

From Vietnam to Iraq: Continuity and Change in Between-Group Differences in Support for Military Action

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This paper examines between-group differences in support for military action in the period since the Vietnam War. During the Vietnam War, support for military action was stronger among men, whites, the more educated, the more affluent, and younger persons. In the post-Vietnam era, men have remained consistently more supportive of military action, despite recent changes in gender roles and gender politics. Racial differences have remained strong, but not uniformly so. The gap between whites and nonwhites has been most pronounced in periods of intense partisanship or when military events have sparked a “rally-‘round-the-flag” response that affected whites more than nonwhites. Education and income differences have generally followed a similar pattern, although there are signs of a weakening (or even reversal) of differences in attitudes to war on the education variable. Another change in the post-Vietnam era has been the relative decline in support for military action among younger persons. These data are used to explore the diverse causes and meanings of attitudes toward the use of military force and to assess the implications of the social distribution of pro- and antiwar opinion for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy and political mobilization on issues of war and peace.

Controversy over American military intervention in Vietnam made patterns of public support for and opposition to war the focus of extensive research in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Verba et al. 1967; Hamilton 1968; Robinson and Jacobson 1969; Converse and Schuman 1970; Hahn 1970; Patchen 1970; Rosenberg, Verba, and Converse 1970; Mueller 1971, 1973; Schuman 1972; Wright 1972). In a similar way, the current U.S. military action in Iraq, and the accompanying debate over the justification, consequences, and strategies for pursuing or ending that war, have again made public attitudes toward the use of military force a topic of pronounced social scientific interest (Eichenberg and Stoll 2004; Feaver and Gelphi 2004; Everts and Isernia 2005; Mueller 2005; Voeten and Brewer 2006; Berinsky and Druckman 2007). During the intervening decades, however, public attitudes toward military intervention received only occasional attention from social scientists—the chief exception being a brief period of renewed interest sparked by the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91 (Schuman and Rieger 1992; Conover and Sapiro 1993; Bendyna et al. 1996; Wilcox, Ferrara, and Allsop 1993; Mueller 1994; Wilcox, Hewitt, and Allsop 1996).

Among the central concerns of the Vietnam-era research was the analysis and interpretation of between-group differences in public opinion: for example, differences between men and women or between whites and nonwhites in their support for the war. There was some attention to this question in the spate of studies that followed the first Persian Gulf War—especially on the gender issue—but almost none regarding other U.S. military actions in the post-Vietnam era, including the current war in Iraq. This paper contributes to filling that void by analyzing patterns of public opinion on the use of military force over the entire period since the end of the Vietnam War, with a focus on the social and demographic correlates of pro- and antiwar sentiment and the extent to which these have persisted or changed in the years since Vietnam.¹ Included in the study are data on support for U.S. military intervention in Central America, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, the first Persian Gulf War, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and

Iraq. Over the course of this period I document significant continuities, but also important changes, in the alignment of American public opinion on issues of military intervention. Some of these changes are plausibly interpreted as a legacy of the Vietnam War itself, while others reflect broader trends in American society and the different nature of U.S. military intervention in the post-Vietnam era.

A related aim of this paper is to add to our understanding of the underlying causes and meanings of attitudes toward the use of military force. On this question the literature provides many plausible hypotheses, but the evidence for these is often limited or inconclusive. By examining between-group differences across a variety of foreign policy contexts, I hope to garner a sufficient breadth and variety of evidence to be able to discriminate among alternative interpretations. A key finding of this analysis is that seemingly similar opinions often conceal important differences in the underlying causes or meanings of pro- and antiwar attitudes. Depending upon the historical context and the framing of foreign policy issues by political leaders and the news media, public attitudes toward the use of military force can also be highly volatile. This makes any predictions based on past American wars inherently hazardous unless they are tempered by an appreciation of these complexities. With these caveats in mind, I turn in the conclusion to a discussion of the implications of trends in the social distribution of attitudes toward military intervention for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy and for the prospects and likely contours of political mobilization on issues of war and peace.

Public Opinion during the Vietnam War

Public attitudes toward the Vietnam War were the subject of extensive study during the 1960s and early 1970s. Overall opposition to the war increased during the course of the conflict. Different polls yielded different estimates of the strength of this opposition. Alternative explanations were offered as to its underlying causes. Nevertheless, the many studies of this topic were in general agreement regarding the *relative* levels of pro- and antiwar sentiment among different segments of the American public.

Two of the most consistently supported findings of this research were the greater incidence of antiwar sentiment among *women* and among *racial minorities* (Verba et al. 1967; Hamilton 1968; Robinson and Jacobson 1969; Converse and Schuman 1970; Rosenberg et al., 1970; Wright 1972). Among respondents to the 1964 American National Election Study (ANES), for example, 61 percent of women opposed escalation in Vietnam, compared with 42 percent of men; comparable figures for nonwhites and whites were 75 percent and 51 percent respectively (Wright 1972).

Sex-role socialization and gender differences in the propensity toward aggression were cited to explain the lesser militarism of women (Verba et al. 1967; Robinson and Jacobson 1969). Different interpretations were given to the high incidence of antiwar sentiment among racial minorities. Some attributed this to the disproportionate casualties that the war imposed upon nonwhites, whereas others saw it as a sign of a more sweeping alienation from American society (Converse and Schuman 1970; Rosenberg et al. 1970; Wright 1972; Cramer and Schuman 1975).

There was also a high degree of agreement among different studies in the relationship they found between militaristic sentiments and indices of *class* and *status*.

Most researchers found that support for military initiatives was stronger among the more educated and affluent segments of the public—especially during the early years of the war (Hamilton 1968; Converse and Schuman 1970; Patchen 1970; Wright 1972; but see also Verba et al. 1967). Among respondents to the 1964 ANES, for example, 48 percent of college graduates favored escalation in Vietnam, compared with 24 percent of those with a high-school education or less; 44 percent of persons with incomes over \$10,000 favored escalation, compared with 20 percent of those with incomes under \$5,000 (Hamilton 1968). Ecological studies of local referenda on the Vietnam War also found that opposition to the war was weakest in voting districts that were highest in socioeconomic status (Hahn 1970).

Explanations given for the greater pro-war sentiment of high-status groups included their stronger integration into the mainstream political culture, their closer identification with and susceptibility to the appeals of government leaders, and their greater attentiveness to the (initially hawkish) news media (Hamilton 1968; Patchen 1970; Wright 1972; Modigliani 1972; Mueller 1973). Lending credence to the importance of the news media in bolstering pro-war sentiment among high-status groups was the fact that the correlation between socioeconomic status and pro-war sentiment attenuated during the later years of the war at a time when many of the leading news media switched from hard-line support for the war to a moderate antiwar stance (Wright 1972).

Another pattern consistently supported by these studies was the greater support for military initiatives among *younger* Americans. Contrary to the widespread perception of youth as strongly opposed to the war, researchers found that young people were actually *more* likely than their elders to support military intervention (Hamilton 1968; Erskine 1970; Wright 1972). According to the 1968 ANES, for example, 42 percent of those below the age of 35 favored escalation in Vietnam, compared with 30 percent of those age 60 and over (Wright 1972). In all 14 Gallup Polls taken between March 1966 and October 1969, a higher percentage of those age 50 and over agreed that “the U.S. made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam” than of those age 29 and under (Erskine 1970).

The underlying causes of age differences in pro- and antiwar sentiment received little comment in the Vietnam-era literature; however, Lunch and Sperlich (1979), in their retrospective overview of Vietnam War opinion, offered a number of plausible hypotheses. These included the greater experience of older persons with the horrors of war, the closer proximity of younger persons to the patriotic indoctrination of the schools, the weaker attachment of younger persons to political ideologies and affiliations that might mitigate the impact of wartime propaganda, and the propensity of those most exposed to the privations of war (typically younger persons) to avoid cognitive dissonance by embracing opinions that justified those privations.

The Post-Vietnam Era

Compared with the Vietnam War, the nature and context of U.S. military intervention during the last three decades has differed in several ways that could be expected to affect the alignment of public opinion. In the aftermath of Vietnam, the draft was eliminated as one potential influence on attitudes toward military action. Pentagon planners also implemented new counterinsurgency strategies, known as “low-intensity

conflict,” for projecting military power (Hunt and Shultz 1982; Miles 1986). Partly in response to the unpopularity of the Vietnam War, policymakers sought to avoid the introduction of large numbers of U.S. ground troops into conflicts such as those in Central America, relying instead on military assistance, covert operations, and proxy forces to accomplish their military objectives. Prior to the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War, U.S. troops were introduced mainly in situations (such as Grenada and Panama) where they were unlikely to encounter significant resistance or sustain casualties over a prolonged period. U.S. military strategy in the first Persian Gulf War—with its heavy reliance on air power, overwhelming use of destructive force, rapid deployment and withdrawal, and extensive press censorship—was also formulated with the memory of Vietnam War opposition fresh in mind (Yant 1991; MacArthur 1992). This appears to have been the preferred military strategy for the current Iraq War as well, although, in retrospect it is evident that serious blunders were made in executing that strategy and Pentagon planners significantly underestimated the number of U.S. troops that would be required to pacify the country and the length of time they would need to be deployed (Ricks 2006).

With the partial exception of the current war in Iraq, U.S. military intervention in the post-Vietnam era has consequently been less visible and less burdensome to the average U.S. citizen than the war in Vietnam. Since the end of the Vietnam War, no Americans have been drafted to fight on foreign soil and the casualties of U.S.-sponsored military actions have been overwhelmingly foreign nationals—a contingency that has rarely dampened the American public’s support for war. During the first five years of the Iraq War, U.S. military forces have sustained approximately 4,000 combat deaths. This is high in comparison with other post-Vietnam military engagements, but still equates to roughly 10 percent of the deaths sustained in Vietnam during the first five years following the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and the massive introduction of U.S. ground troops in 1964. Given that much of the public sentiment against the Vietnam War was based not on opposition to U.S. intervention per se, but on growing weariness of the war’s mounting costs, the lesser burden associated with recent military actions may have altered the alignment of public attitudes to war (Robinson and Jacobson 1969; Rosenberg et al., 1970; Mueller 1971).

Another important difference between the escalation in Vietnam and subsequent instances of U.S. military intervention is the party of the president who initiated those military actions. Whereas the major escalation in Vietnam took place under Democratic leadership, U.S. military intervention in Central America, the invasions of Grenada and Panama, military actions in Lebanon, Somalia and Bosnia,² the first Persian Gulf War, and the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were all initiated by Republican presidents. Only in Haiti and Kosovo were U.S. military actions initiated by a Democratic president. This might be expected to increase the class and racial polarization of attitudes toward military intervention, with affluent whites giving relatively greater support to military actions initiated by Republican presidents than they did to actions initiated by Democrats.³

The recent period also differs from the Vietnam era in terms of the broader social context in which military intervention has occurred. For instance, the political and economic situation of American women has changed significantly since the Vietnam era. There has been a sharp increase in the number of women entering the labor force, and a

widening receptivity to the ideas of the women's movement. The implications of these changes have been interpreted in different ways. Some have speculated that the women's movement, by encouraging female assertiveness, contributes to more hawkish views among women (Mueller 1973; Holsti and Rosenau 1981). On the other hand, it is possible that increased economic independence and ideological assertiveness among women, by undermining women's traditional deference toward men on political matters, may have widened the gender gap on war and foreign policy issues (Smeal 1984; Conover 1988). The latter view is consistent with the emergence in the 1980s of a sizable gender gap in voting behavior that researchers found to be associated with women's greater sensitivity to the threat of war (Frankovic 1982; Burris 1984; Mansbridge 1985).⁴

The political and economic situation of racial minorities has also changed in the post-Vietnam era. As a result of the civil rights movement, minorities have been politically enfranchised and achieved increased access to middle-class jobs (Wilson 1980). At the same time, the growth of an urban underclass, together with white backlash against school busing, welfare assistance, affirmative action, and immigration have created new forms of racial polarization of American society (Wilson 1987; Edsall 1991; Hacker 1992). Depending upon which of these trends one chooses to look at, the social situation of racial minorities can be described as either convergent with or divergent from that of white Americans.

What is undeniable is that the civil rights movement has waned as an oppositional force in American politics. The Vietnam War coincided with an historic peak in minority activism and radical turn in the civil rights movement. Minority leaders of the late 1960s and early 1970s articulated a sweeping critique of American society that linked domestic racism with imperialism in Southeast Asia (Fairclough 1984; McAdam 1988). To the extent that minority opposition to the Vietnam War was enhanced by high levels of political mobilization and the exposure to radical views, we might expect minority opposition to U.S. military action in the post-Vietnam era to be weaker or less stable.

Finally, one of the defining features of public opinion in the post-Vietnam era has been the legacy of the Vietnam War itself. Fearful of being drawn into "another Vietnam," Americans in the post-Vietnam era have tended to be wary of introducing U.S. ground troops into foreign conflicts and of other forms of military intervention that might lead down that road (LeoGrande 1987). This "Vietnam syndrome," it is argued, has been reflected in the greater range of debate on foreign policy issues in the news media and a softening of the jingoistic tenor of the school curriculum (Dionne 1991; Joseph 2007).

It is possible that the legacy of the Vietnam War may have impacted some groups more strongly than others. A generalized aversion to military force, if and where one developed, may be more deep-rooted and enduring among higher socioeconomic groups because these are the persons who are most likely to have undergone a self-conscious change in their attitude toward intervention in Vietnam (Lunch and Sperlich 1979). The more educated and affluent classes, because they are the ones most influenced by the news media, should also be the ones most affected by any tendency of the media to become more restrained or less uniform in their support for military intervention in the post-Vietnam era. Some have speculated that the Vietnam syndrome has had its greatest impact on a specific age cohort—namely, those who were young adults during the height of the Vietnam conflict (Holsti and Rosenau 1980; Braungart and Braungart 1986). It is

also possible that the “lessons” of Vietnam, as transmitted through the school curriculum and youth culture, may have contributed to a weakening of militaristic sentiments among even younger persons, many of whom were not yet born at the time of the Vietnam War.

