THE PRICE OF TRANSGENDER MILITARY SERVICE: DO PUBLIC OPINIONS ON GOVERNMENT DEFENSE SPENDING PREDICT SUPPORT FOR ALLOWING TRANSGENDER PEOPLE TO SERVE?

by
Scott Sterling

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Abstract

While a significant body of research exists regarding public attitudes toward the transgender community, little has been conducted specifically concerning views on transgender military service. Existing scholarship suggests that, much as with the gay and lesbian community, public attitudes toward transgender people are tied to one’s age, sex, political identity, and guiding social values. This paper examines whether public support for transgender military service is tempered by concerns regarding the potential military budget impacts alleged by some in politics, or simply driven by the same factors that predict attitudes toward the transgender community more generally. To that end, this study compares Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models of both public feelings toward the transgender community as a whole and public support for transgender military service. The results provide insufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that those who feel the government should increase military spending will be less likely to support transgender military service. Rather, predictors of public support for transgender military service parallel those for feelings toward transgender people more broadly, without regard for purported military budget impacts.
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1 - Introduction

Although the topic of racial inequality has dominated headlines during the past few years, the Trump Administration also enacted policies that affected millions in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community. One such policy step was the administration’s actions toward transgender people serving in the United States (U.S.) Armed Forces.

President Obama repealed the policy commonly referred to as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) in 2011, thereby allowing openly gay men, lesbians, and bisexual men and women to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces; however, this repeal was not extended to transgender people. In 2016, President Obama extended the repeal to transgender service; but in 2017, President Trump announced that he would reinstate the transgender military ban, stating that “our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail”.

Other politicians echoed these concerns. In June 2017, Representative Vicky Haltzer of Missouri proposed (and subsequently withdrew) an amendment to the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would have banned transgender people from serving, stating that President Obama’s repeal of the transgender ban was, “costly in

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dollars and short on common sense.” Representative Louie Gohmert of Texas voted against the 2018 NDAA because Representative Haltzer’s amendment was not included. Gohmert’s office released a statement in which he alleged exorbitant costs of transition surgeries and subsequent after-care which would “prevent others, willing and able, from fighting in their stead to protect this nation.”

With his statement, President Trump framed the issue of transgender military service, in part, as a fiscal one. However, this position disregarded a RAND Corporation National Defense Research Institute study, commissioned by the Department of Defense (DoD), which determined the cost of transgender military service would be minimal, stating, “extending transition–related health care coverage to transgender personnel indicated that active-component health care costs would increase by between $2.4 million and $8.4 million annually, representing a 0.04- to 0.13-percent increase in active-component health care expenditures.”

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) provides the following explanation of the term “transgender”:

The term “transgender” refers to a person whose sex assigned at birth (i.e. the sex assigned by a physician at birth, usually based on external genitalia) does not match their gender identity (i.e., one’s psychological sense of their gender). Some people who are transgender will experience “gender dysphoria,” which refers to psychological distress that results from an incongruence between one’s

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sex assigned at birth and one’s gender identity. Though gender dysphoria often begins in childhood, some people may not experience it until after puberty or much later. People who are transgender may pursue multiple domains of gender affirmation, including social affirmation (e.g., changing one’s name and pronouns), legal affirmation (e.g., changing gender markers on one’s government-issued documents), medical affirmation (e.g., pubertal suppression or gender-affirming hormones), and/or surgical affirmation (e.g., vaginoplasty, facial feminization surgery, breast augmentation, masculine chest reconstruction, etc.). Of note, not all people who are transgender will desire all domains of gender affirmation, as these are highly personal and individual decisions.\(^5\)

President Trump’s justification of the transgender ban likely resonated with a significant portion of the American population. While the APA clearly states that not all transgender people will elect all forms of gender affirmation, it is likely that much of the public does not fully understand the full array of affirmation options and their associated costs.  

