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What is This?

Military Family Attitudes toward Senior Civilian Leaders in the United States

David L. Leal[1] and Curt Nichols[2]

Abstract

This article examines Army spousal attitudes toward senior civilian leaders in the United States. Based on the 2004 Military Families Survey, it investigates the demographic, political, and institutional factors that structured the job approval ratings of then-President George W. Bush, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Secretary of State Colin Powell. Partisanship, race and ethnicity, and opinions about the war in Iraq were consistently significant predictors; experiences directly related to the Iraq war were not. For instance, while Republicans and Latinos were highly likely to support the leadership, past and present deployments were not significant. In addition, Army spouses appear to have distinguished between the three leaders. The results have implications for researchers interested not only in military families but also the role of race and ethnicity in the armed forces, retention dynamics, the civil–military gap, and the Army in a time of war.

Keywords

military families, civil–military relations, military and society, multicultural military

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Introduction

In 2007, the Lifetime television network introduced the fictional dramatic series "Army Wives." This reflected an increased public interest in the lives of soldiers[1] and their families during a time of sustained conflict, frequent deployments, and regular casualties. While scholars have long investigated a wide variety of military sociology questions about service members, their families, and veterans, comparatively little light has been shed on the political opinions and orientations of spouses of military personnel. More specifically, we know little about how such spouses view senior elected and appointed officials or how individual and institutional factors structure such attitudes.

Just over half of all active duty Army personnel are married—including 68 percent of officers and 51 percent of enlisted in 2005—so there are a quarter of a million good reasons to investigate spousal opinion.[2] However, due to a variety of factors, the attitudes of officers and the enlisted ranks, to say nothing of their spouses, are difficult to determine. We therefore analyze a rare survey of spousal opinion—the 2004 Military Families Survey sponsored by the Washington Post, Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University—that is based on samples generated from Army Post communities across the nation.

We undertook this project to better understand the determinants of spousal attitudes toward senior civilian leaders for several reasons. First, "evidence suggests that married military members' attitudes toward the military organization are influenced by their spouses' satisfaction."[3] Spousal opinion may therefore influence how soldiers view the Army and its leadership, which could have implications for retention and morale.[4] Second, spousal opinion may be a proxy for the attitudes of soldiers themselves. If the survey reveals low approval ratings for the civilian leadership—especially among particular racial or partisan subgroups of the military family population—then we may gain insight into not only manpower issues but also civil–military relations. Third, by understanding the determinants of approval, we can explore how combat and deployment experiences shape political opinions in Army families. Fourth, this project extends the social science literature on presidential approval, specifically by investigating whether the partisan and racial–ethnic dynamics found in the civilian political world also operate in a military environment that seeks to subsume such differences.

The 2004 time period—which saw frequent overseas deployments, extended combat operations, divided public opinion, and questions of disproportionate casualties by race and ethnicity—provides scholars a unique opportunity to explore how a military community at war views those civilians who advocated, ordered, directed, and defended the conflict. Our article therefore augments the growing literatures on military-family linkages and civil–military relations by investigating which factors structure Army spousal job approval ratings of then-President George W. Bush, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Secretary of State Colin Powell. The variables of interest include the experiences of the soldier—such as deployments,

rank, length of service, and membership in a combat unit—as well as the views and demographics of the respondent—including partisanship, race and ethnicity, evaluations of the war in Iraq, and attendance at a memorial service.

We will begin by reviewing the political science and sociology literatures on the military and society, followed by a discussion of the data, methods, and models in the article. We conclude with the findings about how demographic, political, and institutional factors are associated with job approval ratings in multiple ways, as well as the implications for the military.

The Military and Social Science

The social science study of the military can be traced back to World War II. Starting with research on attitudes about the military and the war, the motivations of soldiers, and the adjustment of veterans to civilian life,[5] the literature has expanded into a variety of politically relevant arenas. For instance, scholars have investigated civil–military relations,[6] the demographics of military service,[7] public opinion about the military,[8] and the political participation of veterans.[9]

There is also a growing literature on military families[10] and their relationship to the "greedy" military institution.[11] Indeed, since the advent of the all-volunteer force (AVF) in the 1970s and the military's shift from what Moskos termed an "institutional" to an "occupational" orientation,[12] a majority of military personnel are either married or more likely than their civilian peers to become married.[13] Therefore, the study of the links between the family and the military is important to both scholars and practitioners.

Military Families

Social scientists, lead by David and Mady Segal, have therefore called for greater attention to be paid to spousal satisfaction. More than ever, the retention of personnel requires attention to family issues.[14] Simply put, "if family members are dissatisfied with military life, the service member is more likely to return to civilian life."[15] Studies have confirmed that spousal employment satisfaction, as well as military policies, programs, and practices, are positively associated with overall family satisfaction with the military.[16] Additionally, the military provides other social and psychological benefits, which are thought to positively structure spousal attitudes toward the military. These factors include job security, comprehensive medical and early retirement benefits, base housing, and a potential for social solidarity and pride in contributing to the national defense.

However, according to Segal, the military lifestyle also includes aspects that lower spousal satisfaction.[17] The risk of injury or death, both in peacetime and especially during war, is an obvious factor. A review of studies conducted after World War II emphasized the stressful impact of war on military families.[18] Peacetime separations can also have negative effects, both during the period of absence and

after reuniting.[19] Other challenges the military lifestyle poses to families include frequent geographical relocations; residence in foreign countries; long and often unpredictable duty hours and shift work; pressures to conform; and the masculine nature of the organization.[20]

Although often focused on spousal satisfaction, the military family literature rarely addresses the issues of ideology or spousal attitudes toward civilian leaders.[21] Also, most analyses of military opinions about American leaders were conducted shortly after the Vietnam conflict and were characterized by nonfindings.[22] This article extends the research on spousal satisfaction and (indirectly) military attitudes, thereby contributing primarily to the military family literature but with implications for other fields of study.

