Would You Like to Know More? Selection, Socialization, and the Political Attitudes of Military Veterans[*]

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Abstract

Although an initial wave of research during the Vietnam War era suggested that the political attitudes of American veterans were not significantly different from those of the public at large, more recent studies argue that this may not hold for the all-volunteer military. Thus far, however, the reason for this difference has gone unexplored: are veterans from the volunteer era different because a certain type of person is drawn to military life (selection), or are their attitudes shaped by their service (socialization)? Using new survey data on the political attitudes of Americans, and statistical techniques designed to tease out the difference between selection and socialization effects, we examine this question, assessing the extent to which the two factors play a role in this attitudinal difference. Our results have implications for political representation, civil-military relations, and the role of formative experiences in political and psychological development more generally.

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Introduction

Military service is a formative experience for many young people. Men and women who opt to serve must often transition immediately from the lifestyles in their parents' homes, or with their college roommates, to a highly-regimented way of life, in which they are expected to follow (and, in the case of young officers, to give) orders, and to think of themselves not only as individuals, but as part of a larger group. These changes can have profound effects on personal development. But does the experience of military service affect an individual's ideology, philosophy, or political attitudes?

Recent work by Klingler and Chatagnier (2013) on the political attitudes of veterans of the all-volunteer U.S. military suggests—contrary to the findings of studies that concentrated on draft-era veterans (e.g., Johnson 1976) or political elites (e.g., Feaver and Gelpi 2004)—that, among the mass public, military service is generally associated with more conservative and more hawkish political views. However, their data are insufficient to draw strong conclusions, or to determine whether these relationships are simply a function of unobserved variation in their sample. Thus, their analysis remains simply exploratory.

We build upon the findings of veterans' distinctiveness outlined in their study, but we improve on their analysis with data and methodological techniques designed to isolate the effects of non-reluctant military service.[1] Using new data, drawn from the 2015 Survey of American Veterans

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[1]In this paper, we focus on undrafted veterans who report that the draft was not ongoing or did not influence their decision to serve, and compare these non-reluctant veterans (see Oi 1967 for a discussion of reluctant service) to Americans who did not serve in the military. The data include a significant subsample of reluctant volunteers and a smaller subsample of conscripted veterans; we choose to focus on non-reluctant volunteers because this group best represents the modern U.S. military. In our analysis and discussion, we refer to non-reluctant veterans simply as "veterans" unless otherwise indicated, and to civilians as "non-veterans."

(SAVe), we are able to replicate several of their initial findings on the relationship between attitudes and service, and to examine the robustness of these findings to controls for potential confounding factors. Our initial results suggest that veterans do differ significantly from non-veterans, though this may not be due entirely to service. We also compare and contrast the effects of service identified in the Vietnam-era military with those of service in the contemporary volunteer military.

Our key contribution to the literature on veterans' political attitudes lies in our ability to isolate the effect of military service on respondents' preferences. While some studies have found an impact for service, they have been unable to distinguish between effects based on selection into the military and effects from service itself. Unlike previous research, our data contain information about a number of important pretreatment factors (i.e., conditions that influence the decision to join the military). By matching treated and untreated respondents on these characteristics, we are able to separate out the effect of service, distinguishing it from selection. We argue that this is a major step forward in the veterans research program.

Previous Research

Although veterans are generally believed to think and behave differently from civilians, relatively few scholars have studied their political opinions. Indeed, a 2007 article in *Armed Forces and Society* found, after surveying the literature, that much of the existing research was undertaken during the draft era, and may not apply to the modern, all-volunteer military (Camacho and Atwood 2007). Given this state of affairs, they argued for more research on veterans as a distinct voting bloc. What research does exist on the contemporary public opinion of veterans tends to be relatively narrow in scope (e.g., concentrating only on vote choice), or to have a fairly parochial sample group (e.g., only elites or only Latinos). Little extant research looks at the general political views of veterans at a mass level.

Previous studies of veterans have tended to concentrate on turnout and voting behavior. With respect to turnout, authors have found that attributes such as civic virtue or a belief in duty

make veterans systematically different from the rest of the population. Volunteer soldiers may have greater affinity for their country, making them more willing to endure sacrifices, such as the costs associated with voting (Bachman et al. 2000; Teigen 2006). This, combined, with the fact that the military "makes specific efforts to inculcate its members with patriotism" (Teigen 2007, 414), should predispose veterans toward participating, increasing their likelihood of voting, relative to non-veterans. Indeed, much of the literature on voter turnout and veteran status finds evidence supporting this thesis (Ellison 1992; Leal 1999; Teigen 2006).

In terms of vote choice, scholars argue that these very same qualities make veterans more likely to identify with the Republican Party. Indeed, given Republican "ownership" of the national security issue (Norpoth and Buchanan 1992; Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen 2003), those who volunteer for military service are likely to have ideological overlap with individuals who support Republicans. Furthermore, the demographic characteristics of veterans have historically been more similar to those of the Republican Party.[2] These factors together should increase the probability of a Republican vote being cast by a veteran. Empirical research into the area, however, has been mostly inconclusive. While some (e.g., Bishin and Incantalupo 2008) find that veterans tend to be more likely to vote Republican than the general public, others (such as Barreto and Leal 2007) report that prior service increases the likelihood of a Democratic vote.[3] Still others find little or no relationship between veteran status and vote choice (Teigen 2007).

One reason for the lack of consensus may be that veterans' political views are more complex than those put forth in the arguments above. The decision to vote for a Republican or a Democrat depends on a variety of factors. Even an especially hawkish military veteran will not necessarily

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[2]As is addressed later in the paper, veterans tend to be wealthier, and to be more likely to be male or married than the population at large. On the other hand, a disproportionately large number of minorities—who are more likely to be Democrats—are veterans.

[3]It should be noted that this holds specifically for Latinos in 2004.

cast a vote for any given Republican candidate. If, for example, veterans are more liberal on domestic issues—as was true of Vietnam veterans (Johnson 1976)—then the relationship described above may not hold. Relatively few studies have taken the necessary step of looking at the individual political opinions of veterans. In many cases, they have found little effect of veteran status on political opinions (Jennings and Markus 1977; Schreiber 1978). The chief exception has been for elites, in the realm of foreign policy, where veterans tend to be more *dovish* than non-veterans, believing that force should only be used in particularly threatening situations (Gelpi and Feaver 2002; Feaver and Gelpi 2004).

While interesting for its counterintuitive results, Gelpi and Feaver's work tells us only about the foreign policy beliefs of elites. It does not speak to domestic politics or to the effect of service on non-elites. One study that has looked at the ideology and policy preferences of veterans drawn from the mass public in the post-draft era is that of Klingler and Chatagnier (2013). Unfortunately, while their study presents findings that are stronger than those found in previous analyses—they find both that veterans tend to be significantly more conservative and more likely to identify as Republican than non-veterans, and that they voice more conservative and hawkish opinions on an issue-by-issue basis—it has two major shortcomings. First, the authors lack sufficient data to control for potentially confounding factors. Thus, it is possible that some or all of these findings are spurious, being driven by other variables. Second, their hypotheses are not grounded in a coherent theoretical framework. We take an improved approach to their research question, which addresses these two problems. First, we present a novel and consistent theoretical structure, which explains how service can affect individuals' political views. We then test the implications of our theory using a new survey of nearly 2,000 Americans, approximately half of whom served in the military.