In sum, there are reasons why each of the between-group differences in public attitudes toward the Vietnam War may have altered in the post-Vietnam era, although the multiplicity of causally relevant factors makes the direction of any such change difficult to predict. Exposure to feminist ideas and the increased involvement of American women in traditionally male roles may have eroded gender differences in attitudes toward war, or it may have encouraged a more assertive expression of women’s traditional opposition to the use of force. Some trends point to a convergence of the social situations of whites and nonwhites and a weakening of minority movements that might nurture and sustain oppositional views, while others point to a deepening polarization of American society along racial and ethnic lines. The lower level of U.S. casualties in post-Vietnam conflicts may have altered the pattern of support and opposition to military intervention, although it remains to be shown whether exposure to the privations of war is associated with heightened antiwar sentiment or whether, because of the impulse to reduce cognitive dissonance, it contributes to pro-war attitudes. The tendency of higher socioeconomic groups to support governmental policy on issues of military intervention may have been tempered by a rethinking of their endorsement of the Vietnam War and by their increased exposure to oppositional views in the news media, but it is also likely to have been bolstered by Republican Party allegiances. The Vietnam syndrome, if one exists, may have had its most pronounced effect among those who came of age during the height of the Vietnam conflict, or it may have had an even stronger impact on younger Americans who received their early political socialization in the years following the war.

Data Analysis

To explore these issues, I analyzed survey data from three sources: American National Election Studies conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan; CBS News/*New York Times* polls; and ABC News/*Washington Post* polls. More than 200 different surveys, spanning the years from 1964 to 2006, were examined. These opinion polls included questions on attitudes toward the Vietnam War, military intervention in Central America (El Salvador and Nicaragua), the invasions of Grenada and Panama, military actions in Lebanon, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, the first Gulf War, and the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In general, I chose as dependent variables questions that asked for respondents’ opinions regarding *specific* military actions that had been undertaken or were contemplated, rather than more ambiguously worded questions, such as those that asked whether the nation should get “more involved” in a particular region (without specifying the type of involvement) or whether they “approved of the president’s handling” of a military situation (without specifying whether dissent from the president’s policy implied opposition to military initiatives or a preference for tougher military action).⁵ In the discussion that follows, survey questions designated with such labels as “*approve* intervention” or “*approve* sending troops” refer to instances in which respondents were asked about their retrospective endorsement of military actions that had already been undertaken, whereas questions designated as “*favor* escalation” or “*favor* sending troops” refer to instances in which respondents were asked about their support for military actions that were being contemplated or proposed, but had

not yet taken place. An Appendix (available at <http://uoregon.edu/~vburriss/appendix.pdf>) shows the exact wording of the questions selected for analysis. Five social and demographic characteristics were chosen as independent variables for the study: sex, race, educational attainment, family income, and age.

Table 1 summarizes the pattern of association between the five independent variables and each of the survey questions regarding attitudes toward the use of military force. For simplicity and economy of presentation, I have used Goodman and Kruskal's gamma to indicate the direction and magnitude of each association. In all cases the dependent variables have been dichotomized as support for or opposition to the military action in question. Nonresponses and equivocal responses have been excluded from the tally.⁶ Race has been dichotomized as white and nonwhite.⁷ Age, education, and family income are measured in four or five categories, with slight variations from one survey to the next. For comparison, the top rows of the table show the pattern of responses for several representative questions concerning attitudes toward the Vietnam War. On the remaining questions, the signs of the gammas have been altered as necessary so that a positive sign always indicates an association in the same direction as during the Vietnam War and a negative sign always indicates an association in the opposite direction. Thus, a positive coefficient indicates greater support for military action among males, whites, highly educated persons, more affluent persons, and younger persons; a negative coefficient indicates greater support for military action among females, nonwhites, less educated persons, less affluent persons, and older persons. The right-hand columns in Table 1 show the overall percentage of responses endorsing the military action specified in each survey question and the minimum sample size for any bivariate association based on that question.⁸

Table 1 reveals considerable variation in the size of the gammas for each independent variable, even among roughly similar questions dealing with the same military conflict. This is not surprising. Responses to surveys of this type are known to vary widely depending on the context and wording of the questions. Public opinion on foreign policy issues is particularly volatile because of the low level of knowledge and interest among large segments of the public. Opinions are not always well formed or deeply held, and they often have a strong emotional element. Nevertheless, research has shown that public opinion about military action *does* have a comprehensible structure, even if those opinions are not always rooted in detailed knowledge or rational judgments (Hurwitz and Peffley 1987). One method of demonstrating this has been to conduct *meta-analyses* that pool results from multiple opinion polls so that measurement artifacts and other sources of volatility are effectively cancelled out (Jentleson 1992; Eichenberg 2005). In the presentation that follows, I adopt a variant of this approach, which is to compute average gammas across clusters of similar survey questions, where each individual gamma is weighted by the inverse of its standard error (Lipsey and Wilson 2001). The results of these meta-analyses are then presented in bar graphs that allow for easy comparison across different clusters of survey questions. In the following sections I draw upon these graphs to discuss each of the main demographic correlates of attitudes toward military intervention, the degree of continuity or change in the attitudes associated with these variables, and the implications of these patterns for understanding the underlying causes and meanings of between-group differences in attitudes toward the use of military force.

Table 1 • Correlates of Support for U.S. Military Action (Gamma Coefficients)

	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Educ</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Yes%</i>	<i>Min N</i>
<i>Vietnam</i>							
Approve intervention (ANES 1964)	.20*	.16	.24**	.27**	.27**	62	1002
Approve intervention (ANES 1968)	.25**	.18	.16**	.18**	.26**	37	1321
Favor escalation (ANES 1964)	.34**	.49**	.24**	.20**	.20**	49	1027
Favor escalation (ANES 1968)	.30**	.47**	.05	.06	.11*	38	1452
<i>El Salvador</i>							
Approve military advisors (ABC 3/82)	.34**	.17	.05		-.00	37	1134
Favor more military aid (ABC 3/82)	.53**	.22	.09		-.12	25	1147
Favor more military aid (ABC 5/83)	.41**	.40**	.17*	.26**	-.14*	21	1256
Favor more military aid (CBS 6/83)	.27**	.02	-.12	.04	-.05	60	1090
Favor more military aid (CBS 2/85)	.24**	.12	-.14*	-.04	-.10	74	1356
Favor more military advisors (CBS 6/83)	.26**	-.13	-.15**	-.03	-.00	50	1147
Favor more military advisors (CBS 2/85)	.16*	-.29**	-.17**	-.13*	-.02	65	1323
Favor sending US troops (ABC 3/82)	.43**	.26	-.05		-.04	18	1164
Favor sending US troops (ABC 5/83)	.40**	-.17	-.04	.01	.05	15	1303
Favor sending US troops (CBS 6/83)	.36**	-.18	-.18**	-.04	.10	36	1178
Favor sending US troops (CBS 2/85)	.29**	-.33**	-.15**	-.10	-.05	53	1306
<i>Nicaragua (pre-Iran/contra)</i>							
Favor overthrowing government (ABC 5/83)	.40**	-.05	-.10	-.03	-.04	14	1246
Favor overthrowing government (CBS 6/83)	.31**	-.01	.10	.16*	-.00	30	1028
Favor overthrowing government (CBS 10/83)	.23*	.26*	.05	.15*	-.09	27	838
Favor overthrowing government (ABC 2/85)	.34**	.18	.00	.14*	.04	21	1260
Favor overthrowing government (ABC 3/85)	.43**	-.03	.11	.12	.09	18	1239
Favor overthrowing government (CBS 5/85)	.28**	.05	.11	.15**	-.12*	38	1231
Favor overthrowing government (ABC 3/86)	.35**	.06	.13	.17**	.11	32	982
Approve contra aid (ABC 3/86)	.17*	.04	-.06	.02	-.05	37	1049
Approve contra aid (ABC 4/86)	.33**	.07	.14*	.20**	.08	30	1322
Approve contra aid (ABC 6/86)	.43**	.14	.07	.17**	-.06	33	1314
<i>Nicaragua (post-Iran/contra)</i>							
Favor overthrowing government (ABC 1/87)	.42**	.42**	.11	.27**	-.04	24	1331
Favor overthrowing government (ABC 5/87)	.43**	.13	.10	.16**	.00	26	1375
Favor overthrowing government (ABC 8/87)	.34**	.15	.15*	.20**	-.06	31	1187
Approve contra aid (ABC 1/87)	.44**	.28*	.14	.21**	.06	17	1323
Approve contra aid (CBS 1/87)	.54**	.28**	.18**	.21**	.02	32	1337
Approve contra aid (ABC 5/87)	.40**	.28**	.21**	.22**	-.07	30	1382
Approve contra aid (ABC 8/87)	.41**	.28**	.11	.18**	-.14*	38	1189
Approve contra aid (CBS 1/88)	.34**	.38**	.13*	.16**	-.07	36	1302
Approve contra aid (ABC 3/88)	.37**	.36**	.13	.16*	-.11*	42	758
Approve contra aid (CBS 3/88)	.41**	.19	.04	.20**	-.02	44	1391
<i>Lebanon</i>							
Approve sending US troops (CBS 9/83)	.37**	.28**	.25**	.26**	.08	41	1339
Approve sending US troops (CBS 10/83)	.25**	.37**	.12	.25**	-.02	53	928
<i>Grenada</i>							
Approve invasion (CBS 10/83)	.39**	.65**	.15*	.29**	-.07	58	892
<i>Panama</i>							
Approve invasion (ABC 1/90)	.18*	.37**	-.19**	-.01	-.10	83	1399
Approve invasion (CBS 1/90)	.22**	.44**	.04	.10	-.09	80	1395

Table 1 • (Continued)

	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Educ</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Yes%</i>	<i>Min N</i>
<i>Persian Gulf</i>							
Approve sending US troops (ABC 8/90)	.63**	.40**			-.12	76	757
Approve sending US troops (CBS 8/90)	.38**	.44**	.18**	.37**	.01	81	1281
Approve sending US troops (ABC 9/90)	.44**	.45**	.31**	.37**	.03	82	949
Approve sending US troops (CBS 10/90)	.43**	.51**	.24**	.33**	.03	69	2155
Approve sending US troops (ABC 11/90)	.53**	.40**	.29**		.09	70	736
Approve sending US troops (CBS 11/90)	.36**	.54**	.24**	.26**	.14*	67	1167
Approve sending US troops (CBS 12/90)	.34**	.41**	.17*	.23**	.14*	67	928
Approve sending US troops (ANES 1990)	.39**	.44**	.26**	.31**	.11*	60	1655
Approve sending US troops (CBS 1/91)	.47**	.60**	.24**	.26**	.11**	61	2495
Favor stronger military action (ABC 8/90)	.39**	.04			-.02	41	727
Favor stronger military action (ABC 9/90)	.33**	-.02	-.02	.07	.08	51	905
Favor stronger military action (ABC 10/90)	.36**	.01	-.09	.05	-.01	49	904
Favor stronger military action (CBS 10/90)	.28**	.13	-.10*	-.07	.07	43	2127
Favor stronger military action (ABC 11/90)	.43**	.28	.02		.01	66	718
Favor stronger military action (CBS 11/90)	.38**	.17	.05	.12	.15*	23	1172
Favor stronger military action (CBS 12/90)	.28**	.34**	-.12	.00	-.08	48	917
Favor stronger military action (ANES 1990)	.36**	.27**	-.03	.16**	.07	28	1739
Favor stronger military action (CBS 1/91)	.36**	.39**	.05	.15**	.05	50	2507
Approve going to war (ABC 1-2/91)	.41**	.62**			-.00	83	2583
Approve going to war (CBS 1-2/91)	.26**	.58**	-.01	.17**	.03	78	4713
War not a mistake (CBS 1-2/91)	.33**	.52**	.05	.21**	.10**	80	4608
<i>Somalia</i>							
Approve sending US troops (CBS 12/92 #1)	.08	-.25	.19	.12	-.01	83	682
Approve sending US troops (CBS 12/92 #2)	.08	.04	.14	.09	-.21**	86	1015
Approve sending US troops (CBS 1/93)	.05	-.09	.14*	.13*	-.11	74	1105
Approve sending US troops (CBS 10/93)	.17**	-.02	.17**	.17**	.11*	69	1814
Approve sending US troops (CBS 12/93)	-.04	-.23*	.13*	.09	.03	67	1170
<i>Bosnia</i>							
Favor US military action (CBS 12/92)	.25**	-.03	-.09	-.01	.20**	46	561
Favor US military action (ABC 1/93)	.03	.12	-.07	-.02	.14**	38	1171
Favor US military action (CBS 1/93)	.27**	.25*	.14*	.13*	-.06	48	996
Favor US military action (ABC 2/93)	.02	.03	-.14*	-.12	.13*	25	1065
Favor air strikes on Serbs (ABC 8/93)	.14	-.21	-.01	.08	-.03	63	1084
Favor air strikes on Serbs (CBS 4/94)	.49**	.18	.22**	.17**	-.03	64	1025
Approve air strikes on Serbs (CBS 9/95)	.41**	.32**	.24**	.17**	-.08	70	839
Favor sending US troops (CBS 5/93)	.25	.14	.13*	.14*	.21**	48	1049
Favor sending US troops (CBS 11/94)	-.13	-.23	.08	.08	.22**	38	986
Favor sending US troops (CBS 6/95)	.19*	.05	-.09	-.05	.19**	21	1131
Favor sending US troops (ABC 11/95)	.16	-.15	.15*	.09	-.03	41	891
Favor sending US troops (CBS 12/95)	.18*	-.04	.15*	.09	-.03	44	1005
Approve sending US troops (ABC 1/96)	.26**	-.02	.12	.17**	-.06	49	885
<i>Haiti</i>							
Favor use of military force (ABC 5/94)	.06	-.24**	-.22**	-.12*	.11*	38	1298
Favor use of military force (ABC 6/94)	.08	-.18*	-.15**	-.08	.05	45	1366
Favor use of military force (ABC 8/94)	.32**	-.27	-.06	-.04	.08	40	912
Favor sending US troops (CBS 6/94)	.26**	-.34*	.02	.02	.12	26	859
Favor sending US troops (CBS 7/94)	.34**	-.25*	.00	.09	.12	29	1157
Favor sending US troops (CBS 8/94)	.15	-.22	-.14	-.07	.06	32	496
Favor sending US troops (CBS 9/94)	.21	-.33	-.00	-.07	-.04	40	461

