Burns poignantly points out at the end of each segment of his documentary *The War*, “1,000 veterans of this war die each day” (Ward and Burns 2007). However, it should also be remembered that the Vietnam era population is itself
mostly retired today. Despite this, the total percentage of veterans over the age of 65 is actually just under 40% of the overall veterans population (VA 2010).

Another disproportionate demographic variable that potentially impacts attitudinal results is the region of the country from which an individual joins the military – in most cases their home, where they grew up and were first politically socialized. The DoD’s most recent (FY 2005) accession report indicates that over 40% of new recruits come from southern states – a statistic that has been steady for 15 years. While the number of recruits from the Midwest and the West are 1.5% and 0.2% less respectively than their overall percentage of population in similar age groups; recruits from the South exceed their population by over 5%, with those from the Northeast falling short by more than 4%. This can be restated in a ratio of the geographical representation (percentage of accessions divided by percentage of 18-24 year-olds from the region) in which the South is 1.2, compared to 0.7 for the Northeast, 0.9 for the Midwest, and 1.0 for the West. The over-representation by Southerners within the military is likely the result of several explanations including regional differences in educational opportunities, employment patterns, and economic status, but may also reflect unique cultural attitudes towards the military and military service. A resulting consequence is that this disproportionately larger “Southern” effect (Abramson et al. 2010), if any, may also affect comprehensive measures of ideological and political attitudes among the entire military population. As a result, the potential regional effect, requires thoughtful consideration and needs to be statistically controlled for.

To sum then, when looking at a military sample, at a minimum one needs to recognize the additional likely influences of age, gender, race-ethnicity and region of origin on the attitudes of its members. These effects may be more nuanced but still discernable when we look at the differences between the service branches themselves. Self-selection further occurs when an
individual makes her/his choice of which service branch to join. The decision is dictated in part by one’s goals, skills, and limitations; however, analysis of demographic groups’ differing propensities towards joining the various service branches suggests that for many an additional and deliberate self-selection based on preconceived attitudes or opinions has also taken place.

Branch Differences

While the United States military is commonly portrayed as one homogeneous group, it is in reality four distinct sub-cultures, with each of the service branches having a unique primary mission, specialized personnel needs, and differing levels of institutional identity. Socialization arguments are buttressed by these branch-specific differences, particularly during periods of voluntary membership. Due in part to differences in branch size, the skills needed to perform their primary purpose, as well as differences in support institutions such as medical or engineering, the personnel compositions of the four major branches differ. As a result, each branch is essentially unique. Added to these structurally driven differences are the additional effects of self-selection, rooted in group identity. For example, the percentage of women within a service branch ranges from a high of 20% in the Air Force to a low of 6% in the Marine Corps, while the percentage of Latinos is highest in the Marine Corps at nearly 15% and lowest in the Air Force at 6%. Ranging from over 25% in the Army to 13% in the Marines, the distribution of African-Americans varies significantly from their 20% average within the DoD overall. The Air Force has the highest percentage of Whites, with 76.4%, compared to the proportion of Whites currently serving in the military overall of 68.5% (DoD 2007).

The increasing complexity of tasks for all of the service branches has placed a particular premium on recruiting candidates who score well on aptitude tests. The Air Force is the most demanding, with 81% of its recruits deemed high quality, while the least discerning branch, the
Army, is only able to claim 61% of high quality (DoD 2007). One other factor that is less quantifiable is whether one branch is perceived to be a “safer” option over another particularly during times of war. Certainly over the past six years the two primary ground-combat branches, the Army and Marines, have had the most difficulty in fulfilling their recruitment demands, due in no small part to ongoing war losses. However this aspect may be offset by those who choose the Army or the Marines because they are on the frontlines. Regardless, on the strength of their relative demographics alone, we might expect to see some differences between the branches, and indeed the data suggests this. Does the data also suggest the presence of some ideological differences between the branches, which self-selection might reasonably explain or is there some indication of a branch specific effect?

Figure 1. Comparison of Overall Campaign Contributions by Branch and Force Strength

Examining the contribution patterns of military members by service branch sheds additional light on the ideological differences that are likely a function of branch self-selection. At first glance, Figure 1 shows the percentage breakdown of contribution dollars by service
branch to be remarkably consistent with the branch’s percentages within the uniformed component of the DoD. The percentage of overall contributions by military members in both the Army and the Air Force matched their percentages of personnel within the DoD, roughly 45% and 25% respectively, while contributions of the Navy slightly exceeded their DoD percentage, 23% to 20%, with the Marine Corps falling short of its DoD force strength of 10% with contributions of just under 6% of the overall military contributions.

Figure 2. Dollar Amount Contributions to Candidates by Service Branch

The distribution of support for the candidates, as depicted in Figure 2, is not uniformly consistent however. While Senator Obama ended the campaign with significant support from the Army, Navy and Air Force, the Marines still supported McCain over Obama, by just over $3000. Of the total contributions used in the branch-specific analysis, $1.22 million or more than 36.5% were in support of Senator Obama, with McCain in second with 21.3%, followed closely by Paul with 19.98%. Senator Clinton fell to a distant fourth, with 10% of the overall contributions.
Table 8. Percentage of Candidate Support by Branch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Navy</th>
<th>Air Force</th>
<th>Marines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>49.37%</td>
<td>16.58%</td>
<td>29.28%</td>
<td>4.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain</td>
<td>49.51%</td>
<td>25.05%</td>
<td>15.86%</td>
<td>9.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>42.34%</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
<td>29.53%</td>
<td>4.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>41.88%</td>
<td>32.38%</td>
<td>23.12%</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>45.76%</td>
<td>23.49%</td>
<td>25.02%</td>
<td>5.74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 8, Candidate support within each branch was reasonably consistent, and reflective of the collective ‘Overall’ military support shown, with two exceptions. In addition to the higher Marine Corps support for McCain, a 5% advantage over Obama, another significant difference is that of the Air Force: their support for McCain is below the overall average of just over 21% to 13.5%. So essentially, the results for both the Air Force and the Marines deviate from the expected mean, indicating the Air Force is more liberal and the Marines are more conservative.

Discussion

Conventional Contributor or Voter Motivations

The American voter often uses the presidential election cycle to signal a desire for substantive change. This change is not simply one of which party is in control of the Presidency and Congress, but a referendum on national policy and direction. Voters, for all their apparent lack of political sophistication and engagement, do routinely show themselves to have a collective capacity to demand change.

Cycling the office of the President between the parties is a fairly routine aspect of American politics (Miller 1983, Radcliffe and Wingenbach 2000). This tendency thus disadvantages the candidate of the incumbent party, particularly during a time of crisis, when the electorate is most alert. Periods of prolonged and unresolved military involvement, economic
recession, and energy concerns have all previously contributed to the voting public’s resolve to change parties. Events such as these also likely facilitate the efforts of the opposition party, with it being easier to attack rather than defend unpopular positions. The 2008 elections managed to combine all three of these issues, thus heavily favoring the Democratic Party. The Republican Party pragmatically recognized its underdog position early on, with many party incumbents opting to retire rather than risk electoral defeat. Hence, despite whoever the eventual Republican nominee turned out to be, it was generally acknowledged by media pundits that 2008 was the Democrat’s race to lose. This tone throughout the election cycle also likely influenced voter behavior and campaign support decisions.

The pattern of campaign contributions and public support was also likely influenced by the extent and tone of the media coverage (Goidel and Shields 1994). Indeed, as the race progressed, increased media coverage projecting an Obama win likely contributed to this (Project for Excellence in Journalism 2008). Certainly much of the analysis of the 2008 presidential campaign contributions cycle suggests this effect occurring as well. After all, it is a very human virtue to not throw good money after bad – the implication here being that donating money to what one perceives to be a lost cause is a foolish action.

Collectively, the combined influence of all the suggested effects: individual and group identity and interest, front-loading and momentum, media coverage, party cues and expectations and voter’s cyclical inclination for change, particularly impact campaign contribution decisions made during a presidential campaign. The most common, overt political behavior of Americans is voting, and while it has some associated costs in time and effort, it is for the most part free. Breaking out one’s checkbook and contributing money has a very real, easily associated cost – the actual dollar amount given. This is not just caring enough to make the effort to vote, but
caring substantially more, offering real, tangible support for one’s beliefs. Whether these beliefs are more firmly rooted in complex ideological preferences or in a more simplistic desire for change (of policy or habit, i.e. who we elect), remains to be determined.

It is reasonable to assume that rather than supporting one conviction, literally in the example of campaign donations, at the expense of another, this being ultimately an irrational act, the conflicted citizen may simply opt-out of the process. He or she might adequately resolve their conflict at the last moment in the voting booth, but not satisfactorily enough to write a check. Therefore, those citizens who did make financial contributions did so with an arguably strong conviction. So, how did the members of one particular group, one with a significant stake in the outcome, balance these competing motivations? What were the compelling motivations of members of the American military who chose to contribute to one or more candidates over the course of the 2008 Presidential election cycle?

The Differing Military Motivations

For the past six years, the American military has been on the front lines of the war on terror, its personnel and their families shouldering most of the obligations and consequences of that war. The military, through its voting choice and other acts of political support, would likely be a bell-whether group to indicate voter opinion on this issue.

Like many organizations and occupations, the military tends to be viewed generally as one homogeneous group, its membership sharing similar origins, reflecting a shared culture and critically, sharing similar goals both short and long-term. Unlike other groups in America however, the military has some constraints placed upon political behavior. Historically, by the late 19th century the norm for military professionals was to abstain from voting for President as this was thought to potentially put them in the position of disagreeing with their Commander in
Chief (Dempsey 2010). In the modern era this attitude began to change in part from the expansion of the military during World War II, an increase met largely by citizen-soldiers who were used to and expected to vote. Nonetheless, several prominent generals including George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower chose not to vote while in uniform (Fischer 2005).

Today the military has no such reservations on voting. Rather, considerable effort is expended to ensure that all uniform members are able to vote (FVAP 2003). The uniformed services do however fall under the provisions of the DoD Directive 1344.10, which prohibits the display of partisan support on federal property and restricts partisan displays, speech or participation by those wearing the uniform of the U.S. military. This is not to say that members of the armed forces are required to be apolitical, rather they are to reserve their political inclinations to their private sphere.

These legal restraints, along with a culture that until fairly recently has shunned the appearance of an active role in politics, has tended to support the identification of the military as a homogeneous group, one based mainly on the social origins of its membership and its function, widely regarded to be conservative in its values and ideology. This belief is challenged however by the contribution behavior exhibited by those in uniform during the 2008 election cycle. This finding suggests one of two likely explanations: the first is that the previous scholarship suggesting that the military as a group is conservative and supports the Republican Party is simply wrong. The second and I would argue more correct explanation is that the military has been wrongly classified as a homogeneous entity when in reality it is not.

I suggest that the collective identity of the military is composed of several significant sub-groups. One obvious division is based on organizational structure and the separation of officers and enlisted into two primary groups. The largest but least studied group is that of the
young enlistees, the short-termers for whom service in an interlude, an experience but not a
career. The other much smaller group, that of the commissioned and non-commissioned officer
careerists, is the component that has been most observed, and from which the generalities about
military political attitudes have been drawn. Because the locus of self-interest naturally varies
based on the sub-group’s somewhat different characteristics and immediate needs, each group
will likely make political decisions that vary from those of the others. Alternately, one might
suggest that there is no appreciable difference: that those in uniform do not differ substantially
from their fellow citizens. I would not go so far as to make this assumption, however, because
the failure of most military participant data to distinguish this difference, which in many ways
ignores at least two distinct groups, results in devolution to the mean group value. This is
particularly true when looking at contribution activity where the much smaller but more affluent
officer group is easily over-represented. As a consequence, in this analysis, the influence of
officer’s attitudes through contributions is likely exaggerated.

The commissioned officers of America’s active and reserve forces represent less than
18% of the total number in uniform, but they do represent the long-term interests and continuity
of each of their respective service branches. Their generally long-term commitment to the
military as a career has also made them more easily studied as they attend one service school
after another. The officer also has a career progression that is somewhat tied to the health of not
only his/her service branch, but by specific occupation as well. The most junior lieutenants in
their first squadron knows how vital it is that their aircraft continue to be procured. Besides the
continued funding of acquisitions and the development of new systems, the careerist recognizes
the importance of the long-term viability of the armed forces. At some point in their careers,
most officers serve a period of time on long-term strategic planning, helping define the future
role and utility of their service. Officers are also the default spokespeople for the military—retired Colonels and Generals may continue to ply their trade as analysts for the media, but there are no Sergeants giving commentary on CNN. As a consequence, the American public sees the military through the highly successful career officers who represent less than 1% of the total military membership.

In contrast, the “silent majority” of America’s uniform services are the unsung short-timers, the enlistee who does most of the work, gets the least credit and runs the greatest personal risk. These are also the youngest and least educated, and most likely to have come from disadvantaged backgrounds. In short, the least likely to have well-defined or understood positions regarding the long-term implications of the political process on the viability of America’s military infrastructure. They do however, like any citizen, have a healthy perception of their own self-interest. For many, as the euphemistic “point of the spear”, they are quite attuned to foreign policy decisions that place them in harm’s way, particularly when done repeatedly and for no appreciable gain. All are certainly volunteers, but also somewhat pragmatic volunteers who serve for educational and dependent benefits, their self-interest is by definition much more immediate and short-term. What will a new president do about today’s war, today’s deployments, and today’s G.I. bill? Theirs is not only economic self-interest but personal as well. Their families, for the most part, did not sign on to military careers. Rather, they expect more of the continuity, consistency and the ability to reliably make future plans that their civilian counterparts have. Goals disrupted because of prolonged deployments or the consequences of combat are fundamentally goals unmet (Asch, Hosek and Warner 2001).

