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The Impact of News Photos on Support for Military Action

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Abstract: Drawing on an experiment embedded in an online survey, this paper examines the impact of news photos on support for military action. Respondents were asked about support for ongoing military involvement in Afghanistan while being randomly exposed to one of two photos, one of a soldier with a child, the other of a soldier with a gun. The latter photo decreases expressed support for war. The effect also appears to have been greater for those who self-identify as being very interested in international affairs. Results are discussed as they pertain to the potentially profound role of mass media in generating support (or not) for foreign military engagements.

Keywords: public opinion, foreign affairs, media effects

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Countries engaged in military conflict expend significant budgetary resources, not to mention the more significant cost in human lives. In democracies in particular, political leaders must justify these costs, and popular support must be maintained at some minimum level. In short, engagement in wars abroad matters for politics at home, and public support for war is critical to ongoing foreign engagements.

Understanding how to maintain political support for a war is thus central to understanding war making by democratic states. Here, our specific interest is in how news content affects public attitudes about ongoing conflicts. More precisely, we want to examine how simple pictorial representations of a country's military efforts matter for public support for that war. There is an accumulating body of work on the importance of images in the framing of military conflicts; but little work that directly connects image-based framing to individuals' attitudes about military intervention. Doing so is the primary goal of this paper.

To do this, we rely on a simple experiment in which a representative sample of Canadian adults (in the Canadian Election Study) were presented with one of two pictures depicting Canadian forces in Afghanistan, while at the same time being probed for their opinions on this engagement. As we show, a picture that emphasizes the humanitarian aspect of military action, in contrast to the combat or war making elements, elicits greater support for Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. We find that framing, through photos, matters to public attitudes about military conflict. Our results also point to heterogeneity in the framing effects, however. As the existing literature on framing suggests, those more attentive to international affairs are more affected by the changing frames. Despite the fact that framing effects are mainly concentrated amongst a specific group of respondents, they are enough to shift the overall balance of support from unsupportive to supportive of military engagement. This is

true in spite of the fact that the manipulation used here, as we shall see, is relatively muted.

We interpret these results as evidence of the potentially profound impact of pictures on public support for military efforts, and on public attitudes about foreign affairs more generally. There is a growing body of work emphasizing the importance of mass media content to individuals' attitudes about foreign affairs; and a valuable literature focused on the differences in the framing of recent conflicts as well. This experiment lends further support to the notion that subtle frames — not just in text, but in pictures — can have an acute effect on public support for military action.

Context

Media Content, Public Opinion, and Foreign Affairs

Our work here draws on three related literatures. First, there is a body of work emphasizing that ***(1) sustaining military action, for any extended period of time at least, requires public support*** (e.g., Aldrich et al., 2006; Baum and Groeling, 2010; Berinsky, 2009; Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson, 1995; Burk, 1999; Eichenberg, 2005; Gartner and Segura, 1998; Mueller, 2005; Soroka, 2003), and in particular work on the potential significance of casualty reports to US public attitudes about military intervention (see, e.g., Mueller, 1973; Larson, 1996; Gelpi et al., 2006; Berinsky and Druckman, 2007; Gelpi and Reifler, 2008). These literatures make clear that public opinion is important, not just in the way in which a government's foreign policy can matter to their re-election, but to the conduct of foreign affairs throughout the electoral cycle. In foreign policy (as in many other policy domains), public opinion matters.

There is, second, a literature that makes clear that ***(2) public attitudes about policy can be powerfully affected by media content***. The volume of attention the media devote to various issues affects the importance that people attach to those issues (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Behr and Iyengar,

1985; Soroka, 2002). Media coverage has an impact on the ingredients that people rely upon when making political evaluations (Iyengar, Kinder, Peters and Krosnick, 1984; Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Miller and Krosnick, 2000). And, most importantly for our analysis below, the fashion in which issues are framed by elite and news discourse shapes the views of citizens. For instance, a Ku Klux Klan rally will be evaluated more positively if it is framed as an exercise in freedom of speech than one framed as an instance of public disturbance (Nelson et al., 1997a; Druckman, 2001).

