

Latinos, Military Service, and Support for Bush and Kerry in 2004

Matt A. Barreto

University of Washington, Seattle

David L. Leal

University of Texas at Austin

The 2004 presidential election raised a number of questions about the role of military service in political campaigns, particularly how it affects individual-level engagement in politics. However, only a few social scientists have tested theories about the military and politics with survey data or electoral returns. This article examines whether military service and opinions about the war in Iraq were associated with Latino support for Bush and Kerry in 2004. The data set is a preelection national survey of Latinos that includes questions about political engagement, partisanship, and previous military service. Latinos with military experience were more likely to support Kerry. In addition, Latinos who opposed the war in Iraq were less supportive of Bush, and Latinos with military experience who opposed the war were the most strongly opposed to Bush. These results contribute to an understanding of the Latino vote in the 2004 presidential election and the role of military service in electoral politics.

Keywords: *Latino politics; 2004 presidential election; political behavior; military service; veterans; war in Iraq*

Although there is a growing interest in the political and academic worlds about the political implications of military service, relatively little systematic attention has been paid to this topic. The media typically report either vague generalities or bivariate polling data, which shed little light on whether veterans have distinctive political and policy orientations. Some scholars have investigated the democratic ethos of veterans, the political mobilization of veterans, the sociocultural attitudes of veterans, and a wide variety of military sociology questions. If we want to know whether veterans are more likely to support candidates from one party or another, we can learn relatively little from the political science literature. If the question is how veterans of different races and ethnicities engage the political system, there is almost no evidence.

There are good reasons to investigate the potential political implications of military service. Tens of millions of Americans have served in the U.S. armed forces (Richardson & Waldrop, 2003), and the veteran demographic includes citizens and noncitizens, men and women, and people from almost all races, ethnicities, religions, regions, and socioeconomic groups. The military experience is therefore one of the most inclusive in the American experience, but social scientists have relatively little to say about whether veterans and non-veterans are politically distinctive. Although not everyone serves, and although the proportion of veterans has declined since the end of the draft in 1973, the 2004 American National Election Study (ANES) reported that approximately 13% of the overall citizen population (160 veterans out of 1,200 respondents), and about a quarter of men, identified as veterans. It is difficult to think of another demographic factor that is so widespread among the population but so overlooked by political scientists.

Our article contributes to the small extant literature on this subject by investigating whether Latinos who served in the military were more likely than Latino nonveterans to support Bush or Kerry and how such support is related to views about the war in Iraq. The article will begin by reviewing the political science and sociology literatures on the military and society, particularly research with political implications and research on minority populations and the military. We will then discuss data and methods, followed by the findings of how military service is associated with candidate preference in multiple ways.

Social Science and the Military

The contemporary social science study of the military began during World War II. The Stouffer et al. (Stouffer, Lumsdaine, et al., 1949; Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Star, & Williams, 1949) psychological and sociological studies of a half-million military personnel generated a wide range of substantive and methodological findings. These books examined such issues as the social adjustment and motivation of soldiers, attitudes toward the military

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and the war, attitudes of and about African American soldiers, and the adjustment of veterans to the civilian world. This research, in contrast to more traditional literatures on military history, weaponry, and tactics, was the foundation for a line of research that has grown steadily in complexity and volume over the decades.

A wide variety of topics is covered within the growing military and society literature. For instance, scholars have investigated issues of civil-military relations (Huntington, 1957; Janowitz, 1964), the military as a social and professional organization (Janowitz, 1974; Moskos & Wood, 1988), the racial and class demographics of military service (Fligstein, 1980; Kirby, Harrell, & Sloan, 2000; Segal & Verdugo, 1994), women in the military (Katzenstein, 1998; Katzenstein & Reppy, 1999; Snyder, 1999; Stiehm, 1996), the propensity of young people to enlist (Eighmey, 2006; Mehay, 1990; Segal, Bachman, Freedman-Doan, & O'Malley, 1999; Woodruff, Kelty, & Segal, 2006), military family issues (Albano, 1994; Bourg & Segal, 1999; Westhuis, Fafara, & Ouellette, 2006; Wood & Scarville, 1995), race and casualties (Gifford, 2005), military health care issues (Stanley & Blair, 1992), and the economic costs and benefits that derive from military service (Berney, 1969; Cohen, Segal, & Temme, 1992; Miller & Tollison, 1971; Phillips, Andrisani, Daymont, & Gilroy, 1992; Teachman & Call, 1996; Xie, 1992). Other authors have discussed military issues with a political dimension, although the implications for voting behavior are not always clear. This includes writing on whether military service produces better citizens (Cohen, 1985; Hays, 1967), whether veterans are more likely to hold authoritarian attitudes (Christie, 1952; Roghmann & Sodeur, 1972; Schreiber, 1979), whether military service may foster racial integration (Lawrence & Kane, 1996; Moskos & Butler, 1996), and whether veterans are more likely to participate in politics (Ellison, 1992; Leal, 1999).

In a review of this literature, Ellison (1992) pointed out that “for reasons which are not entirely clear, other important issues, such as the long-term effects of military service on actual participation in democratic political life, have received minimal attention” (p. 361). Although some have investigated how veterans view government and international politics, this only provides indirect evidence for the questions addressed in this article. For instance, Jennings and Markus (1977), in one of the few uses of panel data in the study of veteran opinion, found some—but not very large—differences between veterans and nonveterans. The attitudes they examined included cynicism, opinions about the Vietnam War, political attention, faith in American leaders, and tolerance of others (for similar nonfindings, see also Bachman & Jennings, 1975; Segal & Segal, 1976).¹ At the elite level,

Feaver and Gelpi (2005) found that civilians who were veterans held opinions about the use of military force that were more similar to those of military officers than to those of civilians with no military background.²

In addition to the lack of attention to veteran opinions and behavior, there is even less work on Latino veterans. Although the occasional military sociology article may include Latinos (see Browning, Lopreato, & Poston, 1973; Phillips et al., 1992), the most common comparisons are between Anglos and African Americans. As a result, Lovell and Stiehm (1989) called for more research on how military service affects minorities, particularly Latinos:

The experience of different ethnic groups in military service continues to provide a needed focus for research. It seems probable that Hispanics, for example, will play an increasing role in American politics in coming years; the political attitudes of the sizable contingent of Hispanics in the military developed during such service are worthy of systematic study. (pp. 191-192)

One might ask whether military service—which typically takes place for less than 4 years—should be expected to have consequential effects throughout the life of the veteran. The key factor may be the timing of service in the lifecycle of an individual. Most veterans volunteered or were drafted in their late teens or early 20s, which is a formative period. There is evidence from the psychology literature that fundamental life orientations are formed during the teenage years and the 20s—“set in plaster” according to William James (1890/1981; see also Costa & McCrae, 1994; Helson & Moane, 1987). As Elder, Gimbel, and Ivie (1991, p. 215) similarly noted, the military can serve as a “turning point in life” in a way paralleled by few other institutions.

Veteran Political Preferences

Partisanship

One starting point is whether there is a gap between the military and the public in terms of partisanship, ideology, and issue positions. An important question is whether the self-selection process created by the all-volunteer force in 1973 led to a more politically conservative military and therefore a more conservative veteran population. There are two issues in the study of the civil-military gap: The first is differences at the elite level (between civilian policymakers and military officers), and the second is between the military as a whole and civilian society.

For the former, there is much evidence of a gap (Holsti, 2001). Desch (2001) found that the advent of the volunteer army was a key event, in combination with the movement of the South toward the GOP.³ Betros (2001) noted that the Triangle Institute for Security Studies (TISS) found that 64% of the officer corps identified as Republicans (and 67% as conservatives) but only 8% as Democrats. There are also officer-civilian gaps for a large number of foreign and domestic policy issues (Desch, 2001). A military survey by Dempsey, Shapiro, and Cummings (2006) similarly found a disproportionately Republican officer corps. There are also a number of studies of military cadets that show a partisan gap; Cummings, Dempsey, and Shapiro (2005) found that 75% of West Point cadets prefer the GOP, compared to 20% of civilian college students.

By contrast, there are few indications of political differences between the average enlisted soldier and the average civilian. Dempsey et al. (2006) and Dempsey and Shapiro (2006) found that the military as a whole generally mirrors the partisanship of the public. Segal, Freedman-Doan, Bachman, and O'Malley (2001) similarly noted that "we do not find those who chose the armed forces as their post-high school trajectory to be very different in their political attitudes from their peers who entered the civilian labor force or who continued their education" (pp. 211-212). Segal et al. and Jennings and Markus (1977) also noted that the rank and file, which constitutes approximately 80% of the military and therefore most veterans, is not different from the average American.

It is also not clear if the average veteran is more "hawkish" than the average nonveteran—and therefore more likely to support political candidates who favor an aggressive use of the military. In a review of the literature, Laufer (1989) reported that veterans of World War I were "seriously disillusioned with war" (p. 424) and veterans of World War II had "something less than unbridled enthusiasm for warfare"—although he noted that it was difficult to generalize from the literature. Feaver and Gelpi (2005) found that veterans might be more hawkish than nonveterans, although they noted that such work was based on pooled surveys not specifically designed to measure civil-military gaps.⁴

In sum, although there is some evidence that the contemporary officer corps is disproportionately Republican, this is not the case for enlisted personnel—who constitute by far the largest share of the military (and therefore the veteran population). In addition, civil-military differences are likely to be even fewer for those generations who came of age during the decades of the draft, when military service was largely involuntary and self-selection therefore less of a complicating factor.

Representation

The above issues must also be discussed alongside theories of political representation. The two best-known forms of representation in the literature are substantive representation and descriptive representation (Pitkin, 1967). The former is when the policy opinions of constituents are reflected in the voting behavior of legislators. The latter, which is not necessarily mutually exclusive, is found when representatives and the represented share one or more key descriptive trait.

The theory of descriptive representation leads us to expect veterans—Latino or otherwise—to be more likely to vote for Kerry than for Bush. This is because Kerry had the more extensive military experience of the two, as evidenced by his service on active duty, his combat experience in Vietnam, his numerous decorations, his wounds received in action, his membership in Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and his past and present campaigning as a veteran. Although representation theory might suggest that the first preference for Latino veterans might be a Latino presidential candidate, regardless of veteran status, this cannot be directly tested because no such candidate has participated in presidential elections. But just as farmers may prefer to be represented by farmers, so veterans may well believe that politicians who are veterans will have a deeper understanding of veteran issues and a more genuine care for veterans.

Bianco (1994) noted the importance that voters can place on the personal characteristics of politicians:

Many kinds of behavior that are not usually thought of as rational choices, such as voters' desire to be represented by "someone like them," are the product of a systematic, predictable calculus—moreover, a calculus aimed at securing favorable policy outcomes. (p. ix)

For many veterans, who are familiar with the meaning of military resumes, the contrast between Kerry and Bush would not go unnoticed. Although Kerry supporters emphasized, and Bush supporters critiqued, the service record of Kerry—and Bush often appeared with military personnel and in military settings—the facts of service were clear and would be especially evident to veterans. Regardless of the role of standard political variables, we believe that veterans would be, *ceteris paribus*, more likely to support Kerry.

What substantive interests might be at stake? This involves a consideration of the unique policy concerns of veterans. These might include the wide array

of veteran benefits, ranging from health care to education to mortgage assistance. Given the relatively low socioeconomic status (SES) of Latino communities, such benefits may be especially important to Latino veterans. One can hypothesize that veterans are more likely than civilians to favor an extensive array of health care benefits for veterans, for instance, but nonveterans could be equally willing to support the Veterans Administration hospital system. In addition, one might suggest that veterans will support a more aggressive foreign policy, but veterans may also be more likely to oppose some military actions because they know the cost of war. Although John Kerry was often criticized for his involvement in the anti-Vietnam War movement, how this would affect his Latino veteran support depends on how such individuals assess the Vietnam War—and we know very little about this.

