The next Trans-Atlantic frontier: examining the impact of language choice on support for transgender policies in the United Kingdom and the United States

The Next *Trans*-Atlantic Frontier: Examining the impact of language choice on support for transgender policies in the United Kingdom and the United States

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Forthcoming at *Atlantic Journal of Communication*

Abstract
As American and British gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals have made major wins for 'pinnacle rights,' such as same-sex marriage, attention has increasingly moved to a previously overshadowed part of the LGBT community, transgender people. Alongside more visibility in popular culture, trans people have been the subject of policy debates and proposals in both countries, seeking to both restrict and expand their rights. In this paper we examine the extent to which language choice affects public support for policies pertaining to transgender people in the U.S. and U.K. We draw upon two survey experiments conducted in the U.S. and U.K. in July 2016, and find that, in general, different ways of referring to the trans population do not affect policy opinions. This study has implications for both understandings of the effectiveness of framing in increasingly media savvy environments and for the future of trans-related policies in the U.S. and U.K.

Introduction

Transgender people have long been subsumed as part of the larger lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) community representing a wide range of diverse interests. The trans community has been often overshadowed by gay men and lesbian women who are both more numerous and have yielded considerably more public visibility and political influence. Major LGBT policy victories in places like the United Kingdom (U.K.) and the United States (U.S.)—most notably the legalisation of same-sex marriage in both countries—have led many in the LGBT community to draw attention to the next frontier for civil rights: gender identity. Indeed, there is greater realization that these victories for sexual minorities do not necessarily mean greater rights for transgender people. Essentially, policy victories for gay men and lesbian women have allowed more attention to be paid to trans[1] people. This relative increase in visibility vis-à-vis the LGBT community, alongside a more prominent presence of transgender people in popular culture in both countries, has brought greater policy attention to issues of gender identity affecting trans people; a primarily 'cultural turn' has now, slowly, been followed by an 'administrative' one (Hines 2007). But this increased attention in both media and policymaking bodies is not always to their benefit. In shining a light on trans people, policymakers at national and local levels seek to both expand and restrict rights of transgender people.

Policies pertaining to trans people have been passed in places where it is expected (e.g., San Francisco's policy to house inmates according to gender identity) but also where it is unexpected (e.g. government recognition of the 'third gender' in India). But in general, in liberal democratic contexts policies pertaining to transgender people have been especially more commonly debated, often couched in debates on equal rights. A notable example of this

[1] We primarily use the terms 'trans' and 'transgender' as we believe them to be the most inclusive nomenclature (see, e.g., GLAAD 2016), but we do so with the understanding that due to the nature of this study—which examines terminological usage itself—choosing any one (or two) word(s) is inherently fraught.

is the recent debates on so-called bathroom bills—bills that define who may use gendered bathrooms—in many states in the United States (Taylor 2015)

As these policies are increasingly debated, an important question arises: what affects support of a range of policies directed toward the transgender community? In this paper, we seek to answer not only this, but also a complementary question: how does the way we *talk* about transgender people affect how the general public feels about trans-related policies? Essentially, we seek to understand how framing strategies can impact support for such policies. In the British context, for example, Monro (2013) has argued that a 'robust participatory democracy' is necessary for the full inclusion and representation of trans people, and their interests, in the political landscape. This of course suggests, too, that the way we talk about trans people, and how the general public interprets this language, matters in fully understanding the realisation of trans people's rights (or the denial thereof). It begs several questions that are at the center of this paper: does the way we talk about trans people and issues affecting them, affect public opinion that is central to this participatory democracy that Monro speaks of? And insofar as it does, how might policymakers and advocates speak differently to ensure wider support for progressive policies?

This paper proceeds as follows. First, we explore the literature on framing, as well as the limited extant literature on trans politics in both countries. From this received wisdom we posit several hypotheses. Next, we outline the methods, discussing both our data collection and survey experiments. The third section then presents the findings, and we spend the remainder of the paper relating these findings to existing literature and empirical realities in each country, and offer additional lines of research for the future.