The defining features of framing analyses have been reviewed elsewhere (Chong and Druckman, 2007). There are, in our view, several critical studies of the effect of news frames on policy attitudes generally. Iyengar's (1991) *Is Anyone Responsible* makes the case that "episodic" versus "thematic" framing of policy stories in television news can have a marked impact on experimental participants' views about the sources and solutions for poverty and crime. Tversky and Kahneman's (1981) experiment on policy choice, intended to demonstrate loss averse behavior, makes clear that policy preferences (in this case, about dealing with the outbreak of a life-threatening disease) can vary dramatically if they are framed in terms of losses rather than gains. Druckman's (2004) subsequent work explores the contexts in which framing effects are most likely. (See also related work in Druckman, 2001; Druckman and Nelson, 2003.) Framing effects are stronger in the absence of counter-frames, for instance.

Framing effects are also more likely for certain individuals. Past work suggests several possibilities where knowledge is concerned, for instance: some work points toward stronger framing effects for knowledgeable individuals (e.g., Kinder and Sanders, 1990; Krosnick and Brannon, 1993), while others suggest the opposite (e.g., Nelson et al., 1997b). Druckman and Nelson (2003) provide an account that makes sense of these divergent results and is very influential for our own analysis below. In short, they suggest that "elite frames will exhibit a greater impact on more knowledgeable

individuals, and a smaller impact on individuals more likely to have prior opinions" (p. 732). That is, knowledge helps individuals make sense of (and react to) framing cues; but the tendency to have pre-existing attitudes, often related to knowledge, makes individuals less susceptible to the influence of frames. Just as in Zaller's (1992) model of opinion change, knowledge has countervailing effects, simultaneously increasing comprehension of and resistance to new information.

There is, in sum, a considerable body of work suggesting that issue framing can have a marked impact on what people think about public policies. And the likely importance of framing is enhanced in the instance investigated here, since Canadians' experiences of the war in Afghanistan are necessarily mediated. The particular relevance of media for foreign affairs, as opposed to many other domains, is a function of what is often referred to as "media dependency theory" (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976): we are more likely to be affected by media on issues for which we are more media-dependent, and we are more media-dependent for issues that we do not experience directly.[1] Foreign affairs issues, which are almost by definition foreign, and which are thus rarely experienced directly, are particularly open to media influence.

Indeed, the potential importance of media content for attitudes about foreign affairs likely accounts for why foreign policy has played such a significant role in the study of media and public opinion. Which brings us to the third body of literature: work suggesting that ***(3) media framing matters to public attitudes on military intervention***.

Some of this work focuses just on the media, and in particular variability in framing across conflicts and across countries. Aday et al.'s (2005) detailed study of five US networks and Al Jazeera during the Iraq War is one such example; they find that coverage was relatively objective (except for

1 Relatedly, the literature on agenda-setting speaks of the difference between obtrusive and unobtrusive issues; see, e.g., Zucker, 1978; Demers et al., 1989; Soroka, 2002.

Fox News) in tone, and there was a tendency across networks to focus on battles and strategy, and to minimize coverage of casualties: "Despite advanced technologies offering reporters the chance to transmit the reality of war in real time, reporters chose instead to present a largely bloodless conflict to viewers, even when they did broadcast during firefights" (12). Dimitrova and colleagues (2005) find significant differences across US and Swedish media in their use of the "military conflict" versus "anti-war protest" and "responsibility" frames. Subsequent work suggests that coalition media were more positive, and more focused on rebuilding, while Arab media coverage dealt more with "military conflict" (Dimitrova et al., 2007). These are just several examples from a vast literature exploring differences in media framing of conflicts (see also, e.g., Aday, 2005; Aday et al., 2005; Newhagen, 1994; Pfau et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2006; Vliegenthart and Schroder, 2010). Most pertinent for the analysis that follows, Boettcher and Cobb's (2006) recent review of the literature suggests that reporting war deaths can matter to public support; and their experimental test of the framing effects of body counts (US soldiers killed) versus casualty rates (US soldiers killed *and* Iraqi soldiers killed) illustrates this fact. The paper is particularly valuable, not just because it makes a clear link between work on causalities and work on framing, but because the experiments show the impact that framing can have on public attitudes about military conflict.