Latinos and the Military

How military service plays a political role for Latinos may also depend on the Latino military experience. If this experience is generally considered to be negative, then it is unlikely that Latino veteran voters would be attracted by a veteran resume. On the other hand, if military service is largely considered a positive for individuals, then Latino veterans may be particularly interested in supporting veteran candidates.

In general, the military experience is largely considered to have been positive for both individual Latinos and the larger Latino community. This is particularly the case for the half-million Latinos who served in uniform during World War II (Allsup, 1982, p. 16). After the war, Latino veterans gained not only governmental veteran benefits, such as the GI Bill, but also a new willingness to struggle against inequality and discrimination in the United States (see Allsup, 1982; Álvarez, 1973; García, 1985; Tirado, 1970). As noted by Morin (1966) in his classic book *Among the Valiant*, “How could we have played such a prominent part as Americans over there and now have to go back living as outsiders as before?” (p. 277).

One example is the founding of the American G.I. Forum (AGIF) in 1948 by Dr. Hector García, an Army doctor during World War II. The AGIF first worked to ensure that Latino veterans received the government benefits they were promised but did not always receive. This active veterans group would later expand its interests to policy areas of concern to the overall Latino community, and many became involved in presidential politics—particularly the 1960 presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy. For the members of this

group, military service led to decades of social and political engagement that benefited the individual and the larger Latino community.

There is also literature on the economic implications of military service.⁵ This research largely suggests that the experience allows veterans to better succeed in civilian life. This could reflect a number of factors, including veteran benefits such as the GI Bill and mortgage assistance and training received during active duty. Browning et al. (1973, p. 74) similarly suggested that the armed forces serves as a "bridging environment" for minorities that promotes their integration into the civilian world.

For the overall Latino community, the military sometimes provides an opportunity to demonstrate patriotism and loyalty to the larger polity. As Jones (1985) pointed out, "In the United States military service has been used as a legitimizing device by groups traditionally excluded from full citizenship" (p. 52; see also Burk, 1995). For instance, some have pointed out Latino eagerness to enlist in the military and the number of medals won and casualties suffered by Latino service members (see Gonzalez, 1947, p. 4; Guzmán, 1976, p. 97).

More generally, there is evidence that the military is a particularly hospitable institution for minorities. Moskos and Butler (1996) noted, "At a time when Afro-Americans were still arguing for their educational rights before the Supreme Court and marching for their social and political rights in the Deep South, the Army had become desegregated with little fanfare" (p. 31). Many see the military as providing unique opportunities for young people with few financial resources. In comparison to civilian society, it has functioned in recent decades as a meritocratic institution where discrimination is minimal and a wide variety of social services are provided (Ricks, 1996).

In light of the above discussion, we expect that Latinos with experience in the military will have positive orientations toward the armed services and therefore more positive evaluations of political candidates who are themselves veterans. It is also possible that Latinos, regardless of military service, will be more likely than Anglos to favor candidates with military experience, but that is a question for future research.

Military Service and the 2004 Election

There is little doubt that questions about military service were central to the 2004 presidential elections, both in the general and primary contests. As the commander of a U.S. Navy swift boat in Vietnam and the recipient of

the Silver Star and three Purple Hearts, many Democrats hoped that Kerry would appeal not only to veterans but also to the general public on the strength of his military service. If true, this might help the Democratic Party to trespass on the traditional Republican “issue ownership” (Petrocik, 1996) of defense and national security issues. The parallels between himself and another Massachusetts senator—one who also commanded a Navy small boat and had the initials of JFK—were thought to be especially attractive during a time of hostilities abroad.

Kerry emphasized his military service in a number of ways during the campaign, most prominently by his opening line at the Democratic National Convention of “I’m John Kerry and I’m reporting for duty.” He had also made references to his veteran status in previous Senate campaigns in Massachusetts. Nevertheless, this record did not go unquestioned during the campaign. His involvement in Vietnam Veterans Against the War was a source of controversy for some, and his military record was questioned by the television ads of the group Swift Boat Veterans for Truth.

Although George W. Bush was himself a veteran, his military record was also the source of controversy. Bush first joined the military in 1968 as a reservist in the Texas Air National Guard. Some saw his membership in a guard unit as an attempt to avoid active-duty service in Vietnam. Others questioned whether he fulfilled his service obligations, particularly when he transferred to an Alabama Air Reserve unit to work on an Alabama Senate campaign. Democrats raised questions about whether family influence gained him admission to the guard in the first place, thus paralleling charges from the 1988 presidential campaign involving Dan Quayle.

With these competing claims about military service, and with many previous presidential campaigns featuring one or more veterans, one might expect that political science knows a great deal about this political-military dynamic. As noted previously, however, scholars know very little about whether voters with military experience are more likely to identify with veteran candidates or whether veterans are particularly likely to support Republican or Democratic candidates. Although a great deal of media commentary assumes veteran support for the GOP, there is surprisingly little empirical evidence for this claim because previous studies of presidential voting have not used veteran variables.⁶

In general, the best predictor of vote choice in a presidential election is partisanship, documented best in *The American Voter* (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960). However, with the decline of political parties and the rise of candidate-centered elections, parties are playing a reduced

institutional role. Research on presidential voting behavior has therefore explored the role of additional factors, such as candidate characteristics, campaign effects, voter outreach, policy preferences, and campaign issues as determinants of vote choice (Holbrook, 1996; Jacobsen, 1987; Tedin & Murray, 1981; Shaw, 2006; Wattenberg, 1994). Although a "party's over" approach overlooks the extent to which partisanship remains important for American voters (Keith et al., 1992), the contemporary scholarship recognizes that multiple factors compete for voter attention in the political arena. Military experience may well be one such factor.