The belief in military service for patriotism, altruism, or for service sake alone is disingenuous and always has been (Ricks 1996). From the time of its founding this country has
struggled with providing the right balance of incentives to fill its military ranks, and when necessary has resorted to forced drafts in national emergencies. Since George Washington, presidents and administrations have struggled with finding the resources to encourage the most able and competent among us to serve in our national defense, to equip and provide for all military contingencies, and to ensure to those who do serve, that they and their own will be provided for in the event they become casualties in this defense. I would argue that the concerns of the enlisted volunteer today are fundamentally the same as they were 230 years ago, and in all the years in between.

It does the military a disservice to attempt to define it succinctly into one discreet category. To do so demographically, based on modes belies the most American feature of the U.S. armed forces, that of its diversity, and its being a reflection of the society it serves – the military is in many ways a model for diversity, equality of opportunity and a class-free society. While at the same time it does by necessity have very strict class (by rank) distinctions, these are determined not by one’s demographic origins but rather on achievement and progression through permeable levels. One cannot say that the military is more conservative (or liberal) based on the opinions of primarily one minority segment of it, voicing concerns that very well may differ from the larger, but more silent majority.

At least in this one aspect of the 2008 Presidential elections, the expression of ideological position based on campaign contributions, the results shown here are contrary to the popularly held belief that America’s military is an ideologically conservative organization with decidedly Republican leanings. Thus far the data suggest that rather than a unified top-down culture of conservative values and political opinions, America’s military is much more reflective of American society. Their financial support for Obama indicates that they wanted political
change, and were open to the idea of diversity, and their limited support of McCain suggests that they did not appreciably value shared service experience in a candidate. Particularly early on, in their support for candidate Paul, they expressed their desire to end America’s war in Iraq. Their building consensus of support for the eventual winner, Democratic candidate Obama probably signaled more than mere recognition of the inevitability of his winning, but more likely, their conviction that a substantive change was indeed necessary. Through their campaign contributions, America’s military, nearly 2 to 1, signaled a desire for a change, in among others, the prosecution of America’s wars, as well as the rest that a change in party implies. Their internal calculation appears straightforward and succinct: support the candidate that will reduce the likelihood of more deployments, more combat, and more risk. Certainly these are just assumptions that this analysis only suggests, but it does direct future research.

In any future analysis, in order to fully appreciate the ways in which the military may likely differ from its civilian counterparts (and certainly even this analysis shows some areas of difference), one must be able to control for the often competing interests of the membership of that military. Only by accounting for and qualifying sub-group differences can one present a truer picture of what, if any effect military service has on its members. With this information, one should be able to create a better or more accurate model than one made with only a single, undifferentiated military service variable alone.
CHAPTER 3

IDEOLOGY AND PARTY AFFILIATION: SERVICE BRANCH MATTERS

Introduction

The examination of campaign contributions by members of the armed forces in the previous chapter suggested differences among the larger military community in its political preferences, both those directly expressed and those that can be inferred. Particularly when it comes to the strength of their ideological preferences, the analysis of military contributions during the 2008 Presidential campaign suggests that there is some aspect, unique to each service branch that differentiates them this way. A principal shortcoming of the campaign contribution data was an inability to discern discreet sub-groups of individuals such as women and minorities, as well as other potentially critical variables, such as rank, duration of service, or status. This prohibited identifying any distinctions within those contributors beyond the knowledge of their service branch. Lacking the more informative descriptive statistics, one is left to largely speculate over the possible implications for these groups, making meaningful comparisons to the larger civilian population problematic. While the contributions study did suggest some initial differences between the military contributor and his civilian counterpart, particularly in the earliest stages of the election cycle, it more significantly suggested that there are distinct differences in the intensity of political attitudes among the four service branches.

Whether the explanation for these differences is the unique mission and culture of each branch, a combination of the history, popular reputation and mystique projected by each, or a simpler explanation of demographic differences, requires further exploration. Focusing now on the military community exclusively, in an attempt to illuminate the source of these differences, I
look at a large national survey of service members and veterans drawn from the readership of the *Military Times* family of publications.

The ongoing *Military Times* Surveys are an online survey of the readership of the four publications, *Army Times, Navy Times, Air Force Times* and *Marine Times* that are published under the collective masthead of the *Military Times*. Their 2008 pre-election survey was both the source of considerable press coverage regarding the likely propensity of the military vote as well as a source of data for at least one published study (Dempsey 2010). While the pre-election survey speculates on candidate support, a subsequent post-election survey performed the first week of December 2008 records the opinions of military participants in light of the newly elected administration. Besides the fact that the data had not already been analyzed, I considered this post-election survey to have the potential to be more enlightening: The election results were now in. How did those in uniform feel about those results and the potential changes in policy as a consequence?

While the survey itself is unscientific per se; for example, participants are not randomly selected, nor is there any weighting to insure a representative sample, it is however robust, with a large $N$ of $≈ 4400$ respondents. Because participants are solicited through a voluntary subscriber base, those who participate are self-selected and results need to be considered with this in mind. While one therefore cannot make a secure generalization to the entire military population as a result of these findings, they do provide illumination into this unique sub-population. Recognizing these data limitations, and being cautious in interpreting the results, one can still gain valuable insights, both in making comparisons between the branches, and in examining differences among groups across the military population.
The Survey Data

The particular value of this data set is the identification of those potentially influencing, if not directly causal, components of the “military” variable. As suggested in the previous chapter, I theorize that likely critical explanatory variables include what service branch one belongs to, suggesting a different socialization or self-selection influence; what his/her rank or grade is, indicating an extended self-interest in the status of the military establishment; and finally what is one’s current relationship to the military – is he/she on active duty, a reservist, retired or otherwise separated from the service?

While this data’s generalizability is limited, it is a rich sample of opinions across the entire military spectrum. While respondents may be self-selecting into the survey, I would argue that they are self-selecting fairly evenly – indeed, as indicated in Table 9 below, the four branches are represented in proportions roughly approximate to their actual sizes when compared to Department of Defense (DoD) statistics from the same period (9/08-11/08). The Army and Navy are slightly over-represented, with the Air Force and Marines being slightly under-represented. These ratios are consistent as well when compared to the large veterans population, a not unimportant aspect when one considers the substantial number of respondents who fall into this category. These data, therefore, should allow for legitimate comparison between the branches, including tests of significance and variance.

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics by Service Branch, Military Times Survey (12/08)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Survey N</th>
<th>Survey %</th>
<th>Dept. of Defense %</th>
<th>Veterans %*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>2,317</td>
<td>52.71%</td>
<td>48.06%</td>
<td>46.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>19.24%</td>
<td>18.26%</td>
<td>23.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>19.93%</td>
<td>22.92%</td>
<td>19.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marines</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>8.10%</td>
<td>10.76%</td>
<td>10.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total N</td>
<td>4,396</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* data represents Veterans Administration estimates of national veterans populations as of 9/30/08
A further distribution by component status, representing the opinions of Active Duty, Reservists and Retirees/Veterans is shown in Table 10. While this ratio is less clear, due to the inclusion of retirees in the survey, one can see that within the DoD the active (full-time) component, those currently obligated to service (i.e. not retired or separated veterans), is approximately 4 times as large as the reserve component, with the Guard component being 1/3rd of the active part. The survey also represents approximately the ratios between the Active and Reserve, while the Guard component is clearly under-represented. The remaining category of Retired/Veteran has no comparison in the DoD, but its substantial proportion is perhaps better appreciated when one recognizes that there are estimated to be approximately 23.4 million such veterans today.

Table 10. Distribution by Component, *Military Times* Survey (12/08)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Survey N</th>
<th>Survey %</th>
<th>Dept. of Defense %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>1,655</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired/Veterans</td>
<td>1,934</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>23.4 million*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total N</td>
<td>4,423</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* data represents Veterans Administration estimates of national veterans populations as of 9/30/08

The distribution by grade, shown in Table 11 is less representative: E1-E5, the lowest enlisted grades, are under-represented, while senior enlisted grades E6-E9, Staff NCOs, are over-represented. Warrant Officers, a hybrid rank of officers with specialized skill, but with no command responsibility, are in relative proportion to their DoD numbers. Junior officers, grades O1-O3, Lieutenants and Captains are actually represented in equivalent proportions, while Field-grade officers, O4-O6 range from Major to full Colonel, are greatly over-represented. The General Officer/Admiral grades of O7 and higher at just over 1% is just slightly larger than their
actual DoD percentages. Note however, of 23.4 million veterans, only 1.6 million or 7% are officers, while the remaining 21.8 million, (93%) served as enlisted.

One likely explanation for the significant under-representation of the E1-E5 cohort in the sample is their age – more than half of all enlisted personnel being under the age of 25 (Segal and Segal 2004). Like their civilian peers, the youth in America’s military are less likely to respond to survey requests. One could also argue that they are likely to be much busier as well, working in locations and in occupations that do not easily lend themselves to online surveys. That junior officers, O1-O3 are matched in equivalent proportions might challenge this assumption, however as officers, they are also more likely to place a premium on career development which includes reading professional journals and magazines like the *Military Times*.

Table 11. Distribution by Grade (Rank), *Military Times* Survey (12/08)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Survey N</th>
<th>Survey %</th>
<th>Dept. of Defense %</th>
<th>Veterans %*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E1-E5</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>11.28%</td>
<td>≈62%</td>
<td>All Enlisted ≈ 93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E6-E9</td>
<td>1,846</td>
<td>41.97%</td>
<td>≈22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.O.</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
<td>≈1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O1-O3</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>9.87%</td>
<td>≈9%</td>
<td>All Officer ≈ 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O4-O6</td>
<td>1,378</td>
<td>31.33%</td>
<td>≈6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O7-Up</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.07%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total N</td>
<td>4,398</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* data represents Veterans Administration estimates of national veterans populations as of 9/30/08

Table 12 identifies the number of survey respondents who are women and a minority, and contrasts this percentage with the actual proportions found in today’s military. The DoD percentages include all uniformed members, those active and reserve. The relative proportion of these groups within the Veterans cohort is derived from Veteran’s Administration estimates. Similarly to other surveys of military populations, the *Military Times* survey significantly under-
samples women. The percentage of women in the active service today is substantially lower than that of men; still, women’s numbers are increasing steadily, to a current level of nearly 16%, with women constituting almost 8% of the larger veterans population. However, even at 6.7%, the large size of the survey resulted in almost 300 responses from women. As a result, there is a far richer distribution of women within the service branches, as well as among the other variables, than found in any other of the data sets available for study.

Within this data set, Minority is collectively described as any respondent who self-identified their race or ethnicity as something other than white, a total \( N \) of 822. The proportion of minority respondents within the survey at just under 19% is somewhat lower than that of the current force strength of 28.5%. However, much like that of the women, the survey percentage of minorities is roughly equivalent to the proportion of minorities within the veteran population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Survey ( N )</th>
<th>Survey %</th>
<th>Dept. of Defense %</th>
<th>Veterans %*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>4,125</td>
<td>93.34%</td>
<td>84.05%</td>
<td>92.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
<td>15.95%</td>
<td>7.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>3,595</td>
<td>81.37%</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>≈80.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>18.60%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>≈20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total ( N )</td>
<td>4,417</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* data represents Veterans Administration estimates of national veterans populations as of 9/30/08

These variations between the survey sample and the actual military population need to be borne in mind when analyzing the results. As a result, the survey over-states the attitudes of white males as well as officers, as previous surveys also have done. Despite this, due in part to the robust \( N \), the sample still contains a generous number of the under-studied sub-populations of the U.S. armed forces. Most critically, for this study’s purpose, the large sample size means that
these two important groups are represented within the service branches in sufficient numbers to make statistical analysis more meaningful.

Both women and minorities, while distributed across the service branches in relative proportions based on the overall size of each branch, are still under-represented – and do not adequately reflect their more substantial percentages in each of the branches, and indeed the collective DoD as populated today, and described as follows in Table 13. The service branches themselves differ in the percentage of their members with these characteristics. These differences come in part from the branch’s primary mission, limiting, for example, women in the Marine Corps with its primary emphasis on ground combat, and also from individual self-selection. As an all-volunteer force, recruits choose their branch. Choosing which branch to join is a complex decision based on many factors, and in the end, differences between the branches reflect this.

Table 13. Branch Distribution by Gender and Race-Ethnicity, *Military Times* Survey (12/08)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Female N</th>
<th>Survey %</th>
<th>% Branch, DoD.</th>
<th>Minority N</th>
<th>Survey %</th>
<th>% Branch, DoD.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>3.31%</td>
<td>16.30%</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>11.02%</td>
<td>29.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.36%</td>
<td>15.80%</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>3.28%</td>
<td>32.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.49%</td>
<td>20.01%</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>2.78%</td>
<td>23.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marines</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.46%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
<td>27.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>(all) 15.95%</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>18.60%</td>
<td>(all) 28.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women Service Members

Women’s service previous to the all-volunteer era has been by percentage small and restricted to specific roles, primarily nursing and clerical work. The number rises substantially during times of war, but is of limited duration. After the crisis is over, women are among the first to be demobilized. Until 1948 and the passage of the *Women’s Armed Service Integration Act*, women did not serve directly within a branch, but rather as an auxiliary corps, or reserve. Despite their demonstrated utility and effectiveness, military women were further limited in their
opportunities to serve by this legislation as it limited the overall percentage of women within the military to 2% of total force strength (Willens 1996). Today’s all-volunteer military, however, is dependent on the service of women across all but a few, mostly direct combat, restricted categories. The reality of today’s battlefield blurs this distinction, and indeed regular casualties among women service members in Iraq and Afghanistan (as of February, 2010 there have been 124 women killed and 666 wounded in these conflicts) serves to underscore this point. Women are projected to continue to share the responsibility (and costs) of national defense in ever increasing numbers (DoD 2010).

Today, women represent almost 16% of those in uniform, although the proportion varies from a high of 20% in the Air Force, to a low of 6% in the Marine Corps. The Army and Navy are alike at roughly 16% each. The outliers of this distribution are due to branch specific differences in mission, and occupational needs. The Air Force is the most technically demanding of the service branches, resulting in the most selectivity of recruits based on aptitude, with women accounting for many of the positions. One should not assume that the Marines, in the opposite tail, recruit simpletons, they are actually second to the Air Force in requiring candidates considered ‘high quality’. It is the Army, in part due to its large size and the increased demands of meeting larger recruiting goals that has the lowest minimum standards for recruit attitude among the branches (DoD 2005).