Framing is not accomplished just through the use of words, of course, but through pictures as well — both video and still; and there is a small but valuable literature on the potential importance of photographs in framing news stories about military conflict. Schwalbe et al. (2008) capture the shift from war to non-war (human interest) images in the weeks following the US invasion of Iraq, for instance. Griffin and colleagues' (Griffin 2004, 1999; Griffin and Lee, 1995; Griffin and Kagan, 1999) examination of photos across several conflicts suggests that photographs can play a powerful role in new consumers' understanding and memories of military conflict; and that newsmagazines tend to

focus on a relatively narrow set of common patterns of photographic coverage: in particular, US leadership, weapons and military hardware. The dominance of battle images in the US press, as well as a relative lack of photographic coverage of casualties, is a relatively common finding (e.g., King and Lester, 2005; Silcock et al., 2008). There is thus a literature that values photos as framing signals; and that sees systematic biases in the signals photos provide. There is also a limited body of work directly connects those frames to individuals' attitudes about foreign affairs. Pfau et al (2006) find that including a photo in a story about the Iraq War leads to greater emotional responses, and can have a (small) impact on support for war; Aday (2010) finds (very) limited shifts in measures of support for the Iraq War across treatments of photos portraying casualties versus unharmed troops in battle; Gartner (2011) finds that photos – conventional images of loss (i.e., flag-draped coffins) versus unconventional images of lass (combat photos) – can matter to support for war, but that the impact is mediated by partisanship. It is to this body of work that the current paper seeks to contribute. Although here, while we too examine directly the impact of framing, in photos, on public attitudes towards military conflict, we do not focus on the impact of casualties (in the US). Rather, we focus on a shift in the perceived purpose of mission: peacekeeping or combat.

The Canadian Case

Canada's foreign engagement in central Asia is significant. Since beginning its military action in 2002, 158 Canadian soldiers have been killed in action. This number exceeds any Canadian military incursion since the Korean War. When scaled to population, this number becomes even more impressive, with Canadian casualties *per capita* approaching those of the United States.[2] In addition to taking Canadian lives, the war in Afghanistan has drawn heavily from the public purse, with costs

2 Given their respective populations, US casualties in Afghanistan are approximately 26% higher than Canadian casualties. As a share of the total military population in both countries, however, Canadian casualties are twice the proportion of American casualties.

nearing $20 billion. It has also commanded public awareness, providing clear policy differences between the principal political parties and holding the sustained attention of citizens (Fletcher et al., 2009; Fletcher and Hove, 2012). Taken together, all of these factors suggest that the war in Afghanistan is a matter on which individuals should have opinions, and that such opinions should be relatively informed and stable. Those who feel Canada has paid too high a price in this war, or who believe that Canada has no business meddling within another country's borders should oppose the war. Those who believe that Canada has a right or obligation to see through the effort in Afghanistan should support the mission.

There are, however, several reasons to expect that attitudes shift in response to framing, even on a salient issue such as this one. On the one hand, Canada's engagement in Afghanistan involves elements of peacekeeping, development and reconstruction, and the training of security forces in a state previously beset by civil war. This is in line with Canadians' view of their military primarily as a peacekeeping and development force (Martin and Fortmann, 1995). That said, Canada's military history is one of significant and costly combat. Indeed, on a *per capita* basis, Canadian casualties exceeded those of America in both WW1 and WW2. The engagement in Afghanistan, in short, reflects two quite different views of the Canadian military: as peacekeepers, and as soldiers exposed to violent and deadly risks.[3]

This account of Canadian military history — as a war-making nation that, over the past few decades at least, views itself as a peacekeeper — points to the possibility of real complexities in Canadian public opinion on military engagement. A corollary might be the way in which US attitudes

3 Though it may be worth distinguishing between two different conflict-related frames: one in which the focus is on Canadian casualties, and the other in which the focus is on those killed by Canadians.

have been described as divided amongst interventionists and isolationists.[4] In Canada, the relevant division is likely amongst those who see the military as a fighting force or as a peacekeeping force. Yet, such a division is, we suspect, likely often obscured in both media content and public attitudes on military engagement. Individuals may thus be subject to the push and pull of different frames of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan.