Table 1 • (Continued)

	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Educ</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Yes%</i>	<i>Min N</i>
<i>Kosovo</i>							
Favor bombing Serbia (ABC 3/99)	.14	-.08	.12	.13	.07	30	645
Favor bombing Serbia (CBS 3/99)	.07	.19	.03	.03	-.00	61	1024
Approve bombing Serbia (ABC 4/99)	.07	.13	-.03		-.02	69	1671
Approve bombing Serbia (CBS 4/99)	.13	.02	.09	.18**	-.01	65	1391
Approve bombing Serbia (ABC 5/99)	.23*	.12	-.01		.04	60	722
Approve bombing Serbia (CBS 5/99)	.07	-.02	-.00	.07	-.01	59	1436
Peace worth the loss of US lives (CBS 3/99)	.23**	.19	.15**	.12*	.02	41	1084
Favor sending ground troops (ABC 3/99)	.06	-.22*	-.11	-.03	.06	54	663
Favor sending ground troops (ABC 4/99)	.13*	-.04	-.05		.02	58	1659
Favor sending ground troops (CBS 4/99)	.12	-.00	.09	.12**	.07	48	1454
Favor sending ground troops (ABC 5/99)	.13	-.01	-.01		.20**	52	728
Favor sending ground troops (CBS 5/99)	.08	-.09	-.02	.04	.05	47	1522
Favor sending ground troops (ABC 6/99)	.24**	.04	.12*	.12*	.00	49	1031
Favor sending ground troops (CBS 6/99)	.00	-.12	.10	.08	-.07	59	844
Getting involved the right thing (CBS 4/99)	.12	-.11	.17**	.23**	.06	62	713
Getting involved the right thing (CBS 6/99)	.12	-.10	.19**	.10	-.05	59	831
<i>Afghanistan</i>							
Approve US air strikes (ABC 10/01)	.16	.68**	-.04		-.42**	94	983
Favor sending US troops (ABC 10/01)	-.04	.41**	-.08		-.02	76	960
Favor sending US troops (ABC 11/01)	.07	.42**	.11		-.14	73	721
Approve US military action (CBS 10/01)	.30*	.71**	-.01	.28**	-.17	93	1708
Approve US military action (ABC 11/01)	.15	.64**	.05		-.22*	92	1470
Approve US military action (CBS 11/01)	.54**	.68**	.06	.34*	-.07	92	720
Approve US military action (CBS 12/01)	.27	.28	-.18	.19	-.15	95	959
Approve US military action (CBS 1/02)	.31**	.69**	-.03	.21**	-.20**	92	2805
Approve US military action (CBS 2/02)	.26	.67**	.13	.25	.12	93	772
Approve US military action (CBS 4/02)	.15	.57*	.02	.29	-.04	92	539
War worth the cost (ANES 2002)	.27**	.47**	.26**	.19**	.05	80	1126
War worth the cost (ANES 2004)	.48**	.50**	.22**	.33**	-.11	70	1053
<i>Iraq</i>							
Favor US military action (ABC 12/01)	-.03	.22	-.23**		.07	75	707
Favor US military action (ABC 1/02)	.08	.11	-.29**	.04	.13*	73	1362
Favor US military action (ABC 2/02)	.17	.30*	-.14	.04	.12	69	708
Favor US military action (ABC 3/02)	.11	.26*	-.22**		.08	75	950
Favor US military action (ABC 9/02)	.17*	.37**	-.13*		.08	67	1669
Favor US military action (CBS 9/02)	.10	.16	-.27**	.02	.23**	69	1594
Favor US military action (CBS 10/02)	.21**	.48**	-.26**	-.01	.19**	69	1453
Favor US military action (CBS 11/02)	.28**	.51**	.03	.20**	.17*	45	866
Favor US military action (ABC 12/02)	.29**	.21*	-.17**	.03	.14*	64	1096
Favor US military action (ANES 2002)	.10	.33**	-.20	-.03	.03	68	924
Favor US military action (ABC 1/03)	.28**	.41**	-.12**	.11*	.06	61	1755
Favor US military action (CBS 1/03)	.16*	.36**	-.23**	-.00	.11*	65	1709
Favor US military action (ABC 2/03)	.29**	.30**	.01		.09	66	955
Favor US military action (CBS 2/03)	.24**	.41**	-.14**	.08	.13**	71	1949
Favor US military action (CBS 3/03)	.15**	.45**	-.18**	.06	.11*	68	2491
Favor unilateral military action (ABC 3/02)	.25**	.21*	-.16**		.08	59	951
Favor unilateral military action (ABC 9/02)	.16*	.26**	-.14**		.01	52	1670
Favor unilateral military action (CBS 9/02)	.27**	.11	-.10*	.04	.11*	28	1618
Favor unilateral military action (CBS 10/02)	.21**	.39**	-.12*	.09	-.01	30	1479
Favor unilateral military action (ABC 12/02)	.31**	.22*	-.12*	.03	.07	47	1098
Favor unilateral military action (ABC 1/03)	.21*	.45**	-.22**	.14*	.02	54	738
Favor unilateral military action (ABC 2/03)	.33**	.18	.02		.04	52	935
Favor unilateral military action (CBS 2/03)	.25**	.45**	.02	.09	.06	36	1992
Favor unilateral military action (CBS 3/03)	.23**	.55**	-.01	.18**	.03	36	952

Table 1 • (Continued)

	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Educ</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Yes%</i>	<i>Min N</i>
<i>Iraq (continued)</i>							
Approve US military action (CBS 3/03)	.26**	.53**	-.24**	.00	.04	78	2897
Approve US military action (CBS 4/03)	.16*	.53**	-.27**	-.02	.07	77	2503
Approve US occupation of Iraq (ABC 7/03)	.16	.48**	-.03		.15*	75	961
Approve US occupation of Iraq (ABC 8/03)	.33**	.35**	.13	.17*	.11	72	908
Approve US occupation of Iraq (CBS 10/03)	.19	.52**	.08	.21**	.04	58	650
Approve US occupation of Iraq (CBS 12/03)	.22**	.70**	.04	.25**	-.06	64	706
Removing Saddam worth costs (CBS 2/03)	.30**	.52**	.01	.11	.12	68	646
Removing Saddam worth costs (CBS 3/03)	.12**	.54**	-.06	.16**	.06	57	1957
Removing Saddam worth costs (CBS 3/03)	.30**	.62**	-.03	.15**	.02	70	2770
Removing Saddam worth costs (CBS 4/03)	.26**	.57**	-.06	.13**	.04	70	2371
Removing Saddam worth costs (CBS 5/03)	.26*	.45**	-.08	.24**	.11	68	652
Removing Saddam worth costs (CBS 6/03)	.20*	.55**	-.01	.16*	.10	66	697
Removing Saddam worth costs (CBS 10/03)	.09	.38**	-.10	.09	.15	55	320
Removing Saddam worth costs (CBS 11/03)	.26*	.43**	.06	.14	.17*	51	513
Removing Saddam worth costs (CBS 12/03)	.01	.57**	.02	.18**	.09	57	1567
Removing Saddam worth costs (CBS 3/04)	.17	.41**	.12	.15*	.21**	53	845
Removing Saddam worth costs (CBS 7/05)	.04	.36**	-.05	.03	.05	49	1056
War worth the costs (ABC 4/03)	.08	.47**	-.09	.14*	-.08	72	1008
War worth the costs (ABC 9/03)	.15*	.45**	-.07	.09*	.06	55	1815
War worth the costs (ABC 10/03)	.12*	.52**	-.08	.14*	.07	56	1755
War worth the costs (ABC 12/03)	.20*	.33**	-.06	.12	.01	60	868
War worth the costs (ABC 1/04)	.17*	.43**	-.06	.00	.10	48	882
War worth the costs (ABC 2/04)	.16	.33**	-.01		.09	49	951
War worth the costs (ABC 3/04)	.06	.25**	.02	.13*	.04	54	993
War worth the costs (ABC 4/04)	.14	.45**	-.05	.06	.03	52	1045
War worth the costs (ABC 5/04)	.02	.41**	.00	.12	.04	50	1726
War worth the costs (ABC 6/04)	.18*	.52**	.05	.11	.06	47	1052
War worth the costs (ABC 7/04)	.08	.49**	-.00	.08	.05	50	1002
War worth the costs (ABC 8/04)	.04	.42**	-.13*	.01	.07	49	758
War worth the costs (ABC 9/04)	.09	.56**	-.04	.31	-.04	50	1654
War worth the costs (ABC 12/04)	.08	.32**	.10	.16*	-.04	43	838
War worth the costs (ANES 2004)	.13	.36**	-.01	.15*	-.04	39	1046
War worth the costs (ABC 1/05)	.04	.57**	-.02	.14*	.01	45	891
War worth the costs (ABC 3/05)	.22*	.42**	-.02	.08	.08	46	828
War worth the costs (ABC 4/05)	.34**	.38**	.02	.18**	.06	45	928
War worth the costs (ABC 6/05)	.06	.50**	.00	.11*	.03	44	1833
War worth the costs (ABC 8/05)	.20*	.52**	-.04	.11	-.01	46	909
War worth the costs (ABC 10/05)	.22**	.41**	-.05	.13*	.07	39	1091
War worth the costs (ABC 12/05)	.12	.53**	.03	.09	-.01	47	887
War worth the costs (ABC 3/06)	.22*	.39**	-.06	.15*	-.02	43	879
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 8/03)	.15	.49**	.07	.16**	.09	50	1130
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 9/03)	.23**	.46**	.02	.20**	.16*	43	1001
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 10/03)	.16	.47**	.10	.10	.18	47	314
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 11/03)	.30**	.57**	-.03	.13	.14	44	512
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 12/03)	.25**	.63**	.10*	.29**	.03	46	1679
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 1/04)	.17*	.40**	.08	.18**	.05	46	895
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 2/04)	.26**	.58**	.05	.15**	.05	44	2407
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 3/04)	.23**	.50**	.08*	.20**	.09	44	1941
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 4/04)	.28**	.48**	.06	.25**	.03	36	900
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 5/04)	.22**	.63**	.08	.16**	.02	34	1362
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 6/04)	.12	.71**	-.04	.14*	.05	34	915
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 7/05)	.22**	.44**	.04	.11	-.00	37	1073
War worth costs in US lives (CBS 8/05)	.20*	.68**	.03	.13	.02	35	770
War the right thing (CBS 3/03)	.26*	.52**	-.25**	.00	.15	73	747
War the right thing (CBS 12/03)	.21**	.45**	-.06	.17**	.16**	66	1937
War the right thing (CBS 2/04)	.18**	.47**	-.07	.05	.13**	56	2430

Table 1 • (Continued)

	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Educ</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Yes%</i>	<i>Min N</i>
<i>Iraq (continued)</i>							
War the right thing (CBS 3/04)	.18**	.37**	-.11**	.08	.16**	56	1978
War the right thing (CBS 4/04)	.14	.47**	-.09	.16**	.12	51	907
War the right thing (CBS 5/04)	.12	.40**	-.07	.02	.14*	52	1392
War the right thing (CBS 6/04)	.16*	.45**	-.09	.12	.04	51	936
War the right thing (CBS 7/04)	.17**	.58**	-.10*	.05	-.05	48	1778
War the right thing (CBS 8/04)	.18*	.30**	.00	.03	.07	52	891
War the right thing (CBS 9/04)	.06	.54**	-.08	.14**	-.03	55	773
War the right thing (CBS 10/04)	.06	.57**	-.04	.11**	.05	51	2883
War the right thing (CBS 11/04)	.22*	.50**	-.03	.10	.03	49	791
War the right thing (CBS 1/05)	.16*	.56**	.01	.18**	.07	48	991
War the right thing (CBS 2/05)	.16*	.34**	-.04	.00	.02	48	1003
War the right thing (CBS 4/05)	.24**	.32**	-.04	.08	.24**	50	1015
War the right thing (CBS 5/05)	.30**	.33**	.08	.19**	.18*	53	609
War the right thing (CBS 6/05)	.09	.58**	-.05	.08	.09	47	987
War the right thing (CBS 7/05)	.06	.39**	-.02	.09	.01	51	1663
War the right thing (CBS 8/05)	.07	.55**	-.03	.11	.14*	48	771
War not a mistake (CBS 3/03)	.24	.47**	.03	.05	.05	74	456
War not a mistake (CBS 4/03)	.23*	.66**	-.06	.05	.06	72	825
War not a mistake (CBS 12/03)	.10	.51**	-.11*	.13**	.18**	57	1406
War not a mistake (CBS 4/04)	.17*	.47**	-.07	.16**	-.10	49	922
War not a mistake (CBS 5/04)	.26**	.41**	-.05	.06	.12*	48	1010
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (ABC 7/03)	.28**	.45**	.14*		.00	74	958
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (ABC 4/04)	.48**	.41**	.26**	.31**	.01	66	1044
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (CBS 4/04)	.14	.32**	.05	.19**	.11	50	900
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (ABC 5/04)	.29**	.40**	.27**	.29**	-.05	59	836
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (CBS 5/04)	.12	.31**	-.03	.08	.15**	48	1375
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (ABC 6/04)	.36**	.51**	.28**	.26**	-.10	58	1047
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (CBS 6/04)	.23**	.34**	.06	.22**	.06	57	936
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (CBS 9/04)	.33**	.47**	.11	.29**	-.07	58	1142
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (ABC 12/04)	.33**	.39**	.38**	.35	-.11	60	838
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (CBS 1/05)	.31**	.45**	.08	.25**	.13*	55	989
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (ABC 5/05)	.37**	.45**	.16*	.18**	-.04	58	984
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (ABC 6/05)	.28**	.41**	.19**	.24**	-.12	59	899
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (ABC 8/05)	.34**	.55**	.19**	.19**	-.11	55	888
Favor keeping forces in Iraq (ABC 10/05)	.29**	.36**	.20**	.22**	-.03	54	1059
Favor increasing troops (ABC 4/04)	.41**	.33**	.12*	.20**	-.05	65	1048
Favor increasing troops (ABC 3/05)	.09	.18	-.01	.02	-.26**	16	799
Favor increasing troops (ABC 6/05)	.25*	.16	.06	-.06	-.23	16	897
Favor increasing troops (CBS 7/05)	.25**	.12	-.05	.00	-.12	17	1614
Favor increasing troops (ABC 8/05)	.29**	.28*	.04	-.08	-.23**	22	874
Favor increasing troops (CBS 8/05)	.42**	.39**	-.01	.13	-.25**	15	764
Favor increasing troops (CBS 9/05)	.41**	.40	-.05	.08	-.25*	12	623
Favor increasing troops (ABC 10/05)	.31**	.20	-.06	.01	-.30**	15	1075
Favor increasing troops (ABC 12/05)	.43**	.37*	-.26*	-.21	-.10	10	869
Favor increasing troops (ABC 3/06)	.44**	.08	-.14	-.11	-.28**	11	859

Note: positive coefficients indicate stronger support for military action among males, whites, more educated, more affluent, and younger persons.