Spousal opinion of civilian leaders may be significant for multiple reasons. First, it is widely said that the military "recruits single soldiers but re-enlists families." It is therefore not surprising that spousal preferences play an important role in the reenlistment decision.[23] Just as scholars understand the decision to vote is connected to costs and benefits, so is the decision to remain in the military. While military service offers unique rewards, it can also entail emotional, physical, and other costs in comparison to employment in the civilian world. Spousal opinion may therefore play a key role in retention, especially in times of casualties, high operational tempos, and partisan acrimony that can put significant stress on the spouse at home. The regression models in this article point out opinion differences among spouses, primarily based on institutional and demographic factors. This may have implications for how particular groups experience the Army, and therefore for retention.

Second, while literature on the topic is scarce, spousal opinion may be a proxy for the attitudes of soldiers themselves. The basis for this argument is that "spouses tend toward like-mindedness because of the selection processes."[24] Over time, couple homogeneity also increases. Therefore, with over 50 percent of our sample population older than twenty-nine years of age, it is fair to hypothesize that self-selection and normal processes of homogenization have tended to produce similarities that make spouses potential proxies for service members. Furthermore, much of the political "gender gap" between male and female public opinion (and women make up 95 percent of the survey population) is thought to apply primarily to unmarried women.[25] Since all respondents are, by definition, married, this further indicates that spousal opinion may reflect soldier opinion.[26] Higher levels of approval for the civilian leadership may therefore suggest that the rigors of an army at war are being well-borne by families on the home front, and perhaps by the soldiers themselves. This could indicate a greater likelihood of reenlistment. Lower approval may indicate the opposite.

Furthermore, regardless of whether approval is high or low in the aggregate, distinct patterns of lower approval are a potential concern for the military. If specific racial or partisan subgroups are less supportive of civilian leaders, this might suggest the existence of divides within the service that Army culture is not subsuming (although whether it can or should erase such differences are separate issues).

Presidential Approval

In the political science literature, scholars have paid substantial attention to the popularity of civilian leaders, especially the president. This is because job approval is a key source of presidential power in dealing with Congress.[27] Presidents attempt to use the advantages of the "rhetorical presidency" to "go public" over the heads of the Congress and directly to the American people.[28] With more positive approval ratings, presidents are better able to influence members of Congress, either indirectly through their constituents or directly through person-to-person lobbying.[29] A well-established literature therefore explores the determinants of presidential popularity.[30] While there is some disagreement over model specifications, the consensus is that the economy is strongly associated with presidential approval among the general public and specific subgroups.[31]

Less is known about the influence of foreign affairs (including the experience of war) on presidential job approval. For many years, scholars were convinced that the public is largely inattentive to foreign policy.[32] This assessment has been challenged, however, and both positive and negative correlates have been found.[33] In the "rally around the flag" effect, presidents receive short-term boosts to their job approval ratings at the initial stages of an international crisis.[34] This explains the popularity of George H. W. Bush during the Gulf War and George W. Bush's high approval ratings after the 9/11 attacks. Inversely, long-term crises, such as in Korea, Vietnam, and most recently, Iraq, have enduring negative effects as the public tires of the conflict.[35] Our article therefore contributes to this literature by examining presidential approval among military families in a time of war.

Civil–Military Gaps: Old and New?

Finally, the article has implications for the long-standing literature on civil–military relations. As noted by Feaver and Kohn (2001), this research has gone through several phases—the Janowitz–Huntington debate, the self-selection issues raised by the AVF, and the post-Cold War "culture wars" between the military and civilian society. However, the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan may mark a new chapter in this relationship. For instance, did the Iraq war create new fissures with civilians, thereby superseding issues of culture?

In the 1990s, the civil–military gap was thought to reflect different values and practices between soldiers and civilians. The two sides were liberal civilian elites and a conservative officer corps, although some observed more general differences between military and civilian cultures.[36] Some observers saw an increasingly insular military with a growing Republican Party (GOP) affinity within the officer corps. However, the divisive Iraq war, which could not be blamed on liberals or Democrats, raises the question of whether these old divisions are still relevant.

A key issue is how the military interprets the Iraq conflict and the decisions of the civilian leadership in the executive and legislative branches. One possibility is that

the war may have contributed to a general disenchantment with civilian leadership that goes beyond partisanship and ideology. Alternatively, it may serve to distance the military from partisan-ideological conflicts and renew an interest in the older, nonpartisan officer tradition.

While this complex debate is beyond the scope of our article, we can investigate spousal evaluations of civilian leaders as well as whether partisanship structures such views. In addition, researchers would benefit by sustained attention to the attitudes of military spouses. A recurring set of surveys would provide a better understanding of how spouses react to different leaders, administrations, and events. This article provides a snapshot of such views at one time, but tracking attitudes across time would provide insight into the attitudes of an important military constituency. While surveys of active duty military personnel would more directly examine civil–military questions, they are difficult to administer, and therefore rare.