In sum, support for engagement in Afghanistan and elsewhere might be affected by the degree to which the engagement is focused on (and/or framed as) a peacekeeping or a combat mission. (For a related discussion, see Anker, 2005.) And existing work suggests that both frames are relatively frequent, particularly in recent years, in Canada and elsewhere. The American intervention in Somalia has been highlighted as an instance in which support for military action was driven by peacekeeping/ humanitarian concerns, for instance, as was the case for the US intervention in Kuwait (e.g., Bennett and Paletz, 1994; Mandelbaum, 1994; though for a contrary view of Somalia see Livingston and Eachus, 1995). And there is a growing literature on the impact of humanitarian/ peacekeeping frames on Americans' attitudes towards foreign engagements (e.g., Boettcher, 2004; Jentleson and Britton, 1998; Shaw, 2007).[5] So while Canada's sizable role in Afghanistan, combined with the historical context described above, make it an interesting case, it is by no means an outlying one. We see this study as an opportunity to examine the impact of frames that are relevant well beyond the particular context under investigation.

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4 Though note that this is a simplification of a rather sophisticated literature on US attitudes about foreign policy. See, e.g., Chittick et al., 1995; Holsti and Roseneau, 1990; Jenkins-Smith et al., 2004; Maggiotto and Wittkopf, 1981.

5 This is of course linked to the fact that the number of humanitarian/peacekeeping-framed missions, UN-sponsored and otherwise, has increased markedly since the end of the Cold War (see, e.g., Diehl et al., 1998; Seet and Burnham, 2000).

We also see this as a unique opportunity to explore heterogeneity in framing effects, in the foreign affairs context. We draw directly on Druckman and Nelson (2003), as discussed above. However, our focus below is not on knowledge *per se*, but on self-reported attentiveness to foreign affairs issues. The use of attentiveness is partly pragmatic — the survey we use has general but not domain-specific (i.e., foreign affairs) knowledge questions, so we cannot readily introduce a knowledge measure similar to Druckman and Nelson. That said, we do have an issue-specific measure of attentiveness; and we believe that issue attentiveness may be a critical moderator of framing effects. As with measures of knowledge, greater self-reported issue attentiveness may make individuals more able to process (and be affected by) framing cues.

This view of our experiment, as a test of the (potentially heterogeneous) impact of media framing on support for foreign policy, makes clear the relevance of the study to those interested in public opinion, foreign affairs, and public policy more broadly. As we shall see, framing of military interventions can have a significant impact on public support for war. It follows that media content, perhaps particularly for foreign affairs, can be of fundamental importance.

Experimental Design

The central issue in this experiment is whether issue framing can affect public support for military action in Afghanistan. Framing is in this case done not by changing words, however, but by changing the photo attached to the survey question. Our experiment takes up the issue of whether pictorial representations of a military intervention elicit different levels of support for the war.

The experiment was conducted in an online survey of a representative sample of Canadian adults participating in the 2011 Canadian Election Study (CES). All respondents are originally drawn into the study through an RDD telephone survey; a minority are panelists recruited during the 2004, 2006, and

2008 Canadian federal elections. Respondents complete a telephone survey during the campaign period and another in the weeks following the election. They are then administered both a mailback survey and an online survey. Of 4308 respondents to the first 2011 CES wave, 767 completed the online survey. Demographic details of participants in the web wave are included in Appendix Table 1.

The online survey began by asking respondents for their current happiness with Canadian politics, their reported turnout, and two questions on energy policy. They were then asked the following question: "The Canadian military will continue to be involved in Afghanistan for the next several years. Do you support or oppose this?" Response categories were: strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, and strongly oppose. Alongside this question, subjects were presented with one of two pictures relevant to the mission in Afghanistan. Photo 1 showed the back of a soldier walking down an Afghan road, holding the hand of a young boy. No weapons are present in the photo. Photo 2 shows a solider with a large automatic rifle, draped in a large bullet belt; he looks directly at the camera; and other soldiers and dust clouds raised by military vehicles can be seen in the background.

[Figure 1 about here]

The first photo is meant to evoke the military as a peacekeeping and development force. The second is meant to evoke the military as a war making force. Importantly, the first photo is not of a non-military actor engaged in peacekeeping. Instead, a soldier is prominent in both photos, allowing us to focus on the effects of different military roles.

Respondents were randomly assigned to these photos. As Appendix Table 1 shows, we achieved balance on covariates in the two conditions. This is confirmed by a regression of treatment on observables ($F(10,752)=.61$, $p=.82$). As a result of this randomization, we are confident that any differences we see on our quantity of interest are the result of our treatment, rather than some unobserved difference between subjects in our two groups.