Literature review and theoretical framework

Transgender people around the world have long been invisible to both the general public and policymakers alike. From the perspective of politics, this has been especially problematic as they must "navigate a system of governance that is premised on a binary notion of sex and gender" (Taylor 2007: 833; Stocks 2015). Where states simplify their population as that of men and women, those who do not fit in neatly are 'illegible' and effectively ignored (see, e.g., Scott 1998, Anderson 1991). Not only are these citizens unseen by policymakers, but they also often absent from law; like some other sexual minorities (most notably lesbians), their legal invisibility means they are neither necessarily prosecuted for being trans, nor protected from discrimination due to it (see Hildebrandt and Chua 2017).

However, the visibility of trans people has increased in both the U.K. and the U.S. The largely positive (and normalized) portrayal of trans characters on television (e.g., *Orange is the New Black* and *Transparent* in the U.S. and *My Transsexual Summer* and *Boy Meets Girl* in the U.K.) and the public transitions of celebrities (e.g., Olympic athlete Caitlyn Jenner, boxing promoter Kellie Maloney, and filmmakers Lana and Lilly Wachowski) have increased awareness. This public attention, and perhaps corresponding acceptance, has helped contribute to a rise in the number of self-identified trans individuals in both countries. A recent study found that 1.4 million adults in the U.S. identified as trans, nearly double previous estimates in 2011 (Flores, et al. 2016); this accounts for approximately 0.6 percent of the American adult population. In the U.K., a parliamentary committee study revealed that 650,000 of Britons were 'gender incongruent' (WEC 2016). Of course, that the American study doubled in just a few years reveals multiple issues: first, the growing visibility and acceptance of transgender people has allowed more to 'come out' publically; second, and related, there is a difficulty in arriving at a truly accurate accounting of trans people

anywhere in the world, especially when there is not agreement on the terminology to use (Reed, et al. 2009; Chalabi 2014).[2]

But increased attention to trans people has not always translated into better treatment for them, either by government or the general public. In Britain, transgender issues have become politically important in light of the death of several imprisoned trans individuals (Ridley 2015). Even amongst the larger LGBT community, which frequently experiences discrimination, a recent study shows that transgender people in the U.K. are more likely to report human rights abuses (Stocks 2015). Criticism has been levelled across the government, including the National Health Service (NHS) who is said to have perpetuated negative stereotypes of trans people and is largely 'failing' them due to lack of knowledge and understanding (WEC 2016). Suicide rates for transgender people in the U.S. are much higher than that of the general population (Haas, et al. 2010), with studies estimating the rate of suicide attempts to be between 19 and 25% of the population. In contrast, the general population suicide attempt in the United States was 0.00012% (Haas, et al. 2010).

In the case of Britain, trans people have enjoyed legal 'legibility' in the form of the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) of 2004. The act was unusual in that it allowed citizens to be recognised as women or men without surgical or hormonal treatment (Jeffreys 2008); it effectively set aside the medicalized basis for gender identity and, not coincidentally, basis for the term 'transsexual.'[3] It has not, however, been universally praised. Particularly amongst post-structuralist scholars, there is a suggestion that only insofar as transgender people do not disrupt dominant norms of heteronormativity that they are protected by the law

[2] Reed et al (2009) note that even when using a narrower definition like 'transsexual', which is limited to those with medicalized treatments and transitions, those who are 'self-medicating' will go uncounted.

[3] For a more comprehensive historiography, and feminist critique, of the GRA, see Jeffreys 2008.

(Stocks 2015); the point being that the act does not overcome dominant assumptions of a gender binary (male or female), and still ignores that which lies in between the two.

Increased attention to trans people and issues affecting them has been largely attributed to what Hines (2007) calls a 'cultural turn'. But has there been a political, or 'administrative' turn? As in the policy realm, social scientists have been slow to focus attention on transgender people, especially in analysing them separately from the larger LGBT community. Still, some prominent studies have drawn a much-needed focus on the matter of public opinion toward transgender people specifically. Broockman and Kalla (2016) examined how a 'personal touch' could change attitudes on trans issues; their study found that face-to-face conversations with transgender people conducting door-to-door canvassing in the U.S. led to increased support for transgender non-discrimination laws.