The military transgender ban went back into effect in 2019; however, President Biden subsequently repealed the ban in January 2021, on his fifth day in office. President Biden’s ban repeal was the third of three policy reversals regarding transgender military service in less than five years. These policy reversals have impacted an estimated 14,700 transgender personnel serving on active and reserve duty.\(^6\) Considering this record of policy reversals, it is not unreasonable to expect additional reversals in the future depending upon which party gains/retains power in upcoming elections.

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Numerous studies have examined public attitudes toward the transgender as a whole, but few empirical studies have been conducted on public support for transgender military service. Specifically, public concerns regarding alleged impacts of transgender service on military budgets have not yet been examined as a predictor of support for transgender military service. Additionally, in light of the multiple policy reversals over the past several years and the rapid evolution of public attitudes toward the LGBT community since DADT was originally enacted in 1993, a re-examination of predictors of support for transgender military service using more recent data is appropriate.

This study considers whether public support for transgender military service is tempered by concerns regarding the potential military budget impacts alleged by some in politics, or simply driven by the same factors that predict attitudes toward the transgender community more generally. To this end, OLS regression is used to examine the potential relationship between public views regarding government defense spending and views toward transgender military service. This regression model is then compared to an OLS model of public feelings toward the transgender community as a whole.

2 – Literature Review

2.1 - Public Opinion Toward the Transgender Community

While a large body of research exists regarding public attitudes toward the Lesbian and Gay (LG) community, much less research has been dedicated to attitudes toward transgender people and policies designed to advance transgender equality. Although the legality of a ban on transgender military service has been exhaustively considered, research regarding public attitudes toward transgender military service is
particularly sparse. As such, parallels may be drawn between public support for LG military service and that of transgender people; however, differences do exist.

Decades of research have shown that knowing and interacting with someone who is lesbian or gay, referred to as interpersonal contact, positively correlates with public attitudes regarding LG rights. Bramlett wrote that, despite religious teachings against homosexuality, people of most religious traditions are more likely to support same-sex marriage if they have a close relationship with a gay individual.\textsuperscript{7} Although Devine determined that the positive effects of contact with racial minorities is conditionalized by criteria such as interaction that produces positive outcomes, contact in various settings, and nature of interaction\textsuperscript{8}, Overby and Barth concluded that the positive effects of contact with homosexuals do not appear conditionalized by these criteria.\textsuperscript{9}

That said, research on the impact of interpersonal contact with transgender people has produced mixed results. Lewis et al found that interpersonal contact does have a significant impact on feelings toward members of both the LG community and the transgender community; however, the positive effects of interpersonal contact do not extend to support for transgender discrimination protections\textsuperscript{10}, while Jones et al found insufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that people who know a transgender

person will hold more positive views of transgender people and transgender rights.\textsuperscript{11} Flores determined that the direct effect of transgender contact is insignificant; however, interpersonal contact with someone who is lesbian or gay positively correlates with transgender rights support, a phenomenon he refers to as “secondary transfer of LG contact”.\textsuperscript{12} Considering the estimated transgender population of the United States is just 0.6\%,\textsuperscript{13} the secondary transfer effect is important in understanding attitudes towards transgender people, as significantly more people are likely to know or have come into contact with a lesbian or gay person than with a transgender person.

Effect similarities have been found between other predictors of public attitudes toward the LG community and the transgender community. Much research has been conducted regarding the effects of disgust sensitivity on attitudes toward the LG community. Inbar et al posited that an increase in disgust sensitivity is associated with intuitive disapproval of gay people\textsuperscript{14}, while Miller et al determined that disgust sensitivity and authoritarianism both positively predict opposition to transgender rights, and that they moderate each other’s effects such that the greatest opposition is among those jointly scoring higher on both predictors.\textsuperscript{15} The effect of partisanship appears

greater on support for transgender rights than on LG rights, with Republicans tending to hold relatively more negative attitudes toward transgender people and rights; however, opposition to transgender rights may not be as powerfully connected to religious beliefs as was the case with gay rights.\textsuperscript{16} Generally, younger people, those with higher levels of education, those who identify racially as White, and those with liberal ideology have been found to present more positive attitudes toward transgender people.\textsuperscript{17, 18, 19}