Women’s propensity to serve in a branch is also likely dictated by the availability of career opportunity. The Air Force has the highest percentage of its occupational specialties open to women, while the Marine Corps’ primary mission of ground combat and amphibious assault more severely limits opportunities for women. While the large percentage of Army women serve in administrative and support capacities, the Navy has women serving aboard ships in nearly all
capacities. Indeed, the Navy only recently announced the end of its ban on women serving in submarines, a policy kept in place mainly due to the berthing space limitations aboard these boats (McMichael and Scutro 2009).

Minority Service Members

Historically the military has been highly segregated, strictly limiting minorities to supportive but often demeaning, non-combat roles. The demands of national mobilization during WWII relaxed these barriers, often in dramatic ways. Prior to the war, the Marine Corps especially was small, highly selective and fully segregated. This institutional norm continued even as African-Americans were allowed to serve in the Marines, a result brought about mainly due to severe manpower shortages. Still, black Marines were only permitted to do supportive jobs that entailed hard, physical, but often dangerous labor. During the battle of Saipan, early in the island-hopping war in the Pacific Theatre, one group of black Marines, whose role was to carry artillery shells forward from the beach to inland gun positions, found upon their reaching it that the field piece was unmanned. Seeing both an opportunity as well as a need – the gun was guarding a critical position, they manned it themselves for the rest of the battle, and indeed their initiative was largely credited with holding the position, saving both lives and the engagement.

Upon hearing of their actions, the Commandant of the Marine Corps ended on the spot the race-segregated Corps, declaring that “Negro Marines are no longer on trial. They are Marines, period” (Nalty 1995, Ward and Burns 2007).

Stories like this were common on all fields of battle during World War II and helped prompt the eventual elimination of racial segregation in the military by President Truman in 1948 (Truman 1948). That he had to resort to executive order to do so, rather than rely on
Congressional action, indicates the continuing legacy of prejudice not only within the military, but in the nation as well.

While the overall percentage of minorities serving in America’s armed forces is approximately 28.5%, this proportion is not distributed evenly among the service branches and can only be partially explained by institutional demands. Much of the uneven distribution has a self-selection component, brought about by family history, geographical proximity, or cultural identity. Among enlisted personnel, (over 90% of the armed services) Blacks represent 20% of men and 34% of women for an overall proportion of 22%. Within the Army specifically, this number increases to 28%, while it falls to 15% in the Marine Corps. The Navy and Air Force sit between these values at 21% and 18% respectively. While the percentage of African-Americans within the military is higher than in the civilian population, Latino representation lags behind its civilian ratio, with 10% of military minorities identifying as Hispanic. Latino percentages are highest in the Marines, at over 15% and lowest in the Air Force at 6% (Segal & Segal 2004).

Another group that have self-selected preferentially into one branch are Native Americans, who represent .8% of the military age population, but 1.2% of the Marine Corps. In addition to their historical experience with Marines, including the Navaho code-talkers of World War II and having one of the flag-raisers on Iwo Jima being Pima Indian Ira Hayes, the values and importance of Native Americans’ warrior culture finds an outlet in a branch like the Marines whose primary purpose is combat (U.S. Navy 1996).

Methodology

The Military Times data set was available online from the publishers as three Excel worksheets, organized by the respondent’s current service status. I merged the worksheets, for a total $N$ of 4,396 responses, creating a variable for Status (Active, Reserve or Retired/Veteran)
and in several other cases re-coding the existing variables. Dummy variables were created for the categories *Woman* and *Minority*, as well as for those in the survey who were current, active-duty members and for those who were retired. The variable *Branch* was consolidated to incorporate the Reserve and Guard components affiliated with each of the principle four branches in the same way they were grouped in the campaign data examined earlier, and four dummy variables were created for *Army, Navy, Air Forces* and *Marines*. In all of the following analysis, the resulting default reference category is a white male affiliated with the Army. The variable *Grade* was also consolidated from an unwieldy categorical variable with over 20 distinctions, reflecting all of the possible rankings, to a variable that grouped rankings into 6 sub-groups: junior and senior enlisted personnel, warrant officers, and junior, mid-grade and senior commissioned officers.

The finished data set was then analyzed using *Stata9*. Service branch differences were initially evaluated by descriptive cross-tabulation, with a Pearson’s chi\(^2\) test used to estimate the probability of the sample being within the expected distribution. The original cross-tabulation output displayed a matrix in which each cell contained both the actual frequency of responses as well as the expected frequency based on the relative proportions of the total \(N\). For example, in the four branches, one would expect to see a distribution across any set of questions that is approximate to the proportion of the total \(N\) that belongs to that branch, unless of course, there is a significant difference between the attitudes of those within the branches.

The chi\(^2\) test computes the extent to which the actual frequency varies from the expected frequency for an overall variance. This value is the sum of each cell’s chi\(^2\) measure of variance, and is interpreted by a chi\(^2\) table. The resulting value is the probability of there being no difference between the categories given (in this case, the service branches). In all the variables of
interest analyzed, the overall \( \chi^2 \) test suggests that it is highly likely that there are statistically significant differences between the four service branches in the responses to the questions asked. Because the \( \chi^2 \) score is cumulative, it is important to discern which cell or cells within the matrix, if any, account for this score. A cell with a large \( \chi^2 \) will represent the source of much of the variance, and identify more specifically the relationships within the matrix that are significant. \( \chi^2 \) scores are always positive, measuring variance both above and below the expected frequency; each cell’s difference between the actual and expected frequencies, whether it is greater than or less, determines the direction of variation.

Following a series of bivariate comparisons to examine possible alternative explanations based on demographic variables, I present two models resulting from ordered and multinomial logit regressions on the dependent variables measuring ideology and party identification respectively.

**Ideology and Party Affiliation**

**Cross-Tabulation Results**

Looking then to the survey results, respondents were asked the following question: “How would you describe your political views?” The choice of answers creates a five point scale of ideology ranging from 1 = very conservative to 5 = very liberal. Figure 3 presents an overall picture of the ideology among military respondents as one which the literature would predict we would find. Overall, a group of individuals that overwhelmingly identifies as conservative or moderate, with a very small minority, fewer than 10%, identifying itself as liberal. For our purposes however, we are looking for indicators of significant differences between the branches, and in this figure we observe some. Indeed, what stands out is the extent to which the Marine Corps leans to the Right – 65% of all Marines responding (\( \chi^2 = 9.0 \)) identified themselves as
conservative or very conservative, compared to those in both the Army and Navy, each around 54% while those in the Air Force registered just over 57%. The Navy ($\chi^2 = 3.9$) stands out, for having a higher than expected number of respondents identifying as very liberal.

Figure 3. Ideological Self-Placement, by percentage

![Ideological Self-Placement, by percentage](image)

Pearson $\chi^2 (12) = 32.06$  Pr = 0.001  \( N=4395 \)

Figure 4 depicts the survey subjects’ responses when asked to identify their party identification by answering the question, “In politics today, do you consider yourself a …” Here the choices included the two major parties plus Libertarian, Independent, and an ‘all others’ category. Again, the expected response based on the literature, Republican, was overwhelmingly chosen by the majority of each service, ranging from 52.5% in the Army to a high of over 62.6% in the Marine Corps. The Army was alone in having a significantly higher response in indicating Democratic ($\chi^2 = 4.6$). The Navy’s Democratic response, though larger than the expected cell frequency was not so much higher to be particularly significant, while the Air Force and Marines were significantly lower in the same category, at $\chi^2 = 6.6$ and 6.2 respectively. Only the Marine
Corps had an appreciably higher than expected response in the Republican category ($\chi^2 = 4.0$) while the Army’s response was lower than expected, ($\chi^2 = 2.2$).

Figure 4. Party Identification, by percentage

![Bar chart showing party identification by service branch](chart.png)

Pearson $\chi^2 (12) = 32.19$ Pr = 0.001  $N=4394$

These first two questions taken together would indicate that the military population has a clear understanding of ideology and party identification as it exists today. In recent years, partisan polarization has become exacerbated at the national level, particularly over such issues as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. One aspect of Figure 4 that is striking is the heavily right-leaning distribution of the sample when compared to the entire American electorate, which is nearly evenly distributed between the two poles, with a majority between them in the center (Abramson et al. 2010). This picture then, strongly suggests a fundamental difference in the distribution of party support within the military compared to their civilian peers (ibid).

Demographic Differences

What differences if any, are seen among Women and Minorities? Within the general population, when one examines ideological self-placement and party identification, these groups
tend to be more liberal and more Democratic than those of their reference groups, men and whites. Does this pattern hold true among these individuals within the military population? I compare the general population’s distribution on ideology to the military survey using the 2008 American National Election Study (ANES) survey’s similarly worded ideology question. The primary difference between the surveys is that the *Military Times* question has a 5-category range of responses and the ANES question has a 7-category range. The first comparison examines the differences, if any, between Men and Women within both samples: Figure 5a illustrates the gender differences in the *Military Times* survey. Figure 5b displays the gender differences in the general public response to the similar ANES question.

Figure 5a. Gender Differences in Ideological Self-Placement, *Military Times* Survey

Pearson chi² (4) = 63.36  Pr = 0.000  N=4,413
What is immediately observable, beyond the relative symmetry of both distributions, is that rather than the very similar responses between men and women in the ANES sample, the Military sample is distinctly bi-modal in its distribution. If one looks carefully however, you will see that among the female respondents of both surveys, the greatest proportion indicated a moderate or central ideological position, to which one could infer no significant difference between military and civilian women. The responses of men, however, is the source of the difference between the two samples. Military men, in contrast to their male counterparts in the general public, are significantly more conservative, and of course this also confirms that they differ from military women as well.

Examining the gender distribution to the response of Party Affiliation, seen in Figure 6, we see similarly consistent results, which appear to confirm not just the adoption of conservative attitudes, but in correctly transposing those beliefs onto party affiliation. Unfortunately, the Military Times survey question on party affiliation was too different from any of the ANES
questions on party identification to make a clear comparison. In part this is because of the exceptional initial support for the Libertarian candidate Ron Paul, resulting in Libertarian being offered as a specific party category rather than being included among “all others” as it is in the ANES. We do see a substantial difference among men and women in their level of identification with the two major parties though, again suggesting that gender in a military sample is clearly an influencing variable.

Figure 6. Gender Differences in Party Identification, Military Times Survey

The next demographic comparison, differences based on race or ethnicity, is performed in a similar way. Figure 7a shows the distribution of minority respondents compared to the majority white portion of the military sample based on ideological position which can be compared to the similar distribution of the general public in Figure 7b. Again, there is distinct differences by subgroup within the military sample, which is not replicated in the survey sample from the general public. Together these findings support the contention that particularly for white men, there is either a substantial socialization effect, or that those white males who self-select into the military
in the first place are significantly more conservative from their peers. But, we also know that nearly 30% who also presumably self-select are not white, nor are the nearly 20% who are female, and their lack of a similarly strong finding suggests that self-selection, if that is the explanation, is a conditional one.

Figure 7a. Differences in Ideological Self-Placement by Race-Ethnicity, *Military Times* Survey

![Graph showing differences in ideological self-placement by race-ethnicity.](image)

Pearson chi² (4) = 99.69  Pr = 0.000  N=4,419

Figure 7b. Differences in Ideological Self-Placement by Race-Ethnicity, ANES Survey

![Graph showing differences in ideological self-placement by race-ethnicity.](image)

Data Source: 2008 National Election Study  N = 2,135
Figure 8 illustrates the distribution of party support among *Military Times* respondents and again it shows significantly different levels of support between whites and minorities. If we compare the party identification between military and ANES respondents (data not shown), there is evidence of a sizable military bias. Observe in Figure 10 the level of Republican identification among military minorities. At over 35% it is much higher than the same proportion of minorities in the 2008 ANES that indicated they identified as Republicans, which was only 5%. Correspondingly, those in the military identifying as Democrats were under 33%, and was also quite a bit less than their ANES counterparts, of whom 66% identified as Democrats. Interestingly, the percentage of those who identified as Independents was virtually the same in both surveys.

Figure 8. Differences in Party Identification by Race-Ethnicity, *Military Times* Survey

![Graph showing party identification by race-ethnicity](image)

Pearson chi² (4) = 290.27  Pr = 0.000  

Taken collectively, the descriptive analysis tells us several things. First, if military membership has a conservative influence, it does so primarily to men, and not especially to women. Second, service in the military will also influence members of minority groups to be
more conservative than their civilian peers, as well as increase their likelihood of being Republican Party supporters. Still, minorities and women in the military are significantly more liberal and Democratic than their white male counterparts.

Theory Discussion

Much like the explanation given for the sustainability of American political culture in introductory government textbooks being alternately ongoing generational political socialization or the result of self-selection by new waves of immigrants (Fiorina, 2010, or O’Connor 2009), the explanation for military political culture can alternately be an institutionally driven one involving socializing into the norms and values of the new group, or it may be a more consciously driven result of deliberate self-selection into a group that represents one’s own expectations and ideals. In essence, do you become the group, or did you simply join kindred spirits?

Institutional explanations would involve the different aspects of a military experience. How did one serve? What was their role? What did they do? With whom did they serve? Previous surveys of the military, that seemed to confirm the anecdotal evidence of a strongly conservative, Republican leaning institution, were limited due to their bias towards officers. While the Military Times survey is over-representative of officers, it also includes a rich sample of enlisted ranks, allowing for the exploration of the alternative influences posited in the first chapter. Among these include not only a difference between officers and enlisted, but also one that may intensify the longer one is in service. In addition to examining the differences between branches, I also looked at the potential effect of rank on ideology and partisanship (data not shown) to test this question. Retaining the seven categories of rank, the most remarkable result was the consistency of the distribution of opinions across the ranks. No single category of rank
stood apart to a significant degree, suggesting that rank alone does not dictate attitudes nor do differences between the major categories of enlisted and officer result in appreciably different levels of ideology on party support.