For Latino voting behavior, the literature suggests that both similar and different factors are at work, although few comparative studies have been conducted. In general, a key correlate of Latino voting behavior is partisanship (de la Garza, DeSipio, Garcia, Garcia, & Falcon, 1992). Researchers have found strong partisan ties between Cubans and the Republican Party and between Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans and the Democratic Party (Cain, Kiewiet, & Uhlaner, 1991; de la Garza et al., 1992). Beyond partisanship, studies of vote choice have investigated SES. Although income is generally related to GOP support for Anglos (Nadeau, Niemi, Stanley, & Godbout, 2004), Latino partisanship is not as closely tied to SES (Gimpel & Kaufmann, 2001).⁷ Alvarez and Garcia Bedolla (2003) similarly found that Mexican American and Cuban American partisanship does not dramatically change according to income category. DeSipio (1996) even found that SES is positively associated with Latino orientations toward the Democratic Party. More recently, research has begun to investigate additional predictors of political behavior, including religiosity, ethnic identification, union membership, and generational status, although such studies have tended to focus on voter turnout, not vote choice (e.g., Ramírez, 2002). With regard to the military, no study of Latino politics has taken up the question of how veterans vote.

As noted previously, most research on the military and society is largely concerned not with campaigns and elections but with civil-military relations and a host of issues of greater interest to sociologists than political scientists. As only a small number of surveys have included questions on military experience, it is therefore difficult to know whether the voting of nonveterans differs from those who have served in the military. Although some polls indicated veteran support for Bush (Rasmussen, 2004), few political scientists have investigated the issue. In addition, as both media and political science surveys sometimes fail to contain accurate samples of Latinos (Leal, Plascencia, & Kessler, 2004), it is not clear to what degree we can draw national conclusions from them.

Data and Method

The data set used in this article is the 2004 Election Survey of Latino Registered Voters. The sponsors of the survey were the *Washington Post*, Univision Television, and the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI). The sample of 1,600 Latinos was drawn from lists of registered voters, and the survey was in the field from mid-October 2004 until the November 7th presidential election. Telephone interviews took place in both English and Spanish in 11 states,⁸ and the survey focused on the dynamics of the 2004 election. The Post/Univision/TRPI survey is particularly useful for scholars interested in military service and the 2004 campaign. Not only did it include a series of questions about the war in Iraq, but it asked respondents about their military service—a question not often asked by contemporary pollsters. For instance, the ANES after 1960 did not include a veteran variable for more than four decades.

Three multinomial logit regressions are presented and discussed for Latino vote choice. Multinomial logit is used because the dependent variable, presidential vote choice, includes some undecided voters given that the survey was conducted prior to the election (see Appendix for variable construction).⁹ The values on the dependent variable are -1 for a Bush vote, 0 for undecided, and 1 for a Kerry vote. Thus, positive coefficient values predict a Kerry vote, whereas negative values predict a Bush vote. Postestimation analysis is used to provide a better assessment of the effect that each independent variable has on vote choice (Long & Freese, 2001).

The three regression models represent a stepping-stone process for determining the ultimate effect of military service on vote choice. First, a baseline model is presented that includes many traditional predictors of vote choice, including age, education, income, language, nativity, state, ancestry,¹⁰ religion, gender, and party identification. Party identification is coded as a 5-point scale (1 = Democrat, 2 = lean Democrat, 3 = pure Independent, 4 = lean GOP, 5 = GOP) instead of a 7-point scale because strength of partisanship was not asked as a follow-up question. In addition, several dummy variables were created for the issues that respondents felt were the most important in the election: the war on terror, the war in Iraq, education, and the economy. With both candidates courting the Latino vote in 2004, we also include a measure that asked respondents which candidate had a more sincere Latino outreach effort; this was coded 0 for Bush, 1 for “the same,” and 2 for Kerry.

Finally, the key independent variable in the baseline model is military service. Respondents were asked whether they were a veteran of the U.S.

armed forces or were currently serving on active duty in the U.S. military or national guard. Overall, 12.5% of Latino registered voters are either veterans or on active duty, which we combined to create the military service variable. Of the overall Latino registered voter population, about 5.0% were on active duty, and 7.5% were veterans of the armed forces.

Building on the baseline model, in the second regression we introduce three additional variables that capture attitudes about the Iraq war and the campaign against terrorism:

1. "All in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war with Iraq was worth fighting, or not?"
2. "About the war in Iraq, some people say that Latino soldiers are suffering a higher share of the casualties, while others say that all racial and ethnic groups are suffering equal amounts of casualties. What is your view?"
3. "On another subject, do you think the United States is winning or losing the war on terrorism?"

The first variable is coded so that the response "the war with Iraq was not worth fighting" is the high value, the second variable is coded with "Latino soldiers are suffering a higher share of casualties" as the high value, and the third variable is coded with "losing the war on terrorism" as the high value. We hypothesize that each of these positions will be associated with a vote for John Kerry.

The final regression examines attitudes toward the war for those with and without military experience. Although many in the general public had negative views of the war in Iraq in 2004, it was almost exclusively from an outsider perspective. Here, we interact military service with each of the three variables just described to determine whether or not having military experience exacerbates or moderates a skeptical outlook with regard to candidate preference. Stated simply, are Latinos who are skeptical (about the war) and who have served in the military more likely to vote for Kerry than are skeptical Latinos who have not served?

Findings

Despite some recent commentary to the contrary, Latinos continue to maintain a significant Democratic edge in voter registration and voting. In general, Latinos prefer Democratic over Republican presidential candidates

Table 1
2004 Presidential Election Latino Anticipated Vote Choice

	Kerry (%)	Bush (%)	Undecided (%)
Total Latino	59.4	30.0	10.6
Republican with military service	65.8	26.3	7.9
Republican without military service	58.0	30.2	11.8
Iraq war not worth fighting	79.9	9.8	10.2
Iraq war is worth fighting	21.4	69.3	9.4
Latinos suffer more casualties	79.3	11.6	9.2
Latinos suffer same casualties	50.8	37.0	12.1
Losing war on terror	85.6	6.3	8.2
Winning war on terror	35.7	55.5	8.8
Military × Not worth fighting	90.5	5.2	4.3
Nonmilitary × Not worth fighting	78.5	10.5	11.0
Military × Suffer more casualties	89.3	7.1	3.6
Nonmilitary × Suffer more	77.9	12.2	10.0
Military × Losing war	82.4	5.9	11.8
Nonmilitary × Losing war	86.0	6.3	7.6

Source: Washington Post/Univision/Tomás Rivera Policy Institute October 2004 National Survey of Latino Registered Voters.

by a greater than 2 to 1 margin, and in 2004 they preferred Kerry to Bush by a 3 to 2 margin (Leal, Barreto, Lee, & de la Garza, 2005). Thus, when interpreting candidate preference coefficients, it is important to keep in mind the Democratic leanings of Latino voters as a baseline. Before we review the regression results, we begin by presenting a few simple cross-tabulations to explore the pattern between military service, attitudes about the Iraq war, and 2004 vote preference.