Data and Models

Data Set

This article uses the 2004 Military Families Survey, which was sponsored by the Washington Post, Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University. The sample of 1,053 respondents was drawn from the Army's ten largest ''stateside'' military posts and included a total of 454 individuals living on-post and 599 living off-post.[37] The survey was conducted by telephone from January 7 to February 12, 2004. The margin of error for all respondents is 3 percent at the 95-percent confidence level. Reflecting the reality of an Army at war, 444 respondents were married to a currently deployed solider, 342 respondents were married to a soldier who had been deployed since 9/11 but was not currently deployed, and 256 respondents were married to a solider who had not been deployed.[38]

Models

The empirical analysis consists of probit regression models of spousal approval of three civilian leaders. These dependent variables are derived from the following survey question: ''Do you approve or disapprove of the way (George W. Bush/Donald Rumsfeld/Colin Powell) is handing his job as (president/secretary of defense/secretary of state)?'' Probit is used because the variables are dichotomous (respondents who responded Don't Know are dropped from the analysis).[39] Therefore, the values of the dependent variables are 0 for disapproval and 1 for approval.

One strength of the data set is that it allows us to test a broad range of determinants. We therefore include fifteen independent variables in our model (see Appendix A for more information). These include the reported military experiences of the service member, the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the respondent, and the personal and political views of the respondent.

One key question is whether opinion differences according to partisanship—which are widely found in the civilian world—are also present among Army spouses. As civilian opinions about the war in Iraq often broke down along partisan lines, we might expect that self-identified Republican spouses would express higher approval of the civilian leadership.

In addition, we will test whether officer-enlisted differences exist independently of partisanship. While the partisan distribution of the enlisted and warrant officer ranks largely mirrors that of the general population, the officer corps has become predominantly Republican.[40] However, the 2006 so-called revolt of the generals, which saw a number of retired general rank officers criticize aspects of the war in Iraq, may indicate that some officers were unhappy about the war and its conduct. In particular, they might have distinguished the commander in chief (who ordered troops into action) and the Secretary of Defense (who might be blamed for operational difficulties) from the Secretary of State. Spouses of officers might therefore be less supportive of the former, *ceteris paribus*, and Rumsfeld in particular. More generally, as the Secretary of Defense became a focus of discontent both inside and outside of the military, we might expect that his approval was both lower as well as differently structured.

We might also see racial and ethnic approval gaps. The survey allows us to test whether African American, Latino-Hispanic, and "other race" respondents express different levels of approval than do Anglos (non-Hispanic whites). Some of the effects of race and ethnicity might work through the partisanship variable, as approximately nine of ten African Americans and two-thirds of Latinos in the general electorate vote for Democratic presidential candidates. African Americans may be less favorable toward Bush and his appointees, regardless of partisanship—with the possible exception of Secretary of State Powell, a well known and highly respected African American former general. The dynamics may be different for Latinos, however. When George Bush was governor of Texas, he maintained positive relations with Latinos in his state and received relatively high support from Latinos in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections.[41] It is therefore possible that Latinos will express opinions about Bush, and possibly his senior civilian appointees, that are in between those of Anglos and African Americans.

Another set of variables tests how deployment experiences affect approval. Spouses of currently deployed soldiers might express lower support for military leadership, as these uniformed personnel were bearing the brunt of fighting a decreasingly popular war. By asking the question "Which of the following best describes your (husband's/wife's) deployment status," the survey is able to distinguish between those:

a.   currently deployed overseas for military duty;
b.   deployed overseas sometime after 9/11, but not currently deployed;
c.   not deployed overseas since 9/11.

Table 1. Spousal Approval of Civilian Leadership

	Approve (%)	Disapprove (%)	Don't know (%)	Refused (%)
George W. Bush	65	27	5	5
Donald Rumsfeld	61	27	10	2
Colin Powell	76	14	9	2

Source: 2004 Military Families Survey (Washington Post, Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University).

We also test whether military experiences, such as a soldier's length of time in uniform, service in a combat unit,[42] and spousal attendance at a memorial service, are associated with approval. The last two may be negatively associated with civilian leadership evaluations because they bring home the cost of war. For the first, it is possible that respondents married to longer serving soldiers, not to mention the soldiers themselves, may be a self-selecting group who are more favorable toward all aspects of the military, including its civilian leadership. However, a spouse with a longer serving soldier may also be better able to perceive the effects of the war on the Army, which by all accounts introduced a great deal of strain and stress.

We also include spousal evaluation of the war in Iraq. We expect that less positive assessments of the Iraq conflict will negatively affect approval ratings. Finally, we test variables for reported evangelical identification, the presence of children in the home, and gender. We expect to see positive effects associated with the first two because they might be proxies for generally conservative orientations.[43] While the literature on public opinion in the civilian world suggests a pro-Democratic "gender gap," we know little about the political views of military spouses. We therefore tentatively hypothesize that women will be less supportive than men of Bush, Rumsfeld, and Powell.

Results

The first step is to examine the aggregate approval ratings of Bush, Rumsfeld, and Powell. As Table 1 illustrates, Secretary Powell had the highest approval rating (76 percent), followed by President Bush (65 percent) and Secretary Rumsfeld (61 percent). Powell also had the lowest level of disapproval (14 percent), followed again by Bush (27 percent) and Rumsfeld (27). President Bush elicits half as many "don't know" responses (5 percent) as do his secretaries (Rumsfeld at 10 percent and Powell at 9 percent).