\section*{2.2 - Support for Transgender Military Service}

As stated earlier, little empirical research has been conducted specifically regarding public support for transgender military service in the U.S. Armed Forces. Lewis et al determined that, “respondents with a stake in protecting the status quo in the military and society—men, veterans, religious conservatives, and traditionalists—were all more likely to oppose this transgender-inclusive policy.”\textsuperscript{20} With approximately 66\% of active duty personnel supporting transgender military service, the highest levels of support are from LGB and female service members, (81\% and 75\% respectively) while heterosexual and male service members register the lowest support of transgender service (56\% and 62\% respectively).\textsuperscript{21} Racially, Black and Latino service members are the most supportive (69\% and 75\% respectively), while only 64\% percent of White service

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item Lewis, Daniel C. et al, 2017.
\item Jones, Philip E., et al, 2018
\item Miller, Patrick R. et al, 2017
\end{thebibliography}
members support transgender service\textsuperscript{22}; however, this directly contradicts the assertion that White people are more likely than racial minority groups to espouse positive attitudes transgender people in general.\textsuperscript{23} Ender et al concluded that military academy cadets present more negative attitudes toward transgender military service than their Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) and civilian undergraduate counterparts, although this is likely due to underlying social characteristics such as religious affiliation, political ideology, and sex\textsuperscript{24}; however, their analysis only included cadets from a single military academy, ROTC cadets at a single campus, and civilian college students at a single campus. Considering support varies greatly between the services, ranging from approximately 10\% for the Marine Corps up to 41\% for the Army\textsuperscript{25}, it is likely that significantly different results would have been found among cadets from the other service academies and students on other campuses.

The previously mentioned studies examined the effects of traditional predictors of public support for questions of individual equality and civil rights; however, the impact of public concerns regarding military spending levels on support for transgender military service has yet to be examined. This study builds on the existing literature by attempting to understand how these public concerns affect support for transgender service, as messaging from politicians and the media likely inform public opinion, while most voters are not well-versed in the nuances of DoD fiscal practices and expenditures. Although

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Lewis, Daniel C., et al, 2021.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Dunlap, Shannon L., et al, 2021.
\end{itemize}
the budgetary burden of allowing transgender service has been shown to be minimal, statements made by agenda-driven politicians regarding cost to operational readiness may have an as-yet unknown hand in shaping individual attitudes.

3 - Data and Methods

3.1 - Data

A number of variables, including demographics, political affiliation and ideology, religiosity, egalitarianism, authoritarianism, views regarding moral values, views on defense spending, and interpersonal contact are considered in this study. The primary hypothesis is that people who advocate for higher defense spending will be less supportive of transgender people serving in the military. The study uses data from the 2020 ANES Time Series Study. The ANES is a series of national election studies conducted every four years in conjunction with the presidential election cycle as a collaboration between Stanford University and the University of Michigan, and is funded by the National Science Foundation. The 2020 ANES includes two survey periods – one directly preceding the 2020 national election, and one immediately following the election.

The 2020 ANES dataset includes a total sample size of 8,280 respondents. Of these, 2,839 are carried forward from the 2016 ANES, meaning that of the 3,648 respondents who completed the 2016 post-election survey, 2,839 participated in the 2020 ANES as well. The remaining 5,441 respondents to the 2020 ANES constitute a fresh cross-sectional sample. Of the 8,280 total respondents who completed either the pre- or post- 2020 ANES surveys, 6,253 eligible respondents completed both surveys and
answered the question regarding support for transgender military service. These 6,253 respondents constitute the sample used for this study.

Due to the COVID pandemic, none of the 2020 ANES surveys were conducted in-person; rather, surveys were administered online (self-administered), online via live-video interview, and via telephone. The target population for the fresh cross-sectional sample is the 231 million adult American citizens from the 50 U.S. states and District of Columbia, using lists of residential addresses where mail is delivered as a sampling frame. Survey questions/variables include binary (e.g., “favor/oppose”), Likert scale, feeling thermometer, and open-ended responses. The final release 2020 ANES dataset includes a number of post-processed summary variables which summarize responses to multiple questions on a given topic. Weighting variables are included to ensure analysis accurately represents the target population.