In this paper we are interested less in how personal interactions might change policy preferences—which, though powerful, are expensive and infrequent—and more interested in the language used in discussing trans-related policies, both by those who seek to give trans people more and fewer rights. Moreover, we add an important comparative element to the conversation. Whereas previous work has been limited to one liberal democracy (the U.S.) we seek to examine the impact of language choice in two different liberal democracies (the U.S. and the U.K.).

Framing

Language is a powerful tool in politics, allowing policy makers, candidates, and issue advocates to offer distinct understandings of what an issue is and what it entails. A long line of research testifies to the importance of framing effects—by presenting an issue in one way or another, support for the issue is sometimes dramatically affected (Chong and Druckman 2007). Survey research underlines this issue, often finding large differences between questions with subtle wording differences (see for example, Rasinski 1989). This

understanding is key to our study—we anticipate that different use of language surrounding trans issues will affect support for those issues. However, there might not be any effect at all. Pizmony-Levy and Ponce (2013) examined the terminological effects on support for same-sex marriage, essentially testing the assumption that the way we talk about it affects public opinion. They found no significant impact on public support whether it is framed as 'gay rights' or 'civil rights'. And while McCabe and Heerwig (2012) found that discussing marriage in terms of 'same-sex' or 'homosexual' rather than in gay and lesbian frames affected the strength of response, it does not impact odds of support. For this reason, we pose a research question in lieu of a directional hypothesis, asking simply how the language used to describe transgender people affects support for trans policies in the United States (RQ1A) and in the United Kingdom (RQ1B).

Research on Trans Public Opinion

Perhaps testament to how new trans issues are on policy agendas, limited scholarly attention has been paid to them. Sanger (2010) explores how trans people identify themselves as political actors in the U.K., and Hines (2013) offers one of the first examinations of how transgender people are affected by various policies in Britain. Moreover, public opinion on trans people and the public policies related to them is especially crucial for understanding in electoral democracies like the U.K. and U.S. Here the literature is even more scant. There is, thus, a major gap that needs filling (Flores 2015; Monro 2013). There are very few studies that focus on public attitudes toward transgender people. Notable exceptions on the British case include Tee and Hegarty (2006), who found that heterosexism, authoritarianism, contact with sexual minorities and beliefs in biological gender affected attitudes toward transgender people. In the U.S., Norton and Herek (2013) and Flores (2015) conducted similar public opinion research and found that those with more information about transgenderism and who

have had contact with lesbians and gays have a more positive view of trans people, while a more recent research found limited effect of information and images on transgender rights attitudes (Flores, et al. 2017). But Flores (2015: 412) strongly calls for more survey research, recognising that our understanding of this important part of trans policy—how the electorate views them—is crucial for bringing progress on trans rights. Norton and Herek (2013) also correctly note how the limited research on public attitudes towards trans people has mostly surveyed university students. Our sample is far wider and so will also help overcome this particular research bias.

We proceed to fill the gap not simply by recreating previous studies on public opinion and trans people but instead operate from the assumption that the way trans people are talked about (and the policies related to them) may affect attitudes. As suggested by Druckman, varied descriptions of a qualitatively similar phenomenon, what are known as 'equivalency frames,' can have dramatic effects on policy positions (Druckman 2001; 2004). In order to measure this effect, we employ survey experiments that change the way we talk about trans people; in doing so, we follow the lead of other scholars looking at LGBT issues more broadly, Pizmony-Levy and Ponce (2013) and Casey (2016) and transgender issues specifically (Flores, et al. 2017).

Terminological debate

Terminological identification of trans people has been long contested by those who are trans themselves, and those outside the community who study them, or make policies that affect them. It is certainly true that while some terms, like transsexual, have fallen out of favor, others, like transgender, have become more preferable. Much of the growing opposition to the 'transsexual' term has centred around its emphasis on a medicalized view, one where these individuals require 'fixes' to 'problems' (Hines 2007). It is, for some, the

point at which the broader notion of transgenderism (those who are gender nonconformist) switches to those who turn to medical assistance to deal with their 'gender dysphoria' (Reed et al, 2009: 6). This interpretation rests, in part, on the fact that the idea of 'transsexualism' comes out of sexology, which is decidedly medical in its orientation; 'transgender' on the other hand, traces its roots to queer theory and post-structural thinkers (Jeffreys 2008).