Military Service and Political Attitudes

The extant literature provides divergent results, with more recent work suggesting that military veterans are distinct from the general public in ways that contrast with the studies of the 1970s. The source of these differences is unclear. One possibility is that citizens who select into military service have simply become increasingly conservative and Republican as partisan and ideological polarization has dissuaded more left-leaning and Democratic individuals from choosing to spend time within the institution.[4] In this case, the more recent findings remain in line with the theoretical underpinnings of earlier research, which found limited effects of military service on political attitudes. Therefore, we find it worthwhile to draw from the conceptual foundations of these studies. We focus on mechanisms by which military service can have an effect on political *attitudes*, such as ideological self-placement, partisan identification, or positions on specific policy matters.

While some efforts to study conscription-era veterans through cross-sectional data found the group to be generally anti-authoritarian and somewhat left-leaning on social issues, analysis of longitudinal data found few distinctions between veterans and non-veterans (Johnson 1976; Jennings and Markus 1977; Schreiber 1978). Arguably, socialization arising from prolonged exposure to the totalizing, hierarchical institution of the military inculcates respect for and obedience to superiors and to the entity that they represent (i.e., the United States). This was supported to some degree by Vietnam-era panel data. Most notably, military service was associated with slightly higher levels of trust in government, and lower levels of political cynicism (Jennings and Markus 1977). Additionally, while military service was found to have little impact on civic tolerance overall, (Jennings and Markus 1977, 142) report that "more senior enlisted men at any given point in time will probably be less tolerant and less likely to take a civil libertarian and non-chauvinistic approach to politics.". Importantly, members of the all-volunteer force (AVF), being unconscripted,

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[4]And these left-leaning individuals no longer find themselves subject to conscription.

are presumably more likely to view the military as a *chosen* profession, re-enlisting at higher rates and looking more like the "senior enlisted men" described by Jennings and Markus.

To the extent that previous research has uncovered an effect for service, it suggests an association with greater trust in government, reduced cynicism, and less tolerance. This is, presumably, driven by the experience of socialization in a rigid, hierarchical institution. As a result of this increased faith in government and lack of tolerance, we expect that military service should be (at least weakly) associated with support for state intervention in the economy, as well as support for conventional social mores. This generates the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. *Veterans will be more likely than the general public to support fiscally liberal and socially conservative policy positions.*

Related to veterans' reduced propensity to support civil libertarianism, we also expect the authoritarian nature of military service to instill in veterans a reduced tolerance for rule-breaking, and a preference for law and order. Indeed, previous studies have shown veterans to be more likely than non-veterans to be upset when young people broke the law while protesting, to approve of the police using force against demonstrators—and among Vietnam veterans—to approve the use of physical force by policemen (Schreiber 1978). [5] While previous findings have been relatively weak, we still expect military service to be associated with more authoritarian positions on law enforcement.

Hypothesis 2. *Veterans will be more likely than the general public to support law-and-order measures.*

Jennings and Markus (1977) argue that veterans—who serve in a position in which they may be called upon to apply military force—should be more likely to support the use of military

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[5]Interestingly, veterans who exhibited higher levels of political alienation were found to be more *anti*-authoritarian than well-integrated veterans on several issues (Johnson 1976).

force in conflicts, in order to reduce any cognitive dissonance that might result from negatively viewing an act for which they were responsible. However, they do not find consistent support for a relationship between military service and increased support for military intervention. Similarly, Gartner (2008) finds that veterans were more supportive of the Iraq War, but that the effect mostly disappears when controlling for relevant demographic factors. While the relationship between military service and support for intervention is weak at best, other research suggests that veterans (and those closely linked to veterans) tend to prioritize national security, a strong defense, and the armed forces, along with general military spending (Johnson 1976; Ivie, Gimbel and Elder 1991). Although personal experience appears to influence the impact of military service on foreign policy positions (Kirkpatrick and Regens 1978), the mechanism of dissonance reduction should still play a strong role with respect to general objectives and broad institutions, such as support for national defense and military spending as a whole. This yields the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. *Veterans will be more likely than the general public to support military intervention and prioritize national defense.*

Across specific policy areas, our hypotheses suggest that military veterans will be at least marginally more supportive of state intervention, on both fiscal and social matters, which tends toward a form of authoritarianism aligned with conventional social mores. We also expect veterans to support stricter law enforcement policy and a more robust national defense, even if they are not more likely to back specific interventions. These positions are consistent with a form of "big-government" conservatism. While these issue stances are not completely congruent with the policy positions of the Republican Party during the last 40 years,[6] they approximate the platforms of the GOP more closely than those of the Democratic party. Accordingly we articulate one final hypothesis:

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[6]Although they are not dissimilar from the right-populist style of campaign run by President Trump in 2016.

Hypothesis 4. *Veterans will identify more strongly than the general public with conservatism and the Republican Party.*

Data and Methods

We use data drawn from the 2015 Survey of American Veterans. This is a survey of 1,983 voting-age U.S. citizens, conducted on behalf of the authors by the Ipsos polling firm in the summer of 2015. The survey is intended to be used to study veterans' political attitudes and psychological characteristics. For this reason, it oversamples those who report having served in the military, such that they account for about 45% of the sample. This is notable because, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are approximately 21.3 million veterans in the United States, accounting for just over 6.7% of the population.[7] Oversampling brings with it two benefits: first, it provides us with sufficient veteran observations to conduct significant analyses on this particular subset of Americans; second, it gives us an opportunity to match respondents across a larger set of observations. Our survey also asks questions that are especially pertinent to those with a military background. The relevant portion of the questionnaire is available in the supplementary appendix. The full questionnaire is available from the authors upon request.

Our analysis comprises two complementary components. The first portion is a simple comparison of responses by veterans and non-veterans, which effectively replicates the procedure used by Klingler and Chatagnier with our data. However, SAVe allow us to improve upon their methods in two important ways. First, because they use the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) data—which ask only whether an individual has ever served in the military—and are interested in understanding how service affects the attitudes of those who join the military of their own volition, they are forced to eliminate all draft-eligible veterans (i.e., all male veterans

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[7]See `http://www.census.gov/topics/population/veterans/about/veterans-day.html`.

who were born prior to 1954). While this decision is understandable, it throws away informative data. We are also interested in understanding the effects of military service for those who choose to join. Fortunately, our survey allows us to distinguish between draftees, reluctant volunteers, and non-reluctant or "true" volunteers.[8] Thus, in analyzing the response of non-reluctant veterans, we are able to include a relatively large subset of veterans who served prior to the end of conscription, giving us a more robust sample than the CCES provides.[9] Second, SAVe includes many of the same policy questions asked in the 2006 CCES survey. However, whereas the latter simply asks respondents whether they agree or disagree with a given policy, our survey inquires as to the intensity of the preference (i.e., respondents answer on a scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree"). This provides us with a greater level of insight into respondents' preferences. We see these two changes as marked improvements over previous research.[10]

The first portion of the analysis, then, is intended to uncover the presence or absence of differences between the two samples. However, veteran status is not randomly assigned: in today's military, individuals choose whether or not to serve. Not only is selection non-random, but many of the factors that predict political attitudes may also drive decisions about service. Thus, it is important to examine the differences between veterans and non-veterans, after conditioning on

[8] For the wording of the question, see the appendix.