Analysis of Aggregate Approval across Time

Before we present the regression results, we need to situate the Military Families Survey within the context of the time when it was in the field. Because our analysis of job approval is confined to a snapshot, a wider analysis of civilian approval
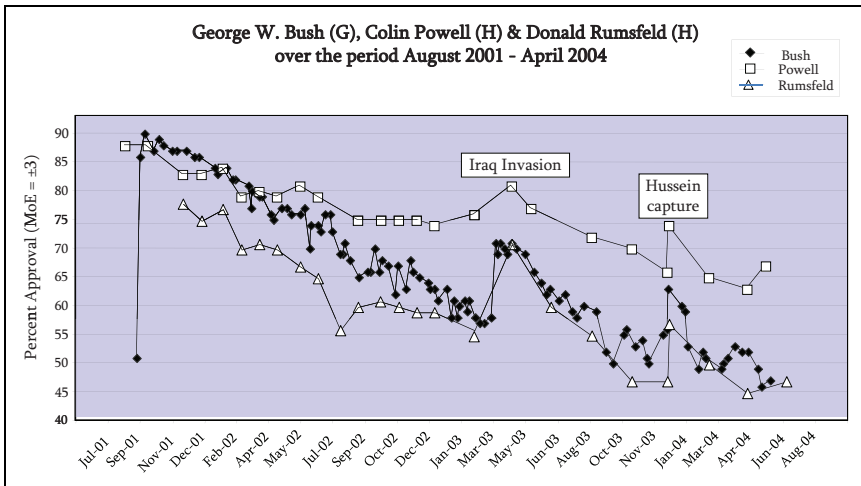
Figure 1. Gallup and Harris Civilian Approval Polls, 8/01-4/04

trends, as measured through Gallup and Harris polls, may inform us of important trends and events that occurred around the time the survey was conducted. Since the instrument was in the field for five weeks, we look at civilian approval to indicate whether this was a period of opinion stability or a period with pronounced shifts in approval that might affect the answers of some early or late respondents. Also, information about civilian levels of approval of the three leaders will indicate whether military and civilian respondents differed at the time the Military Families Survey was conducted (January 7 to February 14).

According to Figure 1, which uses Gallup polls to track the job approval of Bush and the Harris polls to track the approval of Rumsfeld and Powell, all three leaders experienced overwhelming support in the aftermath of 9/11. As the ''rally around the flag'' effect wore off, all three began to see a decline except for Powell, whose approval rating leveled off near 75 percent in July 2002. In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, both Bush and Rumsfeld's approval continued to decline, with the Secretary of Defense's rating trending several points below that of the president. Another rally effect occurred for all three leaders in the fall of 2003 during the initial invasion phase of the war in Iraq. However, this spike soon faded and all three ratings began to steadily decline again, although with Powell 10–12 points higher than the others.

In December of 2003, a sudden but brief spike in approval corresponds with the capture of Saddam Hussein on the thirteenth of that month. This event occurred just before the Military Families Survey was conducted, and Figure 2 details this period. We see that Bush, Rumsfeld, and Powell received bumps in their approval ratings immediately after Saddam's capture (8, 10, and 9 points, respectively). This rally
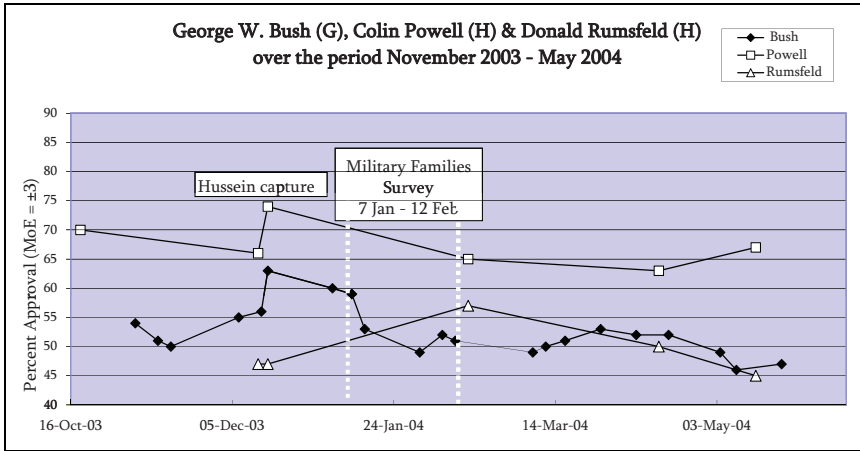
Figure 2. The short-lived Saddam Spike (Gallup and Harris Polls)

was short lived, however, having dissipated for President Bush by half on January 11 and entirely by January 15. After this event, Bush's approval rating leveled off at the approximate percentage it was before 9/11, hovering between 49 percent and 53 percent until May 2004, when it starts to decline again. It also appears that Rumsfeld and Powell's approval ratings followed the same pattern, returning to pre-Saddam induced spike levels quickly and holding steady for the rest of the winter and into the fall.

These trends are important because the Military Families Survey began on January 7 and continued through February 12. Despite initial concerns we had about whether the spike associated with Saddam's capture might affect our findings, the above Gallup and Harris results suggest that this time period is a reasonable period for our survey. First, while we have no evidence as to how many of our 1,053 respondents completed the survey between January 7 and 15, when lingering effects of the spike may have persisted, the magnitude of this effect is likely to be minimal no matter the number. Similarly, because Gallup polls show that President Bush's rating was only briefly affected by the "Saddam spike" before returning to a lower level and remaining steady, we have reason to believe that most of the survey was conducted when approval was less variable than at any other time since 9/11. With a five-week survey window, we believe this steadiness trend is more relevant to the results than are any lingering effects of the Saddam spike.