Another potentially influential variable identified and discussed in the previous chapter was that of one’s current status: would being on active duty or a reservist make any difference, or would being retired or a veteran of the service matter? Again, there was very little variance in attitudes between the four groups (data not shown), which also included National Guard members. The small differences that did occur (within a few percentage points), were typically seen between active duty members and retirees with the relative ages of each likely being a contributing factor.

The remaining explanation, and one which this analysis appears to confirm, is that the branch in which one first enters and learns the way of military life, and then serves in to fulfill its mission, is an influential and predictive variable. So, the logical next question is what is it that makes the branches different? It may be a complex explanation involving history, myth, attitude, risk and interest, or it may be their demographic composition. Definitive answers to most of these hypothetical influences are beyond the scope of this analysis, although anecdotal but unverifiable explanations abound. What this analysis can explore further is the contribution that demographics makes.

Regression Results

Lastly, as a more formal test of the descriptive findings, both ordered and multinomial logit regression models of the Military Times data are generated to examine the interaction of these variables, service branch and demography, among other likely explanatory influences. In Model 1 the dependent variable, conservative ideology, is an ordinal variable and ranges from
very liberal (coded as 1) to very conservative (coded as 5). Model 2’s dependent variable, party identification, is categorical. Included in both models are variables measuring rank, years of service, education (in years), age (in years), woman, minority, retired, and service branch affiliation (with the Army as the omitted category). In both models the independent variables were additionally tested for multi-collinearity by using correlation matrices, and were found to be within acceptable, below the .7, level.

Table 14. Model 1: Ordered Logit Estimation of Conservative Ideology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Z</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.007)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Service</td>
<td>.012*</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.023</td>
<td>-.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.034)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.043)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>-.736***</td>
<td>-6.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.115)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>-.622***</td>
<td>-8.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.075)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>-.083</td>
<td>-.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.080)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>-.051</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.076)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.076)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marines</td>
<td>.484***</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.110)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 4,340  Significance: ***p<=.001
LRch2(10)= 165.89  **p<=.01
Pseudo R2 = .015  *p<=.05

(See Appendix B for a full description of the variables)

Table 14 presents the ordered logit coefficients and standard errors for Model 1, and shows that among those variables identified previously, Women, Minorities, and Marines are all
statistically significant explanatory variables (at the .001 level). While serving in the Marine Corps indicates a positive propensity towards conservatism, being either a woman or belonging to a minority group is negatively related to having a conservative ideology. Years in service also is significant at the .05 level with a positive relationship, indicating that the longer one serves in the military the more conservative he/she becomes.

In Model 1, the ordered logit test of Conservative Ideology, the discreet change in predicted probabilities of each of the significant variables is calculated and shown in Table 15. The percentage change of the variables specified is a measure of the influence of that one variable, while holding all other independent variables to their mean values. The relative effect among the significant variables was highest for Women in their negative probability of identifying as either conservative or very conservative, at 11.7% and 6.5% respectively, while being 10.9% more likely to identify as independents. Minorities also were less likely to identity conservatively at percentages slightly less than women, 9.5% conservative and 6% very conservative. Those serving in the Marines were more likely to be conservative with the change in predicted probabilities at 5.3% for conservative and 6.3% for very conservative. Marines were 8.4% less likely to be independents.

Table 15. Changes in Predicted Probabilities for Ideological Self-Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>V. Lib.</th>
<th>Lib.</th>
<th>Ind.</th>
<th>Cons.</th>
<th>V. Cons.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Min-&gt;Max</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>0-&gt;1</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>-0.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>-0.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marines</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>-0.084</td>
<td>0.053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cell entries represent changes in the summed probabilities of identified values as a consequence of a minimum to maximum change in the value of the independent variable, with all others held constant.
Model 2 is a multinomial logit regression of party identification and measures the likelihood of military members differing from being an independent, the base category of the model. The results of Table 16 show several significant variables. The variables that are found to be statistically significant in influencing a person’s party identification to be Democrat at the .001 level are minority and woman. Years of service and education (both at .01) are also positively related, as is age at the .05 level. Among the service branches, the Air Force and the

Table 16. Model 2: Multinomial Logit Estimations of Party Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Democratic</th>
<th>Libertarian</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-.795***</td>
<td>-.722</td>
<td>1.107***</td>
<td>-0.860*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.234)</td>
<td>(.389)</td>
<td>(.172)</td>
<td>(.377)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>-.040***</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>.019*</td>
<td>.009**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.012)</td>
<td>(.023)</td>
<td>(.009)</td>
<td>(.023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td>-.034**</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>-.050*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.011)</td>
<td>(.019)</td>
<td>(.008)</td>
<td>(.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.160**</td>
<td>.240*</td>
<td>-.074</td>
<td>-.217*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.059)</td>
<td>(.113)</td>
<td>(.044)</td>
<td>(.138)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.158*</td>
<td>-.331*</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>0.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.076)</td>
<td>(.156)</td>
<td>(.057)</td>
<td>(.322)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>.765***</td>
<td>-.569</td>
<td>-.302</td>
<td>0.362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.177)</td>
<td>(.440)</td>
<td>(.160)</td>
<td>(.322)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>1.148***</td>
<td>-.542</td>
<td>-.416***</td>
<td>.407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.117)</td>
<td>(.282)</td>
<td>(.104)</td>
<td>(.215)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>-.081</td>
<td>-.046</td>
<td>-.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.143)</td>
<td>(.275)</td>
<td>(.106)</td>
<td>(.265)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>-.114</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>-.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.136)</td>
<td>(.265)</td>
<td>(.102)</td>
<td>(.248)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>-.413**</td>
<td>-.122</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>-.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.142)</td>
<td>(.251)</td>
<td>(.098)</td>
<td>(.266)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marines</td>
<td>-.486**</td>
<td>-.205</td>
<td>.287*</td>
<td>-.205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.234</td>
<td>-.382</td>
<td>-.172</td>
<td>-.351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 4,340</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRchi²</td>
<td>426.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R²</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance: ***p<=.001 **p<=.01 *p<=.05

(See Appendix B for a full description of the variables)
Marines are significant and negatively predictive, as is rank. Only two variables are significant at the .05 level for Libertarian identification – education positively, and age negatively.

For Republican party identification, rank is positively significant (.05) while minority is negatively associated (.001). The Marines are the only branch significant for the Republican party and positively so at the .05 level. For those identifying with any other party, rank is positively significant (.01) while years of service and education are negatively significant at the .05 level.

In Table 17, the discreet changes in the predicted probabilities of the independent variables are depicted for the multinomial logit Model 2. Again, in a categorical model like this for which a base outcome is selected, Independent Party Identification was chosen.

Table 17. Changes in Predicted Probabilities for Party Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Libertarian</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>-.135</td>
<td>-.014</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td>-.070</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>-.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>-.123</td>
<td>-.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>-.046</td>
<td>-.088</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>-.012</td>
<td>-.147</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>-.212</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>-.046</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>-.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marines</td>
<td>-.063</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>-.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cell entries represent changes in the summed probabilities of identified values as a consequence of a minimum to maximum change in the value of the independent variable, with all others held constant (base outcome = Independent)

The most significant findings are for minorities, where the percentage change predicted for the Democratic party is 22%, with a nearly reciprocal 21% less likelihood of identifying as Republican. For women, there is a 14.5% greater probability of identifying as a Democrat, and a nearly 15% less likelihood of Republican affiliation. As rank increases, the percentage change towards being a Republican is 17.3%, and 13.5% away from being a Democrat. Both
significant findings for education are consistent with national findings, where more education predicts an increased propensity of self-identifying as a Democrat (Abramson et al. 2010).

Finally, Marines were 10.5% more likely to report Republican Party identification.

Summary

Before the implications of my findings are seriously considered, it is important to remember the limitations of the data. The Military Times survey is not a random sample of military members. Nor is it even a completely accurate reflection of the various demographic sub-groups within today’s military. So therefore, to make firm generalizations to the larger military would be foolhardy. The data does however identify trends among a sufficiently large sample to suggest there is some differentiation among not only the military and the larger civilian population it serves, but also within the four primary branches of the military. By examining proportions, rather than numbers, I have tried to mitigate the impact of a non-random sample and the disproportionate over-representation in the survey of such groups as Whites, Men and Officers.

Because the survey itself was roughly proportional in representing the service branches, and considering that the demographic over or under-representations were fairly uniform throughout, I believe these results do show that within the military there are distinct branch differences. While much of this difference is likely explained by the dual roles of institutionally driven manpower needs, and individual self-selection, which result in different demographic percentages between the branches, demographics alone cannot explain the findings. Nor, on the other hand, can I make a convincing socialization argument. If the source of causality is distinct branch culture, or training, or mission, then why are the women not so changed as well?
We know that making comparisons to the general public is particularly problematic with a non-random sample. Still, it is interesting to note that not only does the majority white male membership of the military heavily favor conservative attitudes and Republican Party membership; well beyond those of their civilian counterparts, but those male members who are minorities also do so. This seems to suggest that whatever the cultural influences of military service are, men are much more likely to be influenced by them. (Possibly like the siren’s song, heard only by men…?) Perhaps the military experience for women is still so different from that of men that they have not had the same response to it. If this is the case, one plausible explanation is women’s diminished role in the combat specialties. We also know that of our military today, while many serve multiple deployments overseas, it is still a much smaller minority of the military that actually sees combat, suggesting that for the majority of men and women in uniform, combat service is not the source of causality either. Until the military is methodically and diligently examined and surveyed in-depth to capture the many variables of military service, the answers to these questions will remain uncertain.
CHAPTER 4

THE DIFFERING POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF AMERICA’S MILITARY:

GROUP MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Introduction

In their social identity theory, Green, Palmquist and Schickler (2002) contend that party identification is mainly influenced by one’s social group, and not, as rational choice theory contends, on a considered evaluation of a party’s policies and ideological position. In essence, a voter’s primary group identity first informs their party loyalty. Then, on the basis of its stated policy positions, the party’s ideological philosophy frames the individual’s perception of their own ideological position or self-identification. Building on this work, Abramowitz (2004) contends that more recent data indicates that an individual’s ideological identification, rather than their primary social identity, has a stronger influence on party identity and affiliation. Still maintaining the link between these three considerations: party identification, ideological self-placement, and primary social group, but re-ordering the causal order theorized by Green, Palmquist and Schickler.

The correlation between Party identification and Ideology tends to result in the use of broad, rather simplistic definitions, where a Democrat is deemed liberal, and a Republican is considered conservative. This also means that an individual’s true ideological position is often the result of a compromise. Specific preferences may become somewhat blunted, if not entirely sacrificed in the stark left-right of Party platforms. In the American two-party electoral system, the realistic voter’s choice is one of the major parties. After the primaries, the voter has few options for a nuanced choice – it is basically all that a party represents or nothing.
While voting itself measures support, it does so inexactly. A voter’s choice may indicate they are entirely in sync with the party platform, affirming all their own ideological beliefs or it may be a pragmatic compromise by the voter for the candidate (and by extension, the party) who comes closest to their own position on issues most salient to them, perhaps even to the extreme case of feeling they are choosing between the lesser of two evils. This potential conundrum, ideological philosophy shared between both party’s camps, requires a more detailed examination beyond simple party support and statements of personal ideological position.

Conventional ideological measures incorporate multiple dimensions of belief into a few, arguably over-generalized categories. One is either liberal or conservative, moderate or independent; the further distinction of ideology along social or fiscal values is not usually specified. Presumably, it is an individual’s own understanding of these terms and how they prioritize issues salient to them that motivate their ideological self-identification. To clarify these differences, attitudes on social issues need to be examined.

The Military Times survey also solicited responses to questions that measured political attitudes. Attitudinal questions in large, national surveys such as the General Social Survey or the National Election Studies typically include issues reflecting social norms and values as well as the role and scope of government, and how the government should prioritize its work and resources. The responses to these narrowly defined questions more clearly discern the primary emphasis of one’s ideological convictions; the responses to specific policy and social value questions can be compared. By using an exclusively military sample, differences within its membership in response to questions measuring attitudes can be more clearly discerned. By also comparing the mean responses of the target group, the military, to those representing the general
population, represented in the ANES sample, I can compare, broadly, any significant differences in attitudes between them.

Looking at sub-group memberships previously identified within the military itself, both those created by service branch affiliation as well as larger, descriptive differences, allows for discreet between-group comparisons. These findings can then be juxtaposed to similar questions, from the national survey of the general population. In doing this, I hope to distinguish with more clarity the source of conservative influence within the military community, to determine which variables are critical measures or offer predictive value. More broadly, this comparative analysis should illuminate both the distinctions as well as the similarities between the military and the larger population.

The specific policy areas being compared are all relevant to a military population who may be the instruments of that policy. They are highly salient and reflect recent events as well as opinions on current and projected roles for America’s armed forces. They measure the military’s response to the 2008 presidential elections, its reflections on the outgoing administration, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the prospect of changing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” They are also relevant questions to America’s civilian population as well, for the same, or perhaps for alternate reasons. It is this potential distinction, attitudinal differences between citizens and citizen-soldiers, that this analysis examines.

Data and Methodology

In this chapter, I again utilize the Military Times survey data first on its own to distinguish any differences among the service branches, and then compare the mean military responses to similarly worded responses found in the 2008 ANES sample. This two-step comparison will test whether the military sample’s ideological conservatism extends to social
attitudes and values and how far they deviate from the larger general sample when a comparable
question is available. Then, keeping in mind the results identified in Chapter 3 that indicated the
ideology and partisanship of military women and minorities deviated from the larger population,
I make selective comparisons of these groups’ responses in the military survey to those of their
corresponding groups in the national sample, and illustrate the strength of these differences.