[9] Of the 895 veterans in our sample, 505 were males who were born prior to 1954. While nearly three-quarters of these veterans responded that they were drafted or influenced by the draft, we are able to maintain 128 respondents (around 14% of all veterans in our sample, and 46% of non-reluctant veterans) who would otherwise have been eliminated.

[10] The full text of these questions is available in the appendix. For presentation purposes, where applicable, we recode the responses so that higher values consistently indicate more conservative, interventionist, or pro-military positions.

these factors. Fortunately, the literature on causal inference in political science (e.g., Ho et al. 2007; Sekhon 2009) provides a solution that is precisely applicable to this situation: given a set of pretreatment (i.e., pre-service) variables, we can identify the average effect of a given treatment (here, military service) on a sample. For this reason, part two of the analysis is intended to isolate the effects of service itself. SAVe includes a number of questions about pretreatment variables that may have influenced decisions about joining the military. We are able to leverage these variables to calculate the effects of service on political preferences. To account for non-randomness, we preprocess the data on the relevant pretreatment variables before re-examining differences between the two groups. Our preprocessing technique matches non-reluctant veterans to individuals with similar pretreatment characteristics who reported never having served in the military. Although we cannot randomly assign veteran status, we can identify covariates that are expected to be associated with each respondent's probability of receiving the veteran "treatment," and examine differences between respondents who received the treatment and similar respondents who did not. This allows us to estimate the effect of our treatment, having controlled for confounding factors.

While there are a number of potential matching algorithms, we note that propensity score matching has recently been criticized by methodologists who argue that such preprocessing can actually *increase* imbalance in data, resulting in biased estimates of survey average treatment effects (SATT) (King and Nielsen 2015). A proposed alternative is coarsened exact matching (CEM) (Iacus, King and Porro 2012), which requires no assumptions about the data-generating process and avoids the problems inherent in equal percent bias reducing techniques, such as propensity score matching. After identifying a set of variables associated with the decision to serve, we can then *coarsen* these variables into a reduced number of categories, which facilitates matching. For example, we may break up continuous variables into discrete, but substantively similar, intervals of values. Alternatively, we could combine the values of ordinal variables into broader ordered categories. This allows us to increase the probability that a given respondent has a match on a particular variable, while preserving qualitative differences across categories. We then *exactly*

match respondents that did and did not receive the treatment, based on their coarsened responses to questions related to the determinants of service.

We preprocess the data using the `cem` package in R (Iacus, King and Porro 2009). We match on thirteen different pretreatment factors, which previous studies suggest should influence the decision to serve in the military: *parental military service, high school GPA, urban or rural background, U.S. citizenship status, parental education, race/ethnicity, family military ties, social ties to military, gender, age, region, socioeconomic status*, and *family structure*. We coarsen each of these variables (with the exception of gender), in order to match exactly on pretreatment covariates.[11] After eliminating non-responses, we are left with a total of 1,051 observations (364 veterans and 687 nonveterans), and are able to obtain exact matches on 156 of them (72 veterans and 84 non-veterans).

Preprocessing the data allows us to purge the effects of pretreatment variables, and to obtain the average effect of military service on a number of political attitudes. Bringing this together with the simple analysis on the raw data allows us to make inferences about *both* socialization and selection effects. The presence of a significant treatment effect is sufficient evidence that military service itself alters attitudes in some way, above and beyond any possible selection effects. Conversely, if we uncover a difference between the two groups, but are unable to find evidence for a treatment effect, we can infer that selection may play a role in the divergence of attitudes. Furthermore, we can assess the relative directions and magnitudes of the two differences to make inferences about cross-cutting and complementary effects, where relevant. Thus, our analysis provides a simple, direct, and powerful means of understanding the political attitudes of veterans.

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[11]More information on the predictors of military service and the coarsening scheme used for each are available in the appendix.
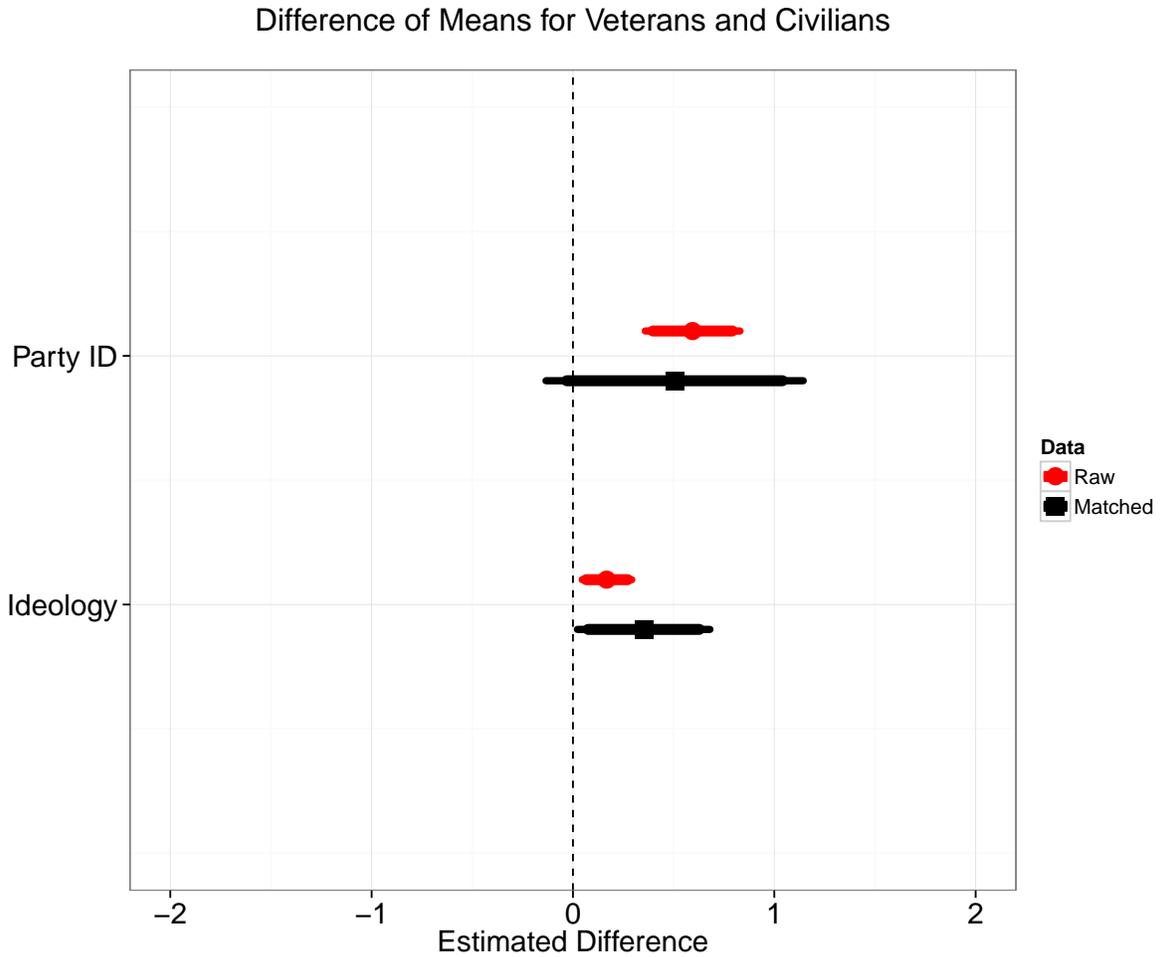
Difference of Means for Veterans and Civilians

Figure 1: Estimated effect of military service on ideology and party ID

Analysis

Building on Klingler and Chatagnier (2013), we examine differences between civilians and non-reluctant veterans on general self-placement measures, as well as several specific policy dimensions. We look first at ideology and party identification, and then examine 29 questions along five different policy dimensions—social, economic, use of force, foreign policy, and law and order—to uncover precisely where the two groups diverge.[12]

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[12]Exact wording for each of the 31 questions can be found in the appendix.