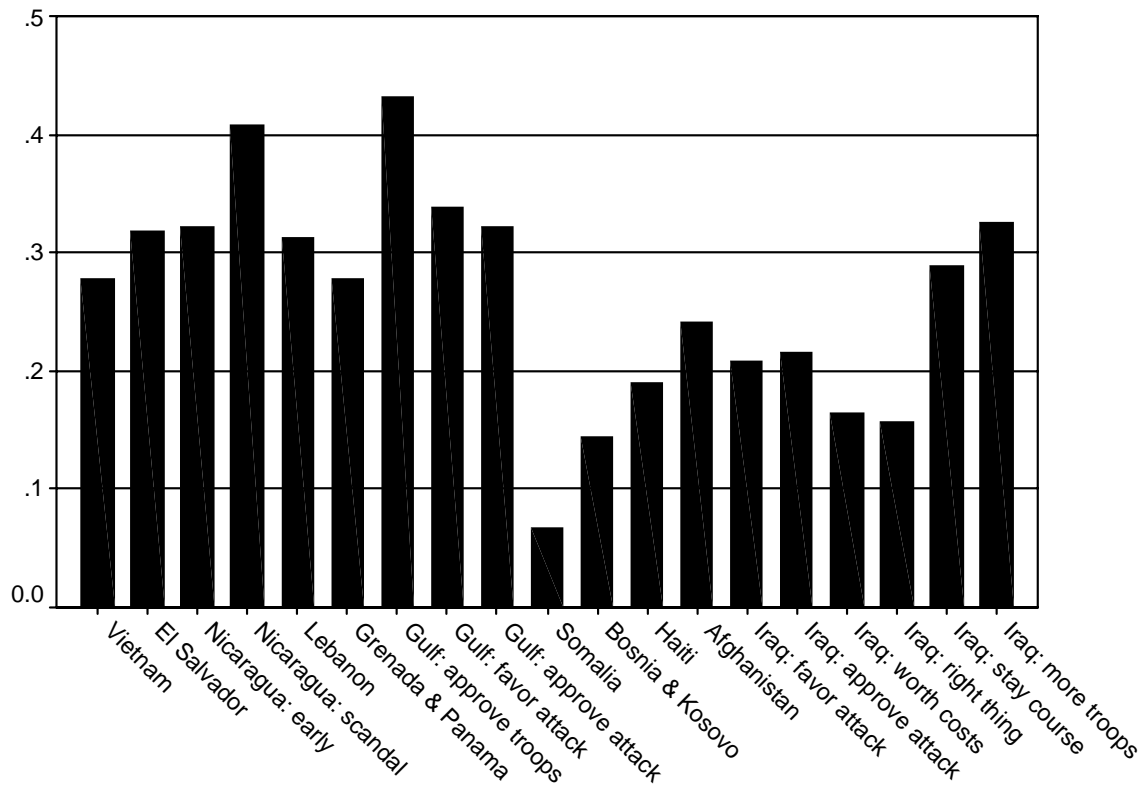
* $p < .01$ ** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Before turning to these findings, two methodological choices deserve comment. The first is the decision to focus on zero-order associations. This was done for substantive reasons as well as reasons having to do with the nature of the data. The primary concern of this study is between-group differences on issues of war and peace. These are properly measured at the zero-order level and are substantively and politically important, even if they are partly explained by other variables. The study is largely exploratory and does not aspire to constructing and testing exhaustively specified causal models of the determinants of pro- and antiwar sentiment, for which multivariate methods would be better suited. Nevertheless, I am interested in assessing various hypotheses about the nature and meaning of these between-group differences, and for that purpose evidence on certain partial associations and interaction effects will be instructive. For example, given the positive association between education and income, are between-group differences on either of these variables plausibly explained by (or masked by) its association with the other? Selected multivariate analyses were therefore conducted and the results will be summarized at appropriate places in the presentation. On the other hand, a comprehensive multivariate analysis, such as running logistic regressions including all five independent variables, exceeds what these opinion polls, with their modest sized samples, can sustain.⁹ Neither is there any straightforward method of meta-analysis for extracting the main *ordinal* associations that might be hidden within the thousands of individual odds-ratios that would result from such logistic regressions.

The second is the choice of gamma as the measure of ordinal association. A number of ordinal measures were considered before deciding on gamma as an appropriate choice for representing patterns of association across a range of categorical variables. Kendall's tau-b is a popular measure for analyzing 2x2 tables such as those associated with the sex and race variables, but is less well suited to asymmetrical tables such as those associated with the education, income, and age variables. Tau-b is also highly sensitive to the preponderance of ties in a table (a common problem with these data). Gamma is more appropriate for tables of different dimensions and is unaffected by the number of ties. Gamma *is* sensitive to the presence of empty or nearly empty cells, but this is rarely a problem with any of the bivariate tables based on these data. Somers' d is another attractive measure, but it is more computationally complex, makes stronger assumptions about the relations represented in the data, and is less widely used. On balance, gamma was chosen for its simplicity of interpretation, its appropriateness to tables of different dimensions, and its insensitivity to the preponderance of ties. It should be noted that, although the raw scores on different measures vary, significance levels for gamma, tau-b, and Somers' d are identical.

Gender Differences

One of the impressive findings of this study is the robustness of the association between gender and attitudes toward the use of military force. This pattern is illustrated in Figure 1, which shows average gamma coefficients for 19 clusters of survey questions, broken down by conflict (and in some cases by types of questions pertaining to a single conflict). In almost every instance from Vietnam through the Iraq War, regardless of nature of the conflict or type of military action involved, women indicated less support for military initiatives than men.¹⁰ This pattern applied to support for low-intensity conflict in Central America, the stationing of U.S. troops in Lebanon, the relatively



Note: Positive coefficient indicates stronger support among men than among women.

Figure 1 • Association between Gender and Support for Military Action (Average Gamma Coefficients)

uncontested exercise of military force against Grenada and Panama, and large-scale conventional war in the Persian Gulf. Gender differences in support for military action were weakest in the cases of Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo—presumably a reflection of the framing of those conflicts as “humanitarian” or “peacekeeping” efforts. Compared with the early post-Vietnam period, the data suggest a small decline in gender differences in support for U.S. military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, although this varies according to the type of question asked.

Earlier speculation that the influence of the women’s movement and changes in the social status of women would lead to a *convergence* of male and female attitudes on the use of military force is not well supported by these data. The opposite hypothesis—that increased economic independence and feminist-inspired assertiveness among women have served to *widen* the gender gap on issues of war and foreign policy—is more difficult to assess, but also seems questionable. If the latter hypothesis were true, we would expect to find a sharper difference between male and female attitudes toward military intervention within the younger population, since this is the age group that has been most affected by recent changes in gender roles and gender consciousness (Gurin 1985; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Fite, Genest, and Wilcox 1990). Using log-linear analysis, I analyzed the distribution of responses for a sub-sample of 50 survey items for

evidence of an interaction between age, gender, and support for military action. Of the 50 items examined, only four had a significant interaction of this kind; in two cases the gender gap was wider among younger persons, and in two cases it was narrower.¹¹ Hence, there is little evidence of a larger (or smaller) gender gap within the younger population.

Several surveys included questions that allowed me to identify more precisely those women who have been most influenced by recent changes in gender consciousness. The 1990 ANES, for example, included a question on attitudes toward the “traditional family,” while the 2004 ANES asked respondents about their support for “equal roles” for men and women. Incorporating these variables into the analysis, I found no significant differences in attitudes toward the first Gulf War between women who agreed that “This country would have many fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties” and those who declined to endorse that assertion. Likewise, I found no significant differences in support for the current military interventions in Afghanistan or Iraq between women who agreed that “Women and men should have equal roles” and those who thought that “Women’s place is in the home.” Other comparisons, such as that between women in paid employment and full-time homemakers also yielded no consistent differences in support for military action.

This bolsters the impression that opposition to military intervention among women has neither been eroded nor appreciably enhanced by recent changes in gender roles and gender consciousness.¹² This does not mean that the political *impact* of women’s aversion to the use of force has not been enhanced by the greater economic and political power that women have achieved in recent decades. But it does suggest that the fundamental causes of gender differences in support for military action are rooted at a deeper level—presumably in gender identities and patterns of sex-role socialization that have been relatively unaffected by the otherwise significant changes in gender relations in the post-Vietnam era.

The relatively modest gender differences in response to military actions in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo are consistent with this interpretation. All of the survey questions pertaining to Somalia refer to the aim of U.S. intervention as trying to “make sure shipments of food get through to the people”—a framing of military action that is likely to dampen any opposition rooted in a traditionally defined female concern with nurturance and care giving. Likewise, the news media’s and pollster’s framing of military interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo as seeking to “stop the fighting” or as “peacekeeping” actions is likely to confound any opposition that is grounded in a traditionally female aversion to the use of force.¹³

Gender differences in support for the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are slightly weaker than one might have expected based on previous U.S. military interventions. The signs of the gamma coefficients are consistently in the expected direction, but their average magnitude is smaller than, for example, during the first Gulf War a decade earlier.¹⁴ The most plausible explanation for this pattern is that the extraordinary patriotic upsurge that followed the September 11th terrorist attacks partly overwhelmed the usual reluctance of women to sanction offensive military action. It is also possible that women’s concern about the threat of terrorism to themselves and their families may have competed with their traditionally greater sensitivity to the human costs

of war.¹⁵ In either case, the modest tempering of gender differences in support for military action in Afghanistan and Iraq is likely a conjuncture-like phenomenon rather than the harbinger of a new trend in women's attitudes to war.¹⁶

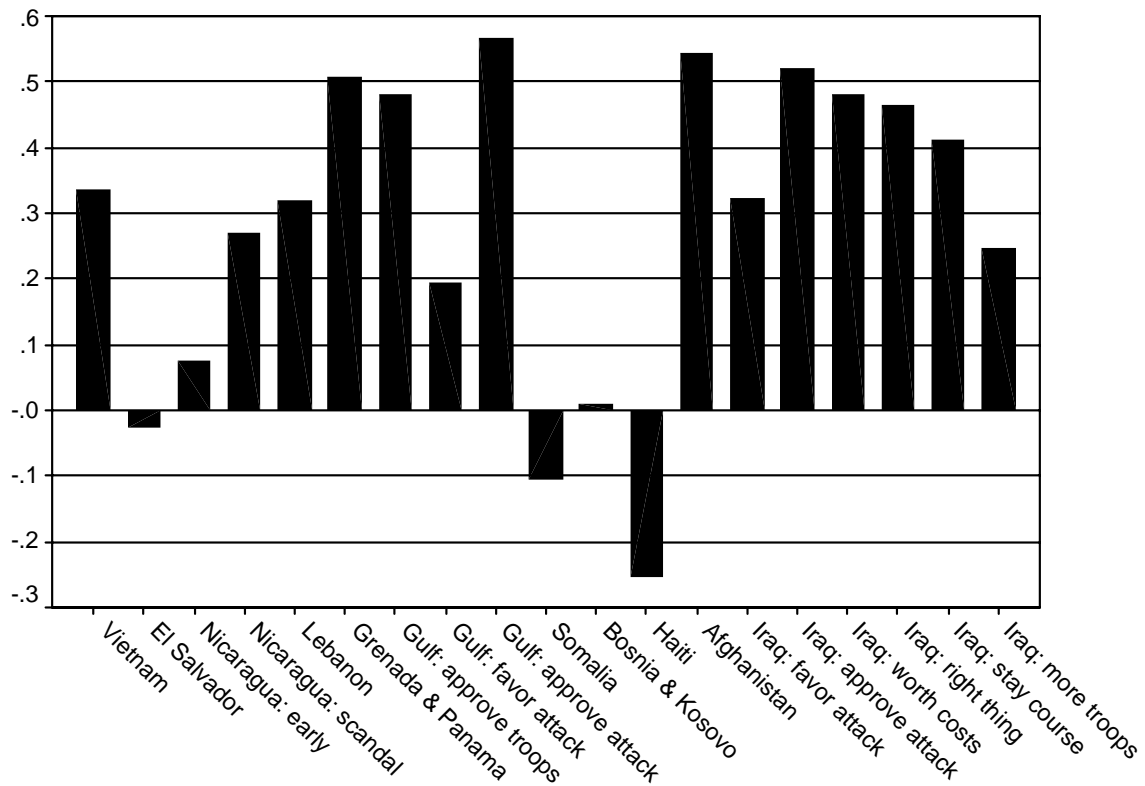
Gender differences in support for the Iraq War vary according to the stage of the conflict and the kinds of questions posed by different polls. As the war dragged on, surveys that polled respondents about their commitment to a *prolonged* occupation or their support for *increasing* the number of U.S. troops yielded stronger gender differences than other questions asked earlier in the war. Additional variability (not shown in Figure 1 because of the aggregation of differently worded questions) is shown in Table 1. Prior to the attack on Iraq, polls that asked whether the U.S. should initiate military action against Iraq, even if its allies *opposed* such action, revealed stronger and more consistent gender differences than similar questions that did not call attention to the lack of allied support. Questions that specifically mentioned U.S. *casualties* in asking whether the war was "worth the costs" revealed stronger and more consistent gender differences than similar questions that spoke abstractly about unspecified costs and benefits of the war. In sum, different questions asked at different stages of the war yielded somewhat stronger or weaker gender differences. Nonetheless, it is worth noting the impressive consistency in the signs of the gamma coefficients across more than 120 survey questions fielded over a period of nearly five years. As shown in Table 1, all but one of these gammas are positive and, hence, consistent with the longstanding propensity of women to express stronger reservations about the use of military force.