First, Table 1 reports stated vote choice for Latino registered voters in the 11-state Post/Univision/TRPI survey, broken down by several military-related variables. Among all Latino voters nationwide, Kerry held a 2 to 1 edge over Bush. Latinos who had military experience were about 8 points more likely to prefer Kerry than were Latinos who did not. This finding stands in possible contrast to the previously noted media reports about Anglo veterans, who may have been more likely to vote for Bush (although the evidence is not strong).

Next, attitudes about the war had a noticeable effect on vote choice, as many analysts aptly predicted. Latinos who thought the war in Iraq was not worth fighting anticipated voting for Kerry 80% to 10%, whereas those Latinos who thought the war in Iraq was worth fighting anticipated voting

for Bush by 69% to 21%. Similarly, negative attitudes about Latino casualty rates and the war on terrorism led to wide differences in anticipated Latino vote choice. Finally, when we reexamine opinions about the war among Latinos with and without military service, a further gulf emerges. Latinos with military experience who also thought the war in Iraq was not worth fighting preferred Kerry by 12 additional points (90.5 vs. 78.5) over nonserving Latinos who held the same antiwar beliefs. Likewise, among those who felt Latinos suffered a disproportionate share of the casualties in the war, Latinos with military experience again witnessed a 12 point boost in their support for Kerry over nonserving Latinos. Finally, for those Latinos who felt the United States was currently losing the war on terror, no statistical difference was found between respondents according to military experience.

The results presented in Table 1 are suggestive of the relationship between military service and vote choice, but multivariate regression analysis is essential to account for the long list of predictors of candidate preference. Most critically, we need to control for party identification to ensure that presidential candidate support is not being driven by partisanship or preconceived notions about the Iraq war. If the relationship suggested in Table 1 remains after controlling for partisanship and other important variables, we can be much more confident in the key findings. Nevertheless, Table 1 is important because it demonstrates that at the most basic level, a relationship does exist between our key independent variables and anticipated vote choice.

Beginning with Table 2, we present the results for the baseline model. Many of the traditional predictors of vote choice are statistically significant and in the direction we anticipated. Latinos with higher education and income levels were more likely to support Kerry, foreign-born Latinos preferred Kerry, and third-generation voters preferred Bush. Catholics preferred Kerry, whereas born-again Christians preferred Bush. Compared to Latinos in Florida (the omitted state group), those in Texas, New York, and the Southwest (defined as New Mexico and Arizona) were more likely to anticipate voting Democratic. Not surprising, party identification was a strong predictor of vote choice. Similarly, voters sided with the candidate they identified as more sincere in their efforts to reach out to Latino voters.

Among the issue variables, only one was significantly related to voting in a multivariate setting. Latinos who identified the war on terror as their top campaign issue were more likely to prefer Bush, although Latinos who identified the Iraq war as the top issue were not more likely to select Bush. Although these two issues were often described as the same issue by the Bush administration, there was a clear distinction made by Latino voters.

Table 2
Latino Vote Choice 2004 Presidential Election—Baseline Model;
Multinomial Logit Results Predicting Kerry or Edwards Vote

Independent Variable	Coefficient	SE	Min-Max
Age	0.001	(0.004)	0.009
Education	0.115	(0.064)	0.171*
Income	0.094	(0.032)	0.267**
Generation	-0.353	(0.157)	-0.266**
Spanish	0.223	(0.253)	0.021
Female	-0.153	(0.099)	-0.035
Party ID	-0.758	(0.081)	-1.029***
Latino outreach	2.074	(0.190)	1.237***
Catholic	1.078	(0.193)	0.348***
Born again	-0.482	(0.180)	-0.167**
California	0.784	(0.479)	0.199
Texas	1.062	(0.431)	0.275**
New York	1.331	(0.577)	0.245**
Southwest	1.606	(0.645)	0.307**
Other state	0.473	(0.397)	0.147
Issue: Economy	0.166	(0.296)	0.072
Issue: Education	0.123	(0.662)	0.031
Issue: Terror	-0.896	(0.480)	-0.247*
Issue: Iraq	0.530	(0.398)	0.177
Military service	0.703	(0.128)	0.194***
Intercept	-1.218	(0.827)	—
<i>N</i>	1,235		
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	.432		
% pred. correctly	.819		
Prop. reduction error	.538		

* $p < .10$, two-tailed. ** $p < .05$, two-tailed. *** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

Finally, having a military background was a positive and significant predictor of an anticipated vote for Kerry. The minimum to maximum change in predicted probability for military service reported in Table 2 suggests Latinos with military experience were 19.4% more likely to vote for Kerry, holding all other variables at their means.