Figure 1 presents the differences in average self-placement on five-point ideological and seven-point party identification scales for veterans and civilians. The filled shapes indicate the differences in means, while the thicker and thinner and bars extending outward depict 90% and 95% confidence intervals, respectively. For each item, the upper point is the difference of means for the raw data (i.e., the simple difference between the two), while the lower point is the difference after preprocessing (i.e., the average treatment effect for military service). Consistent with findings from previous work, the results in Figure 1 suggest that veterans and non-veterans do, in fact, perceive themselves differently, on average. In particular, veterans identify as both more conservative and more strongly Republican than do non-veterans. In the case of ideology, this is driven, at least in part, by the experience of military service. We find a significant average treatment effect, which suggests that when veterans leave the service, they are more conservative than they were when they entered. With respect to party identification, while we see that veterans tend to be more strongly Republican than non-veterans, we are unable to identify a significant effect from service itself. This could mean that Republicans are simply more likely than Democrats to join the military. Alternatively, given the relative magnitude of the difference and the size of the confidence interval on party ID, our result may simply be due to imprecision. That is, although we cannot be certain that the difference in partisan identification is due to the experience of service, it remains a possibility.

Figure 2 depicts the results for our first set of policy questions. In general, veterans appear to be relatively similar to non-veterans on social issues. There are only two such issues on which the groups diverge: support for school vouchers and support for equal funding of men's and women's athletic programs. On the three more religiously-oriented questions—abortion, school prayer, and same-sex marriage—we find no significant difference between the two groups. Looking at the treatment effects, we see a consistent rightward effect, which is never statistically distinguishable from zero. Given the small estimated effect on the Title IX question, it seems likely that opinions on equal funding of men's and women's programs are formed prior to service, with no discernible effect from service itself. For two questions—school vouchers and same-sex
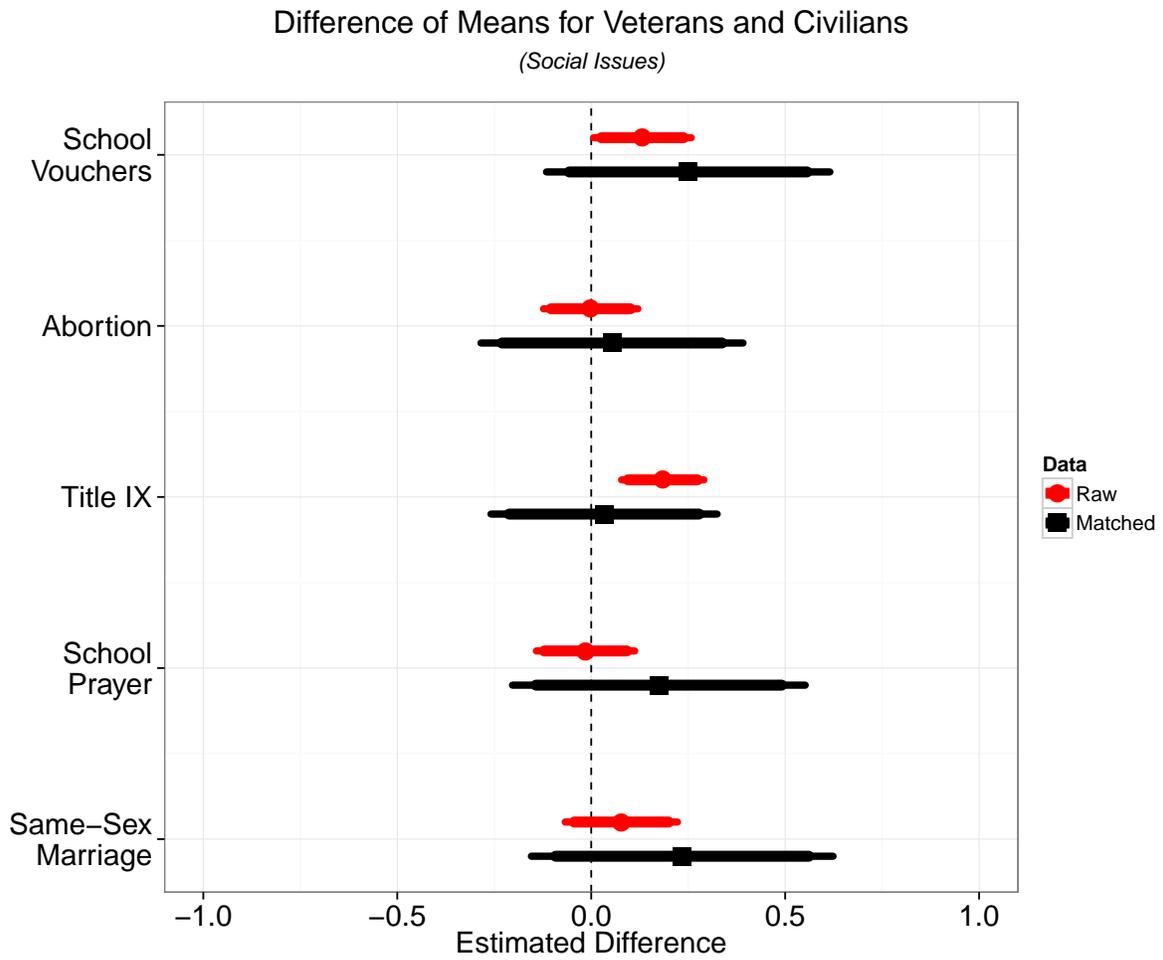
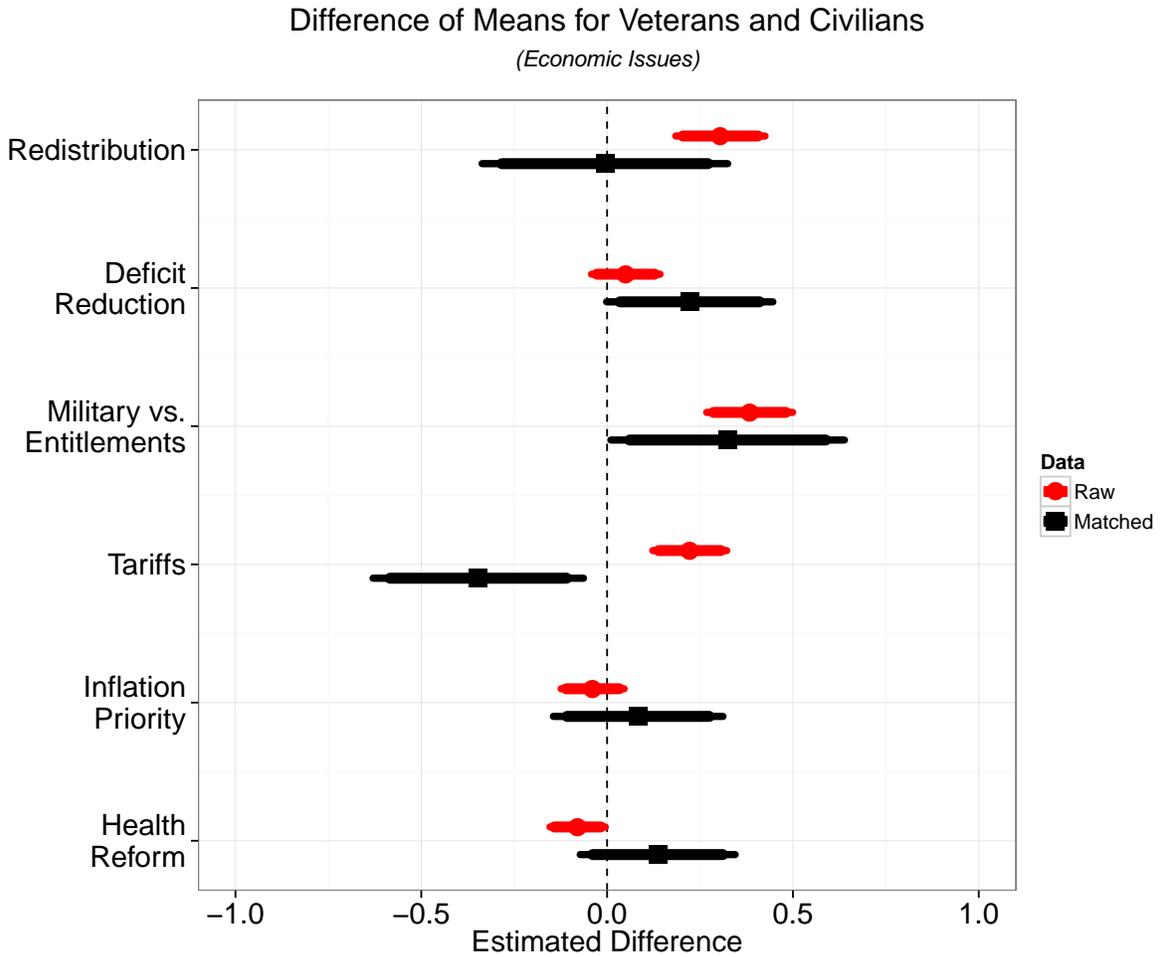Figure 2: Estimated effect of military service on social conservatism