Inter-branch differences within the military will be evaluated by the chi\(^2\) test, which tests
the overall strength of the model as well as produces a matrix that identifies the specific
significant relationships within the model as well. Every Military Times survey question is
evaluated this way to expand on the branch differences identified throughout my dissertation.

Unfortunately, there were only a limited number of exactly worded questions available
between the military and general population surveys. As a result, I utilize some attitudinal
questions from the Military Times survey that correspond if not identically in wording, certainly
in meaning, and always, in the same choice or range of answers, to questions found in the 2008
ANES. In these comparisons, overall sample means are used. In questions that contained an
option of “declined” or other non-response, the cases were dropped, and percentages were re-
calculated based on the remaining numbers. The responses of the two sub-groups, women and
minorities, are also compared by means, to their reference groups, men and whites, within the
military sample. Throughout, values are given in percentages to make comparisons amongst
different sized groups relevant.

Results

Executive Leadership: President-Elect Obama

Figure 9a displays differences in branch responses to the question, “How do you feel
about President-elect Barack Obama as Commander in Chief?” and is helpful in illuminating
the extent to which partisanship colors the attitudes of this sample. In this survey, taken during
the first week of December, 2008, one month after the Presidential election, military attitudes
appear to be mixed, with nearly equal responses across the three definitive categories. Indeed,
this model scores the lowest chi$^2$ overall, with the only significant cell being the Marines low
level of optimism ($\chi^2 = 3.10$). When compared to their civilian counterparts this level of
support is low, less than half actually. Interestingly, during this same period, President-elect
Obama was polling 70% favorable on a similarly worded national poll (Gallup 2008a). However,
in light of the level of Republican partisanship found among the military sample, the level of
positive or even neutral support for the President-elect is probably more generous than expected.
Alternately, their answers may reflect simple respect for the office, after all the Commander in
Chief is a presidential role that has special relevance to the military.

Figure 9a. Percentage Opinion of Obama as Commander in Chief by Branch (MT Survey)

![Bar chart showing percentage opinion of Obama as Commander in Chief by branch]

Pearson $\chi^2 (9) = 20.84$  Pr = 0.013  N=4397

Figure 9b displays the demographic distribution of the Military Times survey respondents
opinion of President-elect Obama, and clearly shows the strong influence of race and gender on
the level of positive support for Obama. Compared to a national opinion poll showing Obama’s Approval rating at 70%, the military response was substantially lower. Among the military subgroups, minorities registered the highest percentage of approval at 52%. Equally telling is the comparatively higher level of negative opinion. While the range of optimistic attitudes are wide, from 28% to over 52%, those expressing a pessimistic one are much narrower, from 20% to 32%, with Women registering the lowest rates of pessimism.

Figure 9b. Demographic Opinions of Obama as Commander in Chief (MT Survey)

Executive Leadership: President Bush

In judging the level of support for the incoming President, it is useful to compare it to the level of support for the outgoing one, President Bush. The responses to the question “Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way President George W. Bush is handling his job as president?” are shown in Figure 10a. While the wording is not identical to the Obama question, it is essentially asking for a similar evaluation. While the level of positive support for Bush by this military sample is substantially higher than his final job approval ratings of 34% in January national opinion polls (Gallup 2009a) it still only exceeds 50% among the members of one
branch – the Marines, with 59% approving ($\chi^2 = 6.6$). Among those who disapprove, the Navy is the highest at nearly 40%, with the Army and Air Force close behind. The Marines, not unexpectedly, also had the lowest levels of disapproval at 30% which was again significant ($\chi^2 = 5.6$).

Figure 10a. Percentage Opinion of Bush Presidential Approval (MT Survey)

![Bar Chart](chart.jpg)

*Pearson $\chi^2 (9) = 26.57$  Pr = 0.002  N=4,388*

When we examine the demographic distribution in Figure 10b, we again see a marked difference in attitudes based on race and gender. Where Whites and Males range from approving Bush’s performance as President over 50% of the time to disapproving by nearly 40%, Minorities are just the opposite, about 40% approving, with nearly 50% disapproving. Women’s opinion appears to be equally split, approximately 45% both for and against.
While the 2008 ANES includes a question on Presidential job approval, there was no comparable question regarding the President-elect Obama’s likely performance as Commander in Chief. In Figure 11, one can see that the ANES Bush approval ratings are substantially lower at 22% than the military sample at 52%. It should be noted that the ANES results are lower even
than other national opinion polls, taken after the elections in November, that showed Bush’s approval at 29% (Gallup 2008). Correspondingly, the disapproval rate for the general public is much higher. The percentage point difference between approval and disapproval is perhaps the strongest comparison; the difference among military was about 20%, while the national survey showed a more than 52% difference.

The Iraq War Policy

If the 2008 Presidential election was partly a referendum on the war in Iraq, the early campaign rhetoric recognized this and used the U.S. strategy in Iraq to frame the choices for voters. Certainly Obama and McCain’s own positions, both early on as sitting Senators casting critical votes and later as presidential campaigners were in stark contrast to one another (Welch and Mooney 2008). Obama’s stated preference for ending the U.S. involvement in Iraq within a 16 month deadline contrasted with McCain’s ardent support for the recent change in strategy by the Bush administration to commit a “surge” of American troops in response to the increasing violent Iraqi insurgency. While an early, and one of the lone, Republican critics of the Bush Administration’s Iraq war policy (having always contended that more troops were needed), McCain’s early campaign commitment to the Iraq war was unconditional – “I would rather lose an election than lose the war” (Gress 2007).

Perhaps because of this hard line, as was shown previously in Chapter 2 McCain’s financial support from the military was lackluster. It was the Republican candidate Ron Paul initially, and later the Democratic Nominee Obama who ultimately led in military contributions. That the most significant congruence on policy issues of their two campaigns was on the cessation of any U.S. military presence in Iraq suggests a possible explanation for this disparate support. While the exact motivations will never be known, what does appear to be certain was
that neither McCain’s status as a genuine and widely respected military hero, nor his Senatorial record of consistent advocacy for the active armed forces and military veterans appeared to gain him much support from military contributors. McCain’s position on terrorist suspect interrogations, at odds with the Bush Administration, were thought to hurt him with his party, while his backing of the Iraq troop surge likely contributed to the failure of his much hoped-for independent support from materializing (Ibid).

The military sample, which we have already seen is largely Republican, is nearly split on the Bush Administration’s decision to go to war with Iraq. Figure 12a displays the results of the question “Should the U.S. have gone to war in Iraq?” In these results, the striking exception is the Marine Corps, which exceeded the other branches in affirming the decision by 15 percentage points or more. It is worth noting that collectively the mean level of support on this issue by the military sample is barely 50%. Particularly at this point in time after 5 years of war,

Figure 12a. Percentage Agreeing to U.S. decision to Go to War with Iraq (MT Survey)

Pearson chi2(9) = 43.3540  Pr = 0.000  N=4,396
a substantial proportion of those surveyed believed the decision to go to war in Iraq to have been a mistake, with the Air Force at 40% being the branch most against. These proportions also suggest that military attitudes are not strictly decided along partisan lines, which adds additional significance to these expressed attitudes.

Figure 12b examines the demographic distribution on this question. There is nearly a mirror reflection of the attitudes of Whites and Men with those of Minorities and Women, both positive and negative support indicating approximately 15 percentage point difference between these groups. On this issue particularly, these different positions seem to suggest two distinct sets of military attitudes: one held by white males, and another held by everyone else.

Figure 12b. Demographic Approval of U.S. Decision to Go to War with Iraq (MT Survey)

Figure 13 compares responses to the Military Times question with that of the closest 2008 ANES question, “Taking everything into account, do you think the war in Iraq has been WORTH THE COST or NOT?” In these results clear differences between both groups are seen. The substantially larger support from the military sample (50%) may be attributed to inherent
selection bias: it is after all, a self-selected sample, although, when contrasted with the other *Military Times* questions the percentage support of a Republican administration or policy is actually low. This would suggest that even among the more professionalized or enthusiastic military (which includes the readers of military-centric literature) there is a certain ambiguity over this issue. Are they party ideologues who advocate aggressive foreign policy responses and the primacy of national security, or are they responding to the more visceral experience of prosecuting this war for 5 years? While this figure would appear to show a striking contrast between America’s military and its general public, I would suggest that this may actually be pointing out less of a difference than partisanship would have predicted.

Figure 13. Comparison of Survey Samples on Question of War with Iraq

![Figure 13. Comparison of Survey Samples on Question of War with Iraq](image)

The next two questions are more policy specific, are of particular relevance to the military community, and as a result highly salient.

Figure 14a illustrates the replies to the question “*Do you approve or disapprove of the way President George W. Bush is handling the situation in Iraq*?” The results are consistent
with the broader presidential approval question results. Again, the Marines’ level of positive approval stands out \( \chi^2 = 7.4 \) at 62%, with the other branches all just above or below 50%.

Noteworthy of all however is the substantial level of continued support by the military for a policy issue that was increasingly contentious and unpopular with the larger civilian population, whose approval of Bush’s handling of Iraq was hovering around 30% in an albeit earlier (2/08) national poll. (Gallup 2008b).

Figure 14a. Percentage Approval of Bush’s Handling of War in Iraq (MT Survey)

![Bar chart showing percentage approval by branch.]

Pearson \( \chi^2 (9) = 21.79 \) Pr = 0.010  

N=4,394

In Figure 14b the demographic distribution seems to suggest that, while Whites, Men, Minorities and Women were almost evenly split either for or against on the previous question of whether the U.S. should have gone to war with Iraq, when the question is re-stated to ask specifically how President Bush is dealing with the conflict, there is a small but appreciable difference in the response: all groups are more approving. While Whites and Men were barely over 50% in favor on the earlier question; regarding Bush’s performance they are a few points

103
more favorable. Minorities and Women were also slightly more approving of Bush’s performance than they had been for the war in Iraq more generally.

Figure 14b. Demographic Approval of Bush’s Handling of War in Iraq (MT Survey)

When the two samples are compared in Figure 15 on the question of Bush’s handling of the Iraq war, (which in the ANES the question is worded “...U.S. federal government has handled...” rather than “...President Bush is handling...”) we see the same pattern of response observed in Figure 15: the military respondents are more supportive and the general public is highly critical. While the percentage of the military approving at 52% may seem low, their support speaks to the professionalization of America’s military: that nearly half of those sampled don’t personally agree with the national policy, and yet they do follow it, also speaks to the American military’s conception of the citizen-soldier – with neither being mutually exclusive of the other (Huntington 1957). Finally, each of the questions on the war in Iraq show the stark differences between the civilian and military populations, particularly at this point in time, and
underscores that attitudes about the Iraq war were still highly relevant (and polarizing) at the
time of the general election.

Figure 15. Comparison of Survey Samples on Bush’s Handling of War in Iraq

![Comparison of Survey Samples on Bush’s Handling of War in Iraq](image)

Figure 16a shows the military opinion to the Democratic President-elect’s proposed
policy towards the Iraq war asked with the question “Do you approve or disapprove of
President-elect Barack Obama's calls to withdraw combat brigades from Iraq within 16
months?” The results are a virtual mirror of those given to the Bush question. Again, the
responses from the Marines, either approving or disapproving were the two cells with significant
chi² scores, 3.8 and 3.2 respectively. Again, it is informative to compare these results with
national polls of the same time. Several national opinion polls asked this question during the
month of July, 2008. The one which most closely matched the Military Times survey question
was nearly evenly split with 50% supporting Obama's timetable for withdrawal (Newport 2008).
We can see from these admittedly rough comparisons that for this sample of the military at least,
there is still overall support for the Bush administration at the time, and at least a concern for the proposed policies of the incoming Democratic Obama administration.

Figure 16a. Percentage Approval of Obama’s 16 Month Plan for Withdrawal from Iraq (MT Survey)

Pearson chi² (6) = 14.59   Pr = 0.024   N=4,394

The results shown in Figure 16b appear to underscore the distinction between the mission and the principal actors. While Obama had the approval of 52% of minority and 45% of women military members as Commander in Chief, when it comes to their approval of his proposed withdrawal plan from Iraq their support falls to 44% and 38% respectively. This would seem to speak both to the military’s professional commitment to finishing the mission, i.e. “staying the course” and avoiding any suggestion of failure reminiscent of Vietnam. (Record and Terrill 2004). A greater percentage of each demographic group disapproved of establishing a deadline for military withdrawal, and on this question while there is clear differences between the groups, the range of difference is narrower, suggesting that they are responding to this question collectively more as military members than as partisan supporters.
Afghanistan War Policy

Figure 17a depicts the results of the question “Do you approve or disapprove of how President Bush is handling the situation in Afghanistan?” In this model the overall Pearson chi$^2$ is

Figure 17a. Percentage Approval of Bush’s Handling of War in Afghanistan (MT Survey)

Pearson chi$^2$ (9) = 13.83  Pr = 0.129  N=4,390
of 13.83 is relatively low, suggesting that the distribution of responses among the four branches are mostly as expected. Indeed, the only significant cells in the table are the responses both approving and disapproving by the Marine Corps, at 3.7 and 3.8 respectively. That said, one small difference from previous questions is the more affirmative response by the Air Force, which likely reflects the larger commitment made in Afghanistan by this branch prior to the election and the drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq (U.S. Air Force 2007). Still, while the general question of whether the U.S. should have gone to war in Afghanistan was answered affirmatively by nearly 87% of respondents (data shown in Appendix B), the total percentage specifically supporting Bush’s handling of the war in Afghanistan fell to below 49%.

When broken down by demographic categories as shown in Figure 17b, the responses are, by now, familiar. There is significantly more support for the Republican President from Whites and Males, while more Minorities and Women disapproved of his decisions.