The next model we present includes additional attitudinal variables regarding the Iraq war and the war against terrorism (Table 3). All three of the new independent variables were statistically significant predictors of candidate preference in 2004, even after controlling for party identification. More specifically, holding a negative viewpoint on the war directly translated

Table 3
Latino Vote Choice 2004 Presidential Election–Iraq War Model;
Multinomial Logit Results Predicting Kerry or Edwards Vote

Independent Variable	Coefficient	SE	Min-Max
Age	-0.001	(0.006)	-0.031
Education	0.151	(0.065)	0.195**
Income	0.065	(0.038)	0.212*
Generation	-0.241	(0.141)	-0.194*
Spanish	0.042	(0.198)	-0.039
Female	-0.253	(0.186)	-0.054
Party ID	-0.680	(0.090)	-0.890***
Latino outreach	1.732	(0.159)	1.009***
Catholic	0.851	(0.181)	0.247***
Born again	-0.636	(0.221)	-0.207**
California	0.466	(0.440)	0.119
Texas	0.892	(0.450)	0.230**
New York	1.244	(0.570)	0.220**
Southwest	1.434	(0.521)	0.266**
Other state	0.269	(0.394)	0.105
Issue: Economy	0.151	(0.344)	0.068
Issue: Education	0.232	(0.642)	0.050
Issue: Terror	-0.464	(0.566)	-0.072
Issue: Iraq	0.480	(0.454)	0.153
Military service	0.817	(0.197)	0.207***
Iraq not worth	0.876	(0.085)	0.530***
Latinos suffer more	0.744	(0.319)	0.203**
Losing the war	0.574	(0.188)	0.284**
Intercept	-2.267	(0.833)	—**
<i>N</i>	1,228		
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	.487		
% pred. correctly	.837		
Prop. reduction error	.583		

* $p < .10$, two-tailed. ** $p < .05$, two-tailed. *** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

into support for Kerry. Latino respondents who thought the war in Iraq was not worth fighting were, on average, 53% more likely to vote for Kerry. Respondents who felt Latinos suffered a higher rate of casualties in the war were 20.3% more likely to pick Kerry, and Latinos who thought the United States was losing the war against terrorism were 28.4% more likely to prefer Kerry—holding all other values constant. These variables can also be interpreted in their inverse, that is, Latino voters with positive outlooks on the war were significantly more likely to prefer Bush.

Table 4
Latino Vote Choice 2004 Presidential Election—Military
Interaction Model; Multinomial Logit Results
Predicting Kerry or Edwards Vote

Independent Variable	Coefficient	SE	Min-Max
Age	-0.002	(0.006)	-0.058
Education	0.139	(0.064)	0.176**
Income	0.071	(0.048)	0.217
Generation	-0.242	(0.137)	-0.193*
Spanish	0.056	(0.193)	-0.033
Female	-0.286	(0.161)	-0.067*
Party ID	-0.679	(0.084)	-0.892***
Latino outreach	1.770	(0.155)	1.034***
Catholic	0.885	(0.173)	0.258***
Born again	-0.652	(0.245)	-0.215**
California	0.467	(0.445)	0.118
Texas	0.898	(0.473)	0.229*
New York	1.286	(0.564)	0.227**
Southwest	1.486	(0.621)	0.280**
Other state	0.327	(0.395)	0.116
Issue: Economy	0.138	(0.344)	0.063
Issue: Education	0.211	(0.656)	0.044
Issue: Terror	-0.368	(0.535)	-0.041
Issue: Iraq	0.463	(0.444)	0.145
Military service	0.199	(0.511)	0.068
Iraq not worth	0.778	(0.116)	0.454***
Military × Not worth	1.039	(0.503)	0.410**
Latinos Suffer more	0.671	(0.375)	0.181*
Military × Suffer more	1.312	(0.554)	0.282**
Losing the war	0.664	(0.185)	0.345***
Military × Lose war	-1.004	(0.254)	-0.672***
Intercept	-2.220	(0.753)	—**
<i>N</i>	1,228		
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	.497		
% pred. correctly	.841		
Prop. reduction error	.594		

p* < .10, two-tailed. *p* < .05, two-tailed. ****p* < .001, two-tailed.

Finally, in Table 4, we interacted military service with war-related attitudinal variables to determine if military experience amplifies the effect of anti- or prowar sentiments. Consistent with the descriptive results presented

in Table 1, the multinomial logit analysis reveals that for 2 of the 3 interaction variables, military service makes antiwar voters even more likely to oppose Bush and favor Kerry in 2004. Having military experience and also believing that the war in Iraq was not worth fighting was a positive and significant predictor of voting for Kerry. Similarly, those with military experience who felt Latinos suffered a disproportionate share of war casualties were statistically more likely to vote for Kerry. By contrast, Latinos with military experience who thought the U.S. was losing the war against terrorism were somewhat less likely to prefer Kerry.

These results should be viewed in comparison to those Latinos without military experience who held the same antiwar positions. Although negative attitudes about the war led Latinos to support Kerry (as seen in Table 3), if the respondents also have military experience, they are even more likely to support Kerry. This is best illustrated by charting the predicted probabilities of a Kerry vote using *Spout* commands for Stata generated by Long and Freese (2001).

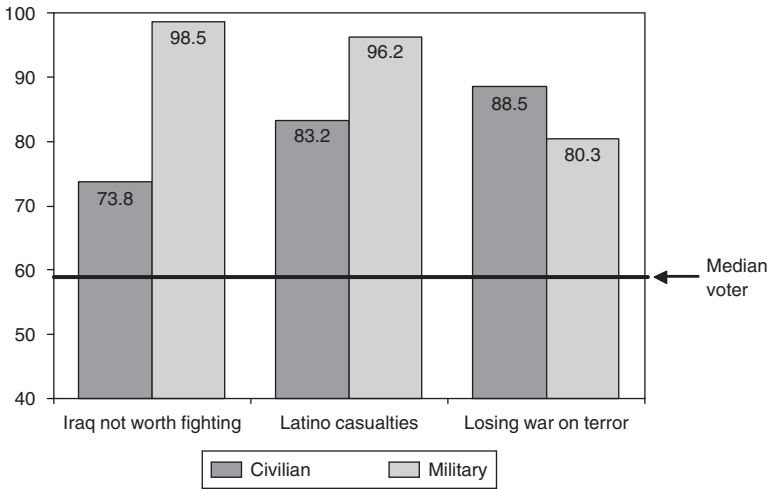
The predicted probabilities reported in Figure 1 are for the interaction model discussed above. Specifically, we plot the likelihood that a respondent will anticipate voting for Kerry given a negative viewpoint on the war. For each of the three war-related variables, we set the value of the military service variable and the military interaction variable to either 1 or 0, and set all other variables at their median value, to generate the two probabilities for military and civilian Latino voters.

