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Gender Differences in Attitudes of the United States Initiating War Against Iraq

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Extensive research has shown that men have an attitude of war that is different from women's. Based on such research, I hypothesized that more men than women would support the United States' initiation of war against Iraq. The study involved 30 participants, in which there were 15 males and 15 females. All of the participants were administered a nine question survey that obtained information about how they felt about the United States initiating war against Iraq and if they supported it or did not support it. The results revealed no statistically significant effect of gender on a participant's attitude of war.

This study was designed for the purpose of determining whether there is a gender difference in attitudes of the United States initiating war with Iraq. I chose to research this topic because it is presently a very important issue in the news and peoples' lives. In addition, among society there is a mixture of opinions concerning the war.

Lee (1993) examined 151 American college students at New York State University. Of the students, 104 were nonminorities and 47 identified themselves as minorities. Participants completed a survey, measuring their attitudes toward the Gulf War. A scale from 1 (disagree) to 9 (strongly disagree) was used. The results indicated that minority students were less in favor of and more opposed to American involvement in the Gulf War than the nonminority students.

Schroeder (1993) surveyed 189 eleventh graders from New York in order to assess the effects of such variables such as race and gender on attitudes toward the Persian Gulf War. The participants completed a war attitudes survey that used a five point Likert scale. No statistical differences were found between groups defined by age or parental involvement in the military. However, group differences were found based on gender and race. As predicted, Caucasians and males were significantly more tolerant of war, but no interaction was noted.

Grussendorf, McAlister, Sandstrom, Udd, & Morrison, (2002) carried out classroom surveys on a total of 3122 students in the United States and four European countries. The survey used statements that assessed the participants agreement with attitudes relating to war, diplomacy, and killing. A five point Likert scale was used. The results revealed that males were consistently more likely than females to agree that war is necessary.

Tessler and Nachtwey (1999) replicated a published analysis that focused on the relationship between sex and attitudes toward international conflict. The study utilized nine public opinion data sets collected through surveys. The results indicated that there were no significant differences in the attitudes expressed by men and women toward issues of war and peace. It was concluded that religiosity influences attitudes toward war and peace more so than variable such as sex.

Bendya and Finucane (1996) used five different data sources to examine the nature of the gender gap in attitudes toward the Gulf War. In each survey a majority of men and women favored war, but in each survey women were less supportive. The

gender gap was widest as the likelihood of war increased and was somewhat smaller as the United States military successes accumulated.

Extensive research has shown that men have an attitude of war that is different from women's. Based on such research, I felt that if participants were given a survey that assessed their opinions, more men than women would support the United States' initiation of war against Iraq.

Method

Participants

The study involved 30 participants, in which there were 15 males and 15 females. Six of the participants were from a country other than the United States. They were undergraduate students at Lindenwood University and were recruited through the Human Subject Pool Board. The students received extra credit in their class for participating in the research.

Materials

A nine question survey was administered to obtain information about how the participants felt about the United States initiating war with Iraq and if they supported it or did not support it. As can be seen in Appendix A, some sample questions included: What do you think is the most significant reason that the U.S. initiated war with Iraq? Do you think George Bush has ulterior motives for initiating the war with Iraq? Do you Support the United States going to war with Iraq? In addition to these types of questions, I was interested in what country the participants were from and their gender.

The study was conducted at Lindenwood University in Young Hall, room 105. Room 105 is the psychology lab and it is comparable to a small classroom setting.

Tables, chairs, pens, informed consent forms, feedback letters, and a large manila envelope are materials that were required for the research.