Figure 17b. Demographic Approval of Bush’s Handling of War in Afghanistan (MT Survey)
The closest question from the 2008 ANES to which these results can be compared to is worded “...U.S. federal government has handled...” rather than “...President Bush is handling...” The comparison of opinion between military and ANES respondents is shown in Figure 18. Again, while the differences in attitudes is to be expected, it is also interesting to note that similar percentages of ANES respondents approved of policies in Iraq and Afghanistan, 20.6% and 19.3% respectively, while 67.4% and 63.1% disapproved. Taken together, this indicates a consistency in general population attitudes regarding both events. Like their civilian counterparts, the military sample demonstrates a similar consistency. Among military respondents, 53% and 49% respectively approved of handling in Iraq and Afghanistan, while disapproving at 35% and 37%. In sum then, military respondents supported both of these wars at rates about 30% greater than the general population survey sample.
Social Policy: Gays in the Military

Another policy area likely to impact the relationship between the military and the Obama administration is the new President’s follow through on his campaign promise to end the ban on Gays and Lesbians in the military. In response to his campaign rhetoric, the Military Times survey asked “Do you support President-elect Barack Obama's calls to repeal the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy and therefore allow gays to serve openly in the military?” Figure 19a indicates that the rank and file strongly opposed any change. Interestingly, President Obama in his 2010 State of the Union Address announced his instructions to the Secretary of Defense to proceed with ending the existing policy (Obama 2010). While Secretary Gates could be seen applauding this statement enthusiastically, the Joint Chiefs were stonily silent. Indeed in the following weeks, Admiral Mullins, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, was the only member who voiced moderately positive support; although he carefully couched his remarks as his personal belief, with a final decision pending upon a Pentagon review (Bumiller 2010). The service chief identified as the most critical of the likely success of the policy reversal was Marine Corps Commandant General James T. Conway (O’Keefe 2010).

The branch chiefs attitudes are mirrored in the opinions of the Military Times survey respondents, with 31.5% of those in the Navy being most supportive of the change, and nearly 69% of Marines opposed it ($\chi^2 = 4.5$). The resolution of this policy position, whether the repeal occurs as a result of the Obama administration, or if, as happened to his Democratic predecessor Bill Clinton it fails, will be determined largely by the attitude struck within the military community. The demonstrably conservative attitude among those in uniform, particularly among the senior officers who have the most influence on this decision, combined with an older, but large (and vocal) veterans contingent suggest that this issue may not be easily
resolved. A national poll on this question in May of 2009 found that 69% of Americans favored the change, including 58% of both Republicans and those who identified as Conservatives approving (Gallup 2009b). The difference in these results, when contrasted with the Military Times survey where positive support overall was less than 30%, suggests a strong disconnect between the military and society on this issue.

Figure 19a. Percentage Support for Repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Policy (MT Survey)

![Graph showing percentage support for repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy by service branch.

Pearson chi² (6) = 21.81   Pr = 0.001   N=4,393]

Figure 19b shows the responses to “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” broken down by demographic categories. The Responses for Whites and Men are nearly identical (and overlap on the graph), with about 28.5% approving and 61.5% disapproving. Among Minorities, just under 35% approve while 54% disapprove. It is among military Women where the most significant support is shown, at fully 50%, while just under 40% disapprove. Overall in this survey, the support for repeal of the ban on openly gay service members is about 30%, while those disapproving represent 60%.
The 2008 ANES used different wording: “Do you think homosexuals should be allowed to serve in the United States Armed Forces or don’t you think so?” but the response options were the same. Table 20 contrasts the 2008 sample, in which over 78% of respondents agreed with the statement, to the less than 30% support from the military sample.
When the question of gays serving in the military is compared across the samples by gender, the national survey shows that of those answering, 83% of Women, and 73% of Men felt that gays should be allowed to serve, while in contrast the military survey’s percentage of support among Women was 50%, and among Men only slightly more than 28% (data not shown). Differences by ethnicity were equally dissimilar; in the ANES 80% of Whites and 76% of Minorities were in support compared to the military sample in which only 29% of Whites and 35% of Minorities were in agreement.

Collectively, the results of these seven policy related questions dispel the myth of a homogenous military, with attitudes and opinions consistent among all members and all branches. Rather, within at least some of the branches there are discernable differences among the individuals who came to serve in them. One possible explanation for the responses to vary by service branch may be linked to the individual’s overall level of satisfaction with their own experience in the military, which presumably is influenced heavily by the branch they serve in. It is also reasonable to expect that those who have a positive feeling will be more likely to have embraced both life in the military generally, as well as the specific culture of their own branch, including an acceptance of the values emphasized in it.

Job Satisfaction

In Figure 21a the results of the straight-forward question “How satisfied are you with your job?” are shown. Not too surprisingly, most respondents say they are satisfied, as we would expect from a sample that both reads as well as responds to a military-centered publication – the truly disaffected not being likely to engage with their profession any more than absolutely necessary. When we combine the intensity of the satisfaction we find that nearly 81% of Marines
and 77% of the Army are satisfied, while both the Navy and Air Force each registered approximately 72% being satisfied with their vocations. Conversely, the Army was the most dissatisfied at almost 15%, the Navy and Air Force were again both virtually alike at 13% and 12%, and the least unhappy group, the Marines at just under 9%. Again, this finding may suggest either a real difference in those who become Marines, from both self-selection as well as indoctrination, or it may simply reflect that this sub-sample, the readership of the *Marine Times*, are more enthusiastic and engaged with their careers.

Variations in job satisfaction based on demographics are shown in Figure 21b. In previous comparisons the results have shown sometimes very significant differences among the sub-groups. This model is interesting because of its singular lack of variation.
The previous differences in attitudes were in some measure painting a picture in which minorities of any description were expressing an alternate military experience – apart from that of the substantially larger majority membership of white men. The lack of variation in job satisfaction is making a very important point – that the military itself, the culture, the institutions, and the mission, is uniform in meeting its members’ expectations. While there has been shown often substantial differences in attitudes between the branches and among the varying demographic groups, that there is no difference in this measure is a meaningful finding.

Discussion

Collectively these findings allow for some tentative conclusions to be drawn regarding the potential influence of military service on the attitudes of its members. They enable comparisons to be made across three dimensions of group membership: first, differences based
on belonging to a specific service branch; second, differences within the group based on ethnicity and gender, and finally, the comparative differences between a collective group membership sharing military service and those from a general population. I will discuss the finding of each of these three groups in turn.

Branch Differences

These findings underscore the previous conclusions drawn regarding the four service branches – that there does appear to be differences both in ideology and attitudes. And while this limited data cannot address why those variations are occurring, it does add to the mounting evidence that something is causing these effects. The likely explanations posited include self-selection into a community of shared values, or deliberately joining a group like yourself; indoctrinated acculturation, becoming like the group you have joined; or, the composition of the group resulting from demographic imbalance due to the institutional requirements or limitations unique to each service branch, in this case group memberships are influenced de facto. In reality the likely explanation is a causal chain containing the impact of all three effects. This is about the most that can be assumed, for lacking the data to more finely discriminate from among these three explanations precludes us from absolutely eliminating one or more as potential contributors.

How then might self-selection, socialization, and demographic makeup dictate the group attitudes of a service branch? I will use the most extreme example from this data, the Marine Corps, to illustrate a proposed causal model depicted in Figure 22. This model helps to explain some of the differences between the branches based on the effects of these three complimentary explanations. It begins with self-selection; in the era of the All-Volunteer force, individuals make
a conscious choice. That decision is driven by many influences including the experiences of family and friends, their own interests and career goals, and the branch culture projected in advertising and by recruiters. The next step in the model factors the different personnel requirements among the branches (and military service generally) that favors a predominantly male population. For the Marine Corps, which has the largest percentage of its force in combat specialties, the opportunities available in non-combat occupational positions (and thus open to women) are limited. By contrast, the Air Force has the highest demand for individuals to perform technically demanding jobs, requiring high aptitude, a criteria of selection that equally favors women.

After branch selection is complete, recruit or officer candidate training and the process of socialization begins. Here is where the institutional uniqueness of each service branch may exert differing influences. The length and intensity of the initial phase of training, during which one is indoctrinated into the culture of the branch likely determines the initial strength of an individual’s socialization into the norms and values of his new group. For those who begin the process already sharing similar values, the experience likely serves to reinforce and strengthen the attitudes held. Among individuals with whom the new values conflict with those already held, those who did not self-select strongly for shared attitudes, the process may either alter them enough so that they now share the group’s beliefs, or, this failure to conform to the group may be an additional incentive to eventually leave it.

What remains then are those who for one or more of these reasons share many similar attributes, motivations and presumably, attitudes which in the example of the Marine Corps equates to demonstrably conservative attitudes, ideology and Republican party affiliation.
Figure 22. A Causal Model Depicting the Propensity of Individuals Serving in the Marine Corps Towards Conservatism
So potentially strong is this effect that many individuals will retain it long after their time in service is concluded, re-ordering their original, pre-military political socialization. While this model theorizes that it is the combination of effects: self-selection, institutional requirements and socialization that collectively determine, as well as help predict attitudes held by those serving in a particular branch, this model also points to the intrinsically related explanation of demographic differences within the military predicting many of the attitudes measured.

Demographic Effects

The other primary cleavages among the military population besides service branch that consistently shows predictive effect are those between genders and among differing racial-ethnic groups. That these effects are strong, and in the case of those in the minority, women and non-whites, are strong enough to resist the robust influence of their largely male, and mostly white colleagues in affecting the attitudes dominant within the group should not be too surprising.

Where the military differs significantly from most groups is in its distribution of these attributes. In none of the branches are women distributed normally nor, while less drastically disproportionate, are minority groups represented in percentages that exactly mirror the general population. As a result, their relative percentages within each branch and the military as a whole will influence the aggregated measures from those groups. Additionally, the primacy of one’s descriptive characteristics and their influence in defining self-identification must logically trump those of a group identity derived from occupation alone.

It is not so certain that such an occupational identity, particularly one which emphasizes a group persona and to which one volunteers, may not significantly interact with those most basic characteristics: gender and race, to create a new, unique identity. This new view potentially influences attitudes as well, perhaps strengthening or moderating existing beliefs and values,
particularly among those groups in the minority and under pressure to conform. In effect, military membership may somewhat, but not entirely alter the attitudes of female and minority members from those held by those groups in the larger society.

Vocational Effects

Unlike most other professions, military service makes significant demands upon its members: they give up many of the civil liberties and freedoms they had as civilians; they are subject to military discipline and orders that have the force of law; and most distinctively, they run the risk of serious injury if not death, in the course of their service. The level of institutional authority, and commitment expected by its members requires the type and intensity of training given, as well as explains service in the military as a potentially profound and life-changing experience. As a result, that there is a unique, military culture should come as no surprise.

What is relevant to this work is how these differences potentially affect America’s citizen-soldiers. In a society, the military can be either a part of, or apart from that society, and I would argue the difference is critical. Military service in America, as either a professional career, a rite of passage in youth, or a patriotic duty in wartime has been a component of American life since the Revolution, and will continue to be so. Therefore, the influence that this service has on its members will continue to be reflected in the political opinions, actions and attitudes held by those who serve. Historically, the political activities of veterans and military families have punctuated critical moments in America’s political life, and in the current era of interest-group politics (and in a time of war) their decisions may be of particular significance. Therefore recognizing and understanding the attitudes of these groups, as well as those currently serving, and how they may differ from the larger public has important value.
CHAPTER 5

THE IMPLICATIONS OF MILITARY SERVICE

Introduction

The previous three empirical chapters have revealed much about the political behavior and thinking of America’s military and the influence that military service has on developing these attitudes and behaviors. Each chapter informed the original question and inspired me to explore these findings in the next chapter. Appreciating that a dissertation is a process, this seemed a natural progression, and one which I will expand on, a logical one as well. Essentially, this research is an exploration of the relationship between military service and one’s political beliefs, attitudes and actions. Beyond simply confirming the accepted wisdom that America’s military is largely politically conservative, I have endeavored to more clearly understand those aspects of military life that contribute to these tendencies, and have found that it is the unique composition of the military itself that provides the most likely explanation. Understanding the individuals who constitute what we collectively refer to as The Military has enabled me to reveal a picture of those in uniform today that enlivens the discussion of the understanding of this important group of American citizens.

The Findings

Campaign Contributions

Chapter 2 was an analysis of the contribution behavior by individuals who identified themselves as belonging to the military, either active, reserve or as a veteran. After collecting records of every donation made to presidential candidates for the entire election cycle I began to look at how the candidates running were supported by the military. Tracking this from the initial phases of the campaign, through the primaries and up until the general election, a story of first
underdog support for Ron Paul, then changing loyalties to John McCain and finally bandwagon support for Barack Obama was revealed. Parsing this further by service branches, a secondary story was revealed that identified variation among the services, both in terms of who they favored and how enthusiastic they were in that support. It is this variation that provided initial support for the hypothesis that the service branch one belongs to makes a difference.

Additionally, the collective behavior of those who contributed from the military in the 2008 election challenges many of the long-held conceptions of the political leanings of the military.

The first interesting finding was the early, substantial support for Republican candidate and Texas Congressman, Ron Paul. While Paul is a conservative, his policy preferences are much closer to Libertarian than Republican, and he stood far apart from the other GOP candidates in his position on the war in Iraq which was, succinctly, complete U.S. withdrawal beginning the day after he (sic) takes office. Contrary to the belief of the military as hawks on foreign policy, this early, aggressive support by at least some of those in uniform suggests a very different picture. At the very least, this should have been a strong signal that there was a significant movement within the military that was fed up with, or exhausted with, finishing a job that was showing little signs of ending against an increasingly hostile and growing insurgency. While Paul had great support from the military, his candidacy was never realistically a challenge to the Republican front-runner, Arizona Senator John McCain.

The response shown to McCain’s campaign by military supporters was somewhat of a paradox. He is a moderate Republican, a decorated Veteran with a record of suffering and heroism as a POW in Vietnam that is well known, and the voice of conscience on Capitol Hill when it came to safeguarding the honor of the military and advocating for those in uniform, yet he received at best, tepid support from those with military ties. The general lack of enthusiastic
support for any of the Republican candidates challenges both the notion that the GOP has a lock on the military vote, and also questions the depth of conservatism within the military as well. Another object lesson from the McCain experience in 2008 was that a military record, which is increasingly rare in national politics today, and even a very heroic one, is no guarantee of support from the military community. While this seems to say that retrospection is not a particular strength of this group, when it came to the Democratic primary race, the military did seem to demonstrate their powers of recall.