First, for Latinos who thought the Iraq war was not worth fighting, having military experience translated into a 98% likelihood the respondent would vote for Kerry, compared to 73% for those without military service who opposed the war. Although both of these probabilities are considerably above the median Latino voter support for Kerry (59%), the negative view of the war combined with military service provides a clear boost for the Democrat.

Likewise, when we look only at those respondents who felt Latinos suffered more casualties in the war, military experience resulted in a net 13 percentage point boost for Kerry, a predicted vote probability of 96% (compared to 83% for those without military experience). Finally, for those voters who thought the United States was losing the war on terror, Latinos without military experience were more likely to vote for Kerry, although both groups were well above the median vote line (80% for Latino who served and 88% for those who did not).

We can only speculate as to why the "losing the war" interaction variable does not perform like the first two war variables, but there is no clear explanation. Perhaps the war on terrorism is viewed as a more legitimate

Figure 1
Probability of Kerry Vote by Military Service, 2004



Note: Predicted probabilities were generated using prchange, holding all other values at their median.

and long-term conflict, whereas the war in Iraq is seen as misconceived and mismanaged. If this is the case, military Latinos may be more forgiving to the administration over mishaps in the broader war on terror in comparison to civilians. However, even for this variable, it is important to keep in mind that 80% of Latinos with military experience anticipated voting for Kerry, a sizable majority.

Discussion

In the 2004 presidential election, military issues received a great deal of attention. Not only was the war in Iraq a key issue in the campaign, but the service records of both candidates were under scrutiny and the “veteran vote” was often discussed by the media. However, none of these phenomena was new to American politics. A number of 20th-century presidents and

presidential candidates have served in the military, as have tens of millions of voters. One might assume that the political science literature knows a great deal about the role of military service in electoral campaigns, but that is not the case. Despite a vast literature on campaigns and elections, few have systematically investigated how military service relates to political engagement. At a time when so many variables have been studied by the political mobilization and vote choice literatures, it is surprising to observe the existence of an unexplored and little-noted factor shared by so many Americans.

Similarly, the growing military and society literature has investigated a large number of topics, ranging from civil-military relations to minority representation to military family issues. As Ellison (1992) noted, however, "For reasons which are not entirely clear, other important issues, such as the long-term effects of military service on actual participation in democratic political life, have received minimal attention" (p. 361).

This article therefore investigates the effect of military service on the Latino vote for Bush and Kerry. In doing so, it is one of only a very small number of studies—of any racial or ethnic group—to ask whether those who have served in the military have different political preferences than those who have not served. In doing so, it brings together elements from the political science and military sociology literatures to answer questions of interest to both. The article also helps to better understand Latino political participation while highlighting a topic of general interest to scholars of presidential elections and political behavior. Given the growing presence of Latinos in the U.S. military, reflecting both Latino demographic growth and recruitment efforts, it is increasingly important for social scientists to understand both the Latino experience in the armed forces and the consequences of service for subsequent political life.

The data show that military service played an important role in the anticipated Latino vote for Kerry and Bush. Latinos with military experience were significantly more likely to support the Democrat, John Kerry, than were Latinos who had not served.

In addition to candidate military service playing a significant role in the campaign, military-related issues were also at the forefront in 2004. Latinos who were opposed to the Iraq war, who were opposed to the war on terrorism, and who believed Latinos were suffering disproportionate casualty rates were much more likely to anticipate voting for Kerry, whereas those Latinos who had more positive assessments of the war were strong Bush supporters. Although these were expected findings, we could not predict with certainty

that this relationship would hold after controlling for partisanship. However, our multinomial logit analysis demonstrated that both party identification and opinions about the war were statistically significant predictors of vote choice among Latinos.

Finally, and perhaps most intriguingly, we found a significant result when military service was interacted with views on the war. Having served in the military seems to have energized the politics of antiwar Latinos, perhaps because of their first-hand knowledge of war. Although Latino voters who thought the war in Iraq was not worth fighting were Kerry supporters in general, those who also had military experience were practically undivided backers of Kerry. Our results indicate that such Latinos anticipated voting 98% for Kerry, in comparison to the 73% support for Kerry expressed by the general antiwar Latino population. The same relationship held for the interactive effect of military service and views on Latino casualty rates. Those who felt Latinos suffered too high a proportion of military deaths in Iraq and themselves had a military background were significantly more likely to state a vote preference for Kerry.

What explains this hyper-politicization of Latinos with military service in 2004? A simple answer may be the intersection of occupation and occupation-related issues in the headlines of the campaign. It makes sense that such Latinos put more stock in military-related issues for two reasons. First, they have a better understanding of the details and technical aspects of war-related issues because of their training and expertise in the armed forces. Second, they can relate to the issues personally through their past experiences, which may elevate the salience of the issue. A similar parallel may be drawn to Latino teachers who become active in an election where education is a hot topic or to Latino nurses who are interested in health care reform. Regardless of which side of the debate Latinos with military experience were on, their personal experience in the military provided an added incentive to vote for the candidate of their choice; such antiwar Latinos strongly supported Kerry, and such prowar Latinos strongly supported Bush. In both cases, Latinos who had served were more supportive of their respective candidates than the average Latino who was pro- or antiwar.

As more Latinos enter the armed forces and become veterans of the U.S. military, this topic will no doubt grow in importance. Furthermore, many military analysts have predicted that a significant number of U.S. troops will remain deployed in Iraq through the end of the decade. Thus, the 2008 presidential election is likely to involve similar war-related issues and therefore increase the salience of military service, providing an important opportunity for further research into this topic.