Racial Differences

During the Vietnam War, race was consistently among the strongest predictors of support for the war. In the post-Vietnam era, racial differences have remained important, although their significance has varied from one foreign policy context to another (see Figure 2). In the 1980s, much of the debate over U.S. military intervention focused on Central America. For much of that decade, race played little, if any, role in the alignment of public opinion toward Central American policy. This changed, however, in the wake of the Iran/contra scandal, when white support for intervention in Nicaragua increased relative to that of nonwhites. Racial differences were also evident whenever the United States took military action involving the overt use of U.S. ground troops, as it did in Lebanon, Grenada, and Panama.

In the 1990s, racial minorities were significantly less approving of the decision to send U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia during the initial stage of the first Persian Gulf War. At the same time, there were only modest differences between whites and nonwhites in their support for taking *offensive* military action against Iraq. After the United States invaded Iraq on January 16, 1991, racial differences were once again strongly evident in support for that decision. Racial differences were weak with respect to U.S. military actions in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, but following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, racial differences reemerged as the strongest division in public attitudes toward the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, with whites expressing consistently stronger support for military action than nonwhites.

The case of Haiti is unique, insofar as the intended purpose of threatened U.S. military action was to restore Bertrand Aristide, a black, democratically elected, president



Note: Positive coefficient indicates stronger support among whites than among nonwhites.

Figure 2 • Association between Race and Support for Military Action (Average Gamma Coefficients)

to office. The use of military force in Haiti was strongly promoted by leaders within the black community—most prominently by members of the Congressional Black Caucus and by TransAfrica director Randall Robertson, who went on a hunger strike to protest President Clinton’s policy toward Haitian refugees and his slowness to respond militarily to the Haitian crisis. It is therefore understandable that this should be the one case among all of those studied in which nonwhites were consistently more supportive of military action than whites. Somalia also generated slightly stronger support for military intervention among nonwhites, although this pattern is much weaker and less consistent than in the case of Haiti (see Table 1).

Setting aside the special case of Haiti, what can we infer from the patterns revealed by other instances of U.S. military action about the causes of racial differences in support for military intervention and the conditions under which these have (or have not) been activated in different foreign policy contexts? One common pattern is that, in contrast to the social distribution of public opinion during the Vietnam War, racial differences in the post-Vietnam era have often been small or nonexistent when the public has been polled about the advisability of *initiating* or *escalating* military action. For example, there were few significant differences between whites and nonwhites in their support for expanding the United States’ military role in Central America and few

differences in their support for military action over economic sanctions during the early months of the first Persian Gulf conflict. Typically, it was only *after* decisions were made to commit U.S. troops to combat that significant racial divisions emerged.

This suggests that racial differences in the post-Vietnam era are less an indicator of “hawk” versus “dove” sentiments (in the sense of a *general* preference for military force versus more conciliatory policies) than they are a reflection of the white citizenry’s stronger tendency to “rally ‘round the flag” in times of overt hostilities. As a case in point, the low-intensity warfare that the United States waged in Central America during the 1980s was purposely designed to avoid the kind of intense opposition that had developed in response to the Vietnam War. But the strategies followed in Central America also had the effect of failing to trigger the rally-‘round-the-flag response that ordinarily accompanies the initiation of hostilities. Military acts such as the arming and training of foreign security forces, financing of mercenary armies, and secret mining of harbors do not rally the public in the same way as sending in the U.S. Marines. In the absence of a rally-‘round-the-flag response, white support for military intervention in El Salvador and Nicaragua remained low and roughly comparable to that of nonwhites. For somewhat different reasons—including the limited commitment of U.S. ground troops and participation of U.S. forces as part of an international “peacekeeping” coalition—military intervention in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo in the 1990s also failed to generate a pronounced rally-‘round-the-flag effect. Consequently, there was little evidence of greater support for these actions among whites compared with nonwhites.

Returning briefly to the case of Nicaragua, it was only following the Iran/contra scandal that significant racial differences emerged in support for military intervention.¹⁷ This appears to have been mainly due to the tendency of the scandal to polarize opinion along party lines, with Republicans (disproportionately white) rallying to the defense of their embattled president and his policies. In effect, the political crisis created by the scandal produced a milder and more partisan analog to the rally-‘round-the-flag response in which support for military intervention was boosted by the impulse among Republicans to close ranks around the president.

The first Persian Gulf conflict, because of the step-by-step process through which it unfolded, provides a particularly good case for viewing impact of the rally-‘round-the-flag response. According to a Gallup Poll conducted immediately after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait but before the announcement of any U.S. response, there was no significant difference between whites and nonwhites in their support for sending U.S. ground troops to the region (Gallup and Newport 1990). Once U.S. troops were dispatched to Saudi Arabia, however, white approval of that decision rose sharply relative to nonwhites. Throughout the fall and winter months, the polls indicated significantly higher levels of approval for the stationing of troops in Saudi Arabia among whites than among nonwhites. For most of that period, however, levels of support for initiating *offensive* action against Iraq remained comparable for whites and nonwhites (typically around 40-50 percent). This pattern continued until after the November 1990 elections, when the escalation of U.S. troop levels and the passage of a U.N. resolution establishing a deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait led increasing numbers of Americans to see an invasion of Iraq as inevitable and imminent. When the U.S. invaded Iraq in mid-January, white approval skyrocketed, resulting in an 18-25 percentage point gap between whites and nonwhites in support for the war.

These findings cast doubt on the view that low levels of minority support for war are mainly a reaction to the greater burden borne by nonwhites and point toward a more sweeping alienation from American political institutions. If different calculations of the likely costs of military action were all that were involved, there is no reason why the divergence of opinion between whites and nonwhites would be so different before and after the *initiation* of military action. On the other hand, if what distinguishes minorities is their weaker identification with the nation, its symbols, and its leaders—making them more resistant to the upsurge of patriotic sentiment that typically rallies the country behind the president at the outbreak of war—then this pattern makes better sense. Despite the political and economic gains that minorities have made in the post-Vietnam era, and despite the weakening of social movements serving to articulate their discontents, minorities in recent decades appear to have been no less alienated in this sense than their Vietnam-era counterparts.

One cannot say for certain that the greater burden that war imposes on minorities has not played any role in fueling opposition to military intervention. However, an examination of the attitudes of those who would seem to have had the most to lose from military intervention (those with friends or relatives in the theater of combat) does not support this argument. For example, in the 1990 ANES respondents were asked whether they had a friend or relative stationed in the Persian Gulf. Racial minorities were more likely to answer “yes” to this question: 69 percent of nonwhites reported having a friend or relative stationed in the Gulf versus 48 percent of whites. When I examined the relationship between this variable and support for military action, however, I found a small, but statistically significant, positive association between having a friend or relative at risk in the Gulf and *support* for military action.¹⁸ The ABC News/*Washington Post* poll of August, 2005, included a similar question about the Iraq War. In this case there was no statistically significant difference between whites and nonwhites in the percentage who said they had a friend or relative serving in Iraq. As with the earlier poll, however, there was a small, but statistically significant, positive association between having a friend or relative in Iraq and support for the war.¹⁹ This lends plausibility to the idea that exposure to the burdens of war is at least as likely to enhance the legitimacy of military action as it is to fuel antiwar sentiment.

Racial differences in response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent U.S. military actions against Afghanistan and Iraq are generally similar to those revealed during the first Persian Gulf War, although there are some interesting differences as well. The wave of patriotic fervor that swept the nation in the aftermath of the assaults on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center was unprecedented in the post-Vietnam era. These attacks on American soil created what might be described as a *preemptive* rally-‘round-the-flag response that persisted for months, if not years. Americans of all races were caught up in this paroxysm of patriotic zeal, but not equally so—at least judging by their thirst for retaliatory action and the reassertion of American power. Whites, as usual, were more strongly affected by the rally-‘round-the-flag response that followed the September 11th attacks, and the intensity of this sentiment was so strong that it carried many beyond their usual readiness to stand behind the decisions of the president or to support the presence of troops already in the field. In this instance an unusually high percentage of Americans (especially white Americans) appeared ready to provide the president with a virtual blank check for any further military escalation—even to the extent of overriding

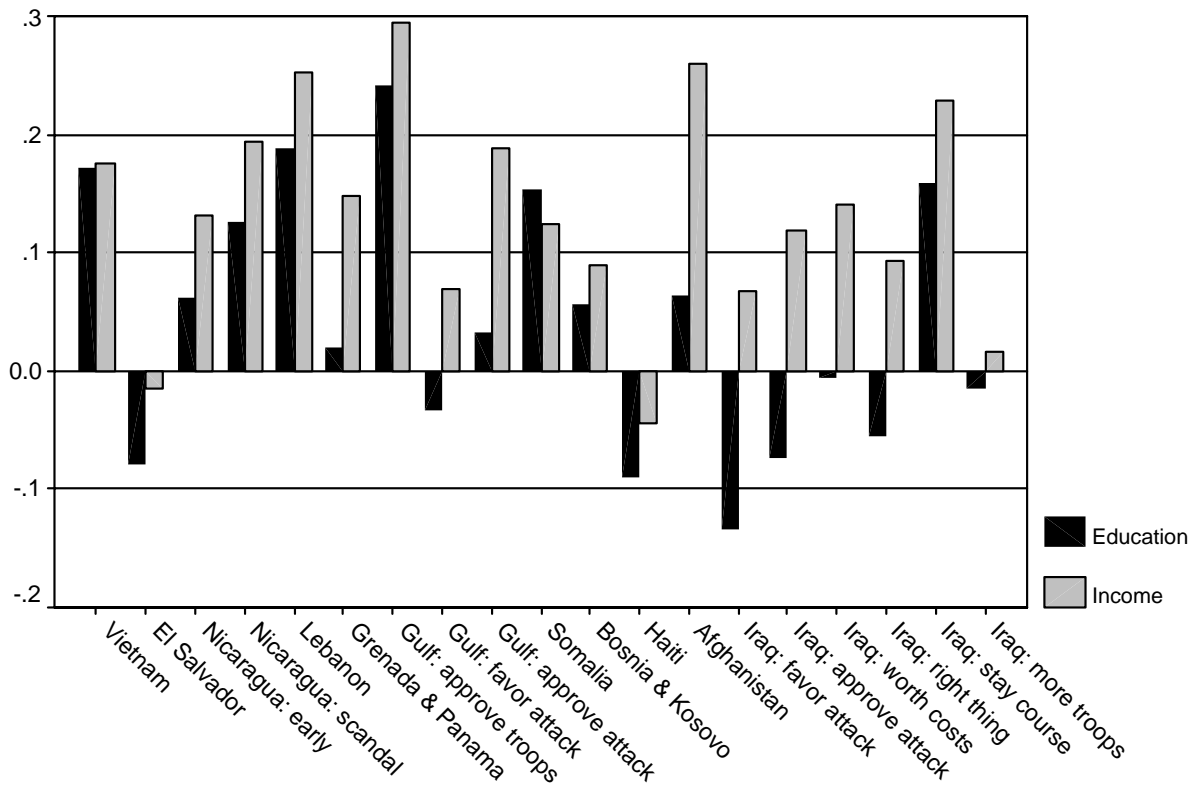
the usual reluctance of Americans of all races in the post-Vietnam era to endorse sending large numbers of U.S. ground troops into the theater of conflict *prior* to the event.

Consequently, there was a sizable race gap in support for military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, not only when respondents were asked whether they approved of actions already taken by the president, but also when they were asked about their support for an escalation of military action. Nevertheless, in *relative* terms, race differences in support for military action in Iraq were still the smallest with respect to military actions that had been proposed but not yet taken place—for example, during the run-up to the war, when respondents were asked whether they favored *initiating* an attack on Iraq, and later in the war when respondents were asked whether they favored sending *increased* numbers of U.S. troops prior to any such escalation. Conversely, race differences were relatively stronger in response to questions that asked about respondents' approval of military actions already taken by the president.