The early front-runner on the Democratic side was New York Senator Hillary Clinton who had failed previously, both as First Lady and in the Senate, to inspire any great allegiance from the military community. There was nothing about the Clinton campaign that would have predicted any substantial support from the military. Being a Liberal and a Woman, and regardless of her specific policy positions, Clinton was fighting an unwinnable battle with the majority of those in uniform: socially conservative men. While there was some support for her through contributions, most of these could be determined to probably be from women service members.

Clinton’s ambitions collapsed under the growing juggernaut of the very effective and successful campaign run by Illinois Senator Barack Obama. Emphasizing the small donor, and utilizing all the new technologies, Obama’s campaign had particular appeal to younger donors. It is no surprise then that the military, with its young population, would respond to this aspect also. What is more surprising, again contrasting with conventional wisdom, is the extent to which this so-called “conservative” group overwhelmingly came to support the Democratic and racial minority candidate. While there is no way to determine the race of contributors, the numbers and
total amounts donated by the military service members to the Obama campaign indicate a broad support, and not one restricted to a sub-population within the military.

Another surprise was the strong support for the Democratic candidate from a sample that was heavily biased in favor of officers. While not all of the contributors identified their rank, the large number that did was enough to identify this as a likely source of bias. The resulting overwhelming support for Obama should have been even less likely, based on prior knowledge of the ideology and political party favored among military elites. as a result of any sample over-representing officers. One final observation on the behavior of military contributors to the Obama campaign: as national support for Obama began to grow, to the record-setting wave it became, so too did military support for Obama reflect the national trend. Sadly, the reasoning behind the shift in military support could not be extrapolated from the contribution data. However, later analysis of the Military Times survey data sheds some light on military thinking and behavior.

Political Ideology and Party Affiliation

Partly in response to the phenomena of the Obama campaign, and partly in light of the inevitable change that would result in changing party control of government, the editors of the Military Times family of publishers, prepared a survey for its readership in the month following the November elections. This survey included specific questions on attitudes regarding both the incoming President and the outgoing one, their opinions on policies salient to the military as well as ideological questions of self-identification and party identification. Because the survey included in its demographic sections questions identifying one’s rank, current status, and service branch, this data allowed for a more in-depth examination of these effects, along with gender and ethnicity, as potential causal variables.
Chapter 3 therefore, examines the results of this survey along the dimensions of branch, gender and race-ethnicity. Two other potentially causal variables, rank and status, were also hypothesized as a source of likely significance. However, following a preliminary examination of the data using cross-tabulation tables, these variables were found to be statistically insignificant. As a consequence, the remainder of the chapter focused on the explanatory significance that Service Branch, Gender and Race-Ethnicity have on the influence of military service towards political beliefs and attitudes. First the Military Times survey respondents both by branch and demography were compared to the total military population. This initial analysis confirmed the relative robustness of this albeit non-random survey in the proportional representativeness of the branches, as well as the percentages of both women and minorities. The Military Times sample was then used to examine political ideology and party identification across the dimensions of branch membership, gender and ethnicity.

When the sample is viewed in its entirety, a pronounced conservative ideological position as well as a strong propensity for Republican Party affiliation is found, much as the existing literature predicts. What is a new founding however, is the variation discovered both between the branches and among the differing demographic groups represented in the sample. While it was found that a majority of the respondents from all four branches identified themselves as being conservative, those in the Marine Corps were found to be significantly more so than those in the other branches. Respondents from both the Army and the Navy had somewhat higher rates of response compared to the others in identifying a liberal ideological position. Similarly, when identifying their party affiliation, the largest percentage indicating Republican identification were once again Marines. The Army had the highest proportion of Democratic supporters and the Air Force had the largest proportion identifying themselves as Independents. Collectively
these results show that there is no uniform set of political values in the military, but rather the branches themselves vary, and in some cases they do so significantly.

The observed branch differences led to the obvious question of why this was happening, but also to the more subtle question of whether these differences were shared uniformly by all members, or were there still more variations along demographic lines as well? When the questions of ideology are analyzed by gender, two discreet distributions emerge; women are more inclined towards a more moderate ideological position, while the attitudes of military men, who dominate the sample, trend in a strongly conservative direction. While we might expect to see similar variation based on gender in the general population, the comparative sample from the 2008 ANES sample refutes this supposition. Indeed, when the two samples are carefully contrasted, we see that it is the variation by military men that differs from the national population. This suggests that the effect of military service, whether rooted in self-selection or from socialization, appears to be only influencing men, and not women. And indeed, when the genders are compared by party affiliation these differences remain, with military women’s party propensity being more diffuse when contrasted to that of military men.

The same comparison made along race-ethnicity shows a similar relationship. Whites in the military are not only more conservative than military minorities, but they are also substantially more conservative as a group, than whites in the general population. While the distribution of minorities in the ANES is remarkably uniform, those in the military are more inclined to identify conservatively, suggesting some potential military effect along this dimension as well. When party affiliation is examined, we find that like gender, race-ethnicity also influences party identification. These results strongly make the point that the group effects of military membership are not uniform, nor are they exclusive – rather they are more reflective
of the values of the majority of their membership, those of white males. As a consequence, particularly when analyzing a military population, statistical controls for both gender and ethnicity must be included. Indeed, when I performed both multinomial and ordered logit regressions these variables are significant, and in the predicted directions. In these same models, it is the Marine Corps alone among the branches that is also found to be a significantly predictive variable of both conservative ideology as well as Republican party affiliation.

Political Attitudes

The findings on ideology strongly suggest the influence of branch membership, and particularly the variances found in the demographic make-up of those branches, in explaining some of the differences seen. Chapter 4 pursues these nuances of demography in the questions capturing policy preferences from the Military Times survey. In addition, for those where a comparable question existed, these responses were compared to the ANES sample as well. Political attitudes are evaluated along several dimensions of policy: Presidential leadership, government policy in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the social values included in the issue of gays serving in the military. In this chapter, as in the previous analysis of ideology, clear differences are seen, both when examining the military survey alone, and later when the military sample is compared to the national sample.

Throughout the series of policy areas that are addressed, the military sample is remarkably homogenous in its attitudes with the major exception of the Marine Corps. Members of this branch are markedly more supportive of Republican policies and the outgoing Republican administration when compared to the rest of the military population. Conversely, Marines are also less supportive of the incoming Democratic President-elect and more skeptical of his proposed policies. This difference is partly a function of the demographic composition of Marine
Corps with its small percentage of women, being the most obvious difference. But while
demographics differences provide some of the explanation, other contributing factors are
suggested as well.

The Marine Corps also stands apart from the other branches in its support for the wars in
Iraq and Afghanistan. Both in their determination and their consistency, and despite the much
larger percentage of Marines likely having had multiple deployments and related hardships that
appeared to be driving the contribution decisions of military members discussed in the earlier
campaign contributions chapter, the political opinions and attitudes of Marine members were
singular and distinct. This difference is clearly branch driven, with the vast majority of Marine
respondents consistently preferring the conservative position, and the policies held by the
Republican administration.

Regardless of branch affiliation, the factors that were most influential in determining
response position continued to be the primary descriptive attributes of the respondents
themselves. Recognizing the likely significance of these effects, and the variations within the
branches of these populations, any theoretical explanation must identify the intrinsic relationship
among these variables and how their proportions differ between the service branches. This would
seem to imply that there is no real difference between military and society, but rather it is the
values of its majority group, young, white, disproportionately southern men, that are driving
much of the military effect seen.

This brings into question whether there is any specific military effect – certainly the lack
of any apparent influence on the female population of the military challenges this assumption.
However, when comparing responses by race-ethnicity (which of course includes both genders)
one can see that while there are still clear differences between the mean position of minorities
and those of the majority white group, the distance between these positions is reduced. This would seem to suggest that while political attitudes and positions based on minority group membership are still predictable, they appear to be diluted to some degree by the group effect of military membership, thus indicating the presence of some military effect.

These contradictions seem to suggest that the influence of military service is a conditional one. First, through the process of self-selection, one first chooses to serve, presumably recognizing first the expectations of what military service means: a regimented, authoritarian social structure in which one’s civil liberties are constrained and individualism is virtually eliminated. Second, the requirements of military service, which differ significantly by branch, dictates who can serve. Only then does the potential for socialization occur, this third explanation being that each branch has its own, and differing propensity for this effect. Finally, the proposed causal model suggests that at each step, those who don’t share similar attributes and values with their new group will likely either never join it, or if they do will eventually leave it. What remains then is a population that is disproportionately aggregated, that shares similar beliefs and is steeped in the group’s norms and values.

Whatever the explanation, from the most simplistic one of demographics to the more complex and interrelated causal chain offered, studies such as this clearly show a difference. This contrast is most clearly seen when comparisons are made between the military sample and the general population on all of the issues examined. It was these depictions that so vividly illustrated the existence of a difference between the military and the society it serves.

The Causal Questions

At the beginning of this work I hypothesized the likely influence of many variables, each having the individual potential to explain the attitudes of the military being measured. As the
work evolved, I came to see these being clustered into three types of effects: those that are a consequence of the unique institutional demands of military service; those that originate with the individual and motivate their decision to join and stay in the military; and those that result from the influences of military service and military life.

Institutional Effects

Status. With the draft no longer influencing enlistment patterns as it did for the young men of the Vietnam War generation (Herring 2002), whether one serves through voluntary enlistment, or through forced conscription is a moot point. The more critical difference in the options of how one serves today is in the decision to pursue the military full-time in active service or to serve as a reservist, or member of the national guard. In recent years, the implications of what used to be a different set of service expectations has been greatly diminished, and indeed, this analysis detected little difference in the attitudes of those in uniform based on the status of their service. It would appear from this evidence then, that it is not how one serves necessarily, but simply that they choose to serve in the military.

Officers vs. Enlisted. The differences between commissioned officers and those who enlist transcend multiple dimensions: officer’s start with a college degree, and usually pursue graduate education, they are often more career centric, and by definition expected to lead by example. Commissioned officers are also a relatively small proportion of the entire military. The enlisted members, particularly those in the most junior grades, represent the majority of those in uniform. They are young, less likely to have higher education, usually are serving for a short duration, and don’t regard the military as a career – their role is to follow orders.

While this research indicates that officers are more likely to contribute to political campaigns and participate in opinion surveys than enlisted individuals are; more importantly, the
attitudes and values expressed by either group, officers or enlisted are not significantly different. In today’s military, which is increasingly more diverse and better-educated than ever before, the differences in attitudes between these two groups is negligible. While historically social class drove who became officers and who served in the ranks, these traditional distinctions appear to be virtually gone.

Branch Mission. The differing missions and personnel requirements of each service branch influences its composition in many ways. The size and relative proportions of occupational specialties within each service branch influences the numbers and types of individuals typically recruited. The varying needs among the branches also significantly impact the opportunities and career potential for women service members. As a result, the demographic make-up of each branch, by gender, race-ethnicity and age, varies. Additionally, one consequence of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is that the Army and the Marines have both been subjected to especially intense pressures: serving multiple deployments, being subject to stop-loss orders and tour extensions, and comprising the bulk of war casualties. These two branches have faced unique challenges. For the Marine Corps at least, this may explain some of the variation in effect that was found.

Self-Selection Effects

Gender. Gender clearly influences the opportunities for service in both the military generally, and each branch specifically. Historically women have consistently shown that in times of extreme crisis they are both willing and capable of defending, alongside men, their homelands. World history provides numerous examples of women who openly rallied and led their people in combat, others who disguised their gender in order to fight, and still others, officially non-combatants, who nonetheless were swept up in war (De Pauw 1998). The military experiences of
American women by the 20th century were defined by cultural expectations that included only very limited service in uniform, almost exclusively as nurses. Even as the manpower needs of World War II expanded the role of women in all the military branches, their service was qualified; female officer’s command authority was limited, and many, such as the Women Air Service Pilots (WASPS), including those who were killed in the line of duty, were refused any veteran’s benefits. Not surprisingly, after the war the Veterans of Foreign Wars also banned women from membership (Kerber 1998).

Regardless of many noteworthy exceptions, war, either directly, or in the pseudo-violence of warfare training, has predominantly been a man’s realm. While this work is definitely not a treatise on whether the military could or should be populated co-equally by women (see Browne 2007 for a thorough discussion of the issues involved), nonetheless the result of women’s voluntary service in the nation’s defense, an obligation of all citizens, means that women are now an integral part of all four service branches.

The most obvious impact of gender differences are found in the varied distribution of women among the branches. A technology intensive branch like the Air Force needs to heavily recruit women in order to meet its high-aptitude needs, while the Marine Corps with the highest proportion of combat positions has fewer remaining opportunities for women. While all of the branches in today’s military have made significant efforts to incorporate female personnel, anecdotally at least, this is still a work in progress (Browne 2007). The consequence of these institutional limitations, in addition to long-standing cultural inhibitions towards women’s military service results in the relatively small percentage of women either currently serving, under 16% of those in uniform and less than 8% of all veterans (DoD 2007; U.S. VA 2008). This
mitigates any significant influence of women’s political orientation and attitudes in group measures of the military.

Race-Ethnicity. Along with gender, one’s race-ethnicity is a clearly predictive variable for party support and political ideology, as well as other political attitudes. Unlike gender, the percentage of the military that identifies themselves as racial-ethnic minorities within the armed forces today is much more substantial at nearly 30%, while approximately 20% of veterans are minorities. Interestingly, one’s race-ethnicity is also a somewhat predictive variable for which service branch one joins. This aspect encapsulates much of the branch self-selection argument: choices made by the anecdotal experiences of family and friends, the historical experience of one’s primary reference group, or for some, a branch with an image that resonates with their own cultural identity of bravery. Since race-ethnicity in the data used is limited to a single, dichotomous category, it is impossible to discriminate between the different minority groups, but we must assume that there are differences, just as there are variations among the proportions of minority members within the branches.