Some scholars have suggested that in employing the term 'transgender' those in the community have exerted agency and displayed opposition to the labels placed upon them by the medical and psychological communities (Currah, et al. 2006). But this terminological turn should not be seen as a linear progression, either. Nor should it be seen as a universal and unproblematic word choice for the community. In fact, despite currently favoured usage of the term transgender, it is not without its critics. Some find it inherently problematic because it is, in fact, seen as *too* broad a term—like the LGBT moniker, it includes a large number of individuals with diverse interests, such as transsexual, intersex, transvestite, cross-dressing, drag, and gender queer (Hines 2010). Thus, for some scholars and members of the community, the term 'gender diversity' is preferable (Munro 2013).

In general, academic debates of terminology related to transgender people have been primarily situated in post-structuralist discourses (see, for example, Hines 2006; 2010). While illuminating, our study shifts the focus away from these discussions, many of which are concerned with matters of performance, and are largely normative in nature, and toward empirical questions of *effects* of language choice. To be sure, we agree that language is very much constructed, and it is difficult if not impossible to make causal claims related to language and support. Still, we believe there is value in examining how changes in language choice might affect support for policies related to a subsection of the population that has, until very recently, been largely ignored in politics and society.

In the U.S., advocacy organisations like GLAAD have taken strong positions on language that correspond with some of the positions of academics noted above.[4] In their media guide, GLAAD presents transgender as the broadest umbrella term. It notes that 'transsexual' is a primarily outdated term but accepts that insofar as it remains in usage it is a more specific term, one that usually refers to those who have had medical interventions to 'change' their sex from one different than the one into which they were born (2016). Likewise, a 2016 parliamentary committee report found that both the terms 'transsexual' and 'gender reassignment' were 'misleading' and 'outdated'; it suggested that the general term 'gender identity' was more appropriate (WEC 2016).

It is worth noting that the push toward 'gender' and 'equality' over 'sex' language in media coverage on gay issues has not been uniform. The conservative *Washington Times* famously held onto style guidelines mandating that the term 'gay' not even be used, instead favoring the more medicalized 'homosexual' (Kirchick 2008).This same policy was maintained by other conservative publications with sometimes unintended gaffes: during the 2008 Olympic Games, American Sprinter Tyson Gay was mistakenly referred to as 'Homosexual' due to standard search and replace functions employed by these outlets (Akers, 2008). Armstrong (2002) suggests that the use of the term 'homosexual' over gay is often used to emphasise the 'sex' part of the identity, a subtle wink to remind others of the perceived deviance of gay relationships.

Similarly, we might expect the word transsexual to connote deviance, bringing to mind sexual acts and sexuality, rather than gender identity. Casey (2016) conducted a survey experiment to test how respondents reacted to different LGBT-related news items which found that the strongest negative reactions came when respondents were asked about

[4] Originally an acronym for 'Gay Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation', GLAAD has since shed this full name in recognition of its recent turn toward advocating for trans people in particular.

transgender related issues. He argues that 'the more associated with sex a policy is, the more likely it is to elicit disgust' (2016: 5). By extension, he suggests that the move away from 'sexual connotation' of gay couples and towards more emotional ones of love and commitment was crucial in increased public support for same-sex marriage in the U.S. As an official U.K. government report suggested, there is something 'outdated' and potentially pernicious about the term 'transsexual'—they argue that the sexual part of the term 'pathologies' trans identities (WEC 2016). This mirrors change in government policy, as illustrated in the Gender Recognition Act which suggested 'transsexual' was associated with a 'problem' frame of trans people (Jeffreys 2008). This leads us to our first expectation, that transsexual, as compared to all other language choices, should result in less favourability toward policies that protect transgender people (H1).

More broadly, along these lines we are interested in what predicts support for trans policies, as little research speaks to this question (see Flores 2015), let alone in a cross-national way. For this reason, we pose a final research question, asking what variables predict support for trans policies in the U.S. (RQ2A) and in the U.K. (RQ2B). We draw on previous studies on attitudes toward the lesbian, gay and bisexual community (Tee and Hegarty 2006; Norton and Herek 2013) and transgender individuals (Flores 2015) in exploring the effect of race, age, gender, tolerance, and familiarity with LGBT people has on support. With these questions in mind, we turn to our methods for answering them.