Procedure

Individuals were first given an informed consent form. The consent form explained that they had the choice whether or not to participate, and would be asked to answer a variety of questions concerning the current conflict between the United States and Iraq. They were advised that war and politics are very controversial topics in society; therefore some questions could be potentially offensive or upsetting. If the participant felt uncomfortable they did not have to answer the question, and the form explained that all information would be anonymous and kept confidential. After the participant read and signed the consent form, the survey was administered. The survey took approximately five minutes to complete. When the participants were finished they placed the survey in a large manila envelope, which ensured anonymity. They were then given a feedback letter that thanked them for their input, explained why the experiment was conducted, and information regarding who they could contact if they had any questions or concerns. In addition, participant receipts were given that enabled them to receive the extra credit for their class.

This study was a between subjects design because males' and females' attitudes were being compared. Both groups were treated equally because they were provided with identical surveys. The individuals participated depending on the times they signed up for on the Human Subject Pool Board. Monday through Friday between the times of 11:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M in a small classroom setting were the opportunities available for participating.

Results

In order to test the hypothesis that more men than women would support the United States' initiation of war against Iraq, a chi-square test was conducted with the participant's attitude of war as the dependent variable and gender as the independent variable. The results revealed no statistically significant effect of gender on a participant's attitude of war, $\chi^2_{(2)}=1.019$, $p=.601$.

In addition, descriptive statistics were conducted to further analyze the data. Forty-three percent of the participants believed that the United States initiated war against Iraq because of nuclear weapons of mass destruction, 26.7% believed it was because of Saddam Hussein, 20% thought the war was a result of the September eleventh hijackings, and 10% reported other. Fifty-seven percent of the participants believed President George Bush had ulterior motives for initiating the war, 23% believed he did not, and 20% did not know.

Discussion

The results were inconsistent with the hypothesis that more men than women would support the United States' initiation of the war against Iraq. An explanation for the results is that the study was conducted when the war was fully underway and the United States was extremely successful in their military action. There were casualties, but overall the U.S. was victorious in their missions. As proven in previous research, men and women are more likely to support a war when it is ongoing and successful.

It was interesting to discover that almost 60 percent of the participants believed that President Bush had ulterior motives for initiating the war against Iraq, but nevertheless supported the war. A possible explanation for the results is that when the

study was conducted many participants asked what the word “ulterior” meant. Potentially a number of other participants did not understand the word, but were too embarrassed to ask what its meaning was. In a future study, the words hidden or concealed should be used in place of ulterior on the questionnaire to prevent misunderstanding.

In addition, it was surprising to find that 67% of the international students who participated in the survey did not support the United States’ initiation of war against Iraq. This finding may have affected the overall results of the study.

If this study were conducted again, I would administer the questionnaire to all of the participants on the same day. I conducted the study over a period of a week and a half. The war was fully underway and on a daily basis there were updates and news stories that may have affected people’s attitude of the war.

The conclusions of the study cannot be generalized to the population. The sample population was relatively small; therefore further studies should be conducted with a larger sample to fully test the hypothesis that more men than women support the United States’ initiation of the war against Iraq.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

1. Are you aware of the conflict between the United States and Iraq?
 Yes
 No
 Somewhat

2. Where do you receive the majority of your information? (Please choose only one answer)
 TV
 Radio
 Newspaper
 Internet
 Other Explain:_____

3. Do you personally know someone that has been sent on an assignment in the last year to the Middle East?
 Yes
 No

4. What do you think is the most significant reason that the U.S. initiated war with Iraq? (Please choose only one answer)
 September 11th Hijackings
 Saddam Hussein
 Al-Qaida
 Osama Bin Ladin
 Nuclear weapons of mass destruction
 Other Explain:_____

5. Do you think George Bush has ulterior motives for initiating the war with Iraq?
 Yes
 No
 Don't Know

6. If you answered yes in the previous question, what do you think his ulterior motive is? (If you answered No or Don't know skip this question)
 Oil
 Revenge on Saddam Hussein for once plotting to kill his father
 Publicity/portray himself as powerful
 Other Explain:_____

7. Do you support the United States initiating war with Iraq?

Yes

No

Don't care either way

8. What gender are you?

Male

Female

9. What country are you from?