More importantly, because we are interested in how a variety of demographic, military, and political factors are associated with leadership evaluations, the overall levels of expressed support are less important than the presence of any such differences. Regardless of whether overall military family evaluations are high or low, we are primarily testing whether such opinions are associated with the independent variables.

In general, the results from the Military Families Survey show some parallels with those from the Gallup and Harris polls. Army spousal support of civilian leaders

Table 2. Probit Models of Civilian Leadership Approval

	George W. Bush		Donald Rumsfeld		Colin Powell	
Officer	−.130	(.177)	−.257*	(.155)	−.258	(.216)
Time in uniform	.024**	(.011)	−.007	(.009)	.009	(.013)
Latino/Hispanic	.320*	(.194)	.316*	(.187)	.424*	(.220)
African American	−1.019***	(.198)	−.328*	(.182)	−.799***	(.180)
Other race	−.102	(.255)	−.197	(.205)	−.456**	(.207)
Party (GOP)	1.265***	(.145)	.598***	(.135)	.559***	(.162)
Memorial service	−.411**	(.188)	−.295**	(.148)	−.287	(.188)
Gender	.658**	(.309)	.787***	(.247)	.256	(.265)
Children	.146	(.159)	.155	(.136)	.386**	(.177)
Iraq	−.792***	(.088)	−.642***	(.073)	−.480***	(.086)
Constant	1.248***	(.379)	1.116***	(.307)	1.735***	(.353)
Observations	960		921		922	
Pseudo R^2	.436		.241		.251	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. The results for the consistently statistically insignificant variables (combat unit, evangelical, current deployment, and past deployment) are not presented.
*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.
Source: 2004 Military Families Survey (Washington Post, Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University).

follows the same broad patterns as it does in the general population, with the exception that it is generally 5 to 10 percentage points higher. Powell has the highest support of the three leaders, with Bush and Rumsfeld trailing behind in close formation.[44]

One issue is how to interpret such military–civilian opinion differences. While the majority of survey respondents expressed support for all three leaders, some might find the levels (Powell at 76 percent, Bush at 65 percent, and Rumsfeld at 61 percent) as lower than expected. Given the self-selected nature of the military, as well as its explicitly patriotic culture, one might have predicted higher levels of support for these senior civilian leaders. Because few benchmarks exist for spousal opinion, it is unclear whether these figures are typical or specific to the Bush administration.

Army Spousal Approval of Civilian Leadership

The determinants of leadership approval are shown in Table 2. The first column shows the model for President Bush, the second the model for Secretary Rumsfeld, and the third the model for Secretary Powell. Results for the consistently insignificant variables (spousal service in a combat unit, past and present spousal deployments, and respondent evangelical identification) are not included.

President George W. Bush. The regression results in the first column of Table 2 indicate that Latino respondents, Republicans, and those married to soldiers with

more time in service provided relatively positive evaluations of the president. On the other hand, respondents who were African American, attended a memorial service, and were more negative about the Iraq war were less favorable toward Bush.

First, the Latino variable is statistically significant and positive. This indicates that Latino evaluations of Bush were more positive than those of African Americans and Anglos. This may reflect the relatively good relationship between Bush and Latino communities, both in Texas and across the nation. In 2004, he received the highest Latino vote share of any Republican presidential candidate, and the author Richard Rodriguez proclaimed him the first Hispanic president.[45] In terms of policy, Bush was one of the few prominent voices in the GOP advocating comprehensive immigration reform, and he refused to use anti-immigrant rhetoric as governor of Texas or countenance presidential candidates who did during the 1996 campaign.

Another possibility is that support for Bush may reflect positive Latino views of the Army itself and therefore of the Commander in Chief. While research on Latinos and the military is in an early stage, there is evidence that Latino enlistments did not decline during the Iraq war; that Latinos are particularly likely to choose combat arms occupations; that Latinos are more likely to recommend that a young person join the military; that Latinos are the group least deterred by the military lifestyle; and that the reenlistment rate for Latinos is high. In addition, Latinos are more likely to choose the Marine Corps and to have suffered disproportionate casualties during the war phase of the Iraq conflict.[46] To adopt the typology of Moskos, if Latinos are choosing an "institutional" rather than an "occupational" military experience, this may reflect a greater enthusiasm about the military *qua* military, which may lead to more positive evaluations of the senior civilian leadership.[47]

By contrast, African Americans were less supportive of Bush than were any other racial or ethnic group, even after controlling for partisanship. As with Latinos, the explanation could be personal or institutional factors. For the former, as the survey took place before hurricane Katrina, the dynamic could reflect African American unhappiness over the 2000 presidential election in Florida, with its widely publicized charges of African American voter disenfranchisement.[48] On the other hand, these attitudes could reflect the African American military experience in 2004 rather than evaluations of President Bush and his administration.

The partisanship variable shows that party dynamics are not limited to the civilian world. This variable is, in fact, highly significant in all three models. This suggests that partisanship, which is central to understanding political behavior in general, is also important to how military spouses—and possibly service members themselves—view civilian leaders. The military environment does not prevent Republicans from particularly favoring Bush, or respondents with other affiliations giving him lower marks, even after controlling for a variety of other factors.

The statistically significant and negative results for assessments of the Iraq war suggest that disenchantment with the war had political effects within both the military and the civilian sectors. This also reminds us that attaining the support of Army

spouses can be more complicated during times of conflict, which could have negative implications for retention.