3.2 – Methods of Analysis

This study uses two OLS multiple regression models – one to examine public support specifically for transgender military service, and the other to examine public attitudes toward transgender people in general. The study uses as the dependent variable a summary variable from the 2020 ANES survey which gauges support for transgender military service on a 7-point scale ranging from “favor a great deal” to “oppose a great deal”. This variable is a summary of two ANES questions. The first asks whether respondents favor or oppose allowing transgender people to serve in the military, with three available responses (favor/oppose/neither favor nor oppose). The second question

then asks whether the respondent favors/opposes a great deal, a moderate amount, or a little. For comparison, the second model examines another variable from the 2020 ANES survey which gauges public feelings toward transgender people in general using a 0-to-100 feeling thermometer.

The models in this study include independent variables from the 2020 ANES dataset intended to capture respondent demographics, political affiliation and ideology, religiosity, egalitarianism, authoritarianism, moral traditionalism, views regarding defense spending levels, and interpersonal contact. Demographic variables include respondent age, race, sex, and 4-year degree attainment. Political affiliation is captured by party of registration, and political ideology is determined using a liberal-conservative self-placement variable on a 7-point scale. Religiosity is measured with a question which asks how often the respondent attends church service with five possible responses ranging from “never” to “every week”.

Three variables have been recoded into additive indexes using multiple questions from the 2020 ANES survey. Egalitarianism is captured using four variables that elicit respondents’ views on equal opportunity and fairness. These variables are recoded into an additive index with higher scores indicating higher respondent regard for equality (higher egalitarianism). Similarly, authoritarianism is measured in the ANES survey by four questions/variables that explore respondents’ views on child traits – i.e., independence vs. respect, curiosity vs. good manners, obedience vs. self-reliance, and considerate vs. well-behaved. These four variables are recoded to create an additive index in which a higher total score indicates a higher level of respondent authoritarianism. Moral traditionalism is determined with two questions/variables
regarding traditional family values and adjusting moral behavior views to keep up with a changing world. These two variables are recoded to create an additive index in which a higher total score indicates a higher tendency to espouse traditional moral values.

Under the assumption that those respondents who would advocate for increased defense spending would also harbor greater concerns regarding the impacts of transgender service on military budgets, this study operationalizes public attitudes regarding the fiscal impacts of transgender military service using a 7-point self-placement question/variable which captures respondent views of defense spending levels (“greatly decrease” to “greatly increase”). Interpersonal contact is assessed with a single 2020 ANES question which asks whether the respondent has a friend, family member, or coworker who is transgender.

Descriptive statistics are provided for all independent variables in Appendix A.

4 - Results

Distributions of public attitudes toward transgender people in general and transgender military service specifically are presented in Figures 1 and 2. To facilitate visual comparison, the feeling thermometer data in Figure 1 were divided into seven levels. As expected, public support for transgender military service follows a similar pattern to public attitudes regarding the wider transgender community. In both cases, a little less than 20 percent of respondents were unsupportive, approximately one third were neutral, and a little less than half indicated some level of support for transgender people in general and for transgender military service specifically. The more gradual increase toward “Warm” in Figure 1 is likely due to the much larger set of response
options provided in the survey via feeling thermometer versus the seven categorical response options allowed for the transgender military service question shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Feelings Toward Transgender People

This study hypothesizes that American adults who believe the government should increase defense spending will be more likely to oppose military transgender service.

The rationale behind this hypothesis is that the anticipated costs of health care for transgender troops (e.g., hormone therapy, reassignment surgery, psychological
counseling, etc.) have often been cited as justification for support for a ban on transgender military service. Of the 5,450 respondents who expressed an opinion, slightly over half (55 percent) felt the US government should keep the same level or decrease spending, with the rest indicating that defense spending levels should be increased by some level.