Appendix

Variable Construction

Variable	Values	Description	<i>M</i>
Presidential vote	-1, 0, 1	-1 = Bush, 0 = undecided, 1 = Kerry	0.292
Age	0-93	Continuous	48.5
Education ^a	1-6	1 = grade school or less, 6 = postgraduate degree	3.23
Income ^b	1-8	1 = \$15,000 or less, 8 = \$100,000 or more	3.47
Generation	1-3	1 = foreign born, 2 = U.S.-born second generation, 3 = U.S.-born third generation	1.69
Spanish	0, 1	1 = completed interview in Spanish	0.682
California	0, 1	1 = resides in California	0.288
Texas	0, 1	1 = resides in Texas	0.286
New York	0, 1	1 = resides in New York	0.090
Southwest	0, 1	1 = resides in Arizona or New Mexico	0.112
Other state	0, 1	1 = resides in other state (but not Florida)	0.104
Party ID ^c	1-5	1 = solid Democrat, 5 = solid Republican	2.30
Female	0, 1	1 = Female	0.572
Catholic	0, 1	1 = Catholic	0.777
Born again	0, 1	1 = self-identified born-again Christian	0.284
Latino outreach	0-2	0 = Bush, 1 = same, 2 = Kerry (better Latino outreach)	1.11
Issue: Economy	0, 1	1 = economy is top issue	0.265
Issue: Education	0, 1	1 = education is top issue	0.150
Issue: Terror	0, 1	1 = war on terror is top issue	0.201
Issue: Iraq	0, 1	1 = Iraq war is top issue	0.150
Military	0, 1	1 = respondent is military	0.118
Iraq not worth	0-2	0 = Iraq worth fighting, 1 = don't know, 2 = not worth fighting	1.3
Military × Not worth	0-2	Interaction between military service and Iraq not worth	0.152
Latinos suffer more	0, 1	0 = all groups same, 1 = Latinos suffer more war deaths	0.285
Military × Suffer more	0, 1	Interaction between Military service and Latinos suffer more	0.035
Losing the war	0-2	0 = winning war on terror, 1 = draw, 2 = losing war on terror	0.937
Military × Lose war	0-2	Interaction between military service and losing the war	0.116

a. Education: The full range on this variable is 1 = grade school or less, 2 = some high school, 3 = high school graduate, 4 = some college, 5 = college graduate, 6 = postgraduate degree.

b. Income: The full range on this variable is 1 = \$15,000 or less, 2 = \$15,000–24,999, 3 = \$25,000–34,999, 4 = \$35,000–49,999, 5 = \$50,000–64,999, 6 = \$65,000–79,999, 7 = \$80,000–99,999, 8 = \$100,000 or more.

c. Party ID: The full range on this variable is 1 = solid Democrat, 2 = lean Democrat, 3 = Independent, 4 = lean Republican, 5 = solid Republican.

Notes

1. On the other hand, variables related to military service (e.g., duration and timing of service) helped to explain some views, although even the effects of these variables were not large.

2. Such views were more complex than might be thought, however. Officers and civilian elites with military experience were less willing to use the military in an interventionist manner and reserve military action to situations where national security interests were clearly at stake. Also, when officers and elite civilian veterans found military intervention necessary, they were more likely than elite nonveteran civilians to support less-restricted military action, as the latter were more interested in using limited options. Furthermore, Gelpi and Feaver (2002) found that such attitudes had meaningful political consequences. The higher the proportion of veterans among American policymakers, the less likely the use of military force—but the greater the level of force used once the decision was made to engage the military.

3. As Southerners are disproportionately represented in the armed forces.

4. A slightly different possibility is that the military is a largely conservative and Republican institution that promotes such values among its members. For instance, Dempsey, Shapiro, and Cummings (2006) found that the GOP identification by officers is linearly related to rank; the higher ranking the officer, the more likely he or she is to identify as a Republican. Possible explanations include a military that selects conservative officers or a military environment that is particularly amenable to conservative officers, who are then more likely to seek a military career (a generational effects explanation seems less likely; see Holsti, 2001). In addition, a study of West Point cadets by Cummings, Dempsey, and Shapiro (2005) found that cadets who identified as Democrats were less optimistic about their military career prospects, and they also noted that the overwhelming identification of cadets with the GOP might be caused in part by institutional and social pressures; half of respondents felt pressure to identify with the GOP. There is currently little evidence for whether a similar dynamic occurs in the enlisted ranks, however. Additional evidence for a civil–military partisan gap is periodic political conflict between the military and Democratic presidents (Feaver & Kohn, 2001).

5. See Browning, Lopreato, and Poston (1973), Lopreato and Poston (1977), Martindale and Poston (1979), Miller and Tollison (1971), Phillips, Andrisani, Daymont, and Gilroy (1992), Teachman and Call (1996), and Xie (1992). On the other hand, some literature suggests that such economic and educational benefits from service may not apply to those who served during the Vietnam War (Cohen, Segal, & Temme, 1992; De Tray, 1982; Little & Fredland, 1979; Villemez & Kasarda, 1976).

6. For a more detailed discussion of some of the dynamics reviewed in this section, see Teigen (2005).

7. They found that although Democratic affiliation declines somewhat as income increases, Latinos in even the highest category (\$100,000 and more) are still 10 percentage points more likely to be Democrats. They concluded that Latino incomes would have to average more than \$200,000 for this partisan deficit to be eliminated.

8. Latino registered voters were interviewed in California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Virginia.

9. The models were also replicated using a dichotomous dependent variable and logit regression with undecided voters excluded. Both sets of regressions return nearly identical results, but because of sample size considerations, multinomial logit results are presented.

10. In the regression results presented here, we clustered the multinomial logits by country of ancestry because of multicollinearity between country of ancestry and state of residence (for Florida and Cuban American ancestry). In separate models, we included control variables for just ancestry or just state, and the results for our military- or war-related variables were all consistent.

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Matt A. Barreto is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Washington and faculty researcher of the Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity and Race (WISER). His research examines the political participation of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States, generally focusing on Latino and immigrant political behavior.

David L. Leal is an associate professor of government at the University of Texas at Austin and a faculty associate of the UT Center for Mexican-American Studies. His research primarily involves Latino politics—particularly Latino public opinion and political behavior—and public policy.