The fact that the evangelical variable is statistically insignificant—in this or any other model—suggests that recent journalistic accounts of a military increasingly polarized along religious lines may not reflect the everyday experiences of military families. We found no evidence that evangelicalism structures opinions of the very leaders that the media stories suggest this group would support. Future research might investigate whether religious identification has attitudinal or behavioral effects on other aspects of military life.

Only two of the military-specific variables are statistically significant in the model—attendance at a memorial service and time in uniform. The former may indicate that Bush, as Commander in Chief, takes some blame for the painful costs of the war. The latter, however, suggests that a soldier's dedication to the profession of arms is important to respondent evaluations of the commander in chief, regardless of views about the current conflict (or even the specific occupant of the White House).[49]

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Four variables were statistically significant in all three models: ethnicity (Latinos always more positive), race (African Americans always more negative), partisanship (Republicans always more positive), and assessments of the Iraq war (those less favorable are more negative).

However, one variable was significant in only the Rumsfeld model: officer rank. Given his conflicts with the military leadership (as exemplified by the "revolt of the generals"[50] and the departure of General Eric Shinseki), this lower regard by the spouses of officers is not a surprise. It also indicates the sophistication of respondents in assessing responsibility. Just as in the "revolt," Secretary Rumsfeld appears to be singled out for blame that did not attach (at least publicly) to Bush or Powell.

Secretary of State Colin Powell. Secretary Powell had the highest overall approval, but he was nevertheless rated less favorably by African Americans, respondents of "other race," and those who thought the war in Iraq was not going well. While the results largely conform to expectations, the statistical significance of the African American and "other race" variables—and their negative direction—may be somewhat surprising, as Powell was the first African American Secretary of State. This suggests that the dynamic of descriptive representation[51] did not lead African American respondents to be more supportive of Secretary Powell—in fact, they were less supportive even after taking into account a wide range of other factors.

If the article had only examined Bush and Rumsfeld models, one could in theory have interpreted the statistically significant and negative African American variable as indicating a descriptive representation dynamic, for example, African American spouses and Anglos spouses were less and more, respectively, supportive of Anglo civilian leaders. However, this variable is also negatively associated with Powell

support, which indicates a different dynamic. While we can only speculate about why African Americans are consistently less favorable toward the civilian leadership, even after controlling for partisanship and evaluations of the Iraq War, it suggests we need to know more about the role of race in the contemporary military. For instance, while a long-standing literature discusses the positive African American experience in the Army,[52] our models indicate there may be additional dimensions to the story.

In addition, Powell was positively viewed by Latino respondents, as were Bush and Rumsfeld. This again suggests a dynamic that goes beyond descriptive representation. Latinos—regardless of partisanship, opinions about the Iraq war, and a variety of other demographic factors and institutional experiences—were more favorable toward the civilian leadership. This finding adds to the small but growing literature on Latinos and the military, a subject of increasing importance to the Department of Defense.

Finally, the memorial service attendance variable was not statistically significant in this model but was significant and negative in both the Bush and the Rumsfeld models. As with the significant officer variable in the Rumsfeld model, it suggests that Army spouses can differentiate between the responsibilities of these three civilian leaders. Not only was Powell not in the Army chain of command, but he was the least enthusiastic advocate and supporter of the Iraq invasion. To hold him in some way accountable for casualties would make less sense, and the respondents do not appear to do so.

Discussion

We are able to draw a number of conclusions from Table 2, as a wide array of variables structure spousal approval of the civilian leadership. Four variables were significant in all models, and two variables were significant in two models. In addition, opinions about Bush, Rumsfeld, and Powell each exhibited a unique feature.

First, direct military experiences relevant to the Iraq war and the global war on terror do not appear to affect attitudes. A soldier's past deployment (post-9/11), current deployment, and service in a combat unit were never significant. While deployments likely caused family disruptions and stress, they did not affect leadership evaluations. However, assessments of the Iraq war were always statistically significant. Taken together, this suggests that views about the war in Iraq were consequential to evaluations, although spouses of those who deployed or might expect to see combat did not have unique opinions.

In addition, three variables uniquely structured attitudes toward Bush and his secretaries. Spouses married to officers expressed more negative views of the Secretary of Defense but not Bush or Powell. In addition, memorial service attendance was associated with lower evaluations of Bush and Rumsfeld but not Powell.[53] These findings indicate that Army spouses differentiated among civilian leaders in terms of accountability for some aspects of the Iraq war. In light of the

so-called revolt of the generals, we might not be surprised to find that the officer variable was only significant in the Rumsfeld model. For the memorial service variable, Secretary Powell was not in the Army chain of command and was the least involved in day-to-day Iraq operations. It therefore makes sense that this variable was only insignificant in his model. Finally, respondents married to longer serving soldiers were more positive about Bush. This could reflect internalized norms about respect for the Commander in Chief rather than judgments of Bush himself.

Second, partisanship played a consistent role in structuring spousal attitudes toward civilian leaders. Most discussion of partisanship and the military focuses on the GOP orientations of the officer corps and the consequent potential for a civil–military gap. However, this article asks whether partisan divisions are present within the military family in terms of civilian leadership evaluations. The fault lines we discovered might be of some concern to the military, although it is difficult to know whether this is a new phenomenon. For instance, it is possible that Democratic spouses held more positive views of President Clinton (and now of Barack Obama) than did Republican spouses. In addition, it would be unrealistic to expect spouses to leave their partisanship at home when they join the Army family; they may feel no need to adopt an attitude of neutrality toward politicians.