Cross tabulation of support for transgender military service by views on defense spending indicates a statistically significant relationship: approximately 28 percent of respondents who indicated the US government should spend more on defense opposed military transgender service, while just under 10 percent of those who stated the government should spend the same amount or less opposed transgender people serving in the military. However, although public views on defense spending and support for transgender military service are correlated, this relationship actually appears to be driven by other factors.

Table 3 depicts the results from Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions of both public attitudes toward transgender people in general, and support for transgender military service. Just as support for transgender military service largely follows public attitudes about transgender people in general, so do the predictors of support for transgender military service tend to follow those of attitudes toward the greater transgender community. In both cases, those who were younger, female, less conservative in ideology and political views, and/or who expressed views tending toward higher levels of egalitarianism and lower levels of moral traditionalism and authoritarianism were more likely to have positive views of transgender people and to support transgender military service. Additionally, both being Black and not having
transgender friends or family members were associated with cooler views toward transgender people and less support for transgender military service.

Table 1. OLS Models for Public Transgender Attitudes and Support for Transgender Military Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1 Public Transgender Attitudes (0 – 100 Feeling Thermometer) Estimate (SE)</th>
<th>Model 2 Transgender Military Service (1-7 Scale: Oppose → Favor) Estimate (SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (Liberal → Conservative)</td>
<td>-3.145*** (.532)</td>
<td>-.292*** (.042)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense Spending Views</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.030 (.025)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran Status (currently serving or served)</td>
<td>2.788* (1.315)</td>
<td>.005 (.272)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense Spending Views x Veteran Status</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-.066 (.061)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (log)</td>
<td>-4.615** (1.375)</td>
<td>-.377** (.104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree Attainment (4 year or higher)</td>
<td>1.115 (.756)</td>
<td>.082 (.055)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (Black, non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>-7.884** (2.092)</td>
<td>-.399* (.149)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (Hispanic)</td>
<td>1.022 (1.545)</td>
<td>.095 (.161)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (Asian/native Hawaiian)</td>
<td>-.302 (1.798)</td>
<td>-.061 (.169)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (Native American/Alaskan Native)</td>
<td>3.939 (3.778)</td>
<td>-.214 (.241)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (Multiple, non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>4.189† (2.217)</td>
<td>.011 (.132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (female)</td>
<td>6.763*** (.911)</td>
<td>.347*** (.060)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarianism</td>
<td>1.158*** (.227)</td>
<td>.083*** (.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Traditionalism</td>
<td>-1.924*** (.353)</td>
<td>-.147*** (.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarianism</td>
<td>-.998* (.457)</td>
<td>-.103*** (.028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>1.176** (.401)</td>
<td>.044 (.028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Contact (no contact)</td>
<td>7.413*** (1.420)</td>
<td>.318** (.088)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>-.922 (.882)</td>
<td>-.006 (.060)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Attention</td>
<td>.948 (.887)</td>
<td>.052 (.049)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered to Vote</td>
<td>1.946 (2.148)</td>
<td>.398* (.163)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party (D → R, 7-point scale)</td>
<td>-.935** (.323)</td>
<td>-.063* (.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>85.112*** (6.880)</td>
<td>7.055*** (.523)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R^2                                                 | .485                                                                          | .588                                                                          |
N                                                   | 4921                                                                          | 4500                                                                          |

Source: ANES 2020 Time Series Study
Note: Models incorporate ANES full sample post-election weights.
† p < .1, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Women indicated almost 6.8 degrees higher than men on the feeling thermometer and supported transgender military service by over 0.3 points more than their male
counterparts. Having personal contact with a transgender person was associated with a 7.4-degree increase in support for transgender people, and approximately a 0.3-point increase in support for transgender military service. One statistically significant effect was shared by both models due to race – Black respondents were 7.9 points cooler toward transgender people on average than their White counterparts, and indicated 0.4 points less support for transgender military service.