Family & Friends. The decision to join the military is made by most individuals when they are young adults and still primarily socialized by family and friends. For many, their immediate and extended family, and community play an influencing role in decisions to join the military and choosing which service branch to join. All of the service branches have examples of multi-generational family service, attesting to this effect, suggesting as well that many individuals have clear expectations regarding their choice of service branch.

Regional Origins. The large proportion of military members originating from southern states also contributes to a concentration of individuals with more socially conservative values and attitudes. Following the party realignment of the 1970s and 1980s, the conservative principles
and values rooted in the southern states translated into solid Republican Party preferences in presidential elections. Particularly for the generations currently serving, this strong Republican voting propensity must also contribute to the results found. Also relevant to southern regional origin and likely contributing as well to the conservatism of the Marine Corps is the large number of Marine officer candidates from the southern military academies The Virginia Military Institute and The Citadel, so much so that the latter is often considered the unofficial national academy of the Marine Corps.

Socialization Effects

**Branch Culture.** Throughout this analysis, the distinctions between the branches are clearly apparent if at times somewhat subtle. The consistent exception to this general trend has been the Marine Corps. In addition to the demographic variations discussed earlier, the relative sizes of the services also likely play a contributing factor. The Marine Corps is the smallest, and most homogeneous of the branches. In part because of its smaller, more easily administered size, but largely due to the value placed on institutional tradition, all of its future officers go through the same school on the same base, while enlisted recruits are trained in only two locations. This makes for a much more consistent initial experience, while also underscoring to the new member that they are becoming a part of an unbroken tradition. Additionally, because the Marine Corps does not have its own national service academy, (Annapolis graduates can opt to be commissioned into the Marines) it does not create a separate, elite sub-culture for these graduates. While there exists an informal distinction between aviation and ground components; at the end of the day, the Marines with their credo “every marine is a rifleman” ensures that all marines receive the same basic level of combat training. This “all in” approach is not necessarily
a requirement for all members of the other service branches, but has remained the bedrock of the Marines’ training philosophy.

The Marine Corps’ relatively small size permits a greater sense of community as well – and has certainly facilitated the sense of membership in a selective and elite organization. This heightened sense of group identification may indeed lend itself to more homogeneous views, while also encouraging those who do not share similar values to leave.

**Rank.** What is more informative than the simple distinction between officer and enlisted is the relative rank of the survey respondent. Not surprisingly, rank, along with its corollary of age, is then a moderate predictor of conservatism and Republican party affiliation.

**Career length.** How long one serves was found to be mildly predictive of an increased propensity for conservatism as well. While this is reasonably explained as above in Rank, it should also be considered as a function of the socialization process, as duration is most likely to intensify any socialization or enculturation effect. As a result, those who serve longer should be more likely to reflect any branch or service effect more intensely, and for conservatism at least, this appears to be the case.

Another measure of a long career (usually a minimum of 20 years) as opposed to a briefer time in service, is whether the individual retired from the military. Retired status also has a related aspect in that as the recipients of retirement benefits, many which are indexed to active duty benefits, they have a direct stake in these policy areas.

**Implications for Policy**

**Military-Centric Issues**

America has long benefited from the service and sacrifice of its military members; more recently this has included a resurgence of active political participation by this group. Despite a
long history of successful military leaders capitalizing on their war records to enter the political arena, by the 20th century this phenomena had largely ceased as the military professionalized. One noteworthy exception was Douglas MacArthur, whose frustration with President Roosevelt’s war policy (which prioritized a European victory) led him to not only injudiciously allow himself to be considered for the Republican presidential nomination, but in a clear violation of the 1939 Hatch Act, he would actively solicit support to this end while still on active service (Manchester 1978). Indeed, it would be MacArthur’s one-time aide Dwight Eisenhower, who would vault to the Presidency on the strength of his wartime record, only in his case, this would occur well after his retirement (Eisenhower 1986).

It would be 1991 and the successful Gulf war, before military generals would again have the kind of broad popularity that Eisenhower and MacArthur enjoyed. While two of the most identifiable of these generals, Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf, declined to parley their professional successes into electoral politics, after his retirement Powell would serve in Republican administrations. More recently, many prominent military figures have retired and gone directly into politics, most emphasizing their military records and rank. Particularly when national security and military policy dominate political debate, these albeit retired military members’ active participation signals a potential increase in both the partisanship and politicization of the military.

Even as war policy takes a backseat to the economy and broad social issues such as healthcare, the military community remains engaged as an identity group with a stake in the issues. When concerns over possible changes to existing Military and Veterans’ health care as a consequence of the proposed healthcare overhaul legislation arose, lawmakers were quick to assure the military community otherwise (Maze 2009). This example illustrates a potential
concern that those with military affiliation and benefits will be perceived by their fellow citizens as being part of an exclusive, privileged group. In recent years particularly, active-duty military and Veterans alike have received significant increases in all manner of benefits: double-digit pay raises, a new, expanded Montgomery G.I. education bill, and employment priorities for themselves in the federal government and for their spouses aboard military bases (U.S. Army 2006). While no one doubts the worthiness of these policies, during a time of recession and national belt-tightening, having one group relatively immune from this risks an eventual backlash.

Social Issues

The U.S. military, as a federal institution has long served as a laboratory for social change in America. The Federal government’s commitment to desegregation of the military, both within the ranks and among the affiliated institutions supported by the Department of Defense marked a milestone in national civil rights policy. While less an extreme example, the deliberate expansion of opportunities for women’s service offered many a rare chance to earn wages at full parity with men, and to eventually qualify for educational and other veteran’s benefits as well. While women’s service is still restricted from direct combat occupations, those remaining areas historically closed to women are rapidly being integrated. Most recently, as it had in the previous examples, the military is reappraising its stance on sexual orientation as a condition of service and is preparing to add alternative sexual preferences to its list of institutionally prohibited discriminations, a process which like the examples earlier, will not be without some initial controversy. But I am confident, that as the issue resolves itself, the military will weather this storm too and allow the dignity of national service to yet another discriminated group.
Today’s military, more than at any other time in its history, reflects the diversity of the nation it serves. It provides meaningful experiences, benefits, and career opportunities for citizens and non-citizens alike, from all walks of life. While the all-volunteer nature of service today will continue to see patterns of membership based on self-selection tendencies, the military as an institution has demonstrated its commitment to equal opportunities to those who choose to serve, and will continue to offer all its members a unique experience. But importantly, the military must not be perceived as a distinct sub-group of American society – rather a reflection of society. To ascribe to this group collectively then such general assumptions as have previously been done is disingenuous. Military members have many unique attributes as a consequence of their experiences, but shared political attitudes are not necessarily one of them.

Future Research Directions

This process has confirmed for me the need for a comprehensive national survey of the American military. Besides the need to examine a more representative selection of individuals with service experience, that reflects the variances to be found by age, gender, race, and other demographic variables, one needs to delve more deeply into the type of service experience as well. This variation, within military service itself, likely holds the key to the differences between the military and their civilian cohort that this research has only broadly suggested. The potential list of independent variables, beyond simple service, branch and duration, must include all aspects of that service: whether one was active, guard or reserve, as well as their rank and duties. What was the individual’s experience with deployments and combat? What was their primary motivation for joining the military, were they vulnerable to the draft, or just looking for a job? How did they choose their service branch? Who or what influenced them? What was their impression of their military service? Were they satisfied with their service? In short, is there a
sub-set of military service variables that better predict the consequences of service on the larger questions being asked?

   Beyond the principal utility they provide, how else does the military service of citizens impact a society? Does service impart a greater appreciation of civic values, the political process, or the importance of participation? And more fundamentally, how do such experiences, for many profoundly affecting, influence the political orientation of citizens?

   Besides providing a comprehensive look at the under-researched area of the enlisted service member’s experience, a stratified survey design would also capture for the first time solid measures of female and minority personnel as well. Beyond the study of voter behavior and party identity, this would offer an insight into (what is for many) the successful transformation of a segment of society that often struggles to succeed. Insights into the factors that contribute to this success could be of benefit to other fields of social science research as well. Finally, a comprehensive study would clarify some of the myths surrounding the indoctrination culture of the American military, and most importantly, identify the potential effect of their military service on the future political attitudes and decisions of all of America’s veterans.
APPENDIX A

CONTRIBUTIONS DATA
Source: Washington Post, Online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>Jan-May 2008</th>
<th>June-Sept 2008</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>1549</td>
<td>1035</td>
<td>3476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>852</td>
<td>1404</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>2895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>2195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marines</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NoBranch</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2609</td>
<td>4445</td>
<td>2564</td>
<td>9618</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONS AND VARIABLES
2008 Military Times Poll  (Poll conducted the first week of December, 2008)

“This is an annual poll conducted by the editors of the Military Times Media Group in order to
gauge the pulse of the military. All answers are confidential.” (Military Times 2008).

Results accessed online, January 16, 2009 www.militarytimes.com

Demographic Variables:

**Grade**  “What is your pay grade?” Originally an interval variable, defined by a range
from E1-O10. For clarity this was collapsed into 6 ranges and recoded 1-6.

**Years**  “How many years have you served in the military?” An interval variable,
measured in years.

**Age**  “How old are you?” An interval variable, measured in years.

**Woman**  “What is your gender?” A binary variable, recoded into a dummy where
female = 1, or male = 0.

**Minority**  “What is your ethnicity?” Originally a categorical variable, recoded into a dummy
where any ethnicity other than white = 1, or white = 0.

**Education**  “What is the highest level of education you have completed?” An interval
variable, measured in years.

**Status**  “What is your duty status?” A categorical variable, recoded into two dummy
variables, Active and Retired.

**Active**  A binary variable, 1 = currently active duty, in the Reserves or National Guard, or
0 = not.

**Retired**  A binary variable, 1 = retired from the military, or 0 = not.

**Branch**  “In which branch do you currently serve or did you most recently serve?” A
categorical variable, originally with 12 choices; collapsed into 4 separate
branches, each including its reserve and guard components. These were then
converted into four dummy variables for each Branch; Army, Navy, Air Force
and Marines.

Dependent Variables:

**Political Views**  “How would you describe your political views?” An ordinal variable,
recoded with 1=very liberal, 2=liberal, 3=moderate,
4= conservative and 5=very conservative.
Party Identification  “In politics today, do you consider yourself a?” A categorical variable recoded (for interpretive consistency) 1=Republican, 2=Libertarian, 3=Independent, 4=Democrat, and 5=Other.

Ideological/Attitudinal Questions:

How do you feel about President-elect Barack Obama as commander in chief? (Check one)
Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way President George W. Bush is handling his job as president? (Check one)
Should the U.S. have gone to war in Iraq? (Check one)
Do you approve or disapprove of the way President George W. Bush is handling the situation in Iraq? (Check one)
Do you approve or disapprove of President-elect Barack Obama's calls to withdraw combat brigades from Iraq within 16 months? (Check one)
Do you approve or disapprove of the way President George W. Bush is handling the situation in Afghanistan? (Check one)
Should the U.S. have gone to war in Afghanistan? (Check one)
Do you support President-elect Barack Obama's calls to repeal the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy and therefore allow gays to serve openly in the military? (Check one)
How satisfied are you with your job: (Check one)

2008 American National Election Study

Dependent Variables:

Political Views  (V083069) Where would you place YOURSELF on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?
1. Extremely liberal
2. Liberal
3. Slightly liberal
4. Moderate; middle of the road
5. Slightly conservative
6. Conservative
7. Extremely conservative

Party Identification  (V083097) Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a [DEMOCRAT, a REPUBLICAN / a REPUBLICAN, a DEMOCRAT], an INDEPENDENT, or what?
1. Democrat = recoded 3
2. Republican = recoded 1
3. Independent = recoded 2
4. Other party (SPECIFY) = 0
5. No preference {VOL} = omit
Independent Variables:

**Military** (V083221) Have you ever served or are you currently serving in the US military, the National Guard, or military reserves?
1. Currently serving
2. Not currently serving but previously served
3. R has never served in the military

**Woman**
Gender = recoded as a binary variable where 1 = woman and 0 = man

**Minority**
Race = recoded as a binary variable where 1 = any other than white and 0 = white

**Age**
Age = in years

**Education** (V083217) What is the highest grade of school or year of college you have completed?
- 00-12 grades
- 13-16 grades
- 17+ grades

2008 American National Election Study

Attitude Questions:

V083028 (Figure 3)
Do you APPROVE or DISAPPROVE of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?
1. Approve
5. Disapprove

V083103 (Figure 5)
Taking everything into account, do you think the war in Iraq has been WORTH THE COST or NOT?
1. Worth it = Yes
5. Not worth it = No

V085210 (Figure 7)
Do you APPROVE, DISAPPROVE, or NEITHER APPROVE NOR DISAPPROVE of the way the U.S. federal government has handled the war in Iraq during the last four years?
1. Approve
5. Disapprove
7. Neither approve nor disapprove

V085209 (Figure 10)
Do you APPROVE, DISAPPROVE, or NEITHER APPROVE NOR DISAPPROVE of the way the U.S. federal government has handled the war in Afghanistan during the last four years?
1. Approve
5. Disapprove
7. Neither approve nor disapprove

V083212 (Figure 12)
Do you think homosexuals should be allowed to serve in the United States Armed Forces or don't you think so?
1. Homosexuals should be allowed to serve = Yes
5. Homosexuals should not be allowed to serve = No
2008 *Military Times* Poll  (Poll conducted the first week of December, 2008)

Attitudinal Question Not in Main Text:

Should the U.S. have gone to war in Afghanistan? (Check one)

Results: Yes = 86.83%  No = 6.13%  No Opinion = 5.05%
REFERENCES


Truman, Harry. 1948. Establishing the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces. Executive Order 9981. General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives.