Procedures

Choice of cases

In comparing the U.S. and the U.K. we are following innumerable scholars who have used these two cases to examine a wide variety of issues in policy, and beyond. Not only are they both advanced, liberal democracies in which English is the most widely spoken

language, but both have recently passed several pieces of legislation that extend 'pinnacle rights', such as same-sex marriage, to gay and lesbians, creating cultural and political space for the proposal and debate on policies that both seek to increase in some areas, and decrease in others, the rights of transgender people—the often-forgotten community of block of LGBT citizens. Although the U.K./U.S. comparison has been widely used by social scientists, there are relatively few studies that look at the two countries in relation to LGBT people generally—a notable exception being Ryan and Rivers (2003) who examined harassment and victimisation of LGBT youth in both countries—and no comparative studies on transgender people specifically.

To explore our research questions, we carried out two simultaneous survey experiments: one in the U.S. and one in the U.K. Except where noted, question wording and order was identical between the two.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. Participants were asked about a series of issues related to trans public policy, but with the language used to describe trans individuals varied. They were referred to as (1) transgender (133 participants in the U.S. sample, 121 in the U.K. sample), (2) transsexual (124 U.S., 108 U.K.), (3) trans (123 U.S., 129 U.K.), or (4) people born as men living as women or vice versa (123 U.S., 149 U.K.). This was the key experimental manipulation.

In the United States, participants were recruited via the Mechanical Turk platform. The sample was restricted to those with greater than 95% approval ratings and at least 500 HITs (Human Intelligence Tasks, or small jobs) completed, as suggested by best practices (Peer, Vosgerau, & Acquisti 2014). The survey was completed by 504 participants, with the following sample characteristics: 41.3% female, average age of 34.42, 77.38% white, 88.6% straight, and 98.2% cisgender.

In the United Kingdom, participants were recruited via the Prolific Academic platform. This sample was restricted to at least 90% approval ratings and at least 500 jobs completed, to parallel the other sample. The survey was completed by 506 participants, with the resulting sample 60.7% female, average age of 34.08, 87.2% white, 90.9% straight, and 99.2% cisgender.

Key Measures

We then consider how support for trans policies is affected by the language used to describe them. Because all of the ten statements form a highly reliable index ($\alpha = .91$), they are combined into a mean scale (mean = 4.95, SD = 1.41). All questions were asked as agree/disagree statements (7 point scale where higher is agreement), and policies included (where the X is replaced by one of the four terms described in the manipulation above; any differences in wording between countries is indicated with a "/"): "X should be granted explicit protection in hate crime legislation," "Employers should have the right to not hire a qualified job applicant based on if they are X" (reversed), "Businesses should be allowed to refuse service to X" (reversed), "X should be allowed to teach children in public schools," "X should have the right to use whichever restroom that corresponds to their preferred gender identity," "The U.S./U.K. should pass policies that would outlaw discrimination against X," "If my child said they were X, I would support them," "If my child said they were X, I would oppose hormonal treatment that would change their gender" (reversed), "Health insurance/NHS should pay for clinical treatment to change a person's sex where desired by a X patient and deemed appropriate by doctors," and "For the purposes of official documentation (passport, driver's license, etc) the government should require a medical assessment of X" (reversed). Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

We also control for gender (U.S. 41.3% female, U.K. 60.7% female), age (U.S. mean age 34.42, U.K. mean 34.08), race (U.S. 77.38% white, U.K. 87.2% white), and ideology (U.S. mean = 4.57 on a scale of 1 (very conservative) to 7 (very liberal); U.K. mean = 4.64 on the same scale).

Two other variables are also included to take into account general feelings about these sorts of issues. First, we measure tolerance by using the least liked group method, adapted from Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1979). Respondents are asked which group they like the least, and then asked a series of questions about how that group or its members should be treated.[5] Responses to these questions are averaged into a single score (U.S. $\alpha = .88$; mean = 3.73, SD = 1.65; U.K. $\alpha = .87$, mean = 3.55, SD = 1.42).