Third, we observed that race and ethnicity played a role in structuring attitudes in all three models. African American respondents were consistently less likely to approve of the civilian leadership, even after controlling for partisanship and a variety of individual and institutional factors, and the Army might be interested in why such views exist. These differences in attitudes toward the civilian leadership may not be in the long-term interest of the Army, which hopes that the color green will subsume the racial–ethnic divides often seen in civilian life.

By contrast, Latino spouses held more favorable views of Bush, Rumsfeld, and Powell. As noted above, these evaluations may reflect relatively positive Latino orientations toward the armed forces and its ''institutional,'' as opposed to ''occupational,'' dimensions. While it is possible that these effects reflect the relatively high levels of Latino support for Bush in 2004,[54] and therefore for his administration more generally, the growing literature on the Latino military experience indicates that we should not rule out an institutional explanation.

Conclusions

This article investigated the views of Army spouses toward senior civilian leaders. Using the 2004 Military Families Survey, we found evidence that political and demographic factors were associated with spousal approval of Bush, Rumsfeld, and Powell. In all three models, partisanship, race and ethnicity, and opinions about the war in Iraq were statistically significant. Experiences directly relevant to the Iraq war were not significant, including past and present deployments and service in the combat arms, although attitudes about the war itself were consistently significant.

In addition, the respondents appear to have distinguished between the three leaders. Officer status was found to predict negative evaluations of Secretary Rumsfeld, while attendance at a memorial service was negatively associated only with Bush and Rumsfeld. We also found different aggregate levels of support for these three leaders; Powell was the most popular, Rumsfeld the least popular, and Bush was in the middle (although closer to Rumsfeld than Powell).

These results have implications for researchers interested not only in military families but also in the role of race and ethnicity in the armed forces, retention dynamics, the civil–military gap, and the Army in a time of war. While some of these implications are tentative and require additional research, the study of spousal opinion offers a unique window into several key questions.

In general, our findings are consistent with prior research on the power of ideological and group orientations to structure opinion. It is notable that we found such factors at work even in a military environment where a certain degree of homogenization is a priority. The consistency with which these factors largely overshadowed military experiences suggests possible challenges for the Army as it confronts opinion differences based on the identity of the individual. For instance, the military in an AVF environment is perpetually concerned about recruitment, retention, and unit cohesion. The time period of the Iraq war saw a substantial decline in African American enlistments, and the models in this article indicate that African Americans were the racial–ethnic group least supportive of the military's senior civilian leadership. These two facts may not be unrelated.

On the other hand, there is no evidence that Latinos were unhappy with the senior civilian leadership. In fact, Latinos were particularly supportive of Bush, Rumsfeld, and Powell, even after controlling for a wide range of variables. In light of "The Army's Hispanic Future,"[55] it may be an encouraging sign for the Pentagon that this group was so positive about the civilian leadership, even in the mid of a controversial war.

The fact of demographic and political divisions is not necessarily a problem, however. This article finds that the attitudes of spouses were structured by the partisan, policy, and racial/ethnic dynamics familiar to those who study American politics more generally. This could be interpreted as a reassuring parallel between the military and civilian society, in contrast to the differences the literature often emphasizes. It is also possible that the results may be specific to the individuals and time frame involved. Subsequent leaders may receive higher support or find their support is structured by different factors. The Military Families Survey provides a baseline of spousal opinion that will hopefully be replicated in the future.

Additional surveys might also provide insight into civil–military relations. Before the Bush administration, scholars and observers posited a values gap between soldiers (more conservative) and civilians (more liberal). This was a variant of the "culture wars" debate in American society more generally. However, in light of the Iraq war controversy, we might ask whether contemporary fault lines have changed. The result could be a growing skepticism toward civilian leaders, regardless of

partisanship and ideology, or perhaps just a perception that the latter factors are less important than previously thought.

While this debate is beyond the scope of our article, which studies a snapshot of attitudes in 2004, a sustained attention to spousal views may help track civil–military relations. For instance, while the majority of survey respondents expressed majority support for all three leaders (Powell at 76 percent, Bush at 65 percent, and Rumsfeld at 61 percent), the Secretary of State was viewed more positively than was the Commander in Chief and the Secretary of Defense. Does this pattern indicate problematic military attitudes toward its immediate civilian leadership? Should we consider these levels high or low? How does such approval compare to that of other administrations? Are attitudes about civilian leaders becoming more negative over time? While recurring surveys of military personal would most directly address such questions, they can be challenging to administer. By studying spousal opinion, we gain indirect evidence about how the Army views the civilian leadership as well as data directly useful to those who study military families.

Appendix A

Variables (Unweighted)

Ninety-five percent of the respondents in the Military Families Survey were female, which corresponds to the overall Army spousal population.[56]

Race and ethnicity: 64 percent of respondents identified themselves as non-Hispanic white; 15 percent were African American; 14 percent were Hispanic; and 7 percent reported that they were "some other race."

Respondent age: 50 percent were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine; 34 percent were between the ages thirty and thirty-nine; 15 percent were between ages forty and forty-nine; and 1 percent was fifty or older.

Education: 4 percent of the sample had not completed high school; 27 percent completed high school or the Graduate Education Development test (GED); 3 percent had additional vocational training; 36 percent had finished some college; 22 percent had completed college; and 7 percent had graduate-level experience (variable coded as a 6-point scale).