Figure 3: Estimated effect of military service on economic conservatism

marriage—the magnitude of the effect is relatively large, suggesting that service could have an effect on these issues, though the confidence intervals are too wide to be certain.

We examine economic issues in Figure 3. Here, we find greater distinction between veterans and non-veterans, as well as interesting effects for selection and socialization. Perhaps least surprisingly, we find that veterans are significantly more likely to favor cuts to entitlements over cuts to military spending. Moreover, we find a significant treatment effect, suggesting that at least some of the difference in opinion is caused by the experience of military service. On two issues— health care reform and the importance of fighting inflation—we find that veterans express slightly

more liberal preferences than civilians do (though the difference for the latter is not statistically significant). In both of these cases, the estimated treatment effect of military service actually pulls in the conservative direction, though it is not significant for either issue. On health reform in particular, this suggests that individuals who support state intervention in healthcare are more likely to join the military.

On the remaining three issues, veterans tend to express more conservative positions. First, we see that veterans are far less likely to support redistributionist policies. Moreover, our estimated treatment effect, though imprecise, is effectively zero, providing strong evidence for a selection effect: more fiscally conservative (i.e., anti-redistributionist) individuals are more likely to opt for service. When confronted with the choice of raising taxes or cutting spending, veterans express a greater, but non-significant, preference for spending cuts. Interestingly, however, we find a significant ($p \approx 0.053$) treatment effect in the same direction, suggesting that any difference between the two groups is due to the experience of service. Finally, our most interesting finding concerns economic protectionism. We find that, relative to civilians, veterans express significantly greater levels of opposition to tariffs; however, military service itself is associated with a strong and statistically significant *pro-tariff* shift in attitudes. This implies that individuals who choose to serve strongly support free trade, but that this attitude is dampened to some extent by military service. This may be indicative of a form of economic nationalism rising from the experience of service, and associated with the inculcation of patriotism in recruits. This provides modest support for our first hypothesis with respect to economic intervention and some support for our hypothesis that military service should increase support for a strong military in the form of increased support for spending on the armed forces.