Racial differences in support for the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are among the largest of any conflicts in the post-Vietnam era. For example, in an ABC News/*Washington Post* poll, conducted in November 2001, during the first month of the U.S. air assault on Afghanistan, 95 percent of whites approved of the action compared with 71 percent of blacks; 78 percent of whites also supported sending U.S. ground troops compared with 43 percent of blacks. In the CBS News/*New York Times* polls of March 2003, shortly after the invasion of Iraq, 81 percent of whites approved of the invasion, compared with 45 percent of blacks. In both cases support for military action among other racial and ethnic groups was intermediate between these extremes.²⁰ Considering the intensity of the patriotic upsurge that followed the 9/11 attacks, the reluctance of substantial numbers of minority Americans—and especially African Americans—to endorse retaliatory action is a testament to the profound racial divisions in American society in the predisposition to rally 'round the flag in times of perceived national crisis.²¹

Socioeconomic Differences

As with racial differences, socioeconomic differences in support for military action have varied during the post-Vietnam era (see Figure 3). There was no strong or consistent association between socioeconomic status and support for military intervention in El Salvador. In the case of Nicaragua, however, the Vietnam-era association between high socioeconomic status and support for tough military action was again visible, although somewhat muted in the case of the highly educated. Status differences were also evident in support for military actions in Lebanon, Grenada, and Panama, but again somewhat weaker on the education variable. During the first Gulf War, socioeconomic differences tended to parallel racial differences. Specifically, education and income differences were pronounced with respect to support for the president's initial decision to send troops to Saudi Arabia, relatively weak with respect to support for *initiating* military action against Iraq, then stronger again once the president committed the nation to war. Generally, support for military intervention in the first Gulf War was more characteristic of high-income groups than of the highly educated. Support for military intervention in Somalia was the only instance in which status differences were slightly stronger on the education variable than on the income variable. Status differences were quite modest with



Note: Positive coefficient indicates stronger support among more educated and more affluent persons.

Figure 3 • Association between Education/Income and Support for Military Action (Average Gamma Coefficients)

respect to support for military actions in Bosnia and Kosovo, and slightly reversed in the case of support for military action in Haiti.

Throughout most of the post-Vietnam era, high income tended to be a stronger predictor of support for tough military action than high levels of education. In the post-9/11 polls on Afghanistan and Iraq this divergence became even sharper. More often than not, high levels of education were *negatively* associated with support for military action in Iraq, whereas high income was *positively* associated with support for military action—a pattern that I shall return to shortly.

U.S. policy toward El Salvador provides an appropriate case for evaluating the effects of a Vietnam syndrome. Concern that El Salvador might become “another Vietnam” was an explicit theme in the debate over U.S. intervention in the Salvadoran civil war. As in Vietnam, the United States allied itself with a military-backed regime that was opposed by large segments of its population and faltering in its efforts to crush a guerilla insurgency. In language reminiscent of Vietnam, the public was told that increased military aid, military advisors, and possibly U.S. troops would be needed to save the country from falling into “Communist” hands. Vietnam-era theories of falling dominoes were refurbished in an effort to convince the public of the dire consequences that this would have for national security. Unsurprisingly, many Americans saw ominous

parallels between El Salvador and Vietnam. For instance, 65 percent of respondents in the March 1982 ABC News/*Washington Post* poll agreed with the statement that “The war in El Salvador is much like the war in Vietnam.”

Earlier I noted several reasons why disaffection with U.S. policy in Vietnam may have produced a bigger shift in the opinions of the more educated and/or affluent segments of the public. Some surveys used in this study asked respondents for retrospective assessments of the effects of the Vietnam War on their views toward government and foreign policy. Highly educated persons were, indeed, more likely to report that their views had changed in the direction of greater distrust of government or wariness of military intervention. In the February 1985 CBS News/*New York Times* poll, for example, 36 percent of college graduates reported a turnabout in this direction, compared with 21 percent of those with a high school education or less. Income level was associated with a similar change of views, although the magnitude of that association was smaller and only marginally significant.²²

The notion that the opinions of high-status groups were most subject to change in the aftermath of Vietnam appears to be borne out by the shift in the education and income correlates of support for military intervention in El Salvador as compared with Vietnam. In contrast to the initial escalation in Vietnam, there was no consistent association between income and support for military intervention in El Salvador, and the association between education and support for intervention was typically negative. In the case of Nicaragua, there were signs of a reemergence of strong status differences in support for military action. Most polls found stronger support for U.S. efforts to overthrow the Nicaraguan government among persons with higher incomes. A similar but weaker tendency could be seen among highly educated persons. In part, this reflects the fact that most of the Nicaragua polls date from a later period than the El Salvador polls, suggesting that public concern over the possibility of “another Vietnam” in Central America may have ebbed as years passed without the direct involvement of U.S. ground troops (LeoGrande 1987).

Also important is the fact that U.S. policy toward Nicaragua became a highly partisan issue, whereas U.S. policy toward El Salvador produced less public dissension between Republican and Democratic leaders. Party identification (which correlates with socioeconomic status) was consequently a more salient factor in attitudes toward military intervention in Nicaragua. The gap between Republicans and Democrats in support for intervention in El Salvador was typically in the range of 10-15 percentage points, with Republicans consistently more supportive. In the case of Nicaragua, the gap between Republicans and Democrats was generally larger, even before the Iran/contra scandal. During the spring months of 1985 and 1986, when the debate over contra aid was heated in Washington, the gap between Republicans and Democrats averaged 20 points in the Nicaragua polls. After the Iran/contra scandal began to unfold in late 1986, the gap between Republicans and Democrats regarding aid to the contras widened further, exceeding 30 points in several of the 1987 and 1988 polls. This polarization between political parties was associated with an increase in the strength and consistency of the association between socioeconomic status and support for intervention in Nicaragua, especially on the income variable.

During the 1990-91 Persian Gulf conflict, there was a strong and consistent pattern of status differences in support for the initial stationing of troops in Saudi Arabia. As with racial differences, this appears to have been mainly an expression of the stronger rally-'round-the-flag response among the educated and affluent classes, perhaps reinforced by Republican allegiances. Differences in attention paid to media coverage of the war—a factor often cited to explain the pro-war sentiments of high-status groups during the early years of the Vietnam War—may also have played a role during the first Persian Gulf War. Using data from the 1990 ANES, I found higher levels of attention to media coverage of the war among more educated and affluent persons and a significant association between media exposure and approval of the decision to send troops to the Persian Gulf.²³

After the stationing of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia in late 1990, but prior to the invasion of Iraq, status differences were weak or nonexistent in support for taking *offensive* military action. These findings reinforce the thesis that the stronger support that high-status groups expressed for sending U.S. troops to the Gulf was more the reflection of a “follower” mentality than of “hawkishness” in the sense of a *general* preference for tough military action (Mueller 1973). In the final weeks leading up the invasion of Iraq, income differences in support for an offensive began to crystallize. By then most Americans had come to see war with Iraq as inevitable and imminent—a view that was reinforced by the build-up in U.S. troop levels and approval of a U.N. resolution establishing a deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. At the time, however, there was no comparable tendency for highly educated persons to favor offensive action. Once the assault on Iraq commenced, high-income groups were heavily overrepresented in the rush to rally 'round the flag, but highly educated persons were much less so. This could reflect a lingering effect of the Vietnam syndrome among highly educated persons, although none of the polls from the post-invasion period include questions that would allow for a direct examination of this hypothesis.

The data on public attitudes toward military action in Lebanon, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Haiti all reproduce the same pattern of weaker status differences on the education variable than on the income variable. Only in the case of Somalia (for which the data are limited) is there any indication of stronger support for military action among highly educated persons than among high-income persons. During the post- 9/11 assault on Afghanistan, high income was once again much more strongly associated with pro-war sentiment than high levels of education.

The current war in Iraq exhibits, by far, the most pronounced divergence between the educational and income correlates of pro-war sentiment. Tendencies toward such a divergence were seen in earlier conflicts, but none of these compare with pattern revealed in the Iraq War polls. As shown in Table 1, of more than 120 survey questions fielded between 2001 and 2006, roughly two-thirds of the gammas on the education variable had negative signs, whereas more than 90 percent of the gammas on the income variable had positive signs. Arguably, even these data fail to capture the full measure of the divergence between education and income with respect to support for the Iraq War. Education and income are, of course, highly correlated, with a gamma that typically ranges between .40 and .45 in these polls. This means that between-group differences on the education variable are likely colored by their association with income differences, and vice versa. Based on a multivariate analysis of a sub-sample of 25 Iraq War survey

questions, drawn randomly from polls with a sample size larger than the median, I found that the average gamma between education and support for military action *within income categories* (i.e., the partial association controlling for income) was -.12 compared with an average zero-order gamma of -.06 (a difference of about 1.5 standard errors). The average gamma between income and support for military action *within education categories* (i.e., the partial association controlling for education) was .16 compared with an average zero-order gamma of .12 (a difference of about 1.0 standard error). On the education variable, the divergence between the partial and the zero-order associations was most pronounced among the highest income groups. On the income variable, the divergence between the partial and zero-order associations was most pronounced among the middle educational levels. A similar multivariate analysis of a sub-sample of 25 pre-Iraq War polls revealed much weaker interactions between education and income.²⁴

How are we to explain the divergence between education and income in support for the Iraq War? Here again we could be witnessing the more pronounced effects of the Vietnam syndrome on highly educated persons or their greater attentiveness to the news media, which, compared with most other post-Vietnam conflicts, reflected sharp divisions among foreign policy elites over the merits of going to war.²⁵ Part of the divergence might also be explained by the fact that income is a stronger predictor of Republican loyalties than education. But the persistent pattern of *opposite* signs for the gammas on education and income, despite the strong positive association between these two variables, suggests a more complex interaction between education, income, and party affiliation.

At the root of this unusual alignment of pro- and antiwar opinion among higher socioeconomic groups is one basic fact. From a Republican standpoint, at least, the Iraq War is the most partisan war in modern American history. During the presidency of George W. Bush, support for the Iraq War has been fashioned into the first principle of Republican Party loyalty and the main unifying issue for holding together the socioeconomically diverse Republican electoral coalition (Piven 2004). Consequently, among the roughly one-third of Americans who identify as Republicans, support for the Iraq War has been *extraordinarily* high, regardless of any differences in education or income.

For example, in the days prior to the invasion of Iraq, the CBS News/*New York Times* polls of early March 2003 revealed that between 85-90 percent of Republicans at *all* education levels and *all* income levels favored taking military action against Iraq.²⁶ In the same polls, 50 percent of Democrats and 65 percent of independents favored military action. However, beneath these averages for Democrats and independents we find significant variation by educational level, with more educated persons expressing much *weaker* support for war. Among Democrats, for example, 64 percent of persons with a high-school education favored military action, versus 37 percent of those with a college degree. Income differences in support for military action were insignificant among Democrats and independents; hence, it was almost exclusively the propensity of high-income persons to identify as Republican and for Republicans to remain loyal to their president that produced the positive association between income and support for going to war. As already noted, Republican loyalties also trumped the otherwise robust *negative* association between education and support for war that was found among Democrats and independents.

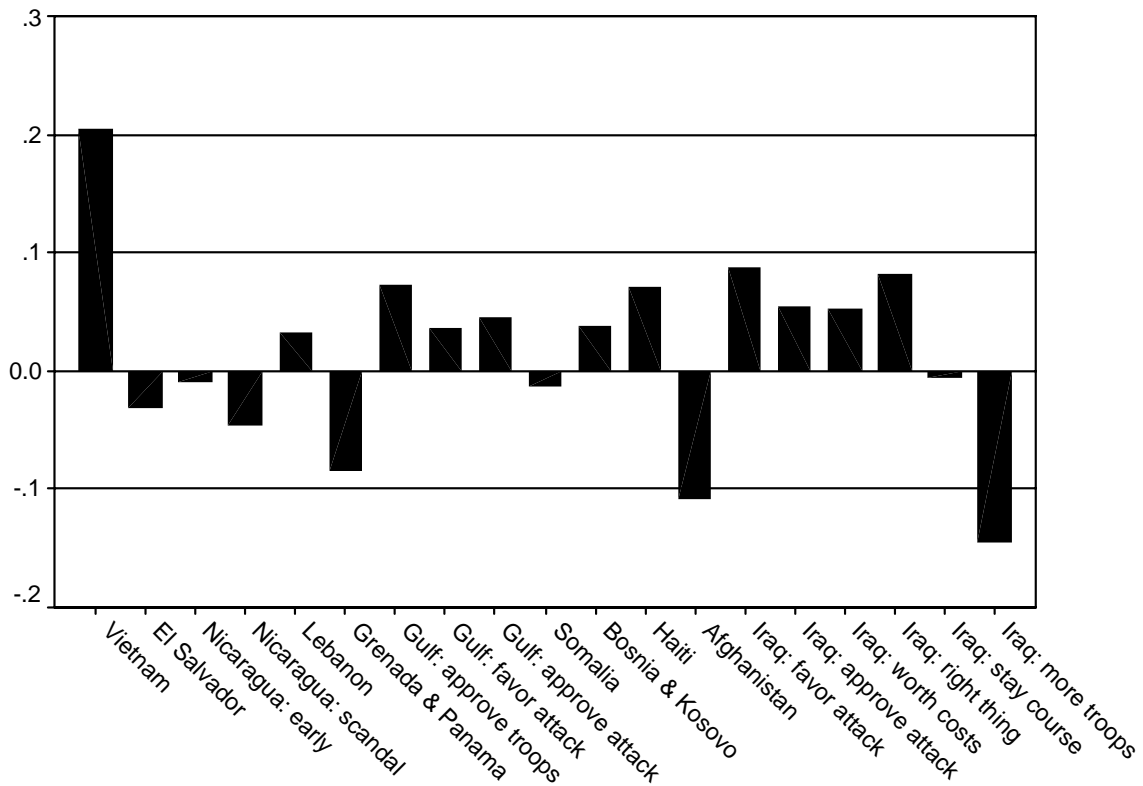
An identical pattern can be found in the March 2003 CBS News/*New York Times* polls taken shortly after the initiation of the war.²⁷ Once again, Republicans at *all* education and income levels provided *very* strong support for the war, ranging from 90-96 percent. On average, Democrats favored the war by 61 percent and independents by 76 percent; however, in both cases there were once again pronounced differences by education in support for the war. Among Democrats, for example, 72 percent of those with a high-school education approved the attack on Iraq versus 47 percent of those with a college degree. As in the pre-war polls, within-party income differences in support for initiating hostilities were small, so that the positive association between income and support for the war was largely attributable to the Republican leanings of high-income persons; whereas the negative association between education and war support was mainly limited to Democrats and independents.