Second, we measure familiarity with LGBT issues, asking simply, "How familiar would you say you are with policy issues affecting the LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender) community?" Answers ranged from 1 not at all familiar to 5 very familiar (U.S. mean = 3.69, SD = 0.91; U.K. mean = 2.94, SD = 1.10).

Analysis and Findings

To answer our first research question, which considers the role of language in support for trans policies, we estimate a series of ANOVA models, with each individual policy as a dependent variable, as well as the composite measure described above. To simplify presentation of these many results, we summarize pairwise comparisons between conditions in Table 2.

[5] Options for groups included fascists, communists, Ku Klux Klan (U.S. only), English Defense League (U.K. only), Black Panthers (U.S. only), Britain First (U.K. only), Atheists, Muslim Council of Britain (U.K. only), Pro-abortionists (U.S. only), Anti-abortionists (U.S. only), or other (respondent was asked to fill in. Statements about the group were asked 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree: "Members of that group should be banned from being president of the United States/Prime Minister of Great Britain," "Members of that group should be allowed to teach children in the public schools/in the state schools," "That group should be outlawed," "Members of that group should be allowed to make a speech in my city," "That group should have their phones tapped by our government," and "That group should be allowed to hold public rallies in my city."

[Table 2 about here]

As can be seen in the table, the role of language seems to be minimal in affecting support of trans policies. Most effects are only marginally significant, and they are few and far between. This suggests the answer to our first research question is that language choice does not matter all that much for support of trans policies—at least in the samples we use in this study. Even when we estimate a regression equation to determine the effect of the more disparaging or deviant "transsexual" as compared to all other language choices (see Table 3), we find no significant effect, failing to support H1. This suggests that framing on this issue is minimally effective, which has been seen in other areas as well (Brewer 2002; 2003; McCabe and Heerwig 2012), especially when respondents already have existing opinions and knowledge. This is perhaps indicative of a savvier than expected populace in the two countries we consider—due to the recent salience of trans issues, people may have effectively made up their minds, and are not easily persuaded by changes as small as the ones we employ in this study.

[Table 3 about here]

The one exception to this is consistent across both the U.S. and the U.K. When a government assessment is involved, people are more sensitive to language changes (see Table 2). As can be seen in the Table, for the U.S. there are significant differences between the use of the words transsexual and transgender, transsexual and trans, transsexual and born as a man but living as a woman or vice versa, and transgender versus trans. The means associated with government assessment are included in Table 4. Unexpectedly, the means are lowest, in both the U.S. and in the U.K., for the transsexual condition – where low means reflect that participants generally do not favour the government requiring medical assessment. This is contrary to our expectation that the transsexual condition would activate thoughts about sexual deviance, and therefore encourage people to be less favourable towards trans people.

This could be a wording effect, as the statement in question is relatively complicated, but future research should explore this phenomenon more carefully.

[Table 4 about here]

Generally, though, effects of language changes are lacking. This suggests we might have reached a period where acceptance of trans people has recently turned high in both contexts.

The final question asks what types of variables predict support for trans policies. The analysis to answer this question is presented in Table 3, which shows a pair of ordinary least squares regressions predicting overall support for trans policies in each country. As can be seen, several variables are consistent across countries—younger liberal females that exhibit greater tolerance and are more familiar with LGBT issues are all more supportive of policies that protect trans individuals. The one difference between the two countries comes in the form of race—in the U.K. whites are more supportive of trans policies than are non-whites, whereas this distinction does not seem to be meaningful in the U.S.

Conclusion

Our findings suggest that it takes more than simple wording changes to affect public opinion about transgender policies. Although our public opinion data is not cross-sectional, we speculate that the null findings in terms of the role of language in predicting policy support is due in part to a change in language use over time. While people are likely familiar with all of the terms we use, they are also familiar enough with the issue such that they are not affected by language variations.

To explain this we can look back to the Pizmony-Levy and Ponce study (2013) that found no significant variation in support for same-sex marriage depending on how it is discussed. The way media and advocates publically talked about marriage changed at a very fast pace from ‘gay marriage’ dominating in 2004 to same-sex marriage in 2012 (Hackl, et al.

2013). If trans language has similarly evolved in rapid fashion, that might help explain the absence of major framing effects here. Some research suggests this may be the case, at least in terms of the trans-related language major newspapers have used over the past decade (authors, working paper). Future research should consider other factors that might have affected the way in which people interpret different language surrounding trans issues.