Self-described extremely liberal respondents indicated almost 19 points warmer toward transgender people than extremely conservative respondents, and indicated approximately 1.8 points more support for transgender people in the military. Party affiliation had a similar but lesser effect - those who considered themselves strong Democrats indicated approximately 5.7 degrees higher than strong Republicans on the feeling thermometer, with approximately 0.4 points more support for transgender military service. Egalitarianism and moral traditionalism had especially strong effects on both attitudes towards transgender people and support for their service in the Armed Forces. Those respondents with the highest level of moral traditionalism averaged 15.6 degrees cooler toward transgender people than those at the lowest level, and indicated 1.2 points lower support for transgender military service. Similarly, the least egalitarian-minded respondents were 18.5 points cooler toward transgender people and 1.3 points less supportive of transgender people in the military than those with the most egalitarian views. The authoritarian effect was more subtle, as those with the most authoritarian beliefs registered 4.0 degree cooler and 0.4-points less supportive than those with the least and authoritarian views.
However, there were some differences between the two models. Respondents who indicated that religion was extremely important in their lives were 4.7 degrees cooler toward transgender people in general than those who indicated that religion was not at all important; however, there was no statistically significant religiosity effect on support for transgender military service. Conversely, those who were registered to vote indicated almost 0.4 points more support for transgender military service than respondents who were not registered; however, this result did not translate to a statistically significant effect on their overall views on transgender people.

Surprisingly, veterans, defined in this study as both currently serving and previously serving members, were warmer than non-veterans toward the transgender community by 2.8 points; however, this did not make veterans more supportive of transgender military service than their non-veteran counterparts. This lack of a statistically significant veteran status effect on support for transgender military service appears to directly contradict Lewis et al, who found veterans to be somewhat less supportive than non-veterans. 27 However, that survey was administered in 2015, while transgender people were still subject to the original ban from service. By 2020, when the ANES survey used for this study was administered, transgender people had been allowed to serve openly and subsequently banned again. This political roller coaster may have engendered sympathy in some veterans, particularly those who served alongside an openly transgender service member. Additionally, in 2015 transgender service had not yet been attempted and proven to be a non-issue in the US military, but by 2020 this was no longer the case - transgender people had openly served for a period of time and the

military continued to function effectively, thus showing open transgender service to be a viable concept. This may have swayed some veterans who were initially leery of potential impacts to unit morale.

Defense spending views did not result in a statistically significant effect, thereby failing to support the primary hypothesis of this study. Because it stands to reason that military veterans would be better suited than their non-veteran counterparts to understand the impacts of government defense spending decisions at the unit level, an interaction term between Veteran Status and Defense Spending Views was included in Model 2. As with each of these independent variables, the interaction effect was not statistically significant. In short, respondent views on whether the government should increase defense spending did not impact their opinions regarding transgender military service, even when conditionalized by veteran status.

5 - Conclusion

Ultimately, those factors that predict support for transgender service largely appear to be the same as those that predict feelings toward the transgender community as a whole. Additionally, these predictors largely mirror those found in past studies, such as that conducted by Lewis et al in 2015. Notable differences between the results of that study and this one include the lack of statistically significant veteran status and religiosity effects in this study, and the lack of statistically significant authoritarianism and ideology effects in Lewis’s study.\(^{28}\) Other than the change in veteran status effect previously discussed, it seems very unlikely that any of the other three effects would lose or gain

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statistically significant predictor status over the five years between the two surveys. Rather, these dissimilarities in results likely are due to differences in the way the variables were captured.

Any discussion of transgender military service must include consideration of military readiness. In general, readiness is a valid concern – the U.S. Armed Forces exist to defend the U.S. against all adversaries and to serve the nation as a bulwark and guarantor of its security and independence above all other considerations.\textsuperscript{29} To this end, a number of factors such as age, citizenship, education, aptitude, physical fitness, and/or dependency status may result in disqualification from service. Because warfighting is the military’s primary mission, individual circumstances which may significantly detract from that mission must be considered. As such, the potential budgetary impacts of transgender service warrant examination, even if the result is non-inclusive policy. Simply put, if valid, the financial cost of allowing transgender people to serve may be sound reason for banning transgender service.