Religion: 37.5 percent considered themselves "born again/evangelical."

Employment status: 41 percent employed, 40 percent homemaker, 11 percent students, and 1 percent retired.

Seventeen percent of respondents had attended a memorial service for a fallen soldier.

The number of children currently living in the house varied from 0 to 7, with the modal category of "two" children accounting for 33 percent of the sample. We recoded this into a dummy variable for children or no children living in the house.

We specified the partisanship variable as 1 for Republicans and 0 for everyone else. The survey question for partisanship was coded on a 5-point scale; 37 percent

of the respondents considered themselves Republicans and an additional 9 percent identified as independents but leaned Republican. Twenty-two percent considered themselves Democrats while 8 percent identified as independents but leaned Democratic. Eight percent of the sample considered themselves Independent and did not lean either way (true independents), while 16 percent of respondents said that they were politically "something else." The latter were not asked the same follow-up question "which way do you lean" that was asked of independents.

Twenty-one percent of the sample reported marriage to commissioned officers.

Fifty-four percent of soldiers reportedly served in combat units while 46 percent served in support units.

The question about the Iraq war was phrased: "How would you say things are going for the United States in Iraq?" Four response options were provided: very well (14 percent), fairly well (51 percent), not too well (23 percent), and not well at all (12 percent).

The reported length of time in uniform varied between four months and thirty-eight years, with an average of eight years.

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Notes

1. In this article, we use the term soldier to refer to all uniformed Army personnel—enlisted, noncommissioned officer, and commissioned officer.
2. Bradford Booth, Mady W. Segal, and D. Bruce Bell, with James A. Martin et al. *What We Know About Military Families—2007 Update*. Prepared for the Family, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Command by ICF International, http://www.mwrbrandcentral.com/HOMEPAGE/Graphics/Research/.whatweknow2007.pdf. According to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (2002), 53 percent of the 1.4 million active duty service members (514,000 of which are Army personnel) are married. Military dependents outnumber service members by half a million (1.9 million; www.acq.osd.mil/housing/ housing101.htm). See also David R. Segal and Mady W. Segal, "America's Military Population," *Population Bulletin* 59, 4 (2004): 1-40.

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38. The regressions use the weight provided by the survey: ''The sample was weighted to reflect best estimates of the on-post and off-post distribution of married families at each Fort. To the extent that data were available, official Department of Defense estimates were used in weighting.'' See http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/upload/Military-Families-Survey-Toplines.pdf.

39. Five percent of spouses responded with ''don't know'' when the subject was President Bush. For Rumsfeld and Powell, the figures were 10 percent and 9 percent, respectively. Although there is a statistical debate about including or dropping ''don't know'' respondents, we agree with those who argue that retaining the ''don't know'' respondents is ultimately not critical—as long as the ''don't know'' response was not read to them as a possible option in the survey (which it was not) but was volunteered by the respondent. This minimizes the possibility of ''false negatives'' or those that really have an opinion but do not report it. For an overview of this debate, see Mikael Gilljam and Donald Granberg. ''Should We Take Don't Know for an Answer?'' *Public Opinion Quarterly* 57, 3 (1993): 348-57.

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42. The army divides its branches into combat arms, combat support, and combat service support. The combat branches are Infantry, Armor, Field Artillery, Aviation, Air Defense

Artillery, Engineer Corps (light/combat), and Special Forces. We cannot directly determine whether spouses found the terms familiar or not. The nearly 1:1 ratio of those reporting their spouse as serving in a combat versus support unit is within reason for a survey conducted at Army posts basing major combat units.

43. A check of the correlation matrix for all independent variables suggests few potential problems. The highest correlations are between past and present deployments (.59) and Republican identification and evaluations of the Iraq war (.36)—and these are not large enough to warrant a high level of concern. Furthermore, the correlation between Republican identification and officer spouse is positive but only .14.

44. For additional efforts to compare military and civilian attitudes, particularly among elite populations, see the first four chapters in Feaver and Kohn, "Soldiers and Civilians . . ." (although we cannot directly compare these various findings with those of this article).

45. In an interview, Rodriguez said this may be due to "the advantage Bush had of growing up in Midland . . . And I really do think that he has a kind of physical ease of a sort that Clinton had with black audiences. I've seen Bush with Hispanic audiences, especially when he's allowed or allows himself to speak high school Spanish. There's just this kind of physical pleasure that he has with it. And it's true. It doesn't seem to me fake; it seems to me a true joy that he has." Suzy Hansen, April 27, 2002, "The Browning of America." Salon.com. http://www.salon.com/books/int/2002/04/27/rodriguez.

46. Leal, "American Public Opinion toward the Military . . . ."

47. Moskos, "The Emergent Military . . ."; "From Institution to Occupation,"; ". . . An Update."

48. According to a report by the US Commission on Civil Rights (2001, Chapter 9), "While statistical data, reinforced by credible anecdotal evidence, point to widespread disenfranchisement and denial of voting rights, it is impossible to determine the extent of the disenfranchisement or to provide an adequate remedy to the persons whose voices were silenced in this historic election by a pattern and practice of injustice, ineptitude, and inefficiency . . . The disenfranchisement was not isolated or episodic. And state officials failed to fulfill their duties in a manner that would prevent this disenfranchisement." US Commission on Civil Rights, *Voting Irregularities in Florida During the 2000 Presidential Election* (Washington, DC: US Commission on Civil Rights, June 2001).

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