The most important issue on which socioeconomic differences by income and education converged concerns the appropriate exit strategy for the war in Iraq. Several years into the war the polls began to query respondents about whether they favored a rapid withdrawal of U.S. military forces or supported keeping U.S. troops in Iraq until “civil order was restored” or until a “stable democracy” was in place. On this vital question, a preponderance highly educated respondents set aside their reservations about the wisdom, justification, or accomplishments of the war and faithfully fell in line behind the view most widely espoused by the media pundits and the leadership of both political parties that a precipitous withdrawal of U.S. troops would produce an even worse fiasco than “staying the course” in Iraq. The only other question on which the opinions of the highly educated and high-income populations converged was on the question of whether troop levels in Iraq should be increased. This was such a widely unpopular option that neither the highly educated nor the more affluent respondents stood apart from the broad consensus in opposition to an escalation of this sort.

Age Differences

Perhaps nowhere is the difference between the Vietnam War and the post-Vietnam era more visible than in the shift in the age distribution in attitudes to war. The tendency of younger persons to express stronger support for military action was one of the most robust findings of opinion polls during the Vietnam War. Younger persons also expressed more hawkish attitudes during the Korean War (Hamilton 1968; Mueller 1971). In the years since Vietnam, however, polls have shown no such tendency toward increased support for military action among younger age groups. This is illustrated in Figure 4, which reveals generally weak and highly variable gamma coefficients for the association between age and support for military action in the post-Vietnam era.

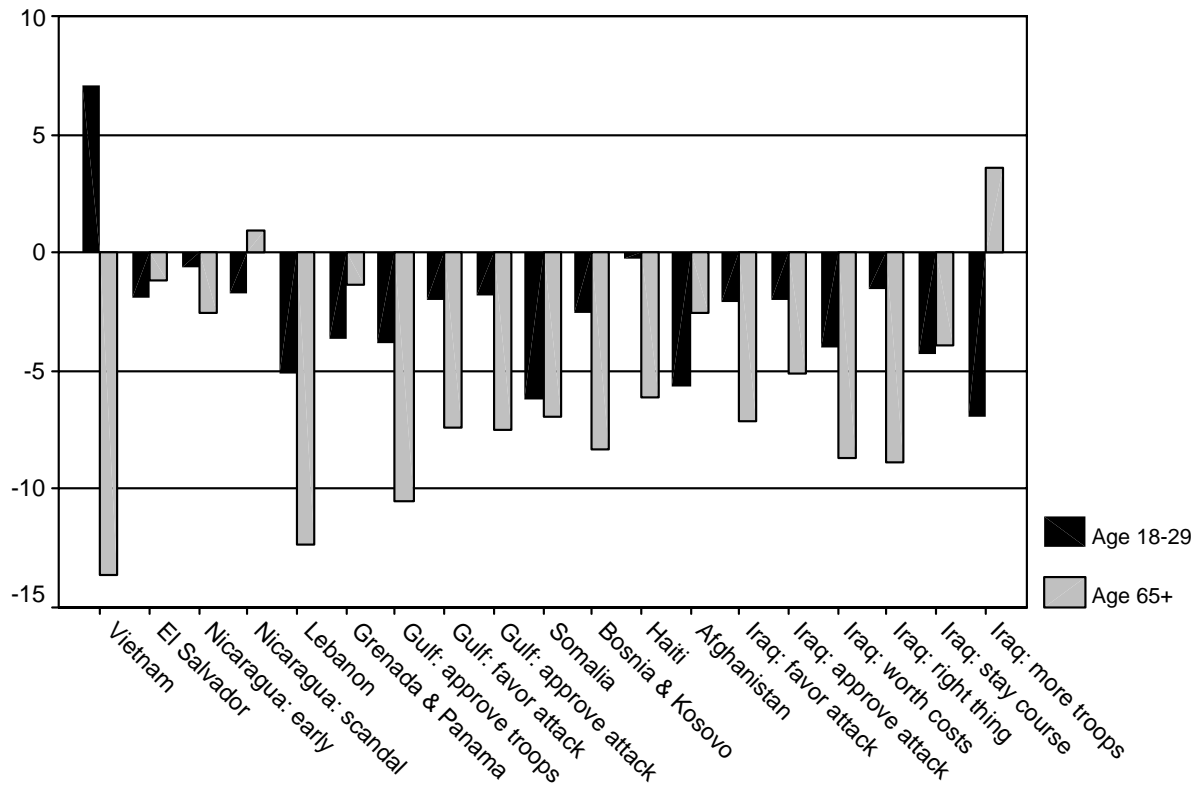
In the cursory attention given to age differences in the Vietnam-era literature, it was left ambiguous whether the negative relationship between age and support for military action was mainly an expression of the pro-war attitudes of the young or the antiwar attitudes of the elderly, or whether both young and old differed from persons of intermediate years. A closer look at the Vietnam War polls provides evidence for the latter interpretation. In the 1964 ANES, for example, support for escalation in Vietnam was 8 percentage points *higher* among persons 29 and under than among those age 30-64. Among persons 65 and older, it was 12 points *lower* than among those 30-64. The 1968 ANES also showed similar differences at both ends of the age distribution.



Note: Positive coefficient indicates stronger support among younger age groups.

Figure 4 • Association between Age and Support for Military Action (Average Gamma Coefficients)

On the age variable, the biggest change in the post-Vietnam era has occurred at the lower end of the age distribution. This is shown in Figure 5, which provides a more detailed look at average levels of support for military action at each end of the age distribution. Here I have taken the mean level of support for military action among the 30-64 age group as the baseline for comparing the attitudes of the younger and older age groups.²⁸ The bars in this graph do not represent measures of association, as in Figures 1-4, but simply percentage gaps in support for military action, which have been averaged across multiple polls with similar questions. What the figure reveals is the almost total elimination of the hawkish leanings that once characterized the under-30 age group. Across the range of post-Vietnam conflicts, support for military intervention within this group has remained consistently at or below that of the intermediate 30-64 age group. Most recently, in the polls on U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, support for military action within the 18-29 age group averaged six percentage points below that of the 30-64 age group. For the Iraq War, support within the 18-29 age group averaged between two and seven percentage points below that of the 30-64 age group depending on the question asked. These are not large gaps by comparison with the between-group differences on some of the other variables examined, but the consistency of this pattern and the sharp contrast with the 5-9 percentage point *preference* that young Americans expressed for tough military action in Vietnam points to a significant change in the post-Vietnam era.²⁹



Note: Positive gap indicates stronger support than the 30-64 age group; negative gap indicates weaker support.

Figure 5 • Percentage Gap in Support for Military Action among 18-29 and 65+ Age Groups Compared with the 30-64 Age Group

There are several possible explanations for the relative decline in militaristic sentiment within the youngest age group. If pro-war attitudes serve to accommodate individuals to the privations of war, as Lunch and Sperlich (1979) hypothesized, then the repeal of the draft could be argued to have removed one distinctive source of pro-war sentiment within the youngest age group. I have no way to directly test this hypothesis; however, the general finding of a positive association between having a friend or relative involved in a military action and expressing support for that military action makes it plausible that limiting the exposure of young Americans to the privations of war might weaken the appeal of the rationales that are advanced to justify those privations.

A more plausible interpretation, I would argue, is that young persons in the post-Vietnam era have been disproportionately influenced by the Vietnam syndrome as transmitted through the schools, youth culture, the mass media, and other channels of political socialization. Schools and educators have become more tempered in their promotion of patriotic and militaristic ideologies in the post-Vietnam era. Graphic media exposure given to the horrors of Vietnam has made it more difficult to sustain the naively optimistic view of war that earlier generations of youth embraced. On the other side of the equation, iconic images of student opposition to the Vietnam War (even if these

represented only a small minority of the youth of that era) may have normalized and encouraged antiwar opinions among subsequent generations of American youth. Of course, some cohorts who came of age following the Vietnam War are now well into their middle age. Although some effects of their early political socialization and youthful political identities may have persisted, we should not be surprised if other socializing forces, ideological influences, and political affiliations have eventually come to exert a stronger, and possibly countervailing, impact on their attitudes toward war.

It should also be emphasized that, whatever the average pattern may be, attitudes of the youngest age group are among the most volatile of any demographic category, reflecting the underdevelopment of a coherent political identity and susceptibility to the influence of contextual factors. It would be an exaggeration to say that young adults have become a reliable constituency for resisting the call to war in the same way that women and racial minorities have been. Nevertheless, the decline in pro-war sentiment within this age group is substantial by comparison with young adults during the Vietnam era.

At the other end of the age distribution, the tendency of persons 65 and older to oppose military intervention has persisted, albeit unevenly, in the post-Vietnam era. Elderly opposition to military initiatives generally has been more pronounced in conflicts that threatened protracted involvement or substantial casualties to U.S. troops—for example in Lebanon, the first Gulf War, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. The reluctance of persons 65 and older to endorse military action was somewhat muted in the case of Afghanistan, but has become much stronger in the polls on the Iraq War. This opposition may reflect a greater experience with and sensitivity to the human costs of war or it could simply indicate a stronger sense of pessimism about the ability to shape world events. Whatever the cause, the relative lack of enthusiasm for war among elderly persons implies that the aging of the American population could make the mobilization of public opinion in support of future wars increasingly difficult.

In the post-Vietnam era, the level of support for military action has tended to be highest within the 30-64 age group. From the early 1980s through the early 1990s, those in the lower range of this age category would have corresponded to what some have termed the “Vietnam generation”—i.e., persons who entered young adulthood during the height of the Vietnam conflict.³⁰ Contrary to the speculations of some writers, I found no evidence of pronounced anti-interventionist sentiment within this age cohort. Across the range of polls dealing with attitudes toward military intervention in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, and the first Gulf War, the 30-44 age group was, on average, no less hawkish than the 45-64 age group. Hence, if the legacy of Vietnam can be said to have had a dampening effect on support for war within a specific age group, this has been manifested in the attitudes of young adults generally and not within the particular cohort that came of age during the Vietnam conflict.³¹

Summary and Conclusion

The post-Vietnam era has seen both continuity and change in public attitudes toward military intervention. The strongest continuity has been the persistence of gender differences in support for military initiatives. With only occasional exceptions, women have expressed weaker support for the use of military force than men. The robustness of this pattern, despite the changes in gender roles and gender politics in the post-Vietnam

era, suggests that it is rooted in relatively enduring aspects of gender identities and sex-role socialization.

A mixture of continuity and change was seen in the race and status correlates of support for military intervention. Race differences were often weak when the public was polled about its support for initiating or escalating military action. There were also few significant racial differences in support for the use of military force in humanitarian or peacekeeping missions. However, whenever U.S. troops were sent to foreign shores for purposes of offensive military action, race emerged as one of the strongest correlates of public reaction. This suggests that race differences in the post-Vietnam era have been mainly due to the stronger propensity of whites to rally 'round the flag. It also suggests that, despite significant changes in the political and economic situation of racial minorities, pervasive sentiments of alienation continue to distinguish nonwhites from whites and limit their receptivity to appeals for national unity in time of war.

In the post-Vietnam era, socioeconomic differences in support for military action have varied from one foreign policy context to another. Compared with race or gender, socioeconomic differences on issues of military intervention appear to be only weakly anchored in enduring features of political identity and outlook and are more dependent on the framing of specific military actions by political leaders and the mass media, sometimes differentiated by party allegiances. Nevertheless, the evidence also suggests a definite trend toward a weakening of support for military intervention among highly educated persons. The current war in Iraq presents a striking example of countervailing tendencies in public opinion along the dimensions of education and income. In the Iraq War high levels of income have tended to be associated with support for military action and high levels of education have tended to be associated with opposition to military action. This can be traced to the intense partisanship of public opinion regarding this war and the different manner in which income and education differences intersect with Republican and Democratic party loyalties.

One of the noticeable changes in the post-Vietnam era has been the relative decline in youthful support for military intervention. This change is surprising considering the extensive commentary about the post-Vietnam generation's supposed abandonment of the ideals that motivated youthful opposition to the Vietnam War. If young adults in the post-Vietnam era have been less idealistic than their predecessors, they also appear to be more wary of the motives and consequences of military intervention. This change is most plausibly interpreted as a reaction to the United States' traumatic experience in Vietnam as this has been transmitted through the schools, youth culture, the mass media, and other channels of political socialization.

By way of conclusion, let me return to the larger questions that I raised at the beginning of the paper. What implications does the social distribution of pro- and antiwar opinion have for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, and what does it suggest about the prospects and likely contours of political mobilization on issues of war and peace? Neither of these questions lend themselves to simple answers. Although it is generally agreed that public opinion places constraints on the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, few would argue that foreign policy decisions are directly responsive to the strength of public opinion for or against specific policy alternatives (Rosenau 1961; Davis and Kline 1988; Holsti 1996; Sobel 2001). Likewise, political mobilization around issues of war and

peace is a distinctively social process rather than a simple expression of individual attitudes reported in opinion polls (DeBenedetti 1990; Wells 1994; Small 2002).

Previous discussions of the impact of public opinion on U.S. foreign policy have understandably taken the *aggregate* level of support or opposition to specific military initiatives as the key variable. Nevertheless, variation in the social distribution of pro- and antiwar sentiment should not be overlooked as a mediating factor in assessing the political impact of a given division of public opinion. The percentage of respondents who answer one way or another to a public opinion poll is important only insofar as it tells us something about their likely *actions* as citizens, ranging from voting to letter writing to making political contributions to engaging in social movement activism. Different social groups vary in their predisposition and resources for engaging each of these forms of political action. It is for this reason that evidence on the social distribution of attitudes toward military intervention may be valuable in assessing the impact of public opinion on issues of war and peace.