That said, the results of this study show that public support for a ban on transgender military service can generally be predicted with the same factors that predict negative attitudes against the transgender community as a whole, as well as negative perceptions of the gay and lesbian community.\textsuperscript{30} While the financial cost of allowing transgender people to serve in the military may be an expedient political sound bite which


provides the voter base a socially acceptable argument against transgender service, it
does not hold up under scrutiny – neither as a factual matter nor as a true motivation for
support of a transgender ban. Ultimately, demographics and guiding social values are
likely the actual determinants of support for transgender people serving in the military,
much as they are the determinants for public views of the transgender community as a
whole.

This study is not without limitations. Although the ANES 2020 survey does
address transgender policy, questions primarily center on the hot-button topic of public
restroom use. A survey designed specifically to examine public views of transgender
policy would allow for a more detailed analysis. Additionally, this study assumes that
respondents who are concerned about the cost of transgender service will also feel the
government should program more funding toward the DoD in general; however, this
assumption may not prove true for all survey respondents. Again, a survey which
specifically inquires about transgender military costs may produce more accurate results.

This study examines one part of a two-part concept. When President Trump
alluded to the “tremendous medical costs and disruption” of transgender military
service31, the disruption he referred to is that of unit cohesion. Although studies have
been conducted on the actual impacts of transgender service to unit cohesion in several
foreign militaries32, 33, the effects of public concerns over the alleged disruption on
support for transgender military service have yet to be examined. Future research should

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33 Schaefer, Agnes G. et al. 2016.
include examination of this topic, as disruption to unit cohesion is often cited as justification for non-inclusive military policies, and this reasoning may color the public beliefs regarding a military transgender ban.
6 - References


Appendix A

Table A-1 provides descriptive statistics for the continuous and ordinal independent variables used in this study, and Table A-2 provides distributions for the categorical independent variables.

**Table A-2. Descriptive Statistics for Continuous and Ordinal Independent Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>47.36</td>
<td>17.55</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (Liberal $\rightarrow$ Conservative)</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense Spending Views (Less $\rightarrow$ More)</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarianism</td>
<td>15.01</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Traditionalism</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarianism</td>
<td>6.01</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Attention</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification (Strong D $\rightarrow$ Strong R)</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: ANES 2020 Time Series Study*

*Note: Data incorporate ANES full sample post-election weights to reflect general population parameters.*
Table A-3. Categorical Independent Variable Distributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-year Degree Attainment</td>
<td>Degree – 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No degree – 64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>White, non-Hispanic – 67.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic – 10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic – 12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic alone – 4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native American/Alaska Native or other Race, non-Hispanic alone – 1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple races, non-Hispanic – 3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male – 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female – 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Contact</td>
<td>Contact – 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No contact – 87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran Status</td>
<td>Veteran – 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-veteran – 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter Registration</td>
<td>Registered – 87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unregistered – 13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ANES 2020 Time Series Study

Note: Data incorporate ANES full sample post-election weights to reflect general population parameters.
Curriculum Vita

Scott Sterling earned a Bachelor of Science in Systems Engineering with a Minor in Japanese at the United States Naval Academy in 1996. Upon graduation, he commenced Navy flight training in Pensacola, FL, and was awarded his aviator wings as a helicopter pilot in July 1998. During his Navy career, Scott deployed to the Mediterranean Sea, Persian Gulf, Black Sea, and Indian Ocean while flying SH-60B Seahawk helicopters. He also served as a helicopter flight instructor, flying TH-57B and TH-57C Jet Ranger helicopters.

Scott’s final tour in the Navy was with Air Test and Evaluation Squadron ONE (VX-1) at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, MD. There, Scott flew MH-60R and MH-60S helicopters and was responsible for overseeing Operational Testing (OT) of the MQ-8B Fire Scout unmanned aerial system. Since his retirement from the Navy, Scott has continued to work at VX-1 as a senior test and evaluation analyst, where he plans, analyzes, and reports on OT for a number of Naval aircraft and associated systems including the CMV-22B Osprey, E-2D Advanced Hawkeye, MQ-4C Triton, MH-60R/S Seahawk, and MQ-8C Fire Scout.