Figure 4 presents the results from six different scenarios concerning the use of military force. In general, the treatment effects that we identify for these responses are small and insignificant. We find significant differences between the two groups in only three instances: destruction of terrorist camps, prevention of genocide, and protection of allies. In each of these situations, veterans are more likely than non-veterans to endorse the use of force. The lack of a significant
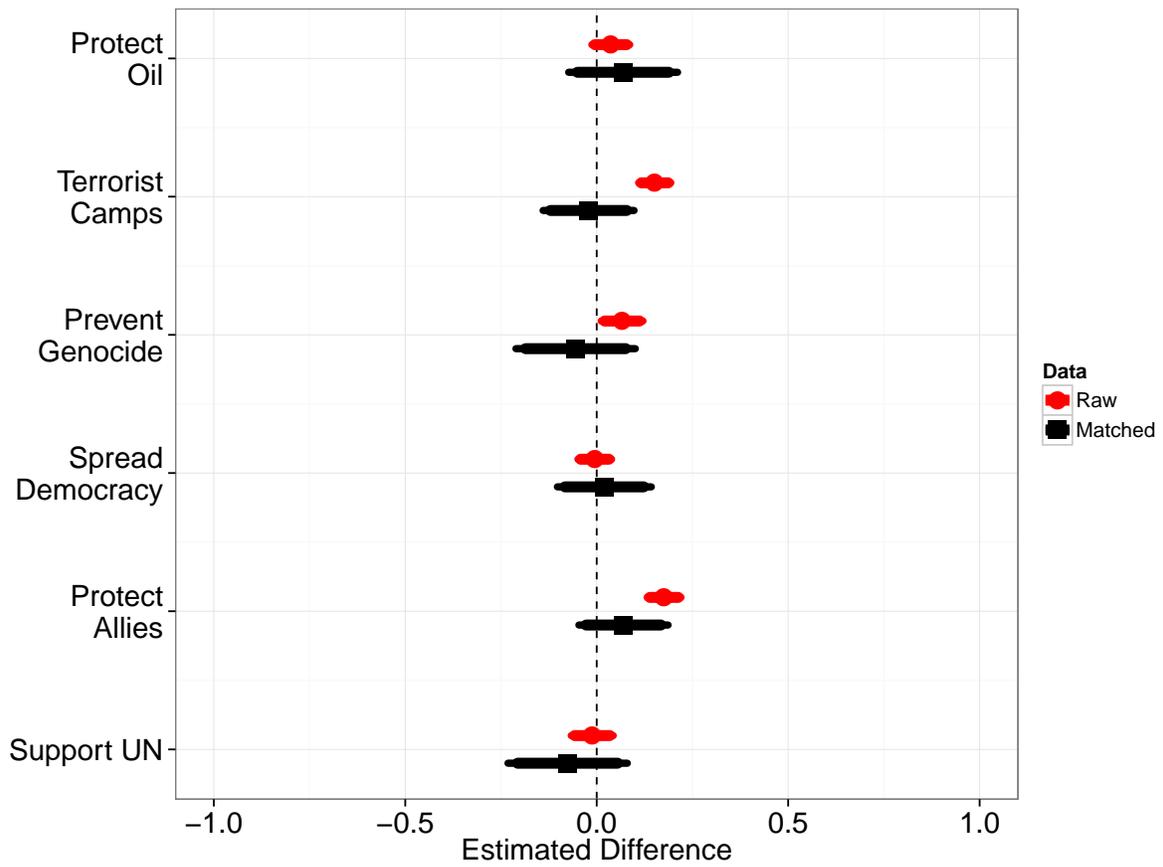
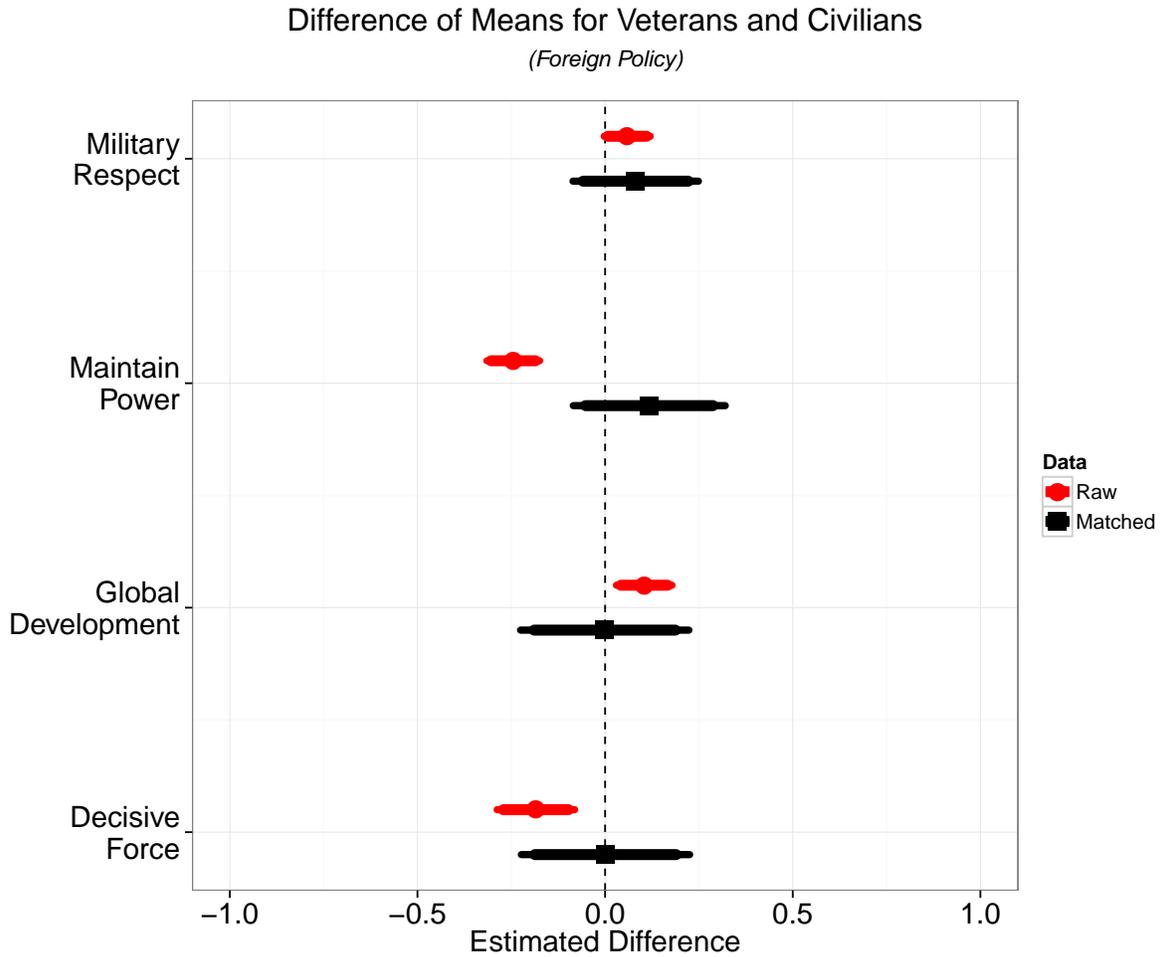Figure 4: Estimated effect of military service on willingness to use force

Figure 5: Estimated effect of military service on foreign policy interventionism

treatment effect across these three cases suggests that individuals likely join the military with these attitudes already established. Those who believe in the importance of fighting terrorism, preventing genocide, or protecting allies are simply more likely to serve. Given the missions of the armed forces in recent decades, this is not especially surprising: those who most approve of the mission are most ready to sign on to promoting its goals.

In addition to the use of military force, we ask about four general foreign policy questions, shown in Figure 5. Here, we find that the two groups differ on all four questions.[13]. However, the effect of service is non-significant in each case, and its estimate in essentially zero for the

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[13]For the question of whether the military receives sufficient respect, $p \approx 0.06$

promotion of global development and for the use of overwhelming force, rather than gradual escalation. Combined with the results from Figure 4, our findings suggest that foreign policy attitudes seem to be established prior to military service, and to remain unchanged afterward. Interestingly, however, we see a mix of interventionist and non-interventionist opinions here. The lack of a constrained foreign policy ideology among veterans, combined with the relative unimportance of service itself is one of the most surprising findings in our study. These results do not provide support for our hypothesis that military service should increase support for military intervention or the importance of a strong military, though they are largely consistent with null findings from the Vietnam era.

Last, we examine several law and order issues, the results of which are provided in Figure 6. Here, we find significant differences between veterans and non-veterans on most questions, with veterans expressing more conservative opinions in general. The two exceptions are on "three strikes" laws (where the difference is insignificant) and an unwillingness to convict the innocent in order to punish the guilty.[14] While there is some variation in raw differences between the two groups, it is notable that the treatment effects—though rarely significant—all point toward greater levels of conservatism. The effect of service is statistically different from zero in three cases. When asked whether they believed societal problems were caused by moral decline, veterans were more likely to answer in the affirmative, and we find that service increases that propensity to a significant extent ($p \approx 0.078$). On the subject of the use of corporal punishment in schools, veterans tend to be more supportive than civilians, and the estimated effect of service is nearly identical to this difference, suggesting that the change in attitudes is likely driven entirely by military service.