The quantity of interest we wish to estimate is the average support for the Canadian military intervention in Afghanistan, as stated in our question above. Since the dependent variable has four response categories, we examine the distribution of support using an ordered logit regression model.[6] The model regresses support for war, ranging from 0 to 3, on:

a. the treatment variable (0/1), equal to 1 for respondents who saw the conflict-framed photo and 0 for those who saw the peacekeeping-framed photo;
b. self-reported attentiveness to foreign affairs (0/1), measured using the following question: "In general, how much attention do you personally usually pay to the following issues?…defense and international affairs?", 1 if respondent said "a lot", and 0 if "a little" or "no attention";
c. support for increased spending on defense (0-2), measured using the following question: "Should the federal government spend more, less, or about the same as now on the following areas?… defence?" (0=less, 1=about the same, 2=more);
d. a set of basic demographic variables, including gender (female=1); immigrant status (immigrant=1); age, with binary variables for 35-54 and 55 and over, with under 35 as the residual category; and education, with variables for more than high school and university, with high school or less as the residual category.

Given that the treatments were randomly assigned, the demographics (and in fact the measures of attentiveness and spending preferences) are not critical to estimating the treatment effect. Indeed, the estimated effect is basically unchanged by the inclusion of these variables. Even so, including the other variables does illustrate some of the demographic and attitudinal differences in support for war, and so we present the full model here.

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6 ANOVA, typical in experimental designs such as this one, is limited when the dependent variable is not interval-level.

In addition, as noted above, in another model we use attentiveness as a moderating variable. That is, following on Druckman's work on heterogeneity in framing effects (see citations above), we allow for an interaction between treatment and self-reported attentiveness to foreign affairs, with the expectation that the manipulation matters more strongly to those more attentive to Canada's role in Afghanistan.

Results

Results from the basic model are presented in the first two columns of Table 1. Cells include odds ratios. The first model is a basic bivariate specification, to make clear that the treatment does make a statistically significant difference to support for war — that is, to confirm that this treatment effect is not dependent on the inclusion of controls. The odds ratio for the treatment variable suggests that the conflict frame reduces the odds that respondents are one category higher on support for the military action in Afghanistan by 27%.

[Table 1 about here]

A second model adds the demographics along with both attentiveness and support for defense spending. The only demographic that makes a significant difference to support for war is immigrant status, where immigrants have odds roughly 50% smaller than non-immigrants of being one unit higher on the four-point support scale. Support for defense spending is, predictably, strongly and positively related to support on the Afghanistan question. So too is self-reported attentiveness to foreign affairs, where increasing attentiveness is related to higher levels of support. The impact of the photo treatment is, with the addition of controls, slightly stronger. Results suggest that the odds of being one unit higher on the support measure drop by roughly 35% if respondents see the conflict-framed photo. The shift in the distribution of support is illustrated in Figure 2, which shows the predicted distribution of support,

by treatment, based on the second model in Table 1.

[Figure 2 about here]

The shift in support from the first to the second photo is, to be sure, only moderate. We see the fact that changing photos does not dramatically shift respondents as evidence that people do indeed have pre-existing, partly durable attitudes about support for military intervention. That said, the shift produced by the manipulation used here is important: a majority of respondents is pro-war using the peacekeeping frame, but anti-war when the conflict frame is employed. The median voter, in essence, shifts from pro- to anti-war. And this is using what we regard as a very weak and passive manipulation. We are not changing any question wording, after all, or presenting different news stories. Nor are we describing the content of the pictures. All we have done is change the photo.

Recall that we expect framing to be more effective for some respondents than for others; specifically, we anticipate framing effects to be moderated by issue attentiveness. These differences are the focus of the third model in Table 1. That model allows for the treatment to interact with self-reported attentiveness to foreign affairs.[7] This change is revealing: the coefficient for the treatment, which now captures treatment effects for low-attentiveness respondents, is statistically insignificant. The coefficient on the interaction, however, is powerfully significant, indicating a strong impact for high-attentiveness respondents. The results are made clearer in Figure 3, which shows the estimated combined percentage of respondents (and associated margins of error) saying either "approve" or "strongly approve", for both low- and high-attentiveness respondents across the two treatments. Illustrating results in this way serves to highlight two facts. First, the impact of the treatment on the two groups is evident. Among those with low-attentiveness, there is a decrease in support for intervention,

7 We note that attentiveness to foreign affairs is measured in the campaign period survey, prior to the web survey. Accordingly, it is unaffected by the photo treatment.

but it is slight, and statistically indistinguishable from zero. High-attentiveness respondents are, in contrast, much more powerfully affected: support for intervention amongst this group drops nearly 15 percentage points.