From this standpoint, one of the important findings of this study is the evidence it provides of a fracturing of the relatively solid support that highly educated members of the public historically have provided for U.S. wars. The evidence of this trend is far from uniform; it is sometimes constrained by the countervailing influence of Republican Party loyalties; and it may be temporarily overwhelmed by a susceptibility to rally ‘round the flag. Nevertheless, policymakers have reason to be especially sensitive to any shift in the opinions of highly educated citizens. Such persons are generally more informed and place more importance on foreign policy issues. They are more likely to vote, contribute to political campaigns, write letters to their newspapers or members of Congress, and discuss politics with friends. Outside the conventional channels of electoral politics, the sympathies of these relatively resource-rich segments of the public also have implications for the “political opportunity structure” that facilitates or inhibits the mobilization of political protest and other forms of social movement activism (McAdam 1999). Any decline in the relative propensity of highly educated Americans to support military intervention can therefore be expected to accentuate the constraints that public opinion places on foreign policy.

Another important shift in the social distribution of attitudes toward the use of military force is the virtual disappearance of the longstanding tendency toward stronger or more uncritical support for war among younger Americans. Too much should not be made of this trend. It would be an exaggeration to characterize young adults as a stable reservoir of antiwar sentiment in the same sense that women and racial minorities have been. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of the prospects for mobilization in opposition to war, this stands out as an important shift in public opinion. As the Vietnam antiwar movement demonstrated, young adults—especially students—are uniquely situated in terms of their availability for participation in political protest. To cite a more recent example, according to various press reports, students and other young adults accounted for half or more of the millions worldwide who turned out on February 15-16, 2003, to protest Bush administration plans for invading Iraq. The strength of antiwar sentiments among young adults is therefore an important variable in gauging the prospects for political mobilization outside the conventional channels of electoral politics.

Any change in the propensity of young adults to endorse the use of military force or in their receptivity to appeals couched in the language of militarism also has important consequences for military recruitment, which, in turn, can be an important constraint on foreign policy. The current war in Iraq is a case in point. Despite generous signing bonuses, lowered standards for enlistment, increased resources and personnel devoted to recruitment, and aggressive (and sometimes unscrupulous) recruiting strategies, by early 2005 the army was falling well short of its recruitment goals. Increased expenditures on recruitment and a further lowering of standards temporarily closed that shortfall, only for it to reappear again, leading to added recruiting expenditures and even lower standards. Without sufficient new recruits, the military has been forced to draw heavily on reservists and the National Guard to fight the war in Iraq, to extend tours of duty, and outsource many military functions to private contractors, often at great expense. In the process, the army has been stretched so thin that it would be hard pressed to put a significant number of additional troops in the field, thereby constraining any policy options that would entail a significant escalation of the conflict or the opening of another front except by way of an exclusive reliance on air power.

Other findings of this study point to stability, rather than change, in the social distribution of pro- and antiwar opinion. Even in these instances, however, broader historical trends could accentuate the political consequences of certain between-group difference in support for military action. For example, the tendency for women to express weaker support for the use of military force has been relatively constant throughout the post-Vietnam era. On the other hand, it can reasonably be argued that women today exercise a stronger and more autonomous influence on American politics than they did during the Vietnam War. For example, during the peak years of U.S. escalation in Vietnam, roughly 2 percent of the U.S. Congress was comprised of women. Today 16 percent of Congress is comprised of women. Of course, women legislators come in all political stripes, and chances are that their policy preferences will generally resemble those of male legislators elected from the same states or districts. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that women in Congress will be at least somewhat more receptive to the sentiments that cause a disproportionate number of their female constituents to express reservations about the use of military force.

Assuming the persistence of some of the more robust between-group differences in support for military action, demographic shifts could also alter the balance of constraints that public opinion places on U.S. foreign policy. For example, stronger opposition to military action among racial minorities has been a recurrent pattern throughout the post-Vietnam era. At the time of the Vietnam War, however, non-Hispanic whites constituted approximately 85 percent of the U.S. population. Today they constitute 69 percent of the population, and in 2020 they are estimated to constitute 61 percent. Stronger opposition to military action has also been characteristic of persons 65 and older during most of the post-Vietnam era. At the time of the Vietnam War, persons of that age group comprised 9 percent of the U.S. population. Today they comprise 12 percent, and in 2020 they will comprise 16 percent. The graying of the American population and the trend toward racial and ethnic diversity could therefore have important consequences for the future balance of public opinion on the use of military force and, therefore, on the constraints that public opinion places on tough military action.

In each of these respects, there are sound reasons to conclude that the social distribution of attitudes toward the use of military force plays an important role in mediating the impact of public opinion on U.S. foreign policy and on the prospects for political mobilization on issues of war and peace. Between-group differences were an important focus of the classic studies of public attitudes toward the Vietnam War, and they deserve to be given greater attention in contemporary public opinion research. The present study is offered in the hope of encouraging further research in this direction. Among the inevitable trade-offs that must be made in any research, this study has given priority to breadth over depth of analysis. Many of the specific conclusions of this study must therefore be treated as tentative. Future studies, using more direct measures of key variables and multivariate methods of analysis will, no doubt, provide insights that go beyond or challenge some of these results.

Notes

¹ There are several prior studies that survey public attitudes toward the use of military force across multiple foreign policy contexts in the post-Vietnam era (Jentleson 1992; Sobel 2001; Eichenberg 2005). However, these are mainly concerned with trends in *aggregate* levels of support for military action, and therefore have little to say about between-group differences. An exception is Eichenberg (2003) who examines variations in the gender gap across a number of different conflicts.

² U.S. military action in Somalia and Bosnia took place mainly during the Clinton presidency, but both were *initiated* in the closing months of the first Bush administration.

³ With respect to race, however, it should be remembered that the exodus of southern whites from the Democratic Party, and the resulting of polarization of party allegiance along racial lines, occurred largely after the peak years of the Vietnam War.

⁴ Cook and Wilcox (1991) challenge this view, arguing that the feminist movement has had an equal impact on the attitudes of men and, therefore, cannot be seen as responsible for changes in the gender gap.

⁵ Apart from this, there was no selection involved in the choice of dependent variables. The analysis includes data from essentially *all* surveys on pro- and antiwar attitudes that were available through the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) as of October 2007, except for a few that failed to provide data on the independent variables for this analysis and several that had an insufficient sample size to allow for between-group comparisons. When multiple polls were conducted within a single month by the same organization using identically worded survey items, the data have been aggregated to increase sample size.

⁶ This was necessary for consistency, because the coding of some surveys did not allow me to distinguish between missing data and “don’t know” or “undecided” responses. Rarely did the omitted responses exceed 6-8 percent of the total sample.

⁷ This was necessary because of the absence of more detailed racial categories in many polls and uncertainty about how one might construct a clearly *ordinal* race variable with more than two values.

⁸ The smallest sample size is usually for the comparison among income categories because the income question tends to receive the highest percentage of refusals to answer. Sample size for the other independent variables was typically 5-10 percent larger than the minimum sample size.

⁹ The median sample size for the polls in this study is approximately 1,050. A saturated model including all five independent variables would split this sample into 400-500 cells depending on the measurement of some variables. Clearly, this is problematic from the standpoint of cell size. Collapsing all independent variables to a binary level would alleviate the problem of cell size, but the costs of abandoning so much information on these variables might outweigh any gains achieved by multivariate modeling.

¹⁰ Women's lesser support for military action was relatively consistent across different categories of race, education, and income. The strongest interaction was between gender and income. There was a modest association between being female and having a lower family income, with gammas typically in the range of .15 to .20. Based on a multivariate analysis of a sub-sample of 50 survey items, drawn randomly from polls with a sample size larger than the median, I found that the average gamma between gender and support for military action *within income categories* (i.e., the partial association controlling for income) was .23, compared with an average zero-order gamma of .25 (a difference of only .3 standard errors). On average, these partial associations were roughly uniform across income categories.

¹¹ On the assumption that age differences in exposure to feminism would be more likely during the early period of this study, this sub-sample was drawn from the years between 1982-93. Age was dichotomized into under-30 and 30-and-over categories. For each survey item I calculated parameter estimates for a saturated model including sex, age, and support for military action. A chi-square was then computed for the null hypothesis that the interaction effect was zero, using a rejection level of $p < .05$. I did the analysis again redefining the younger age group as those under 45. This produced even weaker evidence for the hypothesis that gender differences were larger within the younger group.

¹² Conover and Sapiro (1993) and Bendyna et al. (1996) provide additional evidence for this conclusion.

¹³ Eichenberg (2003) comes to similar conclusions about the relative weakness of the gender gap with respect to "humanitarian" or "peacekeeping" missions.

¹⁴ The average gamma for all survey items pertaining to the first Persian Gulf War was .37. For Afghanistan and the Iraq War the average gamma was .21. Note, however, that this comparison fails to control for the very different mix in the types of questions that were posed about the different conflicts.

¹⁵ For example, in the ABC/*Washington Post* poll conducted on October 8, 2001, 55 percent of women (compared with 33 percent of men) said that they were "personally worried that [they] or a close relative or friend might be the victim of a further terrorist attack," although controlling for this factor did not appreciably alter the gender gap in support for military action.

¹⁶ The high number of women among U.S. combat forces in Iraq, and the positive spin given to this in the Pentagon's marketing of the war, might also be cited as contributing to a decline in the gender gap in war support. However, this interpretation is confounded by the fact that women played a proportionally *larger* role in the first Gulf War and the public relations impact of that involvement was more uniformly positive than it has been in Iraq (e.g., as shown by congressional support for expanded combat roles for women).

¹⁷ The only exception was on the October 1983 CBS News/*New York Times* poll. This poll was taken at the time of the invasion of Grenada, which whites supported much more strongly than nonwhites. The racial difference on this poll in support for efforts to overthrow the Nicaraguan government is plausibly interpreted as a halo effect of differences in support for the Grenada invasion.

¹⁸ Among persons with a friend or relative at the front, 33 percent favored offensive military action, compared with 24 percent of persons with no friend or relative at the front ($\gamma = .22, p < .001$).

¹⁹ Among persons with a friend or relative involved in the war, 50 percent said that they thought the war was worth the costs of fighting, compared with 39 percent of persons with no friend or relative involved in the war ($\gamma = .23, p < .001$). Of the former group, 61 percent said that they thought "the U.S. should keep its military forces in Iraq until civil order is restored there, even if that means continued U.S. military casualties," compared with 39 percent of the latter group ($\gamma = .28, p < .001$).

²⁰ For a variety of reasons, including the availability of data, maintaining comparability with earlier studies, and concern about cell size, racial differences have mostly been presented in terms of the comparison between whites and nonwhites. As with the polls discussed here, however, the sharpest racial differences have usually been between whites and Blacks, with other racial groups occupying an intermediate position in terms of their support for the use of military force.

²¹ Significant racial divisions in support for military action were found across all categories of gender, education, and income. The strongest interaction was with income. There was a moderate association between being nonwhite and having a lower family income, with gammas typically in the range of .20 to .25. Based on a multivariate analysis of a sub-sample of 50 survey items, drawn randomly from polls with a sample size larger than the median, I found that the average gamma between race and support for military action *within income categories* (i.e., the partial association controlling for income) was .36, compared with an average zero-order gamma of .37 (a difference of only .2 standard errors). This was mainly due to the slightly weaker, but still very strong, association between being nonwhite and opposition to military action among lower income groups.

²² Gamma for the association between education level and responses indicating increased distrust of government or wariness of military action was .18 ($p < .001$). Gamma for the association between income level and these types of response was .11 ($p < .05$). Similar associations were obtained from an analogous question in the March 1985 ABC News/*Washington Post* poll.

²³ Media attention was associated with support for sending troops to the Gulf (gamma = .29, $p < .001$), education (gamma = .14, $p < .001$), and income (gamma = .18, $p < .001$). Iyengar and Simon (1993) report similar findings.

²⁴ On the education variable, average gammas within categories of income were roughly 1.0 standard error in the direction of weaker support for military action as compared with the zero-order gammas. On the income variable, average gammas within categories of education were roughly the same as the zero-order gammas

²⁵ On the sensitivity of media coverage to elite unity or division on policy issues and the impact of this on the opinions held by highly educated members of the public, see Zaller (1992).

²⁶ These polls of March 2003 were chosen to explore this interaction because of the high level of public attention to Iraq in this period and because of their large sample size, which allows for more reliable estimates of cell values when the sample is divided along more than two dimensions. Essentially identical results were obtained from the CBS News/*New York Times* polls of February 2003, which also have a large sample size.

²⁷ These polls were chosen to explore this interaction because of their proximity to the invasion and because of their large sample size. An analysis of the CBS News/*New York Times* polls of April 2003, which also had a large sample size, yielded similar results to those described below.

²⁸ In several polls, age categories were pre-coded so that the intermediate age group had to be defined as persons between the ages of 31 and 60 rather than between 30 and 64.

²⁹ Weaker support for military action within the 18-29 age group was relatively consistent across different categories of gender, education, and income. The strongest interaction was with race. Nonwhites were overrepresented among younger age groups, with a gamma typically in the .20 to .25 range. Restricting the analysis to whites only, the 18-29 age group remained consistently less supportive of military action than the intermediate age group, but the average magnitude of the gap was only about two-thirds as large.

³⁰ If we define the height of the Vietnam War as the years between 1964 and 1972, and the "Vietnam generation" as persons who were between the ages of 16 and 24 at any time during those years, then roughly 90 percent of persons age 30-44 in the early 1980s would have been members of this generation, declining to roughly 70 percent by the early 1990s. By comparison, none of the 45-64 age group would have been part of this generation in the early 1980s, increasing to roughly 20 percent in the early 1990s.

³¹ This simple comparison between two age groups provides only a very rough measure of cohort effects in support for military action. For a more rigorous study that comes to similar conclusions, using data on the Persian Gulf War and measuring cohort effects more precisely, see Schuman and Rieger (1992).

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