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[14]We use the term "Blackstone's Formulation" in the figure above, in reference to William Blackstone's famous saying that "It is better that ten guilty persons escape than that one innocent suffer."
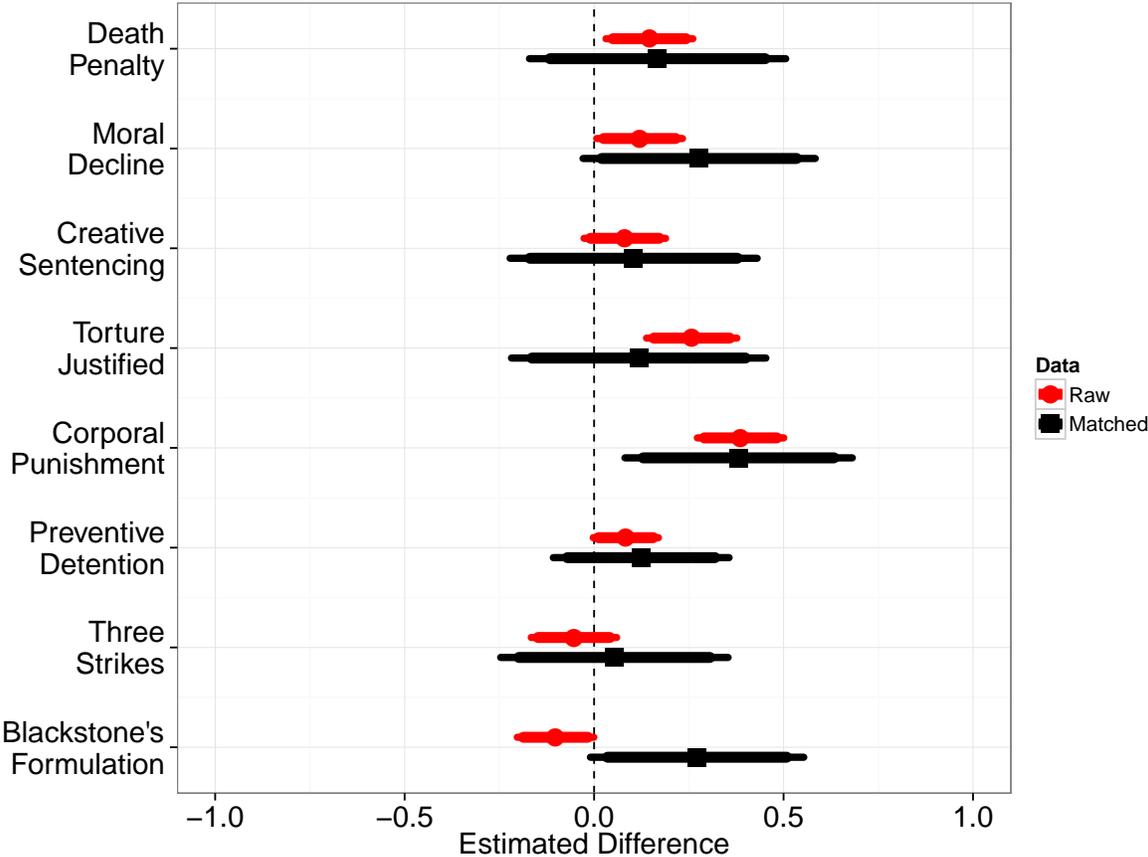
Figure 6: Estimated effect of military service on preferences for law and order

Finally, in considering Blackstone's Formulation, we find an especially interesting effect. Although veterans are less willing to see innocent people harmed in order to punish the guilty, the effect of military service appears to mitigate this attitude to a significant extent ($p \approx 0.06$). In other words, military service decreases respondent support for defendants' rights, but this effect is not sufficient to overcome the strong bias *in favor* of the defendant for those who choose to join the military. The direction of the treatment effect may be due to an increased level of trust in government, leading veterans to endorse greater prosecutorial powers. Overall, we find support for our hypothesis that military service should result in more support for law-and-order positions on law enforcement, which is consistent with prior work (in particular, Schreiber 1978).

Reflecting on our analysis as a whole, we find some evidence that military service by true volunteers increases conservatism in self-reported ideology, though we find no clear treatment effect for party identification. Furthermore, the small group of effects with which service is associated with identifiable treatment effects are mostly linked to law and order issues, funding of the military, and tariffs. When considering the pattern of these effects as a whole, we note that service in the U.S. military seems to push individuals to adopt political attitudes that are roughly authoritarian and populist in nature. We also find evidence that suggests that military service *attracts* individuals who are relatively more conservative and more Republican. On an issue-by-issue basis, volunteers tend to be more fiscally conservative and hawkish than those who opt out of service, and they seem to be at least slightly more willing to endorse law-and-order policies.

Discussion

This paper builds on prior work and provides additional evidence that veterans of the United States military hold distinctive political opinions from Americans who have not completed a term of military service. Using new data and techniques that allow us to separate the effect of service from the consequences of self-selection, we are able to determine that volunteer service in the

military leads individuals to identify as more conservative later in life, though not necessarily as Republicans. When we examine specific issue areas and positions, there are few significant treatment effects, but those we do see, such as support for higher tariffs, corporal punishment, and punishing the innocent to avoid letting the guilty go free, suggest that volunteer service pushes individuals toward populist, authoritarian attitudes in several domains.[15] Our ability to differentiate between pre- and post-treatment effects with respect to military service is a significant step forward in understanding veterans' political attitudes, and it suggests a number of fruitful paths for future research.

First, the treatment effects this study has uncovered raise many questions about why military service would be causally associated with attitudes corresponding to an authoritarian and populist mindset. Future work should push further into the other variables collected in the SAVe, to look for potential mechanisms or mitigating factors behind these attitude shifts. The Survey of American Veterans includes data on the value respondents place on duty, courage, and personal honor, and we intend to search for treatment effects of military service on these values, which might in turn explain the observed effect of service on attitudes. It would also be helpful to collect additional data on the values placed on patriotism and American ethnicity, and to examine the effect of service on the Big Five personality traits, focusing on conscientiousness and agreeableness. Finally, the results here have suggested that subsequent data collection should include other traits, such as authoritarianism and moral foundations.

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[15]These findings may help to explain what the *Washington Examiner* implied was a surprising level of support for President Trump during the GOP primary (see `http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/why-troops-and-vets-are-voting-for-trump/article/2584171`), in addition to his showing in the general election, where he won the veteran vote nearly two-to-one. Given the effects that we uncover here, President Trump's platform—which has been variously characterized as populist, nationalistic, and authoritarian—likely appealed to those who have been involved in military service, even if he personally did not.

We based much of our research design on previous research that used Robert Heinlein's (1959) novel, *Starship Troopers*, to develop a theory about the relationship between ideology and service. In particular, they argue that those who serve will, on average, place a higher priority on virtue and civic duty than will those who opt not to serve. They expected this to lead veterans to be "hawkish libertarian[s]" (Klingler and Chatagnier 2013, 677). While we were able to replicate some of the prior findings, their idea of the veteran as a small-government war hawk seems to be misplaced. There is only slight evidence of hawkishness among veterans: we uncover no effect of service on any of our foreign policy questions, and although veterans are more hawkish in some areas, it is not always the case. Additionally, we find no indication that veterans are ideologically libertarian. On the contrary, they tend to favor conservative social policy, a mix of economic policies, and authoritarian law and order policies. Thus, our results suggest that a United States in which only veterans had the right to vote—the thought experiment put forth in that essay—would look relatively little like Heinlein's world.