[Figure 3 about here]

We note, additionally, that the peacekeeping frame produces more divergent responses than the conflict frame, a product of the conflict frame essentially compressing support for war among the highly attentive. We take this not just to be an interesting side-note to the experiment, but rather an indication of what could be increasingly divergent preferences for foreign policy when peacekeeping frames are more prominent. Price et al.'s (2005) past work on the framing of gay marriage may be instructive here: they find that reactions to the frame "marriage for homosexuals" are more polarized than the frame "civil unions for gay couples." Similarly, it may be that the peacekeeping frame here is more evocative, or complex/multidimensional, and thus produces greater divergences of opinion. At this stage, this is only conjecture — the possibility that one of our frames is more complex or emotional is a subject for future work.

Focusing on the differential effect for attentive versus non-attentive respondents, then, we note the greater effect amongst more attentive respondents is in line with previous work finding that those with more knowledge are better able to process, and thus be affected by, issue frames (see citations above). Self-identified attentiveness is not knowledge, *per se*, but it is most likely related.[8] And here, the photo manipulation quite clearly has a much greater impact on those who say they are more attentive to foreign affairs news. Our interpretation is that the manipulation matters more for respondents who are more inclined (better equipped) to both notice and react to the changing frames.

8 In principle, attentiveness and knowledge are absolutely related, but survey responses do not perfectly capture either.

Discussion and Conclusions

The main question addressed in this paper is whether, and for whom, differences in simple photographic representations of war change attitudes toward a country's military engagement. Results suggest that photos can matter to public attitudes, but that there is also heterogeneity in framing effects: respondents who are more attentive to foreign affairs are more affected by foreign affairs framing.

There are, as we see it, several limitations to the present study. First, we draw on a sample of survey respondents that is partly self-selected,[9] in one country, during one election, and ask about one policy area. Concern about the partial self-selection is largely obviated by the fact that we have imbedded the assignment of treatment randomly within the survey; but note also in Appendix Table 1 that the demographic makeup of the final web wave of the CES is not dramatically different from the RDD-generated campaign wave. That we have data from effectively one case may limit external validity – nevertheless, as noted above, the issue of humanitarian/peackeeping frames is by no means exclusive to the Canadian case, and we have no reason to believe that the results here are not more broadly generalizable. Moreover, we argue that internal validity of the experiment is clear, and that our construct validity is equally established.

A second limitation is the relatively moderate substantive size of the treatment effect. To be sure, the effect is not insignificant in real terms, as we mention in the results section above, nor is it huge. We suggest two reasons to take our results seriously. First, in this particular case (and presumably in

9 Recall that the sample is only "partly" self-selected because, though the CES begins with a standard RDD sample, the web wave in which this experiment was embedded is the fourth wave of the study. See discussion above.

many others as well), a 5-to-10 point shift is all it takes to shift the median voter from supporting to not supporting a given policy (or vice-versa). Second, we want to emphasize the rather passive nature of the treatment. Individuals are exposed to one photo, once (with no control over how long they view it). We suspect that it is reasonable to assume that the effect of seeing similar photos in newspapers and images on television, day in and day out, would be cumulative and considerably larger than those reported here, particularly if a certain frame was more available at the start of Canada's campaign in Afghanistan (Druckman et al. 2012).[10]

There is an impressive literature on how framing can shape opinion on policy, and in particular, foreign policy. There exists at the same time a large body of research showing how sometimes quite minor variations in question wording can elicit substantively and statistically significant differences in survey responses (e.g. Schuman and Presser, 1981; Schwarz and Sudman, 1992; Tourangeau et al., 2000). This paper contributes to both perspectives.