Our null findings do not suggest that policy-makers or trans advocates should not pay attention to the language they use—indeed, it is likely the fact that they have taken care with their language that has produced the absence of framing effects we see among citizens. But they should be reassured that the public is not led astray by small changes in language, suggesting that anti-trans advocates have a difficult road ahead of them.

The study, despite offering some of the first research on public opinion of trans issues, is limited in several ways. Notably, both samples rely on convenience samples. While these sorts of samples have been validated as appropriate by many studies (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz 2012; Clifford & Jerit 2014), particularly for experimental research such as we conduct here, they are less diverse than a representative sample of either country, and results should therefore be interpreted cautiously. In addition, by virtue of the nascence of the research on trans issues, the measures we use are not validated survey measures, and we therefore cannot tell how much of our effects (or null effects) might change with different question wordings. Finally, while we are able to compare across two countries, they are relatively similar—Western, English speaking, and with similar LGBT policies—which prevents us from generalizing our findings to countries with different characteristics. Future research should extend this line of questioning to other countries, particularly those with different characteristics and policy contexts.

Still, this is an important step in understanding public opinion on trans issues. We offer insight not only into the role that language plays, which is minimal, but also what other

variables play a role in predicting support of trans policies. This offers practical information to trans advocates and policy makers about who they have convinced, and who remains to be swayed.

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Tables

Table 1: Policy support for each trans-related policy, by country

	United States		United Kingdom	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Overall index	4.95	1.41	5.37	1.09
Hate crime	5.18	1.84	5.39	1.53
Not hire	5.33	1.90	6.01	1.51
Refuse service	5.32	1.92	6.23	1.38
Allowed to Teach	5.39	1.82	5.80	1.48
Restroom	4.84	2.08	5.05	1.78
Discrimination	5.19	1.87	5.70	1.47
Child support	5.40	1.76	5.89	1.40
Child hormone	4.52	2.02	5.03	1.73
Insurance/NHS	3.88	2.08	4.43	1.81
Govt assessment	4.48	1.83	4.22	1.68

Measured on a seven-point scale. Instances where the statement is phrased as anti-trans (not hire, refuse service, hormone treatment, and government assessment) are reversed, such that higher numbers always indicate greater support for trans people.

Table 2: Significant differences in language use by policy in the United States and the United Kingdom

	United States						United Kingdom					
	TS v TG	**TS v T**	**TS v B**	**TG v T**	**TG v B**	**T v B**	**TS v TG**	**TS v T**	**TS v B**	**TG v T**	**TG v B**	**T v B**
Overall index	#			#								
Hate crime	#											#
Not hire				*		*						
Refuse service												
Allowed to Teach												
Restroom												#
Discrimination												
Child support										#		
Child hormone												
Insurance/NHS	#									#		
Govt assessment	*	#	*	*			*		*	#		

Pairwise comparisons reported. TS = transsexual, TG = transgender, T = trans, B = born as men and living as women or vice versa. * p< .05, # p<.10.

Table 3: Ordinary Least Squares Regression Predicting Overall Support for Trans Policies in the United States and the United Kingdom

	United States β (SE)	United Kingdom β (SE)
Condition	-0.17 (0.11)	0.08 (0.10)
Gender (F)	0.28 (0.10)*	0.56 (0.08)*
Age	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
White	0.02 (0.11)	0.47 (0.12)*
Ideology (L)	0.48 (0.03)*	0.28 (0.03)*
Tolerance	0.07 (0.03)*	0.10 (0.03)*
LGBT familiarity	0.20 (0.05)*	0.19 (0.04)*
R^2	0.45	0.33

The condition variable compares transsexual to all other terms.
* $p<0.05$

Table 4: Means of support for government assessment by experimental condition, for both countries

	U.S.	U.K.
Transsexual	2.97	3.45
Transgender	3.95	4.05
Trans	3.38	3.67
Born as man/living as woman	3.74	3.91

Note the way the policy is phrased: "For the purposes of official documentation (passport, driver's license, etc.) the government should require a medical assessment of X" means that higher means are actually more anti-trans.