Many other potential factors have altered the effects of military service on political attitudes over the last 40 years. Most immediately apparent is the evolving nature of combat, from the Vietnam era, through the wars fought from 1980, and up to the onset of the Global War on Terror. Several scholars cite the harsh and morally ambiguous nature of conflict as a key factor in how service may have alienated veterans (Johnson 1976; Jennings and Markus 1977). Earlier research on military service in the conscription era argued that such separation could lead veterans to become politically alienated, expressing "attitudes which indicated estrangement or separation from the political system" (Johnson 1976, 399). However, the quick victories and sanitized operations of the first few decades of the AVF may have reduced political alienation among veterans and removed a key driver of the anti-authoritarian feelings that played a role in Vietnam era activism. This influence could have created feedback loops, as officers and NCOs socialized into the military during this period were responsible for socializing new recruits later on. The slightly more left-leaning opinions of more recent veterans and active duty servicemen and women may reflect the more morally-ambiguous combat environment of prolonged counterinsurgency operations in Iraq

and Afghanistan. Future research should look more explicitly at feelings of alienation in veterans and how it can affect political attitudes.

Methodologically, given the size of the standard errors in our analyses, future studies might build upon this work by surveying broader samples or using imputation methods to expand the sample sizes available for matching, in order to obtain additional precision. These additional matched observations would be useful for examining differential treatment effects of service for subsamples of veterans as well. We are particularly interested in analyzing differences in treatment effects by race and ethnicity, as well as age and military rank. These techniques could also be used to compare volunteers to draftees or reluctant volunteers. All of these steps will improve our understanding of the effects of military service.

Ultimately, scholars should try to explain when and why veterans develop their peculiar political attitudes. Identifying links between service, persistent values and traits, and political attitudes through CEM is useful, but panel data would be even more enlightening in addressing our research questions. A panel of young adults that gathers information on persistent values, traits, and political attitudes before, during, and after military service would allow us to measure treatment effects directly, and to examine how selection enhances the political distinctiveness of this group. A well-designed panel would also identify the points in the experiences of a veteran at which notable changes occur.

Veterans make up a significant and diverse proportion of the population. They have shared and separating life experiences, and they have demonstrably distinctive attitudes on policy. In this way, they are much like many other groups in American society that have been studied more thoroughly. This analysis, along with future research along the lines discussed above can help to develop better explanations for why veterans are distinctive among Americans. It could also aid in the formulation of policy recommendations to close the military-civilian gap. Ultimately, it is our hope that these findings and any subsequent work helps to draw additional attention to this understudied group of Americans.

Appendix

Service

Our analysis compares the political attitudes of civilians to those of veterans whose service was neither compulsory nor driven by a reluctance to escape conscription. The veterans included in the comparisons above are those who chose the third answer below:

Were you drafted into military service?

- Yes

- No, but the draft influenced my decision to serve in the military

- No, there was no draft when I volunteered or it did not influence me

- Prefer not to say

Coarsening Scheme

Conducting causal inference through matching techniques is, to a large extent, limited by the quality of the pretreatment variables used to preprocess each observation. The Survey of American Veterans includes a wide variety of items which have been found to predict military service.

Parental Military Service.

Children of current and former military members are more likely to serve themselves (Faris 1981, 1984; Kilburn and Klerman 1999; Segal and Segal 2004). We include a variable for parental military service which has a coarsened value of 1 if both parents served in the military, 2, if only one parent served, and 3 if neither served.

A or B Student.

Individuals with higher grade point averages in high school have lower rates of enlistment (Bachman et al. 2000). We use a variable for grade point averages which has a coarsened value of 1 if the student has a GPA of 3.67 or higher, and 0 if otherwise.

Rural Background.

The urban-rural distinction may be associated with enlistment, though at least one prior study found no relationship between a rural environment in youth and military service (Elder et al. 2010). We use a variable to capture the urban-rural distinction and role in predicting military service which has a coarsened value of 1 if the individual indicates living in a rural area during youth, and 0 if the individual lived in an urban area or suburban area during youth.

U.S. Citizenship.

Immigrant status is associated with the decision to enlist (Kilburn and Klerman 1999). We coarsen this variable such that individuals who received U.S. citizenship at birth have a value of 1, individuals who received citizenship before the age of 18 have a value of 2, and individuals who are not citizens or received citizenship after the age of 18 have a value of 3.

College-Educated Mother/Father.

Individuals whose parents have higher levels of education have lower enlistment rates (Bachman et al. 2000). We include separate variables for the education levels of respondents' mothers and fathers. For both, we coarsen the variable such that the value is 1 if both of the respondent's parents has a college degree, 2 if only one has a college degree, and 3 otherwise.

Race and Ethnicity.

African-Americans are more likely than whites to serve in the military, while Hispanics are less likely to serve than non-Hispanic whites and African-Americans (Bachman et al. 2000; Segal and Segal 2004). We include a variable which has a value of 1 if the individual indicated that they are a white non-Hispanic, a 2 if they are a white Hispanic, 3 if they are a black non-Hispanic, and 4 if they are a black Hispanic.

Family Ties to Veterans.

Family ties to current and former military members may also be more likely to serve themselves (Kleykamp 2006). The Survey of American Veterans has information on the number of family members who had served in the military when the respondent was 16. This variable was coarsened such that it had a value of 1 if no family members had served at that time, 2 if one had served,

and 3 if there was more than one family member reported who served in the military.

Social Ties to Veterans.

Social ties to current and former military members may also be more likely to serve themselves (Kleykamp 2006). The Survey of American Veterans has information on the number of friends and acquaintances who had served in the military when the respondent was 16. This variable was coarsened such that it had a value of 1 if no friends and acquaintances who had served at that time, 2 if one had served, and 3 if there was more than one social connection reported who served in the military.

Female.

Women are significantly less likely to enlist in the military, and we included a dummy variable for female gender (Segal and Segal 2004).

Age.

There are likely to be significant cohort effects in the decision to serve. Wars, major world events (such as 9/11), and the U.S. political climate are likely to play a major role in the life decisions of individuals of military age. In addition, the presence of the draft for men born prior to 1958 should significantly increase the probability of service (both directly and by encouraging "reluctant volunteers" to join in order to avoid being drafted). We place respondents into one of six categories according to their year of birth, and code them in the following way:

1 if the respondent was born before 1916;

2 if the respondent was born between 1916 and 1935;

3 if the respondent was born between 1936 and 1939;

4 if the respondent was born between 1940 and 1957;

5 if the respondent was born between 1958 and 1964;

6 if the respondent was born in 1965 or later

Region.

Individuals from the Mountain West and South regions in the U.S. are more likely to serve in the military than Americans from other regions. We match on a variable which is coded 1 if the respondent grew up in the South, 2 if the respondent grew up in the Mountain West, and 3 if they grew up anywhere else.

Socioeconomic Status.

We match on a variable which is coded 1 if a respondent's family was reported as upper class, 2 if a respondent's family was reported as upper-middle or lower-middle class, and 3 if a respondent's family was reported to be lower class.

Family Structure.

Individuals with larger family sizes, as well as individuals growing up in nontraditional families are more likely to serve (Kilburn and Klerman 1999; Bachman et al. 2000; Elder et al. 2010). We created a variable for nontraditional family structure, in which respondents who grew up with both biological parents in the home were coded as a 0 and all others were coded as a 1, and carried this over to the coarsening scheme.

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