The implications of our study for the literature on survey design effects are clear. We have illustrated here that even a relatively weak photographic treatment can lead to significant shifts in responses to questions on foreign policy preferences. That is, simply by showing respondents a different photo — though still one depicting a soldier at war — we have provoked movement in opinion on the war. This finding represents, we think, both a challenge and opportunity for survey

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10 We note one additional limitation with the design of our experiment: we have one condition in which respondents are presented with a photo of a soldier holding a gun and one condition in which a soldier is holding the hand of a child, but no condition in which respondents are simply asked the question about their views on the war while seeing no photo. We consequently lack an estimate of whether the peacekeeping photo pushed support up, for instance, as compared to no photo at all. We are interested here in the framing potential of one photo versus another, however. Results clearly reveal an important difference in the two conditions available, and the direction of the effect is consistent with expectations.

researchers. Given the presence of an effect from a rather subtle treatment, researchers obviously need to exercise some caution when designing visual studies and interpreting results. At the same time, the possibilities for drawing out fine-grained distinctions between treatments is one that ought to be taken advantage of. And since online surveys are becoming increasingly popular, the occasions to employ photos in survey research grow constantly.

The above findings also contribute to our understanding of how media can frame a policy, and how these frames affect opinion. The contribution lies in the study's explicit use of photos very similar to those used in media reports on Canada's military engagement in Afghanistan. Indeed, our treatments were drawn directly from news reports and were taken by the same photographer. Because of the nature of foreign policy — namely, that it is foreign — the average citizen only comes in contact with it via the media. In particular, we highlight not just a statistically significant visual framing effect overall, but also heterogeneous treatment effects across levels of self-reported attentiveness to international affairs. Indeed, and in line with some previous work on heterogeneity in framing, the impact of our treatment is largely concentrated amongst those who are more interested in this policy domain. One implication of this finding is that framing may have a rather large effect on real-world politics. If the impact of public attitudes on policy is driven mainly by attentive "issue publics" (Converse 1964), for instance, then the opinions that matter most may be those most affected by framing. That said, investigating this possibility requires some further work. For the time being, it is clear that the framing implied by photos can have an important impact on support for military engagement. It follows that media framing, through the photos that appear on the pages of newspapers (not to mention the video that is a fundamental part of television broadcasts), can matter greatly to the distribution of opinion on foreign affairs.

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Tables and Figures

Photo 1 - Peacekeeping Treatment

Photo 2 - ConflictTreatment

Figure 1. Photo Manipulation

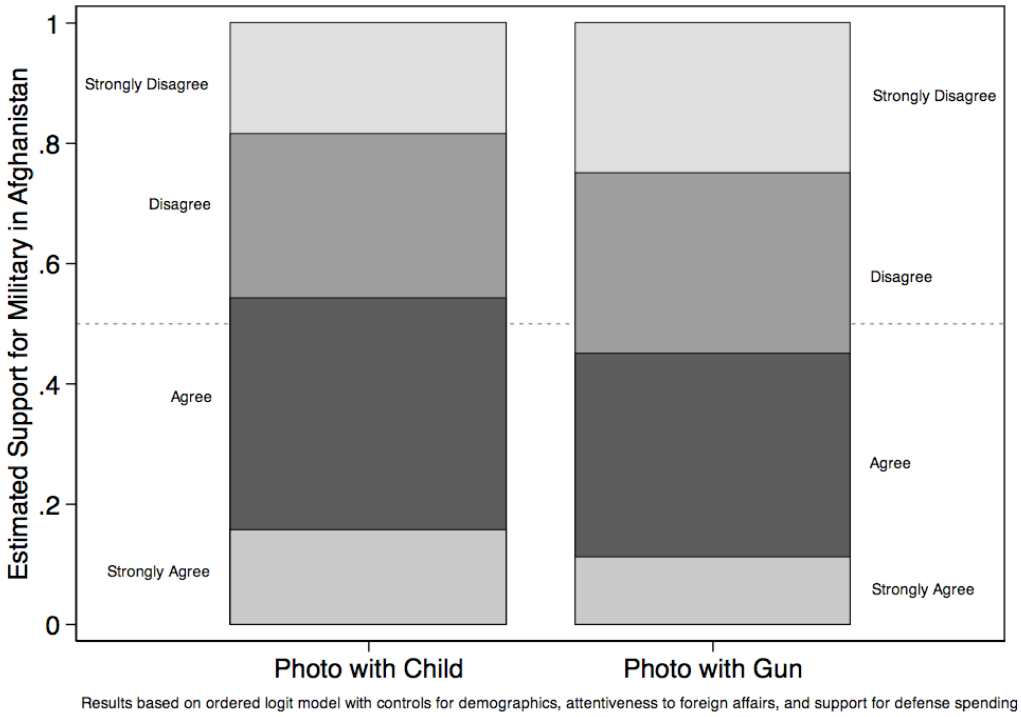

Figure 2. Estimated Support for War, Basic Model

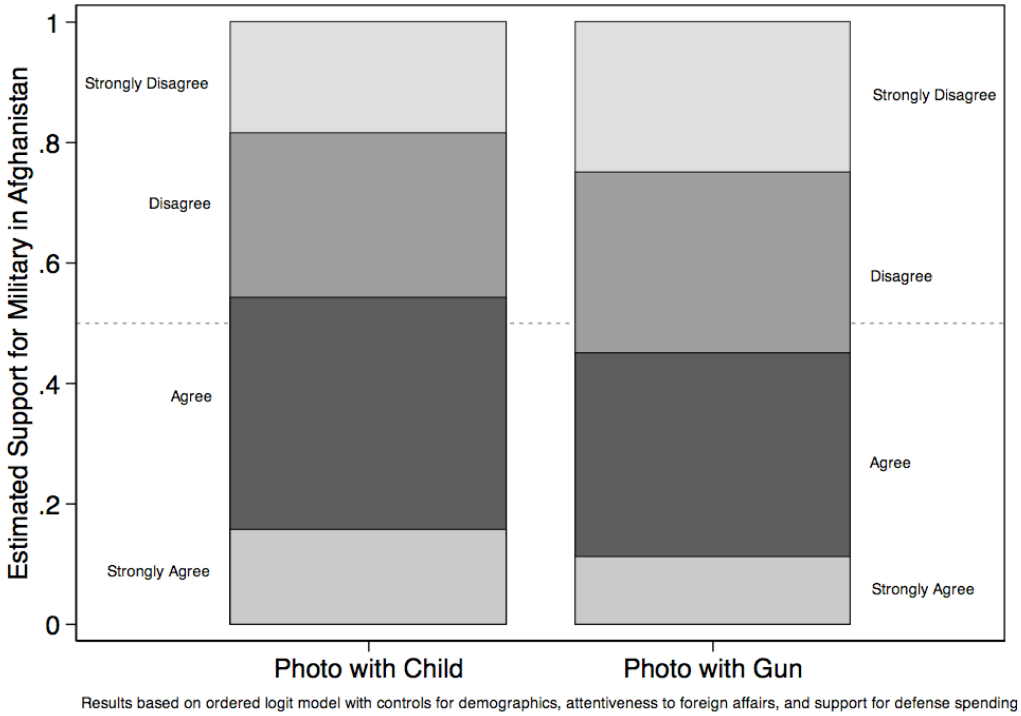

Figure 3. Estimated Support for War, by Attentiveness

Table 1.

Ordered Logit Models of Support for War

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Treatment	.728**	(.096)	.659**	(.090)	.805	(.146)
Attentiveness			1.349**	(.193)	1.715***	(.349)
interaction					.634*	(.172)
Defense Spending			2.581***	(.284)	2.570***	(.284)
Female			.819	(.112)	.813	(.111)
Age: 35-54			.746	(.180)	.746	(.180)
Age: 55+			.785	(.185)	.775	(.183)
Educ: >HS			1.279	(.264)	1.278	(.264)
Educ University			1.557	(.307)	1.542	(.305)
Immigrant			.512***	(.009)	.517***	(.100)
N	765		747		747	
Pseudo Rsq	.019		.077		.078	

* p < .10; ** p < .05; *** p < .01. Cells contain odds ratios from an ordered logit estimation with standard errors in parentheses.

APPENDIX

Appendix Table 1.

Basic Demographics, CES Survey Respondents

	Campaign (1st) Wave	Web (4th) Wave		
			By Experimental Treatment	
		Total	*Treatment 1*	*Treatment 2*
Gender				
% female	55.6	51.6	52.7	50.1
Age				
18-34	14.1	8.8	9.4	8.1
35-54	35.4	34.1	32.9	35.2
55+	50.5	57.1	57.6	56.6
Education				
HS or less	35.3	17.3	17.7	16.8
Tech or HS	32.5	33.6	30.8	36.2
University	32.2	49.2	51.5	46.9
Region				
East	14.3	13.0	11.5	14.5
Quebec	28.7	17.3	18.5	16.3
Ontario	30.6	36.5	36.1	36.9
Prairies	14.8	17.6	17.9	17.3
BC	11.6	15.5	16.0	15.0